

Oregon Training System Assessment

Prepared by the Butler
Institute for Families
University of Denver

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Effective training systems lead to better-prepared staff, who in turn will engage in best practices with children, youth, and families, ultimately resulting in better child welfare outcomes. The Butler Institute for Families (Butler), at the University of Denver, conducted a training system assessment sponsored by Casey Family Programs for the Oregon Department of Human Services, Office of Child Welfare. The goal was to determine strengths and challenges in multiple domains and make recommendations for a more effective training system. This executive summary offers a snapshot of findings and recommendations.

Methods

Using the Training System Assessment instrument, Butler looked holistically at the entire training system. To accomplish the training system assessment, Butler conducted listening sessions with 19 groups for a total of 89 participants. Listening sessions were conducted virtually by Zoom and guided by protocols with specific questions relevant to participants' positions. In addition to listening sessions, Butler administered the Training System Assessment Survey online to 2,908 DHS staff (business and office staff, social service assistants, supervisors, office managers, social service specialists, and others) via Qualtrics survey platform. The survey was open November 2 – 17, 2020, and received 1,483 responses for a 51% response rate.

Survey Findings

Key findings from the survey were:

- Of the 1,483 responses, 56% were Social Service Specialists (SS1s), 4% MAPS, 10% Supervisors and Office Managers, 11% SSAs, and 18% Business/Other Staff; of the SSS1s, 21% were newly hired in the past year, 79% were experienced
- Perceptions of training experiences were mixed; new SSS1s reported more positive perceptions of training experiences than other staff
- Staff indicated a need for improved content regarding family engagement (particularly for racially/ethnically diverse and LGBTQIA+ families)

- Staff also wanted more support on earning transfer, particularly performance feedback and supervisor guidance
- Preferred training formats were classroom (ideally 4 hours) and live virtual (ideally 2 hours)
- Proposed training topics that were most important to staff members jobs were: documentation, organization/time management, worker well-being, and family engagement

Training System Assessment

The Training System Assessment instrument guided the interview protocols and document reviews and the review of DHS's training system across multiple areas. The results reported in this executive summary may be from listening session participants, document reviews, or survey findings. More detail can be found in the body of this report.

Overall Strengths

Listening session participants noted multiple strengths including:

- Experienced and skillful trainers
- Leadership commitment to training
- A variety of available trainings

Assessment Area: Management

Strengths:

- Presence of workforce development deputy director on agency's executive management team
- PSU sufficiently staffs all roles in their training department
- Moving toward more stakeholder involvement with a training advisory committee

Areas for improvement:

- No overall or individual PSU or DHS training plans
- No formal training needs assessment conducted on a regular basis
- Insufficient marketing of training opportunities

Assessment Area: Training Array

Strengths:

- Good mix of in-person, online, and web-based training
- Strong Essential Elements training for new SSS1s

Areas for improvement:

- Insufficient training for supervisors
- No job-specific training available for business/clerical staff or leadership/management
- Insufficient course space for SSS1s to complete their required trainings in a timely manner as courses fill up and there is a ceiling on registration

Assessment Area: Infrastructure

Strengths:

- Some local offices provide strong support to staff to attend training

- PSU has policies related to managing training
- An adequate budget exists for training

Areas for improvement:

- Inconsistent formal plans to provide coverage while staff are at training
- Lack of statewide policies around training-related issues
- Lack of flexibility in how the training budget can be administered

Assessment Area: Instructional Design

Strengths:

- PSU has extensive curriculum with a consistent format that includes instructions to the trainer and content to offer
- A wide variety of formats are offered by both DHS and PSU
- PSU's ability to offer classroom experience remotely along with in-person classes

Areas for improvement:

- Keeping virtual classes to a manageable size to fully engage participants
- No competency statements identified in either PSU or DHS curriculum
- No standardized curriculum for trainings provided by DHS
- No ongoing assessment of curriculum, which should occur at least every two years

Assessment Area: Trainer Management

Strengths:

- PSU has a trainer development program and a supervisor observes each trainer at least twice per year
- Some PSU staff have attended conferences on training; DHS staff attended National Staff Development & Training Association conference this year

Areas for improvement:

- No trainer development or ongoing professional development provided to DHS staff trainers
- Lack of ability to ensure fidelity to curriculum

Assessment Area: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Strengths:

- Some efforts to include DEI issues
- PSU has made concerted efforts to address DEI through trainer development, curriculum, and trainee interactions

Areas for Improvement:

- Need for more training related to LGBTQIA+ or persons with different abilities

Assessment Area: Transfer of Learning

Strengths:

- Robust materials, including a supervisor manual and portfolios for SSS1s
- Transfer of learning is addressed in Essential Elements training
- MAPS staff provide strong support to new SSS1s in the field

Areas for improvement:

- Perception that Essential Elements from PSU does not reflect actual practice
- Significant implementation issues related to transfer of learning

- Lack of follow through on transfer of learning tasks
- New SSS1s possibly assigned cases prior to completion of training

Assessment Area: Training Evaluation

Strengths:

- PSU and DHS evaluation tools are concise, well-worded, and collect relevant and useful data
- Thorough individual evaluations (Portfolios of Learning and Professional Development) for SSS1s

Areas for improvement:

- Lack of consistent evaluation practices across all DHS training
- Lack of clarity about how PSU and DHS utilizes training evaluations (particularly aggregate data from EE and other DHS training evaluations) for decision-making
- Insufficient use of portfolios for SSS1s and supervisors to structure post-training support

Organizational Support for Training and Barriers

Strengths:

- Some local agency leaders strongly support training

Areas for Improvement:

- Funding
- A perception that training is more about compliance
- Traveling to Salem when located far away

Workforce Development

Other components impacting workforce development include:

- Heavy workloads
- High turnover
- Ongoing recruitment

Perceptions of positive supervision help mitigate these issues

Curriculum Assessment

PSU curricula from Essential Elements were assessed using Butler's curriculum assessment rubric.

Competencies/Learning Objectives

Strengths: Learning objectives provided and training content matches the objectives

Areas for improvement: Need for competency statements

Training Methods

Strengths: Vary throughout curriculum assessed

Areas for improvement: Much didactic material in the classroom curriculum. Incorporate flipped classroom approach

Curriculum Instructions

Strengths: Detailed lists of required training material for each module

Areas for improvement: Need for more specificity and incorporation of timelines

Content

Strengths: All curriculum contains thorough content

Areas for improvement: Move knowledge content to online learning platforms

Sequencing of Content

Strengths: Generally moves from broad to specific

Areas for improvement: Need for DEI integration and engagement

Format

Strengths: Consistent formatting and training information is easy to locate

Areas for improvement: Use trainer notes consistently and present content in bulleted format

Attributions

Strengths: N/A

Areas for improvement: Need for citations and reference list/bibliography

Online Courses

Strengths: N/A

Areas for improvement: N/A

Transfer of Learning

Strengths: Offered throughout the curriculum

Areas for improvement: N/A

Recommendations

Based upon the training system and curricula assessments, Butler offers the following recommendations to improve the overall Oregon training system (more detail for each recommendation is in the [Recommendations](#) section):

1. Strengthen the partnership between PSU and DHS through shared visioning and implementation efforts to build trust, relationships, and stronger training.
2. Consider developing a strong practice model complemented by a competency model approach.
3. Infuse all training from DHS and PSU with content to build skills around diversity, equity, and inclusion.
4. Have current DHS field personnel conduct an intensive audit of PSU's Essential Elements to understand how the content can better align with current field practice.
5. Revise transfer-of-learning activities for new caseworkers to better prepare them. As appropriate, assign these responsibilities to others.
6. Develop formal supervisor and manager curriculum and implement training with fidelity.
7. Develop standards for all PSU and DHS curricula including:
 - a. Use of a competency-based approach
 - b. Use of citations and current research to support all content
 - c. Use of a consistent format across all curricula provided to DHS employees
 - d. Detailed instructions to guide the trainer and ensure fidelity

- e. Ensure inclusion and integration of significant themes such as DEI, trauma, and engagement
8. Employ coaching techniques and train all MAPS and others providing transfer-of-learning functions.
9. Prepare curriculum developers and trainers through formal training and ongoing coaching and support.
10. Explore options to provide “flipped” training, where knowledge-level content is provided through online courses and skills are developed in the classroom (virtual or in person).
11. Explore ways to train MAPS and supervisors to use training evaluation findings (in addition to Essential Elements staff portfolios – see Recommendation #5).
12. Hold regular CQI sessions that include both DHS and PSU to review evaluation data and identify ways to increase training quality.

Conclusion

Oregon’s training system has many strengths as well as some opportunities for improvement. Engaging in this comprehensive assessment demonstrates Oregon’s commitment to delivering the best possible training system to ultimately ensure better service delivery for the children and families served.



Training System Assessment

Introduction

Effective training systems lead to better-prepared staff, who in turn will engage in best practices with children, youth, and families, ultimately resulting in better child welfare systems. Training assessments lead to a better understanding of the system's effective components and those that could be improved.

The Butler Institute for Families (Butler) at the University of Denver conducted a training system assessment sponsored by Casey Family Programs for the Oregon Department of Human Services, Office of Child Welfare to determine strengths and challenges in multiple training system domains and to make recommendations for a more effective training system. Oregon's training system, in partnership with Portland State University (PSU), provides a variety of professional development experiences for child welfare staff as part of vital part of developing a well-prepared workforce.

Methods

The training system assessment involved collecting qualitative and quantitative data through multiple methods and from a variety of sources, including a review of documents; an online survey administered to staff; and listening sessions and interviews with PSU training staff and DHS directors, managers, supervisors, caseworkers, and other staff across the state.

For the qualitative aspect of the project, Butler staff used training system assessment instruments they had previously developed to assess Oregon DHS's training system and for the quantitative component, developed a customized survey for Oregon DHS staff. Butler's team conducted the assessment from October – December 2020.

Using the training system assessment tool, Butler looked holistically at the entire system. The tool was designed to systematically identify the structural elements of a training system that are functioning effectively, the extent to which the system supports the professional development of the workforce, and opportunities for system improvement. The assessment tool was informed by best-practice evidence and in consultation with subject-matter experts in human services training and professional development. Multiple stakeholder groups vetted the tool to ensure it captured the necessary elements of a comprehensive training system. It has subsequently been administered in approximately nine states. Please see [Appendix A](#) for the full assessment instrument.

To accomplish the training system assessment, Butler conducted 19 listening sessions with various Oregon DHS staff groups including:

- DHS Training Management
- DHS Trainers
- PSU Training Management
- PSU Trainers
- Program and District Managers
- Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) Management
- ORCAH Staff
- Supervisors
- Social Service Specialists 1's (SSS1)
- MAPS
- Business Support Staff

Listening sessions were conducted virtually by Zoom and guided by specific protocols relevant to participants' positions. For example, it would not be expected that a DHS staff person would know about training management or training evaluation, so questions for each participant group were tailored to areas where they might have knowledge and/or experience. Each listening session started with a statement about voluntary participation, confidentiality agreements, and the use of findings per Casey Family Program's Human Subjects Review Committee protocol.

Please see Table 1 for a listing of listening session group types, number of groups and interviews, and number of participants.

Table 1. Training System Assessment Listening Sessions

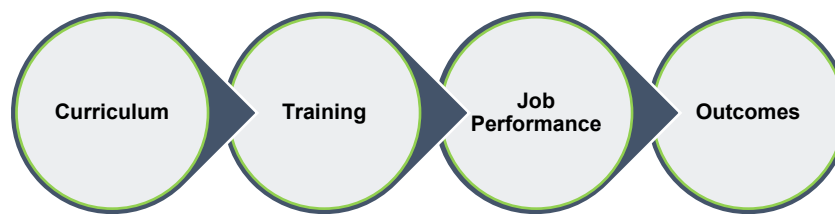
Type	# of Groups/Interviews	# of Participants
DHS Training Management	2	2
DHS Trainers	1	12
PSU Training Management	1	4
PSU Trainers	1	4
District/Program Managers	2	8
ORCAH Management	1	3
Supervisors	2	9
Social Service Specialist 1 (SSS1)	5	26
MAPS	1	11
ORCAH Staff	1	5
Business Support Staff	2	13
TOTAL	19	97

While it's well accepted that training is a key implementation driver for building practice skills of staff, there is less of understanding about the essential elements of effective training. Butler has identified a number of critical elements that are important to consider when designing curriculum to build staff knowledge and practice skills. Butler evaluated the Oregon training system's curricula using an assessment instrument (see [Appendix A](#)) that evaluates critical elements of curriculum from a rubric of key domains, Butler staff assessed materials used to deliver classroom (virtual and in-person) and online curricula. These domains included:

- Competencies/Learning Objectives
- Training Methods
- Curriculum Instructions
- Content
- Sequencing of Content
- Format
- Attributions
- Online Courses
- Transfer of Learning
- Training Evaluation

These domains ensure the most effective learning experiences, resulting in the best-prepared staff. See Figure 1 for a graphical representation of how better outcomes are ultimately achieved by starting with effective curriculum.

Figure 1. The Impact of Effective Curriculum



This report will present findings from the survey, training system assessment, and curricula review. Finally, based upon the findings from the quantitative and qualitative information, Butler will offer recommendations for training system improvement.

Survey Methods

The online survey for staff was administered in November 2020 using Qualtrics software from the Qualtrics Research Suite (© 2020). A total of 2,908 DHS staff (business and office staff, social service assistants, supervisors, office managers, social service specialists, and others) were sent an email that contained each staff member's unique link to the online survey. The "other" category included policy analysts and consultants. Prospective participants received an information sheet outlining the voluntary nature of participation, noting that responses would be

kept confidential and reported in aggregate without identifying information. Reminder emails were sent three times per week to encourage participation. The survey included approximately 39 closed-ended items and one open-ended item.

