



A partnership for Education, Student Support, Training, Evaluation, and Research

Child Welfare Training from the Individual Worker Perspective

Key Results:

For 2412 professional child welfare staff respondents to the *Individual Worker Survey*, 99.8% self-report that they have received training for their jobs in fiscal year 2010-2011.

Most have completed (73%) or are in the process of completing (4.8%) the Common Core Curricula for Child Welfare Workers.

Among 358 respondents who have been at their current jobs for one year or less, 99.4% have received from 1 to 30 days of training last year.

In collaboration with the County Welfare Directors Association and the California Department of Social Services, CalSWEC has surveyed the state's public child welfare workforce every three to five years since 1992 to determine the extent to which the state is meeting its requirements for Master's-level social workers among child welfare social work staff.

The data for this 2011 study were gathered between August 2011 and February 2012 using two online survey instruments. The first was the *Agency Administrative Survey* aimed at gathering administrative data about agency staffing such as the number of staff, vacancies, need for bilingual workers, turnover and the effects of the economic downturn on hiring.

The second was the *Individual Worker Survey*. This survey was designed to obtain a more detailed perspective on the workforce by having individual child welfare staff complete it. As a result of the statewide participation of county child welfare agencies and public child welfare staff, we were able to gather substantial information on the demographics of the workforce, service assignments, education, professional licensure, experience level, interest in further training and further education.

Although one of the primary purposes of the Workforce Study was to determine the educational levels of the public child welfare staff, this was the first time we asked individual workers, supervisors, managers and administrators about on-the-job training needs and experiences from an *individual* perspective. The purpose was to gather information from individual workers to examine their viewpoints in order to identify training needs, barriers to training attendance, to improve access to on-the-job training and ease of training use.

I. Training days¹

For 2412 professional² child welfare staff respondents to the *Individual Worker Survey*, 99.8% self-report that they have received training for their jobs in fiscal year 2010-2011.

- The number of training days ranges from none to 30.
- Mean= 7.38 days; Median = 5 days; Mode = 5 days.
- 99.4% of those who have been in their current positions for 5.5 years or less (n = 1434) have received some training for their jobs last year.
- Among 358 respondents who have been at their current jobs for one year or less, 99.4% have received from 1 to 30 days of training last year. Mean = 9.55 days, Median = 7 days, Mode = 5 days.
- Supervisors
 - For 481 self-identified supervisors: 99.8% of supervisors have received from 1 to 30 days of training last year. Mean= 8.0 days; Median = 6 days; Mode = 5 days.
 - 60 supervisors who have been in their current positions for one year or less have all received 1 to 30 days of training last year.

II. Have you completed the Common Core Training for Child Welfare Workers?

- Most have completed (73%) or are in the process of completing (4.8%) the Common Core Curricula for Child Welfare Workers.

Common Core	All Professional Child Welfare Respondents		All---5.5 Years or less in current position		Supervisors Only	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Percent
YES	1736	73.	1060	74.8	330	69.8
I am in the process of completing.	113	4.8	100	7.1	4	.8
I don't know.	153	6.4	85	6.0	17	3.6
NO	296	12.5	135	9.5	91	19.2
Not applicable.	79	3.3	37	2.6	31	6.6
Total	2377	100.0	1417	100.0	473	100.0
Missing System	35		17		8	
	2412		1434		481	

¹ About 5% of the responses were outliers in which respondents said they had taken more than 30 days of training in one year. One outlier took 1000 days of training. These responses were excluded from the analysis. Newly hired workers may have up to 6 weeks of training for the Common Core. (6 weeks x 5 days = 30 days)

² Professional child welfare staff includes case-carrying social workers, non-case-carrying social workers, supervisors, managers, and administrators. For definitions, refer to the Population Data Brief.

III. Have you completed the Common Core Training for Child Welfare Supervisors?

- 482 respondents have taken Supervisors' Core; another 33 are in the process of completion.
- 349 supervisors have had Supervisors' Core; another 32 are in the process of completion.
- Among those respondents who have been in their current positions 5.5 years or less (1487), 255 have completed Supervisors' Core.

Supervisors' Core	All Professional Child Welfare Respondents		All---5.5 Years or less in current position		Supervisors Only	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
YES	482	20.4	255	18.2	349	73.2
I am in the process of completing	33	1.4	25	1.8	32	6.7
I don't know	31	1.3	19	1.4	12	2.5
NO	1116	47.3	625	44.5	71	14.9
Not applicable	696	29.5	480	34.2	13	2.7
Total	2358	100.0	1404	100.0	477	100.0
Missing System	54		30		4	
Total	2412		1434		481	

IV. If you have missed any Common Core Training (Child Welfare Worker or Supervisor) what was (were) the reasons? (Check all that apply)

Reason	Frequency
Lack of coverage	107
Training cancelled	50
Workload concerns	345
Personal emergency	113
Work emergency (called away)	90
Not applicable to me	1363
Other reasons	112

Workload concerns were the most prevalent reasons for missing Core training. "Other" responses for missing or not attending training included: Trainings were full, double-booked, too far away; supervisor wouldn't give permission for the worker to be away from the unit. These answers may represent opportunities for webinars and other distance learning technologies. We did not ask about the need or desire for web-based learning or distance education in this version of the Workforce Study, but that should be included in the next administration of the survey.

V. How do you keep track of the training you have had? (Check all that apply)

Keeping track of training	All Frequency
Myself	1414
My supervisor	477
The staff development department	1908
I have no way of keeping track	103
Other*	210

*Other responses include a variety of online or training system ways of keeping track of training such as, County HR, E-learning site, LA Kids, Learning Management Systems (LMS), Peoplesoft, PERC, SABA, SSA Learn, Training Partner (Web-based), UC Davis.

