

**COMPILATION OF
RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM PREVIOUS REPORTS
RELATING TO WASHINGTON'S
CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**

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For Use By

The Joint Task Force on Child Safety for Children in Child Protective Services or Child Welfare Services
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TRAINING AND ON-GOING CASEWORKER SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Coursework

1. All caseworker's must receive the required course of Academy training prior to assuming case-carrying duties. Though state law now requires this, caseworkers we talked to still complain of attending the Academy training months into their job. *Advisory at 20.*
2. Supervisors should ensure that social workers receive basic academy training prior to carrying cases or when changing positions into programs that they have not worked in prior. *Fatality Review at 20 (Gomez Review).*
3. The Children's Administration should modify current departmental policies governing employee training to include the specific time frame and prerequisite completion of coursework requirements for caseworkers. *JLARC at 34.*
4. The caseworker training plan should be reviewed to ensure provision of basic skills training, advanced and specialized skill development, and a closely monitored on-the-job training component. *Advisory at 20.*
5. The Department should ensure that social workers are trained to flag serious injury, near fatality, high profile referrals so that the appropriate chain of command is alerted. *Fatality Review at 7 (Gomez Review)*

Continuing Education and Training

6. Children's Administration should continue to develop its staff training and technical assistance programs. *Implementation.*
7. Decrease the time it takes to achieve staff confidence and competence by experimenting with teaming with a more seasoned worker. *Riveland at 17.*
8. Increase the time available by supervisors for mentoring and coaching. *Id.*

9. We recommend that a competency-based caseworker certification program that required demonstration of core basic skills competency and required periodic, in-service training. *Advisory at 49.*
10. Examine creation of new and higher job classes for experienced workers that allow higher salary without moving into supervisory ranks. One approach would be a certification process that, through experience and testing, would allow field workers to progress to greater levels of independent practice. *Riveland at 17.*
11. The Department needs to re-examine the application of the KCF concepts and the use of KCF tools by CA social workers. The tools may be in need of revision or strengthening in order to be effective. Ongoing training on the concepts of safety as the priority, safety and risk assessment should be required for any worker and supervisor handling cases, particularly when children are being reunified with their families. Additional training is needed for social workers on the issue of the competing interests of safety and family preservation. *Fatality Review at 19 (Gomez Review).*
12. The Department must ensure that CWS social workers understand that assessing safety and risk is part of their job and that they do not focus solely on permanency and reunification. The department must examine the content of training delivered specifically to CWS social workers and ensure that there is proper emphasis on safety and risk assessment. *Fatality Review at 19 (Gomez Review).*

Supervisor Training

13. While the tools to develop and, where necessary, terminate staff are available, supervisors and area managers are not trained to employ them most effectively. The CA should work closely with the state Department of Personnel to develop training programs tailor to their needs. These training programs should cover, in addition, to employee selection and human resource development, performance monitoring and appraisal as well as the management of problem performance and grievances. *Management.*
14. All management personnel within Region 4 should be assessed on their ability to assist staff in managing conflict; special training and technical assistance should be given to those supervisors and managers who are deficient in this area. *Fatality Review at 19 (Grace Review).*

15. Professionals should be trained to use their expertise to determine suspected abuse. Regular training and oversight on the High Standard of Investigation should be provided to ensure that all caseworkers understand and follow protocol. *Fatality Review at 19 (Champagne-Loop Review)*.

Work Environment

16. Increase retention rates by providing greater opportunities for flexible schedules, job sharing, telecommuting, and sabbaticals. Create job rotations to allow “timeouts”. *Riveland at 17*.
17. Increase tools available, which contribute to worker effectiveness; e.g. access to state cars, laptop computers, recorders, cell phones. The payback in terms of worker time and satisfaction will quickly justify the initial costs. *Riveland at 17*.
18. Don’t stint on worker recognition – internally and externally. A well-received, popular recognition program is a great reinforcer of mission and values. *Riveland at 17*.

Specific Areas of Concern

19. CA should consider requiring all social workers to attend substance abuse training periodically and these trainings should include guidance as to engaging substance abusing clients in treatment and holding clients accountable. Additionally, while binge drinking problems are not frequently identified in CPS investigations, consideration should be given that any training offered by the department on substance abuse includes a segment on binge substance abuse. *Fatality Review at 19 (Robinson Review)*
20. Social workers need training to learn and understand how to best hold substance using clients accountable to their treatment program. The Department should develop joint treatment plans with chemical dependency providers which would assist CA social workers in assessing their clients’ sobriety v. their recovery. The Department should explore establishing or strengthening partnerships with chemical dependency providers or perhaps the Division of Alcohol and Chemical dependency (DASA) in order to increase the availability of expertise and the accessibility of chemical dependency professionals (CDPs) to department social workers. This partnership could include the out stationing of CDPs in CA offices. If this is a challenge due to funding, the Department should bring this issue before the legislature. *Fatality Review at 19 (Gomez Review)*

21. Intensive, high quality comprehensive training on chemical dependency should be provided to all CWS and CPS staff. *Fatality Review at 19 (Grace Review)*
22. Annual training of service providers on safety and risk assessment should be required and written into contracts with service provider. *Fatality Review at 19 (Gomez Review)*
23. Consideration should also be made to do more cross-training with mental health providers in Kitsap County. *Fatality Review at 19 (Robinson Review)*

Bibliography

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