Of the 1,483 participants who completed the survey, 14.5% self-reported as business or office staff, 10% as supervisors or managers, 11% as social service assistants, 61.5% as social service specialists (SSS1s and SSS2s), and 2.8% as other (see Table 2). Six participants did not report their position.

Table 2. Assessment Survey Respondents by Position

	Business /Office Staff	Supervisors /Office Managers	Social Service Assistants	SSS1s and SSS2s	Other/ Did Not Report	Total
Invited Staff	529	274	372	1,653	80	2,908
Survey	215	148	163	909	48	1,483
Response Rates	40.6%	54.0%	43.8%	55.0%	60%	51.0%



Findings

The following section details findings from the survey, listening session discussions and interviews, and the curricula review assessment. Butler aggregated all findings, though when context is necessary, the group or origin of a finding or comment is identified.

Survey Findings

These findings provide details on the ratings of and experiences with training as conveyed by the Oregon child welfare staff who participated in the assessment and represent both the qualitative open-ended responses and the quantitative survey data. It should be noted that these findings represent the views of the 51% of staff who responded to the survey.

Participant Demographics

Of the 1,483 participants who completed the survey, 75% identified as white and 81% as female (see Figure 2). The average age of participants was 42. About 61% of participants have a bachelor's degree and 17% have a master's degree but 84% did not have a degree in social work. Most participants reported that this was their first full-time child welfare job (69%) and most participants work directly with children and/or families (74%). Approximately 21% of participants had been at the agency a year or less and 32% in their current position a year or less (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). On average, staff have worked at the agency for 7 years and in their current position for 4.5 years.

Figure 2. Participant Race and Gender

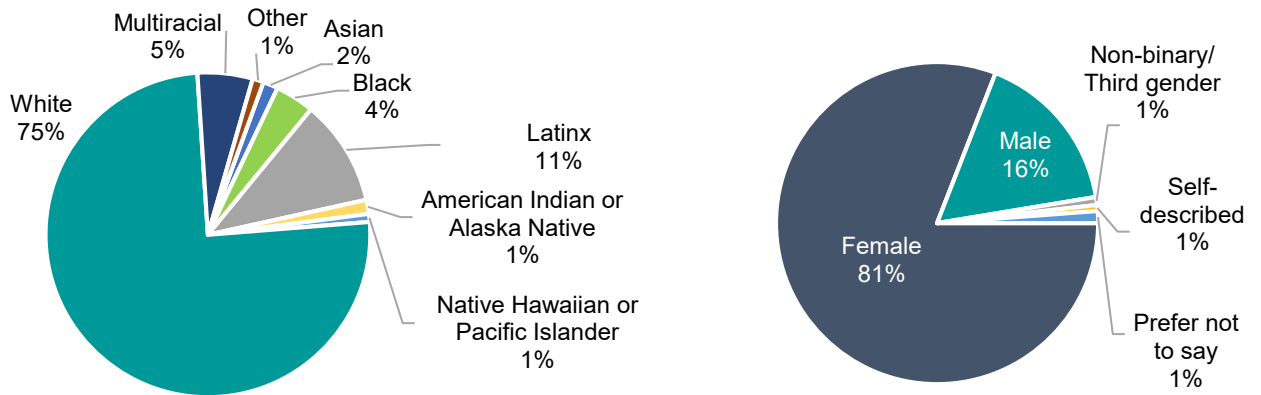


Figure 3. Participant Years in Current Position

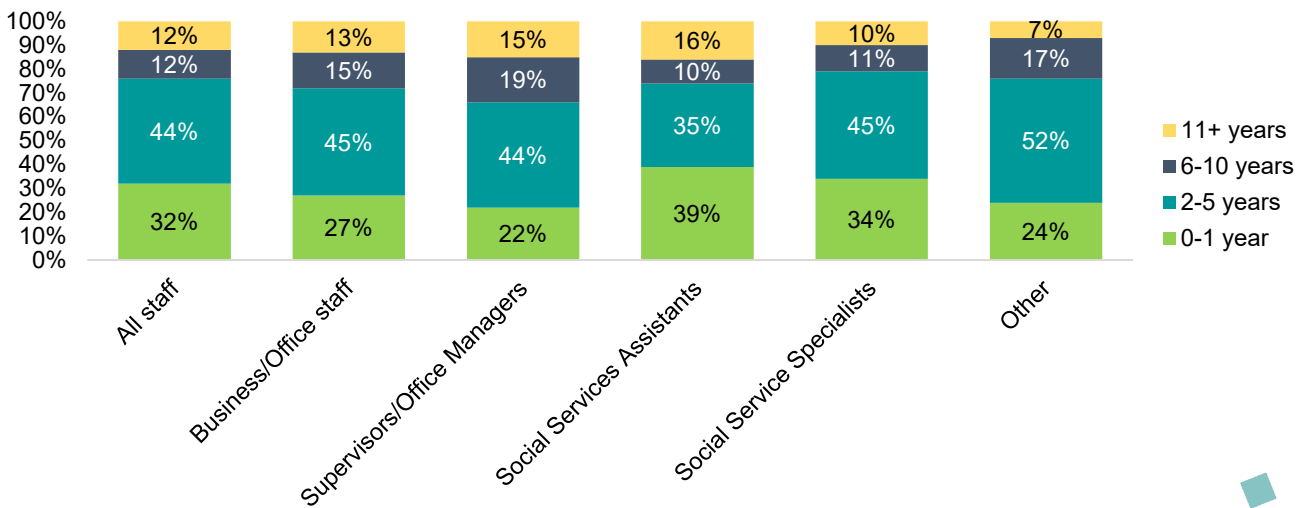
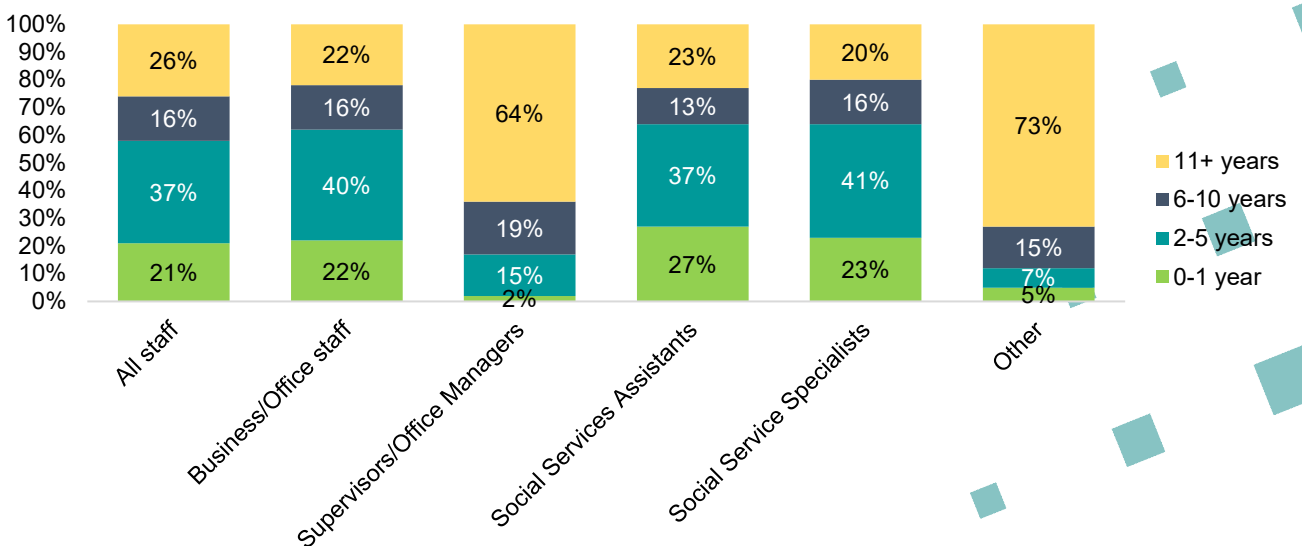


Figure 4. Participant Years at Agency



Training Perceptions

Quantitative data from the online staff survey were exported to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS®) where they were scored and analyzed. In this report, descriptive statistics are reported as percentages, averages (*M*), and standard deviations (*SD*). Standard deviation is an indicator of the extent to which scores spread out from the average (low standard deviations indicate that scores cluster near the mean while high standard deviations indicate a greater range of responses). Items were rated on a 4-point scale, from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 4 = “strongly agree” (see [Appendix B](#) for average ratings and standard deviations for survey items).

The survey included 15 items that asked staff to rate their perceptions with training experiences, particularly in the areas of their learning experiences, perceptions of the training system, and learning transfer and supports. Two items were presented to new SSS1 only (one year or less job experience) to assess their perceptions of Essential Elements of Child Welfare Practice (EE) training, so they received 17 items total. Responses indicated that 61% of new SSS1s and SSS2s felt their training prepared them for their job and 80.5% agreed that their supervisors made sure they engaged in on-ramp activities.

On average, ratings across all items in the measure indicated that staff had fairly mixed perceptions of training. Across all items, new staff reported higher ratings on average than experienced staff (see Figure 5). Also, higher percentages of new SSS1s and SSS2s agreed with the all training items in comparison with all other staff groups (see Table 3). The highest rated items indicated that staff agreed trainings were up to date (*M* = 2.96) and that trainings were based on best practices (*M* = 3.01). The lowest rated items pertained to family engagement (Items 6-8) and guidance on applying training to work (Items 14-16).

Family Engagement

Staff gave lower average ratings for items pertaining to engagement with all families (*M* = 2.56), ethnically and culturally diverse families (*M* = 2.54), and LGBTQIA families (*M* = 2.35). Further exploration found that job experience and race staff member identified as were related to ratings on the family engagement items. New staff members (one year or less of experience) reported significantly higher agreement that trainings taught them how to work with all families,¹ families of diverse cultures and ethnicities,² and LGBTQIA families.³ Staff members who identified as white reported significantly higher agreement (*M* = 2.57) that trainings taught them how to work with ethnically and culturally diverse families than staff who identified as people of color (*M* = 2.42).⁴

Lack of training around engaging with children and families was a common theme from open-ended responses. Staff felt that trainings taught policies and procedures but did not address

¹ $t(1,462) = 5.71, p \leq .001$

² $t(1,471) = 6.81, p \leq .001$

³ $t(1,459) = 5.54, p \leq .001$

⁴ $t(1,455) = 3.12, p = .002$

“how to manage a case load, how to deliver difficult information to people, how to ask questions to determine if parents have made internal change, how to do a protective capacity assessment, how to support foster parents navigate the system, etc.” In another example, one staff person felt “there is a disconnect between the work and the theoretical parts of training” and because of that “when I got out of training I was not prepared for my first case ... I was not properly trained on engagement with teens, how to manage explosive reactions, or really any of the special circumstances (ILP, BRS) that often come with teen cases.” For SSS1s only, 72% of them are in their first child welfare job. Since training is the key to preparing them for the job, family engagement, particularly “more training on working with diverse populations and how we need to take into account cultural considerations when it comes to child safety” is clearly a key area training needs to address.

Guidance on Applying Training to Work

Lower ratings were also given to items about guidance applying training to work. In comparison to new staff members’ ratings, experienced staff reported significantly lower ratings on feedback,⁵ supervisor guidance,⁶ or peer discussion⁷ on how to apply what they learned in trainings to their job. Although new caseworkers were more likely to agree they received feedback, supervisor guidance, or peer discussion, the overall ratings were still lower than other items. Despite the lack of guidance and support, 87% of staff reported that they applied training to their work ($M= 2.98$).

Open-ended responses identified several issues with learning transfer, because while trainings “are all relevant and important to our jobs, the issue is that there’s a lack of accountability when it comes to applying information learned in the trainings.” Although survey findings indicated a small majority of new SSS1s felt training prepared them for the job, open-ended responses indicated staff felt unprepared for practical aspects of the job, including one survey comment that “Essential Elements does nothing to teach you a major part of your job such as how to write an assessment from beginning to end, writing tips and tricks for court documents.” Staff felt that training did not provide them with the tools to apply their learning to their job: “I have learned more from seasoned workers on the job than I have in any of the offered trainings.” Other staff expressed that they felt training occurred too soon, before they had actual cases to apply what they learned while receiving guidance and support from trainers.