Many respondents complained that online ways of tracking training were difficult to use or inaccurate. Since 40 hours of training every 24 months is required for child welfare workers (See Appendix), there may be a need for and an opportunity to try to bring some consistency to keeping track of training for individual workers. Promotions or other incentives tied to training attendance may also enhance the motivation to keep track.

VI. Changing service assignments may have implications for training.

Changing service assignments afford another opportunity to provide staff training.

Among all 2414 respondents:

- 24.8% indicate that their service assignments have changed last year.
- Another 10.7% expect their service assignments to change this year and 28.9% don't know if their assignments will change.

Among those 1434 respondents who have been in their current positions 5.5 years or less.

- 26.2% indicate that their service assignments have changed last year.
- 11.5% expect their service assignments to change this year and 30.7% don't know.

The Turnover Data Brief has additional information about service assignment changes.

VII. Would you be interested in further training for your child welfare job?

Social Workers. Seventy-one percent of the social workers would like more training; another 20.7 percent would like more "but not at the present time".

Social workers noted they need more training on topics already in the Common Core, such as child development, substance abuse, mental health, and other topics that would further their understanding of "how best to assess and support our client population".

Supervisors. Supervisors responded in the affirmative, 64.7% of the time; another 24.2% responded in the affirmative, but "not at this time." Several said there was no time for training now.

Others did not anticipate they would receive training for their changed service assignments or had already had Supervisor Core training.

Topics supervisors were interested in ranged from wanting information about new child welfare services mandates and techniques such as adoptions³, transitional age youth permanency, assessment tools and support for the new client groups for whom they have assumed responsibility to more about helping staff, supervision and management. Those results are reported out separately and in greater detail in the next data brief.

Continuing education for licensing (LCSW or MFT) is frequently requested by the staff.

Managers. Just over half of the managers responding have received Core training. Management related training specific to managing child welfare line workers and supervisors and leadership were the most frequently needed training topics for managers, but training about the requirements for new policies and best practices in child welfare for managers would also be welcome. Others do not expect they will receive training for their jobs.

³ Counties are anticipating the assumption of adoptions services, since the California Department of Social Services has cut back or eliminated their adoption units.

VII. Appendix

Methodology

Although the methodology for this study has changed since 1992, the basic questions remain: “How many social workers and other professional staff work in public child welfare agencies in California? What proportion of the professional staff hold master’s degrees in social work/welfare?” Two online surveys were used to gather the data.

First, the 58 counties were asked to provide census information about the population of professional active/encumbered child welfare staff positions, needs for MSWs, vacancies, and proportion of bilingual workers among the staff population. 55 counties responded with administrative census data. Three counties that declined to participate were located in the northern region of the state and have small populations. Since those counties responded in 2008, their 2008 data was substituted for the 2011 missing data when the proportions of MSWs were calculated. The missing data amounted to 0.457% of the total population.

Second, a web-based survey was sent to all individual workers in 55 counties⁴ by their child welfare or human resources departments to provide educational level, service assignment, position, race/ethnicity, age, years of service, needs for additional education, and training experiences. 3496 responses were received from workers from 54 counties. When matched to the proportionate distribution reported in the census data there were not significant differences. This means that the sample responses are representative of the distribution of child welfare positions in the state.

In all but four counties, all public child welfare social work assistants, social workers, supervisors, managers/program managers, and administrators were given the opportunity to respond to the individual worker survey. Social work assistants were included in this study because they can be a source of “home grown” social workers, and we wanted to gauge their interest in seeking additional degree education. Where appropriate, they were enumerated.

The application and approval letters are on file in the CalSWEC Office and the University of California Berkeley Office for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Copies of the survey instruments are available upon request.

Regulations

California State Educational Qualifications for Child Welfare Staff

The Manual of Policies and Procedures, Division 31 Child Welfare Services Program, Regulation 31-070 states that “County staff who provide emergency response and family maintenance services shall meet the following qualifications:

“.11 At least 50 percent of the professional staff providing emergency response services, and at least 50 percent of the professional staff providing family maintenance services, shall possess master’s degree in social work, or its equivalent in education and/or experience as certified by the State Personnel Board or a county civil service board.”

⁴ One county declined to send the individual worker survey to its workers but did complete the census survey. Three counties declined to participate in the study.

“.12 One hundred (100) percent of the supervisors of staff providing emergency response and family maintenance services shall possess a master’s degree in social work, or its equivalent in education and/or experience as certified by the State Personnel Board or a county civil service board.”

The standards for MSW social workers in Adoptions are located in the Community Care Licensing Manual Sections 89152-89155.

California Child Welfare Training Regulations

An All County Letter (ACL-08-23) from the California Department of Social Services delineates Child Welfare Training Regulations Effective July 1, 2008. Among the items addressed are suggested topics for training content for newly hired child welfare workers and supervisors in core training. This ACL also spells out requirements for 40 hours of continuing training for current workers every 24 months:

“.1 County welfare departments shall provide training to employees who are newly hired, transferred, or promoted to social services positions.” Authority Cited: Sections 10553 and 10554, Welfare and Institutions Code. Reference: 45 CFR 1357.15(t); Social Security Act, Title IV-B, Program Improvement Plan, and Section 16206, Welfare and Institutions Code.

These regulations apply to juvenile probation officers as well as child welfare workers.



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Suggested citation: Clark, S.J. (2012) *The 2012 California public child welfare workforce study: Training from the individual worker perspective*. Berkeley CA: University of California Berkeley, School of Social Welfare.

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