CPS Worker and Supervisor Training Topics Survey

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October 4, 2016

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Survey Center (UWSC) was hired by the Division of Safety and Permanence within the Department of Children and Families to conduct a series of brief surveys of the child welfare workforce. The purpose of these surveys is to identify strengths and challenges faced by the child welfare workforce in Wisconsin. Input from these surveys will help the Department of Children and Families and counties partner in their efforts to continually improve upon policy, process and practice standards, as well as training and technical assistance. This initial Flash Survey is called the *Flash Survey on Training Needs*.

Responses from each survey are submitted to a centralized database managed by UWSC, where they are combined with the answers from all respondents. All answers are confidential—none of the survey responses are linked to identifying information. These surveys are intended to be very brief, and are designed to gauge workforce knowledge of a particular issue or topic, professional needs and challenges, and strengths and gaps in practice and policy areas.

The survey was sent electronically on Aug 20, 2015 to 2,129 email addresses representing frontline workers and supervisors (1,776 frontline workers and 353 supervisors) with job responsibilities in child protective services. The final sample file included 837 workers and 179 supervisors (total N=1,016), for an overall response rate of 49.1%.

An additional survey was sent to County Human Service Directors. This survey asked about the same training topics, but from a leadership vantage point—i.e., what training topics does the county leadership feel their workforce needs? Results from these additional surveys further inform efforts to set a training agenda, since child welfare leadership may feel that their staff needs are different than the staff identify for themselves.

This *Executive Summary of the Flash Survey on Training Needs* includes findings broken down by whether workers have completed the foundational training requirements or not, and by region of the State. Findings are presented in more detail and broken down by other characteristics in the *Flash Survey on Training Needs: Technical Report*.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Table A shows the composition of the survey respondents. In total, a little more than 1,000 people responded, the vast majority of whom were frontline workers, and about one-fifth supervisors. Among agency types, more than three-quarters of respondents were county employees and about 12% were private agency staff. A little less than 30% of respondents had between 1 and 4 years of child welfare experience, about 20% had between 5 and 10 years, and a relatively large 44% of respondents reported more than 10 years of experience in the field. About one quarter of workers reported a decade or more of experience in their current position, 20% between 5 and 10 years, and about 40% reported 1-4 years of tenure in their current position.

The majority of respondents have both a social work degree and license, and about 20% reported having neither. About 10% each reported having a social work license or a degree (but not both). Turning to education level, most respondents reported having a bachelor's degree (but no graduate degree), and about a third reported having a master's degree or higher. A small fraction of respondents reported attaining less than a bachelor's degree.

Among county population categories, respondents are somewhat evenly distributed, though there are fewer respondents from the smaller population counties. Finally, training regions are not as evenly distributed as counties. The Northern and Southeast counties have the fewest respondents, while the remaining areas have a similar number of respondents.

The Flash Survey on Training Needs asked questions about six different "blocks" of training topics: practice challenges, foundational child welfare practice, skills development needs, leadership and supervision (asked of supervisors only), placement and out-of-home care practice, and child welfare populations. Within each block of training topics, respondents were asked to select up to five topics on which they desire more training. Results are reported across subgroups of respondents (e.g., education level, job tenure, training regions). In this Executive Summary, the results are presented only by region. The Technical Report presents findings for a larger number of subgroups.

TABLE A. RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (N=1,016)

Position	Supervisors	179	17.6%
	Frontline Workers	837	82.4%
Agency Type	County Human Services	807	79.4%
	Private Agency	124	12.2%
	State	85	8.4%
Child welfare Experience	Less than 1 Year	71	7.01%
	1-4 Years	277	27.34%
	5-10 Years	218	21.52%
	More than 10 Years	447	44.13%
Current Position	Less than 1 Year	166	16.40%
	1-4 Years	418	41.30%
	5-10 Years	189	18.68%
	More than 10 Years	239	23.62%
Social Work Degree / License	Neither	166	17.38%
	Degree, No License	113	11.83%
	License, No degree	98	10.26%
	Both	578	60.52%
Education Level	Less than Bachelor	32	3.31%
	Bachelor	606	62.73%
	Master or higher	328	33.95%
County Population	Small	121	11.91%
	Medium	207	20.37%
	Large	264	25.98%
	Extra Large	213	20.96%
	Milwaukee	211	20.77%
Training Region	Northern	96	9.45%
	Northeast	270	26.57%
	Southern	181	17.81%
	Southeast	78	7.68%
	Western	180	17.72%
	Milwaukee	211	20.77%