⁵ $t(1,467) = 6.54, p \leq .001$

⁶ $t(1,464) = 5.94, p \leq .001$

⁷ $t(1,467) = 4.16, p \leq .001$

Figure 5. Average Ratings on Training Perceptions by New and Experienced Staff

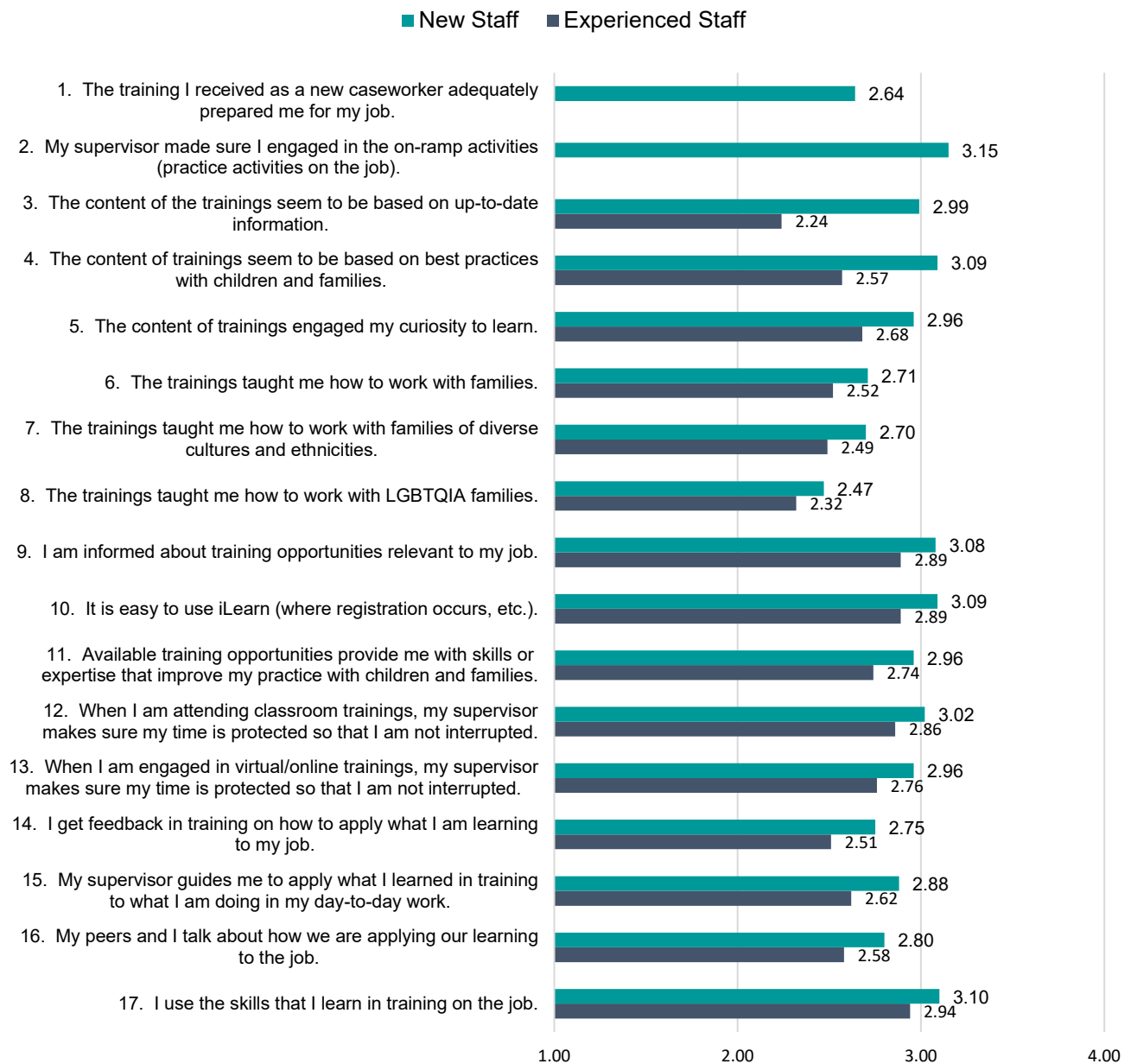


Table 3. Percentage Who Agreed on Training Perception Items by New and Experienced Staff

Percent of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the following items.	All staff (n= 1,430)	New SSS1s and SSS2s (n= 195)	Experienced SSS1s and SSS2s (n= 698)	New All Other Staff (n= 111)	Experienced All Other Staff (n= 418)
1. The training I received as a new caseworker adequately prepared me for my job.	58.7%	61%	N/A	N/A	N/A

2. My supervisor made sure I engaged in the on-ramp activities (practice activities on the job).	77%	80.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A
3. The content of the trainings seems to be based on up-to-date information.	84.5%	86.6%	86.8%	77.8%	81.4%
4. The content of trainings seems to be based on best practices with children and families.	87.7%	91.8%	87.2%	85%	87.1%
5. The content of trainings engaged my curiosity to learn.	68.8%	80%	63.4%	75.4%	70.5%
6. The trainings taught me how to work with families.	57.6%	73.8%	54.3%	51.8%	56.5%
7. The trainings taught me how to work with families of diverse cultures and ethnicities.	54.7%	70.3%	50.4%	50%	55.8%
8. The trainings taught me how to work with LGBTQIA families.	42.6%	52.8%	36.1%	40.4%	49%
9. I am informed about training opportunities relevant to my job.	82.3%	90.7%	85.8%	82.6%	72.6%
10. It is easy to use iLearn (where registration occurs, etc.).	80.8%	85.9%	80.5%	84.6%	77.7%
11. Available training opportunities provide me with skills or expertise that improve my practice with children and families.	74.1%	87%	71.5%	77.2%	71.3%
12. When I am attending classroom trainings, my supervisor makes sure my time is protected so that I am not interrupted.	74%	83.2%	72.3%	77.8%	71.3%
13. When I am engaged in virtual/online trainings, my supervisor makes sure my time is protected so that I am not interrupted.	68%	79.4%	66%	73.2%	64.3%
14. I get feedback in training on how to apply what I am learning to my job.	56.3%	73.7%	59.4%%	59.5%	49.6%
15. My supervisor guides me to apply what I learned in training to what I am doing in my day-to-day work.	62.4%	76.2%	63.1%	70.1%	52.6%
16. My peers and I talk about how we are applying our learning to the job.	60.8%	69.9%	57.6%	73.5%	58.2%

17. I use the skills that I learn in training on the job.	86.9%	90.8%	84.6%	91.7%	87.4%
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Training Needs Assessment

The survey also included a brief “needs assessment” section to better understand what staff were looking for regarding training formats, timing, and topics, among other areas. Sixty-five percent of staff indicated they had attended both required and supplemental trainings. When staff was asked how often they attended trainings, “a couple of times a year” (38%) and “every couple of months” (32%) received the most responses, which ranged from “never” to “a couple of times a month.”

Participants were asked to rate their interest in training topics and the importance of the training topics to their work on a 4-point scale. Participants reported they would like trainings on de-escalation, worker well-being, and family engagement and reported that these topics were important to their jobs (see Table 4). Trainings on documentation and organization/time management were also rated as important to their jobs but they rated training on those topics less important. In the table, higher ratings for topics are highlighted in green with the next level of high ratings in yellow.

Participants were also asked about their preferred training activities and ideal length for trainings. Participants preferred trainings to have activities related to case studies (see Table 5), though in open-ended responses, they requested more realistic scenarios rather than best-case scenarios for practical applicability to what they would face on the job. They indicated their ideal length for trainings was 4 hours for in-person classroom, 1 hour for in-person peer-to-peer, 2 hours for live virtual trainings, and 1 hour for all other online trainings (see Table 6). The options most-often selected are highlighted in green with second-best options highlighted in yellow in the table.

Table 4. Participant Rating of Training Topics and Importance

Training Topics	Would like training on this topic Not at all (1) - Very Much (4)			This topic's importance to my job Not at all (1) - Very Important (4)		
	Number of responses	Average rating	Standard deviation	Number of responses	Average rating	Standard deviation
De-Escalation	1,430	3.12	0.94	1,366	3.33	0.91
Worker well-being	1,423	3.07	0.98	1,367	3.47	0.78
Family engagement	1,419	3.01	1.01	1,369	3.40	0.99
Worker safety	1,418	2.94	0.98	1,359	3.28	0.94
Interviewing	1,427	2.89	1.03	1,367	3.22	1.04
Documentation	1,426	2.88	0.99	1,367	3.55	0.75
Oregon Safety Model	1,408	2.84	0.99	1,356	3.31	0.95
Change management	1,405	2.74	1.0	1,342	3.04	0.96

Organization/time management	1,432	2.69	1.11	1,375	3.54	0.74
Other	189	3.00	1.28	216	3.32	1.11

Table 5. Participant Selection of Training Activities

Training Activities	
I prefer the following activities during training (select all that apply)	Number of times activity was selected
Case studies (application of knowledge and skills to case study)	1,168
Lecture	808
Problem-based learning (activities are participant-led)	722
Skills practice	637
Small group activities	535
Partner activities	302
Homework to apply learning	202

Table 6. Participant Ratings for Ideal Length of Trainings

Participant Rating of Ideal Length of Training						
Ideal length of training for:	Number of responses	Length				
Classroom (in-person)	1,475	2 hours (25.1%)	4 hours (36.3%)	1 day (27.1%)	2 days (6.2%)	Other (5.4%)
Virtual (live)	1,469	1 hour (21.3%)	2 hours (45.9%)	3 hours (12.1%)	4 hours (18%)	Other (2.7%)
Online self-paced	1,467	1 hour (61.8%)	2 hours (25.4%)	3 hours (3.3%)	4 hours (6.7%)	Other (2.7%)
Webinars	1,466	30 minutes (19%)	60 minutes (50.2%)	90 minutes (20.3%)	120 minutes (8.7%)	Other (1.8%)
Virtual peer-to-peer learning	1,459	30 minutes (21.8%)	60 minutes (47.6%)	90 minutes (17.3%)	120 minutes (10.5%)	Other (2.9%)
In-person peer-to-peer learning	1,461	1 hour (47.9%)	2 hours (33%)	3 hours (5.1%)	4 hours (9.6%)	Other (4.4%)

Training System Assessment Findings

Overall Strengths

The next section details findings using the *Training System Assessment Tool*. Participants of the group listening sessions identified many strengths of the training system. They most often noted the experience and skill of the trainers. Most people agreed the trainers facilitate trainings in a way that makes for a positive learning experience, citing expertise and flexibility as key strengths. Many participants in the listening session group expressed appreciation that trainers had field experience and could provide context and examples from their lived experience. They found the trainers to be credible and this helped to instill confidence in the participants that they are learning what they need to know. Many participants also expressed appreciation for the diversity of the trainer pool, including former foster and adoptive parents.

Leadership commitment to training was also frequently identified as a strength of the training system. The training system has been in place for a long time and has been implemented in various ways over the years, yet the commitment to ensuring workforce development remains a consistent priority. Even in the midst of a pandemic, and ensuing challenges, leadership at both PSU and DHS demonstrated commitment to maintaining quality training for the Oregon child welfare workforce by ensuring training staff had the tools they needed to successfully move classroom training to a virtual environment. One listening session group participant commended the training system for its “ability to maintain the integrity of the training as we migrated to an online an electronic environment.”

While the full breadth of training offerings has not been available over this past year (due to budgeting reductions) the variety of trainings that are available was also identified as an overall strength. From the mix of classroom (when not experiencing a pandemic), online, and web-based training to the different training topics, many listening session participants identified this variety as a strength. Listening session group participants also identified the breadth of topics included in the Essential Elements(DHS’s initial training for all frontline staff) trainings as a strength.

The next sections analyze Oregon’s training system using the training system assessment tool and provides aggregated responses to some additional questions asked during the listening sessions and interviews. Please see [Appendix A](#) for the full instrument, including the indicators for each section.

Assessment Area: Management

The management domain looks at how the training system is managed from a macro perspective and addresses indicators including: the existence of a comprehensive training plan, needs assessments, the ability to fulfill various roles, connections between the training program and executive leadership and the human resources department, the availability of a functioning learning management system, marketing efforts to communicate about training offerings, and involvement of external and internal stakeholders in the training system.

A training plan has the potential to tie together the various training system components and provide operational guidance. At this point in time, neither PSU nor DHS have an individual or joint training plan.

Periodic needs assessments also provide the opportunity to obtain feedback from the field and address training needs accordingly. Currently no formal training needs assessments are in place though this assessment did generate a list of additional training topics (see the [survey findings](#) and [listening session findings](#)).

Training management also explores training's place within the agency. Most positively, the workforce development deputy director is on the agency's executive management team and this elevates attention to training. A defined link to human resources (HR) is also thought to result in better training preparation,⁸ though no such connection exists at this time and training and HR departments operate separately. One person suggested that HR could provide turnover rates and forecast recruitment needs and this information may result in better planning for training and more accurate budget predictions.

Training management ensures the training system attends to, and staff fill, the various roles necessary in a training system. The National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA), publishes a "[Keys to Success](#)" document, which includes a list of these roles as well as specific competencies required for each. DHS staff said they rely on those functions being provided externally by PSU, especially related to communications, evaluation, and instructional design. This occurs because DHS has limited flexibility with their funding to hire for these functions. PSU staff expressed confidence that these roles are fully attended to in their program. It was also noted that while the DHS training department has received funding to hire staff, they are only temporary positions and will need to be reauthorized for funding which does hamper the morale and long-term sustainability of the DHS training department.

Effective marketing offers another indicator of training management. Currently, email blasts across the agency convey the training opportunities and these are perceived as insufficient. One person said, "We don't strategically leverage all of the trainings that we offer."

Staff gave the learning management system, iLearn, mixed reviews. Some thought it was easy to use and provided good training records but others experienced issues navigating it, such as finding the relevant training(s) for their professional development. From the survey, 19% felt iLearn was not easy to use. Lessons from using the iLearn system can inform the preferred functionality of the new workforce development platform, WorkDay Learning.

Another factor related to effective management is the involvement of external and internal stakeholders. DHS training management recognizes the need for stakeholders to have continuous engagement and that they can do better job at this. To that end, DHS is currently building an intentional infrastructure for a Training Advisory Committee. Members will be charged with going back to their constituents and gathering feedback from them.

⁸ American Public Human Services Association. (2016). *Human Resources as a Strategic Partner for Health and Human Services*.

Assessment Area: Training Array

A strong training array offers new and ongoing training for staff at all levels including clerical, worker, supervisor, and manager.

Generally speaking, listening session participants felt that, prior to the pandemic, there was a good mix of in-person, online, and web-based training offered. Many participants shared that they prefer in-person training because it provides an opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the state. Overall, participants reported a need for more refresher trainings for frontline staff, especially around the topics trained in Essential Elements. Many participants also shared they wish there was more advanced training available, especially around current issues facing the field. Additionally, many staff in the listening sessions lamented that there is no opportunity for real professional development. One listening session group participant shared, “Professional development opportunities are important, and make you feel like you are [being] invested in. I don’t think the state has figured out how to make this kind of investment in people.”

