

Title: Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition; Site Visit Report

Award #: 90CW1133

Cluster: Training of Child Welfare Agency Supervisors in the Effective Delivery and Management of Federal Independent Living Service for Youth in Foster Care

Grantee: The University of Iowa

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Project Website: www.uiowa.edu/~nrcfcp/

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SUMMARY

A new training program helps Iowa child welfare supervisors work with caseworkers and communities to improve outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care to independence. The University of Iowa School of Social Work collaborated with the Iowa Department of Human Services, youth, and community partners to develop and implement the "Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition" project. Project staff conducted focus groups with a variety of stakeholders across the State—including workers, youth, and families—and used that information in developing the curriculum for supervisors. The resulting training materials focused on the following tenets:

- Start early in planning with youth.
- Incorporate positive youth development into supervision and case planning.
- Promote culturally responsive practice with youth.
- Build and sustain permanent connections.
- Develop community collaborations.

Four groups of 25 Iowa child welfare supervisors participated in the supervisor trainings. The supervisors then helped design and deliver 1-day trainings to caseworkers and communities in eight service areas throughout Iowa. The "community day" events gave supervisors and caseworkers the opportunity to train and exchange ideas with lawyers, judges, foster parents, group home staff, school district representatives, and other stakeholders to support youth in making successful transitions from the child welfare system.

Among the participants at supervisor, caseworker, and community trainings were foster care youth representatives from Elevate, a program sponsored by Children and Families of Iowa for youth ages 13+ who have been in the child welfare system. These youth spoke individually and in panels, answering questions and sharing their stories. They made a noticeable impression on caseworkers when they talked about how important caseworkers are to youth—including what they liked and disliked about their own workers.

Short-term evaluation results showed that supervisors and caseworkers made gains in their knowledge about transition planning as a result of the training. The long-term evaluation will focus on whether transition planning improves for youth in Iowa.

The State of Iowa is expecting to receive additional Chaffee funds, with which it hopes to expand the project further in the State and adapt it for training foster and adoptive parents. In the meantime, the content of the training has been integrated into the

graduate and undergraduate curricula of the university's social work classes on child welfare.

Reprinted from *Children's Bureau Express*, "Site Visit: Training Supervisors to Improve Outcomes for Iowa Youth" (<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov>).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Abstract (*Adapted from the project's grant application*)

The University of Iowa School of Social Work (UI-SSW) will collaborate with the Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS) to develop, field test, implement, evaluate, and disseminate a training program for public child welfare supervisors and for supervisors mentoring their caseworkers to improve outcomes for older youth in transition from foster care to independence. The project has three goals:

- To strengthen the quality of public child welfare supervision to improve outcomes for Iowa youth in transition from foster care to independence
- To demonstrate a training model that engages supervisors and their caseworkers in a learning and team-building process around the needs of youth in transition
- To improve outcomes for youth in transition nationally, through varied dissemination activities

The approach builds on the core principles of youth development, cultural competence, collaboration, and permanent connections, and involves all IDHS supervisors, line staff, and transition planning specialists. The project involves youth, IDHS staff, and community partners in each step, from information gathering through focus groups and interviews, to curriculum development, fieldtesting, implementation and evaluation, through dissemination. There are two phases to the curriculum. The first involves skill building with supervisors. The second brings supervisors and their caseworkers together in a learning/team-building model, in which supervisors will participate as cotrainers. The project evaluation will examine the impact of the training program on knowledge acquisition, utilization of skills, and outcomes for youth as measured through quantitative data and from the perspectives of both youth and professionals. The key benefits of this project include developing and documenting a whole agency approach to improving outcomes for older youth in transition, producing and disseminating two distinct but complementary curricula to improve transitional planning for older youth, making the training and evaluation results widely available through printed and electronic means, and sustaining the capacity for ongoing training of new public child welfare employees through the UI-SSW and IDHS partnership.

SITE VISIT HIGHLIGHTS

The site visit took place on September 3 and 4, 2008, in Des Moines, IA. The site visitor met in person or by telephone with the following people:

- Doug Wolfe, Program Planner, Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS)
- Two youth representatives from Elevate (statewide group for foster care youth)
- Ruthann Jarrett, Children and Families of Iowa

- Brad Richardson, National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice (NRCFCP) Research Director, Project Evaluator
- Miriam Landsman, NRCFCP Executive Director, Project Principal Investigator
- Lisa D'Aunno, NRCFCP Training Director, Child Welfare Curriculum Director
- Margie Poorman, IDHS Training Coordinator
- Teresa Sea, IDHS Transition Planning Specialist
- Kim Marks, IDHS Transition Planning Specialist
- Holli Miller, IDHS Independent Living Coordinator
- Melissa Ohden, Sioux City Service Area Supervisor
- Sue Davidson, Social Work Administrator, Dubuque Service Area
- Lori Frick, IDHS Community Liaison, Dubuque Service Area
- Kathy Berns, Transition Planning Specialist, Dubuque Service Area
- Sue Tew, Project Consultant, 2 Consulting, Inc.
- Ann Williams, IDHS Supervisor, Polk County

The site visitor reviewed the following materials, and the project plans to make these available on their website (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~nrcfcp/>):

- *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition: Participant Manual*
- *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition: Resources for Community Collaboration*
- *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition: Supervisor Training Participant Manual*
- *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition* by Miriam J. Landsman and Lisa D'Aunno

The visitor also listened to a CD produced by Elevate youth- Desire to Inspire. It includes songs and poetry about dislocation and multiple moves, fear of attaching to a new family, grief over the loss of sibling connections, and hope for reconnection and success. More information on this CD is available here:

http://elevate2inspire.com/dev/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11&Itemid=26

LESSONS LEARNED

Unique and Innovative Features

- Project participants found that the best voices for youth are the youth themselves. This was a steep learning curve as a community. They felt they did a good job preparing youth to speak to trainees, but they learned that they also needed to prepare the grownups to embrace the voices of youth and not to put individual youth on the spot. In some ways they believe that youth involvement grew too big too fast. They feel that the incredible demand for speakers burned out some youth. Youth need a well-rounded life which is not always entirely focused on advocacy.
- Caseworkers acknowledge that they cannot possibly do everything youth need in order to prepare for transition. There is a system in place for contracting with service providers in the area to do the in-home work directly with the youth. Project staff would recommend including these partners with

Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS) staff for training instead of just inviting them to the community meeting. Child welfare staff see a need to raise the bar of expectations of foster parents and group home staff so they will help youth learn life skills during their everyday teachable moments. During the project, caseworkers received needed supervisor support and supervisors received needed support from other supervisors to be empowered to deal assertively and proactively with foster parents and group homes, making expectations clear and raising the bar.

- Project participants would recommend a second day of caseworker training. The first day would cover the theory, then they would come back later for practical application. They would recommend more focus and depth, and giving participants more practical tools.
- There were some eye-opening experiences. For example, during the supervisor training on gay and lesbian youth, few knew if there were any of these youth on their caseload. These supervisors now plan to use an activity called *Breaking the Silence: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Foster Youth Tell Their Stories*, (National Center for Lesbian Rights) at unit meetings to get the conversation going (this activity is described in the project's Resource Manual).

Challenges

- Child welfare caseworkers say their biggest barrier is time. They want to see youth regularly, but do not even have time in the day to do all the driving that would require. Caseworkers find it tempting to skip visits if it seems youth are doing well and they do not have anything specific to address or talk about. It is hard to keep up on everything, e.g., the educational training voucher and the aftercare network. It helps that these topics were presented to staff during the training, along with the *Transition Information Packet for You: Opening Your Eyes* (TIP) that youth get. As the project was initially building consensus around competencies, there was a huge pushback on the proposed competency- "engages youth in process." Caseworkers said they did not have time for this. The State is telling them their focus is supposed to be on young children. It did not seem reasonable to ask overburdened caseworkers who only see youth once a month to have a relationship and engage them in the process. There was a lot of resistance to this training at first. It was hard to get people on board. One supervisor said this was the last topic in the world they wanted training on. It was a long ride- they had to hammer it for awhile until it took hold. Now they have embraced it. The push for more involvement with youth coincided with the Department's push to meet with all families once a month, and supervisors reported that once engagement was made a priority, the workers found it was a self-reinforcing part of their job.
- Engaging youth can be challenging. Project staff wish they could have done more youth involvement. There was a youth co-facilitator for 3 of the 4 supervisor trainings but she was not available for the 4th training. Part of the problem was that there were not enough youth prepared to speak at first. Getting them ready was a big challenge. Elevate has over 200 active members now, but there are more youth out there who could benefit from this program. Iowa is a very rural State, so it is often difficult for youth to get to meetings twice a month. They are considering trying some internet-based

activities. Another challenge is that youth are sometimes asked inappropriate questions. When that happens, the adult facilitator steps in. This facilitator position is usually filled by a foster care alumni or a foster/adoptive parent—someone with a personal commitment to youth. And there is often pretty intense conflict between youth and their parents. Balancing the needs and interests of youth and keeping them protected, while maintaining ongoing engagement with the whole family is challenging.

- There was a lot of material to cover in the 1-day caseworker trainings. They believe they could have done a lot more with a second day. Trainers are always under pressure to deliver a lot of information but some trainees have trouble sitting for long periods. They brought Tinker Toys and asked them to build models of youth permanency. This worked very well. It energized the trainees, several of whom volunteered to be on the planning committee.
- It was challenging to determine where collaboration was needed and what would promote it. Some regions said collaboration was not happening, while others said it was going well but they needed help with some specific area. Phase three was a community day in each of the regions. They had originally proposed bringing in all the partners for a big conference. At early focus groups, supervisors said they needed support from their community partners in working with youth, that they could not do this work alone. So they decided to have eight regional meetings instead of one big conference. Supervisors were asked to invite people from their community who they believed needed to be at the meetings. At each of these regional meetings, the project provided resources to improve collaboration.
- There are many obstacles to successful transition. The recent change in Iowa from State-run to county-run adult services has been very challenging. At the trainings, an adult system specialist came in and presented this topic. The adult service system is very complicated. Each of the 99 counties now pays for adult services whereas child welfare services are State-funded. Eligibility and other requirements vary based on county of residence. Staff know they need to commit to figuring this out and making it work, learning how to connect youth with county-run resources in the adult system as they transition out of the State-run child welfare system. The Department of Education is a key partner, but collaborating and resolving issues such as confidentiality have been a challenge. Very few youth are accessing vocational training funds. This is a controversial issue with educators, some of whom favor college preparation. Transition has never been a high priority in child welfare and recently there has been a shift in Iowa to put even more focus on children ages birth to 6 years. With younger children, if abuse is confirmed, a case is opened. With older youth the criteria differs, so it is more challenging. Younger teens are often reunited with their families, but this is not the case for older teens. The adoption rate for older youth is discouraging. Supervisory knowledge of transition varies, so staff need a Transition Planning Specialists (TPS) who can be a resource to them, but there are only eight for the whole State. Supporting youth through the transition process is more difficult if staff do not have a good working relationship and communication with the TPS. When this is the case, it is even more important that staff have training and tools for working with youth. For youth in residential treatment, there is distance to contend with, and collaboration around planning and goal setting can be especially difficult.

- Staff turnover and changes in resources and requirements pose additional challenges. New staff need transition training and ongoing updates are needed by veteran staff and community partners. This project has developed a good base for addressing this challenge by training and producing and disseminating materials to virtually everyone in the State who is currently supporting youth in transition. TPS staff and supervisors are now on the same page and have the resources they need to support caseworkers and community partners. TPS caseworkers keep up with changes in resources and requirements and the relationships developed during this project have increased the likelihood that caseworkers will work more closely with their TPS. Now that this curriculum is available, they can include this training as a core course for all new caseworkers if they choose. TPS caseworkers plan to use project resources for ongoing training of caseworkers and community partners.

Successful Strategies and Keys to Success

- Iowa's previous Children's Bureau-funded child welfare training for recruitment and retention project laid a foundation for this independent living project. So getting the project up and running took less time. The support that was needed from the top developed during the recruitment and retention project and this carried over to the independent living project.
- The project took a comprehensive approach- supervisor training, casework, and community collaboration. First they trained all of the child welfare supervisors in a central location. Many of the people interviewed by the site visitor said it worked very well to train supervisors first. Then supervisors and the planning team developed the caseworker trainings (using the same main components with some variation), then they did the community days. It worked very well to have supervisors help design and deliver this training and develop the invitation list for subsequent trainings. They went to all eight service areas to train the caseworkers and hold community days. The supervisors were given time to train the service providers. The regional caseworker training and community days reinforced the supervisor training. Doing these in regions and adapting the training to meet each region's needs worked well.
- It also worked well to focus first on supervision, with an emphasis on the supervisor as teacher, developing caseworker's capacity for strengths-based, family-centered practice. The 2-day supervisor training focused on these principles. The 100 Iowa child welfare supervisors were divided into four cohorts of 25 each, as had been done with the recruitment and retention training a few years earlier. This promoted communication across service areas and across new and experienced staff. The small groups led to easier conversation. Trainees formed a cohesive group, did activities at their table, and strategized how they would put what they were learning into practice. Talking among themselves was a strong part of the training- supervisors do not often get to do this. Supervisors appreciated learning strategies for actually getting their work done, focusing on the most important skills and tools in their supervisor practice. Supervisors self-assessed their behaviors related to topic, using the Supervisor Behavioral Competencies tool (attached). This tool breaks tasks down into categories, which helped them

operationalize the competencies. It also was used as a pre- and posttest to measure behavior change. Supervisors also assessed their staff. This gave them a picture of each caseworker and their skill set across competencies and a unit picture. This helped supervisors decide how to do caseworker education- teaching the whole group or pairing strong caseworker with beginners. It also helped supervisors to be aware of their staff strengths, which staff will work best with youth of different genders, cultures, and languages. The supervisors also identified the topics on which their caseworkers needed training during phase two.

- On the last day of supervisor training, they asked people to return to their service areas, talk with geographical peers, and work with them to help design the community training. Supervisors also were asked if they wanted to volunteer to be on the planning team for phase two (caseworker training) and phase three (community day). There were four sets of recommendations for each of the eight regions. The training team collated the results. The regions formed eight planning teams which traveled around the State meeting with planning teams and hammering out plans for phases two and three.
- Positive youth development, with its focus on strengths and moving forward, was an exciting part of the project. This has had an empowering effect on the youth involved. They spoke of several recent cases where older youth have been brought into the process and made significant contributions. Youth are responding positively and reaching out to help other youth. There is a growing understanding that youth need to be at the table. Changing the lives of youth through stories of hope has been inspiring. Of course there have been some negatives that needed to be addressed, but the focus has been on the positive.
- Project staff say they would involve youth again, that youth participation at all levels is critical. At the beginning of the project, two foster care graduates were advisors. Project staff met with the Des Moines Elevate group and held three focus groups with youth who had recently aged out of the foster care system. The youth had a lot of good suggestions and ideas. For example, they suggested a hotline for foster youth, staffed by former foster youth. Staff developed a slide show of quotes from focus groups, which they presented during lunch hour and supervisor training. During the trainings, project staff displayed posters that youth made, and every hour or so there was some youth-focused reminder that kept it real. Having these voices at the trainings was key- caseworkers say they sometimes forget that these are real children's lives.
- Youth played a key role at the trainings. One of the youth advisors changed a lot of hearts. She sat in on three of the four supervisor trainings and stressed how important caseworkers are to youth. She was given the opportunity to make comments at key points. They debriefed an hour after each supervisor training. The youth advisor was really observant and forthcoming and had new input each time.
- At some trainings, a panel of youth talked about their experiences in foster care. Having youth at the table was very helpful. The caseworkers really enjoyed it and had a lot of questions about how they could do better. They found it amazing to hear what some youth know and what they do not know. They found it motivating to hear youth talk about how important their caseworker is to them. Caseworkers say they need to hear this, that they

often do not recognize what a key person they are. The panel was asked questions such as “what was your transition like?” Staff worked hard to prepare the panelists, but results varied depending on the group and the facilitator. Staff gave them written questions and told them that these caseworkers know your stories, they need to know how to do better, what you liked and did not like. They were asked to express what other kids would want them to express, and when they did, it was very well received. The most effective dialog was when youth spoke about what they liked and disliked about their caseworker. Some spoke about their spirituality and how important it was to them, how it is hard to be forced to go to religious services that are not of their own choosing. During panel presentations, youth always had the option to pass.

- The partnership with Elevate (<http://www.elevate2inspire.com/dev/>) has been very beneficial. Elevate brings the youth voice into the legislature and the child welfare system to inform decision making and improve the child welfare system. Their influence is powerful when they talk about their experience with the system and with caseworkers and make suggestions. Elevate youth now speak at all trainings for new child welfare caseworkers. Youth work with an adult facilitator. They come in right after lunch and people really perk up. Youth participated in interviews for the new coordinator of the Elevate project. This was a very effective way to identify candidates who could relate to youth. Elevate youth are being trained as transition coaches, and they get paid for it. This is a powerful and positive experience for youth. When asked questions about culture, some youth said they had none until Elevate. The program prepares youth before they have any speaking engagements. Youth learn how to avoid making themselves too vulnerable, and they always have someone there to support them. Youth learn how to be advocates, how to tell their stories, how to write about their journey. Youth receive help with transportation, and they have fun while they’re learning life skills. Youth caseworkers hope the Elevate program expands and supervisors who do not yet have this program in their areas want it.
- Community partnerships are another key. The project’s community day in each region was an effective way to bring all the partners together. The project contracted with the Continuing Education Director at a community college to organize the community days. Most of these events were held at community colleges, which had good meeting rooms and parking facilities. In one region, the Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS) community liaison helped get things set up, got the training going, invited the community, and helped out with communication with the community so people were on the same page about working with youth in transition. All levels of leaders and caseworkers came to the community days. IDHS staff took a leadership role, making introductions and spreading themselves around the room one at each table. The clear message was that IDHS knows it has things it needs to work on and part of that work is making these transition resources available to everyone. Many child welfare staff saw their community day as a chance to share training with their partners. They used the training as a community organizing tool whenever possible. It drove the curriculum down to the caseworker level- service providers, group home staff, and foster parents. It provided cues for caseworkers, lawyers, and judges. Each region developed a community resource matrix, which they plan to update at regular intervals. Caseworkers brought a case with them, wrote a name on a doll, listed

challenges and resources, and put the dolls around the room as examples of youth they were working with.

- Supporting youth through the transition process involves many roles and responsibilities and requires an infrastructure so everyone knows who should be doing what and when they should be doing it. For example, the roles of the Chaffee transition specialists need to be clear. They have found that integrating this expert into an ongoing community team effort is more effective than bringing him/her in at the end of the transition process. The Chaffee-funded Iowa Aftercare Services Network for youth 18-21 was another good partner, providing a lot of key data. In one region, child welfare staff met with school district staff to develop a protocol for working together on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and family team meetings. This came out of their community transition event. The transition liaison for the schools was there, and said “we can do this, let’s set up a meeting.” Staff found it exciting to observe this positive communication, with people getting engaged, seeing the need, and working together. Community partners shared that there had been a lot of finger-pointing in past. They used to do IEPs and family team meetings together, but had not done so lately. Child welfare staff have worked hard at developing relationships with local schools, but they felt that without this training, this progress would not have occurred.
- The curriculum is organized into nine caseworker competencies, each broken down developmentally, outlining a training process for caseworkers at beginner through professional levels. The grant paid for travel costs for caseworkers, but putting them all up overnight would have been very expensive, so they packed a lot into one day. As a result, staff feel they may have talked too much. The supervisors greeted people at the door, assisted with registration, introduced trainers, and facilitated discussion. Every table had a supervisor at it. They reinforced that supervisors are leading this. Supervisors see this caseworker training as just the beginning. The supervisors are committed to this, they have tools, and they will be strong leaders.
- The project developed several resources. Many trainees said they had a craving for practical tools- “how to do this stuff.” The TIP for teens also was popular with community partners. Caseworkers use it with families where teens have come back home, and several homeless shelters want to use it with young adults. Trainees took a lot of notes in their resource manuals and took the manuals back to work with them. Many people said they did not know these resources existed. The *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition: Participant Manual* includes a checklist and a form letter for sending to schools. It was to be personalized for use in each community. Take-away resources at community days included Casey *It’s My Life* booklets, videos, national resource center and Elevate materials. The project planned to put these on their website (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~nrcfcp/>). During the project, the team learned and adjusted a lot. They kept refining the content based on feedback. Project staff were very good at this and put a lot of work into it. They believe that precision is important. At the time of the site visit, they were updating the online materials and planned to continue doing so.
- It was critical to have a large and diverse group planning and developing the training. Some Transition Planning Specialists (TPS) were on the original

planning committee and advisory group for the project. In phases two and three, the TPS staff were leaders and trainers. A Social Work Administrator (SAM) shared that she was glad she was on the planning committee and that the curriculum was modified based on local needs. A SAM stated that if you are going to initiate change, you better be there at training. She did some talking there, moved around the tables, and interjected points for clarification. She believes that having SAMs there shows caseworkers this is an important issue, which they are expected to learn about and practice.