PRACTICE CHALLENGES

The top five training topics are indicated in yellow or blue highlighting in the following tables. Yellow highlighting indicates that across all subgroups in a given table, there was agreement that the topic was in the top five. Blue highlighting indicates that at least one subgroup, the topic ranked in the top five. The percentage of respondents who indicated a preference for each topic is presented, along with the rank, in parentheses, for that topic (1 indicates the highest level of preference).

Table B shows variation across training regions. All regions include mental illness/mental health issues, substance abuse, and parenting strengths and challenges in their top 5 training choices. All but Milwaukee are interested in sexual abuse training, and parenting strengths and challenges. The western region includes neglect in its top 5, as do the northern and northeast regions. All but the northern and western regions include cognitive impairments and learning disabilities in the top 5. Finally, Milwaukee includes human trafficking and domestic violence in its top 5, while others do not.

TABLE B. Practice Challenge Items, by Training Region						
	Percent (Rank)					
Question (#)	Northern	Northeast	Southern	Southeast	Western	Milwaukee
Mental illness/mental health issues (4)	75.00% (2)	79.63% (1)	83.43% (1)	80.77% (1)	81.67% (1)	77.25% (1)
Substance abuse (5)	79.17% (1)	69.26% (2)	66.85% (2)	74.36% (2)	67.78% (2)	59.72% (3)
Sexual abuse (6)	34.38% (5)	34.44% (5)	37.02% (5)	33.33% (5)	42.22% (5)	37.44% (6)
Neglect (7)	52.08% (4)	34.44% (5)	36.46% (6)	29.49% (7)	42.78% (4)	26.07% (10)
Cognitive impairments and learning disabilities (8)	30.21% (6)	42.22% (4)	48.07% (3)	39.74% (4)	33.89% (7)	41.23% (5)
Emotional abuse (9)	30.21% (6)	30.00% (8)	33.70% (7)	28.21% (9)	32.78% (8)	28.91% (9)
Domestic violence (10)	28.13% (8)	28.89% (10)	30.94% (9)	29.49% (7)	41.67% (6)	60.19% (2)
Poverty stressors (11)	25.00% (9)	31.11% (7)	30.94% (9)	30.77% (6)	28.89% (9)	29.38% (8)
Parenting strengths and challenges (13)	57.29% (3)	47.04% (3)	47.51% (4)	53.85% (3)	50.56% (3)	35.55% (7)
Human and sex trafficking of youth (14)	11.46% (10)	29.26% (9)	31.49% (8)	28.21% (9)	16.67% (10)	53.55% (4)
N	96	270	181	78	180	211

County Directors were also asked to select the top five practice challenges training topics on which they felt their staff could benefit from additional training. The top five training topics selected by county directors were mental illness/mental health issues (77%), substance abuse (73%), parenting strengths and challenges (56%), poverty stressors (46%), and neglect (38%).

FOUNDATIONAL CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

Table C shows that across training regions, all workers were interested in intergenerational maltreatment, attachment disorders, child maltreatment prevention, and trauma informed practice. Workers from the southern region and Milwaukee indicated interest in the effects of psychotropic medication, while workers from the remaining areas included the science of addiction in their top 5.