Clerical staff (known as office managers/business support staff) receive a minimal amount of training related to how to do their job. One listening session group participant shared, “I did not receive any training, you just figure it out as you go...it wasn’t pleasant.” Survey results indicated that business support/other staff felt significantly less informed about training opportunities relevant to their job compared to SSS1s (Business/Other Staff $M = 2.73$; SSS1s $M = 3.00$, $t(1098) = 5.99$, $p \leq .001$). There was a general sense among many listening session participants that not training support staff is a missed opportunity, and staff in these positions should play a more active role in helping achieve the mission and vision of the agency. Another listening session group participant shared, “Our business support staff don’t have much support, beyond local access to training. Some of them have identified that they don’t feel acknowledged or valued by the agency. Our business staff could do a better job if there was better understanding of the work done by the agency and about the work that business staff do.”

Essential Elements (core) training for SSS1’s occurs during their first year of employment. This training consists of web-based, classroom, and simulation learning; however, due to the pandemic the classroom portion of this training has been delivered via a virtual platform. Of all the staff trained by the training system, SSS1s receive the most training. Essential Elements is viewed as being comprehensive, and staff especially appreciate opportunities for hands-on training experiences like the simulation trainings. Limited ongoing training is offered to SSS1s, partially due to budget constraints over the past year. Many listening session group participants expressed frustration that when ongoing trainings are offered, space for attendance is limited so it is hard to get a seat to attend the training.

In 2019 the State of Oregon moved to a centralized reporting system, which came to be called Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH), and the training for all intake/screening staff was moved to that program. Due to a history of concerns around inconsistency in screening practices, a diligent effort was made to ensure ORCAH staff receive comprehensive training on the state’s screening policies and practices. This training is provided by DHS ORCAH program management and trainers. ORCAH delivers a screener training academy on a cohort basis,

which includes a pre-academy onboarding process, mandatory online training, and three weeks of classroom training. Additionally, advanced training is provided at the unit level (screening teams) on a monthly basis and focuses on topics that help deepen staff understanding of child abuse and neglect issues and/or policy and procedure. One screening staff shared, “Since I’ve been at ORCAH, I’ve received the most helpful and applicable training to do my job”.

DHS provides a two-week, foundational training for supervisors. That being said, there is a sense that training for supervisors is inadequate. One listening session group participant shared, “I am a new supervisor and I haven’t received any training on how to be a supervisor.” Another listening session group participant shared, “Onboarding of supervisors needs to be more intentional...should be about the administrative, as well as the supportive and educational, aspects of the role. If [you] don’t onboard supervisors well, it’s hard for us to onboard our staff”. There is also a feeling that supervisors feel disconnected from what frontline staff are being trained on, and that training for supervisors should be brought down to the field level, not just the “big picture stuff” (e.g., how to communicate with staff, how to have difficult conversations).

Program, district managers and senior and deputy directors do not receive any formal training related to their role. Oregon Management Project training, called TOMP, is provided, but the training is not perceived by them as useful for performing the role of a program or district manager. One listening session participant shared, “TOMP trainings is about learning to manage managers, document it and have feedback sessions...if I had one shot at delivering training to upper-level management, it would not be this.” Mentoring is often the path by which individuals in these roles learn how to do their job. One listening session group participant shared, “As a new program manager (PM), I look to other PM’s to help me know what potholes to avoid.”

Assessment Area: Infrastructure

The infrastructure domain looks at mechanisms such as policies and funding and how they are built into the system to make it run effectively. This also manifests in the organizational culture and climate around training.

The child welfare training system in Oregon has been in place for a very long time. There is a real appreciation for the need for workforce training within DHS and at the local level. There is support for staff to attend training, although as in many places, workload and staffing issues often make it difficult for staff to attend. It is especially difficult for SSS1’s and screening staff to get away to attend training, due to caseload demands. Without a formal plan in place to provide coverage for staff while they are in training, staff frequently have to cancel their training registration or are required to attend to case-related issues while at training. This makes it difficult for staff to truly engage in the learning experience. One listening session participant shared, “Sometimes I feel guilty when I go to training because it gets hard for everyone else when someone is gone.”

There are no statewide policies around training-related issues. State statute requires child welfare staff to have a certain amount of training around child abuse and neglect, but there are no formal policies in place at DHS. Historically, training partners at PSU have taken ownership

of the training policies related to classroom management (e.g., attendance, participant engagement in training); however, these policies are not codified in a procedure manual and nothing similar exists for DHS training.

According to some listening session participants, an adequate budget exists for the training, although rules around how the funds are used make it difficult to build DHS program infrastructure. DHS staff have decision-making authority about how the funding may be used to train the child welfare workforce; however, more funds are required to adequately staff the program at DHS. Training funds are spent based on training needs, versus a strategic approach to workforce development. The program could benefit from a financial model that allows for more flexibility and a focus on creating a robust training system infrastructure that supports child welfare professionals across the state.

Assessment Area: Instructional Design

The instructional design domain looks at the use of a competency-based approach, presence of a curriculum, use of varied training formats, use of technology, and ongoing needs assessments. Effective instructional design offers thorough information and attends to adult learning principles, so fidelity to curriculum is attained and learners acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.

Comprehensive curricula should include full lesson plans including instructions for the trainer on how to present the material, content to be trained (i.e., words trainer should use to communicate the concepts), PowerPoints, and participant manuals to supplement learning. PSU does have full curricula to guide their course offerings all using the same format, so trainers have a consistent expectation of using the curriculum and can be assessed for fidelity to the curriculum.

DHS staff are still in the process of developing their approach and currently do not have formal curricula to guide trainings or they use consultants to provide the training. One DHS staff person said, “We’re really struggling with instructional design and cannot connect training to outcomes as we don’t have fidelity to anything.” In the listening sessions, DHS training management recognize that this area is ripe for capacity-building. Additionally, they would like to see the use of a standardized template across the training system.

Both DHS and PSU offer training in a variety of formats including online, webinars, and in-person trainings. Across the board, listening session and survey participants thought there was a good mix of delivery methods. When asked about their preference for training format, staff placed classroom format as their first option 36% of the time followed by live virtual format (which was placed as first option 27% of the time). In open-ended responses, staff explained their preference for the live virtual format to decrease the need for long-distance, overnight travel for some classroom trainings. As one staff member reported in the listening session, “During COVID I have had access to much more training since it is all online.” Due to the pandemic, all classroom trainings have pivoted to virtual, synchronous presentations where all training participants are present at the same time and are guided by a trainer. Both groups acknowledge the tremendous effort and success they have had in transitioning to the virtual platforms.

Several groups mentioned the unavailability of in-person classes prior to the pandemic. Since training is mandatory, this interferes with their ability to get the training they need to start their positions and has a negative, cascading effect.

Since the pandemic, classes have been offered virtually. Some listening session participants cautioned against allowing too many participants as that interferes with engagement. They encouraged the use of breakout rooms.

PSU staff also noted they can deliver training remotely even with in-person classes as they set up cameras around the room and use multiple engagement strategies, such as using the web-based application Kahoot. Listening session participants said they appreciated the remote training offerings so they did not have to drive to Salem. That said, several participants noted that “classroom training is best for engagement and learning.”

Formally, competency-based training means that competency statements articulate the knowledge and skills related to the job and that learners will be able to perform those at the training’s conclusion. Butler uses the interpretation that learning objectives refer to various dimensions of the competencies, and when learning objectives have been achieved, so has the competency. According to PSU staff, they do use a competency-based approach, as they start with competencies to develop the learning objectives for the curriculum. That said, no competencies were found in any curriculum. The supervisory transfer-of-learning guide does articulate the competencies and the corresponding training content, and this information would be a good addition to the curriculum to make it truly competency-based. According to DHS staff, they do not perceive any training as competency-based, though some thought maybe PSU’s training might be.

Good instructional design also means that curriculum is assessed every two years and updated accordingly. PSU and DHS undertook a massive curriculum redesign about four years ago, but it hasn’t been updated since then. DHS says their training is not assessed at this point in time.

Assessment Area: Trainer Management

Effective trainer management means that trainers are fully trained to facilitate training, observed by training management to ensure fidelity to curricula, and offered opportunities for continued professional development.

PSU has its own trainer development program that PSU staff believes adequately prepares them and offers opportunities for ongoing feedback. A supervisor regularly observes each trainer approximately twice per year.

For DHS staff, no trainer preparation is offered. Opportunities for observation and feedback are rare for trainers. There is a perception among training staff that there is no formal process for onboarding, regular performance review, fidelity assessments, or ongoing professional development. While some remarked during the listening sessions about the availability of courses on presentation skills and curriculum development and design, these are not offered regularly. Typically, onboarding happens by pairing new trainers with high-performing trainers.

Feedback may also come from other trainers. As a result of the lack of fidelity and sufficient preparation, new trainees may not always get the same training due to trainer differences.

DHS training staff also acknowledge that when consultants conduct training, they do so independently, without using a DHS template or process.

Another dimension of trainer management is to provide ongoing professional development for staff relevant to their individual positions. Both PSU and DHS trainers noted the lack of ongoing professional development. PSU staff has been able to attend conferences in the past but does not think that opportunity will continue due to budget cuts. DHS staff were able to attend the virtual NSDTA conference this year and appreciated the opportunity and stated they want and need much more professional development. PSU has offered their trainers quarterly professional development meetings in the past and they've contracted with Bob Pike training for instructional design.

Assessment Area: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

This domain assesses whether the training sufficiently addresses issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion including race, ethnicity, LGBTQIA+, and persons with different abilities. PSU staff said they are “hyper-focused” on diversity issues and have done much to increase their knowledge and attention to DEI issues including engaging in a book group, open dialogues, and purposefully infusing DEI into curricula and trainee interactions. PSU also provides a statement on racial equity at the beginning of each training. A DHS staff person noted that they have a “brave spaces group” as part of their diversity group.

In terms of training attendance, it was noted that in-person trainings were hard on persons with mobility issues, while online training was challenging for persons with different hearing and visual abilities.

DHS staff acknowledged during the listening sessions that efforts were made to include DEI, but that these often fall short of expectations. As one participant noted: “Historically, we haven't supported DEI efforts, we are far better than we have been in the past. Another person said part of the issue is the lack of diversity in the staff who conduct and manage the trainings. Another said “it's not being ignored, but it's not enough.” One person suggested it also be addressed further upstream in the hiring process. In particular, the training system does not sufficiently address issues related to LGBTQIA+ or persons with different abilities.

Assessment Area: Transfer of Learning

Transfer of learning means that participants can apply the knowledge and skills learned in training to their job. This assessment looked at perceptions of transfer of learning among stakeholders, as well as structures in place to support transfer of learning, including preparation and expectation setting, alignment of curriculum with job needs, and support from peers and supervisors to apply new skills to the job.

A major barrier to transfer of learning is the perception that the Essential Elements training does not reflect actual practice. One participant reported that they were told by a colleague, “We'll teach you the real stuff after you get back from training” indicating that skills needed on the job would not be learned in the classroom. This sentiment was echoed across the listening

sessions by staff at all levels, with other comments like, “Training doesn’t always reflect what really happens in the field.” The latest Office of Reporting, Research, Analytics, and Implementation (ORRAI) engagement survey had an item related to perceptions about whether training prepared staff to do their jobs and 47.9% disagreed that training prepared them and 39% agreed with the statement indicating a widespread belief that training does not prepare staff for their jobs. Results from the survey found slightly better percentages, where 62% of new SSS1s (one year or less of experience) agreed that training adequately prepared them for the job and 38% disagreed. One person noted there would need to be a significant cultural shift to help staff move away from this way of thinking about the Essential Elements training.

Transfer of learning can also be inhibited when caseworkers get assigned to cases when they yet to complete training. While new caseworkers are not supposed to carry cases, due to workload and turnover, they might be assigned cases anyway while still in training. In one recent study in another state, caseworkers who were assigned cases while still in training were more likely to leave the agency within six months,⁹ suggesting the importance of minimizing case assignment during the training period. In one open-ended survey response an experienced staff member shared that “once new caseworkers start taking cases, their protected training time ends. This can be a time when training can be most impactful as caseworkers can codify their knowledge and retain it in context. They can get overloaded with cases and no longer feel they can take time for training.”

DHS supervisors noted there’s an expectation they be available even while in training and this inhibits their transfer of learning. One person noted, “There isn’t enough support for supervisors or caseworkers to go to training and just focus on training.” Another DHS staff person said, “Supervisors are compliance monitors, not part of a robust transfer-of-learning system.” This too might be the result of heavy caseloads and turnover. It should be noted that the new SSS1s all expressed strong positive regard for their supervisors and the support they received.

PSU developed a 215-page manual, *Supervisor’s Guide to Caseworker Training: Supervisor Actions and Coaching Supports to Enhance Professional Development and Transfer of Learning*, to support supervisors and managers as they assist new caseworkers in transferring their learning. The guide includes:

- Descriptions for all sessions
- Learning objectives and key content for all sessions
- Competencies and competency components for all sessions
- Session supports for supervisors
- Supervisor actions and coaching applications

While this manual contains a wealth of information and best-practice strategies for promoting transfer, it does not seem to be known about or used by the target audience of DHS supervisors. During a listening session, one person said, “SS1s have a clear plan for transfer of learning, but it has fallen pretty flat...the challenge has been they get to their branches and

⁹ Wilke, D. J., Rakes, S., & Randolph, K. A. (2019). Predictors of early departure among recently hired child welfare workers. *Social Work, 64*(3), 188-197.

they get assigned a caseload. Supervisors are not following through with transfer of learning.” The MAPS staff have taken on many of the transfer-of-learning duties, but it is still insufficient. This gap indicates significant issues with implementation and potentially supervisory workload.

