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**National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants:
Final Report**

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Introduction

Training in the human services, particularly in child welfare systems, is a frequent theme to improve intervention. Training utilizes resources of time, talent, and money, it is often touted as the solution to a wide variety of social problems, and it occurs in multiple jurisdictions (federal, state, local) and settings (public and private). Despite what may be excessive attention to training as a solution to a number of social problems, the scholarly attention to the role of training in child welfare systems is minimal (Collins, Amodeo, & Clay, 2007).

Much of the literature focuses on training practice, that is, the identification of approaches to training (e.g., curriculum development, training delivery, training systems). Alternatively, at a more conceptual level, there is some attention to adult learning theory to guide the development of a wide array of educational and training interventions (Knowles, 1984). There has also been attention to the transfer of training to improve workplace performance (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Curry, McCarragher, & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2005). In all of these areas (training practice, adult learning theory, transfer of training) the boundaries of knowledge include child welfare training but range far to include learning that occurs in a variety of settings and for differing purposes (e.g., human services, business, military).

Current Study

In 2003, the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funded the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants. The evaluation, conducted by Boston University School of Social Work, consisted of four

components: (1) a multiple case study of nine previously funded training grantees (focused on Independent Living), (2) a comprehensive literature review of child welfare training, (3) a phone survey of state training directors, and (4) a survey of faculty of schools of social work. This multi-method study was designed to provide a comprehensive perspective to inform further development of training approaches at federal, state and local levels. The participation rate for each component was high, suggesting both a broad commitment to, and interest in, the topic of child welfare training. Each of the individual components addressed specific research questions as listed below.

(1) Case study of IL grantees: How did grantees implement project activities? To what extent did projects achieve immediate training outcomes? How were site context and project activities related to outcomes?

(2) Literature review: What is the current state of knowledge regarding child welfare training? What are the gaps in knowledge that require further research attention?

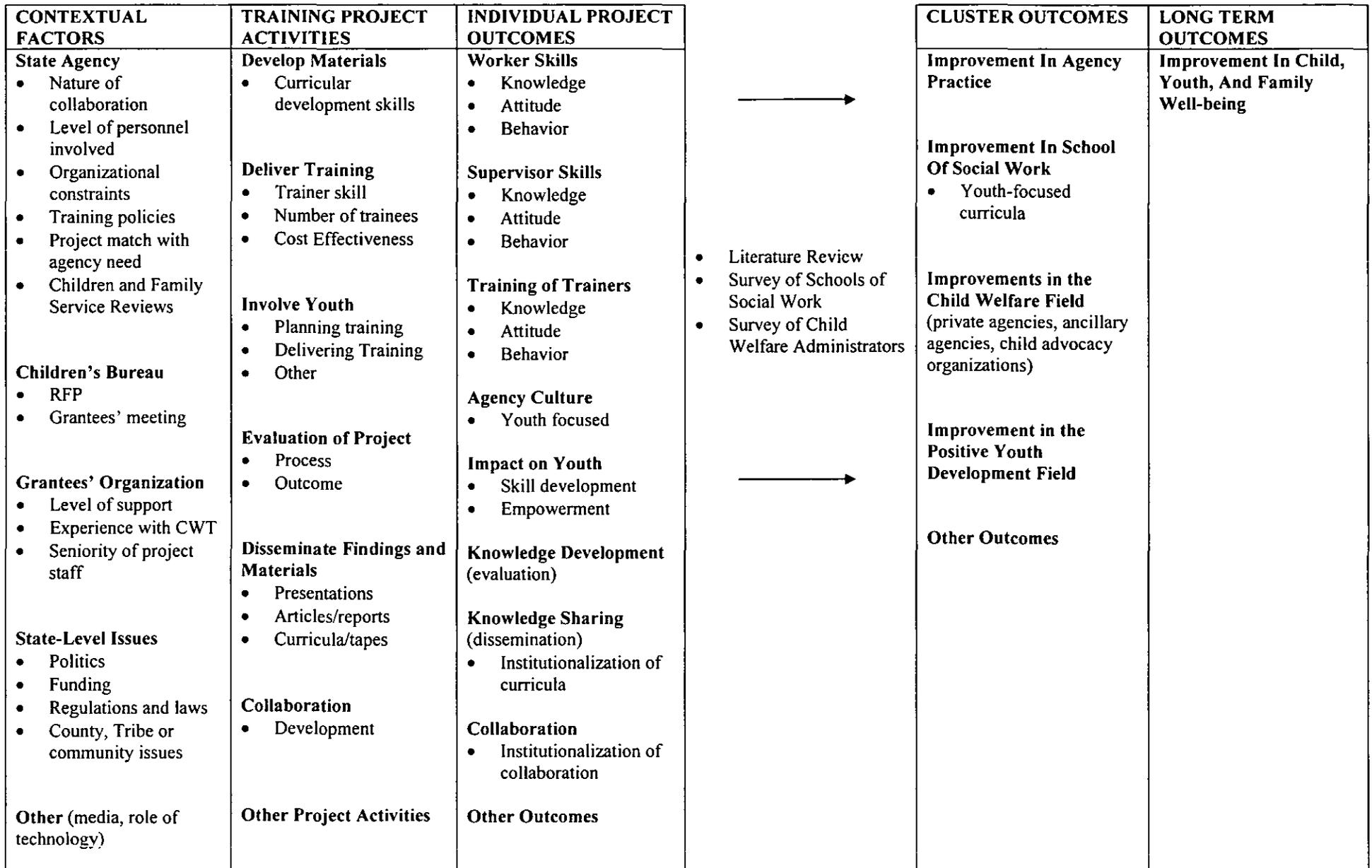
(3) Survey of state training directors: What is the perspective of those at the state/county level regarding providing effective child welfare training? What is their experience with federally-funded child welfare training projects? What is needed to improve child welfare training at the state level?

(4) Faculty survey: How do faculty members, especially those in schools of social work, see their role in child welfare training and other child welfare activities? What have been the experiences of faculty with federal child welfare training grants? What is the commitment of schools of social work to child welfare?

Conceptual Model

A conceptual model was designed both to guide the evaluation of the training projects using a multiple case study design, and to integrate all four components of the project. Figure A provides the conceptual model that has guided this project. The first column, *Contextual Factors*, identifies key factors that were likely to influence the development of the project, and potentially the well-being of children, youth, and families. The second column, *Training Project Activities*, identifies conceptual categories of project activities. All projects engaged in each of these activities to some extent although they may have emphasized some more than others. The third column, *Individual Project Outcomes*, identifies the range of project outcomes that might be achieved through these training projects, although not all projects targeted all the project outcomes. Column four, *Cluster Outcomes*, identifies more sustained impacts on fields of practice. The final column, *Long Term Outcomes*, addresses improvements in child, youth, and family well-being. The gap identified in the conceptual model conveys the anticipated disjuncture between successfully completed projects and longer-term impact.

**Boston University School of Social Work
National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Project (2003 – 2006)
Conceptual Model**



Study Limitations

Two key strengths of the study were the utilization of multiple methods and the high response rates achieved in each component. The major limitation was the need to use retrospective rather than prospective methods for conducting the evaluation of previous training grantees. Although the use of the case study method allowed us to derive several lessons from these training projects, a prospective design would have been able to measure impact of training efforts.

Completed Reports

Written reports of each component have been completed. Reports of the phone survey with training directors and the mail survey of colleges/universities are attached as Appendix A and Appendix B. The reports of the multiple case study and the literature review have been produced and are currently being disseminated. Copies are attached to this final report and also available on the Boston University School of Social Work website: <http://www.bu.edu/ssw/research/childwelfare/index.html>

In addition, a list of dissemination activities, concluded and planned, is attached.

Summary Conclusions and Recommendations

Each of the written reports describes the specific method, findings, and conclusions. Here we highlight conclusions that were repeated themes throughout several of the data collection components.

- Knowledge development: The field of child welfare training needs greater scholarly attention to facilitate further knowledge development regarding best

methods of training, efforts to institutionalize training, role of collaboration and partnerships. An extensive funded research and evaluation agenda is needed to support child welfare training as a field of study in order to gain the necessary information to improve training strategies and technologies.

- State of knowledge: One challenge to the knowledge base is that training knowledge is dispersed across a variety of fields and ranges from the highly micro (e.g., instrumentation) to macro (e.g., policy implementation). Our review of the knowledge base suggests that training knowledge is dominated by curriculum development and training delivery; expansion is needed in training evaluation, organizational analysis, and systems approaches. Some key questions to be answered include: the relative impact of various training methods, the role of the supervisor and other mentors in cementing learning, and the optimal composition of learning groups for skill development and transfer.
- Schools of social work – commitment to child welfare: Individual faculty members in schools of social work appear committed to child welfare and many report that their schools are committed to child welfare. This is not universal, however, and some faculty members do report a declining commitment of their schools to this area. One hypothesis is that the lack of significant federally-funded research grants makes the field less attractive to some schools. Securing training grants, in particular, is not supported in all university settings. This may limit the number of talented people who engage in developing training projects and the field may suffer as a result. Greater effort to promote training as a field of

scholarly inquiry, and funded research to support the field may encourage more institutional, and therefore individual, attention to training.