- They employed a variety of effective training techniques. Sessions were led by teams and were very interactive and activity-based. Participants had a choice of workshops, which was good for adult learners who need choices and a chance to go deeper into areas of particular interest. Participants were asked to state the one thing they will take away and use, to write it on a sticky note and put it on their computer. Recognizing multiple intelligences, they always brought toys (manipulatives), markers, paper, and Play Doh. This helped some people stay focused. They also brought blankets, thereby eliminating the evaluation comment “rooms too cold.”
- In Iowa, family team meetings are really catching on. For some older youth who will not be going home, family team meetings, which typically focus on reunification, are being adapted and called Dream Teams. Youth decide who will be invited and the meetings are very youth-centered. At dream team meetings youth are asked “what are your dreams?” The team coaches and mentors them, helps them determine what is realistic and how to get there. Iowa child welfare programs were already doing family team meetings, so this Dream Team adaptation has worked well. When the project staff started talking about youth-centered teams, child welfare staff said that sounded a lot like family team meetings and they were ready for it. Caseworkers are buying into this concept and say that they now have the tools they need to train facilitators or do it themselves. These Dream Team meetings are being counted as Family Team meetings for Child and Family Services Review purposes.
- Other innovations for youth are being implemented in Iowa with other funds. These initiatives are addressed at the Independent Living trainings. Family finding uses private investigators and computer techniques to find family members and, where appropriate, reconnect them with youth. Child action teams meet with foster parents, biological parents, and youth to ease transition and support visitation. The training introduced tools developed by other entities, for example, Foster Club’s *About Me* tool which includes their journal of likes and dislikes, their foster care plan, and what their foster home needs to know about them. Participants were particularly interested in this resource. Another example is Foster Club’s *Permanency Pact*, which lists a lot of options for people to be in youth’s life in a variety of ways. They work on building connections little by little, starting small and building relationships. Caseworkers feel like they could ask people to start small, be a part of a teen’s network.

OUTCOMES

Evaluation

- Preliminary results show the project is having a positive impact. Three instruments were developed and administered: knowledge pretraining and posttraining, behavior skills assessment, and training satisfaction survey. They would recommend pilot testing the knowledge test. In the preliminary results, the scores appear to go down progressively. In fact, the test got harder.
- Supervisors left their training with tools which they could immediately start using with their caseworkers. So when caseworkers came to their training, some of them had already made a good start. One supervisor found the section on permanency and concurrent planning particularly helpful. She plans to expand that further with her staff. She found that discussing what to do with a 17-year-old opens up additional discussion about other concerns of these youth. Supervisors and caseworkers had “aha” moments and good conversations. They got away from the paper work and putting out fires and thought about long range for these youth.
- Caseworkers said they liked the training, especially the resource book, the youth stories, and the youth video. Caseworkers said that they found the resource information very useful. Information on transitioning youth to adult mental health services was particularly helpful. Of all their training materials, feedback was that specific tools were most valuable. One trainee reported using the tool with which youth can describe the kind of family they’d like to be part of. Staff said that they knew some of this before, but now they are being more proactive. Light bulbs were coming on. They got a lot more out of the training than just what was on the agenda.
- The community days hit home with a lot of people. Youth spoke and did an excellent job, which had a huge impact. There was a good representation of community partners. A variety of people from various agencies participated. Project staff are hearing from new agencies, and there have been a lot of follow-up questions. It was a great thing to have youth issues raised statewide. Virtually everyone who works with youth in foster care received this training. It put youth issues at the forefront. Some youth caseworkers have been frustrated by lack of progress in this area, but now there is a sense that the State is advancing. They believe grants like this have helped, and Chaffee funding has increased. People appreciated getting a lot of good information, having ample opportunity for discussion, and having follow-up steps in order to support the changes they talked about. It is good to have everyone in the system trained, not just caseworkers and supervisors. Everyone is on the same page now, and some community agencies made commitments to support youth in specific ways.
- Many child welfare staff had thought transition planning was a one shot deal. They now see it as a bigger process, requiring a lot more thought. They now have several treatment plan meetings, usually rolled into the family team meeting process. They keep meeting on the same case continually, for as long as it takes. The Transition Planning Specialist (TPS) is the key point-person, taking a leadership role, maintaining standards, working with the adult system, not giving up. The TPS appreciates having the whole team trained on this so everyone in the child welfare agency understands that they all need to work together with community partners to support youth through the transition process. TPS caseworkers are getting a lot more calls and emails since the training, and people are dropping in with questions.

- The language of positive youth development is catching on. Relationships with youth are now considered an important part of case work. Around the State, staff are seeing the value of including youth in planning, turning the wheel over to them (within realistic limits), empowering youth, keeping youth at the center of planning of their transition, and making permanent connections. Transition planning is now taken more seriously. Whereas previously caseworkers were worried about youths' current behaviors rather than planning and preparing for their future, they are now beginning to realize that behaviors improve when youth feel they are in control of the plan for their life. They are finding that a youth-centered approach works. They now realize that at this age, these youth should be at their case reviews, participating in their own case planning. They are finding that when youth play a part in developing their plan, they buy into it. Around the State they are hearing that youth are "sitting at the table." There also is a better understanding that college is an option, and more people who work with youth are talking with them about it. Recently, they are seeing more of the older youth in independent living programs than before. These youth have more knowledge about the child welfare system. For example, they are more likely to call their caseworker's supervisor if they are not being visited regularly. Youth are attending family team meetings and putting names with faces. Participation in Elevate also makes them more knowledgeable and assertive.

Sustainability

- Many of the people who have been involved in this project recognize the need to continue this training. They already see this happening and there are plans to sustain it in additional ways. Child welfare staff now see this as a relevant part of their work and they want/need the training to continue. The new 40-hour caseworker training now includes a 2-hour segment on working with youth to plan and prepare for transition. Elevate youth come in and speak to the trainees about the transition process. So when new staff are hired, they learn about working with youth and acquire an enthusiasm for it. Some supervisors who had this transition training have now retired. When caseworkers who have received this training are promoted into supervisor positions, they will carry on, and they are considering adding transition planning to their supervisor training curriculum. They recognized that it is important to include TPS in planning the training and developing resource materials. This was a true partnership and they know best how this actually works inside the Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS). It also will contribute to sustainability.
- Project staff frequently hear supervisors say that they now have the tools they need and they are focusing on individual caseworker development. Most of the materials are electronic, so they can be updated and posted on the IDHS website. People are asking for additional copies of the training resources. Grant funds are being used to make these available in electronic format and the remaining print copies are being distributed. The Foster Club Permanency Pact materials that were included in training notebooks, describing 45 ways that a supportive adult might support a youth transitioning from foster care, are being incorporated into practice. For example, at a recent family team meeting for a youth with no connections, staff from one of the agencies involved volunteered to go through this list with the youth to see what they could come up with. The foster parent also said they could help with some of this, they just cannot do everything. Child welfare staff see this as a good support and are pleased to see it being

used. They are seeing a better understanding of positive youth development, the need for transition planning, addressing cultural issues, and how it all ties together. At the training, supervisors received a video on foster youth from diverse backgrounds and their needs- *Knowing who you are: Helping youth in care develop their racial and ethnic identity* (Casey Family Programs) and *Breaking the Silence* (National Center for Lesbian Rights). At least one supervisor has used this video in group supervision and will be using it again in diversity training for staff. Elevate youth will continue to be available as a resource. They plan to make training slides, manuals, and activities available, and the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice would like to do this training around the country.

- They also are looking for and finding ways to sustain this training for other community partners. One regional administrator asked that this training be offered to all youth services providers. It will need to be reformatted for this purpose. It was suggested that this training could be reformatted for foster and adoptive parents. This group has been doing permanency training and they piloted this curriculum at their State foster parent conference. The curriculum that is adapted for foster parents also should work for group home staff that are required to receive a set amount of training each year. It is likely that this training will be added to the schedule of county attorney spring and winter trainings. There are plans to offer this training before the State disproportionality conference and to market it to private agencies there.
- Iowa is expecting to receive additional Chaffee funds. They plan to use some of these funds to introduce dream teams into six more areas around the State. There is recognition that without follow-up, the lessons learned at these trainings may fade away, but it takes time and energy to keep it going. Project staff are looking for another grant to do this follow-up work. People around the State who work with youth are committed to this and they are thinking about next steps. There are plans to review this material at the next supervisor meeting and keep it on their radar screen. Since some of the same staff worked on both projects, they noted that the recruitment and retention project's planning year was helpful in terms of sustaining that program after the grant ended.

ATTACHMENTS

- Focus group summary with supervisor and caseworker competencies
- Summary of Curricula: Youth in Transition to Independent Living
- Article: *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition*
- Supervisor behavioral competencies survey
- Transition training by the numbers
- Training agenda
- Practice goals for supervisors
- Case scenarios from trainer's guide
- Worker/Community Rollout Process
- Jewel's poems: *Like Strangers* and *Probably Wasn't What You Wanted Anyway*
- Evaluation of Supervisor Training
- Project Logic Model

Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition Focus Group Summary The University of Iowa School of Social Work

The following summary is based on key findings from focus groups conducted with DHS supervisors, workers, transition specialists, and youth, as well as interviews with key informants as part of the federal child welfare grant on improving outcomes for youth in transition. Following the discussion of participants and summary of key findings, we propose a set of competencies for supervisors and workers around which to build the training.

Participants

NRC staff and consultants conducted sixteen focus groups with a total of 150 participants, including:

- Eight (8) focus groups of DHS child welfare supervisors, one in each service area, with a total of 89 supervisors participating.
- Two (2) focus groups of DHS caseworkers, one in a primarily rural service area and the other in a service area with a substantial urban population. A total of 26 caseworkers participated.
- Three (3) focus groups of youth who recently aged out of foster care. Two of the groups were held in Central Iowa and the other in Eastern Iowa. A total of 12 youth participated, including four youth of color and one physically disabled youth.
- A focus group of Transition Specialists, with 8 participants.
- A focus group of Native American families in Sioux City, with eleven participants.
- A focus group consisting of 4 representatives of aftercare provider agencies.

In addition, NRC staff conducted interviews with thirteen key informants identified by the Iowa DHS Training Committee and others. These informants represented the perspectives of foster parents, private youth serving agencies, public health, DHS, and advocacy organizations. Three of the key informants represented provider agencies which primarily serve minority youth.

Findings

Key points are organized according to various questions posed by facilitators and interviewers.

What are the most pressing needs for youth in transition?

- Respondents easily identified multiple pressing needs for youth in transition, including financial support, housing, health and mental health care and health insurance, educational attainment, job readiness, transportation, having all of their “vital documents”, getting a driver’s license
- Even though it is harder to achieve in foster or group care, youth need opportunities to develop their unique talents and interests through participation in extra-curricular activities, art, music or performance opportunities, paid or volunteer jobs, etc.

- Beyond the common needs for youth transitioning out of care, mental illness, emotional disturbance, and/or developmental delays pose even greater challenges for youth to achieve independence.
- Youth leaving care need positive, supportive relationships with adults, someone to turn to for help even with common challenges faced by young adults
- High caseloads keep workers from doing sufficient planning and skill development for youth leaving care, creating a sense that many of these youth are destined for failure
- Due to their high level of vulnerability, youth leaving care need to be able to return to care voluntarily if their plan for independence fails
- There is a gap between life skills that youth may be taught while in care and experience in practicing these skills and learning from mistakes.
- Youth leaving care need to be understood as youth--our expectations that they will be able to create and adhere to plans may not be realistic when most youth of that age are also not developmentally prepared but have their family as safety net
- Youth would like to be better informed about health coverage, financial resources and the changes that occur when they leave care, as well as other programs and how to access them. Youth are concerned about transportation since many of their goals depend on reliable transportation. They expressed a need for mentors or sponsors; one idea suggested was a hot line to get advice from other youth.

How is the transition process working currently and how can this be improved?

- Currently transition planning tends to be treated as an event that occurs at a particular age, usually resulting in a document that focuses on housing, education and means of support
- Participants discussed the fact that the Department's prioritizing young children in care has resulted in older youth being seen as a lower priority in terms of workers' time and available resources.
- Supervisors generally see their role as providing their workers with information, tracking progress in transition planning, and assisting workers with barriers that come up (courts, schools, adult services), but acknowledge that high workloads and the Department's focus on young children present barriers to solid transition planning
- Some participants discussed the idea of specialized caseloads, allowing those workers most skilled in working with teens to focus on this population; however, the Department's trend appears to be in the opposite direction of more generalized caseloads
- Because many caseworkers have few teens on their caseloads, transition planning is more difficult because they are not doing this regularly, have to learn new regulations, etc.
- There is widespread consensus that to be more successful, the work of transition planning should begin earlier in the youth's life.
- The amount of time spent managing disrupted placements is often a barrier to effective transition planning, distracting both workers and youth.
- The role of the transition planning specialist seems to be unclear in different service areas. Some participants believe that the transition planning specialist should be handling all issues related to transition; the transition planning specialists express their role as providing support and information to workers to assist in their work with youth in transition.

- There is widespread acknowledgement that youth in transition would benefit from support/training in social skills, not only life skills such as balancing a checkbook or completing a job application
- Participation in aftercare services would be helpful for many youth; however, an effective recruitment strategy may be needed to help youth see how the program will benefit them.
- There are mixed feelings about the Ansell life skills assessment—some feel that it's too cumbersome, some don't use it, some feel that as a self-report it may not be reliable and valid. Some youth experience the assessment as a test that they "pass" or "fail," used to determine whether they are ready to leave care.
- Participants acknowledge that foster parents end up doing a lot of the one-on-one work in preparing youth for transition, and that the Department should be doing more to prepare and support them, and clarify expectations.
- Youth in care express the feeling that they are unimportant. They know that their caseworkers have a heavy workload but would like more contact, even if by phone. They would like caseworkers to talk to them directly, not just communicate through foster parents and service providers. They would also like to know when their worker is leaving. And they would like their workers to treat them as people with potential, not just problems.

How engaged are youth in planning for their own transition?

- There is consistent agreement that transition planning, when done, is more often led by the worker than by the youth. Some participants feel that youth are left out of the planning; they are not present at the meetings when most decisions are made.
- There is considerable variation across services areas and counties in how transition plans are made and the degree to which youth are involved in developing a plan and whether meetings specifically for transition planning are held
- Youth provided varied opinions about transition planning. Some acknowledge "going along with the plan" just to be free of the child welfare system as soon as possible. Others would like workers to spend more time with them in helping them to prepare to leave care, and to be able to stay in touch after they leave care.
- Youth feel unprepared for many situations that they will be facing—for example, some placements don't permit them to hold jobs, they are inexperienced in learning how to make their own choices because things are decided for them

How do youth-serving agencies in your community work together (or not) to support youth transitioning out of care?

- Issues of agencies working together to support youth in transition came up frequently, particularly with regard to county mental health services for youth turning 18 and the educational system.
- In some communities, county mental health services will not participate in transition planning until the youth turns 18, which makes planning difficult.
- In some areas, DHS staff express frustration with the public schools, believing that schools tend to give up too easily on youth in care, do not encourage youth to complete school, and do not collaborate with DHS.

- However, there is considerable variation among service areas in how community agencies are working together, with some having established effective community partnerships for transition planning.
- Some participants expressed the view that rural areas don't offer a range of services and don't have enough services, but others felt that small counties work better together because they are more aware of the individuals needing services in their communities
- Some participants expressed the notion that the maze of services is confusing even to them; it is even more overwhelming for youth who are expected to navigate it.
- Some participants believe that DHS staff at all levels, but especially supervisors, must be more visible in the community and involved in collaborations with community entities.
- Many participants suggested identifying a person (such as a CASA or community mentor) or agency to reach out to the youth at various intervals after the youth has left care. That person/agency could be assigned well before the youth ages out and the youth encouraged calling on that person for help, if needed.

Do minority youth experience unique challenges in transitioning?

- Overall, DHS staff did not identify specific challenges in transition for minority youth; more often they identified commonalities for all youth in care or described the challenges more in terms of class than of race/ethnicity.
- Some participants felt that African-American and Native American youth had the advantage at the time of transition in that their families and communities welcomed them back
- Some participants expressed a dearth of interpreters and services for non-English speaking youth, which made it quite problematic to work with non-English speaking youth
- Some supervisors believed that their workers lacked training and experience with minority groups
- Minority consumers and providers were vocal in identifying unique challenges that youth of color faced in transitioning out of care.
- Minority youth expressed not being able to talk about issues of racial or religious discrimination that they experienced with their caseworker
- Minority providers stated that cultural competence training and more minority staff at DHS are needed to more effectively serve youth of color
- Native American participants noted special challenges for youth who may need special assistance in establishing tribal membership and connections, for both financial and emotional support. Native youth may suffer from a loss of cultural identity and may need a re-introduction to their culture.
- Some respondents noted that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth struggle to find acceptance in foster homes, sometimes leading to running away and placement disruptions

Do youth transitioning from state care to adulthood have permanent connections?

- Participants acknowledged the importance of supports and permanent connections, and stated that many youth leaving care do not have positive connections.
- Many participants further acknowledged that youth for whom permanency is unresolved return to their biological families, and that youth would be better served if reestablishing connections was part of transition planning
- Where possible, consideration should be given to preserving connections to biological families, including siblings and extended families, through visitation and attendance at significant family events such as funerals.
- Some youth are able to maintain permanent connections with foster parents; other youth break connections as they approach 18 out of fear of the future
- Participants discussed different successes in pursuing non-traditional connections (with former teachers, ministers, etc.) and the need to think creatively in this area.
- Some participants discussed the potential use of family team meetings to engage youth in transition planning and to build permanent connections

Are there specific content areas that you would like to see included in a curriculum for transition planning?

- adolescent development and behaviors
- mental health issues and developmental disabilities
- preventing placement disruption and mitigating the effects of placement and adoption disruption
- strategies for reconnecting youth with families and/or significant adults in their lives
- cultural sensitivity training
- knowledge of services and policies for youth who are leaving care
- strategies for allowing kids to take risks and learn from them
- best practices in transition planning, including how to achieve an effective “handoff” to adult services
- tools for helping DHS staff track the transition planning process
- planning for youth transitioning from different settings—residential, group, foster care
- how to make the independent living assessment more usable
- engaging youth more in their own transition planning
- real life scenarios, including kids of different abilities--those headed for college and those need adult services and strategies for obtaining services
- how to work more effectively with the educational system
- working with foster parents in transition planning
- some electronic and/or web based resources with current information on services and policies
- developing volunteers as youth mentors

From these key findings, we propose a set of competencies for supervisors and caseworkers to serve as the basis for the training program. These competencies focus on improving practice with youth in transition by promoting stronger youth involvement, strengthening permanent connections into adulthood, understanding the youth’s cultural heritage and

incorporating this in transition planning, and strengthening collaboration among the various entities involved in transition planning.

Proposed Supervisor Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Transitioning Youth

1. Uses supervision and the supervisory relationship to promote positive youth development approach to work with youth/adolescents.
2. Coaches staff in the importance of and the skills necessary to support youth in identifying and sustaining permanent connections.
3. Advocates for/allocates resources which respect the diverse needs of youth.
4. Uses supervision to assure culturally competent practice with youth.
5. Ensures that DHS is an effective partner on the transition planning committee.
6. Develops and sustains collaborative community relationships (including foster parents and group care providers) that support youth in transition.
7. Coaches workers to incorporate knowledge of adolescent development, characteristics, behaviors, and social challenges into assessment and case planning.
8. Recognizes indicators of mental illness and developmental disabilities and provides consultation to workers
9. Supervises workers in implementing policy and programs relevant to adolescents in transition.

Proposed Caseworker Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Transitioning Youth

1. Involves and supports youth in an ongoing process to develop skills, resources, knowledge, and attributes that the youth defines as necessary for survival and success.
2. Supports youth in establishing relationships and maintaining permanent connections.
3. Understands the unique cultural self-identity of youth and incorporates this understanding into case planning.
4. Effectively collaborates with youth, the youth's support system and with community agencies in developing, implementing, and evaluating a transition plan.
5. Advocates for youth's needs with outside agencies (i.e., schools) as warranted.
6. Understands the factors that contribute to placement stability and implements strategies to achieve placement stability (including sensitive management of placement transitions).
7. Demonstrates knowledge of adolescent development, characteristics, behaviors, and social challenges through thoughtful assessment and case planning.
8. Recognizes indicators of mental illness and developmental disabilities and initiates evaluation and potential service planning.
9. Demonstrates current knowledge of policies and programs relevant to adolescents in transition.

Youth in Transition to Independent Living

Summary of Curricula

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Cultural Competence

Institution	Race	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	SES	Ability	LGBT	Spirit/Relig	Comments
Boston-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Focus placed on many areas of culture, including youth struggling with issues of sexuality and ways to be sensitive to their experiences as well as ethnicity, race, age, etc.
Denver*-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	“We to Me “ is a module on cultural competence identifying major cultures and several subcultures. “Cultural Mix” module teaches participants about the ways culture influences transitioning youth.
Fordam	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Cultural competence focuses on the use of “isms” (i.e., racism, ageism, sexism, etc.) in society and to raise consciousness and sensitivity to the “isms”.
Kansas*-N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Culture is not discussed. Age is mentioned as point in time when things should occur.
So. Maine	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Culture is only mentioned in terms of youth identity.
North Carolina*-N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Culture is not discussed in these terms. Curriculum looks at culture as a societal force not the make-up of the youth.
Oklahoma*-N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Cultural competence focuses on Native Americans with a special emphasis on embracing tribal traditions. Discusses elder-youth mentoring, but no age-specific issues.
San Diego*-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Cultural component in this training addresses all major issues from youth point of view (p. 47-58) in a Mezzo context.
San Francisco	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Includes competency training for LGBT populations. Module on challenging values on p. 85-89. Categorizes people into groups of “privilege” and “underprivileged” (p. 96-97).
SUNY*	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	No discussion of cultural competence in this training – brief look at sexuality and discovery.
E. Michigan-N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Cultural competence is sprinkled in a few places, but not a lot of heavy emphasis on training on these issues. They are included but specifically emphasized.
South Carolina-N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	This core element was not included at all.

