

Evaluation of “Families in Crisis”

Workshops presented by

The Missouri Training Program for Child Welfare Workers

June, 2007

David J. Dixon, Ph.D.
Center for Research and Service
Department of Psychology
Missouri State University

July 11, 2007

Evaluation of “Families in Crisis”

Workshops presented by

The Missouri Training Program for Child Welfare Workers

June, 2007

On June 27, 2007, The Missouri Training Program for Child Welfare Workers (MTP) presented a workshop entitled “Families in Crisis” to Missouri Children’s Division employees. The workshop had been presented twice before, on May 15 and June 6, and a prior evaluation report was issued which covered those presentations. A workshop scheduled for June 26 was cancelled due to low enrollment. This evaluation report covers the June 27 presentation of this workshop.

Prior to the workshops, nine competencies were identified as those to be addressed in the workshop. These competencies came from the an analysis of the proposed objectives of the workshop and are closely related to some of the 140 child welfare worker competencies identified through the work of the MTP to date. These competencies were reworded for use in a retrospective pre-test-post-test design using a self-report questionnaire with closed-ended questions. Attendees were instructed to complete the questionnaire at the end of the program. The questions directed attendees to identify their level of agreement with statements asserting aspects of their competency in and understanding of certain issues in child development. An additional closed-ended question requested attendees’ opinion as to whether the information from the workshop could lead to positive cultural change in the workplace. In addition, three open-ended questions were asked in which attendees were to indicate whether they had received training in the topics in the past. Finally, respondents were requested to identify their job classification and work specialization. Responses to all of these questions form the basis of this evaluation. (Please see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.)

At the end of the workshop, questionnaires were collected and submitted for analysis. Nine questionnaires with complete or partial responses were collected from workers and form the basis of this evaluation. Four questionnaires completed by attendees who did not work for Children's Division were not analyzed for this report.

Characteristics of Respondents

Job Classification: Respondents were offered five closed-ended alternatives and an “other” alternative to report their job classification. Of the nine respondents to this item, seven (77.8%) identified themselves as Social / Children’s Services Worker II, and one each (11.1% each) identified the self as Circuit Manager and Other (“Specialist”).

Work Specialization: Respondents were offered four closed-ended alternatives and an “other” alternative to report their work specialization. Of the nine respondents to this item, four (44.4%) identified themselves as Family Permanency workers, three (33.3%)

identified themselves as Generic workers, and one each (11.1% each) identified the self as Investigations and Adoption / Licensing workers.

Prior training child development issues: Of the nine respondents to this question, eight (88.9%) indicated that they had received previous training and one (11.1%) indicated that he / she had not received previous training in the subject. Responses to the question of when this training occurred included “A long time ago,” “Several time-Senate Bill 595 last training,” and “2 years [ago].”

Responses to the Closed-ended Questions on Competencies

Data collected regarding the nine competencies lent themselves to matched t-test comparisons, comparing self-reported levels before the workshop to those after the workshop. Means, standard deviations, t-test values and levels of significance for each of the nine items and for an aggregate of the specific items for this training (Item 1 + Item 2 + ... + Item 9) are displayed in Table 1, below.

Table 1: *Item Data, Contrasts and Statistical Significance by Item*

Item	n for paired contrast	Pretest average	Posttest average	Gain (loss)	standard deviation of gain	t-value (17df)	$p \leq$
1. I can identify social and family dynamics in cases of abuse and neglect.	9	4.22	4.33	.11	.333	1.000 (8 df)	.347
2. I can develop collaborative relationships to help families engage in collaborative casework.	9	4.33	4.56	.22	.441	1.512 (8df)	.169
3. I know how to effectively participate in the Family Support Team Meetings.	8	4.25	4.63	.38	.518	2.049 (7 df)	.080
4. I can effectively facilitate the Family Support Team meetings.	8	4.00	4.25	.25	.463	1.528 (7 df)	.170
5. I can conduct effective casework interviews, with appropriate communication, control, encouragement, support, and confrontation.	8	4.25	4.50	.25	.463	1.528 (7 df)	.170
6. I can help families communicate feelings as well as facts.	8	4.13	4.25	.13	.354	1.000 (7 df)	.351
7. I can involve families in the development of case goals and objectives; develop appropriate measures; and identify the best services and activities to achieve the goals and objectives.	8	4.25	4.63	.38	.518	2.049 (7 df)	.080
8. I can identify and utilize naturally occurring support systems within the extended family, neighborhood and community.	8	4.13	4.38	.25	.463	1.528 (7 df)	.170
9. I conduct routine and timely case reviews, reassess outcomes and service interventions, and make appropriate and timely plan	8	4.00	4.13	.13	.354	1.000 (7 df)	.351

modifications.							
Column averages (aggregate ÷ 9)	8	4.18	4.42	.24			
Aggregate scores (Item 1 + Item 2 + ... + Item 9)	8	37.63	39.75	2.13	2.997	2.005 (7 df)	.085

There is no evidence, trusting the methodology, of a statistically significant gain on any of the nine items, nor a statistically significant gain on the aggregate scores. Across all items, as a group, respondents reported a level above “agree” (average = 4.18) with the positive assertions associated with each question presented in the pre-workshop condition, and they reported a level between “agree” and "strongly agree" (value = 4.42) with the positive assertions presented in the post-workshop condition. Reported high values of skill and understanding before the workshop likely led to a "ceiling effect" restricting further gain on items.

