



# Workforce Development & Coaching

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## Introduction

***Building the confidence and competence of child welfare staff gives agencies a foundation that is essential for improving outcomes for children and families. Too often child welfare agencies jump to classroom training as a “quick fix” solution to performance problems or poor outcomes. Research indicates, however, that only a small percentage of learning effectively happens in the classroom, while the majority of learning occurs in practice and through the application of new ideas in the field.<sup>1</sup>***

**W**hen areas needing improvement are identified, staffing issues are often at the root of the concern. For example, the agency may be concerned about low rates of family reunification or struggling with staff turnover. There may be concerns with the quality of supervision, or the lack of connection between the agency’s training program and better practice or improved outcomes.

Developing the workforce should go beyond traditional classroom training to focus on the practical application of new information, receipt of feedback, and opportunities to practice new learning until confidence and mastery are sustained. Whether it is an individual tool, a full learning program, or a coaching initiative, CSF emphasizes these principles to promote learning and skill development.

## Principles for Learning and Skill Development

CSF’s approach includes the latest research on adult learning and building competency in staff, which include the following principles for designing, developing, and delivering learning initiatives within child welfare agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> M Morgan W. MacCall, Michael M. Lombardo, Ann M. Morrison. (1991). The Lessons of Experience: How Successful Executives Develop On the Job- Lexington Books.

<b>Principles for Designing, Developing, and Delivering Learning Initiatives</b>	
<b>AGENCY ENGAGEMENT AND TEAMING</b>	Teaming structures are needed to guide the process. Engaging staff and stakeholders at all levels of the learning process can help to determine the best ways to address the agency's learning needs. For example, having social workers committed to a learning community within the agency depends upon their active engagement and involvement in design and development of learning activities.
<b>COMPETENCY AND SKILL BASED</b>	A customized learning initiative focuses on building skills. Practice and feedback are essential in a learning program and key to all phases of the learning process.
<b>CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT</b>	Having reliable and valid baseline data is critical to understand what is working, available learning opportunities, and gaps in current learning programs.
<b>EVALUATION FOCUSED</b>	We mold each phase of our process – design, development, and delivery – around the steps of an evaluation model, focusing ultimately on outcomes for children and families.
<b>BUILDING A LEARNING CULTURE<sup>2</sup></b>	A learning program must foster agency ownership and pride in the practice. There should also be a culture within the agency where learning and improvement of skills are prized and encouraged. Beyond a single learning event, the program should emphasize continuous learning and ongoing growth. This growth builds sustainability far beyond the delivery of the learning program.
<b>LEARNER-CENTERED<sup>3</sup></b>	An effective approach to learning empowers staff to take the lead in their learning. Giving voice and ownership to the learning process is key to staff's transferring the learning into their day-to-day work with families.
<b>ADULT LEARNING BASED<sup>4</sup></b>	Malcolm Knowles, a leader of adult learning, spells out assumptions, characteristics, and principles of how adults learn. Andragogy, the art and science of adult learning, is central to CSF's approach for the design, development, and delivery of a learning initiative.
<b>STAGES OF CHANGE<sup>5</sup></b>	Change does not take place with one learning event, but rather is a process of adaptation. CSF uses the Stages of Change model to guide learners through the five stages of behavioral change to transfer learning into sustainable practice.
<b>INDIVIDUALIZED</b>	Agencies' needs and performance are often unique, so each phase of a learning approach should consider those differences. The learning program should be customized to the specific agency's needs and delivered within the existing infrastructure to assure a smooth delivery and sustainability.

<sup>2</sup> Watkins, Karen E. and Marsick, Victoria (1993). *Sculpting the learning organization: Lessons in the art and science of systemic change*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>3</sup> Wright, Gloria Brown (2011). "Student-Centered Learning in Higher Education" (PDF). *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 23 (3): 93–94. ISSN 1812-9129.

<sup>4</sup> Knowles, Malcolm; Holton, E. F., III; Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (6th ed.). Burlington, MA: Elsevier. ISBN 0750678372. LCCN 2004024356.

