

National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants

Case Study Report of Independent Living Training Projects

Mary Elizabeth Collins, MSW, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

Maryann Amodeo, MSW, Ph.D.
Co-Principal Investigator

Cassandra Clay, MEd, MSW
Co-Investigator

Boston University School of Social Work

February 2007

This study was conducted as part of the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants (9OCT0124) funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. Research assistants who contributed to this report include: Celina Miranda, Rolanda Ward, Christiana Bratiotis, Jieha Lee, Cesar Abarca.

Disclaimer

Points of view or opinions expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	15
Context	22
Project Activity: Curriculum Development	31
Project Activity: Training Delivery	51
Project Activity: Youth Involvement	67
Project Activity: Conducting Evaluation	79
Project Activity: Dissemination	91
Project Activity: Collaboration	97
Outcomes	103
Final Conclusions	121
Recommendations	125
Appendix A: Outcomes from the National Evaluation Phone Survey of Training Participants	131

National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants

Case Study Report of Independent Living Training Projects

Executive Summary

In September 2000, the Children's Bureau funded 12 three-year child welfare training projects that focused on the training of workers to assist youth transitioning from care to independent living. In 2003, the Children's Bureau funded Boston University School of Social Work to conduct the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants. The National Evaluation consists of four components:

- Evaluation of Independent Living Training Projects
- Comprehensive Review of Child Welfare Training Literature
- Survey of State Training Directors
- Survey of Social Work Faculty

This report provides the results of the evaluation of the cluster of Independent Living (IL) training projects. The research questions guiding this study included the following:

- What is the site context of projects that may impact their ability to influence outcomes?
- How did grantees implement project activities?
- To what extent did projects achieve immediate training outcomes?
- How are context and project activities related to outcomes?

Because the evaluation project was funded at the time that the IL training projects were concluding, methodological options were limited. Consequently, the focus of this evaluation was the implementation and immediate outcomes of the training projects. The goal was to produce information that could further develop the delivery and impact of federally-funded training projects.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework (see figure at right) guided the conduct of the evaluation of the IL projects and also provided a link to the other three components of the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants. The conceptual framework consisted of five main areas of inquiry: *Contextual Factors*, *Training Project Activities*, *Individual Project Outcomes*, *Cluster Outcomes*, and *Long Term Outcomes*. Between columns three and four the conceptual model identifies a potential gap. In conceptualizing the evaluation project, we anticipated that while most training projects are likely to be successful at influencing individual project outcomes, there may be greater difficulty in advancing longer-term impact on the field and long-term improvements in child, youth, and family well-being. A critical part of the overall national evaluation project is to identify barriers to more sustained improvements. The gap identified in the conceptual model conveys the anticipated disjuncture between successfully completed projects and longer-term impact.

Method

The evaluation utilized a multiple case study design. This method was selected for several reasons. First, the strength of the case study method is its ability to describe and analyze complex phenomena that are situated within a specific context. Training projects such as these are complex in their multiple sets of activities, key factors, foci of interventions, and contextual uncertainty. Moreover, all the projects were concluded or near conclusion by the time of the evaluation study. Hence, the collection of in-depth retrospective data was the most feasible option. Three core principles guided the design and conduct of the study: collaboration, utilization, and triangulation. Although maintaining the integrity of an independently conducted evaluation, the project attempted to work collaboratively with project sites by soliciting input about project design, sharing findings at a draft stage, and facilitating dialog about the meaning and implications of the study findings.

Of the 12 funded IL training projects, nine were selected for the case study evaluation. After conducting a pilot study in Summer 2004, the field period for data collection ran from August–December 2004. All site visits were

<i>Contextual Factors</i>	<i>Training Project Activities</i>	<i>Individual Project Outcomes</i>	<i>Cluster Outcomes</i>	<i>Long-Term Outcomes</i>
<p>State Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of collaboration • Level of personnel involved • Organizational constraints • Training policies • Project match with agency need • Children and Family Service Reviews <p>Children's Bureau</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFP • Grantees' meeting <p>Grantees' Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of support • Experience with CWT • Seniority of project staff <p>State-Level Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics • Funding • Regulations and laws • County, Tribe or community issues <p><i>Other (media, role of technology)</i></p>	<p>Develop Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curricula • development skills <p>Deliver Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer skill • Number of trainees • Cost effectiveness <p>Involve Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning training • Delivering training • Other <p>Evaluation of Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process • Outcome <p>Disseminate Findings and Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations • Articles/reports • Curricula/tapes <p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development <p><i>Other Project Activities</i></p>	<p>Worker Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Attitude • Behavior <p>Supervisor Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Attitude • Behavior <p>Training of Trainers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Attitude • Behavior <p>Agency Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth focused <p>Impact on Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development • Empowerment <p>Knowledge Development (evaluation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge Sharing (dissemination) • Institutionalization of curricula <p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalization of collaboration <p><i>Other Outcomes</i></p>	<p>Improvement In Agency Practice</p> <p>Improvement In School Of Social Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth-focused curricula <p>Improvement in the Child Welfare Field (private agencies, ancillary agencies, child advocacy organizations)</p> <p>Improvement in the Positive Youth Development Field</p> <p><i>Other Outcomes</i></p>	<p>Improvement In Child, Youth, And Family Well-being</p>
		<p>↑</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review • Survey of Schools of Social Work • Survey of Child Welfare Training Administrators <p>↑</p>		

conducted during this time period. Most were 2-day visits, but occasionally visits were for one day or three days. Prior to the site visit, relevant documents were reviewed including the proposal, interim and final reports, the complete curriculum, videos, and any other products. Site visit activities included a series of interviews with key project personnel including the project director, youth participants, trainers, curriculum developers, evaluators, and collaborators from the public child welfare agency or key private agencies. At sites where training was still being offered, we attempted to schedule the site visit so that we could observe training. To supplement the case study data we conducted follow-up phone surveys with past training participants.

Data analysis involved writing detailed case study reports for each site that integrated the various types of data using the conceptual model as a guide to organize the data. When these reports were completed, the second phase of data analysis involved a multi-site analysis. At this stage, the elements of the conceptual model guided the integration of data across the multiple sites through an iterative process. A series of matrices were developed to organize key concepts across sites. The raw data (interview notes, final reports, curricula) frequently were double-checked for accuracy. As segments were written, the content was reviewed by the analytic team to determine if there were different recollections of the data gathered in interviews, as well as to begin to generate implications from the data. Two other checks were included to ensure accuracy and objectivity. Research assistants reviewed sections of the written multi-site analysis and compared it to the individually written case study reports to look for discrepancies. Finally, a draft report was made available to the grantees to correct any errors of fact and to generate discussion regarding the validity of the implications and recommendations drawn by the project team.

Findings

The findings are presented in extensive detail in the report and follow the organization of the conceptual framework. Thus they address the five main areas: context, project activities, project outcomes, cluster outcomes, and long-term outcomes. Here we highlight a few key findings:

Context

- All grantee organizations had previous (and often substantial) experience in child welfare, training, or adolescent issues (and sometimes a combination of expertise); thus the sites were well chosen to conduct this work.

- Virtually all projects describe economic and political contexts that posed challenges to implementing their projects. While these may alter over time, training projects are likely to continue to operate in uncertain economic and political climates.
- Key challenges in collaborating with the public child welfare system included budget crises, insufficient priority given to training, insufficient priority given to adolescent issues, and state geography. Also unique to this cluster, projects were challenged by widely varying perceptions of and commitment to a positive youth development approach.
- Some projects reported that the Chafee legislation and funding of Independent Living services helped create a climate that was supportive of these training projects. In some, but not all, jurisdictions there seemed to be productive synergy between the training projects and other state/county initiatives, which together advanced attention to the needs of adolescents in the state.

Project Activities

- Projects are better at “front end” activities than “back end” activities. Front end activities include information gathering, setting up collaborations, curriculum development, and pilot training. Back end activities include evaluation, dissemination, and institutionalization.
- Curricula fall along a continuum from extremely structured (almost totally scripted) to extremely unstructured (content or handouts with no guidelines for presentation). Less structured curricula had more problems with fidelity. Lack of fidelity to a curriculum during training delivery is a fundamental problem in the field of training, and not specific to these projects.
- Training of trainers can be considered either a means of dissemination to a broader audience or a means of institutionalization. The institutionalization function results from training workers within the unit or organization in which you want to institutionalize the training, so they can become a trainer to their peers (as opposed to training trainers).
- Use of youth in delivering training was a decided strength. Watching youth as trainers increased participants’ sense of youth as having strengths and resilience. The youth were “able to convey painful experiences and yet leave people feeling positive.” The youth trainers were professional, articulate, humorous, compassionate, and committed to improving the work of the social workers collaborating with them.

- Involving youth in projects was an innovative aspect of the cluster. There was no “one” way to do this. Most projects had little experience in this area and little guidance as to how to do this. The appropriate role for youth is dependent upon both project needs and youth interests. Some youth can have a small, temporary role and still benefit from the experience. The audience benefit is enhanced, however, when the youths’ involvement is both high profile and well integrated into the training content and delivery.
- Evaluation of training did not appear to be a high priority of the majority of the projects, although they all conducted at least a minimal level of evaluation. In addition to uncertain commitment of projects to evaluation, other factors affected the quality of evaluations including: limited project resources impacted opportunities for observations; the three-year time period impacted follow-up with trainees; technological difficulties; and public agency resistance to conducting evaluation (e.g., providing contact information to follow-up with trainees).
- Dissemination of curricula and other project materials was not extensive. Dissemination requires a skill set that may not be common among training grantees. These skills include production and graphic design, web site development, and video production.
- Collaborating organizations often participated through representation on advisory committees. This model generally involved one individual representing an organization. This raises the question of whether the full benefit of collaborative work with another organization can be experienced in this way. Some projects found that if the representative was difficult to engage, or left his/her job, the collaboration fell apart.
- There was minimal institutionalization of projects, in part because the collaboration with the child welfare agency was often project-based (rather than long-term) and because the agency needed to shorten or “water down” the full training project.

Project Outcomes

- The quantitative evaluative data reported by projects were very thin. Although projects did not provide a lot of documented evidence about the impact of their projects, project personnel and their collaborators perceived the projects to be successful in many ways, most prominently in achieving attitude change regarding adolescents.

Cluster Outcomes

- In addition to the outcomes that individual projects achieved, this evaluation also examined whether the cluster of training projects had an impact—larger than any one specific project—on the fields of child welfare, social work or youth development. Several projects noted—and we concur—the development of these curricula is a definite and concrete contribution to the field of training and child welfare services. Previously, curricula for working with this population did not exist.
- In its totality, the cluster contributed evidence that youth development approaches can work and provided guidance as to how to make them work.

Long-term Outcomes

- Evaluation of the long-term outcomes of training projects of this sort is technically possible, but would be highly complicated and costly. Projects were neither directly nor indirectly encouraged to obtain this type of data. Consequently, no evaluation on long-term outcomes was either planned or conducted.
- Training projects alone are unlikely to have a lasting long-term impact. Respondents speculated that potential factors for facilitating long-term impact included: accompanying legislation, resources, institutionalization of training within agencies, and agency/governmental context supportive of good child welfare practice (e.g., foster care, workforce, etc.).
- There needs to be realistic expectations of long-term outcomes. For behavior change to occur, skill practice is often necessary. What can be expected of training that is relatively short-term? The size of training groups and lack of feedback from trainer (or groups) to individuals on their behavior will further inhibit changes in skills.

Recommendations

To influence the impact of future training initiatives, our recommendations target three audiences: the Children’s Bureau, future grantees, and the state/county public child welfare agencies. The foci of our recommendations are what we consider to be the larger, more undeveloped areas in training practice that need attention in order to move the field of child welfare training forward, and thereby enhance the ability of such projects to have a more sustained impact. The areas of curriculum development and training delivery are not discussed in our recommendations. We have found that grantees are generally experts in these areas and there is already adequate existing knowledge regarding effective strategies.

Youth Involvement/Consumer Involvement

The lessons learned about youth involvement are relevant to the broader area of consumer involvement. Although these projects focused on training, the lessons of consumer involvement in training are relevant to the more general area of consumer involvement in service delivery. The main lesson from these projects is that professionals often are committed to consumer involvement but may lack the experience to partner effectively with consumers. Again, we note that this observation is not likely specific to these projects, but is an ongoing challenge to the field of child welfare.

Recommendations on Youth Involvement/Consumer Involvement

- 1) The Children’s Bureau should encourage consumer involvement in all funded projects, and should facilitate grantees’ development of expertise through access to resources (e.g., National Resource Centers) and presentations at grantees’ meetings.
- 2) Grantees should recognize the need to partner with organizations that can provide infrastructure in consumer-driven practice; “partnership” and “infrastructure” are needed to avoid superficial involvement of consumers.
- 3) Public child welfare agencies have been making progress in emphasizing more partnership with service users (e.g., family group conferencing). Training initiatives and strategies are another mechanism by which agencies can engage consumers in their work.

Evaluation

There is a need for greater clarity regarding the purpose of evaluation and appropriate designs to match. During delivery of training, embedded evaluation is critical to determining the extent to which learning is taking place. Overall evaluation of the project is needed to advance the field.

There is an important caveat to the emphasis on evaluation of training: even if training is effective in influencing the skills of participants, training by itself is not the solution to many problems facing child welfare systems. Nor are well-trained workers the sole factor in the well being of children, youth, and families.

Recommendations on Evaluation

- 1) The Children's Bureau should continue to provide grantees with technical assistance regarding evaluation. However, it would seem that there is less of a need for technical assistance than conceptual assistance. Guidance in articulating the core focus of the project and appropriate expectations of project impact may be more important than methodological guidance. Evaluators from outside the grantee organization often can provide the technical skills but may be less able to assist in conceptualization.
- 2) Grantees should have a designated evaluator to conduct the evaluation of the training project, and the evaluator should be integrated early in the planning phase. Increased attention should be given to outcome evaluation. Although methodological issues are often the focus of the evaluator's work, more attention needs to be directed to the conceptual focus of the evaluation. The principal investigator and senior project team members need to provide the conceptual focus for the evaluation. In general, projects tend to set the expectations of their project impact too high. Training evaluation designs require greater clarity, focusing on the questions: What is the project aiming to accomplish? How can these aims be measured?
- 3) Public child welfare agencies need to cooperate in the evaluation. This will include allowing evaluators to conduct follow-up with trainees from the state agency. Examination of the transfer of learning to the agency setting and the mastering of skills taught in the practice setting is sorely needed. This will almost always require follow-up in the practice setting, which will include data collection involving interviews, observations, case record reviews, and other methods. Additionally, access to comparison groups may be needed.

Collaboration

Although important to successful projects, collaboration remains an ongoing challenge. Effective collaboration involves reciprocity among parties, some level of formalized commitment, and a sense of good will in working toward a common goal. While some grantees have solid and ongoing relationships with public child welfare agencies and a history of collaboration on projects, projects often require new linkages with other entities that are central to the core themes of the training project (e.g., youth development). In addition to the important knowledge such partners may bring, they also can lend a fresh perspective and, in some cases, an entirely new paradigm of approaching the work. Good collaboration takes time, and depending on the number and nature of the partners, often extensive time. It also requires clarity regarding the expectations of collaborators' contributions to the project tasks.

Recommendations on Collaboration

- 1) The Children's Bureau should encourage grantees to develop collaborative relationships with entities that can increase project impact. This encouragement could be communicated in the language of the RFP and the scoring procedures for submitted grant proposals.
- 2) Grantees should aim to establish collaborations with organizations—rather than individuals—to provide more stability to the collaboration. Collaborators should be chosen, in part, to facilitate long-term institutionalization. Thus, at the start of projects, active advocacy should occur to secure organizational collaborators who will share the work and responsibility for outcomes.
- 3) Public child welfare agencies are typically the key collaborators on federally-funded training projects. In their roles as collaborating agencies they should: provide agency representatives who are interested and willing to do some of the work; involve decision makers in the collaboration; and collaborate as an organization, not just through individuals.

Institutionalization

There is a need for closer relationships between the grantees and the child welfare systems in order to institutionalize training within the agencies. A number of specific recommendations may facilitate this: (a) greater negotiation at the point of proposal submission so that the public agency's commitment to using the curriculum and supporting the trainees' skills following training is articulated in the letter of agreement; (b) public agency participation in the design and delivery of the training, rather than simply in reviewing the work once it has been completed; and (c) public agency administrator participation in pilot tests or final delivery of the training. In general, however, many public agencies need to demonstrate a greater commitment to the training of their workers.

Recommendations on Institutionalization

- 1) The Children's Bureau should aim to fund the type of training projects that are of critical need to public child welfare agencies. If the funding priorities of the Children's Bureau are not aligned with the needs of the field, public child welfare agencies have no reason to engage in long-term institutionalization of training programs. The Children's Bureau must be flexible so that proposals can address the needs of the public agency. After projects are completed, the Children's Bureau is the only entity with the appropriate infrastructure to keep the products that have been developed at the forefront of child welfare practice. The Children's Bureau should think creatively about how to insure that products remain available and easy to locate.
- 2) Grantees should plan for the institutionalization of training at the beginning of projects and work flexibly with the public child welfare agency to create a version of the training program that will be of use to the agency on an ongoing basis. Time should be built into the project to adapt the training to a format that maintains the integrity of the training and increases its usability for the agency over the long term. Training of trainers should be seen as a mechanism of institutionalization and utilized frequently for this purpose.
- 3) Public child welfare agencies should recognize the importance of utilizing key elements of the training project and assist the grantees in modifying the full program for use by the state agency. More sustained collaboration with the grantee will be needed to insure that the training program is in a format that the agency can utilize on an ongoing basis.

Knowledge Development

For the field to move forward there must be greater attention to the role of training grants in producing knowledge that has a sustained effect on training practice. By “knowledge development” we mean the important lessons learned in the project that should be shared with the field to enhance the training efforts of others, and not the development of curricula or evaluation results. In this cluster of projects, we believe there was important knowledge development, for example, in the areas of partnering with youth, collaborating with Native American communities, and using embedded evaluation in training delivery. These types of lessons are as important as (if not more so) the effective development and delivery of curricula. Knowledge development and its dissemination are particularly important because training is so frequently articulated by public agencies and policy makers as a solution to many problems in child welfare agencies. Yet, as a field of study, so very little is known.

Recommendations on Knowledge Development

- 1) The Children’s Bureau should elevate the field of child welfare training by funding additional cross-site research and evaluation projects. The immediate next step should be to fund a prospective evaluation of a cluster of training grants. Additionally, flexibility in project goals, designs, and strategies should be encouraged in the RFP process. Too often, in an effort to secure funding, potential grantees design proposals that attempt to respond to “what the Children’s Bureau wants.” This results in proposals that “over promise.” Instead, the RFP process should encourage and reward creativity.
- 2) Grantees should recognize that their projects are opportunities to develop learning about the field of child welfare training that can and should be shared with wider constituencies. Although “lessons learned” are typically requested as a part of project reporting at the end of grantee projects, the content is generally thin and lessons are not shared. Grantees should make more of an effort to think conceptually about the core lessons of their project and disseminate the contributions of their project via conference presentations and journal articles. These should be less focused on promoting projects and more focused on linking project innovations to the wider field of child welfare training. For example, the conceptual model designed for this study might be used by future grantees to conceptualize their knowledge development contributions to the field. One project might be particularly successful in

efforts at collaboration, while another might be strong in use of technology in training design, delivery, evaluation, or dissemination. Projects need not have solutions in all areas, but should be encouraged to recognize the strengths of their projects and package the lessons in a way that is useful to knowledge development in the field.

- 3) Public child welfare agencies should contribute to this knowledge development partnership by becoming more open learning communities and sharing responsibility (and credit) for identifying and promulgating innovations to the field.

In addition to these five core areas, there are other recommendations—particularly those raised by grantees—that might be considered. These include:

- A longer time period for projects (four or five years) so that projects can devote additional time to developing collaborations, conducting follow-up evaluation activities, and disseminating knowledge.
- Enhanced communication among grantees at grantee meetings and between meetings; for example, having each grantee in a cluster deliver a curriculum segment during grantee meetings.
- Mechanisms for encouraging the field's utilization of previously developed curricula materials that continue to be salient for the field; for example, sponsoring conferences or developing a video for the purpose of demonstrating the content, strengths, and appropriate target audiences for existing curricula.

National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants

Case Study Report of Independent Living Training Projects

Introduction

In September 2000, the Children’s Bureau funded 12 three-year child welfare training projects that focused on training workers to assist youth transitioning from care to independent living. In 2003, the Children’s Bureau funded Boston University School of Social Work to conduct the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants. The National Evaluation consists of four components¹. One major component was the evaluation of the cluster of Independent Living (IL) training projects. This report provides the results of that evaluation.

The research questions guiding this study included the following:

- What is the site context of projects that may impact their ability to influence outcomes?
- How did grantees implement project activities?
- To what extent did projects achieve immediate training outcomes?
- How are context and project activities related to outcomes?

Because the evaluation project was funded at the time that the IL training projects were concluding, methodological options were limited. Consequently, the focus of this evaluation was the implementation and immediate outcomes of the training projects. The goal was to produce information that could further develop the delivery and impact of federally-funded training projects.

1. In addition to the multiple case study of Independent Living training projects, the other three components of the National Evaluation project include: comprehensive literature review of child welfare training, survey of state training directors, and survey of faculty of schools of social work.

Conceptual Framework

An early task of the project was to develop a conceptual model that would guide the conduct of the evaluation of the IL projects but also link the evaluation of the IL projects with the other three components of the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants. Figure A (at right) provides the conceptual model that has guided this project.

The first column, *Contextual Factors* identifies key factors that were likely to influence the development of the project, and potentially the well being of children, youth, and families. These contextual factors included: the state or county agency; the role of the Children’s Bureau in facilitating these projects; organizational factors related to the grantee’s organization; state/county/tribal issues that might affect child welfare; and miscellaneous other contextual issues. The second column, *Training Project Activities* identifies conceptual categories of project activities. All projects engaged in each of these activities to some extent, although they may have emphasized some more than others. Additionally, it was anticipated that there would be widespread variation in the delivery of these different activities. The third column, *Individual Project Outcomes* identifies the range of project outcomes that might be achieved through these training projects, although not all projects targeted all the project outcomes. Column four, *Cluster Outcomes* identifies more sustained impacts on fields of practice. The final column, *Long-Term Outcomes* addresses improvements in the well being of child, youth, and family.

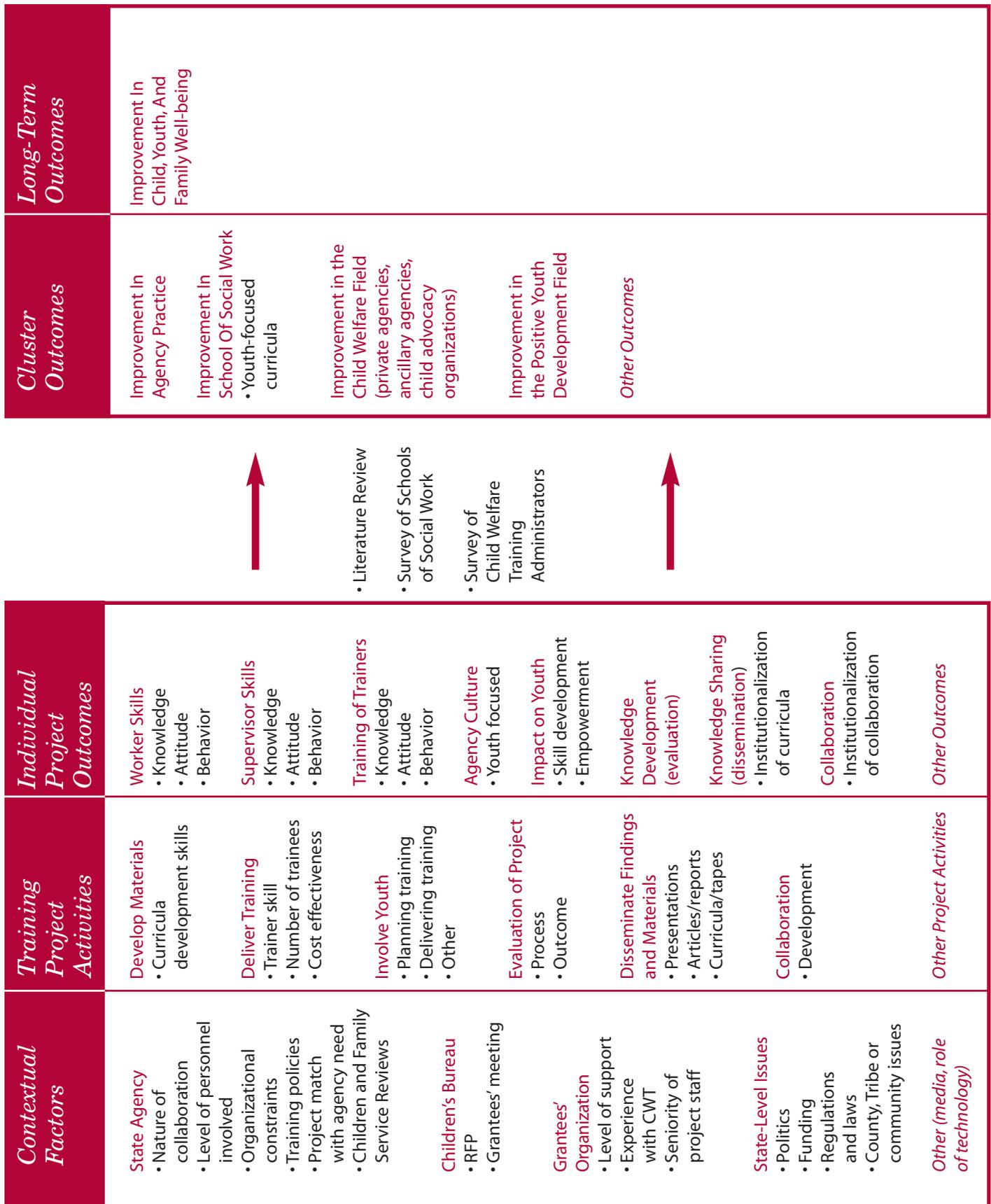
The conceptual model indicates a potential gap between columns three and four. In conceptualizing the evaluation project, we anticipated that while most training projects are likely to be successful at influencing individual project outcomes, there may be greater difficulty in advancing longer-term impact on the field and long-term outcomes resulting in improvements in child, youth and family well-being. The gap in the conceptual model conveys the anticipated disjuncture between successfully completed projects and longer-term impact. A critical part of the overall national evaluation project is to identify barriers to more sustained improvements.