Race/ Ethnicity: addresses bias related to race/ethnicity **and/or** how to work with youth of different backgrounds

SES: addresses differences in socio-economic issues

Age: addresses bias related to age

SES: trains on information regarding socio-economic status and biases in SES

LGBT: addresses issues youth are dealing with regarding sexuality

* = Power Point electronically available

Gender: addresses bias related to gender

Ability: addresses working with youth of varying ability/disability

Spirit/Relig: addresses issues related to spirituality and religion

N= Detailed notes are available

Permanency Connection

Institution	Current Support	Reconnect to Family	Connect to Foster Family	New Connections	Comments
Boston-N	Y	N	N	Y	These issues are briefly touched on, but more focus on positive social supports with less focus on long term permanent connection
Denver*-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Trains on minimizing negative connections while maximizing the positives and how to assess the quality of connections.
Fordham	Y	N	N	N	Very little is added in this training about creating and maintaining permanent connections
Kansas*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Builds upon relationship with worker and foster parents strongly but does discuss how to reconnect with biological family.
So. Maine-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Describes the importance of connectedness in maintaining sense of identity.
North Carolina*-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Session 7 deals with connections as positive youth development. Also Handout 2b discusses positive support relationships.
Oklahoma*-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	These are discussed in Section 5, "Four Core Principles," and integrated throughout other sections, but not a specific training module.
San Diego	Y	Y	Y	Y	On a Micro level, looks at supports on the personal, community and societal levels.
San Francisco	Y	Y	Y	N	Doesn't address permanency specifically. Connections are talked about and discussed, but no emphasis placed on how to use them or how to make connections.
SUNY*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Dedication of most of Module 3 to recruiting and sustaining support systems including pulling together LifePaks
E. Michigan-N	N	Y	Y	N	While Current Support and New Connections are touched on, it is not discussed within the umbrella concept of Permanency. Rather, support systems are generalized as part of developing the youths' positive self-identity.
South Carolina-N	Y	N	N	Y	Activity 2A focuses on violations of trust and how it affects youths' relationships with others.

Current Support: addresses the issue of what supports are currently in place to assist in youth transition

Reconnect to Family: addresses youth desire/plan to reconnect with biological family while transitioning to IL

Connect to Foster Family: addresses how youth can maintain connections with foster family while transitioning to IL

New Connections: addresses how to recruit and sustain new supports before/during/after transitioning to IL

* = Power Point electronically available

N= Detailed notes are available

Collaborations

Institution	Agency	Use of other youth	Community Involvement	Life Information	Safety Net	Policy	Comments
Boston-N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Looks at collaborations between worker and youth to help with the engagement and empowerment process
Denver*-N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	“Between Teens” is a module that identifies teens with special needs and uses case studies to engage participants in thinking about formal and informal resources and partnerships. Community involvement is limited to a directory of resources available to youth and their workers.
Fordham	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	These issues are sprinkled throughout, but no set focus on collaborations with others
Kansas	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Curriculum provides areas of collaboration, though this is not one of the stronger areas.
So. Maine-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Curriculum provides workers with ways to collaborate with youth and vice versa.
North Carolina*-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Session 7 builds on the importance of community partners and resources.
Oklahoma*-N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	“Assessing Community & Tribal Resources (p. 137-139): Explores formal (agency) and informal resources. Discusses ICWA policy at length.
San Diego	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Collaborative efforts are outlined mainly in p. 32-38 and video clips of youth’s views show how this training makes collaboration work well.
San Francisco	Y	Y	N	N	N	?	Content was developed cooperatively with foster youth and intended to be delivered by youth. Policy advocacy is addressed, but no specific policies are included in the content. Includes handouts that describe the services and eligibility criteria of local programs, such as WIC, Head Start, TANF, etc. (p. 109-114).
SUNY	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Use of Eco-Maps and positive examples of using youth as partners in the Youth Development approach in Modules 2 and 3
E. Michigan-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	The Chafee legislation has its own training section in Module 4. Page 4-9 of Module 4 trains on youths’ informal supports (collaborations).
South Carolina-N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Life information was limited to training on relationships, adolescent development, and nutrition.

Agency: addresses ways youth can collaborate within agency and with other agencies in the community

Life Information: addresses how to obtain pieces of information youth will need during and after a transition

Use of Other Youth: addresses ways youth can look to other youth for support and guidance for support

Safety Net: addresses ways youth can create a safety net among resources and important people in their lives for support

Community Involvement: addresses ways youth can become involved in their communities to help meet their needs during/after a transition

Policy: addresses ways state/federal government has changed due to advocacy **and/or** ways youth can promote policy change

* = Power Point electronically available

N= Detailed notes are available

Youth Development

Institution	Life Skills (i.e. budgeting, shopping)	Social Skills (i.e. relationship building)	Role-Plays	Advocacy	Attitude	Substance Abuse	Special Program Modules	Transition Planning	Engagement Strategies	Comments
Boston-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Uses DOMG framework to provide steps to guide thinking, planning and action toward a successful transition
Denver*-N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Social skills are taught in the Emotional Intelligence curriculum. Heavy focus on decision-making and managing risks.
Fordham	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	These functions are looked at in a general overview throughout, a very good Module on Adolescent Sexual Development
Kansas*	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Does not mention substance abuse. Mentions advocacy but does not provide skills.
So. Maine-N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	In terms of skills, focus was on communication skills of both youth and workers.
North Carolina*-N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Matrix is provided showing what youth need and strategies to achieve.
Oklahoma*-N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Uses “tangible” for Life Skills and “intangible” for Social Skills.
San Diego*-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Although lacking a focus on substance abuse issues, youth development issues are discussed throughout the training at all levels – Macro, Mezzo and Micro.
San Francisco	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Utilizes role-plays throughout the curriculum. Each module demonstrates unique engagement strategies, emphasizing “teachable moments”.
SUNY*	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Emphasis here is on Assessment of Needs (module 1), and using a strengths-based approach in working with high – risk youth.
E. Michigan-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Module 1 emphasizes how to build a relationship with youth and help them make relationships with others.
South Carolina-N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	None of the skills curriculum are fully developed. This element is weak.

Life Skills: addresses the hard or “tangible” skills youth should possess prior to emancipation (ex. budgeting, how to interview, how to buy healthy food, etc)

Social Skills: addresses soft or “intangible” skills youth need to possess prior to emancipation (ex. problem-solving skills, social skills, anger management, etc)

Role Plays: are role-plays offered to assist youth in understanding “real life” **and/or** are role-plays offered to help workers understand what transition is like for youth

Advocacy: addresses if the training promotes self-advocacy or advocacy for foster youth in a broader text

Attitude: discusses how to work with youth who are difficult to work with

Substance Abuse: the training addresses substance use/abuse issues

Transition Planning: describes a transition plan or how to create one

Special Program Modules: other issues that may be given special attention

Engagement Strategies: discusses how to encourage youth involvement in their own lives

* = Power Point electronically available

N= Detailed notes are available

Boston Curricula S.W. O. T. Analysis

Strengths: The training is broken down into ten nicely organized modules with clearly defined objectives and time lines. Modules 5 and 6 look at transitioning to independence and offers ideas to encourage youth engagement (i.e. DOMG in Module 6, p. 6). This training hits nicely on all four core principles and sprinkles in conversation boxes of “Youth’s Views” on varying topics (usually found in each training Module) while stressing the Positive Youth Development theory (focused on in Module 1, but found throughout regarding how all topics can be applied to PYD).

Weaknesses: Collaborations with community groups and services is not clearly defined, yet provides more of a focus on collaborations between the youth and their worker (Module 5, p. 10). Permanent connections are address regarding positive social connections and less to do with creating long-term relationships with helping adults with minimal attention to maintaining ties to foster families and biological families. This training also does not stress the “hard skills” needed for successful transitions. And although youth voices are sprinkled into the training, this training is facilitated by professionals.

Opportunities for ideas: This training brings back the ever-useful Eco-Map (Module 7, p. 9) to help youth look at current supports and where support may be lacking. The use of case vignettes (Module 6, p. 8-11 and Module 3) are helpful to practice training objectives in the moment, while using the Fish Bowl exercise (Module 7, p. 13-14) allows the opportunity to hear a variety of participant voices in a controlled manner.

Training Technique: Many positive training techniques are used here to reinforce the Boston model including those mentioned above, as well as large and small discussion groups in nearly all Modules, roles plays (Module 2, p.4), handouts, flipcharts and small group or individual activities, like the one in Module 2 (p.3) in helping participants recognize the multiple cultural memberships we possess to help us to better understand ourselves and to assist our youth in their transition journey.

Denver Curricula S.W. O. T. Analysis

Strengths: This curriculum identifies and utilizes existing resources from other organizations. They include ordering or bibliographical information to make it easier to obtain the same resources (i.e., videotapes). Each module contains handouts, powerpoints, and detailed trainer's notes. Unique to this curriculum is a module specifically for training professionals about youth who are differently-abled, but do not meet the disability criteria. Each module contains helpful role-plays, scenarios, and group activities.

Weaknesses: The curriculum does not include ideas for engaging youth in their transition planning, nor does it address attitudes and advocacy issues. Nearly all of the curriculum is focused on what social workers do, or behavior of social workers, in relation to how their actions may influence the youth they work with.

Opportunities for ideas: "We to Me" is designed to get participants to think about how culture influences youth learning independent skills. Knowledge tests accompany each module. The "Cultural Mix" module has several case scenarios and role-play skits. Section III of "Planning in Advance" module refers to using a video developed by Eastern Michigan University under the same grant (Section III, p. 2). Section IV of "Planning in Advance" module refers to a video about youth speaking on the loneliness of being emancipated without permanency and the importance of youth to have connections. The film was developed by the Casey Foundation and the state of Colorado (Section IV, p.2). A detailed description of how youth with special needs respond to help can be found on p. 9-13 of "Between Teens" module. "In our own Voices: Foster youth tell of life in care" video referred to in "Problems Solvers" module on p. 6. The video has 10 digital stories developed by foster youth, of which two are integrated into the curriculum. "What do we know about youth mental health and substance use" quiz about research findings is found on p. 3 of that module.

Training Technique: Handout I-a is a group activity to be used as an ice-breaker for introducing cultural competence. Handout I-e can be read as a skit for a large group activity to explore spirituality and religion as part of cultural competence. Handout I-g describes the stages of Cultural Sensitivity. Handout II-a trains on ethnographic interviewing in child welfare. "Planning in Advance" module trains on emotional intelligence (section II). Section IV of this module trains on connections. Substance abuse and mental health training is synthesized and included in the "Youth as Problem Solvers" module.

Fordham Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis¹

Strengths: Although this training is facilitated by professionals, it notes having had collaborative youth involvement to help create this training to represent the youth voice. In Box 1, #11 Fordham provides a great chart looking at adolescent development of physical, emotional, cognitive, social and moral as well as the tasks, attitudes and behaviors associated with that as well as the impact of foster care on this development. Also provided is an exercise to help us see that looks can be deceiving (Box 3, #3). Fordham offers a module on adolescent sexuality and sexual development which can be found in Box 2. In Box 4 we find some nice assessment tools and #6 outlines the S.M.A.R.T. goals for creating challenging but attainable personal goals for youth.

Weaknesses: Greater attention to organizing this training could have been useful as well as bringing a clearer focus to the cultural competency piece. Although cultural competence is mentioned and tended to, there is not a good deal of information there. Another struggle is with the lack of planning for permanent connections for greater support and well-being.

Opportunities for Training: The “Choosing Partners” exercise in Box 3, #3 is a great exercise to help you see where your own biases may lie and an activity entitled “Myth or Fact” in Box 2, #4 is a great exercise for youth to discover that some of what they have been told about sexual development and sexuality may not be as valid as they thought.

Training Techniques: The above mentioned activities are both challenging and interesting to add to any training. Many of the other techniques used in this training are handouts and blank worksheets (Box 4 #4) that help to reinforce the material as well as giving the participant tangible resources to take with them and use with youth as appropriate. Another positive training technique used is by turning a common game show into an exercise in reinforcement; Independent Living Jeopardy (Box 1 #15) is a great example of this.

¹ Note: This curricula is divided up into boxes and then numbered, so you will see notation to reference specific elements in Boxes 1, 2, 3 or 4 and then the number it is designated within that box. For example Box 1, #1 discusses worker competencies.

Kansas Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths: Curriculum tends to be heavily focused on policy affecting IL youth. Competencies for the training were developed by Kansas youth.

Weaknesses: Training presents many ideas but not enough strategies to achieve goals. Skills are discussed in the last sessions of the curriculum but without procedure. Collaboration is a strong area in this training but needs more detail. The trainer's manual does not provide much guidance.

Opportunities for ideas: Ideas would be to mention more of the skills to achieve the goals and competencies presented.

Training Techniques Techniques include lecture and video segments.

North Carolina Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths Positive youth development is a strong theme throughout training. Session 7 deals directly with youth development. A matrix is included outlining skills, health, employment support needs for youth and strategies to achieve. The curriculum is divided into 8 sessions, with each session containing facilitator notes, a list of materials needed, highlights and challenges of the session, and a list of key concepts. Each session is outlined and an appendix contains all the participant handouts and overheads. The materials have a substantial amount of depth.

Weaknesses Training seems to be too interactive at times without enough information being given to participants. Needs to be more specific on culture as defining the person not the societal actions.

Opportunities for ideas More discussion would be helpful. Curriculum presents great ideas but am unsure if everything is conveyed through the activities. The training sessions are listed on page 35 with an accompanying description of each session. They are as follows:

- Session 1: Personalizing Youth Work. This session introduces the concept of positive youth development.
- Session 2: Measuring Success. This session emphasizes how workers can use youth development outcomes successfully with youth in care.
- Session 3: Connection with Youth Culture. This session identify challenges, barriers, and opportunities for youth input and participation.
- Session 4: Seeing Me Through Your Eyes. This session presents approaches for increasing youth input and participation.
- Session 5: Opportunities for Positive Youth Development. This session promotes the application of workers' knowledge and skills for positive youth development.
- Session 6: Supports for Positive Youth Development. This session teaches participants three types of support that youth need for positive development, which are emotional, motivational and strategic.
- Session 7: Family and Community Connections for Positive Youth Development. This session promotes strategies for connecting youth with relationships and resources that promote their positive development.
- Session 8: Walking the Talk. This session reviews the knowledge and skills participants obtained through the training and how these will be applied to promote positive youth development.

Training Techniques: Video created by youth, discussion and activities with each session. A “positive youth development” activity is on page 7 of session one. It introduces the training and gets participants focused on why this training is important. Page 25 of session one has a handout listing the characteristics of supportive adults based on a survey of youth. Page 29 of session one is a handout that identifies youth development outcome areas. Each session has compiled step-by-step instructions for learning activities.

Maine Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths Advocacy session that described the need and provided strategies. The coaching session was also useful as another way to look at the supports youth need.

Weaknesses Skill-building was a weaker area. In the coaching session, the importance was placed upon communication skills. This left out many crucial skills needed by youth.

Opportunities for ideas Improving the weaker areas of training such as culture and skill-building would make this an important knowledge base for positive youth development among workers.

Training Techniques: Techniques include discussion, activities, video, and books.

Oklahoma Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths: Section 12, “Culturally Competent Teaching Strategies” (p. 86-91) focuses largely on how to engage youth in the training of life skills. The curriculum is laid out well and is very organized with a detailed trainer’s manual and a second, complimentary participants’ manual, which has several worksheets to engage trainees in active learning processes. They used very clear objectives in most sections and tied most sections to a defined competency.

Weaknesses: Advocacy is not clearly linked to training materials, nor is it linked to any of the competencies identified in the content. Its presence, though, can be found in pages 111-115. Permanency connections is addressed on a global “resources” aspect, rather than as establishing a permanent home post emancipation. Independence is emphasized as an investment in the community rather than establishing connections with individuals or creating a support network for future safety nets. They do, however, discuss the influences of past connections. Life information is very subtle and hidden in assessments and goal planning. Safety nets are mentioned, but not specifically trained.

Opportunities for ideas: A “tear-jerker” letter from a child in custody is found in the participant manual’s appendix, pages 76-77. The letter is useful in demonstrating what it might be like to transition out of care after a long period of foster care drift. The Module, “Four Phases of Life Path” (p. 80-85) is a great training idea to have participants explore culturally-related concepts in the life course of adolescents. The module, “Naturalistic Inquiry,” (p. 133-136) is a solid beginning step to help youth start thinking about setting goals. Entire sections are devoted to “Indian Child Welfare Act” and “Historic Distrust” (p. 56-66). This information can be useful to integrate into other curricula for inclusion of the Native American race in the development of cultural competence training.

Training Techniques: “Minefield” (p. 108-111) is a learning activity that uses role-plays and physical movement to simulate youth navigating the child welfare system. This would be a great activity to bring out barriers to local community services, language and cultural barriers, and other challenges associated with transitioning. Another similar group role-play is found on page 97. Several times throughout the training, the facilitator asks the participants to practice using tools (worksheets) in the manual during the training.

San Diego Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths: The training is structured by breaking down the issues into three major levels – Macro, Mezzo, and Micro levels. This plays well for coordinating all areas of need for youth in transition, looking at policy all the way down through making permanent connections for personal support. A wide array of need is covered, yet one does not feel overwhelmed by the broad spectrum due to positive organization. Two binders accompany this main training, one for the participant and one for the trainer. The trainer version has greater details on instructions for activities and also includes “Trainer Tips” for additional information or to help keep moving a discussion along if stuck, while the participant binder has all the needed resources to share with the youth with whom they work. A third binder helps guide participants through a simulation called “Teen Time” which helps workers “walk a day in the life” in another role. Although youth are not the main facilitators of this training, a youth panel is an optional activity and via video clips, a strong youth voice is present throughout the training.

Weaknesses: More attention could be given to the special issues such as substance abuse, mental health issues and obtaining more of the supports needed to obtain or maintain health in those areas.

Opportunities for Training: The use of the simulation “Teen Time” is a great way for workers to put themselves in different roles to help acknowledge how many different players the youth is juggling. The use of the video clips (present throughout the training) is a positive way to infuse a youth voice on varying issues. Another positive use of a case study is introduced to us (initially on page 64 of the trainer binder) and used throughout the training as a tool to look at adolescent development and assessment (p. 106 trainer binder) for examples.

Training Techniques: If possible to gather a youth panel and prepare them as San Diego did, this can prove to be a great strength for sending a strong message (p. 19 participant, p. 24 trainer), and again the video clips tell a story in youth’s own words as well. Revisiting one case study throughout the training helps to bring familiarity to the case as well as using different skills as one would with their own clients. This training keeps the participants involved by asking for volunteers for group discussions, role-plays (i.e. Teen Time) and reflections on their own work – helps to keep the group tuned in and eager to hear more. Finally, this training ends with a powerful exercise called, “Web of Support” (p. 113, trainer) where participants are in a circle and while stating what they commit to do for youth in care they pass around a ball of string or yarn, making a “web of support”.

San Francisco Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths: Chapter 3 describes the 10-step curriculum development process. A 4-step development process is illustrated on p. 31 with a helpful debriefing/evaluative worksheet. The curricula places a strong emphasis on attitudes and values reconstruction. Each unit uses active learning strategies to engage participants in the training and helps participants identify with the youth they serve and the discrimination issues the youth face.

Weaknesses: While the depth of the cultural competence is a strength, the curriculum is lacking in breadth. There is very little content about teaching policy issues, life skills, and establishing permanency. There is a heavy emphasis on getting participants to identify with what the youth have been through in the past, but little focus on how to help them plan for the future. Most content is past and present focused, and extremely limited in forethought and transitional planning. There is an “overkill” on creative teaching and teaching moments theme. This curriculum is lacking in substantive content on the issues youth face. For example, “Buying Time” skit (p. 50-54) seems to be an example of how social workers shut out their clients, but it’s not very useful for training supervisors unless you modify the skit to be an interaction between supervisor and supervisee—and then it’s not clear what the purpose of doing it is for.

Opportunities for ideas: Includes information on foster youth rights and a glossary of terms at the end of the manual. Samples of youth testimonials are found throughout the curriculum. “Foster Youth Testimonials” module (p. 55-62) addresses the effects of labeling youth. A module about story-telling is found on p. 63-67, which engages youth by using life experiences to create teachable moments. The entire curriculum seems to be based on a symbolic-interactionist approach. For example, “People Hunt” (p. 90-95) is a module created to develop awareness about the labeling and diagnostic process and its effects on youth.

Training Techniques: The communication skills module (p. 68-73) uses a learning activity called “Life™ Cereal Rebate Offer”. A module on attitudes impacting social work with youth uses a Treasure Hunt training technique (p. 115-118). “Super Social Worker” module (p.119-121) involves a learning activity where workers diagram their qualities as social workers on a self-portrait. “Recognizing Resources” includes a tool that makes learning about community resources a game (p. 106-107). “Milestones” is a survey tool identifying the transitioning youths’ milestones combining a visual and narrative technique (p. 77-78). “What Comes to Mind” is a learning activity asking participants to reflect on stereotypes through word and thought association (p. 140-142). “Taboo” is a module that exposes social workers to the challenges of gay foster youth (p. 131-139). Digital storytelling is taught using “mind maps” while viewing video clips (p. 43-47).

SUNY Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis²

Strengths: This training is broken down into 3 well-organized Modules of Power Point slides with explicit steps for introducing the material and has all of the handouts and worksheets available as attachments. A strong focus is on the needs of high-risk youth, using Strengths-Based (Module 1, slide 25) and Youth Development (Module 1, slide 45) approaches for effectively working with youth. Module 2 looks at Substance Abuse and Prochaska's Stages of Change (Module 2, slide 18, plus handouts) which is a great assessment tool when looking at a youth's readiness to change certain behaviors. Module 3 focuses on recruiting and sustaining supports for high risk youth and possible reasons why youth may be resistant and how to work with them in overcoming a fear of connections (Module 3, slides 7-12), while creating contingency plans and safety nets (Module 3, slides 23-31).