MAPS staff take primary responsibility for supporting new caseworkers in the field and use Onramps for onboarding. New caseworkers with less than a year’s experience in the field felt supported by MAPS but could have used more support from them.

PSU trainers used to go out in the field with caseworkers to observe but that no longer occurs. PSU lamented the loss of this activity as it provided trainers with current knowledge of the field and new caseworkers with one-on-one coaching.

Supervisors also have a responsibility to support their new caseworkers in the field. They are provided customized portfolios for each trainee that details their engagement in the training, results of assessments, and videos of their simulations. Multiple groups noted that while the intent of these portfolios is positive and should result in better transfer, the reality is far different, with one person noting, “I cannot even say that any of our supervisors [are] even meeting with the workers about that.” According to listening session participants, the portfolios often arrive weeks after the training and supervisors simply do not have the time to even open the portfolios to review them with new trainees. This also indicates issues with implementation as the strategy is a good one, but the ability to put it into practice is lacking. MAPS staff said that supervisors leave it to them, but they don’t have access to the portfolios since they contain performance information.

Assessment Area: Training Evaluation

A rigorous training evaluation system is guided by a plan and evaluates training on four levels: satisfaction, knowledge, transfer, and outcomes. Evaluation instruments follow good survey construction, and the information collected informs the system standards and processes.

DHS Training Evaluation

Through the Child Welfare Partnership (CWP) with DHS, PSU conducts evaluations on the mandatory trainings they deliver to newly-hired social service specialists 1 (SSS1). Through participant evaluation forms, they collect data that includes pre/post self-assessments of knowledge gained as well as participants’ assessment of trainer knowledge, learning objectives met, helpfulness of materials, amount of interaction/engagement, overall training rating, and content usefulness. Participants also share any technology challenges they experienced and are asked for open-ended feedback about what they like and what can be improved about the training. According to PSU’s document outlining what training evaluation data are currently being collected, participants are asked to complete a post-training knowledge test for Essential Elements of Child Welfare Practice and pre/post assessments for Preparing and Presenting for Success in Court (PPSC) and Well-Being Needs of Children and Young Adults (WB), which are part of the required training for all SSS1s, though it is unclear whether they are evaluated on Family Conditions. The same evaluation is used for the Certification and Adoption (C&A) training. Aggregated data from the evaluation are reported quarterly and used for federal reporting and program improvement plans. It is unclear how the data are typically used, but tracking these data over time (the quarterly and biennium

averages) could shed light on where the greatest learning gains are achieved. The data can also offer insights on which training components represent challenge areas for new caseworkers (both before and after training), which provides opportunities to remediate or supplement caseworker knowledge, if needed.

Up until this year when the training contract ended, evaluation of the ongoing professional development *Advanced Training for Child Welfare Staff and the Supervisory Training* (modules 1 – 6) was conducted by PSU and utilized standard evaluation forms that included participants' perceptions of knowledge gain, satisfaction with training, and usefulness of content. Evaluations for supervisor conferences and quarterly meetings are conducted by DHS, usually via SurveyMonkey. These evaluations vary in length and format but tend to ask for examples of what was learned, how to improve upon the session, relevance of the topic, whether there are areas supervisors need additional training or support, and ratings of presenters.

When intakes became centralized, the *Screening Training Academy* was formed, which consists of 13 general modules (such as *Customer Service and Engagement* and *Screening Decision-Making and Sensitive Cases*) as well as six modules related to the relevant technology. The evaluation for the screening training includes self-assessments of knowledge gained as well as participants' assessment of trainer knowledge, amount of interaction/engagement, how well the technology worked, overall training rating, useful aspects of the training, and what can be improved. A similar evaluation is employed for the *Mandatory Reporter Train-the-Trainer*. The data from both evaluations can be used for training improvements, though it is unclear whether that is how the data are used.

Individual Data

At various times across trainings, PSU collects demographic data from participants, including race, gender, age, language, education, and work-related demographics such as previous experience. It is unclear how the data are used; for example, whether they are used in reporting to describe the sample from whom evaluation results are presented or whether the results are ever disaggregated by some of those demographic groupings and looked at separately to better understand who is benefitting most from the training.

Data are also collected and used to provide individualized tracking of progress and growth in staff portfolios of learning and professional development. Portfolios are shared with participants, their supervisor, and the program manager after completion of the EE, PPSC, and web-based trainings, which include knowledge tests. In addition to knowledge test results, the portfolios contain caseworker self-assessments of learning and simulation assessments for parent interview and child interview (this includes simulation self-reflections, links to their simulation videos, and assessment tools for supervisors). Work samples are also collected for EE (e.g., Neglect Pre-Assignment, Conditions of Return, Expected Outcomes) and PPSC (e.g., petition allegation language worksheet). Participants' case notes will be a source of data starting in January 2021.

Overall

Generally speaking, the evaluation tools are concise, well-worded, and collect relevant and useful data. It is unclear whether data are being utilized for continuous quality improvement (CQI) purposes, but certainly have the potential to be used in that manner.

In addition to training evaluations, data are also used for individuals' professional development and growth. The information kept in staff portfolios offers staff the opportunity to work together with their supervisor on challenge areas and provides a structure for supervisors to target support and conversations in a manner that can best help their staff grow.

Organizational Support for Training

In addition to the training system assessment domains, listening session participants were asked about other barriers to training.

Support for training varies by geographic district. Listening session group participants expressed that, generally speaking, attending training is supported by agency leadership, although many felt that there is a disconnect between managers and frontline staff when it comes to training. One listening session group participant shared that in their experience "Managers focus on what's not being done. There is a 'naughty list' that comes out, and if your name is on there, it means you haven't done the training and you'll get called out [f]or it." When there is support for staff to attend training, workload and staffing issues often make it difficult for staff to attend. It is especially difficult for SSS1's and screening staff to get away to attend training due to the demands of their caseloads. Without a formal plan in place to provide coverage for staff while they are in training, staff frequently have to cancel their training registration or are required to attend to case-related issues while at training. This makes it difficult for staff to truly engage in the learning experience. One listening session participant shared, "It should not feel like a burden to go to training."

Barriers to Training

Over the past year, funding challenges have prevented PSU from offering the wide array of trainings that are usually available for staff and supervisors. Budget limitations mean that most, if not all, ongoing and advanced level trainings are not currently being offered. Additional training for supervisors has also been cut (e.g., coaching, clinical supervision) as well as training for caregivers. One listening session group participant shared, "Essentially this training has just disappeared. [We] went from a robust delivery to virtually nothing."

Many staff identified having to travel to Salem to attend training as a barrier to attending training. For some staff, a one-day training can turn into a three-day affair when they factor in travel to and from Salem. When new staff are hired and have to travel to Salem for several days in a row, it requires them to find alternate support/care for their personal and family responsibilities.

Additional Topics

Overall, participants reported a need for more refresher trainings for frontline staff, especially around the topics trained in Essential Elements. Many participants also shared they wish there

was more advanced training offered especially around current issues facing the field. Curriculum for advanced training does exist; however, due to budget-related issues these trainings are not currently being offered. Many listening session staff lamented the fact that there is no opportunity for real professional development. One listening session group participant shared, “Professional development opportunities are important, and make you feel like you are [being] invested in. I don’t think the state has figured out how to make this kind of investment in people.”

Groups were asked to identify additional topics they would like to have training on. These included:

- Engagement
- Implicit bias
- Advanced training on diversity, equity, inclusion
- Specialized training on organization, writing, and documentation
- Court/Providing Testimony
- ORKIDS
- Refresher on the OSM
- Motivational interviewing
- Beginning, intermediate, and advanced training on practical skills
- Worker safety
- Working with families with disabilities
- Mental health
- Working with sex offenders
- Substance use and the impact of use on child safety

Agency-University Partnership

DHS and PSU have had a training partnership for more than thirty years and this has been a strength as well as presented challenges. The thirty-year partnership has resulted in a wealth of curriculum resources and an opportunity to tap into the knowledge the university offers. Over the last few years, the partnership has been challenged by leadership changes, funding issues, overwhelming training needs, and an overall lack of communication and trust; as one listening session participant stated, “We’ve been in crisis mode.” Individually, staff from both partners have a high regard for their individual leaders and feel this has helped them during these trying times. The DHS leadership changes have resulted in perceptions that there is a lack of institutional knowledge about the training system. Both DHS and PSU staff expressed these issues in their listening sessions with comments like, “They say they value us, but then their actions say otherwise.” They each perceive a lack of flexibility in the partnership.

A lack of communication exists at multiple levels. For example, DHS training staff have not gone through the Essential Elements training (unless they had a previous caseworker) and PSU staff have not attended any DHS trainings. Apparently, there used to be quarterly meetings, but these have gone away. The two training systems are also hampered by the inability to easily share all curricula files in a central place. MAPS staff said that they do not know what is being trained in Essential Elements though they’ve asked for curricula.

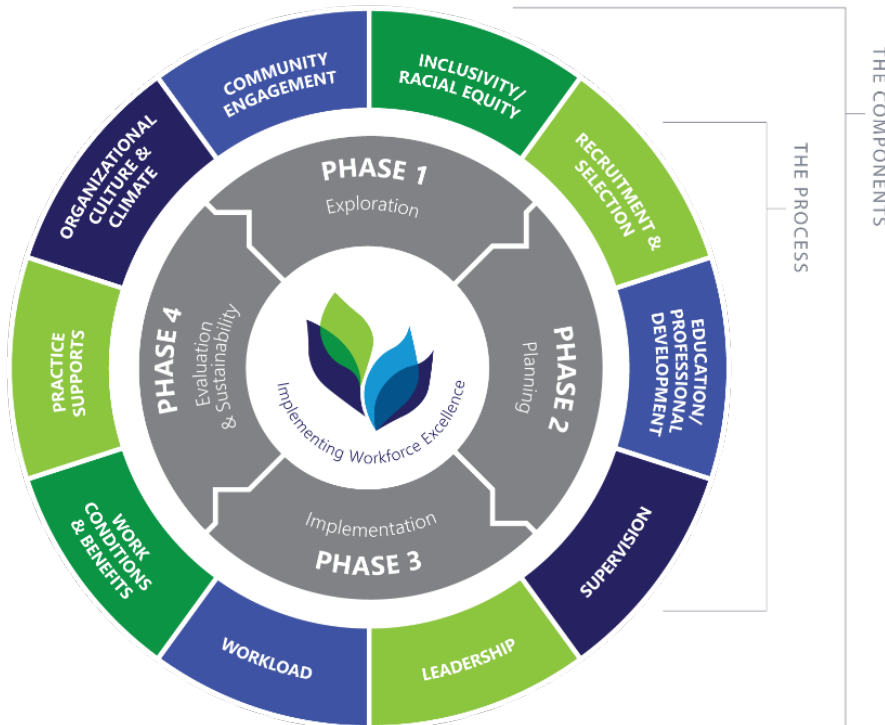
Training to the Oregon Safety Model (OSM)

The OSM was initially rolled out in 2007, and 2014 was the last time a refresher training was offered across the workforce. Most listening session group participants agreed that training to the OSM happens in the context of various training curricula. For example, if staff go to a training on intimate partner violence, elements of the OSM will be woven into the training content. There is currently no stand-alone OSM training being offered outside of an introductory online module included in the Essential Elements training. There is a general sense that staff across the workforce know what the OSM is but may not be able to articulate very well how it informs their practice. One listening session participant shared, “I guess the training works because they can tell you the six domains, but they can’t have a conversation with you about it.” Many listening session participants shared that truly understanding the OSM requires experience working in the field, so you have a mental model framework to apply the framework to, as one listening session group participant shared, “for people to get the OSM requires people to really understand the work.” Some listening session participants expressed concern that the training related to the OSM did not provide enough practice application, and caseworkers did not interact with the content enough in training (i.e., not enough opportunities to apply the learning). Of the SSS1s who responded to the survey, 67% reported they would like training on OSM and 89% felt it was important to their job.

Workforce Development

Training is nested in the broader context of workforce development and is just one component of this larger effort. Butler helped craft the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute’s revised [Workforce Development Framework \(WDF\)](#) and recommends adopting this comprehensive framework to guide workforce development efforts (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. NCWWI Workforce Development Framework



The WDF explains the key elements of an effective workforce and provides evidence-informed strategies to develop each element. The WDF’s inner circle describes the *Process* for assessing organizational workforce gaps and implementing workforce strategies, while the outer circle identifies the *Components*. Together, the *Process* and *Components* compose the Workforce Development Framework (WDF) developed by NCWWI. Organizations can use this framework to develop a comprehensive approach to improving the health of their workforce.

Several issues were brought up during the listening sessions that aren’t specifically related to training, but certainly impact the training system including:

- High turnover
- Heavy workloads
- Recruitment (due to the high turnover)

The ORRAI survey conducted in 2020 also shed light on additional workforce issues. It should be noted that the survey’s response rate was 29%, tempering widespread applicability of the findings. Those who did respond noted significant time pressures to keep working (73.8% in agreement), not enough time to do the job (51.7%), feeling frustrated by the job (57.5%), and being emotionally drained by the job (66.1%). Additionally, 35.8% noted they feel they are personally experiencing the trauma of clients and 59.4% believed that work interferes with family or personal time. These findings indicate issues with the WDF components of workload and organizational culture and climate.

Workforce efforts can also mitigate these issues (e.g., time pressures, secondary trauma), and Oregon staff have identified elements that are working well including supervision. Several of the new caseworker groups stated their supervisors substantively supported them while in training. Additionally, these listening session participants said that agency leadership supports training. Other, more experienced staff in the listening sessions thought that management does not sufficiently support training.

Recommendations From Listening Sessions

Listening session participants were also asked what they would like to see happen to improve the training system and offered a variety of recommendations.