Method

The evaluation of IL training grantees utilized a multiple case study design. According to Yin² (1984) a multiple case study is defined as “empirical inquiry that uses more than a single case in investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context

2. Yin, R.K. 1984. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Figure A



are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” This method was selected for several reasons. First, the strength of the case study method is its ability to describe and analyze complex phenomena that are situated within a specific context. Training projects such as these are complex in their multiple sets of activities, key actors, foci of interventions, and their contextual uncertainty. Moreover, all the projects were concluded or near conclusion by the time of the evaluation study. Hence, the collection of in-depth retrospective data was the most feasible option. Other design options, such as the collection of pre-test and post-test data, identification of control groups, or other options were precluded.

Three core principles guided the design and conduct of the study: collaboration, utilization, and triangulation. Although maintaining the integrity of an independently conducted evaluation, the evaluation project attempted to work collaboratively with training project sites by soliciting input about project design, sharing findings at a draft stage, and facilitating dialog about the meaning and implications of the study findings. During the planning phase of the study, the evaluators held a 2-day meeting with the grantees to provide information about the overall project and the case study evaluation. The draft conceptual model, data collection plan, and instruments were presented to the group and feedback was solicited. The meeting also was used to talk about the larger issues facing the field of child welfare training to guide the general research questions of the evaluation. During the data interpretation phase of the study, a draft report of the case study evaluation was distributed to the grantee representatives for review and comment and a second meeting was convened to discuss study conclusions.

The principle of utilization led to design decisions that focused on producing data that could be most helpful to the Children’s Bureau, and the field of child welfare in general. The principle of triangulation was implemented through the multiple data collection activities, interviewing of several key individuals, and multiple analytic strategies.

Of the 12 funded IL training projects, nine were selected for the case study evaluation. We eliminated our (Boston University) training project from inclusion. We then selected the smallest project (Fordham) to use as a pilot. The University of Kansas project was eliminated because it could not be scheduled during the field period. The remaining nine projects formed the project sample and are identified by the university in which they were located: University of Denver (DU), Eastern Michigan University (EMU), University of Oklahoma (OK), San Diego State University (SDSU), San Francisco State University (SFSU), State University of New York (SUNY), University of North Carolina (UNC), University of South Carolina (USC), and University of Southern Maine (USM). (Brief descriptions of the grantee organizations are found on pages 22–24.)

After conducting a pilot study with the Fordham University project in Summer 2004, the field period for data collection ran from August–December 2004. All site visits were conducted during this time period. Most were 2-day visits; occasionally they were for one day or three days. Prior to the site visit, relevant documents were reviewed including the proposal, interim and final reports, the complete curriculum, videos, and any other products. Site visit activities included interviews with key project personnel including the project director, youth participants, trainers, curriculum developers, evaluators, and collaborators from the public child welfare agency or key private agencies. At sites where training was still being offered, we attempted to schedule the visit so we could observe training. Table 1 (see page 20) provides a list of the activities that were conducted at each site and the documents reviewed.

To supplement the case study data we conducted phone follow-up surveys with past training participants. Because projects were not expecting to participate in an outside evaluation (and therefore, typically did not have contact information available) and the length of time that had passed (up to 2 years), we relied on a convenience sample for the phone survey. The method involved distributing flyers describing the purpose of the phone survey and requesting participation. Our contacts at the project sites were asked to distribute 10 flyers to individuals or groups (child welfare offices, group homes) who had received the training. Past training participants would then call in to participate in the phone interview. Details on the method and results of the phone survey are found in Appendix A.

Data analysis involved writing detailed case study reports for each site that integrated the various types of data and used the conceptual model as a guide to organize the data. When these reports were completed, the second phase of data analysis involved the multi-site analysis. The elements of the conceptual model guided the integration of data across the multiple sites through an iterative process. A series of matrices were developed to organize key concepts across sites. Additionally, the raw data (interview notes, final reports, curricula) were frequently double-checked for accuracy. As segments were written the content was reviewed by the analytic team to determine whether there were different recollections of the data gathered in interviews, as well as to begin to generate implications from the data. Two other checks were included to insure accuracy and objectivity. Research assistants reviewed sections of the written multi-site analysis and compared it to the individually written case study reports to look for discrepancies. Finally, a draft report was made available to the grantees to correct any errors of fact and to generate discussion regarding the validity of the implications and recommendations that were drawn by the project team.

Table 1: Data Collection Activities / Products Reviewed

	Interviews (N)	Training Observation	Product Reviewed (N)
A	Project director (1), Trainer (1), Representative, grantee org. (1)	None	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (3), Media (1)
B	Project director (1), Trainer (2), Curriculum developer (2), State collaborator (1), Evaluator (1)	7 hrs.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (1), Media (1)
C	Project director (3), Trainer (1), Curriculum developer (2), State collaborator (2), Evaluator (2), Youth (3), Representative, grantee org. (5)	3 hrs.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (3), Media (3)
D	Project director (1), Trainer (1), Evaluator (1), Youth (2), Representative, grantee org. (3)	None	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (1), Media (1)
E	Projector director (1), Trainer (3), State collaborator (2), Evaluator (1), Representative, private child welfare agency (1)	6 hrs.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (1), Media (1)
F	Project director (2), State collaborator (3), Representative, child welfare agency (2)	None	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Curriculum (1), Media (5)
G	Project director (1), Trainer (2), Curriculum developer (2), state collaborator (2), Evaluator (1) Representative, grantee org. (1)	50 min.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (6), Media (4)
H	Project director (1), Trainer (1), State collaborator (1), Youth (1), Representative, grantee org. (2)	None	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (3), Media (4)
I	Project director (1), Trainer (2), State collaborator (2), Youth (2), Representative, grantee org. (2)	5.5 hrs.	Grant proposal (1), Final report (1), Interim report (6), Curriculum (1), Media (1)

One final task was a content analysis of curricula and videos. Two project team members read the nine curricula to identify broad thematic areas within each. The following conceptually distinct categories appeared across the nine curricula: Adolescent Development, Independent Living Assessment/Case Planning, Policies, Special Issues, Special Populations, Supervisor/Worker Relationship, Worker Skills, Youth/Worker Relationship, Youth Development, and Youth in Foster Care.

After the broad categories were developed, specific codes within these main categories were identified using an iterative process. A definition or description of the code was written to assure that individual coders would have a common understanding of terms and their meaning. For example, under the broad category of Youth Development, a sub-code of Philosophy/Principles was developed. A description that reads, “Definition and/or philosophy of positive youth development are present in the curriculum. This information may be delivered using various methods (e.g., didactic, discussion, activity)” was added as the initial two coders worked with this sub-code. In many cases the initial part of the description of each sub-code was revised as the coding process advanced. In this way, the codebook for the curricula content analysis was developed.

After the initial coding of the curricula by two members of the research team, two additional coders reviewed the curricula. Their codes were then compared with those of the first two coders. During this process, sub-codes continued to be added, deleted, and modified. The second coding allowed for refinement of the broad categories, sub-codes, and code descriptions. A mere mention of a sub-code did not qualify it for inclusion as a category covered by any curricula. Using the sub-code descriptions/definitions, the coders rated curricula as having a particular category present if there was substantial evidence that the topic, issue, or idea was covered in the curricula.

Findings

The findings report the cross-site analysis of the project case studies. The presentation of findings follows the organization of the conceptual framework. Thus they are in five main areas: context, project activities, project outcomes, cluster outcomes, and long-term outcomes.

Context

Contextual factors that were examined include: the grantee's organizational setting, the relationship with the child welfare system, and other issues related to the state and local setting.

Grantee Organization

Several of the grantees were centers or institutes affiliated with schools of social work and emphasizing a state or regional jurisdiction: DU, the Institute for Families; EMU, the Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Communities; UNC, the Jordan Institute for Families; USC, the Center for Child and Family Studies. Two of the grantees were affiliated with a national resource center not specifically affiliated with social work: OK, the National Resource Center for Youth Services; USM, the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. Two were Title IV-E funded training academies in California: SDSU, the Southern California Public Child Welfare Training Academy; SFSU, the Bay Area Academy. The final grantee was a center with a state/regional focus but not specific to a school of social work: SUNY, the Center for Development of Human Services (CDHS). Table 2 summarizes a brief description of each grantee organization.

All grantees had a base of experience in child welfare training. The two projects housed in the National Resource Centers (OK, USM) had extensive infrastructure for the development and delivery of training throughout their regions. For example, USM had significant experience in the development of competencies for child welfare workers and OK had special expertise in the development and delivery of culturally competent training. Other grantees that were part of a Center or Institute also had existing infrastructure (e.g., cadres of trainers, expertise in curriculum development, ongoing relationships with state and county child welfare agencies, and dissemination mechanisms) that facilitated the implementation of these training projects.

In addition to expertise in child welfare training, several sites also demonstrated a commitment to adolescent issues (OK, SUNY, USM). For example, at SUNY both the project director and the administrative director of the grantee organization had IL experience and saw the RFP as an opportunity to fill a gap in training. They perceived that youth in their state voiced the same IL-related problems that existed 20 years ago.

<i>Grantee</i>	<i>Table 2 Description of Organization</i>
DU	Institute for Families (IF) is one of the biggest child welfare training providers in the state. It has conducted numerous trainings for the state (both core and advanced). IF is part of the Graduate School of Social Work. Most activities of IF are focused on child welfare, but they also do work in the area of juvenile justice. In addition to training, they also conduct research and program evaluation.
EMU	The Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Communities at EMU has been in existence for over 20 years and was established to conduct applied research, create/test demonstration programs, design/provide training, disseminate information, and consult with organizations serving children and families.
OK	The National Resource Center for Youth Services has 25 years experience in training and technical assistance and has a national reputation and a focus on adolescent services. It has an extensive training focus and numerous grants and contracts. For 15 years the Center has operated a child welfare resource center—the National Resource Center on Youth Development.
SDSU	The applicant was the Southern California Public Child Welfare Training Academy (PCWTA) but after award grantee was reorganized under the umbrella organization, the Academy for Professional Excellence. PCWTA and STAR (the IL training project) were two of several programs within the Academy for Professional Excellence.
SFSU	SFSU School of Social Work has extensive experience in child welfare curriculum development and is part of CalSWEC, a CA Consortium of graduate programs which utilizes Title IV-E funds to train MSW students in child welfare. The School administers the Bay Area Academy which is responsible for providing organizational development expertise to the child welfare departments of twelve Bay Area counties. California Youth Connection was a core collaborator.
SUNY	The grantee organization was the Center for Development of Human Services (CDHS). CDHS is a partner of the Research Foundation of SUNY, Buffalo State College. CDHS is the primary provider of child welfare training and technical assistance in the state. CDHS is one of four independent state resource centers covering two regions of 17 counties.
UNC	The Jordan Institute was founded in 1996; its vision is to “strengthen families and engage communities”. The Institute is a “conduit bringing together researchers, organizations, communities and families to engage in research, train practitioners and community leaders, and collaborate with policy makers and legislators.”
USC	Center for Child and Family Studies is part of the College of Social Work. The Center has 40–50 staff including an evaluation unit.
USM	The Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine offers graduate degree programs in public policy and has extensive applied research programs, including child welfare training and technical assistance.

With long histories in the field of training, many grantees are considered innovators in the field. For example, SUNY has introduced an innovative model in New York for the transfer of training involving pre-training conferences between workers and their supervisors—with the staff development coordinator/trainer present. The trainer later gives feedback to the worker and supervisor on how the worker performed in the classroom and recommends ways the agency can meet the worker’s future learning needs. Each worker receives three conferences (pre-core, post-core, and at the point of seeking further staff development) where worker, supervisor, and staff development coordinator/trainer are present. In addition, supervisors with dilemmas about how to help a worker improve skills can request individual assistance from CDHS. CDHS also has developed technology for evaluating training.

Innovations in training also were identified at USM, where the Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI) is involved in a number of training initiatives to respond to the state restructuring of child welfare services. For example, CWTI is in the field using a model of “Work as Training” in which the trainer works with the trainee and supervisor in the field continually.

Although sites primarily described the strengths of their organizational context (e.g., experience, infrastructure), they also noted occasional challenges. EMU reported internal challenges such as negotiating with the setting regarding office space, project materials, and devoting staff time to project activities rather than teaching. Three sites reported turnover among IL training project staff as a key impeding factor (OK, SUNY, USC).

Collaboration With the Child Welfare System

As with all training grants, grantees were required to collaborate with the public child welfare agency. While all grantees had some relationship with the state and/or county child welfare agency, there was extensive variation to these relationships.

For projects with a regional approach, the collaborative relationship between the project and the child welfare system could be complicated. The relationship tended to be stronger within the state where the project was located. But efforts to implement the project in other states in the region often yielded variable relationships that needed to be cultivated, and successful implementation was uneven, depending upon the strength of the relationship between the project and the state/county.

For instance, UNC had a solid relationship with the child welfare system in North Carolina, but the implementation of this project required relationships with several other states. The establishment of these relationships was a key part of their project activities. The project worked in eight states, with variation in policy and practice. Reportedly, Tennessee and Kentucky had several training grants and they have more sophisticated training infrastructure, that likely helped with implementation of training. Other states were considered more problematic. For example, Florida was in the midst of privatizing their child welfare services, leading to a lot of personnel changes and difficulty establishing ongoing collaborative relationships.

The USM project also had a regional focus and found considerable variability among the New England states with regard to the provision of IL services, existing systems for training, and the integration of youth development philosophy. For instance, respondents noted that Connecticut has been a national leader on these issues (e.g., it has a statewide youth advisory board). In Vermont, the IL coordinator was involved at first but later the training was not marketed well and fewer participants attended; and Rhode Island was not in a position to participate in collaborative efforts.

Additionally, both USM and UNC had overlapping IL projects with other grantees in their regions (USM with Boston University and UNC with USC). This caused some confusion in planning and a need to adapt original plans.

Another key factor was the long-standing nature of reciprocity that existed in some collaborations. For example, USC had many individuals at the Center that were previous employees of the Department of Social Services. This was noted in other sites as well (SDSU, UNC). For example, at SDSU most employees at the Academy once worked for the county. This was perceived as helpful to successful training projects.

Child Welfare Systems

The child welfare systems with which the grantees collaborated had their own sets of strengths and challenges that impacted the training project. Common challenges identified by respondents included: 1) budget crises, 2) insufficient priority given to training, 3) insufficient attention to adolescent issues, and 4) geography.

1) Budget crises

All but one site (OK) spoke about the impact that challenging state and county budget environments had on the projects. Concerns about budget issues manifested themselves in several ways. For example in South Carolina the state budget crisis led to workers who did not have time to participate in training or could not get reimbursed for travel to attend training. UNC reported budget problems in all eight states involved in their project, that led to state reluctance to spend money on training. In Michigan, state budget problems led to extensive retirements, that resulted in a lot of new people in staff positions and staff stretched thin due to early retirements. In San Diego, budget difficulties led to a hiring freeze. Therefore, the Academy stopped doing a lot of core training and shifted to more advanced training. However, this led to too much different training being offered and a need to strategize with the counties to deal with the variety of training needs and requests. Similar examples were given by other projects as well.

2) Insufficient priority given to training

Virtually all sites reported that states and counties allocated insufficient priority to staff training. This was the case for staff training in general, as well as the IL training specifically.

Respondents at USM reported that workers have large caseloads and it is a challenge to get full participation in training. In general, attendance at pre-service training is considered to be good. However, after workers become full-time they have little time for training and primarily attend only what is mandatory. Previously the CWTI offered more discretionary training, but has since limited this because workers do not have enough time to attend. There is also a relationship between the lack of training priority and geography in primarily rural states. Lack of funding to pay for travel costs and overnight stays becomes a barrier to participation in training. USM noted, however, that when training was done off-site for a few days and expenses paid, people made a real commitment to leave their environment and attend to the tasks of training.

In South Carolina the IL training was not mandated and the project had a difficult time recruiting participants from the public agency. To adapt to this challenge the project made the training shorter (a common strategy among the grantees) and expanded the target audience to include private agency group home workers.

DU respondents reported that training is not considered a priority in the state or the county. In fact, the state sends a double message to workers: training is valuable but workers need to stay on the job. However, a strength noted in this environment is that Colorado has had the same training director for 20 years; it is helpful to have someone with this level of experience/stability.

3) Lack of priority to adolescent/IL issues in the state/county

Several respondents identified that adolescent issues in general—and IL in particular—do not receive enough attention in their states and counties, at least historically. Many respondents believed, however, that with the combination of funds provided through the Chafee legislation and the delivery of these IL training projects, attention to adolescent issues is increasing.

DU was among the projects that stated this to be an issue. In particular, when the state has fiscal problems adolescent services are more likely to be cut. There is also a bias against adolescents; there are limited resources in adolescent services and more challenging adolescents are quickly referred to the youth justice system.

SDSU reported that in San Diego County there has been a “cookie cutter” approach to providing IL services (which are primarily life skills training). However, this is believed to be changing with the newly established Adolescent Services Unit. But historically, the percentage of eligible youth taking advantage of IL services was low (classroom-based life skills training thought to be “boring”).

At the time of the project, IL services appeared limited in the state of Michigan. They did not have an IL youth advisory board. There was also wide variation by county; some counties did not know about the Chafee legislation, did not have IL coordinators, and there was no state monitoring of the counties about IL services. An EMU respondent who was part of the CFSR process reported that only one youth could talk about receiving IL services. But the situation might be improving. Respondents reported that the director of the state child welfare agency was expressing interest in further development of youth services. The state also was involved in initiatives via the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Program.

At SUNY youth services were a part of the state child welfare agency’s service goals and received relatively high attention from the agency. The focus of the curriculum on high-risk youth was chosen because help with this population repeatedly surfaced as a request in needs assessments. Project staff believed that the state agency and many child welfare agencies across the country do not want to deal with high-risk youth, specifically those in congregate care. According to one respondent, the state child welfare agency did not want to address the high-risk youth population in its regular training because they believed that high-risk youth should be served by other state agencies (e.g., mental health, substance abuse). When the IL grants became available, this was seen as an ideal opportunity to address such a topic.

USC reported a somewhat mixed experience. Prior to this grant there was very little training on IL. But a strong person in the state child welfare agency was

committed to IL and he was very important in several initiatives. The availability of the Chafee funds has been central to the development of new youth services. One key challenge, however, was that the new infusion of IL funds led to many fragmented policies and programs around the state. They “popped up” but were never fully implemented.

Although sites were in agreement that, in general, adolescent services received low priority, there were strengths exhibited in many localities. A key resource in North Carolina directly relevant to this grant is Independent Living Resources—an organization that has advanced IL in the state and conducts contracted training. Additionally, the North Carolina IL coordinator’s stability in her position and advocacy for teens has been an important factor in IL work in the state. UNC also noted that among the states it worked with, Florida was more advanced than most in their attention to the IL population.

4) State geography

Three geographic issues appeared to play a role in influencing the context of the project: the size of the coverage area, the rural character of some regions, and the organization of services in a county-based system. As noted earlier, some projects had a regional (UNC, USM) or multi-state focus (EMU, OK). Uniquely, OK also worked with many tribal communities in Oklahoma and New Mexico. Geographically large projects are challenged by the attention needed to coordinate efforts and adapt to different environments. County-based systems present these same challenges. Projects operating in rural areas expressed challenges related to travel and communication.

Even projects operating in a single state express these types of concerns in covering an entire state. DU described the challenge of coordinating authority and responsibility between the state and counties: the state advises counties on child welfare programs; the counties independently develop training plans and choose which training to offer; policies and programs can become too fragmented; smaller counties may have only two IL cases and not want the training; and workers in the southern part of the state have to travel 6–7 hours for training.

As another example, North Carolina has a state-supervised, county-administered system of child welfare services. There are more than 100 counties, each with slight variation in practice and varying levels of commitment to both training and IL services. The personality of the IL Coordinators and the level of support can influence IL efforts in each county.

Respondents were queried about the impact of CFSTRs in their jurisdiction, but all expressed negligible impact (at the time of the evaluation) on training in their states.

Conclusions: Context

- All grantee organizations had previous (and often substantial) experience in child welfare, training, or adolescent issues (and sometimes a combination of expertise); thus the sites were well chosen to conduct this work.
- Grantee organizations include schools of social work, affiliated centers or institutes, and training academies. There are potential strengths and weaknesses to each type of setting, to be discussed further in our final conclusions.
- Virtually all projects describe economic and political contexts that posed challenges to implementing their projects. While these may alter over time, training projects are likely to continue to operate in uncertain economic and political climates.
- Although all projects are required to have some collaboration with the public child welfare agency at the start of the projects (as indicated by a letter of support), actual levels of collaboration varied. Some appeared to have minimal collaborations, others moderate, and some approaching full partnership. Those that were more minimal appeared limited to this project, whereas those that were extensive typically were long-standing and reciprocal. Projects with a multi-state focus generally had the strongest relationship with the public child welfare system in their own state and less strong relationships in other states.
- Collaborations might be with the training unit, the adolescent services unit, or some other unit within the public child welfare agency. There were some challenges if the adolescent unit is the core focus of the collaboration since this unit may be marginalized within the agency. Projects need to have a champion of the concept/idea within the agency.
- Key challenges in collaborating with the public child welfare system included: budget crises, insufficient priority given to training, insufficient priority given to adolescent issues, and state geography. Also unique to this cluster, projects were challenged by widely varying perceptions of and commitment to a positive youth development approach.
- At the time of the evaluation, the impact of CFSRs on training was limited. In the future, it might be anticipated that CFSRs may provide a window of opportunity for more training initiatives.
- Some projects reported that the Chafee legislation and funding of Independent Living services helped to create a climate that was supportive of these training projects. In some, but not all, jurisdictions there seemed to be productive synergy between the training projects and other state/county initiatives that advanced attention to the needs of adolescents in the state together.



Project Activity: Curriculum Development

Introduction

The training projects used a variety of processes for curriculum development, produced a range of curriculum materials, and covered content that clustered in nine key areas. Virtually all sites used advisory committees and focus groups to provide ideas about content. Many sites designed their learning objectives to build on core competencies identified as necessary for state agency child welfare workers and supervisors. A smaller number of sites used consultants to assist in writing the curriculum or utilized selected materials from previously developed curricula.

Many sites addressed similar curriculum content issues. Topics taught by virtually all sites were: (a) Positive Youth Development (including principles and philosophy) and (b) Independent Living Assessment and Case Planning (including a strengths focus, building relationships, locating and using resources, and building support networks). An additional aspect of Positive Youth Development taught by several sites was the application of the philosophy to practice. Several sites also addressed the topics of state and federal policies related to youth, and relationships between the youth and their workers (including their different perspectives). Other topics of note were diversity among foster care youth and worker skills of support, empathy, and engagement. A few sites addressed more specific issues such as high-risk youth (three curricula), HIV/AIDS (one curriculum), violence related to transitioning youth (two curricula), and supervisor-worker relationships (two curricula).

The curricula that were produced included a number of elements such as presentation of theory (e.g., adolescent development), description of available tools and how to use them with youth (e.g., Ansell-Casey Assessment Tool), instructions for training activities (e.g., skill practice and small group exercises),

explanation of handouts and supplementary materials such as bibliographies and resource lists, and inclusion of videos and DVDs.

Our focus is on the process of curriculum development, with a particular goal to illustrate the similarities and differences among the various sites. The most common components of the process were: (a) identifying advisory committee members and convening the advisory committee at regular intervals; (b) designing and conducting focus groups; (c) screening, hiring and supervising youth employees who participated in curriculum development and/or training delivery; (d) writing, pilot testing, finalizing and packaging curriculum modules; and (e) delivering training.

We begin with the purpose and design of project curricula, as defined by the projects themselves.

Purpose and Description of Curricula

DU: The principal objective of the *University of Denver Competency-Based Training for ILP and Youth Service Practitioners* was to develop and provide a competency-based training program for child welfare practitioners working with youth transitioning from out-of-home care and independent living programs to self-sufficiency. Six training modules, a video, and a theater project were proposed. Collaborating agencies included not only the state and county agencies but also the Casey Family Foundation and the American Humane Association. The provision of distance learning and integration of training content into a school of social work course on child welfare were additional features of the project.

EMU: The purpose of this training curriculum for child welfare practitioners was to strengthen their intervention skills in working with older youth in foster care and/or independent living programs. Key elements were the identification of competencies as the basis of the curriculum, development of modules for specific populations of youth (GLBTQ, adjudicated, and youth with disabilities), and development of web-based training (in addition to face-to-face training). The intended audience for the training was all child welfare practitioners working with older youths and their supervisors. Both public child welfare staff and contracted agency staff were targeted for the training.

OK: The purpose of the competency-based curriculum was to strengthen tribal agency staffs' intervention skills for working with older tribal youth transitioning to adulthood. Additionally, the project wanted state workers to have a better understanding of tribal youth. The rationale for this target audience was that through strengthened tribal and public child welfare agency staff intervention

skills, culturally relevant independent living services would reach tribal youth not currently being offered independent living programming and services.