Weaknesses: This training lacks any focus on cultural competence and does not provide any of the hard/life skills needed for a positive transition into independent living – unless one decides to use the LifePak in this regard, but specifics are not given here. This training appears to be lacking in teaching “real life” skills youth will need to have to transition to life on their own. The overall focus on this training is how to best support youth *while still in care*; little attention is given to the actual time of transition and transition readiness.

Opportunities for Training: One activity seemed to stand above the rest. In Module 3, slide 32 participants completed a resource activity; dividing up the group into 4 and putting paper around the room with different needs (ex. mental health, substance abuse, sexuality, violence – or other pertinent needs) and the participants create a resource list that can later be helpful to youth as well as their workers – a collaborative effort in discovering resources in the area. Another great idea to help participants know what it feels like to move from different foster families and even from foster care into independent living is an activity called “Independent Living Human Machine” (Module 1, slide 17).

Training Techniques: SUNY offers a pre- and post-test as a way for both participants and trainers to assess the effectiveness of the training in terms of gaining knowledge, but this is an optional inclusion. Many worksheets and handouts can be found in the attachment for each module as well as activities like those mentioned above. A “Reframing” activity (Module 1, slide 30) looks at taking statements or phrases we might use and, with a partner, make those statements more neutral or positive. They use a case example and have the trainers perform a skit with a review (Module 2, slide 19). Use of Eco-Maps (Module 3, slide 5, 6), safety net and a Minefield exercise (Module 3, slide 29) where one participate acts as a youth trying to make their way to self-sufficiency while dealing with obstacles along the way. Finally, use of the LifePaks that youth take the lead in creating and have something tangible to take with them upon aging out.

² Note: This training is divided into Modules according to the Power Point, so rather than referencing page numbers, this will refer to the module and the power point slide where you can find additional information.

South Carolina Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths: The curriculum includes the grant's methodology section and a needs assessment of adolescents for independent living. The curriculum places a heavy emphasis on learning about group dynamics and group leadership. For example, page 4:2 uses a physical activity to teach about how groups form and how group leadership naturally emerges. *First Voice* trains on three levels: 1) Leading, which is a module used to train supervisors of case workers on their roles with transitioning youth; 2) Listening, which is a module that trains case workers on how to work with transitioning youth; and 3) Learning Together, which is a module that utilizes group practice with young adolescents in developing skills before reaching the age of having to develop a transition plan. An explanation of these three levels is available on page H1:3.

Weaknesses: This curriculum is still draft form. The most recent copy obtained was dated March 22, 2004 and was stamped with "draft" and had hand-written notes throughout the contents. It is unorganized and appears to be somewhat "thrown" together. It does not include anything on cultural competence and it is very weak in the youth development elements. The manual provides a lot of information about training notes for facilitators, but very little information about the content to train on.

Opportunities for ideas: A list of on-line resources is included in the curriculum. However, when checked on-line, the website links no longer worked or the resources referred to were no longer available. They use a concept of "Power To" versus "Power Over" to train supervisors.

Training Techniques: The curriculum requires advanced reading of some materials. A list of all the materials needed to train with are included in each module. Page H:1-2 teaches participants how to use the Ansell-Casey assessment tool and includes an FAQ to assist with being able to answer workers' questions. This is one of the few curricula that provides training on adolescent stages of development. They included a table of the stages on page H3:1.

Eastern Michigan Curricula S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths: The training manual is very organized. Modules are clearly labeled. Each module includes a separate table of contents for each section, and begins with a description of their approach to curriculum and training tips. Specific goals of the entire curriculum are on p. ii. The manual includes four DVD's for the video clips described and included in the training curriculum. Uniquely, this curriculum provides thorough information on how to train workers to think in terms of building youths' positive self-image.

Weaknesses: While the curriculum is strong in collaborations and building community, it does not clearly link these efforts to creating a safety net, providing life information to youth, or teaching hard skills to youth. Furthermore, the modules lack breadth and depth in addressing the core requirements for cultural competency and permanency.

Opportunities for ideas: Each module begins with a cover sheet identifying the goal for that module and the specific competencies. Module 2 trains on how to help youth build a positive self-identity, emphasizing a strengths-based approach. This module uses the sociological concept of *reference groups* to talk about how youth construct their worldview. Module 3 opens with a discussion of "transitional responding" as a method of using exploratory skills by workers to stimulate youths' deeper levels of thinking about situations. Module 4 is strong in teaching soft skills to youth. Module 6 focuses on hard skills and provides a number of useful handouts.

Training Techniques: DVD clip 1.1 presents adolescents talking about the challenges and rewards of their relationships with their social workers. The clip, "Tuning In", is a former foster youth talking about his experience. "Identity Assessment" on page 17 of Module 2 and "Strengths/Challenges Tracking Sheet" on page 18 of Module 2 are two handouts that were constructed to help train on positive self-discovery of youth using a strengths-based approach. Module 3 includes a section on "Spheres of Control" and "Types of Power", p. 9-11; handout on p. 20. Module 4 contains a "Negotiating the System Simulation", p. 4-6. Each position in the role-play has an instruction sheet in the Module. "Making a Successful Referral" training can be found in Module 4, p. 14. An accompanying handout is on p. 23. "Youth Tool Kit-The Goal Checklist" on p. 14 of Module 6 breaks down specific goals in 6 domains adolescents need to achieve success in order to experience a successful transition.

RUNNING HEAD: IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

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Conceptual Base

The needs of older youth, especially those who are transitioning from foster care to independence and adulthood, are only recently being seriously addressed by child welfare services. This is in response to startling statistics on the number of youth who age out of foster care; more than 26,000 youth exited foster care in 2006 through “emancipation” (U.S.DHHS, 2008). The child welfare system has long focused its limited resources both on the “front end” (child protective assessment/investigation) as well as on the youngest and seemingly most vulnerable children. However, there is ample evidence to suggest that youth who enter adulthood by aging out of child welfare services are equally vulnerable, though in different ways. Relative to their peers who grow up in stable homes, youth who age out of foster care are disadvantaged economically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

The myriad of issues facing youth who “age out” of foster care are often portrayed in grim terms. We know that these youth are usually financially destitute and with limited human capital in terms of employment skills, or educational attainment (Blome, 1996), and are usually without safe and/or stable housing (Courtney et al, 2001). Because most of these youth did not have permanency resolution, they often lack positive support from family and peers, even though many return to their families-of-origin in which the youth experienced maltreatment. We also know that many older youth in care have been identified with special medical, emotional, behavioral, and developmental issues (Wattenberg et al., 2001). A higher proportion of youth from the foster care population compared to the general population become involved in the criminal justice system (Courtney et al., 2001) and they are more likely than their peers to experience pregnancy and parenting at young ages (Nollan et al., 2000). Furthermore older

youth in care are disproportionately members of racial and ethnic minorities (Adler, 2001; Kemp & Bodony, 2000; Davis, 1992; Curtis & Denby, 2004), and may face additional problems due to discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas.

As part of the Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago's Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, relatively current data are available on former foster youth in Iowa. The picture that is presented is a profile of youth who have experienced child maltreatment, often of multiple types, youth who have experienced multiple placements and re-entries into care, as well as histories of running away from placements (Chapin Hall Center for Children, 2005). This study also documents a higher propensity for experiencing grade retention, suspension, and expulsion from school, involvement with the juvenile justice system, being a victim of violence, and needing mental health services among older youth in care. Yet interviews conducted with these youth suggest a remarkable level of satisfaction with their care and with their relationships with family members, both foster and biological, as well as fairly strong levels of social support. Ninety-percent of former foster youth interviewed reported being optimistic about the future (Chapin Hall Center for Children, 2005).

If one looks at older youth in care solely from a problem-focused perspective, it soon becomes overwhelming. While not denying that youth aging out of foster care face many hurdles to economic, social, and emotional well-being, a positive youth development approach that recognizes the strengths and capacities of each youth in the context of cultural factors and needs, that seeks to build permanent connections and supports with and for the youth, and that engages a larger community as collaborative partners, offers a path to a more promising future than leaving the youth on his or her own at the legal age of 18.

The needs of older youth in care were recognized in the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, and now long overdue efforts are underway at federal and state levels to address the unique needs of older youth in transition. For the past three years, the University of Iowa School of Social Work (UI) and the Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS) have been collaborating on a federally funded grant to improve outcomes for youth in transition from foster care to adulthood through training of public child welfare supervisors, workers, and community partners. The purpose of this article is to describe the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating this statewide training effort.

Our project was based on the key assumption that supervision is a specific area of practice with its own skill sets. Therefore supervisor training should include both the content in the core principles of transition planning as well as the skills for supervising caseworkers in the work of transition planning. As coaches, teachers, and mentors for their staff, public child welfare supervisors must themselves understand the needs of youth in transition, successful strategies for engaging youth from a positive youth development framework, the importance of permanent connections, and evidence-based interventions with older youth. Supervisors must also learn and model culturally competent practice, as well as practice that involves collaboration with the multitude of individuals and community entities that work with older youth both formally and informally.

We conceptualized this project as a multi-level training, beginning with building knowledge and skills for supervisors, then moving to the next step of training caseworkers, with supervisors as co-facilitators. Iowa's public child welfare workforce is small, with approximately 115 supervisors and 750 caseworkers statewide. Training at both levels had the advantage of providing consistent content, and including supervisors as co-facilitators would

help to reinforce their roles as coaches and mentors. There are also ten transitional planning specialists around the state; these individuals, as well as the state's transition planning program manager, were heavily involved in developing and implementing the training.

Originally we had intended to conclude the project with a statewide training to which a variety of providers agencies would be invited. However, during the course of implementation we realized that many of the complexities around transition planning have to do with local systems. Therefore, we reconfigured the statewide roll-out as a series of localized events. Instead of one statewide training we implemented a community day in each of the state's eight service areas. Supervisors and mid-managers in each service area shaped the format and content of that community day, based on local needs. Throughout the development and implementation of this project we have also kept the core principles for transition planning, positive youth development, cultural competence, collaboration, and permanent connections, at the forefront. These principles are discussed further under training content.

Curriculum Development

At the time we began this project, UI and IDHS had been developing and implementing a statewide training program for Iowa's supervisors and mid-managers as part of a federal grant on improving recruitment and retention in public child welfare. The focus on supervision was based on a substantial body of research demonstrating the importance of supervision and supervisory support in promoting job satisfaction and retention of child welfare employees (Curry, D., McCarragher, T., & Dellmann-Jenkins, M., 2005; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Landsman, 2001; Mor Barak, Levin, Nissly, & Lane, 2006; Rycraft, 1994). The multi-phased supervisory curriculum was designed to engage supervisors at all career stages in honing skills as reflective practitioners in organizational leadership and supervision. We envisioned the transition project

as complementary to the work in progress, permitting a special focus on developing supervisory skills in this content area.

The supervisory curriculum provides theoretical foundation, concrete application, and emphasis on the improvement of client outcomes through enhanced organizational effectiveness. Material is presented in the context of a comprehensive model of child welfare supervision, acknowledging the various roles of the supervisor in the unit (administration, education, consultation, counseling and evaluation), the contextual factors influencing supervision (e.g., law, policy, economic conditions, and political realities), and the role of the supervisor in the organization (advocating for resources for staff and clients, negotiating relationships with community providers, and responding to client and community concerns).

Our approach to curriculum development is based on sound principles of adult learning, emphasizing practical application of useful concepts and best practices, using case-based applications and providing adequate time for collegial interaction. The training integrates measurable outcomes and learning objectives and supports the IDHS practice model and redesign initiatives. Supervisors are provided tools for self-assessment of their own supervisory behaviors as well as detailed task analyses of worker competencies which can help them develop individual and unit plans with their staff. We have also developed easy to use resources to share with staff and provide supplemental reference materials and web-based resources for use in direct on-the-job application.

Curriculum development occurred through a process of gathering information and collaborating with a variety of stakeholders. At the beginning of the project we convened an advisory committee, which has continued to meet and provide feedback on a monthly basis over the three years. The advisory committee encompasses the IDHS training committee which

oversees all child welfare training for the state. We added two transition planning specialists and two project consultants who work with Iowa's youth initiatives to this committee. Combining our project advisory committee with the state's child welfare training committee helped to ensure that our training would be consistent with and supportive of other IDHS initiatives.

In preparation for developing supervisor training that would be responsive to Iowa's needs, we conducted a series of focus groups in each of the eight service areas around the state with IDHS supervisors, seeking input from as many supervisors as possible. In addition, we conducted focus groups with caseworkers in rural and urban areas, with a small group of IDHS social workers called transition planning specialists, with youth who had recently aged out of foster care, with Native American families, with and providers of aftercare services for youth in care. We also conducted interviews with key informants representing foster parents, public health, IDHS administration, advocacy organizations, and organizations serving primarily minority youth and families.

In addition to gathering information through focus groups and interviews, we conducted a systematic review and analysis of the content of the twelve independent living curricula for caseworkers developed by Children's Bureau grantees. This activity was accomplished in collaboration with the University of Louisville. A matrix summarizing key elements of each curricula, organized according to the four core principles of transition planning, was used in specifying competencies for supervisors and caseworkers and in curriculum development.

Information from the focus groups, interviews, and review of independent living curricula were all used to inform the development of competencies for supervisors and a complementary set of competencies for caseworkers. We shared these with the project advisory committee and revised them in accordance with feedback. The competencies, used in guiding

curriculum development, focus on improving practice with youth in transition by promoting stronger youth involvement in case planning and decision-making; engaging a youth-centered team for strengthening the youth's permanent social or family-like connections and providing support for life skill development; approaching the youth's preparation for adulthood from a positive youth development perspective; understanding the youth's cultural heritage and incorporating this in transition planning; strengthening collaboration among the various entities involved in transition planning and support; and addressing the complex needs of youth.

Our multiple information gathering activities enabled us to better focus the content and approach of the training curriculum while attending to the original goal of addressing the four core substantive areas. For example, while we proposed a round of supervisor-to-worker trainings, the widespread concern about the need for better community collaboration led us to develop a regional approach and to include community partners in the second day of regional training. Another example of how the training was informed by the focus group research is the inclusion of youth voices throughout the curriculum. Two young adults, one who had aged out of foster care and another who was adopted as a teen, serve as curriculum advisors; one of these advisors attends each training session as a resource and co-facilitator. Youth panelists from the statewide foster care youth group called *Elevate* present their perspectives at the closing session of each training. Throughout the two-day training, youth perspectives are presented through multi-media such as video, photography and quotes from the youth focus groups which appear on PowerPoint. *Elevate* staff and participants developed a music video for the section on permanent connections, presenting their songs and poetry about dislocation and multiple moves, fear of attaching to a new family, grief over the loss of sibling connections and hope for reconnection and success (Elevate, 2007).

In implementing the training, we divided the supervisors into four groups, mixed geographically in order to provide opportunities to meet with others across the state. The training was provided in two-day sessions in Des Moines, the most central location. The first training also served as a pilot, with revisions made according to consumer and trainer feedback.

Curriculum development for regional trainings. Following training of supervisors, we turned our attention to the caseworker and community trainings to be held in each service area. Due to variation across service areas in how community agencies were working together, and because we wanted to create opportunities for IDHS supervisors to take visible leadership roles, we decided to offer community trainings in each of the eight service areas and involve supervisors in planning and hosting the events. To maximize efficiency, the community training was scheduled the day after the worker training at the same location whenever possible.

Planning for the caseworker and community trainings began on the second day of each of the four statewide supervisor trainings. Supervisors from the same service area worked in teams to complete a planning questionnaire for the community rollout, recommending goals for the community day, suggesting topics for training and facilitated discussion, and drafting a suggested invitation list. Supervisors were also invited to volunteer for a planning committee if they so desired. After completion of the statewide supervisor trainings, we compiled results for each service area and contacted the eight service area managers (top regional administrators) asking them to appoint a planning committee. Our suggestion was the each committee include one social work administrator (supervisor of front line supervisors), the IDHS community liaison, the transition planning specialist, and some or all of the supervisor volunteers. Our recommendations were accepted, and some service area managers chose to add to the basic

committee a decategorization coordinator, a juvenile court officer, and/or facilitators of the local Elevate (foster youth) chapter.

The UI team of co-trainers and a consultant hired to manage coordination for the rollouts, travelled to each service area and met with the eight planning teams, reviewing recommendations made by the supervisors and discussing the best way to approach the community rollout.

Questions guiding the discussion included: 1) Where is your service area currently in terms of community collaboration to improve outcomes for youth in transition?; 2) Where do you want to be a year from now? What are your priorities?; 3) How could training and/or facilitation resources help?; 4) Who do you need to have at the community day to make that happen?; 5) What would constitute success for a day of training?; 6) What kind of preparation would need to be done to facilitate a successful day?; and 7) How should youth be involved in the day?

We offered the committees options about the length of the training day (which usually depended on the target audience and travel times), the relative proportion of the day to be spent on training and facilitated discussion, and the number of topics to be addressed. Each planning committee was responsible for managing invitations and replies. All eight areas invited the representatives of their legislatively created transition review committees, and all eight areas are also invited a panel of former foster youth to talk about what has made a difference to them in their own transitions. Most service areas included providers under contract to IDHS to provide transition services. Three service areas invited judges, attorneys and juvenile court officers, and one area reached out to voluntary organizations such as the Salvation Army and local church congregations. Educators and visiting nurse associations were also on many invitation lists. The content of the community training is discussed further later in this article.

A similar planning process was used for the worker training. We asked supervisors to review the content of their two-day training and recommend which topics would be most useful

for a one-day worker training. While engaging all of the supervisors in this initial process, we emphasized the importance of their role in coaching and reinforcing best practice. When we met with the regional planning committees, we proposed a full day training, but offered some options about the relative emphasis on training topics and offered some workshop options to allow for worker choice. We also gave the committees the choice about whether to involve child protective assessment workers in the training; all decided not to include the assessors but one committee asked that we work with them to create a half day training for assessors. The committees were very engaged in thinking about how best to use the day. All of the committees decided to include a youth panel.

Training Content

The supervisor training is delivered in two full consecutive days of training. We begin with a review of the model of supervision that we had developed through the Recruitment and Retention project, showing where the transition training fit into the larger structure of supervision practice. We then present to the supervisors what we had learned our focus groups, key informant interviews, and recent research from national data and Iowa's population of youth aging out of care. This information is used to "make the case" for improving the quality of service to older youth in the child welfare system.

Key Youth in Transition Curriculum Concepts for Supervisors. Start Early. Though Iowa law does not mandate transition planning until the youth's sixteenth birthday, our training emphasized that youth participation in case planning should begin much earlier. Formal tools for assessing a young person's life skills, such as the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment, can be used with youth beginning at age 14. Giving youth choices, treating them as resources and partners for generating solutions to problems, assuring their attendance at court hearings, and

informing youth about their family's progress are elements of youth participation which can be implemented for younger youth in care, and certainly for preteens and teens. Youth who have had every important decision made for them by a government agency without their participation are ill-equipped to face the challenges of adulthood.

Incorporating Positive Youth Development into Supervision and Case Planning. Positive youth development (PYD) approaches focus on the *whole child* and highlight the achievement of developmental tasks, concentrating on interactions with family, school, neighborhood, societal, and cultural contexts (Catalano et al., 2002). PYD stems from positive psychology, which focuses on the development of positive qualities in youth such as competence, optimism, compassion, and other strengths. Positive psychology downplays the notion that youth misbehave because they are in some way damaged, or defective, and in need of repair, while focusing attention on responses to the absence of contentment, common sense, and other positive qualities of healthy child development (Kelley, 2003).

A core tenet in PYD is that young people are the primary agents in their own developmental process seeking ways to meet their basic physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs and to build competencies and connections they perceive as necessary for survival and success. (AED/Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996) The PYD approach sees youth as resources rather than problems. All youth have talents, energies, strengths and constructive interests that can be used to facilitate their acquisition of competence and the capacity to contribute to the world (Damon, 2004).

The second tenet of PYD is that the role of youth helpers (e.g., other people, organizations, and institutions) is to promote positive development through providing opportunities and supports. The typical inclination of caregivers and educators is to do things

“to” and “for” youth rather than “with” them. The insight of positive youth development (PYD) is that young people thrive when adults listen to them, respect them, and engage with them in meaningful investments in the community (Nicholson, Collins, and Holmer, 2004).

A significant challenge to incorporating the positive youth development approach in public child welfare practice is transforming a traditionally problem-focused system into one that is built on recognizing and working from strengths. While “strength-based” language is now pervasive in child welfare, this approach is not always evident in practice. Child welfare workers are accustomed to viewing older youth in care as burdened with problems, whether a result of lengthy placement histories, years of maltreatment, behavioral and emotional problems, inability to be adopted or placement instability. A positive youth development approach requires a profound change in the way that older youth are viewed and in intervention strategies to help youth become successful.

In training, supervisors make the connection between the child welfare field’s focus of safety, permanency and well-being and the twelve desired outcomes in positive youth development: physical health, mental health, intellectual ability, employability, civic, social and cultural ability, safety, self worth, belonging/membership, responsibility/autonomy, mastery, and spirituality/self awareness (AED/Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996).

Supervisors consider how they, with their workers, can help youth in care to access necessary opportunities for positive development – opportunities for expression and creativity, group membership, part-time paid employment, contribution and service and exploration, practice and reflection. Supervisors discuss how best to assure that youth in care have relationships with adults that will provide high expectations, standards and boundaries, nurturance and friendship, connections to important resources, and strategic support -- assistance

in planning and assessing their options, motivating, and coaching. The role of the caseworker is carefully considered – how the worker approaches interactions with the youth, using an adaptation of Lofquist and Miller’s (1989) Object/Recipient/Resource framework: what kinds of direct support workers can provide, and how workers can recruit others to engage with the youth. The opportunity to share perspectives with other supervisors has proven especially helpful. During one training session a supervisor stated “when making case transfers, I give top priority to maintaining older youths’ relationships with their worker.”

