



Vermont Family Services Division New Employee Training Program Foundations for Child Welfare and Youth Justice Casework Practice

Summary

The University-State Partnership in Vermont is excited to provide an enhanced training program for new Social Workers employed by the Vermont Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division. The vision for the program took shape over the course of several years when the Division experienced the deaths of two children in their care and the murder of Family Services' Social Worker, Lara Sobel. Over the past three years, the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), the Vermont Citizen's Advisory Board (VCAB) and the Casey Report all independently identified a variety of gaps and challenges in the current training program for Social Workers. Highlights of these reports include:

- DCF should define caseworker professional competencies and standards, and should ensure that caseworkers are properly trained and hold these competencies prior to being assigned cases.
- Training is not available in a timely manner for new caseworkers before they assume a full caseload;
- There are no time frames for initial training requirements;
- There is not a robust assessment of whether the training addresses the basic skills and knowledge required for staff in their positions.
- Train staff to include complete and accurate information on assessments.
- Provide social workers with training and coaching in use of safety plans for cases in which significant safety threats or risks of future harm are identified and children remain in the home or are reunified following out-of-home placement, especially in families with issues of parental substance abuse, mental illness or domestic violence.
- Focus training and coaching on strengthening general assessment skills as well as on specific tools used by FSD.
- Participation in training is not effectively tracked.

In addition, it is well documented that the quality and timeliness of Social Worker training directly impacts staff perception of personal safety, the quality of assessments of abuse/neglect, staff well-being and resilience and the ability to support and retain a healthy and productive workforce.

Family Services Division New Employee Training Program – Training Requirements

New Employee Orientation for Family Services Division – Online

*This is required for **all FSD staff** upon hire as well as required for all new social workers prior to eligibility for caseload assignment.*

In addition to attending the required AHS and DCF New Employee Orientations (registration link below), new employees of the Family Services Division are required to complete the New Employee Orientation for Family Services Division – Online course. This course is available at all times on the Vermont Child Welfare Training Partnership ELearning Website.

<http://training.vermontcwtp.org/course/index.php?categoryid=2>

Agency-Wide Training Requirements and Orientation Sessions

*This list of trainings is required for **all FSD staff** upon hire as well as for all new social workers prior to eligibility for caseload assignment*

In addition to the Foundations curriculum all new Social Workers will also follow the Agency of Human Services and the Department for Children and Families training requirements for all employees. All trainings can be accessed through the

Vermont Child Welfare Training Partnership ELearning Website.
<http://training.vermontcwtp.org/course/index.php?categoryid=2>

This section includes the following required trainings:

- AHS Employee Orientation – Classroom
- DCF New Employee Orientation – Classroom
- Mandatory Reporting: Protecting Vermont’s Children: Reporting Abuse and Neglect – Online
[Be sure to follow this information to the bottom of the page and then follow the link to the online course.]
- HIPPA – Online
- Introduction to Domestic Violence – Online

Foundations for Child Welfare and Youth Justice Casework Practice (“Foundations”), a comprehensive training program for new social work staff. Key components of the program include:

- Clearly articulated training requirements accomplished prior to being assigned a caseload;
- Competency-based curriculum allows for effective design, delivery and evaluation of training content as well as assurance that the curriculum teaches what needs to be taught;
- New evaluation framework that uses Pre- and Post- test measurements to evaluate training design and knowledge acquisition;
- A hybrid curriculum that combines the benefits of online, classroom and field-based learning opportunities;
- Enhanced record-keeping and tracking of training participation, completion and learning plan development.

Foundations Training Requirements

The most significant shift in the training program will be the expectation that all new Social Work staff successfully complete all training requirements prior to being assigned a caseload.

These requirements are broken down into three distinct and complementary categories. All elements of each category must be completed prior to becoming eligible for case assignment.