SDSU: The curriculum *Project STAR: Successful Transitions for Adult Readiness* was designed to enhance outcomes for youth exiting foster care by re-professionalizing child welfare practice for these youth through the Independent Living Program. The curriculum was designed to be multidisciplinary, due in part to the project team's belief that assisting youth with transition is the entire community's responsibility. The initial target area included five counties in Southern California. Several organizations including the Southern Indian Health Council (the Indian child welfare agency) were partners in the effort.

SFSU: The curriculum *Y.O.U.T.H.—Youth Offering Unique Tangible Help* was developed as a competency-based training curriculum that targeted public child welfare practitioners working with older youth in foster care and/or in independent living programs. The curriculum was developed by youth who had experienced the child welfare system and focused on involving young people in decision-making and planning. Training was designed to strengthen child welfare workers' intervention skills and provide the assessment tools they needed to (a) work with youth ages 16–21 to aid them in making a successful transition to adulthood, as well as help them avoid long-term dependency on the social welfare system, and (b) provide age appropriate and youth-focused assistance that addressed early steps to emancipation for youth ages 13–16 to prepare them for later successful transitions.

SUNY: The principal objective of the *Training of Child Welfare Staff to Enhance the Competencies of Older Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care* was to develop and deliver an outcome-based, youth-focused curriculum to assist child welfare staff and caregivers (childcare staff and foster parents) to better serve a portion of identified high-risk youth. An additional goal was to make the curriculum user-friendly. The curriculum (a) focused on high-risk youth in response to a documented need, (b) was PowerPoint-based so that a range of trainers could use it, and (c) was skill-based and interactive in nature. It also has a strong research base related to how needs drive behavior, factors that facilitate individual change, and methods for increasing motivation.

UNC: The principal objective of the *Interdependent Living Project* curriculum (developed in partnership with youth) was to effect changes in the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of the child welfare staff—especially with involving youth in decision-making regarding their well-being. The intended target audience was a variety of child welfare and youth service providers in both urban and rural settings where workers had independent living as either a primary professional role or as one of many professional responsibilities.

USC: The principal objective of the *Interactive Training for Independent Living: First Voice* project was to develop and deliver a competency-based curriculum. This included a protocol and instruments for youth-directed independence-readiness methodology for child welfare practitioners working with youth transitioning out of foster care. The intended target audience was all state child protective service workers, as well as some supervisors and administrators.

USM: The principal objective of the *Training of Child Welfare Practitioners to Work Effectively with Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care Through the Federal Independent Living Program* was to develop and deliver a competency-based curriculum and training system that incorporates and models a youth development approach. The project developed two curricula: one for child welfare staff and community providers (*Teach Them to Fish*), and the other for trainers of those staff. The target audience was child welfare staff and community providers.

Use of Advisory Committees

Seven of the nine projects utilized feedback from one or more advisory committees. These advisory committees played different roles at different sites, and many participated in several project tasks simultaneously. Among these tasks was recruiting youth to assist with curriculum development.

At both UNC and OK advisory committees were utilized extensively for curriculum development. The sites maximized the committees' benefits in the effective way they made use of them. At UNC dozens of youth and adults participated in one or more advisory committee meetings during the life of the project. They worked on curriculum review and in other key training implementation tasks. A youth and the Project Director co-facilitated these meetings and curriculum-training exercises were practiced with the advisory committee as participants.

OK had very active advisory groups whose members received training and provided feedback for curriculum revision. The staff formed a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and a Tribal Competency Work Group whose input was used over the course of a year for curriculum development. These groups included various tribal and non-tribal child welfare staff representatives from each state, as well as foster tribal youth. Project advisors represented those in administration (usually elders) who helped the project gain access to tribes. The PAC chose the pilot sites and members of the committee were participants in the Training of Trainers (T-of-T) course. Final curriculum revisions were based on feedback from the PAC and the participants in the T-of-T. These suggested revisions included: adding participant manual pages to the trainer manual; increasing transition

Case Highlight: DU Use of Advisory Committees

DU's experience exemplifies extensive use of advisory committees across several functions. DU formed both a national and local advisory committee. The national advisory committee had representatives from around the country. The local advisory committee had representatives from the state IL agency, youth service organizations, substance abuse service providers, and mental health service providers. Both the national and local advisory groups were formed specifically for this project. While there was only one national advisory committee meeting, the local advisory committee was very active and generated many of the final curriculum ideas. The local advisory committee (a) recommended the sites for pilot training, (b) assisted in the identification of training participants, and (c) distributed flyers to county agencies for recruitment. Both committees lifted up a curriculum issue that the project staff had not considered—the need to locate community resources to help a range of high-risk youth including the developmentally delayed or youth who are low functioning for a variety of reasons. The committees' input resulted in training sessions where agency resource panels presented available services and printed materials on resources were distributed. The curriculum consultant also attended group meetings of existing youth advisory committees in different counties. This resulted in contributions to the content of three modules: mental health, substance abuse, and culture. Youth contributed ideas for scenarios for other modules as well.

statements from one session to the other; more historical timeline information for the historic distrust activity; and revision of the presentation of the terms “traditional,” “assimilated,” and “acculturated.” According to the final report, each state and tribe was responsible for ensuring that the training was responsive to their individual state needs. Therefore, curriculum design was developed generically to allow for the incorporation of historical, cultural, and resource information relevant to the region where the curriculum is to be delivered.

Other sites utilized advisory committees, but in a more limited capacity. At SUNY, advisory board members served as participants in curriculum pilot tests, and recommended participants for the piloting and final delivery of the training. At SDSU, advisory group input was one factor that determined the training topics for individual training sessions. Similar to DU, advisory group members, especially the County Health and Human Services, assisted in the identification of training participants and the distribution of flyers to appropriate agencies.

The EMU project utilized Curriculum Stakeholder Councils that included youth and agency representatives from a variety of youth oriented social service programs in the Midwest and Oregon. According to the final report, the collaboration involved “a cycle of discussion, development of direction, review of progress, and input into the next steps.” The stakeholder meetings initially occurred every 3–4 months, then met on an annual basis. Respondents said that there was a lot of discussion in these meetings. In particular, they reported one meeting in which a youth spoke and “her comments changed the dynamic of the meeting.” About 20–30 people attended the advisory board meetings and youth attended every meeting.

Use of Focus Groups in Curriculum Development

Eight of the nine projects used feedback from focus groups in developing the curriculum, making this a common project activity. Focus group participants varied from site to site, but child welfare workers, foster youth, and foster parents were the primary groups represented. Focus groups were an early-phase activity that provided input that helped projects “anchor” their training in several ways. For example, participants in some focus groups advocated for inclusion of particular training audiences (e.g., foster parents) that had not been included in the original plan. In other cases, focus groups highlighted content themes they thought should receive more emphasis. Since focus group members were often part of the constituencies that would eventually receive the training (e.g., child welfare workers) or about which the curriculum was written (youth aging out of care), convening focus groups helped to orient project staff to the “real world” issues they needed to address. In spite of the fact that these were generally one-time meetings with a specific group of attendees—as is characteristic of focus groups—these face-to-face meetings sensitized staff to issues that were likely to emerge as the project unfolded and helped them make decisions about curriculum emphasis.

For example, SDSU conducted nine focus groups to determine training content. Collected data contributed to decisions about curriculum competencies and individual training session topics (e.g., adolescent development, helping youth with grief and loss). These focus groups were conducted throughout San Diego County and included child welfare professionals, caregivers, IL providers, educators, current and former foster youth, tribal child welfare professionals and caregivers, and biological parents.

At UNC written evaluations and focus groups were used to evaluate the pilot training, and data from both resulted in significant curriculum modifications. Although SUNY relied heavily on one-to-one interviews with youth to gather data, the project also conducted focus groups with dozens of staff and foster parents working with foster care youth preparing for independent living. At DU focus groups were primarily conducted with youth. At USC some youth focus groups and surveys with youth had been conducted prior to grant submission, and these data were used to inform the curriculum content.

At SFSU seven focus groups were held with current and former foster youth in California. There were also smaller interview sessions with (a) youth diagnosed with mental illness, (b) foster youth who were also parents, and (c) foster youth who identified as GLBTQ. A team of adults and youth facilitated each of these groups. Additionally, data were collected from two focus groups with social worker participants. The findings from these various focus groups were compiled and the gaps that were identified became the curriculum competencies.

EMU used focus groups in a unique way. Focus group sessions were videotaped and six brief DVD clips were developed showing youth—in both focus group and individual sessions—articulating their needs and expectations with regard to their workers. These “Youth Voices” were organized around the six core themes of the curriculum and each became an introduction to the respective modules. To develop specialized modules on adjudicated youth and gay and lesbian youth, focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with these constituencies and the staff who worked in agencies that serve these young people. Some information on adjudicated youth was integrated into a module, but the focus groups led the project to conclude that most of the needs of this population would be covered in the regular curriculum.

Use of State-of-the-Art Information in Curriculum Development

Four of the nine sites emphasized that their curricula were evidence-based, and that curriculum content reflected state-of-the-art knowledge or practice approaches to working with youth.

For example, SUNY stressed that their practice approaches (e.g., assessing stage of readiness for change and methods for working with high-risk youth) had been shown to be effective by virtue of research validation. The curriculum as a whole was designed with a strong research base (e.g., describing how needs drive behavior, factors that facilitate individual change, and methods for increasing motivation for change). Project staff reviewed the existing literature using the Internet, journal articles, material from the National Resource Center for Youth Services, and information from other National Resource Centers. Project staff also used the Child Welfare and Independent Living Core Curricula from New York State to identify pre-requisite skills, effective training methods, and ideas for content. Information from foster parent training programs was also used. Thus, topics grew out of staff identification of what was already known by the field, as well as youth focus groups and advisory committee recommendations.

DU, OK, and SDSU highlighted that their literature reviews reflected knowledge gleaned from research and best practices literature.

In the course of conducting their literature review, OK discovered that there was little information available on tribal youth in foster care or independent living service delivery to tribal youth in care. Subsequently, they developed a resource guide for tribal and state practitioners with approximately 450 specific resources. They also collaborated with the author of a guide for young people, *The Path Before Me: Questions to Guide American Indian Youth Toward Responsible Living* in revising and renaming the booklet so that the revision would include culturally specific questions that related to tribal youth life. Since no literature existed previously, this site's development of entirely new material could be viewed as development of state-of-the-art information.

Use of Content Experts / Consultants for Curriculum Development

Six of the nine sites (DU, EMU, SDSU, SFSU, SUNY, and USM) used content/training experts or consultants to assist them in writing the curriculum. In these cases, the curriculum was written jointly by project staff and consultants, most often with input from focus groups and advisory committees. In projects that did not use consultants, project staff wrote the curriculum.

Most of the sites using content experts/consultants reported them as quite helpful. Content experts were used in SUNY to develop full curriculum modules on mental health and HIV/AIDS. The staff saw themselves as experts on child welfare practice and on youth, but not on these specialized topics. In SFSU, consultants were used for capacity building among youth, specifically in a “youth learning phase” to train youth on topics such as training delivery and transfer of training. Youth reported that retreats for this purpose—involving the expertise of the consultants—work very well for team building and curriculum refining. DU and USM reported very positive experiences with consultants.

However, for a few sites the experience was mixed or negative. Two sites found that the content experts/consultants were either not that helpful or not consistently helpful. At the EMU site, curriculum developers were consultants. The EMU project staff was committed to using the material that came out of the youth focus groups, but the consultants often wanted to take material that had been done in the past and revise it for this project. Further, the curriculum developers “did not always have the concrete skill level focus” that was needed on this project. This put a burden on project staff to monitor and re-write the curriculum written by the consultants, in order to ensure that it met the needs of the project. Project staff ended up changing about 60% of the curriculum that had been developed by the consultants.

At SDSU an interactive 3-hour process called *Teen Town* was developed by consultants and took place during the first day of training. SDSU project staff judged it to be “excellent” and “a really awesome part of the training.” The consultants trained throughout the nation and developed other important and successful experiential learning opportunities. However, the training materials and procedures were not organized in a format that was ready for implementation. The STAR staff spent many hours organizing, streamlining, and formatting the information so that it would be ready for implementation within the project. Consultants also assisted in curriculum writing for the supervisors’ and managers’ training. However, when this was delivered as a pilot, the audience and staff found it very didactic. A second consultant had to be used to revise this curriculum so it was more focused on collaboration between presenters and the audience. The work of the second consultant was successful. Thus, SDSU had a mixed experience in terms of use of consultants.

Consultants may have contributed to “excessive amounts” of text for initial curricula. Several sites said that too much didactic material was produced by whoever was writing the curriculum and extensive time and piloting was required to pare this down for initial presentations. In spite of the piloting process that resulted in many cuts in content, the curriculum produced by

many sites still needed to be cut considerably because the child welfare agencies would not allow so much time for training. It is not clear to what extent the consultants as a group contributed to the production of an “excessive amount” of initial material, but it seems that they must have been active participants since project staff at many sites partnered with them to produce curricula. This raises the question: To what extent were they guided by specific learning objectives?

In judging the usefulness of consultants for curriculum development, consideration should be given to the extent to which the consultants were an integral part of the project as a whole (e.g., clear about the final learning objectives, knowledgeable about the specific target audiences to be served, and the strengths and needs of the trainers) and their willingness to develop a customized curriculum responsive to these parameters. The sites using consultants who were well integrated into the project (e.g., they were identified in the original grant proposal, attended grantees’ meetings, participated in the national evaluation) seemed to have a high level of satisfaction regarding their participation and the quality of their productivity.

Role of Competencies

Seven of the nine sites highlighted the competency-base of their curricula (DU, EMU, OK, SDSU, SFSU, SUNY, USM). Competencies are the areas of mastery needed for effective performance of a particular job. Competencies are often categorized within the domains of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. To perform well in the role of a child welfare worker, technical knowledge and skills related to job tasks are needed (e.g., how to assess for sexual abuse, how to file an abuse report). But there are additional relevant competencies expected of workers, such as self-awareness, attitudes toward clients, and ability to work with diverse populations. Curriculum development based on competencies must balance what the child welfare agency needs workers to do on the job (narrow view of competencies, may be more concrete behaviors) and what the training project feels workers really need to advance their conceptual knowledge or skills (may be broad view of competencies, may be more interpersonal or relational behaviors). Some projects spoke about the tension between these two needs.

SUNY especially stressed that they wrote their competencies after examining the core competencies for child welfare workers in their state. Their focus was on advanced competencies for working with high-risk youth. Using the core competencies as a base, they wrote IL competencies that took the “core” behaviors to the “next level.” The approach was to (a) develop necessary trainee outcomes or abilities and design the curriculum around those, (b) collaborate with content

experts, and (c) ensure that the curriculum was evidence-based. All content was *built on information taught in core* (e.g., consistent with training on visitation, family preservation, enhancing parent-child relationships, and assessing the culture of child welfare practice).

The grantee agency and project staff from USM had considerable expertise in the development of competencies for child welfare workers, and thus were able to develop a set for adolescent caseworkers and to build the curriculum around these competencies. Like SUNY and USM, the grantee agency and project staff at DU had considerable expertise in the development of competencies for child welfare workers, so they derived competencies by following a literature review and articulation of general goals.

At OK the curriculum themes came from advisory groups that started with a list of approximately 27 competencies and worked on reducing them to 10–12. These competencies focused on: adolescent development, assessment and goal planning, community and tribal resources, federal law and social policy, life skills instruction, positive youth development, and tribal identity.

At EMU competencies and corresponding curriculum modules were developed through the following process: The project asked the youth in focus groups to talk about what makes a good versus not so good worker, what makes a responsive and non-responsive child welfare system, and what an ideal youth-oriented program would look like. These conversations were transcribed and analyzed, themes identified, and competencies distilled from the critical themes. In a similar process, SFSU developed their competencies from the findings of youth focus groups.

Integration of Curriculum Materials Previously Developed

Some sites carefully examined existing curricula to determine whether there were modules that could be converted for use in this IL curriculum to avoid “reinventing the wheel.” At least six sites found such material and either used it or considered using it in the final curriculum. For example, SUNY used criminal justice information examining the long-term impact of violence and training materials previously developed by a content expert in this area. They did something similar on the topic of developmentally disabled youth. They were very pleased with these materials and suggested that the Children’s Bureau draw grantees’ attention to such resources.

OK used some material previously developed by the National Resource Center on Youth Services, but other significant sections of the curriculum were newly

developed. Some of the ideas and materials used by UNC were newly developed, while others were from previous training they conducted or other sources. At SFSU the curriculum ideas came from several sources (e.g., youth videos had been used before for another purpose so the idea was familiar to the project team). At SDSU the *Teen Town/Teen Time* consultants provided materials they had used elsewhere, and STAR staff modified them to make the materials more appropriate to this training. EMU found that the curriculum development consultants wanted to use material previously developed that was not sufficiently skill-oriented. Staff felt committed to use the approaches recommended by the focus groups.

Depending upon the amount and type of material used, the utilization of previously developed training material in future projects might be a strength or a weakness. Arguments in favor are that some existing curricula (especially those developed with Children's Bureau funds) may be very high quality and underutilized. Further, making use of existing material would be cost effective. It might also promote continuity between curricula and link one training project to the next.

Drawbacks are: (a) endorsement of use of existing materials might discourage projects from developing especially creative new materials, (b) previously developed materials might address audiences that are different from the current target audiences, and (c) audiences may experience the resultant "new" curricula as less fresh. The tendency to use already-developed materials may be more likely to occur in projects that operate within training centers where many curricula have already been developed.

Unique Elements of Curriculum Development by Site

The EMU project team conducted numerous focus groups with youth and workers to elicit content for the curriculum (a total of 129 youth, 31 parents, and 78 child welfare workers). The project got access to youth through contacts in the various states and sought to include both positive and less-positive youth. The focus groups were done in three states in rural, urban, and small city settings. Most of the time in the groups was spent listening to youth. Conversations were then transcribed and carefully analyzed to develop themes, competencies, and modules.

At UNC an initial task informing the early development of the curriculum and training plan was a capacity assessment of state child welfare agencies and a survey of child welfare staff and youth in each state. Phone interviews were conducted to determine the status of existing training and level of need in each

state. These interviews revealed stark differences regarding practice with youth. For example, Kentucky was progressive regarding involving youth in case plan development. Mississippi had a particular interest in impacting foster care and group homes. Written surveys were completed with 264 child welfare practitioners regarding their work with youth in care, and with more than 700 foster care youth regarding their experiences in care and transitioning from care.

Project staff at SFSU described the curriculum as, “made up of 20 original interactive exercises utilizing small and large group discussions, youth-made videos (digital stories), interactive games, music, kinesthetic activity, and a powerful injection of firsthand knowledge and input from the youth trainers themselves. These latter components are unique aspects. When social workers wonder aloud why transition-aged youth make certain decisions, or how they feel about certain situations, it is likely that a youth trainer will offer her/his personal experience or knowledge of a peer’s experience as a direct answer. The Y.O.U.T.H. training experience is unlike any that currently exists for those who work with adolescent foster youth. From the moment the social workers walk in the door (greeted immediately by a youth trainer and instructed on how to fill out their pre-test) and throughout the entire training process, they are led by at least four youth trainers.”

DU’s *ILP Theater Project* was a collaborative effort between the state child welfare agency, the Casey Foundation, the grantee agency (Institute for Families), and the graduate school of social work. Two main goals of *The ILP Theater Project* were to give foster youth a voice and to raise awareness about foster youth transitioning to independence. *The ILP Theater Project* helped child welfare administrators, workers, and supervisors see that more attention needed to be paid to youth to secure successful transitioning to independence. The entire *ILP Theater Project* was developed and delivered by foster youth who met together regularly to write about their lives in foster care, and then performed what they had written. Youth also developed, rehearsed, and performed skits for the project at various conferences. Recordings of some of the youth group meetings also were used in training. Youth took part in focus groups and reviewed drafts of curriculum. Youth also were involved in developing the training video, “*Can you hear me now?*”

Project staff at USM highlighted three project elements: (1) their involvement of youth as full partners in the training teams that successfully delivered training to adult audiences, (2) the training for audiences of youth that was written and delivered by youth, and (3) the range of final curriculum products developed.

Products developed included three curricula and a booklet on how to partner with youth:

- *Teach them to Fish*, an 8-session curriculum developed by project staff as the curriculum for the primary training audiences;
- *Running a Workshop: Skills to Make You a Pro*, a Training of Trainers curriculum;
- *Stretch your Skills*, Youth Training Symposium, 2002, training for audiences of youth only, written and delivered by youth;
- Morse, Markowitz, Zanghi, & Burns (2003). *Partnering with youth: Involving youth in child welfare training and curriculum development*, describing lessons learned from working with youth on the project.

The USC staff saw attitude change among members of their training audiences as one of the project's main contributions. The project's curricula—*Listening* (aimed at workers) and *Learning Together* (aimed at supervisors)—were focused on relational skills rather than hard skills (such as money management), because the staff believed it was useless to teach hard skills if workers and supervisors did not know how to establish basic trust and build relationships with young people. From their youth advisory board and many youth focus groups, they realized that the biggest training challenge was finding a way to respond to foster adolescents' persistent complaints about the lack of trust their foster parents and workers had in them. One of the major goals of the staff was to design activities to change attitudes. Several classroom exercises were aimed at having adults remember how they felt as youth. One of the curriculum's guiding concepts was "first voice"—that is, the youth's voice—and the need for workers to hear that voice as the primary one.

SDSU distinguished itself by its interdisciplinary work, occurring at an extent and scale unequaled by any other project. Multidisciplinary groups were targeted for training: contracted case managers and former foster youth, foster parents, group home workers, public child welfare workers, school personnel, supervisors and managers. The multidisciplinary focus was maintained in terms of planning, curriculum development, and training delivery in response to the belief that assisting youth with transition is the entire community's responsibility. More than 500 personnel received training, including: administrators, child welfare workers, foster parents, foster youth, group home staff, IL providers, supervisors, and

Case Highlight: OK Curriculum Development

Although all of the projects have unique features to their curriculum content, the curriculum of OK was notable for its strong emphasis on cultural considerations. As noted, the focus was on working with tribal youth. While some other projects attended to issues of diversity in terms of race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other youth characteristics, the OK project—because of its core focus—was consistent in its attention to addressing the needs of tribal youth and tribal communities within their cultural history and contemporary context. Curriculum materials reflected this emphasis, as did the project’s utilization of advisory committees, inclusion of youth as trainers, and training delivery and audiences.

Reflected in its final report was the value OK placed on incorporating input and feedback at all project stages from targeted tribes and foster tribal youth. The OK project staff saw this as ensuring the curriculum’s cultural responsiveness, usefulness, and capacity for implementation by individual tribes and state agencies. Various tribal and non-tribal child welfare staff representatives from each state, along with foster tribal youth, gathered to form a Project Advisory Group (including 12 state, regional, and national leaders in the areas of Native American service delivery and Indian child welfare services), a Tribal Competency Work Group (including approximately 25 representatives of the federally organized tribes, state child welfare tribal liaisons, and the independent living coordinators in Oklahoma and New Mexico), and smaller focus groups.

youth service personnel such as those from schools, juvenile justice, and mental health programs. Consistent with the multidisciplinary nature of the training, trainers were representative of various disciplines (e.g., county child welfare workers, staff from group homes, and educators). Strengths of this project were having an interdisciplinary mix of people and a focus on helping everyone work together. The STAR project was in step with statewide initiatives focused on increasing collaboration between child welfare services and community partners, thus the timing was excellent for the use of a multidisciplinary model.

Curriculum Development Challenges

Common challenges seemed to have been experienced by many of the sites:

- The time frame for development of curriculum and materials lengthened when projects such as these involved focus groups and advisory committees. However, it was important that project staff not simply develop the curriculum on their own. If the curriculum was piloted more than once and then revised, this too lengthened the time frame.
- Some sites (DU, SDSU, USM) wanted a broad curriculum that could address a diverse audience of workers from various disciplines, but creating such a curriculum was challenging.
- Curriculum development turned out to be more complicated when focused on special populations or addressing audiences of workers across large geographic areas. The time frame for curriculum development may need to be longer to accommodate the range of needs of various audiences and sites.
- Teaching youth to engage in curriculum development is a complicated task and requires focused attention from project staff.

Case Highlight: SUNY Curriculum Development

Unique among the sites was the plan by SUNY—proposed in their application to the Children’s Bureau—to develop an advanced curriculum that could be used by all other sites in the cluster. Project staff believed that four features would make this curriculum desirable to the other sites: (1) advanced competencies so the curriculum could be ADDED to what each of the other sites had developed, (2) a focus on high-risk youth, rather than all youth transitioning out of care, (3) a flexible teaching method (modules in a combination of PowerPoint slides and directions and scripts in the trainer’s manual) and (4) special content for inexperienced trainers (the impact of high-risk behavior on IL, and the impact of IL on high-risk behavior).

The project chose only curriculum topics related to high-risk youth: substance abuse, mental health, and violence. Additional topics included building social supports, developmental disabilities, GLBTQ youth, and HIV/AIDS. The curriculum was designed to be taught to workers once they completed core. The staff suggested in their proposal to the Children’s Bureau that the finalized curriculum be disseminated broadly, because other grantees would be able to use the curriculum as a “second level” of IL training. However, no specific mechanism was developed for this, and although the site disseminated it broadly, other sites did not seem to make use of it.

