Have you heard the adage, "If all you have is a hammer, everything becomes a nail?"

Distance Learning: A Needed Planful Approach

Unfortunately, this adage is more and more applicable to today's distance learning initiatives. Overwhelmed by the variety of distance learning technologies available, and under pressure to quickly produce alternatives to classroom learning, some organizations select tools at random and shape their content to fit those tools. Unfortunately, this often results in bland, ineffective products that, far from stimulating learning, end up discouraging learning. These programs shape their content to meet the tool, rather than looking carefully at the content and selecting the best tool to deliver it. Sometimes the best tool is distance technology, and sometimes the best tool is, in fact, classroom learning. More often, the best tool is a blend of classroom and distance technologies. Making the right choice requires first knowing your technology options as well as knowing the content and the audience.

Distance learning options are plentiful and diverse. Therefore, saying that you're going to use distance learning to deliver training is akin to saying you're going to use transportation to get to your vacation. "Transportation" could mean a plane, train, boat, bus, car, or even a skateboard. Similarly, "distance learning" could mean a videoconference, podcast, simulation, webcast, authored courseware—the list goes on and on. Each distance technology has unique advantages and disadvantages and is appropriate for specific learning styles and content. In addition, technology can be expensive and require considerable support. With today's economic realities, you want to be sure you are spending your dollars wisely on the appropriate tools.

The OCWTP is in the process of conducting an in-depth review of available distance technologies, including surveying existing quality distance learning products already available through other states and programs that could be adapted for use by the OCWTP. All of this is in an effort to make educated, planful decisions about how best to deliver and enhance the OCWTP's training through the use of technology, while preserving the integrity of the content and learning experience.

When reviewing all available distance learning tools, the OCWTP will consider the following questions:

How long has the technology been in use?

What are the technology's requirements? (hardware/software, infrastructure and staff resources)

What is the cost?

What is the development time?

Can it be used synchronously, asynchronously, or blended?

What learning styles/content is it suited for?

What are some potential OCWTP-specific usages?

Gathered information will be compiled and released to the OCWTP in June in the form of a written report, but will also become a living resource online that will be referenced and added to as new technologies emerge in the years to come.

The OCWTP's model is – **the right training to the right people at the right time**. This comprehensive review will help add to that model to ensure the *right technology is selected for the right training content and the right people*.

As an OCWTP trainer, you have been asked to partner with RTCs and IHS in gathering accurate and up-to-date information about yourself and the workshops you currently offer. Thanks to everyone for all the work being done to submit the requested information, including updated workshop outlines and reference lists. So far, submitted outlines certainly reflect the excellent training opportunities offered to child welfare professionals across the state! This extensive and time consuming project is a necessity for the training system and will be of great benefit to learners and trainers alike. Throughout the course of this project, you have asked for clarification on several points.

Here are a few of the most frequently asked questions:

Why do I need to update all of my material?

Up-to-date resumes and workshop outlines allow the OCWTP to ensure all trainers have the expertise to train the workshops they create and help RTCs to determine which trainers are able to train on specific topics and content areas.

Does my outline need to look exactly like the sample outline found in the trainer resource section at www.ocwtp.com ?

No. The purpose of the sample is merely to provide you with some guidance in developing or revising your outlines. The most important thing is to make sure your outline includes all components listed on the *Content Outline Checklist* form found in the trainer resources at www.ocwtp.com.

Can I just use my PowerPoint as my outline?

No, but having your information on a PowerPoint will make it easier for you to create an outline. Please review the instructions outlined in the December 2008, OCWTP Trainer Listserve. This issue outlined a quick and simple way to turn PowerPoint presentations into outlines that can be expanded to include additional information, such as descriptions of learning activities and methodologies. A copy of that listserv can be accessed in the trainer resource section at www.ocwtp.com.

Why is it so important to identify competencies that accurately reflect my workshop?

When identifying training needs, learners identify competencies that are important in their jobs and for which they need additional knowledge or skill development. RTCs schedule workshops to meet those identified training needs, and trainers develop workshops to address those competencies. Correctly noting competencies will become

even more important when E-Track is launched because competencies will be one of the key ways RTCs and learners will search for specific trainings in E-Track. The complete list of competencies can be accessed in the trainer resource section at www.ocwtp.com.

Are there other ways learners will search for workshops in E-Track?

Yes. Learners and RTCs can also use E-Track to search for specific training opportunities by searching for topics and subtopics. Therefore, when planning workshops, or updating your existing workshop outlines, IHS or RTC staff will ask you to help identify the topics and subtopics associated with your workshops. A complete list of topics and suptopics can be found in the E-Track Classifications document found under E-track Competencies in the resources section at www.ocwtp.com.