- **University/agency partnerships:** The use and general importance of university/agency partnerships was noted across all four study components. The knowledge base is primarily descriptive, however, and thus of limited utility. More analytic work is needed. Scholarly attention should be given to the range of partnerships, their specific strengths and weaknesses, and their effectiveness in advancing sophisticated training, practice, and research. Limitations of these partnerships should also be addressed. For example, the potential exists for the school of social work's ability to challenge agency practices to be minimized when engaged in a partnership relationship.
- **Collaboration:** Collaborations other than agency-university partnerships are common in child welfare training. Collaborations of all types are likely to have strengths and challenges. More critical attention is needed to the processes and outcomes of collaborative endeavors, in particular, the appropriate choice and role of collaborative partners. Like agency-university partnerships, attention is needed to the potential pitfalls and dangers of collaboration.
- **Coordination and leadership:** Child welfare training, as well as child welfare service delivery, is administered at state and county levels, mostly without federal resources. There is wide variation in the types of training activities and the levels of support for training provided by state agencies. Many respondents at state and local levels struggle to find information, particularly related to best practices. States express a desire to learn from each other; a greater federal role in

coordination of efforts and communication about program innovations was desired by many respondents.

- **Agency context:** The public child welfare agency context is critically important to implementing training programs successfully. Repeatedly in this study, respondents described many substantial barriers to implementing well designed training programs. There is much that is known about best practices in training that is routinely ignored in implementation because the agency context will not allow the time or staff resources required.
- **Politics:** Concern was expressed that politics rather than the needs of the field drives training initiatives. Thus, emphasis should be placed on training and research that addresses the needs of the field rather than political ideology.

Next Steps in Research

- Far more extensive research is needed in child welfare training. The problems that are addressed within child welfare agencies are extensive and complicated, whereas the research enterprise to address these challenges is minimal. More federal leadership is needed. A National Institutes of Health (NIH) model of funding would serve to elevate the quality of research and eventual service delivery.
- Funding should be provided for a prospective evaluation of a cluster of child welfare training projects to maintain and accelerate the research momentum established by this evaluation of child welfare training. This would allow the development of a more a rigorous design than was possible for the current

National Evaluation Study and would be able to test the impact of training interventions better than the current study was able to do.

- Methods should be developed to facilitate higher quality evaluations of individual training projects. For grantees this includes: starting evaluation activities at the beginning of the project, utilizing evaluation expertise from outside the grantee organization, providing greater clarity regarding expected outcomes to be achieved, and developing a fuller evaluation plan at the proposal stage. For the Children's Bureau the focus should be on emphasizing evaluation in the RFP and assessing proposals on their evaluation design, including feasibility.

Final Conclusions

The conceptual framework was heavily utilized for the case study report. But it identified a priori a gap between project outcomes and a more sustained impact. The data from the case study supported this hypothesis. The cluster of IL training grants was conducted successfully by highly competent organizations using both standard training practices and some examples of cutting-edge innovation. Yet, we found little evidence of sustained impact, although a prospective evaluation design might have done so. We suspect this may be the case with other training clusters as well.

How do we explain the gap between successfully completed projects and a lack of sustained impact? We believe, as described above in our conclusions and identified in the reports on the four individual project components, that this gap is primarily due to problems with:

- The state of knowledge in the field -- requiring greater research and scholarly attention.
- The context of the state agency -- requiring greater commitment to sustained training and professional development, and other workforce issues.
- The nature of collaborations -- requiring more thoughtful approaches to choosing and utilizing collaborators to facilitate institutionalization and the impact of training projects.

Attention to these areas is needed in order to achieve a greater impact from training activities.

Dissemination Activities

Presentations:

- Collins, M.E. 2007. Findings from the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants: Lessons and Implications. Presentation at 10th Annual National Human Services Training Evaluation Symposium. Berkeley, California.
- Collins, M.E. and Bratiotis, C. 2007. Findings from the National Survey of Child Welfare Training Directors. New England Association of Child Welfare Training Directors. Portsmouth, NH.
- Collins, M.E., Amodeo, M., and Clay, C.M. 2006. Child Welfare Training as Policy Solution: Findings from the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants. Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Conference. Madison, WI.
- Collins, M.E. 2006. National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants, Independent Living Projects: Preliminary Findings. Invited presentation at U.S. Children's Bureau Discretionary Grants, Training for Independent Living Supervisors Cluster Meeting. Washington, DC.
- Collins, M.E. 2005. National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants: Early Findings and Next Steps. Invited presentation at U.S. Children's Bureau Discretionary Grants Annual Meeting. Crystal City, VA.
- Collins, M.E., Shin, S., Miranda, C., and Rheaume, H. 2005. National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training: Early Observations from Cross-Site Analysis. Fifteenth National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. Boston, MA.
- Collins, M.E. 2004. Planning the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training. Presentation at 7th Annual National Human Services Training Evaluation Symposium. Berkeley, California.

Journal articles in press and under review:

- Collins, M.E., Amodeo, M., and Clay, C.M. In press. Training as a factor in policy implementation: Lessons from a national evaluation of child welfare training. *Children and Youth Services Review*.
- Collins, M.E., Amodeo, M. and Clay, C. Under review. Planning and evaluating child welfare training projects: Working toward a comprehensive conceptual model.

Amodeo, M., Collins, M.E. and Clay, C.M. Under review. Best practices in curriculum design and training delivery: Examples and gaps in federally-funded independent living training projects.

Amodeo, M., Collins, M.E. and Clay, C.M. Under review. Using adult learning principles to improve child welfare training: Activating learners to assume independent roles.

Journal articles in development:

Amodeo, M. et al. Child and Family Services Reviews: State perspectives on the role of training.

Clay, C.M., Amodeo, M. and Collins, M.E. Involving youth in training: Lessons for consumer involvement in social services interventions.

Clay, C.M., Rheaume, H. et al. Agency and university partnerships: Strengths and limitations.

Collins, M.E. Evaluating child welfare training in public agencies: Status and prospects.

Collins M.E., et al. Training evaluation in child welfare: A review of studies.

Collins, M.E. et al. Past, present, and future of child welfare training.

Collins, M.E. et al. Faculty perspectives on child welfare training.

Monographs disseminated:

Collins, M.E., Amodeo, M. and Clay, C. 2007. *National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants: Case Study Report of Independent Living Training Projects*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families.

Collins, M.E., Amodeo, M. and Clay, C. 2007. *Review of the Literature on Child Welfare Training: Theory, Practice, and Research*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families.

Appendix A:
State Training Directors:
Final Report

**National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants:
Survey of State/County Child Welfare Training Directors**

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National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants

Survey of State Child Welfare Training Directors

Introduction

The importance of a well-trained workforce to deal with the extraordinary challenges facing families involved with the child welfare system is of obvious critical importance. Each year, substantial federal, state, and local resources are devoted to training activities in public child welfare systems and their contracted agencies. While the work of child welfare is often highly rewarding, it requires addressing numerous social problems, is fraught with extensive ambiguity, and frequently conducted with limited resources. Professional education and training may be one part of the solution to prepare agency workers but clearly cannot be relied upon as the sole solution to complex problems. Resources, leadership, community support, and state-of-the-art practice strategies are also key elements.

This study is one component of a larger research project titled, “National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants,” funded by the U.S. Children’s Bureau. The purpose of this component was to gather data from state training directors (and occasionally country training directors) about their perspective of the federal government’s role in child welfare training and the issues/challenges in state/county agencies in providing child welfare training.

Method

Phone interviews were conducted with at least one person in 47 states (92% response rate) who was identified as the child welfare training director or “the person most knowledgeable about child welfare training” for the state. Interviews were conducted by phone using a semi-structured interview guide and were between 30 minutes and 2 hours in length. Questions focused on topics such as: the state’s experience with federally-funded child welfare training projects, successes and challenges of providing child welfare training, administrative supports for training, plans for future training, and training evaluation. Written notes were taken during the interview and later typed into a word processing program to be sorted and categorized. Analysis was conducted question-by-question to identify common and unique themes. A team of three data analysts reviewed findings and their interpretation.

Findings

Main Challenges to Providing Effective Child Welfare Training

“Resources” and “time” were the two most common challenges identified by states; each was named by 15 states. When discussing resources, respondents typically referred to money and/or staff for training. When discussing time, respondents described the competing demands of worker time spent in training versus caseload demands; e.g., “people want to come to training but have to be pulled out of training or cancel their attendance because of other work.” State geography that results in extensive travel to training was another common challenge (n=10). This is partly a subcategory of the challenge of finding time for training but has other features. These respondents tended to be from large, primarily rural, states. Additionally, technology was identified as a challenge by seven states.

Another set of challenges was related to the larger workforce issues (n=14). The core themes were: turnover which requires constant efforts at training, the lack of professional qualification of many

entering workers which requires extensive basic training, and issues of pay and retention interrelated with turnover and commitment to child welfare work. One illustrative comment is the following: “Keeping the front line up. Getting people trained fast enough to get them into the field – extensive amount to learn. Complexity of work is high, technical level of job is high – lots to learn in a short amount of time.”

Respondents spoke of the pressure of providing what is known to be good training practice in the real world settings of public child welfare agencies (n=13). Several spoke of the need for follow-up in the field, primarily by supervisors, to support transfer of learning to the practice setting. Another element of good training practice that was found to be a challenge was the need to keep current with knowledge developments in policy and practice, as well as being timely in the delivery of training (n=8).