Conclusions: Curriculum Development

- Projects have substantial experience in curriculum development, they seem to enjoy doing it, and they feel competent in doing it.
- Although project proposals identified the need to develop curricula that addressed cultural diversity, overall projects did not appear to give this a strong focus.
- Since advisory committees were helpful in accomplishing several of the tasks needed in these projects, future projects might use advisory committees to help with the some of the challenges faced by sites in this cluster, i.e., recruiting training audiences in other states, identifying trainers in other states who will follow-through in receiving training and training others, helping youth learn skills in curriculum development and writing, and institutionalization of the training.
- Sites should be strategic in recruiting advisory committee members, including defining the purpose of the advisory committee, specifying expectations of members, and utilizing individuals in positions of authority in the state agency and other key organizations who can actually influence the eventual utilization of curricula. More than one such group could be formed for different purposes (e.g., one with broad representation to ensure inclusion and information-sharing, another that would be responsible for accomplishing key specialized tasks).
- Content experts/consultants who are well integrated into the project from the beginning, participate in developing the learning objectives, understand the evolution of the curriculum and the individuals who will deliver the training, will likely provide more quality input than experts who have a peripheral role in the project.
- Curriculum content should be research-based to the extent possible. It should reflect an exploration of the literature and make use of existing research knowledge. However, this may not always be possible (e.g., there is little research evidence for effective IL approaches and few high quality child welfare training studies that provide direction in training methodology). If grantees are funded for demonstration projects, we recommend they strike a balance between creativity (going where the field has never been before) and building on what is already known.

- It is not clear to what extent using previously developed materials is a strength or a weakness. Such a process would work best when the previously developed materials were highly related to the specific learning objectives of the new curriculum and were tailored to the needs of the new audience. Projects need to attend to the freshness and originality of the curriculum if knowledge development is to occur and advance the field. Thus, the expectation would be that a large percentage of the curriculum would be newly developed or re-configured in a creative way. Certain types of materials could always be reused (e.g., assessment tools that have been shown to be effective).
- Related to use of previously developed curriculum materials, the Children’s Bureau could provide clearer expectations in the RFP (e.g., that grantees would develop “innovative curriculum,” “research-based curriculum,” and “curriculum utilizing existing materials”).
- In the past, specific training on IL issues was very limited and very few materials existed. The development of these curricula was a definite contribution to existing training materials.
- The IL curricula developed by these projects are especially valuable because so few curricula of this type exist. The Children’s Bureau needs to find ways to ensure that these curricula are utilized, and that additional and more advanced or specialized ones are developed.



Project Activity: Training Delivery

Amount of Training Delivered

Although all the projects followed through on their plans for project implementation, and some of the sites did more than proposed (e.g., more curriculum modules, additional training audiences), seven of nine sites delivered less training than they had planned. There were several reasons for this. In some cases the number of hours of training was reduced because the child welfare agency viewed the training as too long and decided it would not be practical to release staff for so many hours (SFSU, UNC). In other cases, the number of times the training program was delivered was reduced or the size of the training audiences was notably smaller, due to state budget cuts or hiring freezes affecting the number of workers available to attend and the lack of release time for those interested in attending (SUNY, USC).

At some sites, less than effective recruitment of participants by the state child welfare agency resulted in smaller training groups than anticipated (EMU, SDSU, SUNY). In the case of SUNY, after pilot testing the curriculum was delivered approximately 15 times in various parts of New York but did not occur on the widespread basis across the state that was anticipated by the planners. This was due in part to a lack of negotiation with administrators who made decisions about offering advanced child welfare training beyond core. Some agencies requested the training, particularly larger residential programs, but little advertising was done by the state until toward the project's end. When advertising was done, it involved the circulation of flyers rather than use of more aggressive, direct marketing. Thus, some training audiences were smaller than expected.

At SDSU workers were informed about the training through a global email system at the agency. The county IL coordinator encouraged contractors, IL workers, and everyone involved with teens to attend. A few respondents noted that not enough recruitment was done to make sure the training group had good representation from different disciplines, and one person noted that there may not have been good buy-in from the county child welfare agency. Budget cuts also affected this site; the training was delivered at a time of budget cuts and required workers to be away from work for three days.

In other cases, the number of times the training program was delivered was reduced because there was uneven implementation across collaborating states. For example, at USM the number of training programs delivered was only 50% of what was planned. In Vermont the IL coordinator was involved at first, but the training was not marketed well and few participants attended. Those trained in the T-of-T did not follow through by conducting any training, and by that point, USM had little influence over the project in Vermont. In New Hampshire, the training institute recruited trainers who attended the T-of-T and were committed. In Rhode Island, respondents reported that people were trained but the curriculum was broken up and only pieces of it were used.

One part of the original plan at USC was to bring foster youth, foster parents, and workers together. However, when the project was underway, some staff believed that youth would not have time to come to training and other project members felt that providing training to workers, parents, and youth together was not appropriate. Another suggested that the youth training would focus on helping youth with aging out and would be more of an intervention than training which would not be consistent with the goals of a training grant. Thus, the training program for youth did not take place. To compensate for the loss of youth as a training audience—and also the loss of state workers as trainees (due to budget cuts and difficulty in recruitment)—USC expanded the target audience to include workers in private agencies. Once it became clear that the full curriculum could not be taught and/or institutionalized, USC divided the full curriculum into modules so that it could be presented in pieces and over time. These measures were also taken at DU, EMU, and UNC.

Audiences Receiving Training

Training provided by these nine sites included a broad range of youth service staff and others interested in youth transitioning from care: IL program staff, residential staff, public child welfare workers, supervisors and managers, advisory committee members representing various agencies such as substance abuse or vocational rehabilitation, foster parents, personnel from private youth service agencies, administrators from adolescent agencies, biological parents, staff from adoption programs, tribal agency staff (in states such as Oklahoma and New Mexico), mental health professionals, and juvenile justice staff. (See *Table 3: Training Audiences* on the next page).

For example, the audience for the EMU training was primarily child welfare practitioners working with older youths, and their supervisors. Similarly, at SUNY the audience was child welfare staff in state and private agencies including residential staff. In contrast, at SDSU a core theme was “interdisciplinary” and the audience was a combination of public child welfare social workers, foster parents, group home workers, school personnel, contracted case managers, former foster youth, supervisors, and managers. At DU the audience included professionals working with transitioning youth: child welfare administrators, supervisors, workers, foster parents, and personnel from private youth service agencies. For their youth-run *ILP Theater Project*, youth delivered the training to an audience that included biological parents, foster parents, caseworkers, residential providers, and adolescent agency administrators. In the OK project, audiences for the training included public child welfare agency staff and tribal agency staff in Oklahoma and New Mexico, as well as members of the advisory committee.

Some sites had multidisciplinary audiences by design (SDSU, SUNY, USM), while others ended up with them by default—either because various groups heard about the training and came even though it was not specifically addressed to them, or because the training audiences were broadened to include a variety of agencies when public child welfare workers could not attend. Some sites viewed multidisciplinary audiences as beneficial because they were able to reach and raise the awareness of additional constituencies. However, most sites had no content on how various “disciplines” could work together on behalf of youth, so there were no specific measurable outcomes related to multidisciplinary audiences.

Further, since many of these individuals (foster parents, substance abuse staff, IL administrators) were in different roles from those of child welfare workers, the course competencies may not have applied. In some audiences, participants may have had to compete with one another to have the trainer make the course content applicable to them (DU).

Table 3: Training Audiences for Primary Curriculum

	CW workers	CW supervisors	CW administrators	Foster parents	Foster youth and former foster youth	Residential staff	Youth services (school, juvenile justice, mental health)	Tribal Agency staff	Adoption staff	IL workers	MSW students
DU	7	7	7	7		7	7			7	7
EMU	7	7					7			7	7
OK	7	7					7	7			
SDSU	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7		7	
SFSU	7	7									7
SUNY	7		7			7	7			7	
UNC	7						7				
USC	7	7	7			7					
USM	7			7		7	7		7	7	

Types of Trainers Delivering the Training

Concerning the curriculum pilot training, members of the project staff often taught these sessions—with or without additional training partners. Also, with the T-of-T curriculum, project staff often took a central role in doing the training. However, when it came to teaching the primary curriculum after it had been finalized, the types of individuals enlisted to teach varied among the sites. Some sites used trainers with considerable professional experience in child welfare, IL, and/or youth services (OK, SUNY, USC). Other sites used project staff (DU) or a combination of project staff and outside trainers (SDSU), eventually passing the training on to the trainers (EMU). The remaining sites used teams of youth and other key individuals. For example, USM used three-member teams including a youth, a foster parent and a child welfare worker. UNC used teams of youth and adults; SDSU teams involved youth, county child welfare workers, staff from group homes, educators and youth service providers. SFSU used primarily youth trainers.

The project sites varied on whether the curriculum developers were the same people who delivered the curriculum. For the most part, different individuals filled these two roles. This occurred for several reasons. For example, at USM the project used the curriculum developer for some of the training, but also designed the project to include youth and other key types of individuals (e.g., foster parents and child welfare workers) in the delivery of training. At SUNY and EMU, the projects did it to reach more distant geographic areas. At DU the project utilized the skills of the curriculum developer, but also wanted to tap the respective skills of the various types of individuals on the team.

Adherence to the curriculum becomes an issue in such cases. If the curriculum content changes depending on the trainer delivering it, the impact of the curriculum becomes more difficult to determine. Site visits were unable to obtain complete data on this issue. Although only two sites raised concerns about this (SDSU, USM) it is likely that many other sites were affected by the difficulty inherent in providing fidelity to the curriculum, while also involving a variety of trainers in delivering the content.

Role of Pilot Testing

Pilot testing played a major role at all nine sites. In most cases, this involved careful planning and execution and was implemented fairly thoroughly. The pilots contributed significant changes to the final curriculum. For example, at EMU a supervisor's comment dismissing the need for workers to spend time

establishing relationships with youth resulted in the inclusion of a rationale for strong worker-youth relationships in the curriculum. At the same site, to strengthen the rationale for individual modules, videos showed youth talking about the importance of topics that were included in each module. When workers requested more worksheets to engage youth, the project developed additional ones. At OK pilots led to changes in the T-of-T manual, the addition of transitional statements that helped participants see the continuity from one session to the next, and a clearer presentation of material on assimilation and acculturation. For several sites, piloting resulted in a reduction in the length of the training, especially in didactic material to be covered (SDSU, SUNY, USM).

At four sites, pilot testing became a significant part of training delivery activities and resulted in key curriculum changes. At USM pilot testing included both the basic curriculum and a T-of-T course for core project trainers. The pilots were delivered by training teams with the same composition as those who did the final training delivery (a youth, a child welfare worker, and a foster parent). Written evaluations were used to elicit feedback. Significant modifications occurred, specifically, a reduction in the amount of didactic content and the inclusion of more exercises to help participants apply the material.

At USC, after an early pilot, the project team realized that supervisors' participation in the training had been extremely successful, so they added supervisor training to the curriculum. In some training sessions, they encountered resistance from supervisors and subsequently resolved this by (1) presenting trainers' credentials at the beginning, (2) creating a non-judgmental instructional culture, and (3) inviting participants to be collaborators rather than students who needed to learn new knowledge and skills.

OK conducted seven pilots (five in Oklahoma and two in New Mexico). Attending the pilots were members of the advisory committee and tribal representatives, as well as one of the trainers who participated as a trainee. All provided feedback for the first revision of the curriculum. These were large pilots with as many as 25 to 30 attendees. The advisory committee chose pilot sites and the contact person for each tribe hosted the pilot session. Meetings were held after each pilot to discuss curriculum refinements (e.g., changes in sequencing of material).

Some sites may have delivered significantly more pilot sessions than final training sessions. The project reports and site visit data are not specific enough for us to be certain about this. Three sites reported running out of time for repeated delivery of the final curriculum: USM due to the development of videos, the curriculum,

Case Highlight: UNC Use of Pilot Testing

At UNC the pilot testing, initially intended for North Carolina only, also occurred in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia. Project staff made this decision to ensure that these states would be fully involved by being part of early project activities. This piloting also helped to insure that the training was not too specifically oriented toward practice in North Carolina. Thus, the pilots were used to ensure inclusion of participants who were geographically dispersed and test training material for applicability to wider audiences beyond North Carolina.

The following is one example of curriculum modifications that occurred following the pilots. When UNC showed their video of young people talking about their experiences, training participants believed that “the youth on the video aren’t like our kids.” This led the project team to decide to add an early activity in which training participants used the same questions on the video to interview youth on their own caseloads and bring back the youth responses to the next training session. The result was that many participants realized that their “kids” were equally bright and articulate and that the trainers had not chosen unique youth. Other early revisions from the pilots included using clearer revised language about Positive Youth Development.

and pilot testing; USC delivered the first two parts of its three-part curriculum but did not have time to deliver the third portion; and EMU which delivered the majority of its training in the piloting phase.

Further, available time for the delivery of the final curriculum may have been only one issue—at some sites, budget cuts in the child welfare agency made it difficult to recruit training participants, even though the project staff had set aside considerable time to deliver the final curriculum.

Training of Trainers (T-of-T)

Training of Trainers sessions were conducted by sites for two divergent purposes: (1) to prepare the youth and other trainers who would be delivering the pilot sessions and the final training on the curriculum during the project period (SDSU, USM), and (2) to prepare broader audiences, usually composed of child welfare staff in public or private agencies, to provide training on the curriculum in their own settings with their own audiences according to their own timetables (EMU). Five of nine sites conducted some type of formal T-of-T sessions and provided accompanying materials to facilitate the trainers' work. Depending on the site, the audience for a T-of-T session could be members of the sites "core training staff," or members of the broader community who attended general training sessions and then opted to take their training further by becoming a trainer themselves in their own environment.

When the T-of-T was provided to "core staff" preparing to be instructors for delivery of the IL curriculum (SDSU, USM), the sites reported that the T-of-T was especially helpful in ensuring consistency in training delivery among numerous trainers and between co-trainers. At USM the instructor teams included a youth, a child welfare worker, and a foster parent. In most cases these trainers had never trained together and the T-of-T gave them a chance to collaborate in a learning environment prior to having to perform as a team. In many sites where youth did the training, the youth were often inexperienced in speaking to audiences of adults and needed guidance and feedback following delivery to modify their approach. At UNC all eight states had training teams attend a regional T-of-T workshop to promote consistency in curriculum development. For this type of T-of-T, where "core instructors" are being trained, the sites found it challenging to do training simultaneously on (a) the curriculum content and activities, (b) presentation skills, and (c) skills for partnering with other trainers who were often inexperienced trainers themselves.

The sites seemed to have had fewer challenges conducting the second type of T-of-T—the model where audiences are trained on the curriculum and then opt to become trainers for their own settings. For example, participants attending a 3-day pilot sponsored by OK (including members of the advisory committee, NRCYS staff, and other community members) were given copies of the draft curriculum and the opportunity to provide feedback. Not all participants had training experience so participant skills were at different levels. The first 1.5 days of the course involved presentation of a mini version of the entire curriculum. On the third training day, the trainers-in-training were given a chance to practice presenting parts of the curriculum. The IL curriculum was then finalized after the T-of-T course. OK also developed a T-of-T manual including an overview, objectives, session presentations, training masters, references, and appendix.

At SDSU the project sought audience members for their T-of-T who were already trainers in their field, i.e., for the probation department and for the schools. However, a broader group of people came to the T-of-T, including some audience members who were not trainers. In this case, the training had to shift to strategic planning with the audience about how to build capacity in their agencies to implement the training. In some cases, T-of-T participants chose to contract with the SDSU Training Academy for the Academy to deliver the training for them in their settings. Another option chosen by some participants was to use an agency staff meeting to present one of the curriculum activities, rather than the entire curriculum.

SUNY reported struggling with the dilemma of whether to offer T-of-T sessions. They concluded that it would be difficult to know the needs of trainers in various parts of the country. In the end, they chose to forgo the development of a T-of-T altogether and instead did regional and national conference presentations.

Web-based Training or Distance Learning

Two of nine sites reported experiences with web-based training or distance learning. In these cases, distance learning was necessary to reach those who were geographically distant. However, trainers were not adequately prepared for using the technology and understanding ways to modify the training format to meet the needs of the distant audiences.

DU found it was too difficult to reach rural areas with their classroom training, so the project staff changed several classroom trainings into video conferences. There was a mixed reception from participants. Participants liked not having to drive 4–5 hours to Denver, but missed interacting with people from other counties. One respondent noted that when participants sit in front of a television screen they expect the action to be exciting and spectacular. Some were disappointed to look at the video screen and see a trainer presenting material, followed by group discussion—even though there was considerable interaction between the trainer and the distant sites. Further, trainers found that they had to adjust the format to make sure that the most interactive pieces of the training (e.g., using small group exercises) were the most prominent, if the audience was going to tolerate the experience and get involved in video conferencing.

At EMU the project developed a web-based training with the goal of presenting content very similar to that in face-to-face training. It was conceived as a self-paced training, especially for workers in rural areas. However, the self-paced aspect did not work as well as expected. On-line discussions requiring participants to chat on line with others taking the web-based training before completing

assignments held some people back. Counties in Oregon, where about 30 people enrolled in the training, were to constitute the first pilot. The National Resource Center for Youth Services agreed to support the web-based training system, but difficulty providing passwords to all participants and similar technical problems proved overwhelming. As a result, the attrition rate was very high.

The project then piloted the web-based training as a course for BSW and MSW students at EMU. This worked better because (a) the project was able to bring in students at the beginning and get them set up on the computer, (b) students were more motivated because they received academic credit, and (c) computer support was available at the university. Project staff concluded that for online training the technological requirements must be clarified for participants before the training begins or they feel excessively burdened once they realize what they need to do.

Schools of Social Work

Three of nine sites had some focus on social work students. For example, at EMU the training was integrated into the School of Social Work as both an undergraduate and graduate course entitled, *Youth in Care*. At SFSU, MSW-level students also were trained. At DU part of the curriculum was integrated into a course on social work and child welfare already taught in the MSW Program.

Observations of Training Delivery by Site Visit Team

Observations of training were conducted at five sites: DU, SFSU, SUNY, UNC, and USC. (Training was not observed at: EMU, OK, SDSU, and USM.) The observations were particularly valuable; we could observe how the curricula “came to life.” However, we recognize the methodological limitations of observing only a few hours of what is quite an extensive piece of work. Furthermore, all of the training observations occurred after the funded project period and may have suffered because of this.

Although all training sessions observed had strengths and weaknesses, only SFSU appeared to successfully deliver the planned curriculum and fully involved youth in the training project. The training observed was strong in other areas as well: it was engaging, the activities were creative and related to content, the variety of exercises felt cohesive, and time management was excellent.

A few of the limitations observed at the different sites—some of which we think may be common to training that occurs after a funded project period—included:

- The culture of the training audience can feel unprofessional at times, in particular starting late, leaving early, long breaks, etc.
- Some trainers felt new to the material and thus the training lacked depth.
- Training teams appeared uncoordinated as if they had not trained together before. It appeared there had been little time to meet or plan among the trainers and that the training groups varied by site. When this is the case it may be better to have one trainer.
- Youth were not well integrated into the training.
- As individuals, all trainers have strengths and weaknesses in covering the full range of material available in good training curricula. Can one or a couple of trainers be capable in the variety of skills needed?
- At times there was superficial coverage of key issues or poor facilitation of discussion of material presented.
- Transitions between subjects were not clearly highlighted, which made the themes difficult to follow.
- There was too much material to present so pieces were cut out during the training or received superficial treatment.
- Projects struggle to find the right balance between didactic sharing of information and experiential activities—we observed excesses at both endpoints.

Challenges to Training Delivery

A range of challenges were identified including: (a) public child welfare agencies provided limited release time for workers; (b) state budget cuts interfered with attendance at training sessions; (c) supervisors were not involved in planning or systematically included as part of the training audience which limited their ability to reinforce the learning on the job; (d) sites had difficulty reaching rural areas; and (e) training delivery was sometimes uneven because members of the

training teams did not know each other and/or had not done previous training together (resulting from an effort to include non-traditional trainers, e.g., youth, foster parents).

Widely experienced problems included:

- **State agency approval for attendance was not consistent.** Child welfare staff did not want to take time away from cases for training and release time was often not given. The sites were adamant that approval from state and county child welfare agencies for attendance at trainings needs to improve if such programs are to succeed. This was a common concern across sites. It is important that states and counties give clear messages that training is valued and expected. It is also clear that training suffers when money is tight.
- **Training was not a high priority for either the state or county agencies.** Several projects reported that the states gave double messages to workers with respect to attending training. Training is seen as a luxury that workers cannot afford to utilize if they want to care for their clients. Recruitment was left up to child welfare agencies and some did a better job with it than others.
- **State agencies seem to want brief training regardless of the learning objectives.** There was a considerable discrepancy between what the projects believed was necessary content and what the child welfare agencies would approve for the length of training offered.
- **Few projects included supervisors.** Supervisory training was recognized as a need by many projects but few systematically included supervisors. There was agreement among several projects that acquainting supervisors with the training before workers received it would have helped to reinforce workers' learning and might have led to more institutionalization of the curricula. Additionally, support from supervisors to do innovative work with youth is also needed.

- **Population-focused training is more time consuming.** When a training is population-focused (i.e., youth in care) much more time and planning is required. The engagement process needs to be extensive. It is not enough to bring these representatives into the project (e.g., invite them to be on advisory board). When they are brought on board there also needs to be time for capacity building.
- **Training is not easily transferable across counties and states.** Time is needed to build relationships in each entity where the training will be delivered. If not, the training will be perceived as coming from the outside.
- **Training provided limited time for skill practice.** If the learning objectives are related to skill competencies, there must be sufficient time for participants to practice these competencies in the classroom. Some sites pointed out that there are many difficult issues facing staff and youth involved in IL, and state child welfare agencies must agree to allow this type of training for a sufficient number of hours/days to make skill practice and coaching feasible.

Conclusions: Training Delivery

- Use of youth in delivering training was a decided strength. Watching youth as trainers increased participants' sense of youth having strengths and resilience. The youth were "able to convey painful experiences and yet leave people feeling positive." Reactions to the youth trainers were very positive. The youth trainers were professional, articulate, humorous, compassionate, and committed to improving the work of social workers in collaboration with them.
- Briefer training seems preferable and more useful to child welfare administrators. A limited number of competencies should be included (e.g., develop no more than six competencies for 12–14 hours of training). Contracting related to length of delivery time for the final curriculum should occur prior to curriculum development. Modules that can be used separately or together vs. full curricula should be considered.
- When curriculum competencies focus on skills, adequate time for skill practice in the classroom and the field must be allocated. Child welfare agencies may need to be educated about such competencies and their limited utility when insufficient time is allocated for supervised skill practice.
- Supervisors are a key constituency to engage and train prior to training workers. They can endorse the idea of the training and reinforce the content on the job.
- Fidelity in curriculum delivery is important. When the individuals who write the curriculum are also the ones who deliver it, the training remains purer to its intent. Training is likely to get weaker and weaker the further it gets from the original designers. If trainers are used who are not involved in curriculum development they need to receive training on the curriculum by the curriculum developers.
- Grantees need to have a plan for ensuring fidelity to the curriculum when it is to be delivered by different trainers (and perhaps to different audiences and in different locations). There should be a plan for how curriculum developers will "hand-over" the curriculum to the trainers if these functions are filled by different individuals. There are various models for this. One example is: observe expert trainer, co-train with expert trainer, deliver full training with observation and critique by expert trainer.

- Another fidelity issue is that trainers need to be flexible in using the curriculum in the classroom to ensure that it meets the needs of various audiences. However, they cannot modify the curriculum substantially as they go along. This seemed to be an issue especially in sites where attendees differed from the original target audience and trainers tried to adapt the curriculum spontaneously.
- Curricula fall along a continuum from extremely structured (almost totally scripted) to extremely unstructured (content or handouts with no guidelines for presentation). The less structured the curriculum, the more problems with fidelity. Trainers' lack of fidelity to the curriculum during training delivery is a fundamental problem in the field of training and not specific to these projects.
- To increase fidelity, the written curriculum needs to be specific about target audiences, learning objectives, content, and delivery methods. It needs to have several basic elements. The following elements are often included in a comprehensive curriculum:
 - (1) Introduction to the overall curriculum, including a statement about whether the curriculum needs to be delivered by a person with training expertise, or content expertise, or simply child welfare practice expertise; and whether the curriculum needs to be presented as a whole or could be presented in parts.
 - (2) Each segment should include: (a) overall goal/purpose; (b) learning objectives specifying the specific knowledge, attitude, or behavior participants will demonstrate after completing the segment; (c) instructions for trainer on how to introduce, coordinate, and bring closure to the segment; (d) content to be conveyed or detailed description of learning activity; (e) format (e.g., small group exercise, case presentation and discussion, role play exercise, lecture, panel presentation, video); (f) materials needed (e.g., flip chart, markers, video player); (g) estimate of time needed; (h) summary of key points to be conveyed; (i) handouts; and (j) reference list or supplementary reading (if relevant).
- Attitudinal outcomes—the ones primarily emphasized by this cluster or seen to have taken hold—are important but there may be a broader range of competencies beyond attitudinal ones that are needed to help youth aging out of care. Some projects included work on skill competencies, such as those related to relationship building, assessment, advocacy, referral, and collaborating with other disciplines.



Project Activity: Youth Involvement

Introduction

Each project aimed to include youth in their training project and did so in a variety of ways with differing results. This element of the cluster was particularly unique among training projects and consequently the lessons for the field may be particularly important. In this section we focus on the **process** of involving youth. In a later section the **outcomes** of youth involvement are presented.

Youth Role

In two sites youth appeared to be general members of the project team rather than having a specific role on the project. This was clearly the case at SFSU, which had the most extensive youth presence of any of the projects. Because the SFSU project was youth-driven, youth served in multiple roles. USM also appeared to have a significant youth presence throughout project activities. A nucleus of 6–7 youth were in the core group and participated throughout. About 10 more were in and out working on different tasks. These youth worked ten to fifteen hours per week and had their own workspace. Most were in college. Some youth worked on both developing the materials and delivering the training. Much of the scheduling of the project’s work was done around the youths’ schedules.

In another site (SDSU) one youth served as a key project member. This youth was hired to review curricula, serve on the advisory board, and be on a youth panel at training sessions. Like other youth who tended to be involved in these projects, she had done public speaking before (speaker’s bureau of former foster

care youth) and had been asked to participate in a lot of events. She reports that after speaking on the youth panel, people would show increased interest in the youth. UNC also planned to hire a youth to work on this project. They had a specific youth in mind and although she wanted to participate, other commitments, especially college, kept her from being involved in this project.