Looking at individual profiles, between one and three of the nine respondents indicated that they had gained from pre-workshop to post-workshop on the nine items—evidencing slight to moderate gain on any particular item. Table 2 presents information on the number of respondents who indicated no change from pre- to post-workshop, the number who indicated favorable change (gain) and the number who indicated unfavorable change (loss).

Table 2: *Value Changes (No Changes, Gains and Losses) by Item*

Item	n for paired contrast	# no change	% no change	# gain	% gain	# loss	% loss
1. I can identify social and family dynamics in cases of abuse and neglect.	9	8	88.89%	1	11.11%	0	0.00%
2. I can develop collaborative relationships to help families engage in collaborative casework.	9	7	77.78	2	22.22	0	0.00
3. I know how to effectively participate in the Family Support Team Meetings.	8	5	62.50	3	37.50	0	0.00
4. I can effectively facilitate the Family Support Team meetings.	8	6	75.00	2	25.00	0	0.00
5. I can conduct effective casework interviews, with appropriate communication, control, encouragement, support, and confrontation.	8	6	75.00	2	25.00	0	0.00
6. I can help families communicate feelings as well as facts.	8	7	87.50	1	12.50	0	0.00
7. I can involve families in the development of case goals and objectives; develop appropriate measures; and identify the best services and activities to achieve the goals and objectives.	8	5	62.50	3	37.50	0	0.00
8. I can identify and utilize naturally occurring support systems within the extended family, neighborhood and community.	8	6	75.00	2	25.00	0	0.00
9. I conduct routine and timely case reviews, reassess outcomes and service interventions, and	8	7	87.50	1	12.50	0	0.00

make appropriate and timely plan modifications.							
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Responses to Closed-ended Question on Cultural Change

One additional closed-ended question (Question 10) probed attendees’ reactions to the possibility of the workshop supporting culture change in the workplace environment. This was asked as a post-workshop question only. Summary data appear in Table 3.

Table 3: *Frequency and Percentage of Responses to the Item of Culture Change*

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
10. I believe I can use the information from today's workshop to "change the culture" of the workplace environment (i.e. in my office, among my colleagues) for the better.	Post-workshop only	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 11.1%	1 11.1%	7 77.8%

About 89% of the respondents report agreeing or strongly agreeing that the information acquired from the workshop could support culture change at the workplace.

Responses to Open-ended Questions

Three open-ended questions assessed respondents’ views of the value of the workshop. Results are arranged by question and summarized below. A full display of the responses, verbatim (except for changing all capitalizations to standard upper and lower case), appears in Appendix B.

11. *What is the one principle you learned today that you will immediately apply to your job?*

Of the nine response sheets returned, nine (100.00%) displayed written responses to this question. Those responses were:

- (1) Bringing out the Family Strength's [sic] to show support in a Family Support Team Meeting (2) Discussion of Risks vs. Safety.
- the checklist: child taken into A / C
- Include family in process
- Listen, empathize, ASK, paraphrase, and summarize.
- I learned I am actually doing some things right.
- I had trouble understanding difference in FST & PPT until today
- Move forward without looking back
- Better Listening
- Model [?] FST. It was nice to get back & watch to gain new ideas to use during my meetings.

12. *What part(s) or topic(s) of the workshop did you find most helpful and why?*

Of the nine response sheets returned, nine (100.00%) displayed written responses to this question. Those responses were:

- The Role Playing of FST Meeting
- FST & PPT meetings & the agenda Relationships between client worker / children to be prepared for the meeting & focus more so on reunification
- Role play
- handouts on skills for relationship building.
- I liked the whole thing. It was interesting and informative.
- Discussions.
- Mock FST-walking in the families [sic] shoes-
- Role play / handout
- Points of new from clients / children. Procedures for FST / PPT.

13. *What part(s) or topic(s) of the workshop did you not find helpful and why?*

Of the nine response sheets returned, five (55.56%) displayed written responses to this question. Those responses were:

- None; N/A (5 responses)
- Everything presented was helpful even if just for a reminder(s).

Conclusions

The workshops, “Families in Crisis,” presented on June 27, 2007, appears to have been only slightly effective in an overall manner, especially when compared with workshops presented earlier through the Missouri Training Program for Child Welfare Workers. When attendees were asked to rate the effectiveness of the workshops, statistically-significant gain was not evident on any of the nine specific questions nor on an aggregate variable measuring the intended outcomes of the workshops. Self-reported high knowledge and skill prior to the workshop may have impeded higher gains from the workshop.

The reception of the workshop appeared to be positive with no negatives noted. Further, 89% of the attendees agreed that the information gained at the workshop could be used to facilitate a “culture change” for the better in their workplaces.