TABLE C. Foundational Child Welfare Practice Items, by Training Region												
	Percent (Rank)											
Question (#)	Northern		Northeast		Southern		Southeast		Western		Milwaukee	
Family systems theory (4)	23.96%	(8)	28.89%	(8)	28.18%	(8)	43.59%	(7)	36.67%	(6)	33.65%	(7)
Brain development (5)	30.21%	(7)	38.89%	(7)	33.70%	(7)	23.08%	(8)	33.89%	(7)	26.07%	(10)
The science of addiction (6)	60.42%	(2)	44.07%	(5)	40.33%	(6)	53.85%	(3)	45.56%	(5)	38.39%	(6)
Stages of child development (7)	15.63%	(9)	19.63%	(10)	26.52%	(9)	23.08%	(8)	22.22%	(9)	29.38%	(8)
The effects of psychotropic medications (8)	37.50%	(6)	43.70%	(6)	41.44%	(5)	48.72%	(6)	32.22%	(8)	41.71%	(5)
Understanding and addressing grief and loss (9)	15.63%	(9)	22.59%	(9)	21.55%	(10)	17.95%	(10)	21.11%	(10)	27.49%	(9)
Intergenerational maltreatment (10)	54.17%	(4)	55.93%	(2)	49.17%	(4)	53.85%	(3)	55.56%	(3)	53.08%	(2)
Attachment disorders (11)	57.29%	(3)	52.59%	(3)	61.33%	(2)	55.13%	(2)	52.78%	(4)	51.18%	(3)
What works in child maltreatment prevention (12)	52.08%	(5)	50.00%	(4)	49.72%	(3)	51.28%	(5)	58.89%	(2)	49.76%	(4)
Trauma-informed practice (14)	68.75%	(1)	57.41%	(1)	67.40%	(1)	60.26%	(1)	68.89%	(1)	71.09%	(1)
N	96		270		181		78		180		211	

The top training topics selected by county directors are trauma-informed practice (75%), intergenerational maltreatment (60%), child maltreatment prevention (58%), attachment disorders (52%), and the science of addiction (51%).

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Workers from all parts of the state were interested in conflict negotiations, cross-system collaboration, and de-escalating crisis situations, as shown in Table D. All but those in the northern region included secondary traumatic stress in their top 5. Workers in the Milwaukee, northern, and northeastern regions included court testimony in their top 5. Workers in the southern and southeast regions indicated an interest in interviewing skills, while those in the western and northern region indicated an interest in effective documentation and case notes.

TABLE D. Skill Development Items, by Training Region												
	Percent (Rank)											
Question (#)	Northern		Northeast		Southern		Southeast		Western		Milwaukee	
Leadership skills (4)	27.08%	(8)	20.00%	(11)	22.10%	(10)	25.64%	(7)	23.33%	(9)	30.33%	(9)
Time management (6)	25.00%	(9)	22.59%	(8)	25.97%	(9)	21.79%	(10)	21.11%	(10)	32.70%	(6)
Court testimony and preparation (7)	40.63%	(4)	40.74%	(4)	36.46%	(6)	25.64%	(7)	35.56%	(7)	46.45%	(2)
Enhancing interviewing skills (9)	34.38%	(7)	35.93%	(6)	39.23%	(5)	42.31%	(5)	40.56%	(6)	32.70%	(6)
Effective documentation and case notes (10)	43.75%	(3)	31.11%	(7)	33.15%	(7)	32.05%	(6)	48.33%	(2)	31.75%	(8)
Conflict negotiations (11)	47.92%	(2)	48.15%	(2)	46.41%	(3)	51.28%	(2)	42.78%	(4)	44.08%	(3)
Enhancing communication skills (12)	18.75%	(11)	20.37%	(9)	29.83%	(8)	24.36%	(9)	28.33%	(8)	22.75%	(10)
Effectively working with Coordinated Service Teams (13)	20.83%	(10)	20.37%	(9)	19.34%	(11)	14.10%	(11)	14.44%	(12)	18.48%	(12)
Cross-systems collaboration with schools, mental health providers, and corrections staff (17)	40.63%	(4)	45.93%	(3)	51.38%	(2)	44.87%	(3)	44.44%	(3)	42.18%	(4)
De-escalating crisis situations (18)	55.21%	(1)	52.96%	(1)	56.35%	(1)	57.69%	(1)	48.89%	(1)	52.13%	(1)
Assessing and addressing secondary traumatic stress (19)	36.46%	(6)	39.26%	(5)	43.65%	(4)	43.59%	(4)	42.78%	(4)	42.18%	(4)
Providing active efforts in ICWA cases (21)	15.63%	(12)	11.85%	(12)	6.08%	(12)	10.26%	(12)	15.00%	(11)	18.96%	(11)
N	96		270		181		78		180		211	

County directors ranked the following topics in the top 5: de-escalating crisis situations (62%), cross-systems collaboration (58%), assessing/addressing secondary trauma (52%), effective documentation and case notes (48%), and court testimony and preparation (42%).