Taking a more specific look at youth involvement, key roles included: key informants, advisory committee members, curriculum developers, trainers, video presence, and conference presenters. Described below are some of the experiences and issues of youth serving in these various roles.

Key informants

Typically as an early step, each project gathered input from youth in care regarding the content of the training projects. Methods included: surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews. Additionally, projects may have involved youth in an on-going role as advisory board members and reviewers of curriculum, exercises, etc.

Focus groups were a common mechanism and particularly central to the EMU project. EMU conducted numerous focus groups in three states in order to inform their curriculum. In Oregon, the project connected with a youth council that allowed for more extensive input from youth through a retreat format. The project also did interviews with youth and used them in the modules. These interviews with youth were independent from the focus groups.

Although focus groups are commonly used they might not always be the best mechanism. SUNY reported doing one focus group with youth, but then decided not to use focus groups because not all youth were vocal. The project decided instead to use individual interviews to gather greater depth of information.

Surveys are more difficult to plan and administer than focus groups, so they were less commonly used in these projects. Nonetheless, two sites (UNC, USC) reported conducting surveys of youth to inform the curriculum.

Projects also turned to the youth-oriented literature for ideas in curriculum development. SUNY sought materials that reflected a youth voice and included opinions of youth about mental health services. They used material from a newspaper produced by youth, *Foster Youth United*, in the curriculum.

Existing youth advisory boards did not appear to play a major role in these projects. These boards may have been a source for finding youth to be involved in the project or they may have served as a focus group, but none of the sites appeared to use them on a continuing basis. For example, North Carolina has a Youth Advisory Board (SAYSO) which is active in the state, yet it did not have a particular role in this project. At USC, reportedly, the role of the youth advisory board (GOALL) was minimal. They read the initial proposal, gave feedback, and wrote a letter of support. The GOALL youth felt the strongest piece of the proposal were activities that involved direct work with youth. However, this part eventually was left out of the project and GOALL youth were disappointed.

Advisory committee members

Serving on an advisory committee was a common role for youth. All but one site (DU) reported that youth served in this capacity. Typically, 2–3 youth served on an advisory committee. Projects serving more than one state attempted to have at least one youth representative from each state.

There was extensive variation as to how the advisory committees were used and whether committee members had real input or were a formality. Because of the importance of the youth development approach in these projects, it was particularly important that youth felt this to be an inclusive experience. Data from the site visits could not ascertain whether this was the actual experience.

One youth participant interviewed at SDSU, however, spoke at some length about her involvement on the advisory board. She reported that there were a lot of people in the advisory group, including SDSU faculty, child welfare leaders, and at least one youth representative. She had been on several boards and in comparing her experiences she noted that sometimes other boards do not really ask for her input. The advisory group for this project, however, always acknowledged her, asked for her input and feedback, and showed her a lot of respect. Additionally, she reported contact (phone, emails) outside of the advisory committee meetings. She also commented that even if she missed a meeting the project director would call her again for the next one. This made her feel valued. In other situations she had been afraid to say “no” at any point because the group might not want her back. Because the project director on this project always stayed in contact, she did not feel the pressure of having to participate all the time.

Curriculum developers

Commonly, the youths' role as curriculum developers was limited to reviewing and commenting on drafts of curriculum. It is not clear to what extent this role was substantive rather than perfunctory. Occasionally, youth might contribute small pieces that were specific to a youth perspective. For instance, in OK a component of the curriculum is a letter written by a youth in care describing the experience.

SFSU was the exception, where youth were fully involved in all aspects of curriculum development.

Trainers/Youth panel

All projects attempted to have youth serve in the role of trainers of the curriculum, but there was substantial variation as to how youth actually served. At SFSU youth were the trainers throughout the full delivery of the training. In two projects (UNC, USM) they served as co-trainers with adults at least during the pilot phase of training. UNC conducted a regional T-of-T for training teams representing each of their eight states and six of these teams included youth. In OK they served a particular role as a cultural guide in the training. In other sites they participated in a youth panel (SDSU). The youth role at DU was primarily to deliver the theater project (rehearsed skits and performances) to audiences of parents, foster parents, caseworkers, residential providers, and adolescent agency administrators. Some sites began with efforts to include youth as trainers, but because of scheduling and other primarily logistical difficulties, the projects tended to reduce the youth in-person role in training and substituted with youth voices on videos.

When youth were involved in-person as co-trainers, some effort was needed to prepare the youth, but they were well received and had a critical impact on training success. Typically, youth trainers had some previous experience speaking in front of groups. Preparation efforts focused on issues of time management and clarity in presentation. The feedback from audience members regarding youth was always very positive. A lot more resistance was expected, but the utilization of youth as trainers fit with the "youth as resources" concept. For example, project personnel at UNC reported some initial worry about youth performance in front of caseworkers who may have had an interest in keeping youth quiet, but the youth did very well.

Case Highlight: USM Involving Youth in Training

At USM training was done by instructor teams of a youth, a caseworker, and a foster parent. The team model was used to plan and deliver training. In the training delivery, efforts were made to play to the strengths of each youth, so youth signed up for sections/issues with which they were familiar. Team members were able to use their personal experiences as teaching moments. Having co-trainers put less pressure on any one person to prepare the material and answer audience questions. Most training segments were delivered by one adult and one youth. For some segments, youth delivered with other youth. The adult-youth partnerships in the teams were meant to model the principles of the curriculum. Teams had some freedom to modify the curriculum to fit their skills and their audience. More exercises were included in the curriculum than could be used for each session so that teams could choose the ones that best fit their training style.

These youth not only presented the curriculum to the target audiences, but as a group they provided an additional training program for youth from CT, MA, and ME to teach youth facilitation and training skills. It was characterized as “by youth, for youth, about youth.” The team model meant that learning occurred on several levels: youth learned the material; the audience learned the material; youth learned presentation skills; youth learned from the audience; the audience learned from youth; youth were mentored by the adults on the teams and by the project staff.

Efforts to involve youth as co-trainers were more concentrated during pilot training. For example, in Northern Maine the first time the training was delivered, youth were co-trainers. But the time commitment to prepare the youth to do the training made it difficult to involve them and the second training instead relied on video segments of youth voices.

In New Hampshire, youth also were involved in the planning and development of training activities. They met as a team at least once every four to six weeks. For the pilot, there were many more meetings. For the second training session, the team did not meet as often and they missed some key points. Also, in New Hampshire transportation was a challenge.

As noted, OK utilized youth as cultural guides in the training, a role that gives voice to the tribal and child welfare youth experience. Also, the project aimed to utilize youth from the local tribal community. This strategy had some strength in terms of having local representation, but it also meant that individual youth were generally not involved in the project on an ongoing basis. In some cases, the youth may not have been prepared well enough for training delivery.

The SDSU project chose to use a youth panel at each first day of training of service providers. Use of a youth panel in the training was viewed as important, but the project had some difficulty with the consistency of youth showing up at the training. Because of this the project decided to develop and utilize digital stories of youth that could be used at training. They connected with SFSU to develop the digital stories.

Projects that integrated youth as trainers devoted substantial attention to training, mentoring, and guiding youth in this role (SFSU, UNC, USM).

Video presence

Several projects stated that they would have liked to include youth as trainers, but the reality of doing this was too difficult. Consequently, youth videos became a substitute. This was particularly the case when delivering ongoing training, as opposed to pilot training. Even projects that involved youth as trainers (SFSU, UNC, USM) produced videos to ensure that youth voices could be included in subsequent training delivery when the projects no longer delivered the training. Other sites using youth videos included DU and EMU.

Conference presenters

Presenting at local, state, and national conferences was not a common role for youth. At SFSU however, because youth were central to the project they were also involved in presenting it at several conferences. Additionally, the youth involved in the DU project participated in the theater project by developing, rehearsing, and performing skits at various conferences.

Development of Youth Involvement

In most sites there was less youth involvement than originally planned. Many sites noted their intent and effort to involve youth throughout these projects, but identified numerous barriers to actually doing so. Key challenges to involving youth more fully included: difficulty maintaining a consistent cadre of youth because they were busy with their lives and other commitments; logistics, especially transportation; lack of time commitment and expertise among project staff in understanding how to fully engage youth.

SUNY noted that they had intended more youth involvement than actually happened, both in developing the curriculum and in training delivery. They wanted to develop a process for training youth as trainers but did not have time to do so. Project staff reported that this type of effort to involve youth requires time, energy, and organizational commitment at a higher level. They commented that for this component, the commitment was not at the level it needed to be in their larger organization.

At DU respondents viewed youth involvement as important in their training but reported challenges in recruiting and retaining youth. The project worked with youth who were currently in the state systems. Respondents found that the youth already had a lot of demands on them and were not able to devote enough time solely for this project. Providing transportation and logistics to get youth to meetings was another big challenge. One respondent noted that some of the youth who worked with the grantee still had lots of anger toward the system, that impeded optimal involvement. Also, some youth were not ready to comprehend training material and presentation content.

Respondents suggested that if youth involvement is proposed for training, intensive planning of how they would be involved is necessary. Decisions need to be made up-front about what the involvement should be and how to bring it about. It should not simply evolve over the course of the project. Since so much structure is required to make it work, the commitment about why and how should come early in the project.

When DU produced their second video, they used older youth who had already transitioned out of system. One respondent noted that this solved many problems described above. Another respondent stated that if they had it to do over again, they would either use older youth or a combination of older and younger youth so that the older group could provide stability for the entire group. Another advantage in using older youth is that they can drive themselves. Respondents also noted that they tried to involve youth in rural areas but transportation

was really challenging. They ended up with all kids from one county, because the workers in that county were really committed to the project and provided consistent transportation.

At OK respondents noted that the challenge of youth involvement is trying to stay in touch with them. Therefore, projects need to allow them to enter and exit the project fluidly. Respondents felt that the benefits of youth involvement outweighed the challenges. Project staff felt like they helped give IL youth a voice through this project. In every culture youth play a role. For this project, it was figuring out how the youth role fit in a culturally competent way.

SDSU reported that the biggest challenge was getting youth to meetings and trainings in terms of transportation, logistics, and the youths' schedules. It was noted that the efforts to involve youth needed to follow similar procedures described by project staff in working with Native American communities on the Tribal STAR project. Extensive energy and time is needed to build relationships. The project has to go in with a mindset to truly involve youth. At SDSU the youth involved in the training also thought the panel session might have been longer. Usually there was a facilitator and 2–3 youth, and one question could easily take up to half an hour. She heard from many individuals and evaluations that people learned the most from the youth panel.

At USM timing in terms of the school year was a challenge—youth couldn't commit to presenting 2-day training programs. Confidence was another barrier. Some of the youth who received training were too nervous to stand up in front of a group. Youth often don't mind doing a presentation involving theater arts, but the idea of providing "training" on IL issues was intimidating to many. The *Teach Them to Fish* curriculum required an extended time commitment and required some "stand-up" training on the part of youth. By the time the curriculum was finalized and the training teams put together, there was not a lot of time to prepare the youth as trainers. Also, youth participated on the planning committees and some youth were assigned to work on involving other youth. For some adults on the committees, the inconsistency in the youth's attendance and participation was frustrating.

All these challenges led to project changes. Often the result was fewer numbers of youth involved than originally planned (e.g., SDSU had planned 4–5 youth on the advisory board but only had 2). Furthermore, projects moved to the use of youth videos instead of youth in-person involvement at training (EMU).

Case Highlight: SFSU Youth Involvement

Youth involvement was central to this project; it not only involved youth, it was “youth driven.” The project director reports that the extent and success of youth involvement even surprised her. They never thought it would go as far as it did regarding youth involvement/ownership. Success of youth involvement was partially related to the project’s ability to partner—from the proposal phase—with California Youth Connection (CYC). This established agency provided the infrastructure for youth participation that was central to project success. Youth involved in this training project were recruited via email to the CYC network of youth. Because this is statewide, the pool of candidates is large and the project director could choose the best. Youth filled out an application for the project and criteria include public speaking experience and leadership ability. With the first group of youth (curriculum developers) the project wanted “overachievers” and one “unknown.” Too many unknowns could bring the group down; this way it was more likely a strong group could help the “unknown.”

According to the project director, the biggest thing the project has to offer workers is the opportunity to see youth development in action—this is a profound success. Youth bring energy and flavor. Youth are opposed to telling workers what to do because they don’t like to be told what to do themselves. In addition to providing a youth perspective, they are also introducing some theory related to youth development in an effort to appeal to the group.

Conclusions: Youth Involvement

Consistently, projects noted that the benefits of youth involvement outweighed the challenges that it sometimes posed. Through their experience, many projects learned lessons about better methods of involving youth. Their experiences provide guidance for other projects seeking to involve youth (or other client constituencies). When implemented fully, consciously, and with focused resources, youth can be successfully involved in training projects and can contribute in meaningful ways to the success of the training project.

- While projects experienced numerous challenges in involving youth, working with them provided great opportunities. Projects may not have been aware of the varied resources needed to help youth be confident and capable trainers. To the extent that youth are providing training, they need to be mentored throughout the training process.
- During training delivery, the focus should be on discussion and not just having youth tell their story. These youth represent thousands of youth so it is important that what they say is not just about them.
- There may be a range of roles youth can take in the delivery of training other than “trainer” (e.g., panel member), but this should be clear ahead of time so youth do not end up in a token role.
- Including youth as trainers required different resource allocation than when using only adult trainers. Such activities as team building, training delivery, and coaching were essential components of successful youth involvement. Projects underestimated the infrastructure needed to support these activities. Delivering a professional training is expensive regardless of whether the trainers are youth or adults.
- Demands on youth time and skills need to be realistic. Many youth have demands on their time—as well as life crises—which they need to address and which may draw them away from conducting training at crucial times. This argues for recruiting more rather than fewer youth and expanding the pool of youth along a broad continuum.
- Audiences need to see empowered youth. To the extent that the curriculum is primarily aimed at changing attitudes regarding youth, this is especially important. The experiential component of seeing empowered youth would likely be more useful than talking about youth empowerment. If projects do not do a good job at this, it could reinforce negative views of youth.

- Extensive, successful youth involvement is not without costs. SFSU was highly successful at youth involvement, but recognized some of the project’s limitations in other areas (e.g., evaluation).
- The method of involving youth on advisory boards depends on the purpose of the advisory group. In general, their role should move beyond reporting on their own experiences. More than one youth should be included. Advisory boards allow other board members to learn about youth development.
- The power of having youth as trainers for these audiences was substantial and the gains seemingly incalculable for the youth themselves, as well as the audiences and co-trainers.
- Extensive staff support for youth involvement is typically needed, at least in the beginning phase. One full time staff person should be identified whose sole function is to facilitate youth involvement and this role needs to have primarily a mentoring component.
- We do not make a conclusion about whether some types of youth involvement are better than others, as the appropriate role for youth is dependent upon both project needs and youth interests. Some youth can have a small, temporary role and still benefit from the experience. The audience benefit is likely to be enhanced, however, to the extent that the youths’ involvement is both high profile and well integrated into the training content and delivery.
- Use of a youth panel might be an alternative between youth as trainers and youth on video.
- Similarly, while recognizing the valid reasons for utilizing youth videos, whenever possible youth involvement in-person at training is typically optimal (if logistical issues can be overcome) because it allows interaction with the audience.
- We do not derive a set of principles regarding how to involve youth. This has been done elsewhere, including by the USM project, *Partnering with Youth: Involving youth in child welfare training and curriculum development*. Our findings support this earlier work—and other work in the area of youth development—regarding engaging with youth as partners.



Project Activity: Conducting Evaluation

Each IL training project was required to include an evaluation plan in the project proposal. There was a wide range of approaches to conducting the evaluation and in some sites there was a more concerted attempt at evaluation than in others. Consistently, the actual evaluation deviated from the plan that was stated in the proposal, and almost always was simpler than that proposed. This section focuses on the **process** of conducting evaluation. Data regarding the results of the evaluation are reported in a later section on **outcomes**.

Evaluator

In three projects, the evaluation was conducted by an evaluation unit within the same organizational entity as the grantee: SUNY, Center for Development of Human Services; USC, Center for Child and Family Studies; and USM, Child Welfare Training Institute. In four other projects, an outside evaluation consultant was hired for at least part of the project (DU, SDSU, SFSU, and UNC). At UNC the consultant provided guidance regarding the embedded evaluation. But the project staff—primarily the principal investigator—conducted the overall evaluation, including the outcome evaluation. The consultant at SFSU was hired during the course of the project, after early evaluation efforts by project staff were not satisfactory. At SDSU the evaluation consultant was a faculty member in the school of social work who had a history of conducting training evaluation with previously funded training projects. At DU two consultants with extensive expertise specific to training evaluation were involved throughout project. Finally, in two cases the evaluation was conducted solely by project staff; in one case the principal investigator (EMU) and in the other a combination of staff (OK).

In all but two sites the person(s) conducting the evaluation was interviewed in the course of the site visit. At SDSU the evaluator was unavailable for an interview. At OK the project team members who had conducted the evaluation were no longer working on the project, hence unavailable.

Integration of Evaluation with Curriculum Development

The level of integration of the evaluation into the overall project design and implementation was variable; in some cases well integrated, in others partially integrated, and in others it appeared quite separate. At USC the integration seemed to be particularly strong. Multiple respondents reported an extensive process of collaboratively developing an evaluation logic model. Both the resulting model and the process of developing it were reportedly helpful in clarifying the curriculum/training design and ensuring the evaluation matched the project's goals. Conversely, other sites noted specifically that the evaluation was separated from the design of the training project (SUNY, USM) and this was believed to be detrimental to effective evaluation. Although not specifically mentioned at most sites, lack of specificity about the relationship suggests that curriculum development and evaluation design were not well connected.

Evaluation Proposed vs. Evaluation Implemented

In most projects, the proposal section describing the evaluation plan was quite brief (2–3 paragraphs), and in some cases even briefer or vague (EMU, OK, SFSU, SUNY). One tentative conclusion from this is that projects gave limited thought to evaluation in the proposal-writing phase. Alternatively, some sites (SUNY) may have ongoing evaluation infrastructure used in similar ways with all projects, and thus little evaluation design effort is required.

Across all projects, the evaluation that was implemented was different, sometimes highly so, from that which was planned and described in the proposal. Occasionally, it was the evaluator him/herself that changed (SFSU, USC). But consistently it was the design that changed. In nearly all cases the implemented evaluation was less sophisticated than what was originally planned.

Two sites seemed to have improved their evaluation strategy over the course of the project. As noted earlier, USC engaged their evaluation unit in conducting the evaluation after the project had started. The design of their evaluation changed as well. Initially, three evaluation components were proposed. The first consisted

of pre- and post-tests to measure caseworkers' learning and application of factual material. The other two components were to focus on evaluating the training project as an intervention with youth directly, and measuring youths' development of relationships with adults. The actual evaluation that was conducted was far different from this initial plan, but was a noticeably better evaluation.

As another example, at SFSU the proposal described a community oriented, collaborative, interactive, evaluation methodology. This included focus groups and other input to develop the curriculum and competencies. Additionally, measures were researched to test effectiveness. The proposal also suggested that pre- and post-tests be considered to measure change in attitudes toward young people, and that each workshop be individually evaluated to assess its teaching effectiveness and to provide feedback to the youth trainers. The basic design of the evaluation that was conducted was much the same, but the instrument, data collection procedures, and the evaluator changed.

The evaluation that was initially conducted consisted of a pre/post-test developed by project staff that was primarily focused on satisfaction. There were, however, several problems: it was too long and had too many questions, the language of the questions was problematic, and project staff was unsure what to do with the data. Also some participants came late or left early, so the project could not get paired data. It became clear to the project staff that the tool did not work, so they made arrangements for an outside evaluator to conduct the evaluation. This worked much better, but money had not originally been allocated for the evaluation and this imposed resource limits on the evaluation design.

Four sites (DU, SDSU, UNC, USM) explicitly stated a plan in their proposal to utilize the Kirkpatrick³ (1994) four-level evaluation model: participant satisfaction, participant knowledge, participant skill, and impact on worker effectiveness and/or client progress. Clearly, the later levels are the most challenging to conduct and the sites had difficulty with these later levels. Each of these four sites did attempt to collect follow-up data in an effort to measure worker effectiveness and/or client progress, but there were several challenges to follow-up assessments.

USM reported that their initial plan proved unrealistic as the project unfolded. A pre/post-test and follow-up design was planned, but in the end only a post-test and follow-up were used. Use of embedded evaluation had been planned as well but did not occur. When the evaluator was included the curriculum needed to be pilot-tested. After that stage it was changed considerably, so it was not possible for the evaluator to incorporate an embedded evaluation. The original plan was

3. Kirkpatrick, D.L. 1994. *Evaluating Training Programs: Four Levels*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

to conduct a focus group with trainers and youth and to observe various trainers but this did not occur. The evaluation that was conducted included a post-test and follow up design to elicit self-assessment and satisfaction data from audience members. Feedback from the pilot test evaluations and T-of-T evaluations provided information to improve the curriculum. Participants completed follow-up surveys 4–5 months after completing the pilot training.

SDSU also proposed to follow Kirkpatrick's model. This would include a customer satisfaction tool (already in use by SDSU), pre/post-tests on knowledge, attitude, and skill. Also proposed were 6- and 12-month follow-ups using the post-test measure to determine the extent to which learning is transferred into practice. Ambitiously, the project also proposed using the Ansell-Casey Assessment Tool with a random sample of 150 foster care youth prior to the training and after, to determine whether the training of workers led to an effect on youth readiness for independence as measured by this life skills assessment. The evaluation that was conducted included satisfaction measurement at the end of training. There was also a pre-test at the beginning of the 1st day and post-test at the end of the 3rd day. Additionally, they mailed out 6- and 12-month follow-up surveys (same measures as post-test). There were other levels of evaluation that were written in the proposal but not carried out. In particular, the survey of 16–18 year olds (interview and Ansell-Casey) was not done. Timing, logistics, and staffing problems made this too difficult. As an alternative, the project attempted to do a focus group in the 3rd year, but that was not successful.

Early in the project, the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Tool was used with a random sample of 128 current foster youth to identify the needs of the foster care population. Although the original plan was to sample 150, the project was dependent on information provided by the County Department of Health and Human Services. They also planned to conduct this assessment later in the training project, using a quasi-experimental design to compare the differences in pre/post-test scores between youth with workers who attended the training and those that did not. As noted above, the follow-up was not done.

At UNC training satisfaction was measured at the end of the training day. Additionally, a 3-month follow-up was included in the training evaluation. Three months after the training, participants were supposed to receive postcards with questions to measure satisfaction and development of knowledge, skills, and effectiveness with clients. However, states were supposed to do this on their own. The project did not follow up to see to what extent this was done.

DU carried out an evaluation that remained close to the initial plan, perhaps because of the initial and on-going involvement of two experts in training evaluation. The evaluation was conducted at multiple levels, ranging from an assessment of trainee satisfaction and trainee evaluation of usefulness of each module, to knowledge assessment for key informational competencies. The evaluation plan consisted of assessment items tailored to the knowledge or competency being trained including: satisfaction and opinion, knowledge, embedded skills, and transfer of learning. Although the proposal stated plans to test psychometric properties to ensure instruments' reliability and validity, there was no evidence that this evaluation task was conducted.

The project also proposed developing follow-up assessment for key competencies identified as appropriate for Participant Action Plans and post-training follow-up. Trainees were to complete a Participant Action Plan during training, identifying plans to implement some of the steps learned in training. Once back on the job, trainees were to complete the form, documenting their degree of implementation of the plan, and key supports/barriers to implementing the plan.

In implementation, the evaluation consultants conducted both formative and summative evaluation. The summative evaluation components include knowledge acquisition and comprehension, trainee reaction, and transfer. For the summative evaluation, the project used an embedded evaluation method that the evaluators were familiar with from their previous evaluation of other child welfare training.

Other sites (OK, SUNY) had planned to conduct follow-up assessments but they were either not conducted or not implemented well enough to gather usable data. OK noted that follow-up surveys were not conducted as originally planned due to "several project staff transitions, curriculum design changes, and time and budget constraints."

Process Evaluation

All projects conducted some form of process evaluation or formative evaluation for the purpose of developing the training curriculum. Several sites (DU, SUNY, UNC) used a specific type of "embedded evaluation" in which the process evaluation is directly embedded into the training delivery.

SUNY was notable for the technological sophistication of its potential evaluation methodology. They utilized an elaborate system with computerized electronic voting to conduct embedded evaluation. Evaluation feedback during training

(e.g., concerning how to determine which youth are high risk) was used to make curriculum modifications. Trainers could get automatic feedback regarding what participants learned and if scores were too low this might indicate a problem with training delivery. Respondents noted that initial evaluation results were not impressive and indicated that too much information was presented. The project reduced the amount of text presented and later scores were better.

UNC used embedded evaluation at three points in the training and provided a check on participants' understanding of the material presented. Case examples and application of material were used to see if trainees understood the content. Trainee responses were assessed to see if they were right or wrong. The trainer could then revisit areas that people didn't understand. It was never clear to the project team, however, how much error was acceptable or whether 100% accuracy was required.

Other sites did not use embedded evaluation but collected feedback during pilot training sessions regarding what worked well and less well. For example, as part of the curriculum development process, EMU gathered qualitative and quantitative data during pilot testing of modules. If a module was rated high, no changes were made. If the module was rated moderate or low, the qualitative information was reviewed to guide revision. At USC process evaluation included reaction forms completed by participants and the evaluation team's observation of training sessions.

At two sites (SDSU, SFSU) there was less formal data collection to guide development of curriculum or the training program. At these sites, the curriculum development and training teams made adjustments based on informal discussions with participants and their professional sense of what worked and did not.