1. Foundations Classroom
2. Foundations Online
3. Foundations Field – Based Practice

1. Foundations Classroom

This 6 week, 3 day/week course will be offered 3 times/year rotating every two months. Training sessions will run from 9:00 – 4:00 daily and will capitalize on interactive, cohort-focused learning. Ideally, staff will begin the classroom session at the onset of week one, however, it is also possible to join mid-stream and complete the classroom requirement in the subsequent session. The curriculum for the classroom portion of Foundations is structured similar to the evolution of the case process, beginning at the front-end of a case and moving through to case closure.

2. Foundations Online

Currently, this program consists of 8 online courses that are available through the Vermont Child Welfare Training Partnership ELearning Portal. Follow the links for Foundations Online Learning Program and specific course requirements.

<http://training.vermontcwtp.org/course/index.php?categoryid=2>

● Instructor – Led Courses

Four of these courses are instructor-led course, which means that you will engage with specific content with an instructor and other learners through an online platform (Moodle). There will be various assignments and discussions that you will participate in in order to meet the objectives of the course.

- *Child and Adolescent Development*
- *Case Documentation*
- *Self-Care and Secondary Traumatic Stress*
- *Collaboration and Teamwork*

● **Self-Directed Courses**

Four of these courses are self-directed, which means you will log-in and proceed according to embedded instructions and prompts. You can complete these classes at your own pace and focus on gathering and digesting the information provided to you in each content area. Some of these classes may require a follow-up face-time session to de-brief or discuss understanding. If this is a requirement of course completion you will be informed of this within the class objectives.

- *Introduction to YASI*
- *Intercultural Responsiveness*
- *Substance Abuse for the Child Welfare Professional*
- *Permanency in Child Welfare & Youth Justice*

3. **Foundations Field – Based Practice**

The purpose of the field-based practice category is to provide opportunities for new social workers to transfer their learning from the classroom and computer to the field and test their understanding of the connection between knowledge and practice. Through methods such as job shadowing, observation, peer mentoring, coaching, document review and documentation practice Social Workers gain insight into the role and responsibilities of a child welfare and/or youth justice social worker. In order to maximize resources and not place unnecessary burden on veteran social work staff consider the following:

- New Social Workers should shadow those Social Workers/Supervisors who have 2 or more years of experience in the field;
- Shadowing may take place in both home and neighboring districts to allow for access to a broad range of perspectives and experiences;
- Develop a mentor cohort in your district and in neighboring districts who can be tapped periodically to work with new social work staff;
- When you are providing mentoring and shadowing for a new social worker:
 - Seek clarity from your Supervisor about the purpose of the job shadow and the parameters for the new Social Worker’s activities;
 - Provide honest, clear and objective feedback to the new Social Worker about their work;
 - Offer as much contextual information as possible for your activity;
 - Invite questions;
 - Provide your ideas and understandings of the activity and refer to Supervisor for additional guidance.
- Prior to caseload assignment eligibility, new Social Workers can be considered to be in a category between Social Worker and Case Aide. During this period, new social work staff should not independently participate in activities that are the responsibility of the Social Worker.
 - Activities that new social workers may assist with include all Case Aide activities that include but are not limited to the following: (Refer to Case Aide Job Description for a more complete list of activities).
 - ✓ Forms and paperwork completion;
 - ✓ Placing calls for appointments, referrals, *reaching out to collateral contacts*;
 - ✓ Entering Case Notes;
 - ✓ Database Mining;
 - ✓ Providing transportation;
 - Activities that new social workers may not be responsible for include but are not limited to the following:
 - ✓ Interviewing family members

- ✓ Representing the department in Court process
- ✓ Representing the Department at Family meetings
- ✓ Independently assessing safety and risk
- ✓ Working with Police to remove a child
- ✓ Placement changes

Program Implementation

● Date of Implementation

Implementation will begin on June 1st, 2016. For those staff hired prior to June 1st who have not completed previously required Foundations training, we *recommend* graduating their caseload over the next several months in order to allow them time to access the same training opportunities as those hired following June 1st. **Anyone hired after June 1st, 2016, will be expected to complete the new training requirements.**

