

Evaluation of “The Affects of Child Abuse and Neglect on Normal Childhood Development”

A workshop presented by The Missouri Training Program for Child Welfare Workers

November, 2005

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November 28, 2005

On November 21, 2005, The Missouri Training Program for Child Welfare Workers (MTP) presented a workshop in Buffalo, MO entitled “The Affects of Child Abuse and Neglect on Normal Childhood Development” to Missouri Children’s Division employees of Circuit 4 of the MTP project. Twenty-eight employees attended.

Prior to the workshop, 11 competencies were anticipated to be addressed in the workshop. Most competencies came from the an analysis of the proposed objectives of the workshop and are closely related to some of the 140 child welfare worker competencies identified through the work of the MTP to date. Other competencies were selected specifically from the content of the presentation. These competencies were worded for use in a retrospective pre-test-post-test design using a self-report questionnaire with closed-ended questions. Attendees were instructed to complete the questionnaire at the end of the program. The questions directed attendees to identify their level of agreement with statements asserting knowledge of and practice in the field of child abuse and neglect. In addition, three open-ended questions were asked, and attendees were asked to indicate whether they had received child abuse and neglect training in the past. Finally, respondents were requested to identify their job classification and work specialization. Responses to all of these questions form the basis of this evaluation. (Please see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.)

At the end of the workshop, questionnaires were collected and submitted for analysis. Twenty-four questionnaires were returned (85.71 % of the 28 attendees) with whole or partial responses.

Characteristics of Respondents

Job Classification: Respondents were offered five closed-ended alternatives and an “other” alternative to report their job classification. Of the 24 respondents, 17 (70.8%) clearly identified themselves as Social Services Worker II, five (20.8% each) identified themselves as Social Services Worker I, and one (4.2%) identified himself or herself as Supervisor II. One (4.2%) offered no response.

Work Specialization: Respondents were offered four closed-ended alternatives and an “other” alternative for to report their work specialization. Of the 24 respondents, eight (33.3%) identified themselves as Family Permanency workers, five (20.8%), identified themselves as Generic workers, four each (16.7% each) identified themselves as Investigations and Other workers (with two noting

“family centered services,” and one each noting “AC/FCS” and “alternative care”), and one (4.2%) identified himself or herself as Adoption / Licensing. Two respondents (8.3%) offered no response.

Prior training in child abuse and neglect: Of the 24 respondents, 20 (83.3%) indicated that they had received previous training in child abuse and neglect, and one (4.2%) indicated that he or she had not received previous training in substance abuse. Of those who indicated receiving prior training, responses to the question of when they had received this training included “Have it all the time” and “1 month [ago].”

Responses to the Closed-ended Questions on Competencies

Data collected regarding the 11 competencies lent themselves to matched t-test comparisons, comparing self-reported levels before the workshop to those after the workshop. Means, standard deviations, t-test values and levels of significance for each of the six items and for an aggregate of the specific items for this training (Item 1 + Item 2 + ... + Item 11) are displayed in Table 1, below.

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

Item	n for paired contrast	Pretest average	Posttest average	Gain (loss)	standard deviation of gain	t-value (17df)	$p \leq$
1. I know the potential effects of abuse, neglect and sexual abuse on a child’s development.	24	3.79	4.325	.46	.658	3.412 (23df)	.002
2. I understand and can identify the traumatic outcomes of the separation and placement experience of children.	24	3.75	4.08	.33	.482	3.391 (23df)	.003
3. I understand the importance of normal, reciprocal attachments of children with their significant caregivers.	24	3.88	4.33	.46	.721	3.114 (23df)	.005

4. I understand the negative impact of inconsistent living arrangements on children and the necessity of reasonable efforts to prevent placements disruption and promote timely reunification.	24	3.96	4.17	.21	.415	2.46 0 (23d f)	.022
5. I understand how the strengths perspective and the empowerment approaches can influence growth, development, and behavior change.	24	3.79	4.08	.29	.464	3.07 7 (23d f)	.005
6. I am capable of gathering appropriate information from the family and other sources to support or refute an allegation or child abuse or neglect.	24	3.88	4.00	.13	.338	1.81 3 (23d f)	.083
7. I can identify social and family dynamics in cases of abuse and neglect; develop collaborative relationships to empower families; promote joint case assessment, planning and service provision; and provide a model for appropriate adult-child interactions.	24	3.83	4.13	.29	.464	3.07 7 (23d f)	.005
8. I can conduct effective and accurate needs assessments, including indicators of child abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.	24	3.79	4.00	.21	.509	2.00 5 (23d f)	.057
9. I can use all available relevant information to formulate a written service agreement with the family to address identified risk factors.	24	3.83	3.96	.13	.448	1.33 6 (23d f)	.185
10. I can use all available relevant information to formulate a written safety	24	4.00	4.00	.00	.295	.000	1.00

plan with the family to address safety issues.						(23d f)	0
11. I can help set expectations for children who demonstrate problems with development and relationships as a result of loss of, abuse from, or neglect from their parent(s) or primary caregivers.	24	3.63	4.04	.42	.584	3.498 (23d f)	.002
Column averages	24	3.83	4.09	.26			
Aggregate scores (Item 1 + Item 2 + ... + Item 11)	24	42.13	45.04	2.91	4.021	3.554 (23d f)	.002

There is evidence, trusting the methodology, of a statistically significant gain on seven of the 11 items—Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 11—and on the aggregate scores. The gain on Items 6, 8 and 9 failed to reach standard levels of statistical significance. There was no gain or loss evident on Item 10. Regarding the average scores across all items, as a group respondents reported a level just below “agree” (average = 3.83) with the positive assertions associated with each question presented in the pre-workshop condition, and they reported a level just above “agree” (value = 4.09, with 4.00 = agree and 5.00 = strongly agree) with the positive assertions presented in the post-workshop condition.