Relevant to the training program:

- Encourage better collaboration and communication between PSU and DHS
- Use a competency-model approach.
- Offer leadership training.
- Onboard supervisors more intentionally.
- Focus more on engagement skills.
- Offer more role-specific training.
- Provide a week break during Essential Elements training.
- Codify DEI expectations in a trainer handbook.
- Increase the capacity of the agency training unit to provide transfer of learning supports (MAPS and supervisors).
- Review the Essential Elements program to determine whether it sufficiently reflects practice.
- Build more capacity in the DHS training unit.

Relevant to trainers and staff:

- Record trainings to make them more accessible to staff.
- Create a better bridge between the core training, the ongoing training, and the MAPS.
- Make training more engaging with the use of breakout rooms, polls, etc.

Relevant to DHS staff:

- Provide educational supports for support staff.
- Develop DEI skills in the workforce.
- Provide new caseworkers computers immediately upon hire.
- Offer mentors to new staff.
- Provide supervisors more guidance on how to facilitate transfer of learning.

The next section reviews a sampling of curriculum using Butler's Curriculum Assessment instrument (see [Appendix A](#)).

Curricula Assessment

Oregon’s child welfare training program is developed and delivered by PSU, DHS, and outside consultants. A training manager estimates that PSU conducts about 70% of the training, DHS does 20%, and consultants provides the balance.

Only formal curriculum, that is a trainer manual with instructions to the trainer and content to be trained, has been evaluated. Anything less than formal curriculum is not considered to be curriculum as it cannot be offered with fidelity or evaluated.

PSU has developed thousands of pages of curriculum and Butler staff found consistency across the curricula in terms of approach and format so limited the assessment to Essential Elements and a few other key curricula (e.g., motivational interviewing). Across the board, this consistent approach is a strength of PSU’s program. It should be noted that the foster caregiver foundations training is no longer offered by PSU and has now been taken over by DHS.

In reviewing the files provided by DHS related to the trainings they provide, Butler did not find any formal curriculum so could not evaluate them. As stated earlier, a formal curriculum is crucial in the chain of actions from curriculum to outcomes to achieve positive outcomes for children and families.

Butler staff were provided a community login to access the online training developed by the child welfare division. Unfortunately, the team could not open these modules in the brief project review window despite technical assistance efforts from DHS. It is our intent to look at these materials in the future if the technical issues can be resolved. See Table 7 for the Essential Elements curricula that was evaluated along with the length of the training and curriculum.

Table 7. PSU Curriculum List with Hours and Page Length

Curriculum Title	Hours	Pages
Week 1		
Beginning the Family Assessment Through Screening	2.5	33
Principles of Engagement and Partnership	6.5	63
Steps in Conducting a CPS Assessment	3	50
Medical Diagnosis – No curriculum		
Secondary Traumatic Stress & Self Care Review	.5	12
Gathering Information for the CPS Assessment	6	60
Assessing for Present Danger	3	35
Week 2		
Domestic Violence: Abuse Elements and Family Dynamics	2.5	47
Child Neglect: Sorting Through the Gray	1.75	35
Child Sexual Abuse	1.75	44

Assessing for Impending Danger & Developing Safety Plans	5	40
Out of Home Abuse Allegations	1.5	23
Substitute Care Placement Practice	6.5	70
Visitation	3.0	41
Legal Issues	3.5	60
Ongoing Family Assessments & Case Plans	6.5	72
Week 3		
Monitoring Child Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being	6.5	50
Planning for Reunification and Meeting Expected Outcomes	6.5	63
Elements of Permanency Planning and Concurrent Plans	6.5	97
Promoting Attachment and Lifelong Connections	6.5	74
Preventing Disruption	1.5	35
Totals	81	1014

Themes Across Curricula

Many themes related to strengths and areas needing improvement emerged from the curricula assessment.

Competencies/Learning Objectives

In the curricula reviewed, competencies were not referenced or provided. PSU stated they do use a competency-based approach and it is articulated in the manual, *Supervisor's Guide to Caseworker Training, Supervisor Actions and Coaching Supports to Enhance Professional Development and Transfer of Learning*, but not in the actual curriculum. The curriculum would benefit from clearly stated competencies.

Learning objectives are provided for each training reviewed and these succinctly state the content to be covered; they just do not roll up into a larger competency.

Training Methods

Training methods varied throughout the curricula assessed but relied heavily on large group discussion and small group work. Throughout the curricula, the most effective training approaches use scenario-based learning to illustrate key concepts and allow learners opportunities to practice. Best practice for skill development follows a five-step sequential process (see Figure 7) to gradually build skills so learners develop them in the correct manner. In much of the curricula, learners were asked to practice skills without any demonstration on

the correct way of engaging in the skill and were not provided meaningful feedback. Such an approach can lead to learners developing skills incorrectly.

There was also a lot of reliance on didactic delivery of content. All curricula could benefit from introduction of a flipped classroom approach to mitigate the didactic nature of delivery.

Figure 7. Progression of Skills Training

Step 1: Explain (and discuss)

The skill is explained in terms of purpose and steps.

Step 2: Demonstrate (and discuss)

Demonstration of a skill helps people see what the skill actually looks like.

Step 3: Practice

This step provides the opportunity for participants to practice the skill.

Step 4: Feedback

This step gives each participant the opinion of the person(s) charged with the role of observer/critic.

Step 5: Discussion of Transfer Implications

This last step is an opportunity for the group as a whole (or small groups) to discuss the skill, practice session, and transfer implications.

Curriculum Instructions

Trainer instructions were typically provided in trainer notes with varying levels of specificity. At best, they provided detailed, step-by-step instructions guiding activities. Some curricula also contained questions to ask or points to debrief. Such detail provides trainers with markers on how and what to cover and results in better fidelity to curriculum. General timelines for sections were provided, for example, “section a, 2 hours, and 30 minutes,” but this may not be sufficient detail to ensure time frames are kept and fidelity attained. Guidance on the amount of time it should take to complete specific activities was only provided in a few instances. For example, the modules *Out-of-Home Care* and *Ongoing Family Assessments and Case Plans* offered much more specific guidance including time for each activity and questions to process it, making them excellent models for other modules. In contrast, the module *Substitute Care Placement* offers an activity to brainstorm the benefits of relative placement but no trainer instructions are provided on how long the activity should take or how it should be processed. Rather, the curriculum just presents didactic material on those benefits.

For the module, *Assessing for Impending Danger & Developing Safety Plans*, an activity to assess safety threats is labeled as a “large, multi-part activity” but the instructions are quite broad. It would be more helpful to provide specific instructions such as how long participants should be in their groups, debriefing questions, and correct responses.

Another module, *Out-of-Home Abuse*, is a great model for complete instructions as it offers questions to ask learners as well as possible responses. The *Ongoing Family Assessments and Case Plans* module offers good instructions to the trainer in differentiating between the terms “safety service” and “change services” as it, too, offers questions to ask and potential responses.

Each module contains detailed lists at the beginning to prepare trainers for the handouts, supplies, PowerPoints, and other items they will need for each training. Such an approach is quite helpful to the trainer.

Content

All curricula contained very thorough content on what the trainer should cover during the trainings. The content correlates with the stated training objectives, which ensures that the scope of the training will be maintained.

For some curricula, the content was meant to be delivered didactically and represented basic knowledge that might be better attained using a flipped classroom model. In the flipped classroom, knowledge-level content is offered online and classroom training is reserved for skill development. Elements related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are largely lacking across curriculum. Attending to DEI through training is key to building a fully engaged workforce and helps mitigate the impact of implicit bias on decision-making and casework.

Sequencing of Content

Generally speaking, the sequencing of training material was positive, moving from broad to specific and sequentially when talking about processes. Another consideration for sequencing is the appearance of key concepts throughout the training. As previously stated, while issues related to DEI do appear, they seemed to be inserted rather than integrated in a comprehensive way. Also missing throughout the curriculum is a constant focus on engagement. The survey results noted this deficit and the curriculum review reinforced that it is not being sufficiently addressed.

Format

Formatting was consistent across reviewed curriculum. Trainer guides are laid out in a way that make it easy to locate specific information related to training agenda and the materials needed to deliver the training. Icons are utilized to highlight how content should be delivered (e.g., through an activity, a handout, etc.). PowerPoint slides are visually appealing and tend to provide visual support for training content.

Trainer notes are utilized but somewhat inconsistently. There is some confusion about using trainer notes to provide supplemental instruction to the trainer about how to deliver content versus actually providing the content to be delivered. Additionally, trainer notes are sometimes used to provide activity instructions and other times activity instructions are presented as content to be trained. An example of this inconsistency can be found in *Essential Elements Module: Beginning the Family Assessment through Screening*. In this module, some trainer notes are included in the content to be delivered with the PowerPoint slide (page 18) and

sometimes trainer notes are in separate boxes that utilize an icon to identify it as a specific trainer note (page 15).

In many instances, however, content to be delivered by the trainer is presented in multiple and long paragraphs. Presenting training content in paragraph format lends to directly reading the material from the trainer guide and can make it a less efficient way for the trainer to ensure thorough delivery of the training to the participants. Breaking up the content using bullet points of key concepts catches the eye and helps chunk the content into smaller bits of information, making it easier to share and ensuring all content is covered by the trainer. For example, in the curriculum guide for *Essential Elements Module "Promoting Attachment and Life-Long Connections,"* the content to be delivered is described in five paragraphs. To make this content easier for the trainer to deliver, it could be presented this way instead:

“Many of the things we talked about Monday afternoon, in terms of building relationships, will help you as you talk with children about these difficult and sometimes uncomfortable topics. When speaking with children:

- It is important to always be honest with children and young adults, in an honest and compassionate way.
- Ensure the child knows they can ask questions and have opinions.
- Use developmentally appropriate language (concrete and clear language) the child can understand.
- Many of the interviewing techniques and engagement techniques you have learned will be important during these conversations including chunking information, having children paraphrase, re-stating, and empathizing will assist in this process.
- Let caregivers know what you are talking with children about so they can reinforce messages.
- Remember to be trauma-informed. The language you choose matters.
- Be aware of the child’s cultural background and norms.”

Attributions

Across all curricula, there are a lack of citations, even with material that should clearly have a reference. No reference lists or bibliographies are provided, making it difficult to do additional background reading. The module *Assessing for Impending Danger & Developing Safety Plans* lacks reference citations. There is quite a bit of literature related to assessing safety, substitute care, and trauma yet citations are missing from the curriculum and this represents a significant gap. Another example of missing citations occurs in the module *Visitation*, where the curriculum states “much of the research on visitation...”, but no references are provided.

Some materials that are referenced are quite old, for example, the Schene reference dates back to 1998.

Transfer of Learning

Transfer of learning in classroom or online learning happens when learners are asked to recall a concept or explain how it will be used in the field. PSU curricula offers transfer of learning content throughout the curricula including the use of “Transfer of Learning” cards for learners to document what they will do differently post-training.

Training Evaluation

For this section, the training evaluation assessment was conducted by Butler’s expert on training evaluation, who provided a strong and thorough assessment of the tools provided. See [Appendix C](#) for a detailed assessment of each instrument.



Recommendations

Based upon the training system assessment and the curricula review, Butler offers the following recommendations to improve Oregon DHS's training system:

1. Strengthen the partnership between PSU and DHS through shared visioning and implementation efforts to build trust, relationships, and stronger training. Cross-fertilize resources and approaches so there is consistency across PSU and DHS trainings. For example, PSU has a process for trainer development that can be employed by DHS to benefit all. Training materials from PSU and DHS should be updated and placed in a central location (e.g., OneDrive) for all to access.
2. Consider developing a strong practice model complemented by a competency model approach. A practice model is defined as “conceptual maps that reflect organizational ideology and describe how the agency’s employees, families, and stakeholders work together.”¹⁰ The current safety model does not qualify as a practice model based upon standards set in the field.¹¹ A model for guiding practice provides a central framework to guide all service delivery and workforce development efforts. When a robust competency model is used in tandem with a practice model, it can guide workforce development efforts from recruitment to retention.
3. Infuse all training from DHS and PSU with diversity, equity, and inclusion. Provide basic training on implicit biases, using an equity lens, and disproportionality and then constantly circle back to these topics in all trainings and workforce development efforts.
4. Have current field personnel conduct an intensive audit of Essential Elements to understand how the content does or does not align with current practice in the field. Staff who are auditing should have current field experience and be provided a specific rubric to guide their observations. In particular, the review should include attention to the presence of engagement-, DEI-, and trauma-related content.
5. Revise transfer of learning methods to support new caseworkers. Keep the materials, but implement them differently to achieve the desired goals. Consider who should provide the transfer of learning methods with options being the supervisor, lead caseworkers, and/or MAPS. Provide enhanced training and support to the persons responsible for transfer of learning, especially around how to coach staff. Consider providing MAPS staff with the new caseworker portfolios to assist with transfer. For the

¹⁰ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). 10 practices—A child welfare leader’s desk guide to building a high performing agency. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-10Practicespart1-2015.pdf#page=20>

¹¹ Finan, S., Bromfield, L., Arney, F., & Moore, T. (2018). *Assessing the quality and comprehensiveness of child protection practice frameworks*. Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia.

Essential Elements training, consider putting field weeks between the modules to allow for the transfer activities to happen (i.e., making it a 5-week academy).