<sup>5</sup> Prochaska, JO; Velicer, WF. The Transtheoretical Model of Health Behavior Change. *Am J Health Promot* 1997 Sep–Oct;12(1):38–48. Accessed 2009 Mar 18

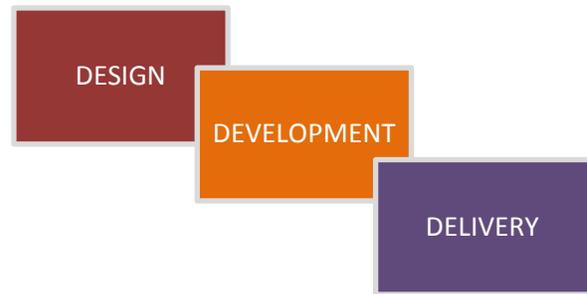
Miller, William R. (Ed); Heather, Nick (Ed). (1998). *Treating addictive behaviors*, 2nd ed., (pp. 3-24). New York, NY, US: Plenum Press, xii, 357 pp. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-1934-2\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-1934-2_1)

## CSF Approach to Workforce Development and Coaching

CSF has been a recognized leader in training and coaching in child welfare since 1991. Over the years, CSF is proud to have provided successful child welfare learning and coaching solutions to local, state, and federal agencies nationwide, resulting in demonstrated positive outcomes.

Our team consists of leaders in the industry who have expertise in every facet of child welfare and can design, develop and/or deliver tailored learning initiatives to agencies. CSF can help child welfare agencies do any or all of the following.

- ◆ Design learning programs and initiatives.
- ◆ Develop tools, materials and aides.
- ◆ Deliver and implement learning initiatives.



### Design

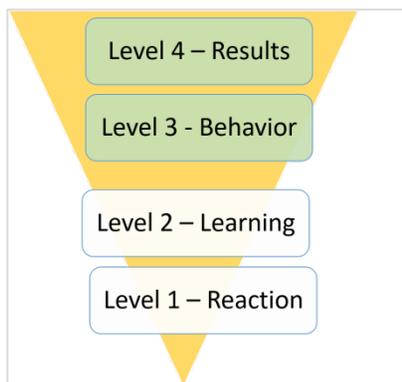
#### *Design Team*

Key activities in the design phase include bringing together a design team, charged with defining the goals and objectives of the initiative and planning the content and learning modalities for the overall approach.

For an organization to change effectively, there must be staff commitment at the project design level. Therefore, it is important to organize a design team that incorporates perspectives from leadership, staff, and stakeholders. CSF helps the design team work together to define goals, objectives, and desired outcomes.

#### *Gap Analysis*

At the beginning of the design process, the design team should conduct a gap analysis that accurately identifies the staff skills and capabilities that need further development. The design team thoroughly explores these gaps in performance and identifies the root causes that need to be addressed for change to occur. This information serves as the connecting thread throughout each of the phases: design, development, and delivery.



#### *Learning Initiative and Evaluation*

The design team also develops goals, objectives, and desired outcomes for the learning initiative. Kirkpatrick's Four Level Evaluation Model,<sup>6</sup> which outlines results in four key areas, is useful in this process. The design team reviews the results in the following four levels.

<sup>6</sup> Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1996). Evaluation. In R.L. Craig, & L.R. Bittel (Eds.), *Training & Development Handbook*. American Society for Training and Development, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.