Several issues surrounding implementation of training were related to the coordination of efforts between the state and county (n=15). Sometimes (n=4) the coordination with the federal government was also raised (e.g., inconsistency between federal regions). Another coordination issue was agency-university partnerships (n=7). A few states (n=4) also commented on a lack of collaborative partners or barriers to multi-agency training.

States Experiences with Federally-Funded Child Welfare Training Programs

Twenty-three (23) states responded that they had no federal funding for training (not including Title IV-E). Six states responded that they did not have federal training grants specifically but utilized the National Resource Centers for some training. Nineteen (19) states (and DC) reported receiving federal funding for training (non IV-E). Most of this funding was from the Children’s Bureau but some was from other federal sources (Title XX, TANF, and Department of Justice were mentioned).

The topics reported by those who have had federally-funded projects were numerous. Topics of these training grants reported by more than one state included: recruitment and retention (n=3), supervision (n=3), systems of care (n=2), and adoption/foster care (n=2). Other topics receiving one mention included: conducting family team meetings, permanency planning, domestic violence, adolescents, rural child welfare, SACWIS, and interdisciplinary training. Additionally, four respondents did not specifically name the topic.

For states that had federally-funded projects, respondents stated the experience was largely positive. The projects were reported to be relevant, and the strengths outweighed the weaknesses; for example, “great working relationship with university and department staff; strong needs assessment on front end.” The few weaknesses reported focused on challenges of collaboration, developmental challenges in the project, and fitting the training project to agency need.

Two other respondents, who did not currently have federally-funded projects, also spoke about the challenges of the application process as being a serious barrier. One state noted that they had federal funding in the past but not recently because of this problem. They do not have grant writers or the ability to mobilize a team to write a grant. If they do write a grant, it is at the cost of other tasks. The respondent felt that there is less development to help rural states; it is not the same playing field with big states. A second state voiced similar concern, reporting that they have not had a lot of federal funding for training, in part because it is a “low yield investment. Rather put time into training than developing RFP.”

Experiences with Title IV-E Partnerships with Universities

While more than 75% of the states surveyed had some existing IV-E arrangement for training activities, there was great variation in the degree of participation. Partnership involvement ranged from minimal participation in stipend programs to maximum responsibility for all child welfare training.

Existing partnerships varied greatly in terms of size, ranging from as few as one to as many as fourteen collaborating universities. The length of relationship also extended from less than one year to more than thirty years.

In those states reporting no present involvement in Title IV-E partnerships, there was often either a past collaboration or exploration of future possibilities. In the cases where past partnerships had been discontinued, the central cause was often related to funding. One state's award winning program just ended because they were not able to come up with the federal funding match. Partnerships also sometimes ended due to organizational issues, relational problems, or differing needs/views of academic and practice communities.

For states exploring future partnership possibilities, this sometimes meant simply expanding and formalizing current programs. A few states identified particular challenges related to Title IV-E stipulations regarding private universities. Since the requirements for IV-E funding are much more complicated for private institutions, a few states were determining how to navigate these challenges.

The description of partnership characteristics generated a variety of different training arrangements. The most common activities included stipend programs, pre-service and in-service training. A range of other unique activities were reported in particular cases.

Stipend Program: While stipend programs existed in slightly more than half of the current partnerships, there was variation in how these programs were structured. In most cases, current/prospective employees would receive some combination of tuition assistance, stipends, and/or paid leave to pursue a BSW or MSW degree. In return, the recipient must agree to work for the state agency for a set period of time. In most cases, there was a one year work commitment for each funded year of education. While some states only allowed current employees to apply for these educational opportunities, other states funded prospective employees (often current students recruited from the university) who then agreed to work in public child welfare.

Interviewees spoke positively about the impact of stipend programs on the state agency. For example, one state noted how it brings in the "social work perspective" and has influenced employees who "might not have thought about continuing education." While usually beneficial, the contracted "payback" time can also pose a problem. As one administrator explained, this policy means the new recruits "have to be in a position that is most needed," but the agency can "have problem employees if people are not screened properly by the university or department."

As compared with other IV-E activities, stipend programs tended to be more stable and institutionalized. One interviewee described how the stipend program "has been in place it seems like forever, we were one of the first states to do it." Depending on the size of the partnership and available resources, the number of yearly participants ranged from just 2 or 3 to as many as 115 students. Most states indicated a desire to increase the number of available slots for stipend participants. As with every aspect of Title IV-E, many states mentioned how funding issues have impacted the growth and resources of these stipend programs. There is often a "lack of fiscal resources to do more" requiring programs to "stretch every penny." In response, partnerships are continually striving to find the best ways to utilize IV-E money and interpret funding guidelines.

Pre-Service Training: About one fourth of the states with active Title IV-E training partnerships reported pre-service training as a central partnership activity. In most cases where pre-service training was provided, the partnership conducted almost all new worker training. In many cases, there was an established training center, academy or institute. For states that provided some, but not all, new worker training, there was a range of level of involvement. Depending on the state, the university might provide

any or all of the following: curriculum, facilities, trainers, evaluation, infrastructure, administrative costs. For states that did not report pre-service training as a central partnership activity, there were sometimes plans for further development in this area.

In-Service Training: Similar to the incidence of pre-service training, about one fourth of the states with active IV-E partnerships indicated in-service training as a central partnership activity. The type of in-service training ranged from focused workshops to full curricula for supervisors, managers, and other child welfare employees. In addition, specific types of training were often structured around continuing education requirements, with CEU's being provided. Sometimes specific trainings were developed for special needs or in relation to CFSR/PIP requirements. States offered examples of topics such as family centered practice, tribal issues, Latino populations, protection, and safety training.

Other Partnership Characteristics/Activities: In addition to the above, the data indicate that Title IV-E partnerships are often engaged in a great variety of other activities. For some states, the academic community lends expertise by providing technical assistance, research expertise, evaluation, and consultation on curriculum development. The diverse range of partnership activities demonstrates the creative and innovative ways that states are interpreting and utilizing IV-E funding. Overall, states continue to explore new approaches to collaboration that will meet their ever changing needs and enhance the quality of training.

Strengths: The five most commonly reported strengths identified were: enabled resource sharing, established positive working relationships, enhanced human resources (recruitment and retention), promoted easier accessibility and convenience, and offered particular programs. While the aforementioned strengths were the most frequent responses, other unique positive attributes were mentioned by different interviewees.

Weaknesses: While there was an overwhelmingly positive view of existing partnerships, interviewees also identified certain weaknesses. The three most commonly reported challenges related to funding/resources, relationships, and differing views of academic and practice communities.

Current Status: Funding uncertainty was a central reason for caution in asserting that a partnership was institutionalized. Despite their uncertainty, people remained optimistic about the continuing future and growth of their relationships with the academic community. States without IV-E partnerships were often still exploring possibilities. Only a few states had no current or future plans for partnership involvement. Overall, the national use of IV-E funding for partnerships seems to be growing and evolving in many creative directions.

Successes/Challenges of State/County Funded Training Programs

When states were asked to describe the successes and challenges of *state and county funded* training programs many states responded to this question with a variety of topical responses, ranging from funding sources to geography, to personnel.

The most concentrated area of responses was regarding the funding source for training. Many states indicated that one of the most significant challenges was the lack of state funding for training. Other states believed that there was state or county funding for training but that it was difficult to tease out which funding streams for training were federal versus state versus county monies (n=3). With partial or no state/county funding, states rely on Title IV-E monies for training (n=8).

One state, an anomaly as compared to the other respondents, has only known state funding for training during the last 25 years. Reliant upon their state legislature to allocate funds for pre-service

training, the state has not been able to develop creative, innovative and problem specific in-service training. This state indicates that only now are they beginning to utilize funding from partnerships such as Title IV-E and IV-B.

Given that many of the respondent states had minimal state/county training funding, a common theme across several states was to establish efforts to foster collaborative approaches to training within different sectors. This might include state conferences on topics such as child abuse, working collaboratively with tribal communities, and adoption issues. Additionally, interdepartmental trainings wherein child welfare personnel are trained alongside juvenile justice and/or mental health staff also maximize training resources.

In addition to fiscal challenges in state/county training efforts, states also cited challenges with regard to technology, enough time for training, and the distance to be traveled in order to train staff (n=7). Specifically, some states indicated that the vast geography of their state created challenges in planning and administering training efforts in remotely located counties (n=4).

While the challenges in state/county funded training efforts are significant, so too are the strengths illuminated by the respondent states. Specifically stated strengths included: utilizing trainers who are currently in practice in the field so that they can relate to specific practice issues (n=3), a statewide training system that increases the consistency of training, the ability to respond to and meet the specific training needs of local jurisdictions (n=2), and the ability to modify training to respond to state policy changes.

Beyond citing specific challenges and successes, state respondents used this question to provide a description of their state's systems of training. Responses included highlighting pre-service trainings, core training efforts, advanced trainings, computerized case management systems, manager and supervisor trainings, special topic trainings, competency-based trainings, statewide networked training centers, train the trainer models, training academies, blended-format computerized and classroom based trainings, SACWIS training, and certification programs.

Administrative Supports for Training

The most commonly noted supports (n=24) were some form of CEU, licensure credit, or tuition reimbursement. Five other fairly common topics related to administrative supports were: providing protected time for training (n=8); providing administrative/managerial infrastructure for training (n=6); technology (n=14); positive leadership and culture surrounding training (n=7); and partnerships that facilitate training (n=10).