6. Develop formal supervisor and manager curriculum and implement training with fidelity. The curriculum should be owned and delivered by DHS and include both the instructions to the trainer and content to be trained. A supervisor academy training, using a supervisory model such as Kadushin, should be developed and delivered to all supervisors (including existing ones) so everyone is grounded in the same approach. Additionally, provide leadership training at multiple staff levels using a framework such as the NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework.
7. Set expectations for all PSU and DHS curricula including:
 - a. Use of a competency-based approach that defines the broader competencies to be achieved by the training's conclusion.
 - b. Use of citations and current research to support all content. All curricula should include bibliographies/reference lists.
 - c. Use of a consistent format across all curricula provided to DHS employees.
 - d. Detailed instructions to guide the trainer and ensure fidelity.
 - e. Attention to significant themes across all curricula including DEI, trauma, and engagement.
8. Employ coaching techniques and train all MAPS and others providing transfer-of-learning functions with foundational coaching training.
9. Prepare curriculum developers and trainers through formal training and ongoing coaching and support. Invest in the training group and encourage ongoing professional development to develop skills and infuse all training with updated approaches.
10. Explore options to provide “flipped” training where knowledge-level content is provided through online courses and skills are developed in the classroom (virtual or in person). Even when the pandemic ends, training isn't likely to go back to how it was before. Valuable in-person time should be spent on skill development and the more didactic material relegated to other formats that still provide the opportunity for engagement.
11. Explore ways to train MAPS and supervisors to use training evaluation findings (in addition to Essential Elements portfolios – see Recommendation #5) to better mentor and guide new and experienced caseworkers for their day-to-day tasks and practice with children and families.
12. Hold regular CQI sessions that include both DHS and PSU to review evaluation data and identify ways to increase training quality. Use reports generated from both DHS and PSU to more fully integrate the evaluation system in the training system.

Over the coming months, Butler recommends a process to fine-tune and prioritize the recommendations including gathering feedback from key stakeholders.

Conclusion

Engaging in this comprehensive assessment demonstrates DHS's commitment to delivering the best possible training system to ultimately ensure better service delivery for the children and families DHS serves. The resulting recommendations of this assessment aim to strengthen training for the child welfare and family support workforce in Oregon and promote better overall system outcomes.

Appendix A: Assessment Instruments

Training System Assessment Tool

The term “training” refers to any of the approaches intended to build knowledge and skills and may include web-based learning or e-learning, classroom experiences, simulations, webinars, conferences, and other events promoting learning. “Training System” refers to the various components that comprise, support, and sustain it. Once the assessment is complete, it is suggested that an action-planning process commence to address areas needing improvement.

Assessment Area: Management	Yes	Partially	No	N/A	Comments
1. The agency has a training plan that addresses training for all levels of staff, methods, and proposed outcomes.					
2. A needs assessment of knowledge and skill needed by staff is conducted periodically (e.g., once per year).					
3. The training program provides sufficient and competent staff to develop and maintain all training offerings, including personnel supporting the roles of administrative support; communication specialist; evaluator/researcher; human resource planner; instructional media specialist; instructor/trainer; manager; organizational development specialist; and training program and curriculum designer.					
4. The staff development manager/director is also on the agency’s leadership team.					
5. HR partners with the training program.					
6. The agency uses a learning management system to register participants and track individual progress.					
7. The agency effectively markets trainings to potential participants.					

8. The agency involves internal and external stakeholders in the development of new curriculum (including staff for whom the training is intended, client representatives, and community partners).					

Assessment Area: Training Array	Yes	Partially	No	N/A	Comments
9. The agency offers training for new :					
a. Clerical staff					
b. Frontline workers					
c. Supervisors					
d. Management					
10. The agency offers ongoing training for:					
a. Clerical staff					
b. Frontline workers					
c. Supervisors					
d. Management					
11. The Title IV-E Child Welfare stipend program is integrated into the training system.					

Assessment Area: Infrastructure	Yes	Partially	No	N/A	Comments
12. Policies exist for staff development activities (e.g., completion of courses, attendance and behavior at training sessions).					
13. Funding is sufficient to support all training and staff development activities.					
14. The training budget is controlled by the training unit.					

15. The agency requires and supports the development of individual learning plans for all staff.					
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Assessment Area: Instructional Design	Yes	Partially	No	N/A	Comments
16. For most or all trainings, the agency uses a competency-based approach.					
17. For most or all trainings, the agency has curriculum that includes a facilitator’s guide and all materials needed for a training (e.g., handouts, PowerPoints, supplemental materials).					
18. The agency offers training in a variety of formats (e.g., distance or e-learning, classroom, blended, and videos).					
19. All training materials respect copyright laws and provide appropriate attributions and references.					
20. Technology is used in multiple ways for training (e.g., iPads in the classroom, mobile apps, polling).					
21. All curriculum is assessed every two years and updated accordingly.					

Assessment Area: Trainer Management	Yes	Partially	No	N/A	Comments
22. All trainers who present training maintain fidelity to the curriculum.					
23. Trainers are periodically assessed for quality and fidelity to the curriculum.					
24. Contract trainers meet program standards and share all materials.					
25. Both content and facilitation expertise are present in classroom training.					
26. The agency provides professional development for personnel involved with training:					
a. For new trainers, including presentation and curriculum development skills					

b. On new technologies (e.g., PollEverywhere, Padlet)					
c. For all staff for continuous knowledge and skills development					
Assessment Area: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Yes	Partiall	No	N/A	Comments
27. DEI issues are addressed and woven throughout the curricula.					
28. DEI references include reference to disparities, LGBTQIA+, and people with different abilities.					
29. Specific content related to implicit biases is present in the content offered by the training system.					

Assessment Area: Transfer of Learning	Yes	Partiall	No	N/A	Comments
30. Training materials are placed in a central electronic location so learners can access it later.					
31. New frontline staff don't carry cases until foundational training is concluded.					
32. The agency offers a variety of transfer of learning methods to reinforce concepts learned in web-based and classroom trainings.					
33. The agency ensures that on-the-job training occurs.					
34. The agency offers coaching to reinforce training content.					

Assessment Area: Training Evaluation	Yes	Partially	No	N/A	Comments
35. The agency has an evaluation plan to assess the array of trainings and the acquisition of knowledge and skills.					
36. The agency conducts comprehensive training evaluation of:					
a. Knowledge acquisition					

b. Skill acquisition (as appropriate)					
c. Transfer of training to job performance					
d. Agency outcomes					
37. Evaluation feedback informs curriculum revision.					



Curriculum Assessment Tool*

Curriculum Name: _____

Rate curriculum using the following criteria. When appropriate, comment on the item and explain why it did or did not meet the criteria.

Competencies/Learning Objectives

- Competencies and learning objectives are presented.
- Learning objectives are linked to competencies.
- A level of learning is clearly articulated by each learning objective, describing the specific awareness, knowledge, application and/or skills that participants should gain as a result of the training.
- Training content reflects the competency and the level of learning indicated by that competency.

Themes

- Issues of racial equity and cultural responsiveness are addressed in every curriculum.
- Key themes for this curriculum are: _____
- _____.
- Key themes designated at the onset of the project are referenced throughout the curriculum.
- There is a clear connection between the key themes and the content presented.

Training Methods

- A variety of learning styles are addressed (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic, diverging, converging, assimilating, and accommodating).
- Alternatives are presented within activities to appeal to different learning styles when appropriate.
- Learning methods change with sufficient frequency to keep participants engaged.
- Didactic material is limited to no more than 30 minute segments.
- Adult learning principles are reflected in the training methods (e.g., content is made relevant, learners treated as experts).
- A variety of approaches are used that include a mix of large group methods, small group activities, and individual activities.
- Training uses a variety of support materials including print, audiovisuals, and media.

Curriculum Instructions

- Curriculum provides clear instructions to the trainer for how to present a topic or activity as well as the content to be presented.
- Instructions clearly explain all activity steps.

* These written curricula domains are based on a set of criteria developed by a consortium of training professionals in Colorado in 1995 for formative evaluation of child welfare training and have since been modified.

- Time frames for various aspects of the activity are presented.
- All handouts and PowerPoint slides are referenced with titles that match those supporting documents.
- When content addresses skill-level competencies, instructions clearly articulate the 5 step process of 1) explain, 2) demonstrate, 3) practice, 4) feedback, and 5) discussion.
- Trainer notes encourage trainer to provide personal examples as appropriate.
- Relevant learning points are made explicit in activity instructions.

Content

- Training content and activities reflect the competency and fully match the learning objective(s) and related learning level objectives.
- Knowledge and skill level of the audience has been acknowledged and considered so the content is at the right developmental level for participants.
- Curriculum is culturally responsive.
- Culturally diverse examples are presented.
- Multicultural perspectives are woven throughout the training when appropriate.
- Curriculum is well-written with proper grammar and punctuation.
- Application to practice is clearly articulated.
- Activities are relevant to content.
- Learning points to be generated from discussion are provided.
- An agenda includes time frames for all curriculum sections.
- Training connects classroom experiences to on-the-job activities.

Sequencing of Content

- Key themes are identified early in training.
- Key themes are sequenced and referenced throughout the curriculum.
- Content is compatible and congruent between sections.
- Material flows from simple to complex concepts.
- Content flows developmentally through the levels of learning starting with awareness and up to skill-level (if content goes to skill-level).

Format

- Trainer instructions are presented using a consistent format throughout the curriculum.
- Content is clearly identified and presented consistently throughout curriculum.
- Format is visually attractive and easy to follow.
- References to handouts, PowerPoint slides, and other supplies are clearly marked and consistent throughout curriculum (e.g., reference to handouts is always in bold and italic font).

Attributions

- Unless original ideas, all content is appropriately cited with full APA-style references.
- For curriculum that has been adapted, source materials are clearly identified and full citations provided.

Online Courses (if applicable)

- A variety of activities intermittently engage the learner.

- Screen appearance is visually engaging and easy to follow.
- The navigation of the curriculum is user-friendly and intuitive.
- The technology works well throughout the module without “bugs” or glitches.
- Feedback is provided when responding to questions.

Training Design Supports Transfer of Learning

- Agency supports training and training transfer including:
 - Peers support one another regarding application of training
 - Supervisor knows content to be presented at training
 - Supervisor meets with participant prior to training
 - Supervisor meets with trainer after training to discuss application
 - Cohorts attend training together
- Various strategies used to support transfer of learning that may include formal on-the-job activities, coaching and/or mentoring, peer networking, webinars, and “booster” sessions.
- Training participants have the opportunity to use their learning on the job.
- Training participants are encouraged to apply learning on the job.

Training Evaluation

- Training includes a plan for evaluating outcomes such as satisfaction, learning at the various levels, transfer of skills to the job, performance outcomes, and/or organizational change.
- Evaluation strategies are appropriately designed for the training event (for example, pre/post knowledge tests would not be appropriate for a 1-day training).

Appendix B: Survey Results

Scales

Agreement (4-point scale) 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Agree 4= Strongly Agree

Percent and Average Rating of Items by All Participants

	Number of responses	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Average rating	Standard deviation
1. The training I received as a new caseworker adequately prepared me for my job.	327	9.8%	31.5%	50.8%	8%	2.57	0.78
2. My supervisor made sure I engaged in the on-ramp activities (practice activities on the job).	330	4.8%	18.2%	48.8%	28.2%	3.0	0.81
3. The content of the trainings seems to be based on up-to-date information.	1,451	1.9%	13.6%	71.6%	12.9%	2.96	0.58
4. The content of trainings seems to be based on best practices with children and families.	1,443	1.1%	11.2%	73%	14.7%	3.01	0.55
5. The content of trainings engaged my curiosity to learn.	1,446	4.8%	26.4%	58.5%	10.3%	2.74	0.70
6. The trainings taught me how to work with families.	1,436	7.4%	35%	51.7%	5.9%	2.56	0.72
7. The trainings taught me how to work with families of diverse cultures and ethnicities.	1,444	8.7%	36.6%	46.8%	7.9%	2.54	0.76
8. The trainings taught me how to work with LGBTQIA families.	1,431	11.6%	45.8%	38%	4.5%	2.35	0.74
9. I am informed about training opportunities relevant to my job.	1,451	3.2%	14.5%	68.1%	14.2%	2.93	0.64
10. It is easy to use iLearn (where registration occurs, etc.).	1,452	4%	15.2%	64%	16.8%	2.94	0.69
11. Available training opportunities provide me with skills or expertise that improve my practice with children and families.	1,430	3.6%	22.4%	65.4%	8.7%	2.79	0.64
12. When I am attending classroom trainings, my supervisor makes sure my	1,437	6.1%	19.9%	52.5%	21.5%	2.89	0.81

	Number of responses	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Average rating	Standard deviation
time is protected so that I am not interrupted.							
13. When I am engaging in virtual/online trainings, my supervisor makes sure my time is protected so that I am not interrupted.	1,454	6.6%	25.4%	49%	18.9%	2.80	0.82
14. I get feedback in training on how to apply what I am learning to my job.	1,440	6.1%	37.6%	50.1%	6.2%	2.56	0.70
15. My supervisor guides me to apply what I learned in training to what I am doing in my day-to-day work.	1,438	6.3%	31.4%	50.7%	11.7%	2.68	0.76
16. My peers and I talk about how we are applying our learning to the job.	1,440	7.6%	31.6%	50.8%	10%	2.63	0.77
17. I use the skills that I learn in training on the job.	1,452	2.5%	10.5%	73.8%	13.2%	2.98	0.58