Looking at individual profiles, a majority of respondents indicated that they had not gained from pre-workshop to post-workshop on any of the 11 individual items associated with the training. The range was from 62.50% to 91.67% of respondents reporting no gain on any specific item. Table 2 presents information on the number of respondents who indicated no change from pre- to post-workshop, the number who indicated favorable change (gain) and the number who indicated unfavorable change (loss).

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

Item	n for paired contrast	# no change	% no change	# gain	% gain	# loss	% loss
1. I know the potential effects of abuse, neglect and sexual abuse on a child’s development.	24	15	62.50%	9	37.5%	0	0.00%

2. I understand and can identify the traumatic outcomes of the separation and placement experience of children.	24	16	66.67	8	33.33	0	0.00
3. I understand the importance of normal, reciprocal attachments of children with their significant caregivers.	24	15	62.50	9	37.5	0	0.00
4. I understand the negative impact of inconsistent living arrangements on children and the necessity of reasonable efforts to prevent placements disruption and promote timely reunification.	24	19	79.17	5	20.83	0	0.00
5. I understand how the strengths perspective and the empowerment approaches can influence growth, development, and behavior change.	24	17	70.83	7	29.17	0	0.00
6. I am capable of gathering appropriate information from the family and other sources to support or refute an allegation or child abuse or neglect.	24	21	87.50	3	12.50	0	0.00
7. I can identify social and family dynamics in cases of abuse and neglect; develop collaborative relationships to empower families; promote joint case assessment, planning and service provision; and provide a model for appropriate adult-child interactions.	24	17	70.83	7	29.17	0	0.00
8. I can conduct effective and accurate needs assessments, including indicators of child abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.	24	20	83.33	4	16.67	0	0.00
9. I can use all available relevant information to formulate a written service agreement with the family to address identified risk factors.	24	22	91.67	2	8.33	0	0.00
10. I can use all available relevant information to formulate a written safety plan with the family to address safety issues.	24	22	91.67	1	4.17	1	4.17
11. I can help set expectations for children who demonstrate problems with development and relationships as a result of loss of, abuse from, or neglect from their parent(s) or primary caregivers.	24	15	62.50	9	37.50	0	0.00

Responses to Open-ended Questions

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

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

Of the 24 response sheets returned, 21 (87.50%) displayed written responses to this question. Of those responses, direct reference or strong implication was made to the following keywords / key issues. (Note that the number of responses may not sum to 21 due to some responses being counted in more than one category.)

- Windows of opportunity (6 responses)
- Attachment, bonding (4)
- Brain development (4)
- Nurturing environment (2)
- Not classified above (8)

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

Of the 24 response sheets returned, 17 (70.83%) displayed written responses to this question. Of those responses, direct reference or strong implication was made to the following keywords / key issues. (Note that the number of responses may not sum to 17 due to some responses being counted in more than one category.)

- Brain development (7 responses)
- Personal experiences relayed (3)
- Windows of opportunity (2)
- Not classified above (7)

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

Of the 24 response sheets returned, 10 (41.67%) displayed written responses to this question. Of those responses, direct reference or strong implication was made to the following keywords / key issues. (Note that the number of responses may not sum to 10 due to some responses being counted in more than one category.)

- None / N/A (4 responses)
- [Too much utilization of] PowerPoint (3)
- [Too much] reading [of presentation] (2)
- Not classified above (1)

Conclusions

This first presentation of the workshop, “The Affects of Child Abuse and Neglect on Normal Childhood Development” appears to have lead to some positive gain on the part of attendees. On seven of 11 closed-ended items measuring self-reported understanding and competency, questionnaire respondents displayed statistically significant gain as a group—this in spite of the fact that on none of the items did a majority of respondents report gain in understanding and competency. However, on four of the 11 closed-ended items, statistically significant gain was not evident. Responses to open-ended questions revealed that the information presented on brain development and “windows of opportunity” resonated most with attendees.

Even more substantial gain might have occurred but for a number of reasons: the content or the presentation features of the workshop; characteristics of the attendees; sensitivity of the evaluation instrument; or some combination of these reasons. Regarding the workshop itself, seasoned MTP personnel were responsible for the design and implementation of the workshop, so continuity would be anticipated absent any reported change by MTP personnel. Regarding the characteristics of attendees, only one respondent reported that he or she had not received training in child abuse and neglect previously. The training of the others may have “taken” well: Indeed, questionnaire respondents reported an average just shy of a value of 4 (“agree”) with positive assertions of understanding and competency associated with the 11 closed-ended questions. This helps create something of a “ceiling effect” prior to the program which restricts measured gain. Regarding the sensitivity of the evaluation instrument, prior evaluations with similar questionnaires have yielded strongly significant results, and a number of statistically significant results were found in the present work.