Hired Prior to March Foundations – Completed Weeks 1, 2 and 3 of Foundations	Prioritize completion of Foundations-Online Review Field-Based Practice Checklist and identify target areas for training 1/17 completion(complete all online courses over 2 cycles)	3/4 caseload- Full Caseload
Hired in March/April – Completed Weeks 2 and 3 of Foundations	Prioritize completion of Foundations-Online Review Field-Based Practice Checklist and identify target areas for training (waived out of last 4 weeks of Foundations – 9/30 completion)	3/4 caseload
Hired in April/May – Completed Week 3 of Foundations (May 23 rd – May 27 th)	Prioritize completion of Foundations-Online Complete Field-Based Practice Checklist (waived out of last 2 weeks of Foundations- 10/15 completion)	Reduced Caseload

● 2016 – 2017 Foundations Program Schedule

The annual Foundations training schedule is developed in order to minimize the amount of lag time experienced by new staff while providing opportunity for effective onboarding and development of job knowledge and skills. As it is currently structured, the maximum amount of time a new Social Worker will not have an assigned caseload is about 4 months.

Foundations – Online Learning Program	July 1 st – August 31 st , 2016	Course descriptions and information on how to access registration and course work is included in the <u>“Online Learning Program”</u>
	November 1 st , 2016 – December 31 st , 2016	
	March 1 st – April 30 th , 2016	
Foundations – Classroom	Sept. 19th – Sept. 21st Sept. 27th – Sept. 29th Oct. 3 rd – Oct. 5th Oct. 12 th – Oct. 14 th Oct. 18 th – Oct. 20 th Oct. 24 th – Oct. 26 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course descriptions and Registration Information is forthcoming. At this time registration will follow standard procedures for registration on the AHS Training Calendar. Once courses open for registration we will send notice. ● Classes are scheduled from 9:00 – 4:00 ● All classes will take place at the Waterbury State Office Complex (WSOC)
	January – February 2017 (specific dates TBD)	
	May – June 2017 (specific dates TBD)	

Foundations – Field-Based Practice	Ongoing – As of June 1 st , 2016	Checklist available on FSD intranet and CWTP Website
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● **CWTP Support**

If desired by districts, CWTP Training Coordinators can meet with individual social workers to review requirements, provide information on registration and scheduling and answer any questions that may arise. CWTP will be seeking feedback on the program on an ongoing basis in order to evolve the program to best meet the social work workforce needs.

● **Waivers**

In the event that a new Social Worker is hired with previous child welfare and/or Youth Justice experience, that employee will have the opportunity to apply for waivers of training requirements (please utilize current waiver process as the new competency-based process is under development).

● **Certificates of Completion**

Elearning courses will self-generate certificates once you have completed each of the modules. Your course instructor will receive a notice of your completion. Foundations classroom certificates of completion will be generated from the sign-in sheet at class.

● **Performance Evaluation and Feedback**

- During this pre-caseload training period, it is the expectation that attending and participating in training *is* that Social Worker’s “caseload”. Given this, a significant portion of the initial evaluation – the 6 month probationary period – will be based on participation in training and efforts to transfer learning into the field.
- CWTP staff will provide structured feedback to the training participant and the Supervisor following completion of Foundations - Classroom training and Foundations - Online training. (Feedback process and form under development).

● **Program Evaluation and Next Steps**

In an effort to create a responsive and high quality training program the Vermont CWTP will actively seek and is open to feedback on all aspects of program implementation. We would be especially interested in your input on the requirements including the practicality and balance of expectations, the clarity of requirements and the availability of support with which to implement the program expectations, the quality of the training design, the delivery of content and provision of relevant and enriching learning opportunities. We will provide structured opportunities for this feedback and will welcome input ongoing.