PLACEMENT AND OUT-OF-HOME CARE PRACTICE

Table E shows that there is not a great deal of consensus regarding training topics in this category across region. All regions ranked effective practice at child removal and placement in the top 5. All regions but Milwaukee included meaningful supervised visits and preparing children for reunification in the top 5, and all but the Northern region included cross-systems collaboration in their top 5. Outside of this broader agreement, Milwaukee included engaging and working with foster/kinship providers. The southern and western regions both included effective concurrent planning practices in their top 5. Milwaukee and the northern region both ranked navigating the TPR process highly, and the northeast region included personal safety in its top 5. Finally, the western and Milwaukee regions included court preparation and testimony in their top 5.

TABLE E. Out-of-Home Care Items, by Training Region												
	Percent (Rank)											
Question (#)	Northern		Northeast		Southern		Southeast		Western		Milwaukee	
Recruitment and selection of foster families (4)	20.83%	(10)	20.00%	(11)	19.34%	(12)	29.49%	(6)	23.33%	(9)	27.49%	(10)
Effective practice at child removal and placement (5)	45.83%	(3)	42.96%	(2)	49.17%	(2)	43.59%	(2)	53.89%	(1)	46.92%	(1)
Meaningful supervised visits (6)	47.92%	(1)	49.26%	(1)	50.83%	(1)	50.00%	(1)	52.22%	(2)	23.22%	(11)
Effective concurrent planning practices (7)	23.96%	(8)	17.78%	(12)	24.86%	(10)	32.05%	(4)	28.89%	(5)	21.33%	(12)
Effective practice at case closure (8)	23.96%	(8)	10.00%	(14)	12.15%	(13)	14.10%	(13)	15.56%	(13)	17.06%	(13)
Navigating the TPR process (9)	33.33%	(4)	22.59%	(8)	25.97%	(8)	23.08%	(10)	24.44%	(8)	33.18%	(2)
Effective practice with adoptive families (10)	8.33%	(14)	12.96%	(13)	6.08%	(14)	8.97%	(14)	8.89%	(14)	12.80%	(14)
Preparing children and youth for adoption and subsidized guardianship (11)	18.75%	(12)	21.85%	(10)	19.89%	(11)	24.36%	(8)	22.78%	(10)	30.81%	(6)
Preparing children and youth for reunification (12)	46.88%	(2)	40.00%	(3)	41.99%	(3)	43.59%	(2)	40.00%	(3)	29.86%	(7)
Preparing youth for independent living (13)	17.71%	(13)	27.78%	(5)	27.62%	(6)	28.21%	(7)	27.22%	(7)	29.38%	(8)
Cross-systems collaboration with schools, mental health, and corrections (14)	30.21%	(6)	30.37%	(4)	28.73%	(5)	30.77%	(5)	31.67%	(4)	32.23%	(4)
Engaging and working with foster/kinship providers (15)	20.83%	(10)	22.22%	(9)	29.28%	(4)	17.95%	(11)	22.78%	(10)	31.28%	(5)
Court preparation and testimony (17)	31.25%	(5)	27.78%	(5)	25.41%	(9)	16.67%	(12)	28.89%	(5)	33.18%	(2)
Personal safety (18)	26.04%	(7)	27.78%	(5)	26.52%	(7)	24.36%	(8)	17.78%	(12)	28.91%	(9)
N	96		270		181		78		180		211	

The top five training topics identified by county directors were: preparing children and youth for reunification (60%), meaningful supervised visits (52%), effective practice at child removal and placement (50%), cross-systems collaboration with schools, mental health and corrections (46%), recruitment and selection of foster families (42%).

CHILD WELFARE POPULATIONS

Table F shows that there was not such complete agreement across training regions as there was across other breakouts of worker types. While all worker groups agreed on engaging and working with fathers, effective practice with teenaged children in foster care, effective practice with ambivalent clients, and effective practice with substance-exposed infants and their caregivers, two of the regions (southeast and western) did not rank culturally competent engagement practice in the top 5. In its place, the southeast region ranked finding and engaging kinship networks, and the western region ranked effective practice with sibling groups in the top 5.