Conducting Outcome Evaluation

Each site made efforts to collect data to measure outcomes of the training. However, the efforts that projects gave to outcome evaluation and the methods used were widely disparate, making it difficult to summarize methods used. Even within projects, different methods were used at different phases of the project. It is also not always clear from reports how many people were included in evaluation data. It appears that SUNY collected evaluation data on 60–70 participants, EMU on 26, and SFSU on 195. DU reported evaluation data for 123 participants in the core module, two cohorts of trainees on the culture module, 57 on the mental health/substance abuse module, and 42 on the *Between Teens* training.

As noted earlier, some projects (DU, SUNY, UNC, USC, USM) attempted to conduct follow-up evaluation but met with limited success. Part of this was due to the projects' limited control over contacting participants after training (SUNY, UNC, USC) or technological difficulties (SUNY).

DU used embedded evaluation to conduct summative evaluation in the following domains: trainee reaction, knowledge acquisition and comprehension, and transfer. There were, however, different evaluations for different training modules. For example, the evaluation of the core training module had a workshop satisfaction survey and an embedded test of trainees' knowledge and skills. The evaluation of the mental health and substance abuse module examined application of knowledge gained from training on the job, in addition to a workshop satisfaction survey, and an embedded test of trainees' knowledge and skills. Transfer of training was measured via a follow-up phone interview for participants in the culture module.

Other than the use of a follow-up survey, there was little variation on a standard pre/post-test design to evaluate knowledge, attitude, or perceived impact on behavior. There was obvious variation on measures. This is because few standardized measures exist in child welfare training evaluation and measures typically need to be specific to the type of training being offered. Thus, projects often design their own.

Two sites utilized retrospective measures (SFSU, USC). These types of measures collect data after the training but ask the respondent to reflect on what they knew before they participated in the training. For example, the SFSU evaluation tool (retrospective pre-test) contained 16 outcome-related questions. The focus of the questions was on knowledge and attitude rather than skill. Participants were asked, "Now that you know specific information, think back to what you did not know before training."

EMU developed a more complex (than is typical) competency measure that was used at pre-test and post-test and focused on skill development. Consistent with the content of the training, the measure was designed to assess four areas of competency: partnering, strengths-based responding, building youth autonomy, and support building. Three measures were used, each containing case studies to assess application of knowledge and attitude. Evaluation data in the final report is based on 26 participants. There is detailed information on this in the final report, but the small numbers and multiple measures make interpretation of the findings difficult. The project's web-based courses used traditional course evaluation instruments.

Case Highlight: USC Conducting Evaluation

One of the more sophisticated evaluations was conducted by USC, which has strong evaluation infrastructure via the Center for Child and Family Studies. However, the original evaluation plan was to include a faculty member from the School of Social Work. When this did not work out the project directors decided to use the Center's evaluation unit. Although the evaluation unit was more involved in program evaluation than training evaluation, they were able to do the evaluation work for this project.

An initial step was the development of an evaluation logic model. This was a combined process of involving the evaluation team with the training project team. It was conducted over a 6-month process that was reported as "very helpful" by the project team. Following this, the evaluators conducted a process evaluation for eight months that involved the completion of reaction forms by training participants and the observation of training by the evaluators. To evaluate outcomes they utilized a retrospective pre/post-test and a 3-month follow-up. This project made a serious effort to conduct a 3-month follow-up and still found the response rate to be disappointing. Additionally, although not a part of the training project directly, the evaluation unit conducts an annual survey of IL youth. Information from this survey was used to inform the training design.

The evaluation team produced a detailed final evaluation report that was separate from the final project report. The evaluation report provided information on three levels of outcomes: reactions; changes in knowledge, skill, attitudes, and intentions; and change in practices. The report included an overview of the evaluation, the logic model, the instruments, and results. The report described two instruments. First, a 33-item reaction questionnaire was designed to solicit feedback from trainees that would guide modifications to the training prior to beginning the outcome assessment. The reaction questionnaire contained both quantitative and qualitative information, was administered at the end of each training session, and could be completed in less than 15 minutes. Second, two outcome questionnaires were designed. One was administered immediately after the training and one was administered three months later. The questionnaires were designed to measure 1) immediate changes in participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and intentions, and 2) intermediate-term outcomes that involve changes in practices or immediate gains. Because each level of the training had its own distinct outcomes, three unique sets of outcome instruments were created. Each set contained a retrospective pre-test questionnaire and a follow-up questionnaire.

The evaluation was not without challenges. The evaluation team identified the following as key challenges to conducting the evaluation: amount of time spent developing the logic model, limited effort to monitor training fidelity, the state budget crisis, decreased participants in training, and high turnover among training participants (affecting follow-up).

At OK there appeared to be little attention to evaluation design. It consisted of trainers giving a pre-test and post-test at both the direct training and the T-of-T courses. The post-test included a satisfaction questionnaire evaluating content, presentation, and atmosphere of the training. Respondents stated that the pre/post-tests were developed after two or three pilots.

Although typical training evaluation focuses on the impact of the training on the participants, because of the unique focus on youth involvement some projects also devoted evaluation attention to the impact of involvement on the youth themselves. Most projects talked about the impact anecdotally, based on their perceptions and impressions. At SFSU however, the evaluator conducted qualitative interviews with each of the youth who participated in the project as trainers.

Other notable mention includes the technological sophistication at SUNY. The evaluation was conducted by the evaluation department of CDHS, which occurs with all training grants. Their sophisticated technology systems include software to track the training history of all individual workers and foster parents. There were, however, some limitations to the approach. The evaluation staff was not involved until late, so there was some disconnect between the training project and the evaluation. Also, the technology-based evaluation was new to the trainers. They were not comfortable with it so the evaluation did not go as well as it might have. There were also some technical difficulties.

Reflections From Grantees

Reflecting on evaluation in child welfare training, several grantees (DU, SFSU, UNC) spoke about some of the larger issues in this field. In particular, these grantees were very aware that there is a great need for more extensive evaluation in the field of child welfare training and that, in general, most evaluations are highly limited.

The evaluators at DU expressed that the current state of child welfare training evaluation is very elementary. One evaluator pointed out that typically only trainees' perceptions about what they learned are evaluated. The other evaluator suggested that child welfare training needs a more sophisticated and intense evaluation of trainee's skills and whether these skills were transferred to the work setting. Moreover, respondents noted that training is never the sole variable in developing worker competency. Evaluation of child welfare training needs to consider other influential factors such as supervisory input, clarity of policies and procedures, and nature of the caseload.

A respondent at SFSU stated an ongoing concern: “how can you really find out about transfer of training with simple tools.” She expressed the need for a lengthy evaluation to assess the impact on youth trainers involved in their youth-driven project. At least a 5-year follow-up is needed. In her view, there should be a full-time evaluator and the ability to follow workers over time to see the impact of the training.

At UNC a respondent suggested that evaluation needs more attention in projects such as these. It is easy to write an evaluation plan in the proposal, but there is no follow-up to ensure that it is done and no repercussions if it is not done. Thus, projects have no real incentive to conduct a more thorough evaluation.

Conclusions: Conducting Evaluation

In general, evaluation did not appear to be a high priority of the majority of the projects, although all of them did conduct at least a minimal level of evaluation. In addition to uncertain commitment of projects to evaluation, other factors limited the quality of evaluations. Limited project resources and the 3-year time period impacted the ability to conduct observations and to follow-up with trainees. There were also difficulties with technology and public agency assistance in conducting evaluations (e.g., providing contact information to follow-up with trainees). Other conclusions include the following:

- The evaluation emphasis in these projects was on process rather than outcome. This is consistent with the projects' main emphasis on curriculum development rather than on-going training.
- Most sites believed in the importance of evaluation and the need for better evaluations in child welfare training. But this belief was outweighed by difficulties in conducting evaluation, lack of expertise on the project team, and greater interest in other components of the project (e.g., curriculum development, youth involvement).
- Having a designated evaluator is important; when the role of evaluator is a part of the principal investigator or project director responsibilities it tends to receive less attention.
- Integration of evaluation with curriculum design and training delivery leads to better evaluation. Coordination with the evaluator or evaluation team should begin at the start of the project. Additionally, the use of embedded evaluation techniques helps to identify whether trainees are learning the skills being taught.
- Clarity of purpose of the training project is needed so that the evaluation design is an adequate fit. For example, if the purpose of the training project is to increase knowledge or change attitudes then a pre/post-test design with these types of measures is sufficient. There is no need to conduct elaborate evaluations in all cases.
- The involvement of the public agency in conducting the evaluation needs to be secured early in the project, even as early as the proposal stage in the letter of commitment. Public child welfare agencies are typically needed to gain access to control groups or to allow follow-up data collection.



Project Activity: Dissemination

This section provides a summary of project dissemination activities. A review of project proposals indicated that projects planned for national, regional, and local dissemination. However, many sites found dissemination challenging either because of time constraints or a limited dissemination infrastructure. Most sites shared similar dissemination strategies with the most widely-used approach being mailings of curriculum, CD-ROM or video, posting of curriculum on a website, and conference presentations. Some sites had expected more assistance from the National Resource Center on Youth Services or the Children’s Bureau in disseminating their materials.

Methods of Dissemination

Marketing and promotional materials. A few sites sent out promotional materials once the curriculum was completed. This method appeared to ensure that national audiences were aware of the materials. SUNY and SDSU stand out with extensive marketing strategies. The staff at SUNY did a mailing to child welfare directors in many states and received more than 100 requests for the curriculum. SDSU mailed a postcard to 8,500 IL providers nationwide and developed a 5-minute informational video. UNC developed a marketing brochure and wrote an article for the Children’s Bureau Express website to market the curriculum.

Web-based dissemination. Among the websites most commonly used were the National Resource Center, schools of social work, or collaborative partners. In their final reports, EMU, OK, SDSU and SFSU discussed the use of either a collaborating partner or the NRCYS website. SDSU created a project website

for the purpose of promoting the training materials. All training materials were posted on the website and the 8,500 mailed postcards directed people to the website to access the curricula.

Development of video or CD-ROM. Videos were developed by DU, EMU, SFSU, UNC, and USC. Youth narratives or digital stories were the primary focus of the videos and were thought to be a very effective way of making sure a youth voice was part of the curriculum. SFSU made available copies of the video, that could be purchased for cost independent of the entire curriculum.

OK, UNC, USC, and USM created CD-ROMs that contained most of the curriculum materials. It was thought that this provided for a much less cumbersome and costly way of curriculum distribution.

Mailing of curriculum. The mailing of the curricula varied considerably among projects. Many sites focused on mailing to members within the core setting, while others mailed extensively outside of the core setting. The DU project distributed the curriculum to 20 sites across the county. SUNY sent more than 100 copies of the curriculum to program staff in the state of New York. OK distributed more than 100 copies of the curriculum to all state IL coordinators and other key stakeholders in OK. Because a key focus of the OK curriculum was on tribal youth in transition, the curriculum also was distributed to stakeholders in tribal communities and the National Indian Child Welfare Association. Other sites reported sending out approximately 20–30 copies.

Conference presentations. Conference presentations were a dissemination strategy used by some sites. Projects that did conference presentations found the strategy to be a useful way of showcasing the curriculum and reaching large audiences. These conference presentations often resulted in additional requests for copies of the curriculum.

Newsletters and booklets. SFSU, UNC, and USM reported writing articles that appeared in newsletters for child welfare administrators or annual reports of collaborators. USM produced, *Partnering with Youth: Child Welfare Training and Curriculum Development* published by the Muskie School of Public Service. In addition, USM produced two articles on the project for *Common Ground* the newsletter of the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners.

Targets of Dissemination

IL and child welfare stakeholders. Most sites disseminated the curriculum to IL programs or agencies providing services to youth. SUNY described sending the curriculum to centers providing services to youth and group homes for youth in New York State. DU noted that some of the curriculum modules and videos are now integrated in the core training for child welfare workers. The staff views this type of institutionalization of the curriculum as a positive outcome of their dissemination strategy.

Schools of social work. Dissemination to schools of social work occurred infrequently. In a successful infusion of curriculum content, the project director at DU integrated some of the curriculum into her graduate child welfare course. In addition, she conducted a brown bag lunch where the curriculum, video, and exercises were demonstrated. In cases where social work faculty was not directly involved in the curriculum development or had not participated in the training, it appears less likely that content would be included in social work courses.

UNC did some marketing to schools of social work but did not receive requests for the curriculum. USM reported not having any dissemination strategies targeting schools of social work. They felt this was a gap in their project and in hindsight thought the curriculum could have been extremely helpful to social work students and practitioners. EMU chose the school of social work as one of their targeted audiences, which resulted in the curriculum being used with social work students.

National advocacy organizations for youth, youth networks, and other national organizations. It was not surprising that most sites disseminated the curriculum to national or regional organizations that address child welfare issues (e.g., Child Welfare League, New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners, Colorado Child Welfare Conference, National Foster Parent Conference, and National Indian Child Welfare Association).

SUNY was able to disseminate the curriculum through the Mid-Atlantic Network for Youth. UNC expressed disappointment that their key collaborator, Southeastern Network (SEN) did not appear to disseminate through their youth networks.

Pathways, a national youth development conference, received attention from at least two sites that did presentations at their national conference. In addition, dissemination through conference presentations was done by UNC at the National Staff Development and Training Association Conference, and by EMU at the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting.

Case Highlight: USC Dissemination

This project had a sophisticated team in place within the Center for Child and Family Studies that facilitated several aspects of dissemination, including final curriculum editing and production, development of a CD-ROM containing all relevant materials, graphics capabilities, and video production. Staff included a Production Manager and others with expertise in graphics, editing, programming, and production. As with other training projects, the production staff developed materials based on the audience of the specific training project. In this project, materials included posters and training materials that were “youth-oriented,” “modern,” “tech-y,” and “fun.”

There was ongoing conversation within the project team about the need for a video to use in training. It was not a piece of the project that was planned from the outset. Video production occurred late in the project and it happened because of existing infrastructure. While the video production was considered a success, the production team identified a couple of key challenges. First, with foster youth it is difficult getting releases from parents that will allow them to participate. Because of this, the team did not have the ability to find a diverse group of youth. A second problem was tracking down the youth and having them keep the appointments for taping. On some occasions, youth failed to appear at the last minute.

In addition to the video, a CD-ROM also was developed. This was considered the primary means of distributing the curriculum and materials. The CD included training materials, video, links to web sites, etc., and asked users for feedback on the usefulness of the training materials. To distribute the CD, the team planned to utilize their standard dissemination plan (e.g., listserv, newsletters) to inform potential audiences. The CD costs \$2 and can be ordered on the Center’s website.

The production team made some suggestions for training projects. First, the projects need to make an investment in media staff—too often production and dissemination are considered as an afterthought. Also, media people usually operate in one world and training specialists operate in another world. Media people can get carried away with developing the “entertainment piece” whereas training people mistakenly assume they have a captive audience (and don’t need to develop “interesting” training). Optimally, at least some key staff would be available who understand and can communicate in both worlds.

Conclusions: Dissemination

- Most sites did not have extensive dissemination strategies. Some sites described underestimating the time needed for other project activities and running out of time for dissemination.
- Many sites wished the Children’s Bureau had been more active in outlining expectations for dissemination and that the NRCYS provided more technical assistance in the area of dissemination.
- Dissemination seemed most successful when the project had a large dissemination infrastructure (USC) or had an institute or center affiliation with existing dissemination supports (SUNY and UNC).
- Additionally, dissemination may require a skill set that was not common among grantees. These skills include curricula production, graphic design, website development, and video production.
- Dissemination to social work schools appears to have occurred only when social work faculty was directly involved in the curriculum development and training. In those cases, where the faculty was quite familiar with the material, it was easier to transfer some of the content into BSW or MSW child welfare courses.
- Conference presentations appear to have consistently generated interest and increased the number of requests for the curriculum, CD, or video.
- Projects typically did not request or get feedback regarding how the curricula were used at the various sites to which they were disseminated. This could be an important component of further evaluation activity.



Project Activity: Collaboration

Developing a collaboration with another entity is often needed to facilitate project activities and attain outcomes. Some collaborations are needed at the proposal development stage in order to describe a viable project. These collaborations are often pre-existing and long-standing. In other cases, they are developed at the proposal stage in order to secure the training project. Additionally, other collaborations are formed during project planning and implementation—sometimes to replace planned collaborations that did not succeed and sometimes as additional collaborations. In this section we describe the collaborative relationships at each of the sites and relevant issues in these collaborations.

DU

Collaborators' roles: Curriculum development, ILP Theater Project, evaluation, curriculum integration in graduate education. Occurred with Casey Family Foundation and American Humane Association (AHA), headquartered in Denver and an early collaborator of the grantee agency. Collaborators assisted with curriculum input and resources. The ILP Theater Project was a product of collaboration between the grantee, state, Casey Family Foundation, and Graduate School of Social Work. AHA assisted with the formative and summative evaluation. The Graduate School of Social Work assisted with integration of the curriculum into graduate courses.

EMU

Collaborators' roles: Curriculum development and training delivery. Occurred through Curriculum Stakeholder Council. Representation from Oregon's State Office of Services to Children and Families, Michigan Family Independence Agency's Children and Family Services Administration, Lucas County (Toledo, OH)

Children Services, HelpSource, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI), and Oregon Department of Human Resources. The EMU School of Social Work was also a collaborator. Lucas County was the primary collaborator for training in OH. No information was provided about the Oregon agency with which the project collaborated.

OK

Collaborators' roles: Curriculum development and training delivery. Occurred primarily through curriculum development with tribal associations in OK and NM, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the New Mexico Indian Child Welfare Association, and foster parents. The final report identifies numerous specific tribes and pueblos from OK and NM. The development and delivery of the training was designed to help state and tribal child welfare systems collaborate to better serve tribal youth.

SFSU

Collaborators' roles: Project leadership, staff hiring, youth recruitment, curriculum development, training delivery. Occurred through a partnership of the School of Social Work at SFSU, the California Youth Connection (CYC), and the San Francisco Department of Social Services. The SSW is integrated with other important systems. It is part of CalSWEC, a California Consortium of graduate programs, which utilizes Title IV-E funds to train MSW students in child welfare. CYC is a statewide agency with 22 county-based chapters and more than 350 members ranging in age from 14–24. The project also worked with other counties, foundations (Orangewood), and private agencies (Seneca Center) that hired them to provide the training.

SUNY

Collaborators' role: Advisory committee. Occurred through individuals on the Advisory Committee. Included Office of Mental Health, Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services, Juvenile Justice, youth service agencies, local district IL offices, and staff from group care.

UNC

Collaborators' roles: Advisory committee and youth involvement. Occurred primarily through Advisory Committee meetings. Collaborators included Independent Living Resources, an organization that has advanced Independent Living in the state and conducts contracted training; Southeastern Network (runaway and homeless youth service providers in the Southeastern states), that has provided

Case Highlight: SDSU Collaboration

Perhaps in part because of this project's focus on interdisciplinary training as a core element of the project, SDSU appeared to have success at developing, utilizing, sustaining, and further developing a variety of collaborative relationships. The collaborators' roles included: trainee recruitment, participation in training, provision of funding, and curriculum development. Collaboration occurred primarily with five organizations: Casey Family Programs, San Diego's Promise (a program of the federal Alliance for Youth), the County Health and Human Services Department (the public child welfare agency in San Diego County), California Community College Foundation (provides training for foster parents and is a primary contractor for Independent Living Services), and the Southern Indian Health Council (the Indian child welfare agency). Casey Family Programs (a) provided money for two years, (b) provided a training facility, (c) were involved in pilot training and presentation of the final curriculum, and (d) provided a staff member who reviewed the curriculum and worked on developing some of the activities. The arrangements for this collaboration became less clear as time went on, creating some difficulties for the project. The collaboration with the Southern Indian Health Council helped to sustain further development of this project through another training grant: Tribal STAR.

The collaborations were viewed as generally good, although there were differences in perspective that needed resolution. We note that successful collaborations do not necessarily mean non-problematic relationships.

services to many youth in foster care; and the child welfare systems of each of the eight states involved in the project. Project staff concluded that these collaborations worked well. However, developing and maintaining collaborations with other states required substantial work. For example, the project had to take a significant role in setting up logistics for advisory committee meetings, paying for travel arrangements, and convincing the states to send youth. The IL coordinators were key in making this work.

USC

Collaborators' role: Some limited youth input on curriculum. Occurred primarily through the Foster Parent Association and GOALL, a youth membership group. Since the grantee agency and state child welfare agency had worked together in the past and anticipated that the project would go smoothly, staff believed that it was not necessary for either entity to “go out and look for” collaborating partners. A former head of the state IL office helped the project get connected to the county IL offices.

USM

Collaborators' roles: Curriculum development and training delivery. Occurred primarily through state child welfare and IL representatives in the states of NH, VT, and RI for the purposes of curriculum development and training delivery. Additionally, USM and Fordham University collaborated in CT. The site reported that developing and maintaining these collaborations required substantial work, as did meeting at various New England locations and providing technical assistance to these representatives.

Conclusions: Collaboration

- As with other aspects of the training projects in the IL cluster, grantees' collaborations with organizations other than the state child welfare agency seemed to have occurred along a spectrum, with some projects engaging in a considerable number of such activities and other projects engaging in few such activities.
- From the information gathered it was difficult to determine (a) whether grantees had chosen the organizations most suited to assisting them with project goals, (b) whether a sufficient amount of collaboration occurred to move the projects forward, (c) whether the collaborators viewed themselves as having a substantial role or serving a more symbolic purpose, and (d) whether the projects saw their collaborators as having a substantial role or serving a more symbolic purpose.
- Collaborating organizations often participated through representation on advisory committees. This model generally involves one individual representing an organization and raises the question of whether the full benefit of collaborative work with another organization can be experienced in this way. Some projects found that if the representative of the collaborating organization was difficult to engage, or left his/her job, the collaboration fell apart.
- Collaborating organizations might be better utilized if the rationale for their inclusion and their functions were more clearly articulated. For example, rather than saying that an organization will serve on the Advisory Committee, the project would identify the tasks involved in the collaboration, such as curriculum review, assistance in recruiting participants for training, and advocacy with the state agency for inclusion of the curriculum in ongoing training.
- Collaborative agreements should be constructed in such a way that they are not dependent on a single individual, and include some written provision for replacement representatives if the initial contact people become unavailable.
- Forming real collaborations is a time consuming process; much of year one activities are needed to establish collaboration and a 3-year time line might not be enough.

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased from 10.5 million to 12.5 million, and the number of people in the public sector who are employed in health care has increased from 2.5 million to 3.5 million (Department of Health 2000).

There are a number of reasons for this increase in the number of people employed in the public sector. One reason is that the public sector has become a more important part of the economy. Another reason is that the public sector has become a more attractive place to work. A third reason is that the public sector has become a more important part of society.

The public sector has become a more important part of the economy because it provides a number of essential services. These services include health care, education, and social care. The public sector has also become a more attractive place to work because it offers a number of benefits, such as job security and a good work-life balance.

The public sector has become a more important part of society because it provides a number of essential services. These services include health care, education, and social care. The public sector has also become a more attractive place to work because it offers a number of benefits, such as job security and a good work-life balance.

The public sector has become a more important part of society because it provides a number of essential services. These services include health care, education, and social care. The public sector has also become a more attractive place to work because it offers a number of benefits, such as job security and a good work-life balance.

The public sector has become a more important part of society because it provides a number of essential services. These services include health care, education, and social care. The public sector has also become a more attractive place to work because it offers a number of benefits, such as job security and a good work-life balance.

The public sector has become a more important part of society because it provides a number of essential services. These services include health care, education, and social care. The public sector has also become a more attractive place to work because it offers a number of benefits, such as job security and a good work-life balance.

The public sector has become a more important part of society because it provides a number of essential services. These services include health care, education, and social care. The public sector has also become a more attractive place to work because it offers a number of benefits, such as job security and a good work-life balance.



Outcomes

The information provided on project outcomes is divided into two sections. First, we summarize the evidence provided by the projects, via the collection of outcome data found in project reports. Second, we provide information from our interviews with respondents regarding perceptions of project outcomes.

Outcomes: Evidence

This section provides a summary of outcome data provided by the projects. It does not include satisfaction data or other feedback about the training. It relies only on data provided by the sites in their written reports. Hence, it excludes perceived outcomes or what respondents felt were the impacts of the training. It is also primarily based on quantitative data, with the exception of qualitative interviews done with youth participants. Aside from this type of qualitative data, the focus is on the outcomes of training participants related to the changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The final reports of the projects were highly variable in the amount of outcome data provided. Overall, very little outcome data were provided by projects and consequently, conclusions about the effectiveness of these projects are limited. Two projects provided virtually no outcome data whatsoever. At the other end of the spectrum, USC had a full separate evaluation report in addition to the project final report.

Outcomes for training participants

As noted above, the most extensive evaluation data was provided by USC. This would be consistent with our observations about the strong evaluation effort undertaken and infrastructure built into this project. Here we briefly summarize the data provided in the report.

The USC project evaluation report provides information on three levels of outcomes: 1) reaction—trainees' reactions to the content of the training, the quality of the instruction, the amount of support they believe they have to implement what is presented in the training, and their overall satisfaction with the training experience; 2) changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and intentions; and 3) changes in practices.

Evaluation data were collected for all three levels of training (supervisor, caseworker, and youth professionals). Small sample sizes, particularly at follow-up, were problematic for the supervisor and youth professional training. The sample for caseworkers was sufficiently large, but only 36% returned the follow-up survey. For these reasons, the authors accurately warn that evaluation data should be interpreted cautiously.

