



**ACADEMY  
for  
Workforce  
Development**  
*Learning is the Key to Leading*

State of Connecticut

CFSP - 2020 - 2024

Training Plan

## Training Plan:

The DCF Academy for Workforce Development is committed to fostering the professional development of agency staff, community providers, undergraduate and graduate students. The Academy takes pride in the ability to partner, collaborate and plan with agency staff at all levels, community providers, local colleges and universities in order to develop high quality training programs. These entities are regularly consulted and encouraged to provide information and insight related to the curricula developed by Academy staff. This is done in an effort to ensure the material covered will enhance the assessments and intervention measures provided by staff to the families and children served.

It is worthy to note, that the Academy changed its name from the Training Academy to the Academy for Workforce Development to emphasize a shift away from didactic training and towards a focus on professional development. This shift, which is based on research around Implementation Science, is in recognition of the fact that training in and of itself does not change behavior. To this end, training has to be inclusive of other activities including but not limited to coaching, mentoring, internship opportunities and the creation of venues that support critical thinking.

Below are several program areas that highlight our partnerships and collaboration for which the division will continue to strengthen. All of the efforts below connect to improvements identified in the CFSR, PIP, and Juan F. with a focus on ensuring our workforce provides the highest quality of services to children and families.

### MSW Field Program:

The MSW Field Program grew out of a need for additional staff development opportunities for those DCF employees seeking an MSW degree. The intent of the program is to foster support of our social workers by allowing them to meet their university requirements of 20 hours of field instruction within their regular 40-hour work week. A major component of the program is that it allows the social workers to use their place of employment as their field instruction, while maintaining their current caseload within their current unit. The students are provided with an outside LCSW field instructor to bridge the gap between what's learned in the classroom and connecting to the field placement. Through the internship placements, students are provided with weekly supervision, which identify gaps in service delivery to focus on throughout the 9 month program. Since the last submission of this plan, 35 staff participated in this program.

A newly constructed partnership between UConn School of Social Work (SSW) and DCF is building a pathway for DCF employed students to obtain an MSW degree through the development of an employed student unit. This new pathway will potentially provide 20-25 DCF staff the flexibility to attend classes' online, evenings, weekends and possibly classes held at the agency location. The school will identify child welfare designated electives such as Substance Abuse, Child and Adolescent Trauma, and Women Children and Families studies to support cross-training in current child welfare practices. The Academy will focus its efforts on ways to provide incentives to DCF managers who volunteer to participate as a field instructor for these students over the course of a year. Ideas include but are not limited to developing a yearly conference or seminar for all field instructors within the agency utilizing renowned educational speakers. Similar to the students, we will explore the possibility of UCONN providing courses specific to child welfare that staff may receive Continuing Education Credits. There will be additional opportunities between UCONN and the Academy to plan and develop this program.

### DCF Stipend Program:

The Department of Children and Families offers a paid internship opportunity for external students pursuing a BSW or MSW degree. In this competitive program, students in their final year of a BSW or MSW program are selected to participate in an internship process in a regional office where they receive orientation, training, supervision, and real-time experience in child welfare activities. The students are provided with a \$5000 stipend to offset the cost of their education. Upon graduation and receiving a recommendation from their field supervisor, students must repeat a background check and an interview process. If successfully completed, students are prioritized in the hiring process. If no positions are available three months after their graduation date, students are released from any obligation to

wait for employment or repay the stipend. This strategy will increase the number of BSW / MSW students who apply to the Department and increase the number of qualified applicants being considered for employment. From 2014-present 45 people have participated in this program. Of the 45 students, 24 are currently employed at DCF. We anticipate 6 additional interns will join our workforce by August 2019. At this time, 3 interns are seeking advance standing within their schools and have deferred their higher date and will seek employment within a year. Out of the 45 student interns, 12 are not currently employed with the agency; due to fulfilling their contractual obligation for employment within the agency and then opting to seek employment elsewhere. In some instances they were not offered employment due to a hiring freeze within the agency. The Academy recognizes the value of the stipend interns and the investment placed on their ability to be successful within the agency. Moving forward, a tracking mechanism will be developed that will allow the Academy to gain clearer information on the career trajectory of the students upon completion of their internship.

The DCF and UCONN SSW are planning for future collaboration, establishing lasting pathways for field placement opportunities, strengthening and supporting a field supervision model and specialized child welfare curricula. In true partnership, DCF and UConn SSW, will provide shared stipend opportunities (\$2000 from DCF and \$2000 from UConn) for MSW students, entering their final year, to complete an internship at DCF and upon successful completion of the program will be required to apply for a position at DCF and agree to work for at least two years. This opportunity will continue to build upon the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) traineeship program and provide support to the students through group supervision, participation in seminars for students and field instructors and enhanced child welfare curricula to improve the quality of public child welfare practices and outcomes.