What is the time line for turning in all of my content outlines?

Hopefully, your first outline was completed by the end of January 2009. Next, you will need to prioritize completion of other outlines depending on when you will next present the workshop. Once the E-Track system is operational, you will not be able to train workshops that have not been approved through this process.

Am I required to send you my information electronically?

No. However, we strongly encourage you to send information electronically to make your material easily accessible to all RTCs and IHS. This will also make the outline easier for you to update.

How do I know that my materials will be secure if I send them electronically?

Your workshop outlines will be stored in a secure site (outside of E-Track) that will be accessed only by IHS and RTC staff.

Do I need to rewrite my outline if I don't have current references or sources?

Provide a list of the references you currently use in your workshop. The next time you update your workshop, you will need to provide updated references. According to OCWTP policy, workshops should be updated at least every two years. This helps us make sure that participants receive the most current and relevant content.

Do I need to use APA style for my content reference list?

Not necessarily, however, APA style is a widely recognized format for noting references. The important thing is to list author, date of publication, article/book title, the publisher, and, in the case of journal articles, the volume and issue of the journal that published the article.

Does my outline need to be a certain number of pages with specific font and font size?

There are no set standards for length or style. What is important is that the content outline contains the items listed on the *Content Outline Checklist* form.

What if I don't get my outline completed before I'm scheduled to train?

Workshop must be reviewed, approved and listed in E-Track prior to your being allowed to train the workshop. When E-Track is activated, only listed workshops will be available to RTCs and participants.

Why is the word "learning" used instead of workshop in some of the material and resources we have received?

"Learning" is the term used by the E-Track system to identify workshops. We use it to help people become familiar with the term.

If you have any questions regarding outlines, references, competencies, or topics and subtopics, please contact Beth Ann Rodriguez at brodriguez@ihs-trainet.com.
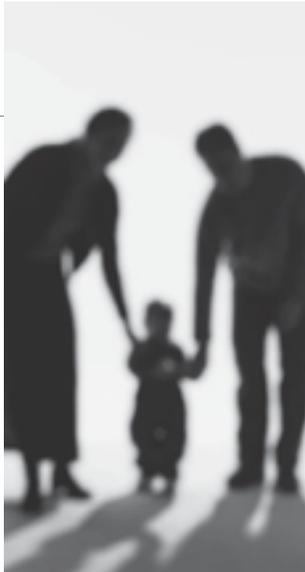
National Adoption Conference Coming to Ohio August 12 – 15, 2009

The North American Council for Adoptable Children (NACAC) is an international non-profit organization that advocates for adopted children and their families. Every August, they offer a major conference attended by over 500 adoption professionals and adoptive parents.

This year, for the first time, the conference will be offered in Columbus at the Hyatt Regency, 350 North High Street. 614/463-1234.

The NACAC conference—the most comprehensive adoption conference in North America—will feature close to 100 workshops by expert professionals and parents addressing a wide variety of topics, including:

- parenting
- race, culture, & diversity
- therapeutic techniques
- agency issues & concerns
- parenting children with challenges
- search/open adoption
- post-adoption services
- international adoption

The dates for the conference are August 12-15. More information about the conference is available at

http://www.nacac.org/conference/conference.html.

Skill-Building Learning Lab Going On-Line

In April, the OCWTP Skill-Building Learning Lab for Trainers will be offered on-line using Go-to-Meeting which will allow trainers to participate in the learning lab from their home office using their own computer, Internet connection and phone line.

The goal for the learning lab is to strengthen trainers' ability to develop and implement workshops that facilitate trainees' application of newly learned skills. The learning lab is designed to provide trainers an opportunity to:

- Learn new ideas through an exchange of information;
- Practice and apply specific skill building and transfer strategies;
  Strengthen existing training designs to enhance efforts to
- support skill building and transfer of learning.

The learning lab will include two three-hour sessions with two weeks between sessions to allow the completion of assignments and the practice and application of new skills. Class size will be limited to six to eight participants to maximize opportunities for interaction between participants and lab facilitators. Dates and times will be determined based on the availability of pilot participants. Most likely, training will occur in the evenings when participants are most available.

Pre-Training Readiness

Prior to attending the lab, participants will choose one of their own workshops and answer a series of review questions about their training design, including the competencies addressed, the level of learning the training is designed to meet, how culture and diversity issues are integrated, and the types of application exercises included. After reviewing their training design, participants will list workshop components they want to strengthen through participation in the Skill Building and Transfer Learning Lab for Trainers.

> *The lab provided excellent ideas to help trainers structure training and impact information in creative ways.*

> I learned new knowledge regarding transfer of learning and specific ways to apply that knowledge to my trainings.