Four states noted that this was variable throughout the state because of a county-administered system. According to one respondent, for example, some counties in the state provide no release time, while others are very supportive; overall, it depends on how much a particular county values education for child welfare workers.

Impact of CFSR on Training

Several states expressed that the CFSR process has had a lasting positive impact (n=11). Many of the state training administrators who responded positively about the process indicated they were personally involved in the review process as a national reviewer or that they otherwise were actively involved in child welfare at the national level and therefore had "buy-in" to the CFSR process from the outset.

Many of the states who felt positively about the CFSR process indicated that they were “ahead of the curve” and that they already had outcome based training and/or a training review/evaluation system that was more rigorous than the CFSR. Another state echoed by saying, “We have a qualitative review that is slightly more intense than the CFSR, so this was of no surprise to us, and we were able to incorporate the review easily.”

Two states felt that the CFSR had a negative impact on training. One of the states indicated a lack of support for the CFSR process, “While the CFSR was said to increase training, they did not clearly define the recommendations. Further, the legislature did not support the CFSR recommendation for training.” The other state initially responded by saying the CFSR has “taken over.” This state training administrator indicated that “the university was not part of the planning but rather was handed the training schedule and then had to implement it. The curriculum then had to be piloted and approved by the state. It was micromanaged.”

In addition to the two states who reported feeling qualitatively less than positive about the CFSR impact on training, two additional states expressed a mixed response -- one that acknowledges the challenges and demands of the process but also the benefits of engaging with the review.

Respondents who indicated that the CFSR process had enhanced training also indicated a variety of other training related changes such as: more visibility to training which yielded more funds for training; transfer of training to the field; and more training accountability and agency policy changes. Seven states indicated that one additional process resulting from the CFSR was the attempt to discern a training issue from an organizational/management issue.

States were also asked to voice their opinion about the role that training plays as a solution to problems raised in the CFSR process. Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated that training is a part of the solution. Twenty-two (22) of the responding states agreed with the seven states mentioned above that training issues must be identified as distinct from management, supervision or organizational issues. Summarizing the sentiment of many states one respondent said, “Training can always be a part of the solution but training itself is not going to solve any issue. Good training can support good systems and good individuals but it cannot create good systems and good individuals.”

Although a significant number of state respondents believed that training is a part of the solution to problems raised in the CFSR process, three states believed that training is not a major part of the solution. One of the three states estimated that training is 25-30% of the solution. Two states believed that it is not the solution at all. “Policy and institutional culture, supervision, those are the primary areas but training is needed to help deliver the word.”

Mechanisms to Facilitate Institutionalization of Training

The two most common responses regarding the mechanisms of training institutionalization were the quality of the training and the quality of the trainer. Nineteen (19) states indicated that the quality of the training mattered greatly: “Very often it depends on the quality of the training. If we develop something not on target, it won’t last and it won’t be supported.” Nearly every state that identified the quality of training as being a critical factor also illuminated the quality of the trainer as a significant mechanism. In fact, some states said that both the quality of the training and trainer, in combination, were critical for training institutionalization: “There is a huge role for both. If training is not well delivered, it’s difficult to roll out and then nearly impossible to institutionalize.”

A significant number of states (n=18) indicated that it was specifically the support from child welfare administration that mattered most. One way that administrative support has been garnered by

three states has been to offer the training to administrators prior to offering pre or in-service training. By allowing administrators a first hand opportunity to experience the training, support then actually does come from the “top down.”

The concept of support for training is at the foundation of several other categories of responses regarding the institutionalization of training. In addition to general support and support by administration, seven respondents suggest that case/line workers being supported to attend training is a major factor in the institutionalization of training. State respondents illuminate the critical nature of workers being released to attend training; there can be an excellent curriculum and trainer but, without workers having the flexibility in their schedule and support of their supervisors and department to attend training, the curriculum and trainer mean little.

State administrators also indicated a different kind of necessary support -- fiscal. Five states suggested that without financial support, training cannot move from a preliminary offering to a more institutionalized, regular offering.

In yet another category of support for training, seven respondents indicated that having policy and procedures that guide the development of training helps to institutionalize it and means that it will be offered consistently and over the long term. The development and establishment of policy and procedure, which greatly support training institutionalization, often emanates from legislative action or from new or amended law.

Another way that training is developed (and eventually institutionalized) is through a needs analysis. Eight states indicated that by conducting a systematic exploration of the kinds of training that currently do not exist they develop training that is both necessary and wanted. In five states the determinations about the needs of the child welfare agency are determined by a Training Advisory Committee or Quality Assurance Team. These groups typically have representative members from administration, managers, supervisors, caseworkers, and often the community and/or university.

It seems that the ability of training offerings to be transferred to the field of practice (transfer of learning) was also a significant indicator of the institutionalization of training (n=12).

Although the range of mechanisms that facilitated institutionalization of training was somewhat broad and varied, there was great consensus among many states, especially in the ways that training was supported. It seems that child welfare training has the best hope of being institutionalized when it is policy driven, an outgrowth of a systematic assessment of agency needs, supported (by administrators), and offered to workers with the flexibility and support to attend training and transfer their skills into practice in the field.

Historical Factors Influencing Child Welfare Training in the State

Seventeen (17) respondents mentioned that budget and funding sources were a significant, if not the primary, factor influencing child welfare training. These expressed budget/finance concerns reflected both state and federal level financing woes.

Another area where states reported both federal and state level influence is legislation (n=6). Federal legislation has significantly altered the way child welfare training is administered. While it is generally thought that the federal mandates have had a long-term positive impact on child welfare training, states did express the distress and difficulty they experienced in the early stages of implementing

the legislation. State legislation was identified by eleven of the participating states as having made improvements and changes to child welfare training.

Nineteen (19) respondents discussed the presence and changes in child welfare administration as having significant impact. Of these states, eight specified that changes in state child welfare administrators, including governors, were a key factor influencing training. Many of these states cite larger budgets for expanded training and training evaluation and state level administrators that had worked in the child welfare system or were otherwise well known for supporting child welfare work. Eleven states indicated specifically that support from child welfare administrators was a large factor influencing training.

Many states reported that child welfare system child mortality/child injury cases have been a significant and powerful influencing historical factor. Not only are the incidences themselves profound but the ripple effects were also quite impacting-- lawsuits and negative public perception of the child welfare agency. When these three factors were considered together, 26 of the responding states reported such an influence on their states' child welfare systems.

Future Initiatives for Child Welfare Training in the State

When asked about future initiatives and plans for child welfare training in their state, respondents provided a range of answers that can be characterized by the following six broad categories: 1) how training is offered; 2) topics of training; 3) groups/populations to be trained; 4) use of technology; 5) university partnerships; and 6) institutes and academies.

As a whole, the responses provided a view of the landscape of future training initiatives. It is noteworthy that states reporting success and stability in their training initiatives seem to be exploring opportunities that provided for more advanced training, use of technology or variety in populations trained. States that indicated hardship in the area of training, due to budget constraints, changes in child welfare administration or other state-specific challenges seemed to be focusing on providing the basic elements of training. For some states, considering expansion to develop web-based training was a significant step forward while other states have been utilizing this training strategy for some time. Likewise, some states were considering developing a leadership institute for senior child welfare administrators while other states were focusing on the inauguration of an in-service training academy.

The enthusiasm and optimism with which state training representatives spoke of their future initiatives were the most common elements among those interviewed. Regardless of the number or type of upcoming training endeavors, the states expressed a collective pride in their advancing work.

Evaluation of Training

Evaluating Organizations: Twelve respondents reported that an outside entity, usually a university partner, had primary responsibility for evaluation tasks. Additionally, seven respondents reported a combined evaluation effort. Often, the outside evaluators conducted more complicated evaluation tasks. The remaining states reported that evaluation tasks were primarily conducted internally.

Types of Evaluation Conducted: There appears to be a wide variety of approaches and a full range of evaluation activities from simple satisfaction forms to sophisticated systems of training evaluation. Training evaluation activities can vary for different types of training (e.g., core versus advanced, established training courses versus new courses). Moreover, many respondents reported they were in a state of development on these issues and were either hoping or actively planning to move toward more sophisticated evaluations.

All sites reported at least some basic evaluation, although on a few occasions so little was said leaving the impression that limited evaluation was occurring (n=6). For example: “At every training, an evaluation with specific objectives is completed.”

Many states (n=10) referred to [Kirkpatrick’s] Level 1 evaluation (satisfaction with training) or the use of “happy sheets” or feedback forms. The following two examples are illustrative: (1) Training evaluation is the “least developed part of the organization. Traditionally [done] on solely the training itself -- usually participation. Likert scale, done in paper product”; (2) “Feel good evaluation. Try to get down to if people saw it as helpful, what concepts they got from it, but no real evaluation.”

The modal category was states who were primarily conducting Level 2 evaluation, or a pre/post method of measuring change during the training session (n=16). These states report something more than feedback forms, but the evaluation activity still appears to be limited to the training setting and not focused on measuring skill development objectively.

