

**Illinois Title IVE “Enhanced” Training Waiver
Demonstration Project**

FY2003-FY2008

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March 2004

STATE OF ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
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Overview:

Under Illinois’ third Title IVE Waiver Demonstration, the state has developed an enhanced training program for new public and private sector child welfare staff. The purpose of the training is to improve the efficiency and efficacy of child welfare services provision, as well as to help child welfare staff improve the safety, permanency and well-being outcomes of the children and families they serve.

The two goals of the “enhanced” training waiver are:

1. Public and private child welfare staffs who receive the enhanced training will show increased competence in the assessment of need, the ability to influence interventions and decision-making around safety and risk issues.
2. The training will contribute to an improvement in key performance indicators such as: length of stay before the achievement of reunification, adoption or guardianship without re-entry or recurrence of abuse and/or neglect, placement restrictiveness, incidence and recurrence of child abuse/neglect in foster care and child mental/physical health and educational status.

The Enhanced Training and Development Program:

In order to assist new caseworkers in achieving these goals, a comprehensive outcome-based training and development program was developed by DCFS and the Children and Family Research Center. This “enhanced training” curriculum is based on cutting edge “best practice” standards as well as the findings of relevant empirical studies. The enhanced training is designed to build upon the 2 week Foundation Training that all new DCFS and private agency workers receive. The enhanced curriculum focuses on the application of the following key concepts: interviewing, child and family visitation, assessment, permanency planning, testifying in juvenile court and identification of child physical, mental health and educational needs.

The enhanced training is a 4-week classroom-based training. New hires from the private sector will also benefit from structured field support for one year following completion of the classroom training. Research has shown that consistent field support is helpful in helping to integrate classroom learning into actual practice. There are two key components to the field support program: ongoing trainer support—Upon returning to their agencies, trainers “shadow” new workers when they engage in certain activities i.e. testifying in court, supervising a visit, conducting a child and family team meeting. In addition, trainers work to develop the skills learned in training by monitoring the “Learning Action Plans” of the new hires. Secondly, Booster Sessions will occur

quarterly through out the year and provide an opportunity to reinforce key concepts that trainees learned in the classroom as well as introduce specialized material that was not covered in the four-week classroom training.

Participation in the Enhanced Training Waiver Demonstration:

The enhanced training is provided to all new DCFS workers and a random sample of private agency new hires. Currently, there are approximately 50 private agencies participating in the training waiver. Our catchment area includes the following Illinois counties: Cook, Lake, McHenry, Kane, Will, Kankakee and Grundy. Each of the traditional and relative foster care teams within each of these agencies was randomly assigned to either the control or experimental group. The team's unique Region/Site/Field number was used as the unit of assignment. The random assignment process was completed in conjunction with independent sampling contractor, Westat, Inc.

All private agency new hires assigned to an "experimental" team undergo two weeks of foundation training followed by four weeks of "enhanced training." All private agency new hires assigned to a "control" group team undergo only two weeks of foundation training. The training waiver moved into the implementation phase in January, 2003. In FY'04, there have been 5 deliveries of the Enhanced Training. During this period, the training was delivered to 59 DCFS staff and 30 private agency new hires.

Evaluation Planning and Design:

The evaluation design includes outcome, process and cost-benefit analyses. The interim evaluation will be completed by the end of July, 2005. The final evaluation will be completed by the end of June, 2008.

Outcome Evaluation:

There are 2 primary goals of the waiver demonstration: to increase public and private child welfare agency staff scores on standardized tests of competence in assessing and influencing interventions and decisions around safety and risk. Staff in the demonstration group will score higher on standardized tests than those in the cost neutrality group. The second goal is to improve performance indicators. Specific child-related outcomes are: reduce incidence of child abuse and neglect among children in substitute care, fewer placement changes and fewer placements of children in more restrictive placements while children are in care, improved health and educational status for children in substitute care, reduced time from foster care to reunification with out increasing re-entry or recurrence of abuse and neglect to children served and reduced time from foster care to adoption or guardianship for children in substitute care who cannot be reunified with

their families. Differences in “group” outcomes will be examined with consideration given to age, race, gender, special needs, etc.

Outcome analysis is premature at this time. However, work has been done to insure that the infrastructure is in place to analyze the outcomes of the cases serviced by new workers in the control and experimental groups. Caseworker identification numbers are being compiled and entered into a database. These ID’s will be used to link the cases of the workers in the control and experimental groups and to compare the outcomes of the cases of the workers who went through Enhanced Training vs. the workers who did not receive Enhanced Training.

Process Evaluation:

The process evaluation has been underway for nearly a year. Telephone surveys are currently being administered to new private agency workers and private agency supervisors in the control and experimental groups. The Public Opinion Lab at Northern Illinois University has worked closely with the Children and Family Research Center to develop and implement these surveys. Surveys are administered at 6, 12 and 18 month intervals following completion of training. There are three survey instruments: the worker survey, supervisor survey and the supervisor’s assessment of the worker. The worker survey compares the control and experimental groups on the following items: sense of preparedness to perform core casework tasks, job satisfaction, practice activities and achieving permanency outcomes, quality and amount of supervision, organizational culture and climate, caseload information, availability of key services and views/perceptions of the field support. The supervisor survey is completed twice during the duration of this five year waiver. It examines group differences in: practice activities and achieving permanency outcomes, organizational culture and climate, view of the field support and key demographics. The supervisor’s assessment of the worker is completed by the supervisor at 6, 12 and 18 month intervals following completion of the training. It will address the supervisor’s perceptions of the level of preparedness of new workers to perform key casework tasks. This instrument will also examine the improvement of workers, over time, with respect to these key tasks.

In addition to post-training telephone surveys, the process evaluation includes a Quality Improvement component. Participant feedback forms are completed by trainees at the end of each of the four weeks of training. Western Illinois University is collecting and tracking this data. These surveys provide valuable feedback regarding training content, “applicability” of information and training delivery. Trainers also complete a Feedback on Participant Form (FOP) for each trainee. This assessment is designed to highlight the participant’s strengths and to identify areas where they might benefit from additional support upon return to their respective agencies.

Cost-Benefit Analysis:

The cost benefit analysis will be an integral part of the interim evaluation report. This analysis will determine whether the costs of the demonstration are justified by the benefits produced. This analysis will occur by quantifying program outcomes and projecting both costs and benefits into the future.

The Department will use the cases randomly assigned to the cost neutrality group as its method for assuring cost neutrality and determining the fiscal effects of the demonstration. The average allowable IV-E costs of a case in the cost neutrality group will be assumed to estimate the amount that would have been spent on each demonstration case in the absence of the demonstration and will be used as the baseline for assessing cost neutrality. The total cumulative title IV-E allowable costs for the cost neutrality group will be divided by the number of cases within the group, and the result will be projected to the universe in the state to determine the amount the state shall be paid in title IV-E funds for the demonstration. The cost neutrality analysis is not performed until the end of the second year of the waiver (and annually each year thereafter).