Promote Culturally Responsive Practice with Older Youth in Care. In a two-day training it is impossible to adequately address all of the cultural issues for foster youth. We decided to frame the inquiry in terms of the adolescent’s development of social and cultural identity, with the added challenge that youth in out of home care must often undertake this task apart from their families, cultures and communities. To stimulate conversation, we view two videos, *Knowing Who You Are* (Casey Family Programs, 2005) and vignettes from *Breaking the Silence: LGBTQ Foster Youth Tell Their Stories* (National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2005). Supervisors draw lessons from the videos, primarily about the importance of their workers listening to and engaging youth in conversations about culture and identity. Supervisors discuss strategies for increasing their workers’ cultural competence and ways to find mentors and other cultural opportunities for youth of color. They consider ways to assure that LGBTQ youth feel safe to disclose to the agency their sexual orientation, gender identity and problems with victimization such as harassment or bullying at school. We also examine family-centered approaches to working with those who have rejected youth based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Build and Sustain Permanent Connections. Research has documented the tendency for youth who age out of care without achieving permanency to return to their families of origin

(Courtney & Barth, 1996; Landsman et al., 1999; Mallon, 1998; McMillen & Tucker, 1999; Westat, 1991). For older youth who are unable to be reunified with their own families and who have not achieved another permanent home through adoption or guardianship, child welfare has begun to expand its definition of permanency to include “relational” permanency, that is, helping youth establish “enduring family relationships that provide for physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual well-being” (Frey et al, 2005). “Permanent connections” are those with whom the youth has some emotional attachment -- birth family, extended family, kin, foster family, mentors, etc. -- and who can be expected to provide lifelong support. Establishing permanent connections is key to helping youth sustain support systems as they enter adulthood.

Best practice points to blending the goals of exploring permanency and helping the young person develop life skills using a youth-centered team. Where older youth are concerned, the youth-centered approach places the youth at the helm of planning for her/his future, with support from family, kin, and other individuals who play a key role in the youth’s life. For older youth who are approaching adulthood without having had permanency resolution, supporting their capacity for self-determination is critical for their successful transition. The youth-centered team composed of the youth, the worker, and the significant adults in the youth’s life, meets regularly to “explore and support the highest level of commitment that each adult can make as a permanent parent or extended family member” and to develop a comprehensive case plan that addresses the youth’s current needs and future hopes and plans (Frey et al., 2007). The youth’s needs for permanent connections and to acquire life skills are integrated by recruiting adults in the youth’s social network to support the youth in skill development (e.g., , teaching the youth to drive or cook) and to offer various forms of material, emotional and strategic support for the attainment of the youth’s goals (e.g., career exploration, college applications). (Frey et al., 2007).

Training activities around youth permanency include using materials to build “models” of permanency and the introduction of a variety of tools to assist workers in talking with youth about permanency and identifying potential permanent connections. Small group work with brief case scenarios give supervisors an opportunity to consider the potential utility of these tools in practice.

Youth permanency is a multifaceted construct which includes legal status, stability and appropriateness of the youth’s placement setting, connectedness to family and significant others, and the youth’s emotional wellbeing (Landsman et al, 1999). The curriculum presents research and best practice for maintaining placement stability, including providing more intensive support (e.g., worker visits, therapeutic support) for the youth and foster parents in the youth’s first six months of placement.

Develop Community Collaboration for Youth in Transition. The literature on interagency collaboration identifies a set of characteristic dimensions: stakeholder involvement, shared goals, responsibilities, rewards, resources, authority/decision-making, evaluation, structures, and vision/values (Austin, 1997; Urwin & Haynes, 1998; Walter & Petr, 2000). Each of these dimensions serves to strengthen the structure and the common purpose behind it. Shared vision and values, in particular, are believed to be crucial to successful interagency collaboration (Bailey & Koney, 1996; Harbert, Finnegan & Tyler, 1997; Morgan, 1995). Walter and Petr (2000) describe shared values as the core of the interagency collaboration. These shared values become the guiding force for the collaborative and the basis for the activities that are undertaken. Our training involves guest panelists representing both the public child welfare agency and community-based agencies in rural and urban settings, with a focus on what is working well and the role of the public agency in improving collaboration. The panel presentation leads to a

discussion among the supervisors about strategies for strengthening existing structures for collaboration, including legally mandated transition plan review teams and Iowa DHS community partnership initiatives. The supervisors work in small groups to share ideas on common challenges in their local collaborative efforts, such as building a shared vision and making their collaborations more culturally diverse.

Content of regional trainings. Most of the service areas identified a specific focus for their community day. For some it has been increasing community and provider participation in youth centered team meetings. For others it is communicating to their community partners how IDHS is working to meet its responsibilities to transitioning youth, combined with an invitation for closer collaboration. For the service area focusing on voluntary organizations, the goal is to educate those organizations on the resources available to youth who age out. At each community training, we have provided data presentations on outcomes of concern for area youth in transition.

During the development of the supervisory curriculum we had worked with two creative transition planning specialists who developed tools to help workers track the transition planning process, understand the available resources for transitioning youth and how to access them. We had also developed a presentation and materials on how to make better use of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment in transition planning. The local planning committees felt it was very important to give their local transition planning specialists the opportunity to be seen as leaders and experts in their regions. In response, we met with the transition planning specialists, invited them to present and reviewed our materials. The result was another transition planning specialist creating an even richer presentation which was used by his peers. Participants rated the resource presentation among the most useful portions of the training content. The

process of each transitional planning specialist “owning” the work was an important benefit of the regional approach.

We felt that the presence of supervisors at the community training was a critical component, so we worked very hard to secure their attendance and to offer them visible roles during the day, including welcoming participants, offering introductory remarks, and leading table discussions. The interactive nature of the day allowed for supervisors to show their leadership through skillful discussion of the topics.

A variety of training methods were used, including short PowerPoint presentations, large group and small group discussions, and videos. A key goal was infusing the training with the voices of youth, which we did in a variety of ways, including presentations by youth, incorporating comments from the focus groups with youth into the presentations and training manual, and using a variety of videos, including a music video created by Elevate specifically for our training.

Most of the planning committees asked that we save time at the end of the day for community attendees to make “commitments” about how what they intended to implement in their individual practice and what they intended to take back to share with their agencies. Those commitments were memorialized in a variety of ways. In one area, the workers in their training the previous day created paper dolls signifying a youth in care with whom they were working. The dolls were on display at the community training, and community participants were asked to write their commitments on paper umbrellas which were then attached to the hands of the paper youth. This idea was generated by the local planning team.

Content of worker training. Caseworker training was provided in a one-day session in each of the eight service areas, and focused on the four core content areas. Workers were asked to bring information about one older youth to the training, to help make the content more relevant for them. One particularly useful part of the training included introducing a variety of tools for identifying permanent connections. Workers had opportunities to review each tool and

to talk with each other and with their supervisor about how they might apply these tools in practice.

We knew from the focus groups that we needed to address the challenges of transitioning special needs youth into the adult mental health system; because of a wide variation in practice across the state we decided to accomplish this at the regional level. We recruited the two IDHS staff who work with the county Central Point of Coordination (CPC) staff to transition youth into adult services. They offered a 75 minute workshop on the process, and invited local county CPCs to join them in the presentation. This was a great plan, as it engaged these individuals in the community day and encouraged them to make public commitments to collaborate. Several CPCs participated in the entire community day.

A key component of the grant is strengthening the supervisors' role in training their workers. We approached this in several different ways. First, we created a set of supervisory tools for the supervisors to use in their administrative, education, consultative and evaluative functions. Second, we gathered a variety of training resources for supervisors to use in unit meetings. Third, we recruited supervisors as hosts for the worker training, to sit with their teams during the training, and to facilitate table discussions. We provided the supervisors with prepared discussion questions for the cultural competence portion of the training. We also provided the workers with a set of practice tools in their participant's manual.

By engaging the supervisors in planning and implementing their workers' training experience, and providing their workers with an introduction to best practices, we have supported and empowered the supervisors to lead their teams to improve outcomes for youth in transition. The trainers noted informally that workers appeared much more engaged in the training when their supervisors modeled that engagement and enthusiasm.

Barriers and Facilitators

One of the challenges to our project has been implementing a statewide training that also takes into consideration the differences by locality. Iowa's 99 counties are organized into eight service areas, and some of these service areas are predominantly urban or rural. There are often vast discrepancies in resources and services available in rural counties compared to urban areas, a fact that we had to keep in mind as we developed the curriculum. In addition, supervisors in rural areas typically supervise multiple counties, thus having less face-to-face supervision time. Finally, some areas were already further along in thinking about transition planning than others, and we had to find ways to capture the best of current practices while remaining sensitive to the variation across the state in the area of transition planning.

Another significant challenge to implementing our project has been the almost continual changes that have occurred within IDHS during the same three-year period. In implementing a new Model of Child Welfare Practice, IDHS had renegotiated its contractual services, which also affected the way that supervisors and caseworkers were viewing their own jobs. Our training team had to stay on top of these changes to make sure that the training was consistent with "current" practice. Having the IDHS training committee as our advisory committee was helpful in this regard, alerting us to imminent changes.

Our project has benefitted from some facilitative factors as well. One such factor is that Iowa's foster youth group, *Elevate*, was available to work as part of our team and to assist with our training efforts, including our regional trainings around the state. Having a youth presence at the trainings was very important to maintaining the primacy of the positive youth development framework.

In addition, we have observed that over the three years of this project, considerably more attention is being paid to the population of older youth in care. When we began this effort, it was sometimes a struggle to engage training participants in addressing the needs of this population. However, over time more resources and initiatives addressing the needs of older youth have been developed, and CFSR outcomes will now be addressing older youth. These factors have reduced our need to “sell” the importance of transition planning for youth aging out of foster care, as we had to do early on. Of course, we like to think that our efforts have played a role in bringing this increased focus on youth aging out of foster care.

The fact that we had already developed a collaborative relationship with IDHS supervisors through our recruitment and retention project also helped to facilitate the transition training project. We have been able to build on the supervision practice model with a specific focusing on the unique content of transition. With this foundation, we have also able to train and support the local leadership role of those who supervise the work of transition planning, as well as to train the caseworkers and community partners who work directly with transitioning youth.

Project Evaluation

Both processes and outcomes are being evaluated in this project. The process evaluation has examined issues related to implementation, such as timely completion of project activities and extent of participation in trainings by supervisors, caseworkers, and youth. The outcome evaluation focuses on the extent to which the desired results are achieved, and we have identified short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes by which to evaluate this project’s effectiveness.

Short-term outcomes include satisfaction with training content/perceived usefulness of the training, and increased knowledge of transition planning and core principles by supervisors

and caseworkers from pre to post-training. Consumer satisfaction has been measured through surveys distributed at the conclusion of each training session, with feedback used in revisions of the training content and methods. To assess knowledge gain, we developed tests and administered them prior to the training and at the end of the training. We conducted item analyses and revised the test questions to eliminate items that performed poorly.

The key intermediate outcomes identified and measured in this project are utilization of knowledge and skills by supervisors in their supervision practice and improved transition planning based on the core principles discussed earlier. Utilization of knowledge and skills is being assessed through supervisor self-reports on their own supervision practice over time, using a behavioral assessment measure developed for this project. Originally we had planned to use a similar assessment for workers, but with only one measurement opportunity we decided that it would not be useful to attempt to track this information longitudinally with all public child welfare caseworkers. With regard to the intermediate outcome of improved transition planning, this is being assessed through a cohort study described later in this section.

Longer-term outcomes for this project include those that we envision occurring beyond the funding period of this grant. One such outcome is the incorporation of transition training in the IDHS training plan. The UI will be available to continue to provide this training to public child welfare supervisors and caseworkers beyond the funding period. A second long-term outcome, the integration of the training content in UI child welfare curricula, has already been achieved—we have included transition as a unique topic in the School of Social Work's course on child welfare policy and practice. The ultimate long-term outcome, improved well-being for youth in transition out of care, will need to be assessed over time.

As noted previously, the intermediate outcome of improved transition planning is being

evaluated through a cohort study of transition planning prior to and following training, using interviews with youth who are nearing the age of 18, and with the youth's permission, an interview with the caseworker as well. The focus of the interview is on planning for the transition process. Issues assessed from both perspectives include: whether permanency goals are better articulated after the training, whether there is evidence that youth are playing a stronger role in their transitional planning, the extent to which permanent connections are being pursued and implemented, whether an appropriate array of services, as well as informal supports, are being identified and coordinated. The working hypothesis is that transition planning from pre-training to post-training will demonstrate greater youth involvement, attention to cultural needs, collaboration with community entities, and strengthened permanent connections. We did not ask questions about the youth's child welfare history, risk factors and behaviors; rather we asked about the youth's plans for turning 18, the youth's role in transition planning, and what steps had been taken toward the transition process. Nevertheless, this study took close to year to receive approval by the Institutional Review Board, primarily because we were requesting a waiver of parental consent to participate in the interview.

The first cohort of youth was identified prior to conducting the first supervisor training. We used stratified random sampling to select 12 youth from each of the state's eight service areas who were between the ages of 17.3 and 17.9, who did not have a diagnosis of mental retardation, and who were not residing in a juvenile detention facility. The latter two criteria were established to ensure that the youth was capable of giving informed consent and without coercion. We sent a letter to each of the 96 youth explaining the study and letting them know that a researcher would be following up by telephone to provide more information and to find out if the youth was interested in participating in the study. We prepared a script for the follow-up

phone calls to cover all aspects of the study procedures and to make sure that the youth understood the concepts of voluntary participation and informed consent. For those who agreed to participate in the interview, a time and place for the interview were arranged. The interviewer made an additional contact prior to the agreed upon time to confirm the appointment. During the face-to-face interview, written informed consent was obtained, and the interviews were audio-taped with the youth's permission.

Making contact with the youth turned out to be quite a challenging task. Many of the youth were no longer at their address of record. Some had returned home, several had run from their placement, some had their cases closed, and a couple were in jail. Multiple attempts were made to find every youth, but ultimately out of the 96 youth selected for the original sample, we were able complete interviews with 22 youth and 21 caseworkers (one youth did not give permission to contact the caseworker), representing slightly less than 25% of the sample. Twelve of the youth interviewed were residing in group homes and ten were living with foster families or relatives.

Now that we are nearing completion of the training, we will be selecting a second stratified sample of youth who are approaching the age of 18 and who meet the other criteria previously noted. Comparing the interview data between the first and second youth cohorts will allow us to evaluate whether transition planning practice has changed after the statewide training effort.

Sustainability

From the outset we have considered how to sustain training for transition planning after the conclusion of the grant. This is being accomplished through the preparation and dissemination of written curricula, integration of transition content in the UI School of Social

Work's child welfare curricula, and the availability of continued training to IDHS and other child welfare agencies through the UI School of Social Work's National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice.

Activities to sustain the work are already in progress. We are preparing written curricula for training public child welfare supervisors to effectively supervise line staff in transition planning for older youth. The curricula will be prepared in print and electronic versions for varied dissemination purposes. Included in these curricula are visual Powerpoint presentations that accompany the on-site training. The printed version will be available at cost from the UI and the e-copy by downloading from the website (www.uiowa.edu/~nrcfcp). An on-line toolkit with resources for supervisors for transitional planning will also be produced and made available to trainees within the Iowa public child welfare system and disseminated nationally.

In order to facilitate sustainability of the training between the UI and IDHS partnership, the curriculum for supervisors and workers will be available on a continuing basis. The training programs will be added to the menu of training programs offered by IDHS, and NRC trainers will be available to conduct new groups on an as-needed basis. Because we were able to train all current supervisors and a large proportion of caseworkers, subsequent trainings will only be necessary for new employees.

We have also integrated the content of transition training into the UI School of Social Work's child welfare curricula for undergraduate and graduate students. A segment of the course, child welfare policy and practice, focuses on the issues of youth in foster care and the transition process. Thus, social work students who are preparing for child welfare careers will receive content that is timely and relevant to working with the youth population.

Our project team is prepared to make this training available to other interested states and

communities. Readers who wish to learn more about the training program described in this article should contact the primary author at miriam-landsman@uiowa.edu.

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Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

NAME: _____ Date: ___/___/2007

Supervisor Behavioral Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Transitioning Youth

About how often do you do each of the tasks below? Please put an "x" in the appropriate unshaded box for each item.

TASK	Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Often (3)	Almost always (4)
ADMINISTRATION: Ensuring an effective work environment that supports effective services and transition planning for youth in foster care				
When assigning cases of older youth, I take into account the worker's interest and skill level in working with older youth				
When assigning cases of older youth, I try to reduce the youth's experience of worker turnover				
Assure that older youths always have at least one relationship with a professional or foster parent				
Make expectations clear to workers for a high level of youth involvement in case planning				
Make expectations clear to workers for my prompt return of youths' phone calls				
Make expectations clear to workers for a high level of youth attendance at court hearings				
Make expectations clear for high worker responsiveness to requests from the transition committee				
When working with other agencies and groups, I attend to the process and dynamics of collaboration.				
I regularly seek feedback from community partners about how the Department is perceived as a collaboration partner.				
Review each supervisee's transition plans to ensure thoroughness and compliance with policies and laws				
Conduct frequent reviews (every three months) of transition plans in the last eighteen months before planned discharge from foster care				
Monitor case plans and progress to assure that youth remain eligible for post-discharge service and supports				
Require that an ongoing record of all positive adult relationships youth have had during their stay(s) in foster care be made and kept in a discrete place in the case record				
Provide a clear vision for the team that every child age 10 and over who enters foster care is preparing for adulthood, and it is the agency's responsibility to assure appropriate opportunities and supports for them.				
Develop a team approach to youth cases based on workers' strengths and interests.				

Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

TASK	Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Often (3)	Almost always (4)
Establish and maintain relationships with referral networks to enhance services and supports for older youth				
Request/monitor indicators for positive youth development when referring to/reviewing reports from contracted service providers.				
EDUCATION: Facilitating the acquisition and application of organizational and professional knowledge, values, and skills to improve outcomes for older youth in care				
Coach workers in incorporating Ansell-Casey assessment data into the case plan.				
Coach workers in skills for engaging youth in case planning				
Coach workers in convening a youth-centered team meeting				
Coach workers about helping youth establish permanent connections				
As appropriate, model talking with youth or arrange for observation of skilled peers				
Assess individual staff and work unit developmental needs for working with older youth				
Implement a staff development plan for my work unit around serving older youth				
Provide in-service programs for my staff on working with older youth in foster care				
Develop team environment that encourages peer consultation and coaching on cases involving older youth				
Coach staff in developing good transition plans				
Model cultural competence in consultation on cases involving older youth				
Know how to access and help workers access resources for youth's special needs				
COUNSELING: Identifying and responding to staff attitudes and behaviors which might promote or inhibit good case practice with older youth				
Explore worker's beliefs and assumptions about permanency for older youth				
Identify workers' biases or need for cultural sensitivity in working with older youth and intervene appropriately				

Transition Training by the Numbers

Supervisor training

Statewide supervisor training	Total Trainees (includes supervisors, and administrators)
Des Moines July 17-18, 2007	19
Des Moines July 31-August 1, 2007	31
Des Moines August 28-29, 2007	26
Des Moines September 11-12, 2007	33
Four two-day supervisor trainings	109 trained

Worker training:

Service Area and Date(s)	Total Trainees (workers and supervisors)
Ames 04/03/08	53
Cedar Rapids 03/12/08 and 05/28/08	24 + 23 = 47
Council Bluffs 03/31/08	27
Davenport 05/06/08	42
Des Moines (scheduled 7/08 and 7/09/08)	37 + 48 = 85
Dubuque 05/20/08	49
Sioux City 04/08/08	62
Waterloo 05/12/08	53
Ten Worker Trainings	418 workers/supervisors trained

Community Rollouts to date

Service Area and Date(s)	Total Participants (community invitees & DHS supervisors)
Ames 04/28/08 and 05/15/08**	18 + 25 = 43
Cedar Rapids 06/04/08	29
Council Bluffs 04/01/08	33
Davenport 05/07/08	28
Des Moines (rescheduled for 09/08/08)	***
Dubuque 05/21/08	30
Sioux City 04/09/08	30
Waterloo 05/13/08	54
Eight Community Rollouts to Date	247 community invitees/ DHS sups trained to date

Total Trained: 774

**Because the Ames Service Area encompasses a large geographic area, we hosted two community events in that area, one in the northwest part of the region (Ft. Dodge) and another in the southeast (Marshalltown).

*** The Des Moines community training was rescheduled from 7/10/08 and RSVPs are pending

The National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice in
partnership with the Iowa Department of Human Services

Improving Outcomes for Youth In Transition: Worker Training Agenda

Breakfast and Registration

Welcome and Trainer Introductions

- Overview of Schedule and Curriculum
- Knowledge Pre-test

Picture of Iowa's Transitioning Youth – brief data presentation, including local data

Positive Youth Development as a Foundation for Transition Planning

- Key Positive Outcomes – Abilities/Identities
- Connecting Opportunities, Services and Supports to Key Outcomes
- Youth Power/Participation
- Integrating Positive Youth Development into Transition Planning
 - Youth Centered Team model
 - Engaging Youth in Team Planning

Supervision of Culturally Competent Practice with Older Youth in Care

- Introduce concepts of cultural competence and youth identity development
- Racial/Ethnic Identity; Excerpts from DVD “Knowing Who You Are”
 - Table discussions led by supervisors

Box Lunches provided

Youth Panel: Voices of Former Iowa Foster Youth (Elevate, other youth programs)

The following three topics are offered in plenary or workshop formats:

Supervising for Successful Transitions of Older Youth with Complex Needs;
Transitioning Youth to Adult Services

Nuts and Bolts of the Transition Process, including Resources and Options for
Transitioning Youth; Using the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment; discharge planning
(led by local Transition Planning Specialists)

Permanent Connections and Placement Stability

- “Voices of Youth” – poetry and music about permanency and sibling relationships
- Best practices and tools for establishing and sustaining permanent connections

Knowledge Post-Test

Practice Goal 1: Infusing Principles of Positive Youth Development into Practice

What can be done ?