In addition to these various educational opportunities for staff and external students, the Academy will focus its efforts on enhancing the professional development of the DCF field instructors. In partnership with faculty from UCONN and Southern Connecticut State University, the Academy will expand the amount of professional development days offered during the academic year. These professional development days will aim to deepen the field instructors understanding of current issues impacting the field of child welfare i.e. trauma, establishment of permanency for younger children, and racial and ethnic disparities. In addition, the Academy will look more closely at the support provided to the UCONN field instructors during the course of the academic year. An initial step would be to hold a focus group with field instructors to gather suggestions around ways to strengthen the support they receive from the Academy in order to aid in their success with the interns.

#### High School Student internships:

This partnership began in July 2018 in response to a request from Capital Prep High School to allow students to intern at the Academy. This is in an effort to foster interest and potentially encourage students to choose a path leading into the Social Work field or any area focused on serving children and families. The Student's internship consists of providing a well-rounded array of interviews/ discussions with various Department personnel including but not limited to the Deputy Commissioners, Social Work Supervisors, the Director of Multicultural Affairs and Immigration Practice, the Director of the Academy for Workforce Development and the Executive Legal Team. These experiences provide the students with an understanding of the various roles and responsibilities undertaken by the agency to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Students attended training classes which were of interest i.e., Microsoft Word, Excel, Pivot Tables, CPR and First Aid. The thirty (30) day internship culminates in a completed project which benefits the Academy's Training staff and aides in their presentation in both in-service and pre-service classes. Last year the students developed a teambuilding and icebreaker reference guide. This was reviewed and distributed to all of the trainers for utilization in the classroom. The feedback received from the 2018 Interns was positive and encouraged future classmates to intern with DCF. The hope for the Academy is to foster interest and add direction to the student's future educational plans to embrace the Social Services field and encourage youth of color and male students to gravitate in this area.

The Academy will again take on Interns in July 2019 – August 2019 with the same focus as last year in addition to emphasizing the importance of Social Work and how best to serve children and families.

The desire is to continue this partnership with Capital Prep and expand to additional local High Schools to provide insight and learning opportunities for the students.

#### Pre-Service:

The Academy for Workforce Development continues to offer pre-service training for new social workers who are hired to serve/support children and families in the regional offices. The pre-service training program is designed to prepare each staff member for effective protective service/child welfare practice. The training is 32 days consisting of 24 course topics. In an effort to streamline the training process, and provide structured shadowing opportunities that comport with the training courses, the Academy has developed an onboarding process for pre-service training. The model affords the new trainees the opportunity to participate in a full week of structured shadowing in their assigned area offices. Week two through six, they participate in shadowing one day a week typically on a Monday, and then attend trainings Tuesday-Friday. This model provides the staff with an opportunity to participate in specific activities that align with the time period the course content is offered. During this period of training, the trainees complete approximately 20 out of the 32 days of training covering 16 topic areas. They complete training in 5 months instead of 10 months, under the previous model.

In addition to the onboarding process within pre-service, closer attention will be given to re-evaluating the courses offered in this track. First, priority focus will be placed on creating ways to lessen the amount of classes that are offered to the trainees. The current pre-service program is very robust however, an assessment will be made to determine if there is a need to shift some of the classes to the in-service training program. Additionally, the Academy will review more closely the order in which the classes are offered to ensure the learning experience compliments the field experience. Finally, a thorough review of the competencies and skills within each course will be completed to ensure they align with the newly articulated strategic goals and in the context of the 21st Century Child Welfare System under development by the Children's Bureau.

Transfer of learning activities will also be strengthened using a 2-2-2 model for all of the pre-service courses. This model requires class participants to be provided with a brief multiple choice questionnaire of the most salient points learned two days after completing the course. Two weeks later they are sent a true or false questionnaire highlighting other points within the course. Then two months after the course is completed, participants are given two open ended questions asking if they were able to apply what they learned in class to practice. This process ensures that concepts from the course are reinforced and applied on a regular basis.

#### Simulation training:

Simulation training is a vital piece of the pre-service training program. Partnerships and collaboration with CSSD for space, and FAVOR (family advocacy agency), who train family members to serve as role players and assist in the scenario development, has made this experience successful for the trainee population. As we advance in this process and identify additional courses to add a simulation component, the continued partnership with these two entities will be vital. The Academy is exploring with our Youth Advisory Boards the ability to involve older teens in the simulation training. This will be an important aspect, allowing staff to gain experience interviewing, active listening skills, engaging and assessing youth in a safe and structured environment. They will receive immediate feedback directly from the youth that will hopefully assist them moving forward. The discussions to explore youth involvement with local agencies such as the Boys and Girls Village - Work to Learn program in Bridgeport, Our Piece of the Pie in Harford and several members of the departments youth advisory board.