TABLE F. Child Welfare Population Items, by Training Region												
	Percent (Rank)											
Question (#)	Northern		Northeast		Southern		Southeast		Western		Milwaukee	
Effective practice under the Indian Child Welfare Act (4)	22.92%	(8)	14.44%	(10)	8.29%	(10)	11.54%	(10)	26.67%	(7)	27.49%	(7)
Culturally competent engagement strategies (5)	31.25%	(5)	28.89%	(5)	34.81%	(5)	26.92%	(6)	27.22%	(6)	36.49%	(5)
Effective practice with LGBT youth (6)	11.46%	(10)	19.26%	(9)	21.55%	(9)	23.08%	(8)	16.11%	(10)	31.75%	(6)
Engaging and working with fathers (7)	42.71%	(4)	43.70%	(3)	46.41%	(4)	44.87%	(4)	51.67%	(3)	53.55%	(3)
Effective practice with teenage children in foster care (8)	56.25%	(2)	42.22%	(4)	46.96%	(3)	50.00%	(2)	41.11%	(4)	59.72%	(2)
Finding and engaging kinship networks (9)	30.21%	(6)	27.04%	(6)	26.52%	(6)	28.21%	(5)	25.00%	(8)	23.22%	(8)
Effective practice with resistant or ambivalent clients (10)	71.88%	(1)	69.63%	(1)	75.14%	(1)	66.67%	(1)	73.89%	(1)	60.19%	(1)
Effective practice with sibling groups (11)	26.04%	(7)	27.04%	(6)	25.41%	(8)	25.64%	(7)	35.00%	(5)	23.22%	(8)
Engaging with foster care providers (12)	21.88%	(9)	22.59%	(8)	26.52%	(6)	15.38%	(9)	19.44%	(9)	22.75%	(10)
Effective practice with substance-exposed infants and their caregivers (13)	55.21%	(3)	49.26%	(2)	49.17%	(2)	50.00%	(2)	61.11%	(2)	47.39%	(4)
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County directors ranked these topics in the top 5: effective practice with resistant or ambivalent clients (77%), engaging and working with fathers (69%), effective practice with substance-exposed infants and their caregivers (63%), effective practice with teenage children in foster care (44%), and finding and engaging kinship networks (40%).

SUPERVISION AND LEADERSHIP (SUPERVISORS ONLY)

Table G shows the training interests of supervisors by region. Supervisors from all regions ranked engaging and motivating others and developing and coaching staff in their top 5. Supervisors from the northern, northeast and southern regions ranked assessing and evaluating performance in the top 5. Those from Milwaukee, the northern, southeast, and western regions indicating interest in recruiting the right child welfare staff. Supervisors in the northern, southern region, and Milwaukee ranked mediation and conflict management in the top 5. Milwaukee supervisors indicated interest in recognizing burnout and STS and managing people.

TABLE G. Supervisor Items, by Training Region												
	Percent (Rank)											
Question (#)	Northern		Northeast		Southern		Southeast		Western		Milwaukee	
Assess and evaluate performance (4)	54.55%	(2)	46.34%	(2)	51.52%	(1)	43.75%	(6)	58.62%	(1)	39.47%	(7)
Recruit, interview, and select the right child welfare staff (5)	54.55%	(2)	31.71%	(6)	33.33%	(6)	56.25%	(1)	48.28%	(4)	42.11%	(4)
Engage and motivate others (6)	40.91%	(5)	51.22%	(1)	42.42%	(3)	50.00%	(3)	48.28%	(4)	57.89%	(1)
Gather and use data to inform worker practice (7)	31.82%	(6)	46.34%	(2)	30.30%	(9)	56.25%	(1)	34.48%	(6)	23.68%	(9)
Mediation and conflict management skills (8)	50.00%	(4)	29.27%	(9)	36.36%	(4)	6.25%	(10)	27.59%	(8)	42.11%	(4)
Recognizing burnout and secondary traumatic stress (9)	31.82%	(6)	19.51%	(10)	33.33%	(6)	31.25%	(7)	20.69%	(10)	44.74%	(3)
Managing people (10)	27.27%	(8)	31.71%	(6)	30.30%	(9)	18.75%	(8)	24.14%	(9)	42.11%	(4)
Leadership skills (11)	22.73%	(9)	41.46%	(5)	33.33%	(6)	18.75%	(8)	31.03%	(7)	31.58%	(8)
Supervising child sexual abuse cases (12)	18.18%	(11)	14.63%	(11)	15.15%	(11)	6.25%	(10)	0.00%	(12)	13.16%	(11)
Developing and coaching staff (13)	63.64%	(1)	46.34%	(2)	48.48%	(2)	50.00%	(3)	55.17%	(2)	47.37%	(2)
Managing diversity (14)	9.09%	(12)	7.32%	(12)	3.03%	(12)	6.25%	(10)	3.45%	(11)	5.26%	(12)
Supervising safety (15)	22.73%	(9)	31.71%	(6)	36.36%	(4)	50.00%	(3)	51.72%	(3)	23.68%	(9)
N	96		270		181		78		180		211	