A few states (n=5) reported additional evaluation steps which included longitudinal follow-up in addition to measures of satisfaction and pretest/posttest. One state reported self-assessment measures of knowledge, attitudes and skills before core training, at the end of training, at the end of field experience, and at the end of the first year. Another reported three and six month follow-up evaluations with workers and supervisors which used to be done by “postcards” and is now done by email. A third state reported “Level 1 and 2 – mostly.” But, “In some training, doing something closer to a 3rd level- to see how the transfer of learning is happening on the job and the role of the supervisor in helping to put training into practice. Level 1 and 2 in both pre and in-service. Level 3 is starting to be in pre-service.”

Ten states were classified as having more extensive training evaluation that examines behaviors in the work setting after training. Two examples are described below:

- The success of training is first measured when trainees take a test. This is followed by a field based assessment piece, which is left up to various supervisors. The supervisor’s evaluation includes an evaluation form, document review and observation of workers in various case management activities. Also an online tracking system, which tells them who passes competencies and other information.
- Evaluation method varies based on the kinds of program. Some Level 1 (happy sheets) that are standardized across the state. Available electronically- when a course is offered, evaluation info is put in immediately, can access it. Use pre/post knowledge test for basic training and all specialty programs. The pre/post is developed with the curriculum. Occasional attempts at level 3 and 4 (very special situations- expensive and hard). Also have a system to do field evaluations- conduct an on-site field review (either scheduled randomly or a project manager requests it).

Although these ten states described their training evaluation activities in partially different terms, they indicated some similarities that led to their classification. The common characteristics that led to this categorization were the following: different kinds of evaluation for different kinds of training; use of follow-up field based assessment; and linkage to quality assurance.

Future evaluation plans: Training evaluation activities did not appear to be static; there was evidence of ongoing attention to training evaluation and discussion about ways to improve in this area. Some respondents (n=5) stated that they “would like” to do more training evaluation. Additionally, respondents from 14 states spoke about a specific plan in place for more extensive training evaluation, or provided specific detail to suggest there was actual movement to the next step in training evaluation.

In two instances respondents suggested that some evaluation steps had been regressive; “There had been a plan to use training evaluation information to create an annual report and to present this information to the field. However, this project was not completed due to lack of time” and “currently not generating reports from training evaluation data. Lost support staff two to three years ago that were generating reports. Not sure how to come back from that.”

Utilization of evaluation: Nine states made generic statements about reviewing results (e.g., “Based on the evaluations done at each training, reports are submitted and the results are used to see what each worker needs”). Or perhaps more honestly, “They are stuck in a folder, and the folder in a box in a storage room. Look at them at the moment of the training, no way of looking at trends. It is a problem that we take quite seriously.”

The majority of states (n=22) reported that they used training evaluation results primarily to review courses and trainers and to adjust training courses based on information. These responses suggest the primary purpose of the evaluation is formative to improve training.

A few states (n=3) spoke of using the data in an information system to track worker participation in training (attendance/enrollment), and perhaps link this with employee retention, but the descriptions fell short of suggesting that it was related to employee performance or quality assurance. For example, “Training Director reviews all training evaluation results and then meets with staff to discuss the results. When employees complete training, this information is put into a database that tracks who took that training.”

Only three states spoke specifically about efforts to use training evaluation to assess worker performance and overall quality assurance. Two of these states identified university partnerships to be important in this endeavor. An additional six states described efforts to move toward linking training evaluation with quality assurance.

What Could the Federal Government Do That Would Be of Greatest Help to Your State/County to Deliver Effective Child Welfare Training?

Some respondents began to answer this question with statements about how helpful the federal government has been in some different ways.

- In terms of support, technical assistance, personnel help, they are fabulous – anything for practice, I can’t say enough. They are fine practitioners and really fight for [our state]. Have helped with CFSR and the state training academy.
- Have a good relationship with federal liaisons and have a great deal of respect for their not easy task. They took a convoluted task and have made some sense of it. Standards are high and they should be.
- The federal government is already helping a lot through Title IV-E.
- One thing I would say- one thing the feds are already doing are the Children’s Bureau grants to the universities. We have had at least two or three grants -- we are very supportive of those- what they really do is introduce areas that we wouldn’t otherwise have any access to.

Also, positive comments were stated about the National Resource Centers (n=6) and the need for continued support of the NRCs. Two comments that had a bit of reservation about the NRCs were the following:

- Strings attached to using the NRC is troubling; can appreciate need for limits but they seemed a bit restrictive.
- When we utilize National Resource Centers to help us develop curriculum, they can't tailor it to individualized training for each state, training is so generic, they can't make it real to their jobs – so availability of consultation that would make training tailor made to each state for their nuances [is needed].

Respondents' suggestions for the federal role in training were organized into four areas: 1) as leader and facilitator of knowledge development and sharing; 2) resolving challenges with Title IV-E; 3) providing funding in several areas; and 4) addressing broader workforce issues.

1) Leader and facilitator of knowledge development and sharing

A common response was a need for a greater federal role in leading and facilitating knowledge development and knowledge sharing across the states. Respondents spoke of this role in a variety of ways but consistently regarded the federal role as important, and the only mechanism to coordinate the vast amount of work in child welfare generally, and training specifically. Two specific areas identified by respondents were: 1) facilitate access to curricula (n=7) and 2) act as conduit for information-sharing among states (n=4). Examples include: "Curriculum developed with federal money could be made available. It would be good if a centrally located web site for curriculum could be developed with federal dollars. It would be cost effective to share ideas with other states."; and "Training directors in our region meet on a regular basis – feds could support this – this is one of the most effective ways, we get a lot from that group. Feds could fund and help organize that kind of thing."

In addition to these specific suggestions, respondents also identified the federal government as the source for sharing best practices and research knowledge in a variety of areas. One respondent spoke at length:

- I'm so glad that you asked that question. I think the first thing they could do; they could establish a group of child welfare training directors to meet a couple of times a year together -- that they make this a mandatory meeting. We need to come together and develop some common ways of communicating, sharing and some common goals. Need to learn from each other. Another thing they could do – the search availability on the Internet. I believe that they need to make it easier to use. Do more education about what's available and organize things more closely. I think they need to analyze, together with the state people, an analysis of what is most important in the CFSR, why it's important, how it can be conceptualized, how it relates to safety, permanency, well-being, conceptualizing cause and effect. Work toward consensus about what the underlying issues are.

Other respondents (n=13) offered other comments about leadership and facilitation. Some of these are provided below:

- If we knew, based on studies, if there was a real central point to find out if we are using the same trends as other states. It is a mish-mash now -- if government could compile and have a central location for research/promising practices for states to access.
- Wish that they would magically publish something that reviewed lots of states, what they're doing and what's most effective for large states, video conferencing, compare them and find out what's working.

- Provide consistency in implementing funding mechanisms to continue institutionalized approach to statewide training. Support integration of latest evidence into training.
- I would expect that they would come out with some core competencies in training that states could then train to those. Have to get CFSR straight, but later, what should the worker competencies be. Nice if there could be sort of a tool chest about how to approach child welfare, like interviewing and assessing instead of trying to guess about what's best.
- Ongoing professional development opportunities for directors and training managers. Providing opportunity and forum for us to hear about practices and changes, even things with CFSR. Looking at the positive impact of CFSR, look at improvements we all can be making in child welfare. Need to become our own think tank and talk about how we can make changes. We all gather together and can we come up with outlines or modules and then take it back to fine tune it to state/county. I can just imagine the amount of knowledge and experience in a room. Continue to offer grant opportunities. Learning opportunities, we need to know how to get the information to us, as the training experts. Who is my peer group that I can reach out to about issues of practice?
- If feds could be spokesperson for all states on what the needs are – to get enhanced funding. Is there something that could be done at the federal level to help break down how training makes a difference or how training improves/changes situations? How do we know what we're doing in the classroom is impacting children and families?
- There is a need to find new initiatives and updates. A challenge to keep up with what is new in the field. There is a clearinghouse but difficult to find things. In a poor state – can't go to conferences so would like to be able to access information. Needs to be more accessible information. Feds should help guide regarding what they should/shouldn't be doing in training.
- This is the first CFSR- provide regular, ongoing technical assistance so that states don't find themselves failing reviews miserably. Tell us what you want up front. Provide assistance proactively. If the feds know what's going on with the trends and how to handle them (i.e., how to handle child mortality, etc). If there is an issue, please provide technical assistance to help us with the issues that we aren't doing well. Share the best practices; tell us what the states that are doing a good job are doing. Regular sharing best practices – send out best practices in foster care, adoption. Let us know what is working with the issues because everyone has the same issues.
- Could help with developing online training. Might help provide cheaper training and the ability to send to national to hear others. They could provide cutting edge training and ways to share ideas such as a webcast. Might provide hands-on DVD tools.

2) Reduce complications around IV-E

Some respondents spoke briefly, concisely, but directly about the importance of IV-E funding (n=6), for example “Keep IV-E as an entitlement program!”

Regarding the complications, respondents tended to speak in some depth on this issue. The three issues (often interrelated) that were raised most frequently were: inconsistency in IV-E regulations in different regions (n=3); confusion regarding allowable costs (n=5); and the narrow scope for using IV-E funding (n=5). Examples are provided below.

Inconsistency: “Wish there was greater consistency within regions regarding IV-E. Huge variance in interpretation. People don't want to ask the question because the most conservative answer is given, instead of looking at issues of children/families – it leads to people not wanting to talk to each other across regions so that they don't compromise what they have. They have had some good feds but some are more strict/more flexible – it becomes hard to deal with figuring out what they want”.