Who could to do it?

What would it take?

What actions can I as a supervisor take to improve practice:

- Administrative (including case assignment, allocating/advocating for resources)

- Direct supervision (education, consultation, counseling)

- Community collaboration/advocacy

- Other

Practice Goal 2: Cultural Competence in Work with Older Youth in Care

What can be done ?

Who could to do it?

What would it take?

What actions can I as a supervisor take to improve practice:

- Administrative (including case assignment, allocating/advocating for resources)

- Direct supervision (education, consultation, counseling)

- Community collaboration/advocacy

- Other

Practice Goal 3: Helping Youth Establish Permanent Connections

What can be done ?

Who could to do it?

What would it take?

What actions can I as a supervisor take to improve practice:

- Administrative (including case assignment, allocating/advocating for resources)

- Direct supervision (education, consultation, counseling)

- Community collaboration/advocacy

- Other

Other Practice Goals:

What can be done ?

Who could to do it?

What would it take?

What actions can I as a supervisor take to improve practice:

- Administrative (including case assignment, allocating/advocating for resources)

- Direct supervision (education, consultation, counseling)

- Community collaboration/advocacy

- Other

Trainer's Guide:
Supervising for Permanence/Permanent Connections: Case Scenarios

1. Janice, age 15, and her sister, Ashley, age 8, are re-entering foster care. Their first entry was when Janice was 11— the girls were in a foster home for 10 months and were returned home. Now they are coming back into care upon credible evidence that their mother's boyfriend sexually abused Janice.

You supervise both assessment and ongoing workers. What steps could the assessment worker take at this early stage of the case to promote permanency and/or permanent connections for Janice should she not be able to return to her mother's care before her 18th birthday? What should the ongoing worker be doing? How should both workers engage Janice in this process? Are there any tools which would be helpful?

Steps:

- a. Keep record of all significant adults in Janice's life and any interest which collateral contacts expressed in keeping contact with her (assessment worker)
- b. Look for relative placement (assessment worker)
- c. Involve Janice in pre- or immediate post-removal family team meeting – ask her who she wants to invite, set aside time in meeting to talk about Janice's positive youth development needs and to engage her mother and others in planning for keeping connections, making transitions, etc.
- d. Place siblings together or, if not possible, facilitate frequent visits

Tools:

- a. Read through case record and take notes about people in Janice's life
- b. Create placement genogram
- c. Use "Remembered People" tool

Engaging Janice:

- a. With Remembered People tool
- b. Interview her about present adults in her life, encourage her to write them an invitation to family team meeting
- c. Prepare her for participation in family team meeting

2. Janice and Ashley were placed with a paternal aunt. After three months, the aunt has requested that Janice be moved from her home because she is acting out -- staying out all night, having sex with a boyfriend, constantly verbally challenging the aunt, and generally being a poor example for Ashley and the aunt's own preteen children.

What are the permanency concerns in this scenario and what steps could the worker take to address them? How should the worker engage Janice in this process?

- a. Early placement disruptions (within first six months) and being separated from siblings after having been placed with them -- are both associated with subsequent

multiple placements – try to avoid moving Janice – talk to Janice and try to get beneath her acting out behavior to see what’s motivating it, if appropriate, normalize Janice’s behavior in discussions with aunt, talk to both parties about aunt’s concerns, appeal to Janice’s desire to be a good role for Ashley, refer to counseling if needed. More frequent caseworker visits during this first 6 months. (and make sure Janice has access to contraception and condoms)

b. Janice may be testing the aunt’s commitment to her – being rejected may set her up for more relationship issues down the road. Talk to Janice. Refer her to counseling if necessary. Seek commitments from the aunt about maintaining this relationship. Ask aunt to participate in counseling with Janice.

c. If Janice must be moved, arrange for twice a week dinner or other ongoing contact with the aunt.

3. Until recently, Janice has been a good student, performing especially well in speech and English classes. She has been singing in her aunt’s church choir. Her grades have started to slip in all subjects. She wants to learn to drive but reports that the aunt is not helping her get ready for the permit test. In the meantime, the aunt’s husband is facing a decision to lose his job or transfer out-of-state with the company. The mother is not making progress toward reunification. Her father was recently released from prison after serving three years for a non-violent offense; Ashley has reported seeing her father at family events. The father has resisted several attempts by the worker to set up an interview, claiming conflicts with his work as a machine operator for a landscaping firm. What opportunities and challenges for permanency/permanent connections are in this scenario?

If Janice is must be moved from the aunt’s home, what strategies/tools could the worker employ to enhance Janice’s chances for permanency and/or permanent connections? What work prior to this event might have made this transition easier? How should the worker engage Janice in this process?

Opportunities:

a. Building connections:

- o As soon as Janice settles into placement with her aunt, read through old case record and talk with Janice about significant adults in her life, using the “Remembered Persons” chart and follow through the steps outlined – connecting her with more adults when she’s in a stable placement not only builds permanent connections but also may identify a potential placement if she needs to move.
- o Talk to Janice about adults in her life right now: adults in the church choir, speech and English teachers. Would she be interested in having them come to a team meeting?

- b. Maintaining connections:
- Investigate the possibility of Janice's father teaching Janice to drive. (He operates machinery for a landscaping firm). Who could help Janice prepare for the written drivers permit test.
 - If placement with another significant adult in Janice's life is not possible, try to find a placement in the same school district.

c. Maintaining connections:

(Looking for: talking to Janice and her mother about guardianship with the aunt, maintaining connections with the father's side of the family, setting up visits with father, finding out if father has a drivers' license and access to a car to help Janice learn to drive on a permit, connect with teachers at school and adult choir members who might be interested in providing support to Janice, even if she has to move away. If she does have to be moved, try to keep Janice in the same school district and see about transportation to the family church. Have a youth-centered team meeting with Janice, mom, dad, aunt, her husband, the choir director or other adult member of the choir)

4. Janice is now 17; her parents' rights have been terminated. She has had a total of 3 placements – first with her aunt, then a short stay with another paternal relative in the same school district, and now in a non-related foster home who has indicated a willingness to adopt. So far, Janice has refused to even talk about adoption. She turns 18 in April (2 months before the end of her senior year) and has indicated that she wants to be “out of the DHS system”. The worker has not pushed Janice to consider adoption; you sense that the worker may not “believe” in adoption for older youth. Janice has secured her driver's license, her grades have stabilized, she is on track to graduate, and she plans to apply to colleges. What additional strategies/tools should the worker implement to help Janice establish permanency and/or permanent connections? How should the worker engage Janice in this process?

- a. Probe workers' attitudes about adoption of older youth, describe cases or have them read about some cases where there was a successful adoption of an older youth
- b. Have worker set up some times to talk with Janice using the tips for “unpacking the no”, i.e., talking with youth about adoption (See handout) Supervisor may want to be present
- c. If answer is still “no”, direct worker to let foster parents know that youth often change their minds and we hope they remain open to the possibility.
- c. Encourage worker to set up another youth centered team meeting – who, including foster parents and relatives, can help Janice gain life skills?
- d. Worker can use permanency pact with the foster parents and others on her team

e. Encourage worker to keep talking to Janice about who is important in her life and make opportunities for her to have contact with them. Allow her make her own transportation arrangements if feasible.

5. Janice is 17 ½ and is moving into a supervised apartment living. Even though parental rights have been terminated, Janice has remained in contact with both her mother and her father (through informal family and church contacts). When the worker asked Janice if she had any concerns about the move, Janice reported that her mother has made several remarks about how nice it will be when Janice has her own place, in case the mother ever needs a place to crash or to get away from her boyfriend “until things cool off”. Her father is currently homeless. What steps can the worker take to assure Janice’s safety and permanency?

a. Through individual contacts or a youth centered team meeting – involve parents about importance of not jeopardizing Janice’s housing and make referral to father for housing assistance.

b. Have someone work with Janice about setting and enforcing boundaries with both of her parents.

c. If necessary, go to court and obtain order to parents not to come to Janice’s house.

Worker/Community Rollout Process

Rationale for Service Area Based Community Trainings

Participants in focus groups of DHS and community providers agreed on the need for better community collaboration to support youth in transition. DHS staff also saw untapped opportunities in the community for connecting youth with non-traditional agencies and community mentors. There was a shared sense that DHS staff at all levels, but especially supervisors, must become more visible in the community and involved in collaborations with community entities.

There was, however, considerable variation among service areas in how community agencies were working together, with some having established effective community partnerships for transition planning. Because of the variations, and because we wanted to create opportunities for the DHS supervisors to take visible leadership roles, we decided rather than to hold a single statewide event for community providers, we would instead offer community trainings in each of the eight Iowa Service Areas and involve supervisors in planning and hosting the events.

To maximize resources, where feasible, the community training was scheduled the day after the worker training at the same location.

Planning Process for the Community Trainings

On the second day of each of the four statewide supervisor trainings, we asked supervisors to group themselves by Service Area and jointly complete a planning questionnaire for the community rollout. (A sample questionnaire is included at the end of this document). They were asked to make recommendations on the goals for the community day, suggest topics for training and facilitated discussion, and draft a suggested invitation list. We also elicited volunteers for a planning committee. At the completion of the four trainings in September, 2007, the NRC collated the results by Service Area and sent a letter to the eight Service Area Managers (top regional administrators) asking them to appoint a planning committee. We suggested that the committees include one Social Work Administrator (the supervisors' supervisor), the DHS Community Liaison, the Transition Planning Specialist, and some or all of the supervisor volunteers. Those recommendations were accepted; additional committee members included a DCAT coordinator (Des Moines and Sioux City), a Juvenile Court officer (Sioux City), and facilitators of the local foster youth ELEVATE chapter (Sioux City, Cedar Rapids).

The NRC team, consisting of the co-trainers and a consultant hired to manage coordination for the rollouts, travelled to each Service Area and met with the eight planning teams between October 12 and November 16, 2007. We reviewed the recommendations made by the supervisors and discussed the best way to approach the community rollout, including:

- Where is your Service Area currently in terms of community collaboration to improve outcomes for youth in transition?
- Where do you want to be a year from now? What are your priorities?
- How could training and/or facilitation resources help?
- What would constitute success for a day of training?
- Who do you need to have at the community day to make that happen?
- What kind of preparation would need to be done to facilitate a successful day?
- How should youth be involved in the day?
- Who do you want to invite?

The committees were given choices about the length of the training day (depended on the target audience and travel times), the relative proportion of the day to be spent on training and facilitated discussion, and the number of topics to be addressed. Each planning committee was responsible for managing invitations and RSVPs.

Following the planning meeting, the NRC worked with the designated committee lead to finalize the agenda and manage the extensive logistics. The training schedule and number of attendees is included in Table – below.

Two sample agendas are attached, for a half-day and full-day. Each agenda called for a box lunch to be served; (costs for non-DHS staff covered by another source of funds) followed by a presentation by older foster youth and youth who had aged out of the system. A number of the Service Areas were beginning or had recently completed special initiatives for transitioning youth, including Family Finding (Dubuque) and youth centered team planning (Iowa Youth Dream Team in Sioux City and Cedar Rapids and the Child Action Team in Ames). We made space on the agenda for representatives of these programs to share their programs with the community. The Cedar Rapids service area invited youth to stay for the entire afternoon and participate in small group work.

During the development of the supervisory curriculum we worked with two creative Transition Planning Specialists (TPS) who created tools to help workers track the transition planning process, understand the available resources for transitioning youth and how to access them. These included charts, grids, and an index of resources. We also developed a presentation and materials on how to make better use of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment in transition planning. The local planning committees felt it was very important to give their local transition planning specialists the opportunity to be seen as leaders and experts in their regions. We met twice with the TPSs, invited them to present, and reviewed our materials; what resulted was another TPS creating an even richer PowerPoint presentation which was used by his peers. The process of each TPS “owning” the work was an important benefit of the regional approach.

We felt that the presence of supervisors at the community training was a critical component, so we worked very hard to secure their attendance and to offer them visible roles during the day, including welcoming participants, offering introductory remarks, and leading table discussions. The interactive nature of the day allowed for supervisors to show their leadership through skillful discussion of the topics.

A variety of training methods were used, including short PowerPoint presentations, large group and small group discussions, and videos. A key goal was infusing the training with the voices of youth, which we did in a variety of ways, including presentations by youth, incorporating comments from the focus groups with youth into the presentations and training manual, and using a variety of videos, including a music video created by the Iowa ELEVATE group especially for our training.

Most of the planning committees asked that we save time at the end of the day for community attendees to make “commitments” about how what they intended to implement in their individual practice and what they intended to take back to share with their agencies. Those commitments were memorialized in a variety of ways. In Dubuque, for example, the workers in their training the previous day created paper dolls signifying a youth in care with whom they were working. The dolls were on display at the community training, and community participants were asked to write their commitments on paper umbrellas which were then attached to the hands of the paper youth. This idea was generated by the local planning team.

Participant evaluations were collected for each training event and shared with the planning committee along with the written commitments of participants.

Planning Process for the Service Area Based Worker Training

We used the same planning process described above for the worker training, but approached the day with fewer options. We asked the supervisors to review the content of their two-day training and recommend which topics would be most useful for a one-day worker training. While engaging all of the supervisors in this initial process, we emphasized the importance of their role in coaching and reinforcing best practice.

When we met with the regional planning committee, we proposed a full day training, but offered some options about the relative emphasis on training topics and offered some workshop options to allow for worker choice. We also gave the committees the choice about whether to involve child protective assessment workers in the training; all decided not to include the assessors but the Des Moines committee asked that we work with them to create a half day training for assessors and that is in the works. The committees were very engaged in thinking about how best to use the day. The Dubuque group came up with the idea of asking each worker to bring in a case to work on, and created the paper doll activity around that case. All of the committees decided to include a youth panel.

We knew from the focus groups that we needed to address the challenged of transitioning special needs youth into the adult mental health system; because of a wide variation in practice we decided to do that at the regional level. We recruited the two DHS staff who work with the county Central Point of Coordination staff to transition youth into adult services. They offered a 75 minute workshop on the process, and invited local county CPCs to join them in the presentation. This was a great plan, as it engaged these folks in the community day and encouraged them to make public commitments to collaborate. Several CPCs registered for the entire community day.

Jewel's Poems

LIKE STRANGERS

I grew with them
I raised them
Took care of them
Like I was their mother
I worried about them
(How would they fare without me?)
(Were they strong enough to deal with the loss of both their mother and sister?)
But there was nothing I could do
I was dealing
With my own issues
But if I could I would turn back time
I would take back all the mean things I did and said
And say the unsaid words
If that could make us now as close as we were
But now it's like we don't know each other
Awkward silences almost too much
They break my heart
Because these are the same small boys
That liked yellow and red
Loved power rangers and pokeman
And had dreams
Now men
That I don't know
(That I don't know)
But maybe slowly
We can get to know
One another
And get to a point
To be like we were before we're
Like Strangers

PROBABLY WASN'T WHAT YOU WANTED ANYWAY

I just want to say sorry to the people
That might have adopted me
(That might have loved me the way I needed to be loved
That might have healed my heart
That might have gave me compassion when I needed
That might have been there when I needed someone to lean on)
I chose for you
Instead of taking a chance
Of letting you get the chance
To know me
And decide for yourself
Rather or not
You might
Want me
I was a coward
Too afraid for anyone to love me
I just didn't want to be rejected again
(Why would anyone love me if my own mother couldn't?)
I felt like I was too broken
"Probably wasn't what you wanted anyway"
But sometimes I wish
I would have been braver
And allow you to decide that for yourself
Maybe I would have ended up a different kid
So if you have a chance to get adopted
Take it
Don't be afraid to let someone love you
Like I was

Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition: Evaluation of Supervisory Training

This report presents results of the evaluation of the curriculum of supervisor training conducted by the University of Iowa School of Social Work in collaboration with the Iowa Department of Human Services, as part of the Children's Bureau-funded project on improving outcomes for youth in transition. The training was conducted in four sessions, two held in July 2007, one held in August 2007 and one in September 2007. Trainings were conducted during two-day sessions held in Des Moines, Iowa.

Three instruments were developed and administered as part of the project evaluation:

- 1) **knowledge pre-training and post-training test**, used to measure project performance in teaching specific knowledge
- 2) **behavioral skills assessment**, used to collect baseline data on the frequency of behaviors that supervisors were using prior to training, and which were administered as a follow-up to measure the extent to which additional skills taught in the training were being utilized in practice
- 3) **training satisfaction survey**, used to measure overall satisfaction with the content, delivery, and usefulness of the training

Development and Administration of Evaluation Instruments

Training Satisfaction Survey

The training satisfaction survey was developed by the evaluators to measure participants' satisfaction with the content and delivery of the training program, as well as the usefulness of the training for their own work. The survey consisted of a series of Likert-type items and several open-ended questions. This survey was completed at the conclusion of the two days of training. Feedback from the survey was used to modify subsequent training sessions whenever possible.

Youth in Transition Knowledge Pre/Post Test:

The knowledge test was developed by the evaluators, with input from the curriculum development team. Curriculum learning objectives were developed into knowledge specific questions. Questions and foils were piloted during the first training session with modifications based on analysis of the pilot data prior to the second and third training sessions. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of each training session with an explanation that the test served the purpose of gathering performance measures for evaluating the curriculum and trainer efficacy. Participants were told that the test was designed to measure "How well we do in delivering the program," not the expertise of the participants.

Committed to Excellence Through Supervision

Pre-tests were administered by members of the evaluation team, and participants were given about 20 minutes to complete the instrument. This approach was developed to differentiate the training from the evaluation aspects of the project, and to encourage participants to focus, but not dwell on, the test instruments. Efforts were made throughout the training to directly and indirectly address the questions on the knowledge pre-post test.

The post-test was administered in a similar fashion with a training satisfaction survey at the close of the session. Participants were allowed as long they needed to complete the post-test. Many participants completed their post-tests within 15-20 minutes.

The knowledge test and the curriculum were revised and improved over the course of the four trainings.

Behavioral Skills Assessment Pretest and Posttests

This instrument was developed jointly by the curriculum development and evaluation teams. Youth in Transition competencies were first developed through analysis of focus group data, benchmarking supervisory competencies in other states, and a review of the literature. Indicators of behavioral skills and competencies were then identified for five functional areas of the child welfare supervision model: administration, education, consultation, counseling, and evaluation (Hamilton and Finnerty, 2005). Training participants completed the behavioral self-assessment pre-test at the same time as the knowledge pre-test.

Behavioral post-test self-assessment of *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition* skills was conducted approximately six months after the initial self-assessment and training. The instruments will be used to facilitate conversations regarding long-term retention of training program content, structural barriers that impede effective supervision and requests for additional resources.

Results

TRAINING SATISFACTION SURVEY

All participants were asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating the training overall. Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with 8 items, ranging from 1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent. The areas evaluated include: presenters' knowledge of the subject, clarity in the presentation of the information, encouragement of participation and sharing, the usefulness of training materials, the usefulness of training activities, the relevance of training content to diversity and cultural issues, the physical environment of the training facility, and training session overall.

Additionally, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement, 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree, to the following three statements:

- "The training content was relevant to public child welfare supervision"
- "I learned skills that will help me to be a more effective supervisor"
- "I intend to use what I learned in my supervisory job"

and to rate the quality of the five individual presentations on supervision of youth in transition issues using a scale ranging from 1 for "Poor" to 5 for "Excellent."

Table 1 below provides the means and standard deviations for each item per session. The *Total* column in the table represents the aggregate means and standard deviations for all sessions.

Table 1. Satisfaction Survey Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition Training Sessions

	Session 1 N=13		Session 2 N=24		Session 3 N=13		Session 4 N=24		Total/Overall N=74	
	μ	S. D.	μ	S. D.						
<i>Scale range 1=Poor to 5=Excellent</i> Presenters demonstrated working knowledge of the subject.	4.85	.376	4.33	.761	4.38	.506	4.71	.550	4.55	.622
Information was presented clearly and accessibly.	4.54	.660	4.25	.676	4.31	.480	4.54	.721	4.41	.660
Participation and sharing was encouraged.	4.92	.277	4.21	.721	4.46	.519	4.61	.499	4.51	.604
Training materials (e.g., hand-outs, graphics) assisted in my learning.	4.69	.480	4.29	.859	4.46	.776	4.67	.637	4.51	.726
Training activities assisted in my learning (e.g. exercises, case studies)	4.77	.439	3.92	1.02	4.31	.751	4.09	.900	4.19	.892
Presenters addressed relevant diversity and cultural issues.	4.62	.506	4.04	.999	4.33	.492	4.38	.711	4.30	.776
The physical environment was conducive to my learning.	4.69	.630	4.00	1.02	4.23	.725	3.88	.947	4.12	.921
Please rate the session overall.	4.69	.480	4.17	.834	4.60	.516	4.30	.865	4.38	.760
<i>Scale range 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree</i>										
Training content was relevant to public child welfare supervision	4.77	.439	4.38	.711	4.54	.519	4.54	.658	4.53	.624
I learned skills that will help me to be a more effective supervisor.	4.83	.389	4.13	.694	4.23	.725	4.39	.722	4.35	.699
I intend to use what I learned in my supervisory job.	4.64	.505	4.43	.662	4.46	.519	4.52	.665	4.50	.608
<i>RATING OF THE QUALITY OF INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS Scale range 1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent</i>										
Rating of presentation on Youth with Complex Needs	4.75 n=8	.463	3.33 n=12	1.30	2.40 n=5	.548	2.67 n=12	1.07	3.30 n=37	1.29
Rating of presentation on Ansell-Cascy Life Skills Assessment	4.50 n=4	.577	4.43 n=7	.787	4.33 n=3	1.16	4.60 n=10	.516	4.50 n=24	.659
Rating of the presentation Resources for Transitioning Youth	4.88 n=8	.354	4.87 n=15	.352	4.33 n=6	1.03	4.50 n=16	.894	4.67 n=45	.707
Rating of the Day 1 Workshop for Assessment Supervisors	4.50 n=2	.707	4.80 n=5	.447	4.25 n=4	.957	4.00 n=1		4.50 n=12	.674
Rating of presentation on Resources for Community Education	4.50 n=2	.707	3.67 n=9	.866	5.00 n=1		4.40 n=5	.548	4.06 n=17	.827

Overall, on average, as a total group, the attendees rated all items on the satisfaction survey at "good" to "excellent." Five items were rated at 4.50 or above. They included:

- Presenters demonstrated working knowledge of the subject ($\mu=4.55$, s.d.=.622)
- Training content was relevant to public child welfare supervision ($\mu=4.53$, s.d.=.624)
- Participation and sharing was encouraged ($\mu=4.51$, s.d.=.604)
- Training materials assisted in my learning ($\mu=4.51$, s.d.=.726)

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When asked to rate the session overall, participants responded with an overall mean score of 4.38 and standard deviation of .760. Trainees in Sessions 1 with a mean score of 4.69 rated their session higher than those in Sessions 2 with a mean score of 4.17.