- ◆ **Level 4 – Results (Child and Family Outcomes):** The design team studies the impact of agency practice on children and families. This information often comes from data reports and performance data available from within the jurisdiction. The team identifies the key outcomes it wants to change as a result of the learning initiative.
- ◆ **Level 3 – Behavior (Caseworker and Supervisory Key Behaviors and Learning Content):** Next, the design team reaches agreement on the specific staff behaviors that are the most likely to have a positive impact on identified child and family outcomes. CSF then works with the team to design content for the learning initiative to support new ideas, information, and practices.
- ◆ **Level 2 – Learning (Select Modalities for Learning):** Next, the team decides which modalities will best work for those staff who have been identified to participate in the learning initiative. Details about the learning environment, setting, and tools that best serve the learning content are outlined.
- ◆ **Level 1 – Reaction (Select Activities that Work):** In the design phase final level, the team designs the actual practice activities. The aim is for these to be interactive, user-friendly, and relatable so staff will have maximum engagement and positive experience. Examples might include classroom exercises, virtual scenarios, or individual or partner-based skill activities.

#### Examples of Modalities Used by CSF

**Classroom Learning** – traditional classroom learning experiences that support group and individual engagement with information and ongoing development.

**Distance Learning** – online modules and forums that allow staff in different locations to participate in learning programs together.

**Blended Learning and Training** – blended learning programs that combine online digital media with classroom methods, allowing the student to benefit from structured classroom curriculum as well as self-paced practice and independent learning.

**Coaching** – observation, modeling, and providing feedback and support around learning initiatives. CSF works with agencies to incorporate best practices outlined by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) model<sup>7</sup> into their plan:

- Coaches are selected who are fluent in the details of the learning program.
- Coaches use multiple sources of information for observation of practice.
  - Coaches directly observe practitioners using the innovation.
  - Coaches review records to inform coaching.
  - Coaching information is obtained from interviews with others associated with the practitioner.
- Coaches provide modeling and feedback directly related to observations.
- Coaching, modeling, and feedback should be timely, specific, actionable, and tied to expectations in the learning initiative.
- Evaluation should provide evidence that practitioners' abilities to deliver the intervention routinely improve as a result of coaching.
- Information from coaching efforts is used to strengthen training and incorporated into CQI efforts.

<sup>7</sup> National Implementation Research Network, Blasé, K, Nagom, S, Duda, M and Fixen, D (2015) *Implementation Drivers: Assessing Best Practices*. Retrieved from <http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/sites/implementation.fpg.unc.edu/files/NIRN-ImplementationDriversAssessingBestPractices.pdf>

The design phase is complete when the agency and the design team have the blueprint of the learning initiative, including specific goals, outcomes, modalities, and an outline for skill development.

## Development

### *Classroom Learning Materials*

Having clear, understandable materials for both the facilitator and the learner so that learning sessions run smoothly and can be repeated over time with consistency and clarity is critical to the learning activities. Classroom materials should be designed to be interactive and practice-based, incorporating examples and topics directly related to the experiences and needs of the participants.

- Facilitator Guides
- Participant Guides
- Power Point Presentations
- Classroom Tools

### *Blended Learning and Training/Distance Learning Products*

Agencies often find that that virtual products offer added flexibility for participants, allowing them to access knowledge when and as often as it is needed. Online coaching and training are among the options in this area. Interactive e-learning courses and activities incorporate realistic scenarios and first-person learning, which accentuates transfer of skills to everyday practice. Online support materials are developed to be engaging and accessible to learners. Whether the agency is enhancing existing learning initiatives with online options or implementing an entire online learning program, having online products that are useful, accessible, and effective for staff will likely enhance the agency's ability to reach its staff effectively.

- Online Courses
- Interactive Practice Activities
- Selection of Learning Platforms
- Videos
- Indexed References

### *Coaching Products*

Coaching is a key element of CSF learning initiatives. We design coaching products that support successful transfer of classroom skills and knowledge into practice. Our coaching products include easy-to-follow guides, exercises, and job aides, which allow learners to practice within the context of their everyday work.

- Self-Assessments
- Practice Learning Guides
- Job Aides
- Practice Activities
- Progress Measurement Tools

## Delivery

The delivery phase is the implementation of the program, product, or initiative decided in the design phase. The ultimate goal of the delivery phase is to ensure that gaps in agency performance are appropriately addressed while monitoring to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved.