Allowable Costs: “The whole issue of cost allocation and penetration rate- makes it difficult to plan for and get training dollars that are needed. Almost punitive in how dollars are spent- why are we niggling over pennies? Everyone is afraid of saying anything...if it was straight – training was 75% - it would be better. If the intent to lift up the entire child welfare workforce, need [focus on] investigation as well as permanency.”

Narrow scope. Typically these respondents suggested that the use of IV-E funds for training did not always fit with areas in which training was most needed. For example, “Feds have divided how monies can be used; ridiculous way that they try to impose that model on training. Provide training in a broad and comprehensive way even though everything isn’t allowed to be trained under one funding stream. Federal government has impeded training in child welfare training, making it difficult for states to access funding, as though they don’t want training to be successful. It really is a very convoluted, mismanaged system that has been created around funding.”

One additional comment about use of IV-E funding was the need to allow private universities to be included in partnerships.

3) *Funding*

Not surprisingly, many respondents suggested that continued or increased funding from the federal government would be helpful. Some respondents were not specific (n=7), e.g., “Increase funding. Look out on horizon and see storm clouds right now. We are building infrastructure while we see lack of support in future – lack of federal resources.”

Some spoke of this in terms of amount and use of money for training specifically (n=4). Others were more general about the need for funding to improve child welfare services (n=5).

Training-specific: “Clearly, earmark money for training only! It would strongly indicate that it was a high priority.”

Not specific to training: “Grants to support implementing promising practices that are known in the field. Feds would say what ten promising practices are and allow states to apply for funds that would allow states to implement one or more of the promising practices.”

4) *Addressing broader workforce issues*

Finally, some respondents (n=7) also suggested that the federal government has a role in addressing some of the larger workforce issues:

- Federal government needs to stress the importance of child welfare to leaders (on the state level). There is a need for leaders to understand the complexity of the child welfare training system.
- Mandate training before caseload responsibility. We certainly advocate for that, but if it was built in on the front-end, it would make it so much easier if it was tied to dollars. Support the professionalization of trainers. If we could have a more stable funding stream, it would enhance our ability to plan. Not be under the gun when things get tough and training goes. Mandating training in certain areas – listing of basic child maltreatment curricula, it would give you a starting point without sitting in endless meetings trying to decide what you do in training and what you leave out. There is probably enough knowledge base out there now, it could be done.
- When CFSR and PIP are done, take into account the staff and caseloads – really need to look at manpower issues.

- It would be nice if there were some consensus arrived at about what is an appropriate caseload size, nice to get some standardized size and then, some consensus regarding minimum qualifications a child worker should come in with, and then what are the responsibilities of the agency to provide in terms of ongoing training. This also includes schools of social work discussion -- what they need to learn as a foundation that can be built upon.
- Opportunities for the grants -- broader than they are -- have a focus determined by a need; don't know how those needs are determined. We would have some ideas about work we would like our universities to do that do not fit within the scope of the current grants. A broader, more open space for making suggestions. Universities see themselves more as a link with the local region -- fund at different level for upscaling it to a state level.
- Could focus on self-care and address the problem of retention. Training is futile if you shut the back door. What's needed are concrete ways to help improve practice, care for self, and nurture workers. Could "allow provision for flexible funding." They have put a lot of time into crossing t's and dotting i's; it takes away from workers having time to learn skills."

What Should Be the Federal Priorities (topics) of Training in the Next Few Years?

Twelve states responded that the federal priorities should focus on child safety, permanency, and well-being. As state respondents indicated that this should be the priority over the next several years, many indicated that child welfare has lost its focus on the critical foundational elements of the field and that a return "to the basics" is in order.

Another area of focus among many state respondents was regarding involvement and relationship building between the child welfare system and families. Using specific categorical responses such as family decision making, using family strengths, forming a relationship with family, relative care-giving and family centered practice, many respondents would like to see the federal priorities focus on families.

Specific issues that impact children such as child abuse, child neglect, emotional abuse, child sexual abuse, and domestic violence were mentioned as preferred federal priorities by a total of six states. Another issue impacting children and families, substance abuse, was prioritized by seven states. An additional seven states indicated that training on methamphetamines and their impact should be a priority, as the prevalence of this particular substance seems to be increasing in nearly every region of the country.

A few other child/family centered training priorities were mentioned by at least one state. These included: child development, aging out of care, foster placement trainings, adoptions, and the disproportionality of minority children in the child welfare system.

Moving from child/family centered training priorities to more systemic training issues, state respondents indicated that the federal government should prioritize training related to the development and growth of the state level child welfare system. With regard to state system issues, three states prioritized staff recruitment/retention, two states prioritized organizational development, three states prioritized best practice examples while five states emphasized training on evidence-based practices. Additional systemic training priorities mentioned by states included: partnerships/collaborations (5), guidance on the CFSR process (4), grant writing (1), rural-specific practices (1), human resource practices (1), and worker safety (1).

In addition to system level priorities, state respondents indicated a number of child welfare staff training issues. Primarily, the training priorities most desired by states focused on front-line worker training such as: case planning, interview and assessment, ethical dilemmas, transfer of learning, court testimony, fatality reviews, working with law enforcement, and mental health diagnosis. While the majority of desired staff training priorities focused on line-worker staff, three states focused on

leadership/management training as a priority, while six states emphasized the need for prioritization of supervisory training.

Finally, it is worth noting that while the majority of states could easily respond to the question of federally prioritized training topics, two states did not provide any response to this question. Another three states clearly indicated that while they would like federal support for training, the states themselves would prefer to prioritize training topics. These three states indicated that they believed that they have greater understanding of their states' needs than does the federal government and therefore training priorities should be set on the state level.

Conclusion

State responses demonstrated a wide range of activity related to child welfare training. Despite the variation, virtually all respondents expressed a high level of commitment to training activities as well as their importance in high quality child welfare services. It is obvious that some states have more resources than others and can, therefore, offer more training opportunities. Regardless of resource levels, in most cases training directors were working to develop and expand further training initiatives. We reiterate from our findings: "the enthusiasm and optimism with which state training representatives spoke of their future initiatives were the most common elements among all states interviewed. Regardless of the number or type of upcoming training endeavors, the states expressed a collective pride in their advancing work."

Often states spoke of a sense of marginalization and vulnerability within the state agency. Some training units were in the enviable position of receiving consistent high-level support to sustain the training enterprise. This did not appear to be the norm, however. More often training units were adapting to numerous internal and external conditions.

A final overarching theme from these data suggested that, consistent with a high level of professionalism, many respondents expressed a desire to learn from and share with their colleagues across the country. Some had mechanisms to do this already, such as funding to attend conferences. Others seemed to be struggling alone to meet the challenges they face. Consequently, several respondents spoke of a desire for the federal government to be more involved in coordinated information-sharing among this group.

Appendix B:
Survey of Faculty
Final Report

**National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants:
Survey of Colleges and Universities**

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National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants Survey of Colleges and Universities

Purpose

The purpose of this component was to collect data from faculty in schools of social work¹ about their involvement in child welfare training and other child welfare activities. It was designed to assess social work's involvement in and commitment to child welfare and to compare the experiences of faculty who had received federal child welfare training grants with those who had not.

Method

The study design involved a mail survey of faculty at colleges and universities throughout the U.S. The survey gathered information regarding the faculty member's involvement in child welfare training and other child welfare activities; their school/department's relationship with the public child welfare agency; feedback about their experiences with federally funded training projects; strengths and weaknesses of the current system of federal child welfare training projects; perceived impact of training projects on child welfare practice at the state agency; perceived impact of training projects on the school/department; and suggestions for further development of the child welfare training program.

Two groups of subjects were selected: 1) faculty who had received a recent grant (projects ending in 2002 or later) from the Children's Bureau for training activities (n=54); and 2) a matched sample of faculty from MSW programs who have not received a grant during this time period (n=124). For the first group, a list was obtained from the Children's Bureau of the Principal Investigators (PI) of the training projects they funded during the target time period. The PIs of these projects were included in the sample except when there were multiple PIs at the same institution. In these cases, one person from the institution was randomly selected. The matched sample was drawn from colleges/universities with MSW programs accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. There were 172 such programs at the time of sample selection. This list of programs excluded those MSW programs in which a faculty member had received a training grant and, therefore, had already been selected. This reduced the comparison list to 124 schools. At each of these schools, one faculty member was identified with expertise in child welfare. Identification of these individuals occurred by reviewing schools' websites and searching the literature to identify a child welfare expert at each school. When a specific individual could not be identified, the letter and survey were sent to the Dean or Director of the school or department of social work.

Materials sent to sample members included: 1) a cover letter which described the study to participants and provided all elements of informed consent, and, 2) a 10 page survey. The cover letter and survey were sent with a stamped and addressed return envelope. A reminder notice was sent 2 weeks after the initial mailing. Four weeks after the initial mailing, a prompting email was also sent.

¹ Although faculty in schools of social work were the primary target of the survey, some administrators were also included if they were a federal child welfare training grantee or they were identified as the school's primary child welfare expert. Additionally, a few of the grantees are not in schools of social work. They, too, were included. The demographics chart identifies the percentages of these different types of respondents.

Sample Description

A total of 98 surveys were returned (55% response rate), 38 were from grantees (70% response rate) and 60 were from other faculty (48% response rate). Table 1 provides descriptive information about the individual sample members and Table 2 provides descriptive information about the schools represented by the sample members.