The physical environment received relatively lower ratings with a mean score across all sessions of 4.12 (s.d.=.921) although this is still in the range of “good.” Session 1 participants rated it highest with a mean response of 4.69 (s.d=.630) while Session 4 participants on average rated the physical environment lower at 3.88 (s.d=.947).

A review of differences in ratings between sessions shows that, on average for each of the items, participants in Sessions 1 reported more satisfaction than those in Sessions 2.

Trainees on average across all four sessions showed a strong level of agreement that: the training content was relevant to public child welfare supervision, they learned skills that will help them be a more effective supervisor, and they intended to use what they had in learned in their supervisory job. Overall mean score responses for these items ranged from 4.35 to 4.53.

On average overall, the presentations on the *Resources for Transitioning Youth*, *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment*, and *Day 1 Workshop for Assessment Supervisors* received higher ratings (4.67, 4.50 and 4.50 respectively) than those on *Resources for Community Education* and *Youth with Complex Needs* (4.06 and 3.30 respectively). The ratings within individual sessions ranged from lows of 2.40 in Session 2 and 2.67 in Session 4 for the presentation on *Youth with Complex Needs* to highs of 4.88 in Session 1 and 4.87 in Session 2 for the presentation on *Resources for Transitioning Youth*.

The remainder of this section presents representative comments from each session on the four open-ended items on the satisfaction survey.

What did you find most useful about this program?

Session 1

- Good mix of theoretical orientations and practical application strategies.
- The tools to use to help workers identify possible support people. The ideas about what to do with complex kids. The resources available to this age group.
- Renewal awareness of addressing permanency needs of older youth-specific ideas to address these needs
- Workshops
- Broadened my view of permanency and transition planning. Provided concrete ideas to implement in practice
- Practical information to bring back. Personal stories and connections with youth- those in field
- Input from participants. Covered a great deal of information in good order
- The open discussion
- New resources. The handbook.

Session 2

- Positive Youth Development. Overview of resources available to youth aging out
- Hearing from panel members directly on their experiences, learning resources out there for youth in transition, hearing about transition committees/ collaborations.
- A reminder to pay more attention to these cases, the importance of connections for youth aging out.

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- Take home resources
- Just the basic information about the transition process for youth.
- Better understanding of the whole process- love the TIP manual
- I knew next to nothing before
- Afternoon discussions- culture and sexuality day 1
- Skilled presenters; well-developed, meaningful material presented at an intellectual level appropriate for the audience.

Session 3

- Lots of really good handouts
- Learning how workers/FP/youth can use assessment tool and report
- Resource info in the book
- The topic- I really need to look at this harder
- Excellent info to take back and discuss with my staff!
- Information and handouts
- The networking with peers
- Collaborating with others in other service areas to get ideas on practice
- Information on positive youth development. Info will be very helpful as workers assess family functioning.

Session 4

- All the tools/checklist
- Handouts. Talking with my co-workers about how they are doing transition in their area.
- That DHS actually addressed this component of the work Social work staff do for children on their caseloads at a supervisory level.
- Discussion of youth team meetings.
- All of the information was very relevant to planning for kids in our system- is very specialized however and should target TSP and APPLA workers.
- I think the discussion time was great. It caused some thought processes that went beyond the text.
- The resources that you provided in the book. Questions too stimulate guided discussion with staff.
- Cultural awareness and resource material
- Youth Center Team Meeting
- Discussion on transition practice & policies
- Lots of great information. I'm glad more attention is being placed on this population.
- Networking with others.

What recommendations do you have for making this training increasingly useful to public child welfare supervisors?

Session 1

- More basics
- More networking among ourselves about ideas on how to meet the needs of the tough kids.
- Do follow-up. Help implement
- More processing and brainstorming time
- More time to network

Session 2

- focus on how to assist supervisors in managing all of the demands, barriers, policies, procedures currently in place
- More time to focus on the cultural competency piece and the huge importance that plays in our work with our families.

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- Complex Needs- did not address questions/subjects participants wanted. Was basically resource information.
- More time on resources/ referral process/ procedures. Best practice info. helpful but need more on what there is and how we do it.
- The information was good -but most of it is too basic. Supervisors already know the basics- we need the down and dirty tools that will help our staff and our kids not the philosophy.
- More time on break out sessions.
- Keep the workshops
- Make it part of new SWII training
- Videos are effective and nice break from power point and verbal presentation.
- Cultural competency was excellent for CPW transgender understanding.

Session 3

- County specific and bring in community agencies- both from child welfare and from adult MH/MR/DD
- Would have liked time to touch base on all the large group information in packets

Session 4

- Better direction for kids with complex needs. Worker training ASAP.
- Make it a 1-day core course for new workers.
- More break out sessions less big group, less videos.
- This was quite useful as is, maybe later move to more advanced issues.
- It needs to be offered to line staff- it is a wonderful resource for supervisors.
- I would suggest that service areas are seated together to discuss changing practice as the training went on
- Better Complex Needs workshop
- Follow-ups

What additional content would you like to see included?

Session 1

- Expanded discussion on cultural/diversity. Need work to improve our practice and subsequent outcomes for minority youth.
- Additional time for workshop on youth with complex needs- need even more information
- Workshop on how to guide workers on arranging effective transition meeting
- More on adult world
- Maybe a workshop on helping foster parents to support youth
- What should the next steps be
- Maybe a bit more on adult services

Session 2

- AAPLA cases
- The people/contacts we need to give to our workers to successfully plan for their youth.
- When asked what next step is when working with staff on cultural competence someone ought to know what it is.
- Continue to encourage open/group discussion.

Session 3

- Liked the videos interspersed- would have appreciated more of that... makes the content more real, esp. when there is so much print material.

Session 4

- Introductions of the main speakers.
- Core course should be developed and offered 1-2x's per year.
- More time on children with complex needs with more detailed material would be best.

- Focus on very difficult to place teens.
- More Q&A time re: real life case examples.
- More on how to get all done that we have to do. I am overwhelmed

Additional Comments

Session 1

- I have seen 2 elevate presentations now- they awe and inspire me!
- Very good job. Good luck for future training.

Session 2

- I think that this was a very effective training- with good information to take back to workers
- Very helpful to discuss, timely, relevant based on recent changed to my supervisory responsibilities. Elevate presentation was outstanding!!
- Appreciated the opportunity to discuss in small groups, but often too close and too loud to hear those at own table.
- Appreciated flexibility in presenting material, having a variety of presenters was also nice
- Thought resources for community education should expand beyond schools and educators.
- Needs to get to field workers ASAP!!! Very needed!

Session 3

- Keep balanced in presenting info- one size does not fit all; focus on how to assess a situation so a family gets what they need and not a cookie cutter approach
- You are a WONDERFUL team - I wish I could take you back to our service area for good! You are smart and real and knowledgeable and likeable and astute to your audiences' dynamics and interests - Thank you!!

Session 4

- I am a new supervisor and all of the material covered was very helpful & I will use it in my daily practice
- Needs to be shared with all DHS staff
- Small group work
- Discussion topics made into workshops we could choose from
- NRC trainings are consistently top notch.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF BEHAVIORAL SKILLS

For the assessment of their own behavioral skills in improving outcomes for youth in transition, supervisors indicated how often they performed each task listed in the five function areas: administration, education, counseling, consultation, and evaluation. The response categories were: rarely (valued at 1), sometimes (valued at 2), often (valued at 3) and almost always (valued at 4). Values were totaled for each response to the tasks in each function, providing individual function scores. Tasks in the administration function pertained to how supervisors ensured an effective work environment that supported sound supervision of services for youth in transition. In the education function, supervisors assessed their skills in facilitating acquisition and application of professional knowledge, values and skills in areas of serving youth in transition. Counseling skills assessment included tasks that showed how supervisors identified and responded to the psychosocial needs of staff as they related to serving youth in transition. The list of consultation function tasks indicated how supervisors used professional knowledge to advise and guide services provided to youth in transition. Under the evaluation function, supervisors showed how they systematically assessed staff processes and products.

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The highest possible score for each function area were: administration, 68 for 17 skills; education, 48 for 12 skills; counseling 8 for two skills; consultation, 40 for 10 skills, and evaluation, 12 for three skills. In some cases, participants did not respond to all tasks in each function area; those scores were not included in this analysis.

Table 2 shows the behavioral skill functions, the highest possible score in each function, the average percent attainment of the highest possible function score, and the standard deviation for each average percent for all of those responding at pretest for Sessions 1, 2, 3 and 4 and overall.

Table 2. Self-Assessment of Behavioral Skills for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition: Average Percent Assessment of Level of Function As a portion of Highest Possible Function Scores by Session at Pretest

Behavioral Skill Functions	Highest possible function score	Average Percent Attainment of Highest Possible Function Score by Session at Pretest				
		Session 1 (n=9)	Session 2 (n=24)	Session 3 (n=19)	Session 4 (n=23)	ALL** (n=75)
Administration	68	66% (sd=.117)	67% (sd=.108)	56% (sd=.112)	63% (sd=.110)	63% (sd=.116)
Education	48	64% (sd=.119)	60% (sd=.102)	50% (sd=.124)	58% (sd=.163)	57% (sd=.137)
Counseling	8	74% (sd=.211)	68% (sd=.156)	64% (sd=.181)	65% (sd=.202)	67% (sd=.183)
Consultation	40	79% (sd=.137)	67% (sd=.118)	62% (sd=.158)	65% (sd=.113)	66% (sd=.138)
Evaluation	12	64% (sd=.221)	61% (sd=.273)	43% (sd=.151)	51% (sd=.195)	54% (sd=.226)

The results indicate that, on average, there is some variation in the assessment of utilization of behavioral skills across functions, as well as within and across sessions. The differences between high and low average percents among function areas within each session showed a range from a high of 20 percentage points difference in Session 3 to a low difference of eight percentage points in Session 2. Session 1 respondents showed a difference of 15 percentage points, and Session 4 respondents showed a 14 percentage-point difference. Overall for participants in all the sessions, the difference was 13 percentage points, ranging from 54% utilization in the evaluation function to 67% utilization in the counseling function.

Session 1 participants assessed themselves, on average, at differing levels across functions on their use of these behavioral skills for *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition*. Consultation skills were used most often at 79% of the highest function score while education and evaluation skills related to youth in transition were used less often in this group (64% of the highest function score). For those in the second session, average percent utilization of behavior skills were very similar across the five function areas, with a spread of just eight percentage points, ranging from 60% for education behavior skills to 68% for counseling skills related to youth in transition. Trainees in the third session assessed their use of counseling skills related to youth in transition at higher levels (at 64% of the highest score respectively) than the other

functions, with evaluation functions being assessed the lowest for this session at 43% of the highest score. Participants in Session 4 judged their use of consultation and counseling skills related to youth in transition on average at 65% of the highest possible function score but reported their use of evaluation skills at a lower level— 51% of the maximum function score.

DHS SERVICE AREA PARTICIPANTS

DHS Service areas within the state of Iowa and the number of service area participants for each training session are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Service Areas and Number of Participants in the Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition Trainings

DHS Service areas	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Total
Ames	2	3	1	3	9
Cedar Rapids	3	4	7	6	20
Central Admin	2	1	1	1	2*
Council Bluffs	3	2	4	3	12
Davenport	0	4	3	4	11
Des Moines	4	8	7	3	22
Dubuque	1	3	3	3	10
Sionx City	2	3	4	5	14
Waterloo	1	5	3	5	14
TOTAL DHS	18	33	33	33	117
Other participants**	2	2	2	4	10
TOTAL ATTENDEES	20	35	35	37	127

*unduplicated count

**includes individuals not part of DHS

In all, 117 DHS supervisors, service area managers, quality assurance personnel, transition planning supervisors, and administrators from the eight DHS service areas and Central Administration participated in the trainings for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition held during the third quarter of 2007. The Des Moines service area had the most participants (22) closely followed by the Cedar Rapids service area with 20. The service area with the smallest number of participants was Ames, with nine. In addition to representatives of the eight service areas, two individuals from Central Administration attended the training. Session 4 hosted the largest group with 37 participants. It should be also noted that, for a variety of reasons, 21 individuals attended just one day of the two-day training session.

KNOWLEDGE PRETEST AND POSTTEST

The Knowledge Pretest and Posttest were administered to participants in the DHS Supervisory Trainings on *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition*. The table below shows the change demonstrated by 79 respondents who completed both a pretest and posttest.

Table 4. Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition Training Knowledge Test. Change from Pretest to Posttest by Session

Type of change from pretest to posttest	Session 1		Session 2		Session 3		Session 4	
number*:	14		25		18		22	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Improved +	13**	92.9%	24**	96.0%	17**	94.4%	22**	100%
No change ++	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	1	5.6%	0	0%
Decreased +++	1	7.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%

* Number who completed both a pretest and posttest ** significant difference: $p < .01$
 + Improved: posttest percent correct was greater than the pretest percent correct
 ++ No change: pretest percent correct was the same as posttest percent correct
 +++ Decreased: posttest percent correct was less than the pretest percent correct

The results demonstrate that each of the four sessions had a statistically significant number of respondents - 93% or greater - who showed an increase in percent correct responses from pretest to posttest. When analyzed as a whole group (79 individuals who completed both a pretest and posttest), T-test results indicated a statistically significant increase from a mean percent correct at pretest of 42.5% to 63.8% at posttest.

COMPARISON OF BASELINE AND ONE FOLLOW-UP ASSESSMENT OF SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORAL FUNCTION SKILLS

The posttest assessment of *Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition* supervisory behavior skills was conducted at training sessions held approximately six months following the initial behavioral self-assessment. Table 5 below shows the change over time in average percent of the highest possible function score within each function area attained by respondents who were matched on the behavioral pretest and posttest. The results show that respondents demonstrated a statistically significant increase from pretest to posttest in their self-assessment of utilization of behavioral skills in four of the supervisory function areas, namely administration, education, counseling, and evaluation.

Table 5. Baseline and Follow-up Comparison of Utilization of Supervisory Behavioral Skills for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition behavioral skills function area	Highest possible function score	# of respondents matched on pre & post1	Pretest		Posttest	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Administration	68	59	64.1%	0.111	70.9%*	0.106
Education	48	58	59.1%	0.138	69.0%*	0.130
Counseling	8	59	65.7%	0.182	73.5%*	0.178
Consultation	40	59	66.8%	0.239	68.6%	0.111
Evaluation	12	58	55.3%	0.111	64.4%*	0.151

* $p < .01$

APPENDICES

- A. Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition Satisfaction Survey
(same form used for all sessions)**
- B. Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition
Behavioral Skills Assessment Form (pretest)
(same form used for all sessions)**
- C. Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition
Knowledge Pretest and Posttest, Session 1**
- D. Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition
Knowledge Pretest and Posttest, Session 2**
- E. Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition
Knowledge Pretest and Posttest, Sessions 3 and 4**

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APPENDIX A

“Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition”

Supervisory Training

Presenters Day One & Two: Lisa D’Aunno, Sue Tew, Teresa Sea

Panelists and Guest Commentators:

SaBreena Boyd, Mary Ellison, Janet Lyons, Jan Pratt, Ruthann Jarrett

Workshop Presenters: Lisa D’Aunno, Teresa Sea, Patricia Gilbaugh

September 11-12, 2007

Please take a couple of minutes to fill out the evaluation of this pilot training session.

Your responses will be useful in revising the training.

How would you rate this session in the following areas? (Please circle one number for each item)

	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Satisfactory (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
1. Presenters demonstrated working knowledge of the subject.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Information was presented clearly and accessibly.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Participation and sharing was encouraged.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Training materials (e.g., hand-outs, graphics) assisted in my learning.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Training activities assisted in my learning (e.g., exercises, case studies).	5	4	3	2	1
6. Presenters addressed relevant diversity and cultural issues.	5	4	3	2	1
7. The physical environment was conducive to my learning.	5	4	3	2	1
Please rate the session overall.	5	4	3	2	1
	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	No Opinion (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
8. The training content was relevant to public child welfare supervision.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I learned skills that will help me to be a more effective supervisor.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I intend to use what I learned in my supervisory job.	5	4	3	2	1

Which workshops did you attend? Please “x” those you attend and rate the overall quality.

Attended Excellent (5) Good (4) Satisfactory (3) Fair (2) Poor (1)

	Attended	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Satisfactory (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Supervising for Successful Transitions for Youth with Complex Needs (Patricia Gilbaugh)		5	4	3	2	1
Supervising the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (Teresa Sea)		5	4	3	2	1
Resources for Transitioning Youth (Teresa Sea)		5	4	3	2	1
Day One Workshop for Assessment Supervisors (Lisa D’Aunno)		5	4	3	2	1
Resources for Community Education (Lisa D’Aunno)		5	4	3	2	1

Please continue on the other side!

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What did you find most useful about this program?

What recommendations do you have for making this training increasingly useful to public child welfare supervisors?

What additional content would you like to see included?

Additional comments:

THANK YOU!

NAME: _____ Date: ___/___/2007

APPENDIX B

Supervisor Behavioral Competencies for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition

About how often do you do each of the tasks below? Please put an “x” in the appropriate unshaded box for each item.

TASK	Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Often (3)	Almost always (4)
ADMINISTRATION: Ensuring an effective work environment that supports effective services and transition planning for youth in foster care				
When assigning cases of older youth, I take into account the worker’s interest and skill level in working with older youth				
When assigning cases of older youth, I try to reduce the youth’s experience of worker turnover				
Assure that older youths always have at least one relationship with a professional or foster parent				
Make expectations clear to workers for a high level of youth involvement in case planning				
Make expectations clear to workers for my prompt return of youths’ phone calls				
Make expectations clear to workers for a high level of youth attendance at court hearings				
Make expectations clear for high worker responsiveness to requests from the transition committee				
When working with other agencies and groups, I attend to the process and dynamics of collaboration				
I regularly seek feedback from community partners about how the Department is perceived as a collaboration partner.				
Review each supervisee’s transition plans to ensure thoroughness and compliance with policies and laws				
Conduct frequent reviews (every three months) of transition plans in the last eighteen months before planned discharge from foster care				
Monitor case plans and progress to assure that youth remain eligible for post-discharge service and supports				
Require that an ongoing record of all positive adult relationships youth have had during their stay(s) in foster care be made and kept in a discrete place in the case record				
Provide a clear vision for the team that every child age 10 and over who enters foster care is preparing for adulthood, and it is the agency’s responsibility to assure appropriate opportunities and supports for them.				
Develop a team approach to youth cases based on workers’ strengths and interests.				

TASK	Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Often (3)	Almost always (4)
Establish and maintain relationships with referral networks to enhance services and supports for older youth				
Request/monitor indicators for positive youth development when referring to/reviewing reports from contracted service providers.				
EDUCATION: Facilitating the acquisition and application of organizational and professional knowledge, values, and skills to improve outcomes for older youth in care				
Coach workers in incorporating Ansell-Casey assessment data into the case plan.				
Coach workers in skills for engaging youth in case planning				
Coach workers in convening a youth-centered team meeting				
Coach workers about helping youth establish permanent connections				
As appropriate, model talking with youth or arrange for observation of skilled peers				
Assess individual staff and work unit developmental needs for working with older youth				
Implement a staff development plan for my work unit around serving older youth				
Provide in-service programs for my staff on working with older youth in foster care				
Develop team environment that encourages peer consultation and coaching on cases involving older youth				
Coach staff in developing good transition plans				
Model cultural competence in consultation on cases involving older youth				
Know how to access and help workers access resources for youth's special needs				
COUNSELING: Identifying and responding to staff attitudes and behaviors which might promote or inhibit good case practice with older youth				
Explore worker's beliefs and assumptions about permanency for older youth				
Identify workers' biases or need for cultural sensitivity in working with older youth and intervene appropriately				

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TASK	Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Often (3)	Almost always (4)
CONSULTATION: Using professional knowledge to advise and guide practice with older youth in foster care.				
Reflectively explore supervisees' casework decisions, strategies, and plans with older youth				
Reflectively explore alternative hypotheses problematic youth behavior, including feelings of loss of control (disempowerment), loss of relationships and community connections, and mental health needs				
In supervision, inquire about the youth's perspective.				
When appropriate, normalize youth behavior as developmentally appropriate				
Affirm supervisees' professional competencies in work with older youth				
Pose questions relevant to cultural and power dynamics in cases				
Infuse youth development principles into group supervision and staff meetings				
Discuss cultural and power issues with supervisees in planning and decision-making regarding older youth in care				
Instill visions of hope for older youth who are struggling or seem likely to "age out"				
Help workers identify concerns about youths' special needs or for the need for an evaluation of special needs				
EVALUATION: Systematically assessing staff processes and products.				
Periodically review each worker's progress in achieving mutually agreed upon goals for improving practice with older youth in care				
Periodically observe staff with youth and in youth-centered team meetings to evaluate performance				
Identify strengths of the team in working with older youth in care				

Test Your Knowledge
IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN TRANSITION – SESSION 1

Your name: _____

Service Area: _____

Position (circle): SWS SAM SWA IM
FOSU EO Other _____

Years as a supervisor: _____
Years in DHS: _____

Please circle "T" for True or "F" for False:

1. T F Relational permanence emphasizes the importance of a child achieving a legal permanency goal.
2. T F High expectations, standards and boundaries, and adult prescribed planning are all positive supports for youth development.
3. T F Families often become less rejecting and more accepting within about 2 years of learning about their child's LBGT identity.
4. T F A goal for child welfare practitioners is to be "colorblind" in their work with older youth.