County directors were asked to identify training topics that they felt would benefit their supervisors. They ranked the following topics in the top 5: developing and coaching staff (69%), leadership skills (48%), recognizing burnout and secondary traumatic stress (46%), engaging and motivating others (44%), and gathering and using data to inform worker practice (44%).

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

<u>Summary of Findings</u>

There are a few main takeaways from the results of the survey. First, workers and supervisors consistently expressed training interest in some of the largest challenges in child welfare work. These include mental illness and substance use disorders, working with resistant clients, and managing conflict situations.

Second, there is substantial agreement in the rankings across different job functions, education levels, child welfare career and current position tenure, degree and licensure statuses, and to some extent, region and county sizes. The most agreement was identified in the blocks on foundational child welfare practice and child welfare populations.

Third, worker and county administrator perspectives did not always align. County Directors may observe needs in their staff that staff members themselves do not see, and vice versa, so both sources of information should be carefully considered in setting training agendas.

Some topics not ranked in the top 5 may still necessitate training, given statutory changes or state or county-level initiatives.

Finally, questions on preferred mode of training generated answers that consistently favored in-person and hybrid training. However, it is unclear whether respondents feel different training topics may lend themselves to different training modes. For example, while foundation training may be best delivered in an in-person setting, an annual update to standards might be best delivered on-line or using a hybrid approach.

<u>How are survey results being used?</u>
The results from the Flash Survey on Training Needs were used by the WCWPDS, in combination with the participant feedback received by the regional training partnerships following training sessions offered in 2015, in the development of the 2016-17 Special Skills and Topics training schedule (http://wcwpds.wisc.edu/class-schedule.htm) that is available to county child welfare staff in the 71 counties outside of Milwaukee. The Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership provides training to Milwaukee child welfare staff. Since the majority of new child welfare staff in Milwaukee spend their first 1-2 years completing the required Worker Foundation training, the Special Skills and Topics training plan was focused primarily upon the needs expressed by those staff who had completed Foundation training. However, additional topics were selected based upon the regional priorities identified within the Flash Survey and more general survey participant feedback.

Mental illness/mental health issues, substance abuse, trauma informed practice, and court/legal topics were the top identified training needs from the Flash Survey and participant feedback following training sessions. To meet these needs, multiple sessions of the following training topics were scheduled in 2016-17:

Mental illness/mental health issues
- Childhood and Adolescent Disorders
- The Impact of Suicide on Youth and Families: The Ones We Miss
- Creative Case Planning for Parents with Personality Disorders

Substance abuse
- Addiction and the Family: A Lifetime of Trauma
- Perinatal Substance Abuse: What Child Welfare Professionals Need to Know

Trauma Informed Practice
- Trauma Informed Practice
- The Neurobiology of Case Planning
- Secondary Traumatic Stress and the Child Welfare Professional
- Using Our Trauma Lens

Court-Related Topics
- Effective Courtroom Preparation and Presentation
- Termination of Parental Rights
- Child Forensic Interviews: Best Practice Guidelines

In addition to the above listed topics, DCF 56 Training, Family Finding Training, SAFE Training, Permanency Roundtable Values training, and the Overview of Child Sexual Abuse training continue to be regularly offered. All training sessions are posted in PDS Online.