Table 1: Sample Description: Individuals

	Grantee (n=38)	Non-grantee (n=60)
% with faculty appointment	90%	90%
% w/administrative appointment	54%	50%
% w/training or research project appointment	34%	34%
Average percent time spent in:		
Teaching	31	39
Research	24	28
Training project	31	22
School administration	42	44
Other	16	22
Average years:		
at school	14	11
involved in training	18	16
in child welfare	21	21
Academic degrees:		
BA/BS/BSW	53%	39%
MA/MS/MSW	76%	73%
Ph.D./DSW	79%	78%
Other	0%	2%
Gender (% female)	76%	68%
Race/ethnicity:		
American Indian	11%	0
Asian, Pacific Islander	0	2%
Black, African American	8%	15%
Hispanic, Latino	5%	5%
White, Caucasian	74%	73%
Mixed Race	0	2%
Other	3%	2%

Table 2: Sample Description: Schools

	Grantee (n=38)	Non-grantee (n=59)
School (% public)	82%	78%
Degrees offered:		
BSW	5%	2%
MSW	5%	2%
BSW & MSW	30%	66%
MSW & Doctoral	21%	14%
BSW/MSW/Doctoral	34%	17%
Other	3%	0
Size of student population in BSW program:		
<100	29%	36%
100-299	61%	57%
300-499	4%	8%
>500	0	0
N/A	7%	7%
Size of student population in MSW program:		
<100	8%	27%
100-299	45%	44%
300-499	21%	14%
>500	16%	7%
Size of student population Doctoral program:		
<20	26%	14%
20-39	35%	52%
40-59	9%	10%
>60	22%	5%
N/A	9%	19%

Findings

Respondents' Involvement in Child Welfare Activities

Respondents were asked to describe their level of involvement in various types of child welfare activities using a 4 point scale (1=none to 4=extensive). Table 3 provides the results comparing grantees and non-grantees. Although grantees had more involvement in some areas (significantly, in "other federally funded child welfare training" which would be expected based on the sample selection criteria) there was equal involvement in other areas.

Table 3: Involvement in Various Child Welfare Activities

	Grantees (n=38)	Non-Grantees (n=60)	t-test
Federally funded Title IV-E CW training	3.24 (1.11)	2.93 (1.24)	1.24
Other federally funded CW training	3.19 (.97)	1.90 (1.00)	6.21 p<.001
State or county funded CW training	2.95 (1.08)	2.59 (1.14)	1.53
Federally funded CW research	2.19 (1.84)	1.84 (1.01)	1.57
Other-funded CW research	2.41 (1.01)	2.05 (.93)	1.73 p<.10
CW program evaluation	2.62 (1.01)	2.42 (1.05)	.91
CW clinical supervision	2.11 (1.13)	2.14 (1.22)	.12
CW task force and planning	2.65 (.95)	2.73 (1.10)	.37
CW professional advisory board	2.51 (.96)	2.53 (1.27)	.09
Average	2.65 (.66)	2.34 (.65)	2.22 p<.05

Respondents were also asked to what extent they felt child welfare was a priority at their school. This question used a five point scale from 1=low priority to 5=high priority. There was no difference between the two groups (grantee M=3.76 and non-grantee M=3.80).

Additionally, respondents were asked whether they felt supported in pursuing a child welfare agenda at their school. Overall, 94% reported "yes", they felt supported. Among the grantees, 100% reported feeling supported, among the non-grantees 90% reported feeling supported ($\chi^2=3.91$, p<.05).

Respondents were asked an open-ended question: “How would you describe your schools’ commitment to public child welfare?”

Mostly respondents reported a strong or very strong commitment:

- 100% commitment
- Central to its mission
- The commitment is vigorous and robust. Child welfare practice issues and trends are fully integrated into the curriculum.
- The school of social work and the university have demonstrated strong and long term commitment of public child welfare. Training, research, publication, scholarly activities and local agency involvement are encouraged.

There was fairly extensive mention of Title IV-E funds as a facilitator for this commitment:

- Because of our IV-E program we are very committed and will have a public child welfare specialization. Without IV-E, I would not be sure.
- Driven by and supported by Title IV-E funds: results in a section of child/youth/family concentration for IV-E traineeship recipients.

Some comments of respondents suggested a more moderate or limited commitment, particularly if key child welfare faculty are not present:

- There is some commitment to working with traumatized children but less so than in public child welfare agencies.
- We have a [very long] history of strong relationships with the public child welfare system in the state. However, this has suffered in the past few years with the retirement of child welfare researchers and because of where the focus of the faculty is who do not want to deal with the complexity of child welfare.
- We have had a IV-E training partnership for many years. It has been peripheral to most school activities, however, until [recently]. Workforce scarcity issues and the federal CFSR have given it prominence within the school.
- While we have a large number of child welfare grants including large federal research grants, there is less overall faculty support that I would like to see.
- Long-standing, well-funded, still (paradoxically) seen as “less than” by tenured faculty who value therapy more.
- Extremely committed. However, with the resignations/retirements of key child welfare faculty this commitment might lessen.

School's Relationship with Public Child Welfare Agency

Large, and nearly equal, percentages in both groups reported their school had an institutionalized link with a public child welfare agency (86% of grantees and 90% of non-grantees).

In response to a question regarding whether their school had an institutionalized linkage with a public child welfare agency, 88% responded "yes". In terms of the most interaction between school/department and public child welfare agencies, 23% were with the county, 68% with the state, and 9% were with other (presumably local or regional) entities.

A series of questions examined the relationship of the individual respondent with the child welfare agency and his/her perception of their schools' relationship with the child welfare agency. These data are recorded on a scale from 1=low to 4=high. The mean responses are reported in Table 4. No significant differences were found between grantees and non-grantees.

Table 4: Indicators of Relationship with Child Welfare Agency

	Grantees (n=38)	Non-Grantees (n=60)
Your Relationship		
Quality	3.74 (.83)	3.46 (.82)
Amount	3.32 (.90)	3.17 (.91)
Mutuality/Reciprocity	3.13 (.96)	3.08 (.91)
Productivity	3.24 (.82)	3.07 (.84)
Desire for future collaboration	3.64 (.76)	3.78 (.52)
Average score	3.35 (.76)	3.35 (.65)
Your School's Relationship		
Quality	3.14 (.95)	3.18 (.83)
Amount	3.05 (.87)	2.89 (.91)
Mutuality/Reciprocity	2.84 (.95)	2.82 (.91)
Productivity	2.97 (.93)	2.71 (1.02)
Desire for future collaboration	3.55 (.74)	3.55 (.74)
Average score	3.09 (.76)	3.02 (.78)

Slightly over half of respondents (51%) reported that the level of collaboration between the school and reference agency was increasing; 36% thought it was about the same and 13% thought it was decreasing. Chi-square analysis found no association between these variables.

The average number of face-to-face meetings (in the past 12 months) between respondents and public child welfare collaborators was slightly higher among grantees, but not significantly so (M=12.54 vs. 11.52).

Experiences with Federally-Funded Child Welfare Training Grants

In the past 5 years, 42(43%) respondents reported they had not applied for a federally-funded child welfare training grant. These respondents were then asked the reason for not applying. The most frequent response (n=19) was that they were too busy with other responsibilities and projects. In addition, six respondents reported that they had no knowledge of the availability of the grants. Other potential reasons (no interest in child welfare training, no school interest in child welfare training, no experience in child welfare training, no school experience in child welfare training) were not checked by any of the respondents. Some write-in responses on this topic included the following reasons for not applying: the child welfare agency was not interested in collaborating on this (n=2), private colleges not eligible (for IV-E), RFPs come out at inconvenient time (August), the child welfare training grants are relatively small, training funds are secured from other sources.

Ten respondents (10%) did apply for a federal training grant but did not receive it. When asked the reason they thought they did not receive it, the responses included the following:

- Status as a private university, plus the plan for evaluation needed to be stronger.
- Grant proposal was not accepted by reviewers.
- Non-specific feedback from reviewers.
- Limited grants and stiff competition.
- After working over a year with the federal regional office and the state commissioner, the priorities of the state changed.
- Made a mistake on the submission (double-spacing).
- Feds give a variety of reasons; I think we are too small.
- Feedback said small population.
- Political.

A total of 48 (49%) did apply and received a grant. The remaining questions in this section reflect the responses of this subsample. Table 5 provides feedback from these respondents regarding the difficulty of processes related to securing, implementing, and completing a federal child welfare training grant. The rating scale was 1=very easy to 5=very difficult.

Table 5: Grantee Feedback on Processes of Federal Child Welfare Training Projects

Item	N	M (sd)
Securing		
Finding out about	46	2.07 (1.12)
Clarity of RFP	45	2.56 (1.16)
Application process	45	2.80 (1.08)
Implementing		
BSW/MSW stipends	35	2.49 (1.29)
BSW/MSW field replacement	36	2.53 (1.25)
Curriculum development	44	2.20 (.80)
Delivering training	43	2.33 (.97)
Collaborating with CW agency	44	2.43 (1.02)
Collaborating with Children's Bureau	42	2.71 (1.26)
Evaluation	43	2.56 (1.08)
Dissemination	43	2.47 (1.03)
Completing		
Final report	26	1.92 (.94)
Institutionalization	23	3.39 (1.41)

Institutionalization of the training project was identified as the most difficult task. Some of the other comparatively difficult tasks were the application process and collaborating with the Children's Bureau. The easiest task was writing the final report. Other comparatively easy tasks included finding out about the training grants, curriculum development, and delivering training.