> *The lab provided concrete "real" stuff to apply.*

Prerequisites

To attend this training, preference will be given to trainers who have attended all workshops currently offered in the Training of Trainers (TOT) series and who have had experience offering trainings to OCWTP constituents. The Skill Building and Transfer Learning Lab for Trainers is designed to provide participants with an opportunity to build on the foundation established in the TOT series and apply what they learn to their own workshop outlines, handouts, resources, and exercises.

Registration

If you are interested in helping the OCWTP pilot this online learning lab, please contact Sally Fitch at sfitch@ihs-trainet.com.

> Having ideas presented and then having the chance to use them in small-group discussions was extremely valuable. The lab offered great practical examples.

Two OCWTP trainers, Ruth McMonagle and Sister Madeleine Rybicki, were recognized nationally for their talents at The National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) Professional Institute held in Atlanta, Georgia in September.

As earlier announced, Ruth McMonagle received the Distinguished Service in Training Award. During her career, Ruth has been a researcher, curriculum developer, trainer, caseworker and a supervisor. She has been a trainer for 25 years, including 22 years with the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program. During her acceptance speech, Ruth thanked all of the Regional Training Centers in Ohio, especially the Northeast Ohio Regional Training Center, and the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program. She also thanked training participants who have attended her trainings throughout the years. A special thank you went to her husband of 37 years who recently died. She knows he would have been proud and clapping the loudest. Ruth reminded each of us to "Love what you do – or do something else."

Also at the NSDTA Intitute, Sister Madeleine Rybicki accepted the Quality Program Award on behalf of the Child and Youth Care Certificate Board of Texas. Dale Curry, formerly of the Northeast Ohio Regional Training Center, and currently an Associate Professor at Kent State University is also a member of that board. The Child and Youth Certificate Board developed and implemented a national professional training and certification program for child and youth care workers. This seven-year effort was supported by a large array of agencies, universities and associations.

Sister Rybicki expressed the Board's appreciation by saying, "Thanks to all for your hard work from the bottom and center of our heart."

IHS Welcomes New Staff Member Stacey Saunders

On January 1, 2009, Stacey Saunders, LISW, joined IHS as a training coordinator. Stacey started her career as the coordinator for TeenCAP, an assault prevention program in Athens, Vinton, and Hocking Counties. Her child welfare career began as an intake worker for Licking County Children Services. Most recently, Stacey worked for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) where she was a Management Analyst Supervisor 1 with the Bureau of Internal Audits and Standards Compliance. During her career with ODRC, Stacey conducted many workshops honing her training skills. She's a Certified Instructor for the Hostage Negotiation program and has trained many other topic areas as well. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Social Work at The Ohio State University where she has worked with Dr. Denise Bronson on two Rapid Evidence Assessments in the area of child welfare, as well as a systematic review of research regarding successful reunification and decreased reentry to foster care. Stacey's contact information at IHS is (614)251-6000, and ssaunders@ihs-trainet.com.

Note: Interestingly, Stacey is the second Stacey Saunders in OCWTP. Our first Stacey, Stacey A. Saunders, now resides in Maryland and continues to be an independent trainer/ consultant.

Looking for Trainers With SACWIS ID Numbers

In preparation for launching E-TRACK, Ohio's online learning management system, IHS staff are working to identify which OCWTP trainers are or will be in the SACWIS database. If you are employed by a public child welfare agency and have an email address that ends in @odjfs.state.oh.us, please contact Kelley Gruber at kgruber@ihs-trainet.com.

COMMON GROUND IS GOING GREEN

THIS IS THE LAST HARD COPY OF COMMON GROIUND. THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE SENT ELECTRONICALLY VIA EMAIL. IF WE DON'T HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS, SEND IT TO HELEN PETERSON:

hpeterson@ihs-trainet.com

Survey Indicates Simple TOL Strategies Can Improve Training

In a debut of a column entitled "Everything DiSC Pulse," found in the December issue of *Training* magazine, authors Scullard and Sugerman shared the results of a survey of 4,967 training participants that asked about common training strategies used in their most recent training and how the presence or absence of these strategies impacted their job effectiveness. The significance of the survey is that participants were not asked about satisfaction with the training strategy, but whether the strategy made a difference in perceived job effectiveness.

The survey found that participants noted greater job effectiveness when training included problem-solving exercises, multiple examples, plenty of practice, and action planning.

Problem Solving

The survey indicated that 86% of learners said job effectiveness improved when participants were challenged to solve problems during the training. As a bonus, participants also noted increased enjoyment of trainings that included multiple problem-solving opportunities. Problem-solving tasks force participants to consider and work with training content material at a deeper level and can be easily added to any training curriculum.