#### In-service:

The Academy continues to offer a myriad of in-service classes on a continuous basis to agency staff and community providers. Staff and providers are able to view all course offerings through our online course catalog which is updated quarterly. Staff registration and tracking of the classes occurs through our learned management system, SABA. To date, SABA does not allow individuals outside of the agency to register, therefore, providers register for classes using a registration platform called Eventzilla. This current fiscal year, the Academy has offered 258 unique

training courses to agency staff and providers. The Academy has found it to be extremely beneficial to have community providers and other state agency partners participate in the training classes. This opportunity lends itself to an enriching learning experience affording people the opportunity to share ideas, and philosophies. The development, execution and success of many of these courses is due to the formal partnerships the Academy has made with agency staff, and external partners including but not limited to CAFAF, FAVOR, Probate Court, Office of Early Childhood, Child First, True Colors and Birth to Three.

Over the course of the next several years, the Academy will deepen its focus on the strategic goals of the agency:

- Keep children and youth safe with focus on most vulnerable populations
- Engage our workforce through an organizational culture of mutual support,
- Connect systems and processes to achieve timely permanency
- Contribute to child and family wellbeing by enhancing assessments and interventions
- Eliminate racial and ethnic disparate outcomes within our department

One priority of focus will be the development of individualized training needs assessments that comport with the agency strategic goals. These assessments will be provided to staff in order for them to identify training needs that will strengthen their understanding, increase their knowledge and assist in their operationalization of the strategic goals. The data from these assessments will afford the Academy the ability to develop courses that align with the mission and direction of the department. During this process, the Academy will broaden and strengthen its relationships with sister agencies for the purposes of cross training. This will undoubtedly create an atmosphere where knowledge at varying levels internal and external to the agency can be shared.

Currently, the agency's second strategic goal: "Engage our workforce through an organizational culture of mutual support", is being conceptualized as the Academy develops a series of wellness courses. These courses will focus on supporting the mental and physical health of staff. EAP has been consulted and has agreed to partner with the Academy to share resources and offer courses.

Strengthening of supervision will also be a focal point within the Academy over the next several years. Currently newly promoted staff receive Mastering the Art of Child Welfare Supervision Series.

The training content includes the following:

- Transitioning from Social Worker to Supervisor
- Building Staff Capacity and Promoting Excellence in Performance
- Building the Foundation for Unit Performance
- Case Consultation and Supervision

This Series continues to assist newly promoted supervisors in becoming more self-aware and self-reflective of themselves professionally. Many of the discussions allow participants to examine how and why they respond to certain situations, or how they make certain decisions. The course utilizes several different inventories that focus on the issues of conflict, empathy, learning styles and power. Participants have found the inventories to be applicable to several facets of the work and allow them to see themselves from a different vantage point.

As an enhancement to the Series, during this past fiscal year the Academy began developing and piloting a Supervisory Coaching Program for newly promoted supervisors. The primary goal of the Program is to support and develop newly hired supervisors with their transition to the supervisory role. Participants will be assigned to a Child Welfare Trainer who will serve as a Coach. Through self-assessment and joint planning, participants in the Program will identify areas of their supervisory practice they feel they would benefit from focused work around, in the areas of quality of service, administration, professional development, and / or support / "work life." Through observation, demonstration, analysis, reflection, and feedback, Coach and participant will meet over the course of three to six months on three to six occasions to enhance supervisory skill and ease the transition to the role. The pilot of the program is currently occurring, with three newly promoted supervisors participating.

The Academy will also look to expand this coaching opportunity to other supervisors within the agency. In order to strengthen the skills of the Academy staff serving as coaches, the Academy will seek to partner with Casey Family Programs and other states to secure resources that may deepen the knowledge base of the trainers so that they may be able to assist those within the area offices more efficiently.

The Academy will seek to continue its partnership with Yale so that the consultation around the supervision model may continue on a requested basis. Moving forward, the consultations with Yale and the AHA series will reiterate to the supervisory staff the importance of holding regular and purposeful supervision sessions. These sessions should provide guidance, direction, establish a line of communication between supervisor and supervisee in order to lead to improved outcomes for children and families.

In addition to Leadership Academy for Middle Managers (LAMM) and Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS), more attention is being given to courses for supervisors who are seeking to further gain skills necessary to making the transition from supervisor to program supervisor. Capacity building in the area of Active Contract Management will also be embedded in various supervisory and managerial training programs. Ultimately the overarching goal is to provide supervisory and managerial staff the same framework, language and tools to utilize when dissecting an intricate issue.

To assist in the continued growth of the leaders within the agency, The Academy will explore ongoing training opportunities for managers that focuses on supporting them professionally. The Academy will seek support for the development of these trainings from partner agencies.