CSF's focus is on the practical transference of knowledge and skills to actual day-to-day practice, and it follows a very basic format that begins with instruction, then modeling, practice and, finally, feedback.

### *Learning Community*

It is essential that staff be given the space and time to practice skills in a supportive environment after instruction. Establishing a learner-centered approach within a supportive learning community encourages collaboration and ongoing intra-agency support of the learning goals and is characterized by:

- ◆ leadership that protects time for staff to learn and practice;
- ◆ an environment where dialog and interaction are encouraged;
- ◆ partnership and collaboration that emphasizes ongoing learning;
- ◆ commitment to productive, creative, and useful time together;
- ◆ willingness to take some risks;
- ◆ responsibility to learn from one another; and
- ◆ ownership for continuous learning.

This approach encourages staff to continue to support ongoing practice of learned skills and transference of learning to new staff over time.

### *Effective Coaching*

According to the latest research from the Center for Creative Leadership, staff absorb the greatest amount of knowledge not in the classroom, but in practicing and working on solutions to questions and problems within their day-to-day practice and in partnership with peers. Coaching is an essential part of this process. CSF uses a coaching model that emphasizes on-the-job observation, modeling, feedback, and support.

The delivery of coaching should be specified in the design plan. Depending on the staff time and requirements, three different coaching models are offered to agencies. These models are often combined to support group, as well as individual, learning:

- ◆ **Group Coaching:** Periodic, small-group discussions, structured to encourage shared learning between the coach and the participants.
- ◆ **Individual Coaching:** One-on-one sessions that entail observation, modeling, and feedback of learned behaviors and practices, and support individual learning over time.
- ◆ **Virtual Coaching:** Online, interactive exercises that allow the learner to practice skills in a safe virtual environment.

The CSF coaching model emphasizes best practices for on-the-job monitoring, modeling of skills, and giving useful feedback to help staff own, take responsibility for, and feel empowered by their own change. In this model, we believe that coaches should:

- ◆ Observe, partner, and model in the field, in small groups and/or in the office.
- ◆ Encourage planned, purposeful work, and scheduling.
- ◆ Assist practitioners in developing schedules with built-in time slots for rearranging tasks not accomplished on the scheduled date.
- ◆ Actively coach on-the-move – in the car, in court, in family meetings, or in staff meetings.
- ◆ Seize every opportunity to engage with the learners to help them feel supported and safe in their continuous learning environment.

Through this model, coaches allow staff to take responsibility for their own skill development, engage deeply with the material within the job context, and be accountable for the knowledge and skills they gain.

### ***Monitoring Outcomes for Success***

No learning initiative can be successful without monitoring outcomes and making adjustments to best meet an agency's needs. While specific decisions will be made by the agency, consistent with the principles of implementation science, it is important to pilot the efforts on a limited basis before full implementation.

In our design phase, we use the Kirkpatrick's model to define desired outcomes, behaviors, knowledge gain, and end-user reactions for our initiative and design evaluation tools to measure outcomes in these four areas. During the delivery phase, we implement the evaluation and regularly collect and analyze results to determine the effectiveness of our design.

- ◆ **Pilot:** Data are gathered during the pilot to understand whether the overall process is meeting the goals defined in the design stage and improving the quality of casework and supervisory practice resulting in improved child and family outcomes. To proceed to full delivery, we work with the agency to better understand if: 1) trainers and coaches are leading the activities as expected; 2) staff are positively engaged in the activities; 3) there was knowledge gain demonstrated through progress on self-assessments; 4) certain desired behaviors can be seen in casework and supervisory practice; and 5) there is initial evidence that children and families are positively impacted.
- ◆ **Full Delivery:** Having met the pilot criteria, full delivery means bringing the learning process to scale, continuing to monitor data, and verifying that there is fidelity to the model and that outcomes are being achieved, thus helping to ensure sustainability.

CSF partners with child welfare agencies to design, develop, and deliver workforce development initiatives that improve agency practice, increase workforce capacity, and result in better outcomes for children and families.