In the past 5 years, 26 (38.8%) of the respondents had completed a training project. Table 6 provides data regarding respondents' perceptions of the impact of the training project on the state agency. Respondents were first asked to identify the goals of their completed project (consequently N varies depending on whether this item was a goal of the project) and then the level of impact they believe their project had on this goal (4 point scale: none to strong). Table 7 provides data on perception of lasting change (5 point scale: none to substantial). Table 8 provides data on the perceived impact of the training projects on the schools of social work (4 point scale: none to high).

**Table 6: Perceived Impact of Training Project on
Child Welfare Practice at the State Agency**

	N	% Moderate or Strong
Recruitment of new CW staff	13	62%
Development of current CW staff	18	83%
CW worker knowledge	20	100%
CW worker attitude	17	88%
CW worker skills	19	84%
CW supervisor knowledge	22	77%
CW supervisor attitude	21	71%
CW supervisor skill	19	74%
Macro level CW policy or practice	17	53%

Table 7: Perception of change

Item	N	% Moderate, Big, or Substantial Change
Collaboration between school and CW agency	25	72%
Institutionalization of a training course	25	68%
Changing agency policy or practice	23	61%

Table 8: Perceived Impact of Training Projects on School of Social Work

Item	N	% Moderate or High
Curriculum	25	72%
Concentration/field of practice	25	52%
Field placement settings	25	64%
Faculty development (interest, knowledge, skill)	24	63%
BSW student recruitment	20	45%
MSW student recruitment	23	52%

Were there unintended positive effects associated with the project?

Twenty-six (26) respondents addressed this question. Only four respondents indicated no unintended positive effects of the project. The majority of the remaining respondents felt that the unintended positive effects of the training projects were related to the opportunities it created for building networks and linkages allowing for

collaborations and other relationships, both interdisciplinary and with the practice community. These networks and collaborations widened the potential for other resources. The projects also helped to build capacity to work with students.

Were there unintended negative effects associated with the project?

Fourteen (14) respondents addressed this question. Some respondents experienced an increase in strained relationships with either other non-funded institutions, the state or internally among faculty. Some of the strain was related to an increased work load and demand for assistance greater than financial resources. Another unintended negative effect was the change in priority and importance the project had after a change in state administration. Several aspects of the training project ended when funding ended (e.g., student recruitment and practitioner training), and the program did not seem to be a priority for the new administration.

Suggestions from Respondents

What suggestions do you have for how the federal government, via the Children's Bureau, can provide leadership to the field of child welfare training?

From 68 respondents several themes emerged including recommendations for training, collaboration, outcomes, funding, clarity of roles, and research.

Training

- Many respondents felt that the training topics needed to be focused on issues related to program and practice needs versus politicized issues. The current training topics do not always address current practice needs.
- There is a need for standardized competencies, expectations and standards for professional development and training. Training curricula should be more skill, competency and knowledge based.
- Trainings projects need to include greater attention to implementation (action planning) and evaluation. Evaluation of training should attend to the actual transfer to learning as well as be more rigorous.
- Training opportunities should be extended to a wider group of individuals involved in child welfare.

Collaboration and outcome sharing

- There is a need for facilitating genuine program collaborations and outcome sharing. There needs to be greater emphasis placed on dissemination of evaluation and training outcomes, information, resources and program model and curricula for the benefit of all, not just funded programs.

Funding

- In general respondents recommended a continuation of training funds and increased funds to meet actual implementation costs. In addition, funding should be directed to pilot programs, state-university partnerships, and research partnerships.

Consistency

- Respondents felt that federal project staff should work more closely with child welfare staff in the field to gain a better understanding of the ground level. There is a need to work more closely with the practice community in determining needs in the child welfare. There is also a need for national consistency of regulations versus regional interpretations.

Research

- Some respondents were concerned that training evaluation did not carry same the value as other evaluation, thus evaluations should be more rigorous to be deemed 'of value' within the university settings. More research should be supported in the field including transracial/ transcultural placement research.

What do you think are the key issues federal child welfare training should address?

Seventy-two (72) respondents addressed this question. Several emphasized addressing issues that are not politicized issues. Topics should be more expansive than currently permitted. Of the various key issues to address through federal child welfare training, there were issues related to the capacity of the child welfare organizations, staff skills and client needs.

- A significant portion of respondents focused on the training needs regarding issues related to their organizations including: staff recruitment and retention. In addition a significant number of respondents expressed a need to provide training to improve program administration and supervision to complement and “preserve reinforcement of training” and overall management of child welfare work. In the area of practice, respondents indicated the need for training to address implementation of effective models of practice and evidence based practice skills and advanced practice.
- One of the more common training needs related to agency capacity was overall cultural competency which included ethnicity and religion. Other capacity training issues included: advocating for resources and privatization of child welfare.
- Community and client issues to be addressed included: minority overrepresentation, family formation and sustaining healthy relationships,

addictions and substance abuse, incarceration, the intersection of immigration and child welfare, youth development, risk assessment, community assessments and capacity building, kinship care, witnesses of violence, and prevention,

What suggestions do you have for how the federal government, via the Children's Bureau can provide leadership to the field of child welfare (e.g., policy, practice, or research)?

Sixty-one (61) respondents addressed this question. In the area of leadership through policy, respondents focused on greater advocacy on behalf of the Children's Bureau for more quality children's services and subsequent funding for comprehensive services that support family functioning. Respondents were concerned about minimizing the political drive of policy making and instead insuring advocacy for continued attention to child welfare issues and the needs of public child welfare workers and families. This could be done by involving social workers in the decision making process. Some respondents were concerned with child welfare policies that respect children and family needs, and do not criminalize them. Respondents wanted policy mandates to be disseminated in a clear manner and support consistency across regions.

In the area of child welfare practice, respondents felt that more resources were needed to support child welfare workers and their training in practice tools. There was a strong desire for assistance in developing relationships between universities and public agencies. This could be done through cooperative awards, or local and regional conferences. Another important theme raised by respondents was the continued support for and dissemination of evidence-based interventions and best practice models. Respondents believed more needed to be done to share the information available regarding successful and effective practice models. Training could be provided to support faculty in advocating for additional resources within the university system, publishing and disseminating research results. Other suggestions in the area of improving practice were:

- Allow for flexibility in child welfare services
- Minimize time needed for paperwork to maximize service time
- Training in court proceedings and testifying
- Make administration local through collaborations with schools
- Cultural competency framework and community advisory systems.

In the area of research, respondents overwhelmingly believed that more research was needed in child welfare, particularly focused on developing interventions and models that are evidence based, and drive policy change. Research should include diverse representatives and a broad range of projects. Other suggestions in the area of research included:

- Evaluation to determine how social work is promoting child welfare
- Research dollars to small rural universities
- More research in kinship care and field-initiated research

- Research that partners with local, grassroots organizations
- Involving education institutions in model research projects
- More reasonable one-year research projects.

Respondents also offer suggestions on other issues to address in child welfare which include:

- Attention to youth development; child welfare workforce issues (retention, etc)
- Advocate for licensure at BA social work level
- Reconsider withholding funds for poor results when more, not less funding may be the only way to increase results
- Better promote child welfare and child welfare workers within the public media to promote “higher respect and public appreciation”.

Other Comments

Fifteen (15) respondents offered additional suggestions and comments that include the following:

- There should a National Institute of Child Welfare with corresponding funding, status and career paths as there are for NIH and NIMH.
- “I love doing the work on the child welfare grant- it seems meaningful and I believe I’m making a difference... I may not write another as the university does not value what they see as ‘service’ grants.”
- “Federal government could do much more in developing an ethnically diverse workforce and utilizing HBCUs to achieve the desired outcomes in child welfare.”
- Focus on “professionalize the child welfare workforce, document effectiveness of efforts, work to help agencies adopt...new skills/abilities – a key piece that must not be left out of the plan.”
- “Gap between child welfare and social work practice remains”.
- Partner with other countries.
- Front-line child welfare workers should be resources for determining gaps in research.
- “Bureau can be capricious in administering cooperative agreements.”
- “Abandon the day sheet for time reporting and mandate, as well as automate the random moment survey.”
- More communication from Children’s Bureau.
- Expand IV-E to permit funding for research, not just program evaluation.

Conclusion

There are many different ways in which faculty are involved in child welfare. In addition to training projects, faculty members are engaged in research, consultation and other means to serve the field. Both former training grantees and non-grantees were engaged in a wide variety of child welfare activities. Relationships with the public child welfare agencies were considered to be strong and desirable. Faculty members in schools of social work appear to be committed to the field of child welfare, but some suggested that there is less than full commitment on the part of their schools. There is neither the funding, nor the associated prestige, attached to child welfare that can be found in other social work fields of practice (e.g., mental health).

The experience of grantees suggests relative ease in securing and implementing these training grants. Institutionalization of projects was the most difficult challenge. This finding is consistent with other results of the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants. Grantees who had completed projects indicated a perception of high impacts of these projects. Additional outcome research is needed to examine this perception.

The qualitative comments again suggested a high commitment to child welfare and many suggestions for improvements in the field. Most notably these improvements focused on increasing research to support the field and de-politicization of child welfare.