As the needs of our workforce continue to change, technology will be enhanced in order to meet the multi-pronged dynamics of the staff. With a large portion of the newer staff falling into the millennial category, many appreciate the advancements technology offers and expect that it be an available resource to assist with the efficiency of completing their job tasks. To meet their needs, the Academy will offer more webinars, short YouTube videos and online power points as a method to disseminating information.

As the Academy finds ways to support our fifth strategic goal "Eliminating racial and ethnic disparate outcomes within our department", identified staff from the Academy, Careline and Region 2 will receive a 3 day formal training on Implicit Bias. This is being sponsored by the CT Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal/Juvenile Justice System. The model is unique in the sense that it requires participants form interagency partnerships and teams when delivering the training. Developing this internal capacity to train and facilitate discussions on implicit bias, will allow the Academy, Careline and Region 2 to carry this forward to the rest of the staff and partner agencies. Undoubtedly, organic connections with other state agencies who are invested in addressing this same issue will strengthen and provide other opportunities for collaboration to occur.

#### Mandated Reporter:

The Academy has been charged with developing and making available to all persons mandated to report child abuse and neglect an educational training program for the prompt identification and reporting of child maltreatment. Two options have been created to satisfy this charge.

#### In-Person Training:

The training is provided by local DCF Area Office staff to the mandated reporters and community agencies in their respective catchment areas. This design allows for relationships to be built at the local level, and accurate Area Office and community specific information to be discussed. On occasion, when the Area Office staff cannot accommodate a request and / or a statewide or other perspective is needed for the given audience, a trainer or other representative from the DCF Academy may be identified to provide the training.

The local Area Office staff who volunteer or are identified to serve as trainers are certified by the DCF Academy via a two-day “*Train-the-Trainer*” course. To participate in the course and become a certified trainer, an individual must meet the below criteria:

- 1 year of DCF employment completed
- Pre-service training at the DCF Academy completed
- Supervisor supports the employee becoming a certified trainer

Once an individual is certified as a trainer, the following criteria must be met on an annual (calendar year) basis to maintain their certification:

- Conducting at least two trainings per calendar year
- Attending informational sessions, when offered by the Academy

#### On-Line Training:

The on-line version of the Mandated Reporter training is the same curriculum as the in-person version, and accessed via the agency website. The on-line training takes participants approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.

The on-line training includes knowledge checks throughout and provides the ability for the participant to stop and resume where he/she left off. Upon successful completion staff receive a certificate.

The chart below provides data from July 1, 2018-present indicating the number of people who participated in the online training vs. the in-person.

	Number Participants	Number of Sessions/Classes
Online Training	52,253	47,696
In Person Training	8,921	270

As the Academy looks to further educate the community on the statutory mandates of a mandated reporter, efforts will be made to partner with people who have specialized expertise in various disciplines. We would look to them to provide more guidance to their colleagues around the identification of abuse in neglect in their respective professions.

#### IV – E Implications:

In addition to the training offered to new workers and the in-service training provided to caseworkers and supervisory and managerial staff, the Academy welcomes the opportunity to train external stakeholders. External stakeholders include: other state agencies personnel, prospective parents, guardians, institutions, state-approved and licensed child welfare agencies, judicial staff, attorneys as advocates to provide support and assistance to foster and adopted children, and children living with relative guardians, (hereinafter “New Trainee Groups or NTG), for short-term trainings. Training is provided to these groups whether the relationship is established directly through the State agency relationship or by contract. These training may be organized to provide training directly to NTGs, or prepared to integrate NTGs into instruction offered to pre-service and in-service participants.

In seeking IV-E reimbursement, the Department will ensure the allocation of such training measures according to the Department’s Title IV-E Cost Allocation Plan (CAP). The Cost Allocation Process for In-Service, Pre-Service, and New Trainee Groups consists of the following:

- Total Department expenditures are assigned to Cost Pools that combine similar expenditure types.
- Claiming for the Academy and its services contract for third-party training contracts.
- The Academy courses and hours of instruction are accumulated. This step summarizes hours of instruction that qualify for 75%, 50% and 0% reimbursement. On average, the total cost of training at the DCF Training

Academy is 4,000,000 per year. Approximately 85% of the Academy pre-service courses are reimbursable at 75% while approximately 15% are reimbursable at 50%. Approximately 54% of The Academy's in-service courses are reimbursable at 75% while approximately 45% are reimbursable at 50%, and 1% not reimbursable.

- The Department will claim for reimbursement, at 75%, and the development of training that increases the ability of the Department to provide support and assistance to foster and adopted children and children living with relative guardians wither incurred directly by the State or by contract.
- Federally reimbursable expenditures are calculated based on allowable costs (from cost pools and The Academy curriculum), allowable children (from eligibility schedules) and allowable activities (from RMTS).
- For prevention trainings, the department will claim for reimbursement at 50%.