The evaluators summarized the outcome results as follows. First, the training produced immediate gains in knowledge, skills, and intentions across all three levels of training. At Level I (supervisors) there were significant increases in appreciation of the importance of a healthy adolescent-caseworker relationship, and an increase in the importance of supporting caseworkers in the use of IL tools. At Level II (caseworkers), the training significantly increased self-reported understanding of how trauma and loss affect the youth-adult relationship, and significantly increased the caseworkers' skills in using specific IL tools with youth. The Level III (youth workers) training also showed immediate gains in trainees' self-efficacy ratings. Respondents believe the training enhanced their ability to conduct a youth group and their appreciation of the need for consistency, commitment, and genuineness in the youth-adult relationship. At Level I and Level II, trainees achieved the criterion of 75% correct on a test of their knowledge concerning the Chafee Act.

Second, most immediate gains are maintained and evidence indicates that caseworkers changed their work-related practices. Small sample sizes at follow-up for Level I and III are problematic, but the limited evidence suggests some ability to maintain gains. For example, at follow-up the supervisors maintained their post-test knowledge level regarding the Chafee Act and their appreciation of the importance of a positive adolescent-caseworker relationship remained high. Level III trainees maintained their immediate gains in their ability to conduct

youth groups, as well as their appreciation of the need for consistency, commitment, and genuineness in youth-adult relationships. In terms of practice, all trainees who responded at follow-up reported using the tools and techniques they learned in the training in their last youth group. However, the Level III trainees did not report an increase in the number of youth groups they conducted in the three months following the training.

The evaluators' conclusions regarding the Level II training are more definitive because of the larger sample size. Scores regarding the use of IL tools and understanding the issues of trauma and loss significantly increased from pre-test to post-test and were maintained at follow-up. There was also some report of the incorporation of these skills into practice. The 39 caseworkers who completed a follow-up survey reported a total of 13 applications of the IL tools in the three months prior to the training. In the three months after the training, these same caseworkers reported a total of 118 applications.

In the follow-up survey, respondents were asked about barriers to implementing the application of what they have learned. Supervisors identified time as the major barrier. Similarly, 50% of caseworkers identified lack of time as the major impediment to using the IL tools; 27% identified an increase in their caseloads; 23% identified a change in their program responsibilities; 12% said engaging the youths with the tools was too difficult; and 23% said there were no barriers to using the IL tools. The follow-up questionnaire also asked caseworkers to identify the ways in which their counties had supported them in using the tools; 39% reported that their supervisors offered flexible work hours; 39% reported that their supervisors stressed the importance of using the life skills assessment; and 39% stressed the importance of information sharing between caseworkers. In terms of receiving support in promoting positive youth-adult relationships, the caseworkers report that their supervisors offered flexible work hours (45%); stressed the importance of honesty and sensitivity (39%); regularly discussed with them ways to build relationships (38%); stressed the importance of spending time with youths (34%); encouraged networking with other caseworkers (35%); sent others to the training (24%); or set up a reward system (3%).

Two other sites (EMU, SDSU) provided fairly detailed outcome information in their final reports. At SDSU the final report provides evaluation data related to training satisfaction, pre/post-test, and 6-month follow-up. Data is provided on the pre/post-test (knowledge test and competency assessment) for four cohorts of trainees, a group of supervisors/managers, and one T-of-T. Significant gains are recorded for most scores. Data on 6-month follow-up are provided for 25 participants and demonstrate positive results.

Additionally, some of the interim reports contain evaluation data. For instance, the fourth interim report provides some detail about the ways in which training participants have worked together to create “significant changes in practice” following the training session. These included, “[One County] is working with group homes to specify tasks completed in regard to working with youth on developing skills needed for self-sufficiency. For example, the group home will no longer be able to merely state that they will work with youth on ‘money management skills’ ... they also will have to state the tasks they will complete ...”

At EMU the focus of the evaluation was on a series of skills: partnering, strengths-based responding, building youth autonomy, and support building. The final report provides data on these measures that is quite detailed. According to the summary:

It appears that the training was able to produce changes in participants. The strongest area of change appears to be in the area of the youth-worker partnership and the interpersonal relationship. An increase in partnering and strength-based responding is evident. Uneven gains appear in the area of youth empowerment. Some areas such as a decrease in power-over strategies and the use of engaged support are evident, but content areas such as sexuality seem to create some unevenness in the participants’ willingness to allow youth to make their own decisions. There is some improvement in how the participants may work with support systems but these are much weaker in terms of statistical significance.

At SFSU the final project report provides data and conclusions from the retrospective pre-test used with trainees. Data are provided for 195 social workers completing the measure between January and August 2003. The evaluation tool contains 16 outcome-related questions ranging from a measure of social workers’ increased understanding of the “impact that demonstrated caring, concern and attention from social workers has on transition age foster youth development” to the “resources available to parenting foster youth.”

Five outcome objectives were identified: 1) Increase social workers’ knowledge of cultural and developmental needs of foster care youth when making assessments and case plans. 2) Increase social workers’ ability to develop relationships, obtain information, communicate and listen effectively to foster care youth. 3) Increase social workers’ use of traditional resources/referrals, as well as experiential learning, to prepare foster youth for emancipation. 4) Increase social workers’ compassion and commitment to foster youth. 5) Increase social workers’ sensitivity

and skill in dealing with stigmatized foster youth groups including teen parents, youth with mental health issues, and GLBTQ youth. The final report lists the quantitative measures on each of these objectives that suggest change from pre-test to post-test. Note, however, that all of these differences used a retrospective test. They also all measure self-reported knowledge, attitude, and skill development.

The conclusion of the evaluation report is that the retrospective pre-test is a good evaluation tool for measuring pre/post changes in trainees' knowledge. Retrospective pre-test findings show that the project exposes social workers to a curriculum and training experience that is both informative and meaningful for participants and the youth trainers. However, it also cautions that there is no evidence that the project changed practices for participating social workers.

At DU the final report included the analysis of evaluation data related to training satisfaction, and knowledge and skills acquisition. Data are provided on post-test (trainee satisfaction, perceptions of the training's relevance to their work, perceptions of their own learning for each competency area) for ten cohorts of trainees on the core module, two cohorts of trainees on the culture module, three cohorts of trainees on the mental health and substance abuse module, and two cohorts of trainees on the *Between Teens* module.

Regarding trainees' knowledge and skill acquisition, the evaluation found that many trainees gained substantial knowledge and skills to effectively work with adolescent populations. For example, in the mental health and substance abuse module where trainees took a written test of nine closed-ended and one open-ended item, 70% of trainees got at least 70% of items correct in the first two sessions.

The grantee conducted a follow-up phone interview on one module—the culture module. This follow-up was designed to measure trainees' levels of transfer of training. Among 21 trainees who completed the follow-up interview, 53% reported that they did not use the learned ethnographic interviewing and 32% stated that they did not use the concepts of youth culture subtypes in their work. In contrast, 15% reported that they used a lot of learned information on cultural groups.

At USM data from a follow-up survey (24% response rate) showed a positive response to the training, including a high percentage of respondents reporting (a) use of the skills and tools learned in the training in their work with youth, (b) agreeing that the advocacy material helped them in their work, (c) agreeing that the networking material helped them in their work, and (d) strongly agreeing that the adolescent development material helped them in their work.

At OK very limited evaluation data is provided in the final report. Evaluation data comparing the pre-test and post-test demonstrated an overall 65% increase in “knowing how to complete a culturally competent life skills assessment” and an overall 72% increase in “knowing how to create a culturally congruent plan of transition.” Responses to the philosophical statement, “it is important to find out what is wrong with a young person when doing an assessment” showed an overall increase of 37% of participants responding correctly (that finding out what is wrong with a youth is NOT most important). The OK final report also includes some verbatim comments that support the success of the project.

Two sites (UNC and SUNY) reported no data in their final reports. At UNC the evaluation of knowledge, skills, and effectiveness with clients was measured at the end of training and at follow-up. Participants rated the following statements on a 5-point scale: 1) I am satisfied with the training; 2) I will incorporate some of what I learned into my work; 3) I will do a better job because of this training; 4) My agency will support me in using knowledge/skills from this training; 5) Adolescents and their families will benefit from my taking this course. Three months after the training, participants were supposed to receive postcards asking these same questions. This part of the evaluation was not considered successful; project staff did not follow up with the trainers to see whether these instruments were administered. The project chose instead to put more emphasis on the embedded evaluation (for purposes of curriculum development) rather than the outcome evaluation.

At SUNY measurement of attitudes and knowledge were attempted. But project staff reported that due to the late point at which the evaluators were involved, the technical difficulties involved in the embedded evaluation, and the fact that the curriculum was delivered by some trainers inexperienced with the technology, no usable evaluation data were produced on the IL training.

Outcomes from phone survey with previous trainees

In an effort to collect some independent data regarding outcomes, we selected a convenience sample of previous participants in the grantee training projects. Phone interviews were conducted with 37 respondents. Although highly limited, the survey results suggest that participants were positively influenced by the training to have more youth-oriented attitudes and engage in practice that supported a youth development approach. A full report on the method and findings from this effort is found in Appendix A.

Outcomes for youth involved in projects

No project reported a quantitative measure of the impact on youth. In one project (SFSU) the evaluator conducted qualitative interviews with youth trainers. In several other projects our evaluation team collected qualitative data from youth themselves, or from other staff, about the impact on the youth.

At SFSU the evaluator described some findings from her interviews with youth trainers. She reported that most of these youth trainers reported feeling very empowered by the project director and described the training as enhancing their skills in public speaking. They also felt that they did not have enough time to contribute as much as they would have liked. The youth trainers provided some feedback that was less positive: there were personality conflicts among group members and they felt they were asked to do a lot (expectations were too high).

At USM project staff reported that when youth were first involved many were terrified of the prospect of having to do training. After being trained as trainers, youth felt validated by connecting with adults who were looking for the youths' input. One of the two youth interviewed reported, "I know the training helped the workers and other adults. I felt good about it. I'm not well educated but I learned I can educate others." The other interviewed USM youth said:

Doing the training helped me think about how to help friends and others who are still in the foster care system. The audience seemed to take away a lot—the statements that some participants made in their evaluations were just the things we were trying to teach them—sometimes it was even said using our own words! I found out I knew more than I thought I did. I felt like a stronger person with a stronger voice in public speaking. It felt odd to be teaching people like our parents but we found we could hold the audience. The audience paid more attention to us than to the other trainers.

Most interview respondents felt the project left youth feeling empowered. Youth at SDSU, SFSU, and UNC often spoke of specific skill development from their involvement in the project. One youth in the SFSU project reported that he developed group facilitation skills, increased his communication skills, and was made more conscious of the need to be active on social issues. Another youth in the same project described learning new skills (presenting material, mirroring back to audience, taking turns). A third youth from SDSU described skill development in public speaking as well as self-empowerment.

In at least two instances youth talked about project involvement shifting their career goals. A youth participant at SDSU talked about gaining insight into what social workers are learning. She recalled that before the public speaking experience she wanted to go into hotel management, but after being involved in the project she decided this is what she wanted to do. A youth at USM said “I learned a lot of information about adolescence that I never knew; I learned a lot because I had to teach it to others. Doing the training sessions has actually helped me to decide to work with adolescents. I’m in college and I had not decided on a major, but I know now that I want to work with adolescents in some way.”

We did not speak with all youth who had been involved in these projects, nor were we able to interview at least one youth at each project. Thus, while the information we received suggests a highly positive experience for youth, there may be a wider range of experiences than was observed in the data collected.

Outcomes: Perceptions

Although projects did not provide a lot of documented evidence about the impact of their projects, project personnel and their collaborators perceived the projects to be successful in many ways, most prominently in achieving attitude change regarding adolescents. This section provides a summary of perceptions of outcomes at the individual level. The data came from interviews with project staff and collaborators at the time of the site visits.

Individual worker outcomes

SUNY project staff reported that workers felt a greater sense of self-efficacy in working with high-risk youth. Workers had a greater appreciation for youth strengths, a greater awareness of the issue of readiness for change, a greater understanding of concepts presented in core training, and a greater sense of how to approach these youth. Similar comments were heard from DU regarding trainees’ changes in skills and attitudes toward youth. This attitude outcome was echoed by UNC, USM, and USC. One respondent thought that trainees learned that the emancipation process was something that they needed to be involved in. One USC respondent thought that the biggest observed change was workers’ increased awareness of resources available through Chafee. This state agency respondent reported, “I get a lot more calls from kids so somebody must be giving them information about what’s available.”

EMU reported that time between training modules allowed the project to come back to people and hear them talk about using their skills. Project staff reported “we saw a lot of changes in people.” They received feedback from people saying that they tried something learned in the training and it worked, or that through the training they started thinking of a new direction to try in their work with youth.

A secondary gain reported by projects was the relationship building among people working in different systems. For example, in places where contract workers were in the training, it improved the relationship between state workers and contract personnel. OK reported similar outcomes that included several key training activities they believe had an effect on network building; developing courage to do the work and share information with one another; enhanced understanding of the impact for youth; and understanding the role of tribal history. An OK respondent reported feedback included statements like “powerful; hit home; received a blessing; I was supposed to be at this training; I learned something new; I made a connection.”

There were similar statements from SFSU participants. Project staff reported that some people were deeply influenced and stated so after the training. There was testimony at the trainings about the impact of the work. This was described as an “emotional shaking up.” It was noted, however, that those most changed by the project were most open to begin with. They said, “You reminded me that my job is about human beings.” Others reported that because of “ageism” or “burn out” they had been particularly interested in learning something that made their job easier.

Worker perceptions in several projects regarding target audiences included a view that “upper management should have been there because they decide what is going to be utilized.” Perceptions differed about the ideal target audience, with some trainees feeling the training was best for beginning workers and others feeling all workers would benefit from this different perspective.

USM reported that the training format created shifts in attitudes as the youth development philosophy was implemented throughout the training process. Trainees’ observations of youth and adults partnering to provide training was an effective way of creating attitudinal change. UNC project staff also saw a philosophical shift in worker attitude on viewing youth as a “resource” versus an “object” or a “recipient” and it was believed that this concept effectively “grabbed” people. An administrator with the public agency in North Carolina reported that involvement in the project was an “extremely positive experience” and that the project was “absolutely fascinating.” She reported that she had her doubts about how much youth would be able to contribute but that “I am a convert.”

Additionally, the ability to collaborate with the other states was positive. States were able to share and learn from each other about different ways of doing things.

Reports from a SFSU state collaborator reported many “feedback” sheets included comments like the “best training ever attended.” She heard from workers that the training re-inspired them and got them reconnected and energized. It also gave them fresh ideas and perspectives, helped them to think differently, and be more empathic with teens. She perceives there was a change in the way workers work with youth and how they are now applying this new thinking.

Another respondent said that the training teams learned a great deal, especially about the agencies represented in the room (e.g., residential programs) and their philosophies about youth. Even the seasoned trainers learned more about youth from partnering with them in the training. Child welfare workers said they would use key concepts related to personal relationships, advocacy, coaching of youth, and social support systems.

Foster parent outcomes

DU reported foster parents learned how important it is to begin the emancipation process early. One respondent felt that foster parents were highly motivated because they deal with adolescent problems every day and that they also could see how caseworkers or adults can influence youth outcomes. Similarly, at USM foster parents expressed relief at hearing an emphasis on letting kids have some independence and were pleased to learn about “interpersonal issues” (rather than only disciplinary). Respondents at USM also said it helped educate foster parents about how the foster care experience has influenced youth transitioning. Foster parents felt less frustrated after training—they could be in the coaching role and not have to control youth all the time. Everyone got the message that transitioning is a lifelong growing process—rather than an event—and should begin early, not just in the months prior to the transition.

Institutionalization of training and impact on agency culture

Institutionalization may occur in different ways, for example, through the adoption of this training as an advanced elective or through infusion into the core training for new workers.

USC reported several examples of institutionalization. All three trainings have been picked up by the child welfare agency permanently and added to the list of training offerings provided by the Center. In addition, use of the Ansell-Casey instrument has been institutionalized into DSS practice. Also, GOALL (youth advisory group) has been institutionalized and efforts are underway to get some of the larger counties to develop their own GOALL groups at the local level.

Most projects identified challenges to institutionalization, such as competing state interests. DU reported that adolescent training was simply not a priority for the state. EMU reported other contextual issues related to the county structure; because services are county run, some counties are supportive of IL and others are not. UNC also was not optimistic about successful institutionalization. Training participants anticipated such barriers as bureaucracy and supervisor resistance.

In contrast, SDSU project staff was much more optimistic because IL is currently an important statewide issue and the county just added an Adolescent Services Division. This interest in IL also was observed by SFSU and demonstrated by funding from the Stuart Foundation to provide additional training in the state. With this funding the project will expand the number of youth involved and will plan to deliver training in more counties. Foundation support is considered essential to keep this training model. However, despite the Stuart Foundation support, institutionalization within California counties is thought to be difficult, due in part to cost. A county collaborator noted that a key barrier was not enough money to bring the project to each training unit. Additional barriers to institutionalization include core training days being cut in half and a hiring freeze, so there are no new workers to train.

Review of project proposals suggested that there was an interest in impacting agency culture, but little evidence was found that this occurred. A youth from the SFSU project said the training project helped the system think outside the box with regard to all training. A SDSU youth participant suggested that the project changed the overall thinking to a new way of thinking. She reported hearing at conferences that, “they need to hear from youth more,” which in her opinion is revolutionary. A county representative who spoke of the impact of the SDSU project stated that it had agency impact because it got everyone in the same room working toward the same goal, and a lot of great ideas came out of the training. She identified several: 1) a web page for the county linked to IL resource pages; 2) partnership with Casey Family Programs; 3) Normalcy Protocol—trying to get residential group homes to create “normal” teen environments; 4) Independence Readiness Conference; 5) Youth Advisory Board (San Diego has a local chapter).

USC reported more interest in youth IL services among child welfare directors and supervisors. A major contribution of this project to the South Carolina child welfare field is that the project successfully introduced youth-driven training development and showed how youth could become resources rather than service recipients.

Cluster Outcomes

In addition to the outcomes that individual projects might achieve, this evaluation also examined whether the cluster of training projects had an impact—larger than any one specific project—on the field of child welfare, social work, or youth development. We have conceptualized this in two ways: knowledge development for these larger fields, and professional education within schools of social work. Several projects noted and we concur, **the development of these curricula is a definite and concrete contribution to the field of training and child welfare services.** Previously, curricula for working with this population did not exist.

Knowledge development

In its totality, the cluster appeared to contribute evidence that youth development approaches can work and provided guidance as to how to make them work. According to SFSU project staff, the field already understood the impact of youth stories on workers but it was NOT convinced that youth could do training. Now there is evidence that “it can be done well.”

DU staff felt the most important new knowledge was in the area of strategy development for recruiting people for child welfare training. Respondents said that they developed and gained important knowledge with respect to recruiting people from rural counties. The UNC project felt contributions were made in knowledge development in two areas. First, was thinking about youth development in the context of caretaking and how to merge youth development perspectives with a parenting perspective needed in child welfare systems. Second, was the thinking about the difference between independent and interdependent living. In both areas of knowledge, this project helped the team move forward in their thinking about these issues.

However, more could have been done to think about the lessons learned in these areas. One answer is for the Children’s Bureau and other federal entities involved in human services training to elevate the field by encouraging scholarship in this area. Training projects also might be structured in ways similar to other knowledge-producing federal agencies. An example suggested by one of our respondents (UNC), would be to structure funding for child welfare training differently, beginning with a first phase of smaller pilot projects. This also would allow organizations with less training infrastructure to get their foot in the door for funding. The second phase would focus more heavily on training delivery and evaluation. The third phase would focus on replication and institutionalization.

Case Highlight: EMU School of Social Work

The EMU project, *Competency Based Training for Child Welfare Practitioners Working with Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care: Developed in Partnership with Youth and Practitioners* developed and field-tested a competency-based web course. In particular, this web-based training was incorporated into the School of Social Work at EMU as both an undergraduate and graduate elective course titled, *Youth in Care*. The project made it possible to bring in participants at the early phase and assist them in becoming established with the technology system. In addition, since participants could acquire academic credit, their motivation to participate was high.

Schools of social work

Most projects did not consider schools of social work to be a primary audience for their training. Only DU and EMU had this as a focus. Infusion of content into professional social work training may lead to future changes in practice.

Long-Term Outcomes

During site visits, interview discussions included respondent thoughts on the potential long-term outcomes related to these training projects in particular, and training projects in general. Final reports of projects were reviewed to identify additional content regarding sites' thoughts about long-term outcomes.

Evaluation of the long-term outcomes of training projects of this sort are technically possible, but they would be highly complicated and costly. Projects were neither directly nor indirectly encouraged to obtain this type of data. Consequently, no evaluation on long-term outcomes was either planned or conducted.

Some sites, because they had not collected data, chose not to speculate about long-term outcomes that might have been achieved (DU, EMU, OK). Sites that did discuss possible long-term outcomes identified potential positive outcomes in three areas: 1) the impact on individual youths who were involved in the projects; 2) the impact on child welfare trainees (caseworkers, supervisors, etc.) who were the target of the projects and youth with whom they worked; and 3) the impact on the systems of service delivery and youth in general.

Impact on individual youth

In the earlier section on youth involvement, several sites spoke at length about the perceived impact of project involvement on youths who participated. In discussing long-term outcomes, two sites reiterated this impact. Respondents from SUNY suggested an increase in competency and self-efficacy for youth involved in the project. Similarly, respondents from USM believed there was a significant impact in terms of increasing personal empowerment, confidence in public speaking, and confidence in partnering with adults.

Impact on trainees and youth

Four sites identified ways in which trainees were affected by the training and how this will likely lead to better outcomes for youth in the long term. For example, at SDSU a respondent recounted feedback from a foster parent who participated in the training, particularly an experiential exercise in which she took on the role of a biological parent. This experience changed the way that she viewed biological parents and will change the way she interacts with them in the future. Furthermore, she believes this will then affect how she talks and deals with the youth she fosters.

Similar sentiments were recounted by SFSU. A respondent from a large private agency which invited the training into the agency commented that although she cannot identify the impact on youth with evidence, she “can’t imagine how it hasn’t helped the youth” since there is “such a direct correlation between a worker’s perspective on youth work and youth outcome.” Similar comments were provided by respondents from SUNY (the training increased youth credibility due to youth involvement in the training and curriculum development, and there was a positive response from trainees for including the voices of youth) and USM (many workers and community providers took away a more positive view of youth and will be more likely to treat them as resources rather than recipients).

Impact on systems and youth

Finally, four of the projects (SFSU, SUNY, UNC, USC) suggested that there was an impact on the systems (primarily child welfare), which will result in better outcomes for youth in the long run. It was primarily suggested that during the time the training was being delivered there were other youth-focused and IL-related efforts in the states and/or counties. It was the combination of activities that may have had an impact on systems to raise awareness of the needs of adolescents in child welfare. Illustrative of this perspective was a comment by SFSU that in combination with Chafee grants and IL money the curriculum “continued the ball rolling” to serve youth better. People are talking about these issues and training is occurring through these grants throughout the country. The message is getting across that we are not serving teens enough. Also, collegial relationships that developed in the course of the project continue. The assumption is that all this activity is bound to have an effect on youth in the long term.

Yet, cautionary notes were sounded by some projects. Since data were not collected there is no evidence of the long-term impact of the projects (UNC), and since little of the training continues to be offered it is difficult to predict that broad systems change has occurred or will occur (USM). Furthermore, much more is needed in terms of building sound service systems for this population (OK).

Conclusions

Outcome Evidence

The quantitative evaluative data reported by projects were very thin. This observation is consistent with those of the literature review we conducted for this project, which also noted the highly-limited evaluations conducted in human services training. Like all areas of human service intervention, there is increased emphasis for projects to demonstrate outcomes. The Children's Bureau has provided technical assistance to projects in conducting their evaluations. Since this issue is fundamental to the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants, and central to the field of child welfare training in general, we highlight these conclusions as particularly important.

First, good evaluations do not need to be technically complex. Good evaluation can be simple in design and use simple tools. Perhaps at a later point in the development of the field we can and should move to more complicated designs, however, this does not yet feel appropriate for these types of training projects.

Second, the economic and political context of human services interventions in general, and child welfare training in particular, needs to be acknowledged. Effective leadership and budgets that support change in practice will drive outcomes more than training projects. Training projects are unlikely to have even a moderate impact if conditions in the agency are not conducive to the goals of the training.

Nonetheless, training projects (and program interventions) are expected to demonstrate outcomes even when they do not have control over major forces. One solution is to maintain a focus on those elements which training programs can affect—primarily knowledge and attitudes—unless conditions supporting the changes that are the focus of the training are supported in the agency environment (e.g., change in practice).

Training can, however, have broader goals with implications for systems change. To be effective in this, and to demonstrate effectiveness through evaluation, training projects would be enhanced by more negotiation early with the public child welfare partners and identification of core project staff possessing the needed skills for promoting systems change. Our interpretation of these projects' data suggest that in the planning of the projects there were high ambitions about effecting systems change and resultant practice, but in implementation the projects tended to take a more narrow route.

Finally, agencies often expect too much from training, i.e., to solve system problems with training approaches. Training projects can engage in discussion regarding the appropriate role for training.

Cluster Outcomes

There was evidence that the cluster achieved some outcomes over and above those achieved by individual projects. The questions remain: Did they achieve enough as a cluster? What should the expectations of a cluster be? How might the cluster be more effective?

- A knowledge development model of funding might be considered. This would involve beginning with small pilot projects and later, once there is some evidence of the utility or effectiveness of the training approach, funding larger implementation and replication projects.
- If a full cluster is funded, there might be some more purposefully specialized functions of some of the grantees versus others (e.g., SUNY's focus on high-risk youth).
- Currently, grantee meetings are the primary mechanism for cluster communication and development as a group. Efforts to improve these meetings, and to facilitate communication between meetings, should be examined.