Please circle the letter that corresponds to the best answer to each question below.

5. One component of youth outcomes is "aspects of identity" that young people need to develop to be successful in adulthood. Which of the following correctly lists these aspects of identity?
 - a) Physical and mental health, intellectual ability, responsibility/autonomy, self-awareness.
 - b) Physical and mental health, intellectual ability, employability, cultural ability, and civic and social ability.
 - c) Self-worth, belonging, mastery, responsibility, safety, and self-awareness/spirituality.
 - d) Self-worth, belonging, responsibility, intellectual ability, cultural ability, and mental health.
6. Which of the following is true about placement stability?
 - a) Most children in foster care experience multiple placements.
 - b) Adolescents tend to be more stable in placements than younger children.
 - c) Most movement occurs in the first six months of a placement.
 - d) Group care placements are more stable than relative placements.
7. Among the suggested levels of participation in decision-making (none, limited, moderate, extensive, and self-managing), youth who are involved at the EXTENSIVE level in decision-making are best described by which of the following:
 - a) being present, being prepared, working with adults to problem solve, reviewing options.
 - b) having personal responsibility and are accountable for themselves while being interdependent with others for personal success.
 - c) consulted but their views are not included, and limited options/choices are controlled by the adult.
 - d) setting agenda, deciding on issues, having joint accountability with adult(s).

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8. Research on lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/questioning foster youth has shown all but which of the following:
- The protective factor of school in helping to prevent health risks and promoting health development does assist LGBT youth, and often teachers intervene to help.
 - In the New York City child welfare system, 56% of lesbian and gay youth interviewed said they stayed on the streets at times because they felt safer there than in group or foster homes.
 - The more open youth are about sexual orientation, the more likely they are to be victimized.
 - In one study, 42% of LGBT youth in out of home settings who participated in a study of family acceptance and rejection, were either removed or ejected from their homes because of conflict related to LGBT identity.
9. Which of the following most correctly lists the Seven Keys to Successful Collaboration?
- Shared vision, shared youth-centered values, strength-based, maximized youth's choices, maximized youth's ability for informed decision-making, involvement of youth's circle of support, culturally sensitive, accountable to community.
 - Shared problem, shared values, skilled leader, leader driven, attention to procedure, diverse perspectives, responsive to community.
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10. Three types of "people support" that are essential for promoting positive youth development are
- nurturing relationships, mentors, high expectations.
 - strategic, emotional, and motivational.
 - help to set goals, help to discover action strategies, help to develop positive concept of future self.
 - safety, permanency, well-being.
11. Typical barriers that foster children with complex needs face include all but which of the following:
- Lack of communication among members of the system, & complicated/time-consuming paper work.
 - Low reimbursement rates for health care services, and lack of or incomplete medical records.
 - Comprehensive assessments and monitoring of all domains of well-being.
 - Complex health plans and numerous gate-keepers.
12. Opportunities for Youth Development include chances for youth to interact with the world in different ways and to take on different roles. Which of the following best explains opportunities for "contribution and service."
- The chance to express oneself through different mediums & settings and engage in learning & play.
 - The chance to have positive influence on others through participation in formal and informal community- and family-based activities.
 - The chance to earn income and be part of the workforce within a safe and comfortable setting.
 - The chance to actively learn and build skills and critically test and discuss ideas and choices.

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13. Which of the following set of comments best reflect the RECIPIENT approach to youth?
- a) "It would be good for you to attend." "That was a good lesson for you to learn." "The court order says you need counseling before making a home visit."
 - b) "What is your opinion on the situation?" "I would like for you to talk with your roommate about decorating your room." "Please share your ideas on how we can better meet your needs."
 - c) "Let's schedule you for life skills class." The case plan says this is what we are going to do next." "All foster youth must attend house meetings."
 - d) "How do you plan to get your chores done while holding down a full-time job?" "Would you be willing to facilitate our next house meeting?" "Our daily house schedule will help you learn responsibility and cooperation."
14. An accurate description of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) would include all but which of the following?
- a) The ACLSA provides an indication of skill level and readiness for living on one's own.
 - b) Using this tool will enable the involved social worker to assist the youth in gaining knowledge to improve themselves following their exit of foster care.
 - c) The ACLSA helps determine a youth's strengths and challenges.
 - d) The ACLSA is most useful when both a caregiver and youth complete it.
15. When sharing results of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) with youth, social workers should avoid which of the following?
- a) Asking them what they think and listening to their answers; asking follow-up questions to understand what they think they are doing well and what they need help with.
 - b) Asking questions starting with "what" and "how" and keeping the conversation present- and future-oriented.
 - c) Telling the youth what to do; asking questions starting with "why;" keeping the conversation focused on their past experiences.
 - d) Asking the caregiver what opportunities they can provide to help the youth demonstrate their skills.
16. Special considerations in supervision of case planning for youth who are differently abled or have other types of special needs include all but which of the following?
- a) Workers and supervisors need to develop an understanding of the laws that were designed to protect people with disabilities
 - b) Caregivers, caseworkers and supervisors and partnering providers have a responsibility to make sure inclusion is occurring.
 - c) Using the disability or special need as a label that prefaces the person.
 - d) Awareness of the unique health care situations including growth, nutrition, infectious diseases, dental care, immunizations, discipline, and sleep patterns.
17. With increased abstract reasoning ability in adolescence, youth begin to establish a sense of the selves they can become, their *possible selves*. These possible selves can include *negative selves* or selves they are afraid they may become. A correct attribute of these *negative selves* would include which of the following?

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- a) May enhance motivation to make more attempts to attain the *positive expected self*.
 - b) Are not part of having a balanced *possible self*.
 - c) Do not contribute to a youth's well-being and self-regulation.
 - d) b and c
18. Which of the following most correctly lists the 5 stages of Social Group Identity Development as applied to racial and ethnic identity?
- a) Racial and ethnic pride, multicultural competence, preparation for racism and discrimination, preserving one's sense of personal continuity, establishing a sense of sameness of oneself.
 - b) Experiencing negative messages, trying on new roles, influence of adults, interaction with institutions and media, creating an identity that is independent of an oppressive system.
 - c) Naive, acceptance, resistance, redefinition, and internalization.
 - d) Self-esteem, self-concept, coping, sustenance to prevail, unity.
19. In providing workers with resources for assisting youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood, supervisors should strive to do all but which of the following
- a) Advocate for and allocate resources which respect the diverse needs of youth.
 - b) Provide workers with requirement for independent research of these resources.
 - c) Ensure that DHS is an effective partner on the Transition Committee.
 - d) Develop and sustain collaborative community partnerships that support youth in transition.
20. Which of the following is a false statement related to transition planning?
- a) Youth in foster care learn life skills at similar rates.
 - b) Transition planning is a process not a one-time event.
 - c) Many transitioning youth have had their development and learning life skills interrupted by moves and changes in their lives.
 - d) Transitioning youth need to have the skills, information and assistance to access essential legal documents.

Test Your Knowledge - PRETEST
IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN TRANSITION – SESSION 2

Your name: _____

Service Area: _____

Position (circle): SWS SAM SWA

Years as a supervisor: _____

Other _____

Years in DHS: _____

Please circle "T" for True or "F" for False:

2. T F Relational permanence emphasizes the importance of a child achieving a legal permanency goal.
2. T F An indicator of positive youth development in the "responsibility and autonomy" domain is that the youth participates in school or community groups.
3. T F Families often become less rejecting and more accepting within about 2 years of learning about their child's LBGT identity.
4. T F A goal for child welfare practitioners is to be "colorblind" in their work with older youth.
5. T F The majority of youth in foster care have a diagnosed mental health problem.

Please circle the letter that corresponds to the best answer to each question below.

6. Choose the phrase that best completes this sentence:
In the "moderate" level of youth participation in decision-making, the youth
 - a) Has joint accountability with adult(s).
 - b) Are present where and when decisions are made.
 - c) Work with adults to solve problems.
 - d) Is accountable for self while interdependent with others for personal success.
7. Which of the following is TRUE about placement stability?
 - a) Most children in foster care experience multiple placements.
 - b) Adolescents tend to be more stable in placements than younger children.
 - c) Most movement occurs in the first six months of a placement.
 - d) Group care placements are more stable than relative placements.
8. Which of the following is an accurate statistic about Iowa youth in foster care?
 - a) About 100 Iowa youth age out of foster care each year.
 - b) More than 50% of Iowa youth in foster care are over age 13.
 - c) Iowa maintains data on health care usage by pregnant and parenting teens.
 - d) More than one-third of Iowa youth in foster care are under the age of 5.

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9. Research on lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/questioning foster youth has shown all but which of the following:
- The protective factor of school in helping to prevent health risks and promoting health development does assist LGBT youth, and often teachers intervene to help.
 - In the New York City child welfare system, 56% of lesbian and gay youth interviewed said they stayed on the streets at times because they felt safer there than in group or foster homes.
 - The more open youth are about sexual orientation, the more likely they are to be victimized.
 - In one study, 42% of LGBT youth in out of home settings who participated in a study of family acceptance and rejection, were either removed or ejected from their homes because of conflict related to LGBT identity.
10. Which of the following most correctly lists the Seven Keys to Successful Collaboration?
- Shared vision, shared youth-centered values, strength-based, maximized youth's choices, maximized youth's ability for informed decision-making, involvement of youth's circle of support, culturally sensitive, accountable to community.
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11. Three types of "people support" that are essential for promoting positive youth development are
- nurturing relationships, mentors, high expectations.
 - strategic, emotional, and motivational.
 - help to set goals, help to discover action strategies, help to develop positive concept of future self.
 - safety, permanency, well-being.
12. Which of the following is true about Waiver programs?
- A youth can only receive assistance from one waiver at a time.
 - If a child ages out of foster care, he/she will no longer remain on the Waiver program.
 - Waiver coverage is less comprehensive than most private health insurance.
 - None of the above are true.
13. Opportunities for Youth Development include chances for youth to interact with the world in different ways and to take on different roles. Which of the following is an accurate statement related to these kinds of activities?
- Services are done with the young person.
 - Opportunities are done by the young person.
 - Supports are done for the young person.
 - Opportunities and supports are done to the young person.
14. Which of the following statements exemplifies approaching youth as a "recipient?"
- "Let's schedule you for life skills class"
 - "Counseling will help you see that you can not live with your mother"
 - "What do you need to have a successful home visit?"
 - "How do you plan to get your chores done while holding down a full-time job?"

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15. Which of the following is true of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA)?
- a) Completion of the ACLSA is now mandated by Iowa law
 - b) The ACLSA has a specific place in the DHS Family Case Plan.
 - c) The ACLSA is meant to be completed *either* by a youth *or* a caregiver
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16. The Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) produces the following scores EXCEPT:
- a) percentage of performance items answered correctly by the youth.
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17. With increased abstract reasoning ability in adolescence, youth begin to establish a sense of the selves they can become, their *possible selves*. These possible selves can include *negative selves* or selves they are afraid they may become. A correct attribute of these *negative selves* would include which of the following?
- a) May enhance motivation to make more attempts to attain the *positive expected self*.
 - b) Are not part of having a balanced *possible self*.
 - c) Do not contribute to a youth's well-being and self-regulation.
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18. Which of the following is NOT TRUE concerning the development of racial and ethnic identity of youth in care?
- a) An indication that the youth has a healthy developing sense of racial and ethnic identity is that the youth chooses to socialize with an integrated, rather than a segregated, peer group.
 - b) A goal of the social worker is to see that youth of color are prepared for racism and discrimination.
 - c) An important part of identity development is preserving a sense of personal continuity despite many changes that one undergoes in terms of defining the self.
 - d) None of the above – all three of these statements are true.
19. Which of the following is NOT TRUE of the ETV – Education and Training Voucher?
- a) The youth must have a high school diploma or GED in order to be eligible.
 - b) The youth must be under age 21 the first time they apply for ETV.
 - c) Youth who graduate from the State Training School and Iowa Juvenile Home are eligible for ETV funds.
 - d) Youth with subsidized guardianships are eligible for the ETV.
20. Which of the following is NOT true about Medicaid coverage for youth aging out of foster care?
- a) Most youth aging out of foster care will remain eligible for Medicaid coverage.
 - b) When closing the case in FACS, nothing further needs to be done to extend Medicaid for eligible youth.
 - c) Youth aging out of foster care can receive Medicaid if they are not participating in Aftercare/PAL.
 - d) Countable income is under 200% federal poverty level.

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Test Your Knowledge IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN TRANSITION

Your name: _____

Service Area: _____

Position (circle): SWS SAM SWA

Years as a supervisor: _____

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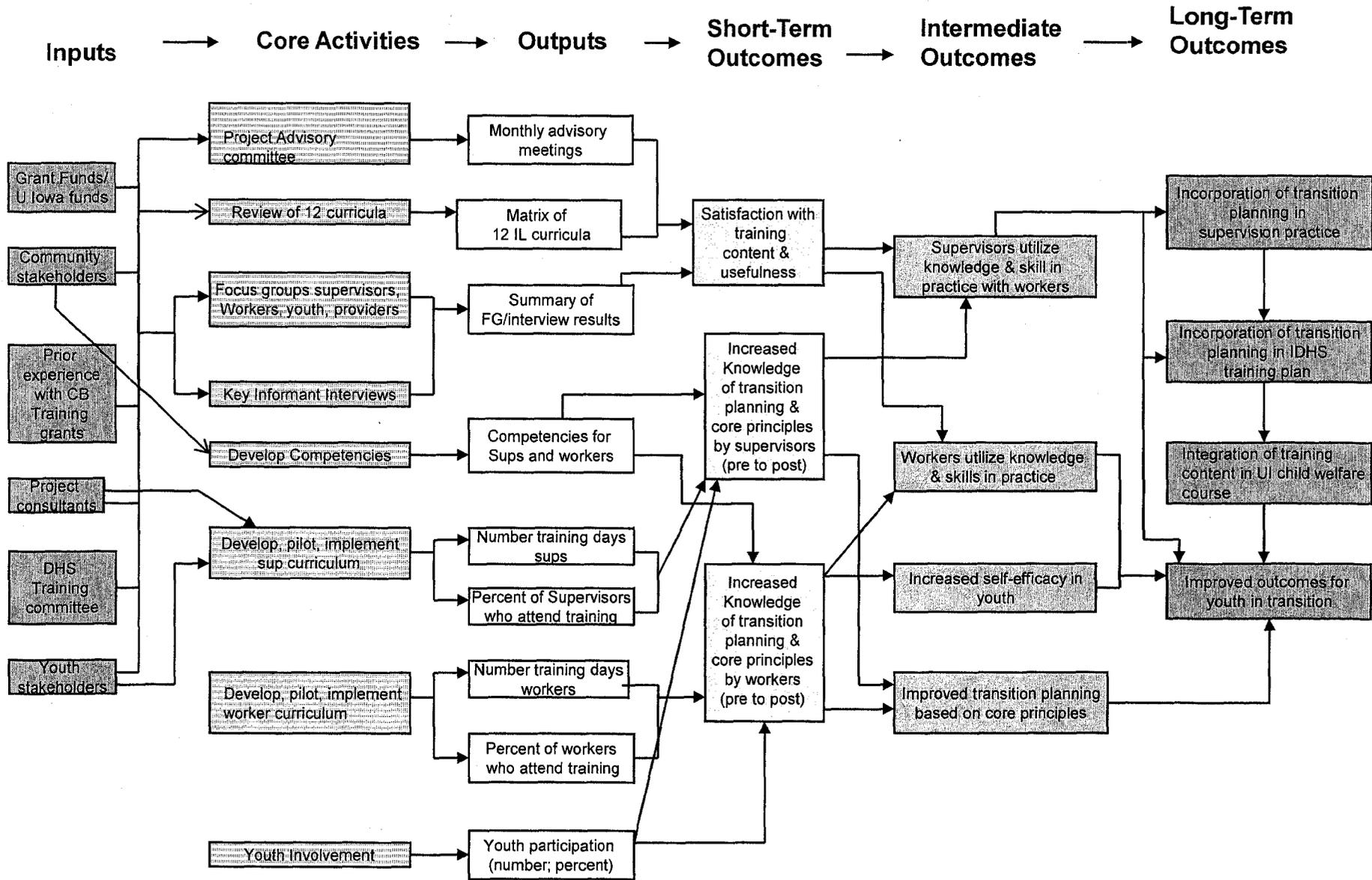
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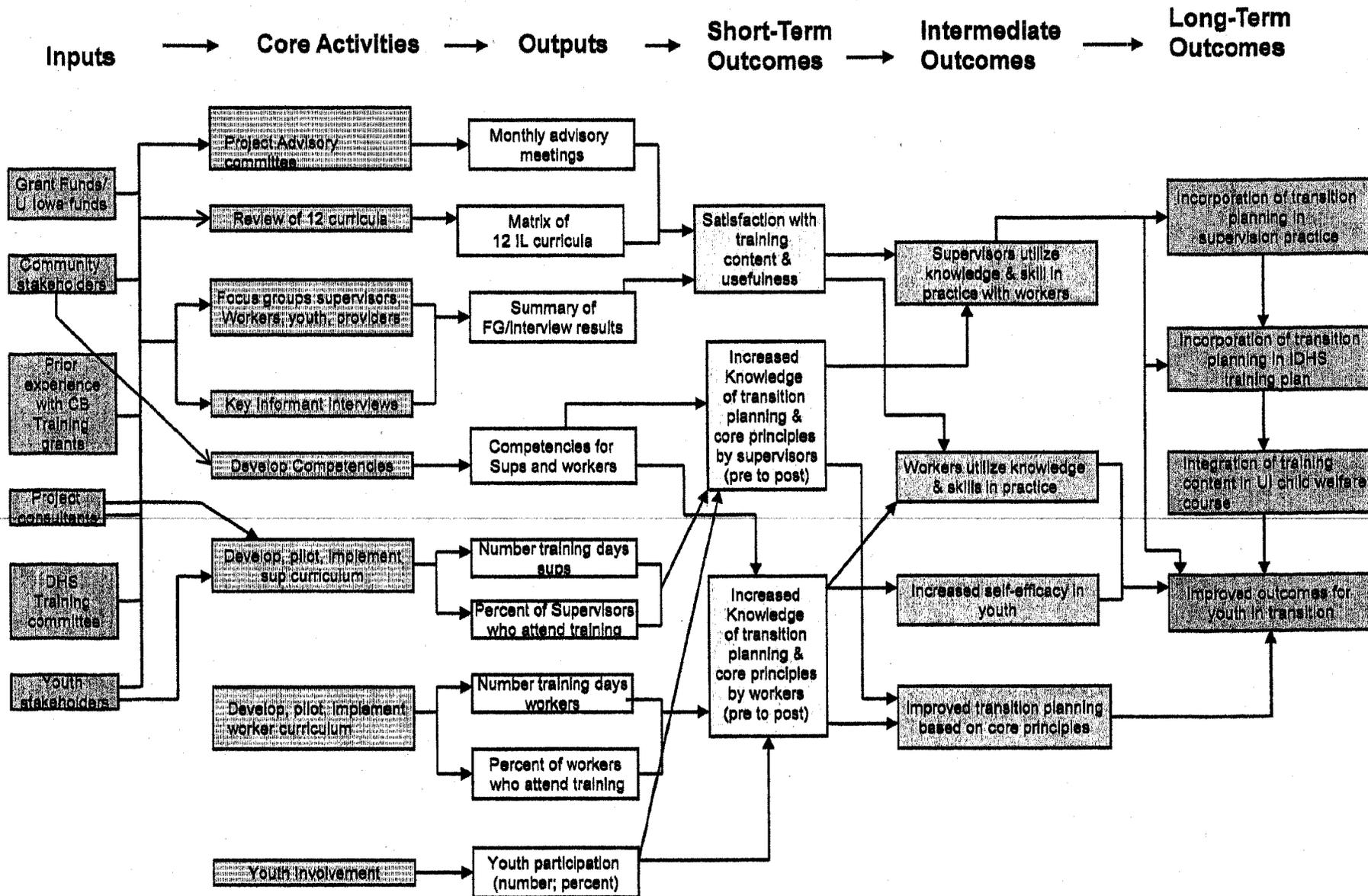
Logic Model for Improving Outcomes for Youth in Transition-University of Iowa/Iowa DHS



Note: Additional Core Activities: Process & Outcome Evaluation, resulting in evaluation plan and evaluation reports;

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