Average and Standard Deviation of Items by Job Title and Experience Level

	New Social Service Specialist 1 (n= 172)	Experienced Social Service Specialist 1 (n= 634)	New Social Services Specialist 2 (n= 14)	Experienced Social Service Specialist 2 (n= 45)	Supervisors or Office Manager (n= 148)	New Social Service Assistant (n= 45)	Experienced Social Service Assistant (n= 103)	New Business/ Office Staff (n= 22)	Experienced Business/ Office Staff (n= 151)	Other (n= 37)
1. The training I received as a new caseworker adequately prepared me for my job.	2.64 (SD= 0.80)	-	-	-	-	-	--	-	-	-
2. My supervisor made sure I engaged in the on-ramp activities (practice activities on the job).	3.15 (0.76)	-	-	-	-	-	--	-	-	-
3. The content of the trainings seems to be based on up-to-date information.	3.08 (0.62)	2.98 (SD= 0.51)	2.79 (0.89)	2.98 (SD= 0.49)	2.92 (SD= 0.55)	3.11 (0.70)	2.95 (SD= 0.65)	2.87 (0.56)	2.80 (SD= 0.68)	2.62 (0.54)
4. The content of trainings seems to be based on best practices with children and families.	3.17 (0.54)	3.0 (0.56)	2.79 (0.70)	3.0 (0.42)	2.98 (0.50)	3.28 (0.54)	3.01 (0.57)	2.93 (0.55)	2.95 (0.53)	2.69 (0.47)
5. The content of trainings engaged my curiosity to learn.	3.02 (0.70)	2.62 (0.72)	2.64 (0.50)	2.83 (0.52)	2.73 (0.61)	3.13 (0.65)	2.83 (0.72)	2.81 (0.54)	2.74 (0.70)	2.67 (0.53)
6. The trainings taught me how to work with families.	2.83 (0.75)	2.49 (0.73)	2.64 (0.50)	2.54 (0.62)	2.51 (0.68)	2.74 (0.71)	2.66 (0.72)	2.54 (0.51)	2.51 (0.68)	2.26 (0.64)
7. The trainings taught me how to work with families of diverse cultures and ethnicities.	2.84 (0.70)	2.45 (0.76)	2.43 (0.85)	2.43 (0.83)	2.42 (0.72)	2.79 (0.75)	2.66 (0.77)	2.77 (0.67)	2.66 (0.70)	1.95 (0.70)
8. The trainings taught me how to work with LGBTQIA families.	2.56 (0.78)	2.25 (0.72)	2.14 (0.86)	2.24 (0.77)	2.35 (0.70)	2.70 (0.78)	2.50 (0.70)	2.52 (0.69)	2.50 (0.71)	1.79 (0.70)
9. I am informed about training opportunities relevant to my job.	3.17 (0.63)	2.97 (0.55)	2.79 (0.70)	2.79 (0.62)	2.92 (0.60)	3.11 (0.67)	2.81 (0.66)	2.89 (0.58)	2.66 (0.85)	2.90 (0.68)
10. It is easy to use iLearn (where registration occurs, etc.).	3.15 (0.65)	2.92 (0.69)	2.64 (0.75)	2.77 (0.70)	2.76 (0.67)	3.28 (0.62)	2.98 (0.67)	3.0 (0.63)	2.87 (0.70)	2.83 (0.71)
11. Available training opportunities provide me with skills or expertise that improve	3.06 (0.58)	2.74 (0.66)	2.64 (0.63)	2.74 (0.64)	2.71 (0.56)	2.96 (0.62)	2.80 (0.60)	2.83 (0.54)	2.72 (0.70)	2.79 (0.58)

	New Social Service Specialist 1 (n= 172)	Experienced Social Service Specialist 1 (n= 634)	New Social Services Specialist 2 (n= 14)	Experienced Social Service Specialist 2 (n= 45)	Supervisors or Office Manager (n= 148)	New Social Service Assistant (n= 45)	Experienced Social Service Assistant (n= 103)	New Business/ Office Staff (n= 22)	Experienced Business/ Office Staff (n= 151)	Other (n= 37)
my practice with children and families.										
12. When I am attending classroom trainings, my supervisor makes sure my time is protected so that I am not interrupted.	3.10 (0.78)	2.87 (0.79)	2.50 (0.86)	2.83 (0.92)	2.59 (0.76)	3.16 (0.80)	2.95 (0.83)	2.91 (0.82)	2.99 (0.78)	2.80 (0.79)
13. When I am engaging in virtual/online trainings, my supervisor makes sure my time is protected so that I am not interrupted.	3.03 (0.80)	2.77 (0.80)	2.29 (0.83)	2.66 (0.82)	2.49 (0.76)	3.15 (0.83)	2.87 (0.87)	2.83 (0.74)	2.90 (0.82)	2.78 (0.77)
14. I get feedback in training on how to apply what I am learning to my job.	2.86 (0.73)	2.54 (0.69)	2.29 (0.61)	2.49 (0.66)	2.46 (0.67)	2.79 (0.72)	2.55 (0.71)	2.60 (0.68)	2.41 (0.71)	2.51 (0.64)
15. My supervisor guides me to apply what I learned in training to what I am doing in my day-to-day work.	2.95 (0.70)	2.69 (0.76)	2.50 (0.86)	2.47 (0.83)	2.45 (0.69)	2.94 (0.79)	2.66 (0.78)	2.77 (0.67)	2.52 (0.75)	2.69 (0.73)
16. My peers and I talk about how we are applying our learning to the job.	2.80 (0.87)	2.57 (0.73)	2.29 (0.83)	2.62 (0.74)	2.69 (0.70)	2.94 (0.79)	2.61 (0.76)	2.61 (0.80)	2.51 (0.79)	2.97 (0.67)
17. I use the skills that I learn in training on the job.	3.13 (0.65)	2.92 (0.60)	2.79 (0.58)	2.94 (0.53)	3.01 (0.48)	3.21 (0.46)	3.01 (0.51)	3.03 (0.70)	2.89 (0.58)	3.03 (0.43)

Appendix C: Training Evaluation Summary

The table below presents detail on the evaluation tools that were reviewed. Data in staff portfolios is not reviewed here as portfolios are not used in service of training evaluation.

Assessment Tool for: Supervisory Training	General Comments
<p>6 closed-ended items: Overall rating of training (4-point scale: <i>Fair to Excellent</i>); usefulness of content (5-point scale: <i>Not At All Useful to Very Useful</i>); ratings of trainer’s knowledge, whether training met learning objectives, whether training was engaging, and whether materials provided were helpful (5-point scale: <i>Disagree to Agree</i>)</p>	<p>The items cover key aspects of the training and are clearly worded.</p> <p>The midpoint (3) of the agreement scale is <i>Neutral</i>. As participants typically have opinions about whether they agree or disagree with statements (even if only a little) but will often gravitate to benign responses for the sake of ease, it is recommended to remove that midpoint. Analytically, it is nearly the same as missing data and does not provide much helpful information.</p> <p>It does seem that there may be times when there is more than one trainer, which can cause challenges with interpreting and utilizing responses for the item, “The trainer was knowledgeable in the content.” Respondents may struggle with whether they should “average” across trainers (if they feel the trainers were differentially knowledgeable), and training directors/trainers may not realize that one trainer is perceived as more or less knowledgeable. Data will be cleaner and more useful if that question is asked for each trainer.</p>
<p>Between 5 and 10 closed-ended items per module related to Knowledge, Skills, & Abilities: Statements pertain to the module’s specific content (e.g., for Module 1: “Creating a positive work climate in my unit”) and are measured retrospectively “Before Module” and currently “After Module” (5-point scale: 1 = <i>Low</i>, 3 = <i>Medium</i>, 5 = <i>High</i>)</p>	<p>The items measure each supervisor’s own perceived competence related to topics covered in each module. A limitation of the data that will emerge from this is that it is not a true pre/post design, rather the “Before Module” assessment is asked retrospectively. The benefit of this design is the parsimony and efficiency inherent in collecting the data at one time point. This benefit likely outweighs the potential messiness of retrospective reporting.</p>
<p>3 open-ended items: What they liked best; what can be improved; an idea, skill, or strategy they will use in their work</p>	<p>All useful to ask as long as the information is reviewed and used for any necessary modifications to the training.</p>
Assessment Tools for: Supervisor Quarterly Meetings and Conferences	General Comments
<p>Number and types of questions vary: <i>Conference Evaluation</i> asks for three things learned, three things they would do differently at next conference, #1 topic they need more training on, area in which they need more professional support, topics for future conferences, rating of presenters (5-point scale plus N/A: 1 = <i>Poor</i>, 3 = <i>Average</i>, 5 = <i>Outstanding</i>), space for open-ended feedback.</p>	<p>Ratings of supervisor events (conferences, quarterly meetings, pre-service training) do not utilize a consistent format or approach in terms of what questions are asked and what type of scale is used (3-point, 4-point, 5-point), making data aggregation or interpretation across items or evaluations challenging. Since many of the questions are open-ended, analyzing the qualitative data could be time-consuming and require some degree of experience/expertise</p>

<p>Quarterly Evaluation asks which topic was most valuable, whether information will be beneficial for work, something they will use, whether they gained new information, what was valuable, overall training rating (scale of 1 – 5 but doesn't specify what the ratings mean), and additional training needs.</p> <p>Pre-Service Training Evaluation is similar to the conference evaluation, asking for three things they can implement, three areas for a “deeper dive”, three things to improve, three things to include in future sessions, applicability of the topic (3-point scale: <i>Very, Moderately, Not at all</i>), topic-specific 4-point ratings of presentation, content, applicability, and open-ended reasons for rating.</p>	<p>to properly interpret. It is unclear whether the data are used for CQI or any other purposes (such as feedback to presenters).</p>
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Assessment Tool for: Advanced Training for Child Welfare Staff	General Comments
<p>2 closed-ended knowledge items: Knowledge of the subject before and after training (5-point scale: <i>None to Very Good</i>)</p>	<p>Administered after the training, these items measure participants' self-assessed knowledge about the training topic retrospectively (before) and currently (after) the training. As noted elsewhere, a limitation of this design is that it is not a true pre/post, though the benefit of efficiency (only administering one survey and having data automatically linked) likely outweighs the shortcomings of retrospective reporting.</p>
<p>7 closed-ended items: Overall rating of training (4-point scale: <i>Fair to Excellent</i>); usefulness of content (5-point scale: <i>Not At All Useful to Very Useful</i>); ratings of trainer's knowledge, whether training met learning objectives, whether training was engaging, whether materials provided were helpful, and whether activities were useful (5-point scale: <i>Disagree to Agree</i>)</p>	<p>The items cover key aspects of the training and are clearly worded.</p> <p>As noted previously, recommend removing the midpoint (3 = <i>Neutral</i>) of the agreement scale as it does not offer helpful information.</p> <p>In cases when there is more than one trainer, participants may struggle with how to respond to the item, “The trainer was knowledgeable in the content”, and training directors/trainers cannot have data specific to each trainer. Consider asking that question for each trainer.</p>
<p>3 open-ended items: What they liked best; what can be improved; something they learned that they can use in their work</p>	<p>All useful to ask as long as the information is reviewed and used for any necessary modifications to the training.</p>

Assessment Tools for: Essential Elements of Child Welfare Practice	General Comments
<p>15 daily surveys (survey each of 5 days for each of 3 weeks of training): For every topic covered that day (e.g., “Oregon Practice Model Review Using OR-Kids”),</p>	<p>The questions cover key aspects of the training and are clearly worded. Administering the surveys daily gives real-</p>

<p>the surveys include knowledge self-assessment (before/after rated on a 5-point scale from <i>None</i> to <i>Very Good</i>), rating of usefulness of activities (5-point agreement scale), open-ended space for comments, four standard training satisfaction items on 5-point agreement scale (ratings of trainer’s knowledge, whether training met learning objectives, whether training was engaging, whether materials provided were helpful), opportunity to share what participant liked best and what can be improved for each session, and opportunity to talk about any technology challenges experienced</p>	<p>time and specific feedback that can be used for training improvements.</p> <p>As noted previously, recommend removing the midpoint (3 = <i>Neutral</i>) of the agreement scale as it does not offer helpful information.</p>
<p>Knowledge tests: 78 EE content questions, including multiple choice, true/false, and matching that results in an overall assessment of understanding (Level 1 = <i>Minimal</i>, Level 2 = <i>Moderate</i>, Level 3 = <i>Solid</i>) as well as assessments for two main categories (Oregon Practice Model Content and Casework Application Content) that are rated on two levels: <i>Understanding Not Demonstrated</i> and <i>Understanding Demonstrated</i>. Concepts assessed are listed under each along with a mark indicating whether the participant got the question correct or not. If incorrect, the session and resources to review are listed.</p>	<p>Did not view actual test so cannot comment on wording of items or scoring method used. The report is somewhat difficult to understand due to the difference between the overall assessment (with 3 levels) and the subcategories (with 2 levels).</p>

<p>Assessment Tools for: Screening Training</p>	<p>General Comments</p>
<p>Screening Training Academy: 19 module-specific surveys with 14 items each: For each module, the surveys include increase in knowledge, trainer knowledge, interaction/engagement, technology usefulness and supports, overall training satisfaction, usefulness of various aspects of training, ways to improve, and whether participants clicked on the “brain breaks”; some items were on 5-point agreement scales (<i>Disagree to Agree</i>)</p> <p>Mandatory Reporter Train-the-Trainer: 6 closed-ended items: Increase in knowledge related to each component of the training (3-point scale: <i>Agree, Neutral, Disagree</i>) 2 multi-select items: Aspects that were most useful and least useful 1 open-ended question: Any additional feedback</p>	<p>For questions 12 (most useful) and 13 (could be improved) on STA, it was unclear whether participants can choose more than one response. If so, it can sometimes be difficult to make meaning of the data. If only allowed one response, evaluators may be missing important information. Recommend revising to a rank-ordering of those elements or putting each element on a scale (e.g., “How useful was the content?” <i>Not at all to Very useful</i>).</p> <p>For MRTTT, the questions about useful and least useful components specify that more than one can be selected.</p> <p>For both STA and MRTTT: As noted previously, recommend removing the midpoint (3 = <i>Neutral</i>) of the agreement scale as it does not offer helpful information.</p>