Long-Term Outcomes

- Training projects alone are unlikely to have a lasting long-term impact. Potential facilitating factors for long-term impact are: accompanying legislation, resources, institutionalization of training within agencies, and agency/governmental context supportive of good child welfare practice (e.g., foster care, workforce, etc.).
- Realistic expectations of outcomes are needed. What outcomes can be expected from training that is relatively short-term? The maximum length of training provided was three days, and most of the training was shorter. Often the sessions were taught within a short period of time with no refresher or follow-up training to reinforce skills. Skill practice often is necessary for behavior change. Length of training, size of training group, and a lack of feedback from trainer will further inhibit skill development.



Final Conclusions

- As a whole, these projects are likely typical of any cluster—it is difficult for any project to do everything well—each project had strengths and weaknesses.
- Projects are better at “front end” activities than “back end” activities. The front end includes information gathering, setting up collaborations, curriculum development, and pilot training. The back end includes evaluation, dissemination, and institutionalization. Hence, more attention is needed to these later activities and skills. This also has implications for developing the project team at the proposal stage to ensure that persons with these skills are included.
- Delivery of the curriculum is often viewed as the culmination of the project and it should not be.
- Some projects appeared to be focused on what the Children’s Bureau wanted more than what the child welfare agency needed. This led to insufficient negotiation occurring with the child welfare agency regarding development of a training project that best met the agency needs.
- Involving youth in projects was an innovative aspect of the cluster. There was no one way to do this. Most projects had little experience or guidance in this area. There was also no way to anticipate how labor intensive this aspect would be or other associated challenges that would be faced.
- There was minimal institutionalization of projects, in part because often the collaboration with the child welfare agency was project-based (rather than long-term) and because of agency need to shorten or “water down” the full training project.

- Knowledge development is an important outcome of a cluster of projects. More emphasis should be placed on encouraging projects to think about the development of knowledge in their projects that could be shared with the field. Our cross-site evaluation is helpful in synthesizing the knowledge gained from these series of projects, but most clusters will not have this type of extensive evaluation. More needs to be done by individual projects to make sure that knowledge is extracted from training projects and shared with the field.
- Knowledge development should be emphasized more by the Children’s Bureau. Our conceptual model, in its articulation of the components of training projects, could provide guidance to projects as to the many different ways in which they might contribute to the knowledge base (e.g., curriculum innovation, involvement of youth, evaluation tools, etc.).
- Training of trainers can be considered either a means of dissemination to a broader audience or a means of institutionalization. The institutionalization function results from training workers within the unit or organization in which you want to institutionalize the training, so the workers can be trainers to their peers (as opposed to training trainers).
- There are strengths and weaknesses to different types of grantee settings. When housed in schools of social work there is likely to be more attention to integrating this training content into BSW or MSW programs. Centers generally have greater infrastructure to assist the project in areas related to curriculum development, implementation of training, evaluation or dissemination, but may be limited by the need to juggle multiple projects and move on to other projects quickly. Regional grantees may have more success at the breadth of implementation of training, whereas initiatives in a single state or jurisdiction may have less success in reaching larger numbers/audiences but greater depth in what they do deliver.
- Projects need to find ways to engage the child welfare agencies to commit to the delivery of the curriculum after the designated project period. Institutionalization of the training involves more than a signed agreement, so other relationship building activities need to take place throughout the life of the project (e.g., ensuring that child welfare administrators have input into design of the curriculum, pilots, and final training, and help shape it so it meets their needs).

- Attention should be paid to developing a structure to ensure that all trainers have consistent training from the curriculum developers or the project teams. Without adequate structures that ensure fidelity to the curriculum, outcomes are unpredictable.
- Issues of cultural diversity did not appear to receive significant attention in most projects, although proposals typically addressed the importance of attending to diversity.
- Training is most likely to achieve its objectives when other initiatives that support the goals of the training are going on in the agency and state/county.
- Projects that attempted to use technology in training and evaluation should be applauded for their efforts, even when these efforts were not successful. There is a lot of room for further knowledge development in the area of technology for training.

Recommendations

To influence the impact of future training initiatives, our recommendations target three audiences: the Children’s Bureau, future grantees, and the state/county public child welfare agencies. The foci of our recommendations are what we consider to be the larger, more undeveloped areas in training practice that need attention in order to move the field of child welfare training forward, and thereby enhance the ability of such projects to have a more sustained impact. The areas of curriculum development and training delivery are not discussed in our recommendations. We have found that grantees are generally experts in these areas and there is already adequate existing knowledge regarding effective strategies.

Youth Involvement/Consumer Involvement

The lessons learned about youth involvement are relevant to the broader area of consumer involvement. Although these projects focused on training, the lessons of consumer involvement in training are relevant to the more general area of consumer involvement in service delivery. The main lesson from these projects is that professionals often are committed to consumer involvement but may lack the experience to partner effectively with consumers. Again, we note that this observation is not likely specific to these projects, but is an ongoing challenge to the field of child welfare.

Recommendations on Youth Involvement/Consumer Involvement

- 1) The Children’s Bureau should encourage consumer involvement in all funded projects, and should facilitate grantees’ development of expertise through access to resources (e.g., National Resource Centers) and presentations at grantees’ meetings.
- 2) Grantees should recognize the need to partner with organizations that can provide infrastructure in consumer-driven practice; “partnership” and “infrastructure” are needed to avoid superficial involvement of consumers.
- 3) Public child welfare agencies have been making progress in emphasizing more partnership with service users (e.g., family group conferencing). Training initiatives and strategies are another mechanism by which agencies can engage consumers in their work.

Evaluation

There is a need for greater clarity regarding the purpose of evaluation and appropriate designs to match. During delivery of training, embedded evaluation is critical to determining the extent to which learning is taking place. Overall evaluation of the project is needed to advance the field.

There is an important caveat to the emphasis on evaluation of training: even if training is effective in influencing the skills of participants, training by itself is not the solution to many problems facing child welfare systems. Nor are well-trained workers the sole factor in the well-being of children, youth, and families.

Recommendations on Evaluation

- 1) The Children's Bureau should continue to provide grantees with technical assistance regarding evaluation. However, it would seem that there is less of a need for "technical" assistance than "conceptual" assistance. Guidance in articulating the core focus of the project and appropriate expectations of project impact may be more important than methodological guidance. Evaluators from outside the grantee organization often can provide the technical skills but may be less able to assist in conceptualization.
- 2) Grantees should have a designated evaluator to conduct the evaluation of the training project, and the evaluator should be integrated early in the planning phase. Increased attention should be given to outcome evaluation. Although methodological issues are often the focus of the evaluator's work, more attention needs to be directed to the conceptual focus of the evaluation. The principal investigator and senior project team members need to provide the conceptual focus for the evaluation. In general, projects tend to set the expectations of their project impact too high. Training evaluation designs require greater clarity, focusing on the questions: What is the project aiming to accomplish? How can these aims be measured?
- 3) Public child welfare agencies need to cooperate in the evaluation. This will include allowing evaluators to conduct follow-up with trainees from the state agency. Examination of the transfer of learning to the agency setting and the mastering of skills taught in the practice setting are sorely needed. This will almost always require follow-up in the practice setting, which will include data collection involving interviews, observations, case record reviews, and other methods. Additionally, access to comparisons groups may be needed.

Collaboration

Although important to successful projects, collaboration remains an ongoing challenge. Effective collaboration involves reciprocity among parties, some level of formalized commitment, and a sense of “good will” in working toward a common goal. While some grantees have solid and ongoing relationships with public child welfare agencies and a history of collaboration on projects, projects often require new linkages with other entities that are central to the core themes of the training project (e.g., youth development). In addition to the important knowledge such partners may bring, they also can lend a fresh perspective and, in some cases, an entirely new paradigm of approaching the work. Good collaboration takes time, and depending on the number and nature of the partners, often extensive time. It also requires clarity regarding the expectations of collaborators’ contributions to the project tasks.

Recommendations on Collaboration

- 1) The Children’s Bureau should encourage grantees to develop collaborative relationships with entities that can increase project impact. This encouragement could be communicated in the language of the RFP and the scoring procedures for submitted grant proposals.
- 2) Grantees should aim to establish collaborations with organizations—rather than individuals—to provide more stability to the collaboration. Collaborators should be chosen, in part, to facilitate long-term institutionalization. Thus, at the start of projects, active advocacy should occur to secure organizational collaborators who will share the work and responsibility for outcomes.
- 3) Public child welfare agencies are typically the key collaborators on federal-funded training projects. In their roles as collaborating agencies they should: provide agency representatives who are interested and willing to do some of the work; involve decision makers in the collaboration; and collaborate as an organization, not just through individuals.

Institutionalization

There is a need for closer relationships between the grantees and the child welfare systems in order to institutionalize training within the agencies. A number of specific recommendations may facilitate this: (a) greater negotiation at the point of proposal submission so that the public agency's commitment to using the curriculum and supporting the trainees' skills following training is articulated in the letter of agreement; (b) public agency participation in the design and delivery of the training, rather than simply in reviewing the work once it has been completed; and (c) public agency administrator participation in pilot tests or final delivery of the training. In general, however, many public agencies need to demonstrate a greater commitment to the training of their workers.

Recommendations on Institutionalization

- 1) The Children's Bureau should aim to fund the type of training projects that are of critical need to public child welfare agencies. If the funding priorities of the Children's Bureau are not aligned with the needs of the field, public child welfare agencies have no reason to engage in long-term institutionalization of training programs. The Children's Bureau must be flexible so that proposals can address the needs of the public agency. After projects are completed, the Children's Bureau is the only entity with appropriate infrastructure to keep the products that have been developed at the forefront of child welfare practice. The Children's Bureau should think creatively about how to insure that products remain available and easy to locate.
- 2) Grantees should plan for the institutionalization of training at the beginning of projects and work flexibly with the public child welfare agency to create a version of the training program that will be of use to the agency on an ongoing basis. Time should be built into the project to adapt the training to a format that maintains the integrity of the training and increases its usability for the agency over the long term. Training of trainers should be seen as a mechanism of institutionalization and utilized frequently for this purpose.
- 3) Public child welfare agencies should recognize the importance of utilizing key elements of the training project and assist the grantees in modifying the full program for use by the state agency. More sustained collaboration with the grantee will be needed to insure that the training program is in a format that the agency can utilize on an ongoing basis.

Knowledge Development

For the field to move forward there must be greater attention to the role of training grants in producing knowledge that has a sustained effect on training practice. By “knowledge development” we mean the important lessons learned in the project that should be shared with the field to enhance the training efforts of others, and not the development of curricula or evaluation results. In this cluster of projects, we believe there was important knowledge development; for example, in the areas of partnering with youth, collaborating with Native American communities, and using embedded evaluation in training delivery. These types of lessons are as important as (if not more so) the effective development and delivery of curricula. Knowledge development and its dissemination are particularly important, because training is so frequently articulated by public agencies and policy makers as a solution to many problems in child welfare agencies. Yet, as a field of study, so very little is known.

Recommendations on Knowledge Development

- 1) The Children’s Bureau should elevate the field of child welfare training by funding additional cross-site research and evaluation projects. The immediate next step should be to fund a prospective evaluation of a cluster of training grants. Additionally, flexibility in project goals, designs, and strategies should be encouraged in the RFP process. Too often, in an effort to secure funding, potential grantees design proposals that attempt to respond to “what the Children’s Bureau wants.” This results in proposals that “over promise.” Instead, the RFP process should encourage and reward creativity.
- 2) Grantees should recognize that their projects are opportunities to develop learning about the field of child welfare training that can and should be shared with wider constituencies. Although “lessons learned” are typically requested as a part of project reporting at the end of grantee projects, the content is generally thin and lessons are not shared. Grantees should make more of an effort to think conceptually about the core lessons of their project and disseminate the contributions of their project via conference presentations and journal articles. These should be less focused on promoting projects and more focused on linking project innovations to the wider field of child welfare training. For example, the conceptual model designed for this study might be used by future grantees to conceptualize their knowledge development contributions to the field. One project might be particularly successful in efforts at collaboration, while another might be strong in the use of technology in training design, delivery, evaluation, or dissemination. The projects need not have solutions in all areas, but should be encouraged to recognize the strengths of their projects and package the lessons in a way that is useful to knowledge development in the field.

- 3) Public child welfare agencies should contribute to this knowledge development partnership by becoming more open learning communities and sharing responsibility (and credit) for identifying and promulgating innovations in the field.

In addition to these five core areas, there are other recommendations—particularly those raised by grantees—that might be considered. These include:

- A longer time period for projects (four or five years) so that projects can devote additional time to developing collaborations, conducting follow-up evaluation activities, and disseminating knowledge.
- Enhanced communication among grantees at grantee meetings, and between meetings; for example, having each grantee in a cluster deliver a curriculum segment during grantee meetings.
- Mechanisms for encouraging the field's utilization of previously developed curricula materials that continue to be salient for the field. For example, sponsoring conferences or developing a video for the purpose of demonstrating the content, strengths, and appropriate target audiences for existing curricula.

Appendix A: Outcomes from the National Evaluation Phone Survey of Training Participants

Celina Miranda, MSW, MEd.

This phone survey was comprised of thirteen qualitative open-ended questions. The first two questions asked respondents to identify the training they attended and the length of time since the training was completed. The next two questions asked respondents to name three things they remembered about the training and to identify what they learned in the training. To assess the effect of the training, respondents were then asked the following two questions: Do you think the training affected the way you work with youth? Do you think this training resulted in any effect on the youth you work with? For each of these questions, respondents were asked to provide specific examples. In addition, respondents were asked to identify where they attended the training, their job title at the time of the training, and how long they had been at their agency at the time of the training. The last two questions asked respondents how many days of training, on average, they attended per year, and if it were completely up to them, how many days of training they would attend per year.

Invitation letters to participate in the telephone survey were mailed to the nine training project sites. The sites contacted the potential participants with a letter describing the project and purpose of the survey. Participants self-selected to participate by calling the telephone number provided in the letter. In order to maintain participants' confidentiality, callers were asked to provide only a telephone number and first name when calling to participate in the survey. Respondents were given a small incentive for completing the telephone survey.

Thirty-seven respondents participated in the telephone survey. Six out of nine training sites were represented: DU, OK, SDSU, UNC, USC, and USM. By far, OK had the largest number of respondents (14), while DU had only one respondent. The other four sites had between four to eight respondents.

Given that the training projects' focus was on youth transitioning from foster care to independent living, it was not surprising that almost half (18) of the respondents had positions in this area of practice. Over a third (14 or 38%) reported that they held Independent Living Coordinator positions, and four were Independent Living Directors at the time of the training. Other positions held at the time of training included: consultant/trainer (4), social worker (3), foster/group home parent (3), and Independent Living Specialist (2). The remaining seven respondents fell under the "other" category.

More than a third of the respondents had worked at their agency at the time of the training between 2–5 years. Thirteen respondents (35%) had worked at their agency between 6–10 years. Seven respondents had worked at their agency a year or less. The remaining three respondents had worked at their agency 11 years or more at the time of the training. Almost half (17) of the respondents reported that it had been 7 to 12 months since completing the training. Eleven respondents reported that it had been 6 months or less. For the remaining respondents (9) it had been between 13 and 24 months since the training had been completed.

Results

Specifics of the training. Respondents were asked what three things they remembered about the training. Responses to this question were categorized in three areas: content, process, and specific activities. In terms of actual content, respondents commonly referred to tools and new techniques to working with youth (6) that were provided in the training. Other common responses about content focused more specifically on concepts that were used in the training such as, "independence vs. interdependence" (3), "positive youth development" (3), and "youth involvement in decision making" (3). Other responses were more unique to locality. For example, one respondent from UNC mentioned "the LINKS Program." Two OK respondents recalled the training's focus on tribal youth. Moreover, the responses about the training process itself were generally positive. Youth involvement was seen as key to the training structure (8). Other frequent comments regarding process focused on: organization of training (9), number of attendees (6), length of training (3), and trainers/facilitators (6). Occasionally, there were some negative comments in terms of process such as not finding parking easily at the training site (1). Overall, respondents were more likely to recall a specific activity from the training (14).

Learning: Training “Takeaways”

Respondents were asked what they learned specifically from the training. This question elicited a number of different responses. Some responses were unique to a particular training site, while other responses spread more widely across the six training sites. The responses can be grouped under four categories: Native American History and Cultural Competency; Resources, Supports, and Relationships; Approaches to Working with Youth; and Training the Trainer.

Native American History and Cultural Competency

Respondents that completed the OK training talked about two main areas of learning. Out of 14 respondents, five stated gaining a better understanding of the history of Native Americans in the United States and the relationship with tribal communities and youth today. One respondent stated that he/she learned about, “The historical trauma and how that relates to the youth (Native American youth) today.” The other regularly cited responses for this training site can be grouped under the heading of cultural competency (7). For instance, one respondent stated learning, “Techniques and skills to work with Native American youth. Before getting into spirituality you need to learn about their tribe and their views. Being more sensitive and aware of their needs.” Another respondent stated, “It helped me understand a different value-system, a different way of looking at something. It definitely helped.” The population-specific focus of the training seemed to have an important effect on trainees in these two areas.

Resources, Supports, and Relationships

Several responses talked about participants learning about the different things that youth need as they transition out of foster care. Seven respondents mentioned learning that youth in care need to be connected to resources. When speaking about resources, respondents tended to speak about them in different forms. Two respondents talked about learning of the various resources that are available to youth as they transition into independent living (e.g., college tuition assistance) and how in order to access these resources, they need to stay longer in care. Another respondent talked in general terms of learning about how to access resources both inside and outside the foster care system for youth.

Having supports and relationships in place were seen as important for youth in foster care. One respondent talked about the training reinforcing what he/she already knew, “It reinforced the importance of services, opportunities, and supports for youth.” A few respondents (3) talked about learning that youth need connections with people other than their child welfare worker as they transition out of care. One respondent stated, “I learned that teenagers need support systems. They need someone to connect with when they leave foster care.”

Approaches to Working with Youth

The training curricula used a youth development framework. Therefore, it is not surprising that eleven respondents spoke directly to learning about working with youth in different ways. Several of these responses alluded to youth-centered practices that honor youth involvement and youth voice. For instance, one respondent stated that he/she learned about, “Hearing the voice of youth and listening to their needs instead of telling youth what to do. And let youth discuss and decide how they want their (IL plan) to be rather than the worker deciding for them.” Another respondent stated learning, “How their (youth in care) interpretation of their experiences is not the same as would be defined by social workers.”

The meaningful involvement of youth in the planning for transition was a strong theme across the responses, i.e., “Nothing should take place without youth at the table,” and “The importance of youth involvement throughout time in foster care ... It is their lives and they need to have input as to what is going to happen to them.” One respondent talked more generally about staying positive when working with youth and applying various techniques when working with them.

Training the Trainer

Five respondents that participated in the training for trainers reported that either their skills as trainers were improved or they gained content knowledge. A respondent that attended the OK training stated, “Learned to improve training skills. Good way of looking at history and presenting it.” Another respondent talked about volunteering to do the training after completing it and how the training had a strong impact on him/her. The respondent stated, “I know more than I thought and how to apply it to work with kids ... I also volunteered to facilitate the training ... The training became a part of me.” Another respondent talked about learning about the qualities of a youth worker and the youth development framework.

Effects of Training On Work With Youth

Respondents were asked if they thought the training affected the way they work with youth. The majority of the respondents (81%) stated that the training did have an effect on their work. Out of the seven respondents that reported that the training had no effect on their work with youth, two were experienced workers who had been working with youth for a long time. Three reported that they did not currently work with youth or youth in transition, and therefore the training did not change their work.

The second part of this question asked respondents to give specific examples of how the training affected their work with youth. The categories below summarize the responses to this second question for the 30 respondents that indicated that the training had an effect on their work.

Involving, Valuing, and Listening to Youth

Given that several respondents reported learning different approaches to working with youth, it is not surprising that nine respondents talked more specifically about the approaches they now incorporate into their work. Three respondents talked about putting more emphasis on making sure that youth are actively involved in decisions having to do with case plans and their future. One respondent stated, “At one point I was guilty of doing case plans without youth involvement. I learned that it is their case plan and they should be involved in determining what we are going to work on together.” Others (2) stated that since the training they value more what youth have to say. A respondent stated, “Now, I am more willing than in the past, to let them get their point of view across. I now get them to express what they think needs to get done.” The second respondent stated that as a foster parent she/he thinks more about partnering with youth in addition to parenting. Several respondents (4) talked about listening more to youth since the training, i.e., “I don’t treat them as objects. I listen to what they have to say rather than try to make it about what I want or about what is convenient for me. I use the object/recipient/resource approach to youth.” Respondents seem to be placing more emphasis on the engagement and meaningful participation of youth on various levels since completing the training.

Cultural Competency

Five respondents talked about being more competent in working with tribal youth. These responses were specific to the OK training site respondents. One respondent gave the following example, “I am working with different kids of Native American descent and the training has helped me provide better services. I understand better the culture and being able to compliment it with services I provide.” Another respondent stated, “(The training) gave me an opportunity to ask holistic questions such as a youth’s connection to their culture and spirituality. Things that often are set aside or not asked.” For another respondent who does not work directly with youth, the training helped her/him think of ways to provide more inclusive services, “It helped me identify the weaknesses and gaps in services in relation to tribal youth.

Application of Training Content

Four respondents talked specifically about applying aspects of the training to their work with youth or their work in general. Two respondents stated that they are using actual tools or resources obtained in the training with youth. One respondent stated, “I am using some of the curriculum they’d given us with the youth. When I work with youth I mentor them on a weekly basis and use the guide they gave us called *Path Before Me* and it has worked very well.” The other respondent talked about now using strength assessments and giving youth feedback about their future. The other two respondents spoke in more general terms of how they are now applying the training content. For instance, one respondent talked about using new techniques and incorporating certain items into individualized treatment plans at the work site. This respondent did not talk specifically about these techniques. The last respondent is now incorporating content from the training into other training he/she does, “Since training, I have done several trainings in reservations and it has been helpful to have that information from that training before I went there. My audience included Native American foster parents, caseworkers, and youth. So it affected youth as well.”

Other

Most of the remaining responses tended to focus on greater awareness of what youth in transition need and how to improve working with this population. For instance, three respondents talked about communicating more with youth since the training. One respondent states, “I will remember to check-in more and be more clear about why I am there and what I can offer to the youth. It will help me to verbalize more.” Respondents seemed to have gained greater awareness of what youth—and more specifically youth in foster care—need as they transition to independent living. One respondent talked generally about having more information to share with youth and being able to help youth prepare for meetings with caseworkers. Placing more emphasis on what youth need such as connections to others was also a common theme. A respondent stated, “I teach them more about being interdependent. Before, I used to talk more to them about being independent. We need others in our lives. Add resources and let them know they are out there. Just to let them know they are not alone.”

Respondents also talked more generally about experiencing a change in views or philosophy since the training. A respondent stated experiencing, “... a philosophical change and enhanced awareness—better knowledge and understanding.” Another respondent talked about the training reinforcing his/her philosophy, “It reinforced philosophies that we hold dear—positive youth development. There might be new workers that attended the training who will now incorporate the philosophy into their work. I would like to see this training be mandatory for all new workers.”

Effects of Training On Youth Themselves

In addition to assessing the effect of the training on respondents' work with youth, the survey asked if the training had any effect on the youth themselves. The majority (31) of respondents stated that the training did have an effect on youth. Respondents were asked to give specific examples of how the training affected youth. Of the 31 examples given, nine did not specifically talk about the impact of the training on the youth themselves; therefore, these examples were omitted from the analysis presented below.

Independent Living

Two respondents stated that the training had a direct effect on the youth in terms of the independent living process. A respondent stated that since the training, "Some of them have increased their independent living skills due to the increased emphasis I now place on that with my clients." Another respondent stated, "It helped one youth get through the independent living process and get into college ... If it had not been for the training ... not sure it would have happened the way it did." This respondent felt he/she was more prepared to help the youth get through the transitioning process because of the training.

Resources

Four respondents gave examples of how resources that they learned about from the trainings have had an effect on youth. One respondent stated, "The resources from the training I have used with the youth on many occasions. I have gotten feedback from the youth that it makes them think about things they had not thought about in terms of preparing for the future. It has really benefited them." Another respondent talked about the training having a positive effect on youth and gave an example of directing a young person in the right direction to access housing. Overall, respondents talked about resource tools they received at the training or information about resources that are available for youth that their clients are now benefiting from.

Youth Involvement and Empowerment

Several respondents (8) talked about increased youth involvement and empowerment since the training. Specifically, three respondents talked about youth being more involved in various areas (e.g., case plans, program planning, training, and decision making). One respondent stated, "I make youth part of the plan. We use our (Chafee) money to help youth in any way possible. Youth are more involved." Three respondents talked about youth being more empowered since the training. For example, "Especially on the youth who were involved in conducting the training. Several of these youth have remained involved in various activities

throughout the state. It is empowering for youth and for younger youth who see their involvement. The message is received differently when it comes from youth that have been in foster care.”

Amount of Training Per Year

Respondents were asked on average how many days of training they attend per year. A third (12) of the respondents reported that they attend between 10–20 days of training per year. The majority (20) reported attending nine or fewer days of training per year. A follow-up question asked respondents how many days of training per year they would attend if it was completely up to them. The majority (17) stated that they would attend anywhere between 10–20 days of training per year. A third of the respondents (12) would attend nine days or fewer. The remaining respondents would attend 21 days of training or more. Overall, it seems that respondents are willing to attend more training per year than they currently attend.

Conclusion

The results from the telephone survey indicated that the majority of participants remembered the training and had applied some of the training aspects. Most respondents who attended the Oklahoma training reported greater cultural competency since the training. It seems that the population-specific focus of the training had a lasting effect on the participants. Increased understanding of the importance of youth involvement and empowerment was a significant theme across sites. This is not surprising given that sites based their curricula on a youth development framework. In addition, respondents gained knowledge around resources that are available to youth in foster care transitioning to independent living. The majority of respondents had applied some aspect of their training into their practice and felt that youth had been positively affected by the training. The results from this survey need to be interpreted cautiously given that the respondents self-selected to participate.