

Over the last 23 years, I have attended multiple conferences and trainings, arriving back at my office with increased energy, motivation and great intentions to start the following day with the new skills and approaches that I just learned. However, reality took over and the meticulous notes that I took, the handouts and the power points that instilled a spark of excitement got set aside, at first to the corner of my desk, but ultimately they were demoted to the bottom drawer to become a part of my collection of great ideas and intentions. The demands of the job and the emergencies were not going to allow me the time to implement or share the knowledge that I had

come back with. And before too long, the meticulous notes no longer made sense and the knowledge I had gathered seemed irrelevant.

Has this ever happened to you? Does this happen to your staff? Are you regularly sending case workers to training with no expectation that they will bring the knowledge and skills back to the agency? Are you sending workers to training based upon convenience versus sending them to training that addresses their developmental needs? If this is the case, are you really benefiting from training in the best way possible? Focusing on the **Transfer of Learning** and how you implement this within your agency can reap benefits beyond measure.



**Transfer of Learning: effectively and continually applying the knowledge, skills and/or attitudes that were learned to the job environment.**

**Our budget is tight and instead of sending five staff to training, I am only allowed to send two. What should I do?**

- Who will benefit most from the training?
- Which individuals are the most motivated to learn?
- Which individuals have the prerequisite skills required for the course?
- Who is in the best position to share the training information with others?
- Which individuals will make a good team to introduce the new serves and/or skill to the rest of the department?
- Know what the training is about, how it will positively impact outcomes for families, and what you can do to maximize the event for the learner as well as the department. Use this information to gain support for attendance at the training from administration.

The Transfer of Learning: A Guide for Strengthening the Performance of Health Care Workers (2002)

## Why Should Supervisors Focus on Transfer of Learning?

**In many agencies, Supervisors are responsible for staff training and development. Your focus on Transfer of Learning will:**

- Improve staff performance and delivery of services to families, leading to better outcomes for children and families.
- Increase the chances that staff will implement the skills taught and implement it into their daily practice.
- Decrease training costs
- Improve staff motivation to perform well within their position.
- Improve staff morale and increase confidence of workers.
- Increase staff retention as they feel supported by their supervisor, they are making a positive impact on families and they can see the positive outcomes from their work as well as professional growth within themselves.

The Academy for Professional Excellence: San Diego State University School of Social Work : Supervisor's Role in Transfer of Learning (2011)

# Transfer of Learning Strategies Before and After Training

**BEFORE TRAINING:** Clarifying the goals, roles and expectations of the worker will be helpful even before training options are discussed. Develop a personalized learning contract or professional development plan with the worker to identify areas of knowledge that they are interested in or need additional training in and how these needs will be met and strengths supported. Training does not need to include strictly formal training, it can be in the form of peer mentoring or coaching as well. When you convey to the worker that training and the application of that training into their daily work is a priority, workers will in turn do the same.

## Additional Suggestions prior to Training:

- Conduct a pre-training conference with the trainee, and discuss workshop expectations.
- Help workers identify cases and situations relevant to an upcoming training.
- Create a plan for how the knowledge and skills that they will gain in training will be transferred to their daily work.
- Prepare workers to share what they have learned when they return and how this will be conducted.

**DURING TRAINING:** Ensure that there are no distractions for the worker and cover for the worker if necessary. Avoid calling, emailing or texting the worker while they are in training. **The most important piece is to convey to the worker that training is a priority.**

**AFTER TRAINING:** After training there are critical steps to take in order to support the transfer of training. Meeting with the worker within a week of the training to review key points in the training and the action plan is critical. Some questions to consider:

- What were the three most important learning points?
- How is this learning similar to what you already know?
- How is it different?
- What cases and situations does it apply to? Why?
- What ideas do you have for application?

## Other key points to remember after training:

- After training meet with the worker about their training experience and explore with them what they have learned.
- Provide the worker with time to re connect with their caseload.
- Additional support may be needed during the time when workers are trying new skills. Continue to process and strategize with the worker during this time.

- Provide the worker with the opportunity to try out the new skills and reinforce usage.
- Observe the use of new skills and provide performance feedback or coaching.
- Use critical thinking questions to guide discussion, and how the skills apply to quality performance.

**Need a helpful tool to use in supervision in order to ensure your workers are getting as much as possible from training?** Click here: [Social Worker Transfer of Learning Tool](#)

**DID YOU KNOW???** The Children and Family Services Training Center has created a **Transfer of Learning Bulletin for Supervisors** that have workers attending Child Welfare Certification Training. This tool not only provides strategies on how to assist with the Transfer of Learning for new workers it also provides supervisors with some critical thinking questions for each week and outlines information that the workers in attendance will be receiving as well as the assignments that are required prior to receiving certification. To see of a copy please go to our Children and Family Services Training Center website and click on the Transfer of Learning Bulletin for Supervisors or click: [here](#) to get to the Resource page.

**References:** North Carolina Division of Social Services (2015) Children's Service Practice Notes, v. 20, n.2 *Social Worker Transfer of Learning Tool*. Retrieved from: <http://practicenotes.org/v20n2/TOL-tool.pdf>; Transfer of Learning: A Guide for Strengthening the Performance of Health Care Workers (2002) Retrieved from: <file:///C:/Users/rachel.behm/Documents/supervisor%20training/The%20Transfer%20of%20Learning%20-%20A%20Guide%20for%20Strengthening%20the%20Performance%20of%20Health%20Care%20Workers.pdf>; Behavioral Health Education and Training Academy (2011). *Supervisor's Role in Transfer of Learning*; Online Module retrieved from: The Academy of Excellence: San Diego State University School of Social Work. <https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/elearning/supervisors-role-transfer-of-learning/player.html>