Multiple Examples

Most trainers use an example to help make training content more applicable for learners and to help make abstract concepts more concrete and understandable. "Research indicates that the more examples participants hear, the more they remember." (Scullard & Sugerman, 2008). In this survey, 87% of participants said multiple examples discussed during training increased their perceived job effectiveness.

Practice

Most of us were raised with the adage, *practice makes perfect*. What is perhaps more important to trainers is the fact that *practice can make permanent*. OCWTP trainers are encouraged to make practice an integral part of every training. Practice enables learners to master new knowledge and to receive constructive feedback as they attempt to master new skills. Scullard & Sugerman's survey verified this practice as 91% of participants said that trainings that offered multiple opportunities to practice increased their job effectiveness.

Action Planning

Ninety percent of participants who said their training included action planning agreed the training made them more effective at their jobs. Action planning helps participants think through how they will use new knowledge and skills in their work. Thinking about training content in the context of what they already know and do increases the likelihood that new ideas will be used on-the-job where it really counts.

What does this mean for trainers? Designing effective training does not necessarily require a lot of new technology or work. By adding simple, low-tech training strategies, such as problem-solving exercises, multiple examples, plenty of practice and including action planning, trainers can develop trainings that can help child welfare professionals be more effective when working with Ohio's children and their families.

Reference:

Scullard, M., Sugerman, J. (2008). Learners say: Simple techniques improve training. *Training*, December 23, 2008. Retrieved 1/9/09 from: http://www.trainingmag.com/msg/content_display/publications/e3id64fe7b10f6b9e960c53fba83aec42b6.

ECORTC

ECORTC sends a THANK YOU to all trainers who participated in ECORTC training observations during 2008. The RTC also encourages trainers to keep up the good work on updating outlines and references!

ECORTC staff is preparing for their 15th Annual Supervisory Conference being held March 4-6, 2009. Each year ECORTC strives to give intensive HR-related training to Ohio's child welfare leaders. Last year they had 20 county agencies represented and provided 16 hours of training for over 55 participants.

ECORTC wishes to acknowledge the diligent work of several regional counties working towards either COA (Council on Accreditation) first-time accreditation or renewal: Guernsey (new accreditation-2009), Tuscarawas (renewal 2009), Coshocton (accredited in 2007). When training in the region, it may be helpful for trainers to acknowledge participants from counties who are in the midst of accreditation or renewal and to ask if there are any unique training needs as a result of the process. For more information on COA check out the PCSAO website at www.pscao.org and go to the COA link in the left-hand column.

CORTC

The New Year ushered several changes and updates to CORTC staff.

Mary Hutton is welcomed as the Department Trainer. Mary succeeds Lydia Holloway who was recently promoted to the position of Secretary I in the Administrative Department at Franklin County Children Services. Mary joins the RTC with previous years of experience as a public relations manager and office assistant. She has also worked 13 years in the Emancipation Department at Franklin County Children Services. Mary has a Bachelor Degree in Communications.

Vicky Rhoads was promoted to the position of Leadership Developer in the Employee Relations Division at Franklin County Children Services. This position is dedicated to developing staff to fill emerging roles at the agency as the workforce undergoes transition. Vicky will be looking at many facets of available training as well as developing innovative new strategies to help employees realize their full potential and meet staffing needs into the future.

In addition, Christy Mayle, Staff Secretary, gave birth to a baby girl- Aaliyah Sherell on November 5, 2008, and Kelly King, Foster Parent Secretary, has accepted a promotion in the Revenue Enhancement Department at Franklin County Children Services.

RTC Winter Advisory:
Stay in Contact

As weather can be unpredictable in the winter, please stay in contact with the RTCs. RTCs are not always aware of the weather in your area and good communication can alleviate no-shows, unnecessary travel, and other problems arising from inclement weather.

Hold These Dates

Feb. 5-6 23-24:	Culture and Diversity
Feb. 10-11 or May 12-13:	Curriculum Development
Feb. 17 or April 15:	Transfer of Learning
Feb. 17 at 7PM; or	
Feb. 19 at NOON	Tele-Conference with Trainers (topic: Updating Content Outlines and Reference Lists Accountability Project)
March 5:	PowerPoint
March 6 or June 5:	Classroom Performance System
April 14:	So You Want to Be a Trainer
May 19-21:	Presentation Skills

To register, contact Debra Sparrow at: dsparrow@ihs-trainet.com

www.ocwtp.com

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Sandra Aska, Sally Fitch, Susan Yingling
Common Grouind is published three times a year. Please send material to syingling@ihs-trainet.com.
The editorial staff reserves the right to condense and edit all materials submitted for publication.

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