

New Jersey Child Support Institute (NJCSI)

Assessment Report

May through September 2007

Background

The New Jersey Child Support Institute (NJCSI) is a collaborative partnership of the Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development (DFD), Office of Child Support Services (OCSS); the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the Judiciary; the County Welfare Agencies (CWAs); and the Institute for Families at the School of Social Work, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJCSI offers the first comprehensive training program designed specifically for the 2,500 professionals employed in New Jersey's Child Support Program. In addition to focusing on the statutes, regulations, rules, policies, and procedures that guide the Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Program, NJCSI courses provide hands-on training in using the automated system that processes collections, disbursements, and case management activity. Training is offered year-round at three state-of-the-art sites in Parsippany, Princeton, and Cherry Hill. Courses include a 10-day training program for new child support employees (required within the first year of employment), a five-day experienced refresher course for staff who have been employed for more than one year, and an array of specialized courses that focus on specific job functions and topics in child support. The project is funded by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, OCSS.

Each course includes an assessment component. The assessments are completed through an online Learning Management System (LMS). Participants complete the assessments on the laptops provided at the training. The pre-training assessment is completed at the beginning of the first instructional class. The post-training assessment is completed on the final day of training. Participants are allotted 40 minutes at the beginning of the training and 40 minutes at the end of the training to complete the assessments.

Measure

Pre-/post-training assessment. The pre- and post-training assessments are intended to capture changes in participants' knowledge about the child support process in New Jersey. The same 50-item multiple-choice questionnaire requires respondents to choose the correct choice among several possibilities.

Course feedback surveys. The course feedback survey is intended to capture participants' perceptions of the training program. Questions measure participants' satisfaction with overall training, modules, materials, facilities, and instructors.

Analytic approach. The assessments employ statistical techniques in SPSS 15.0. A paired-sample *t*-test examines changes in knowledge and skills from the pre-training assessment to the post-training assessment. Descriptive statistics and frequencies are used to generate data from the responses to the feedback surveys.

Results

Participants' demographics. Respondents participated in the NJCSI training program from May through September. Four New Hire Training (NHT) sessions were conducted, and 73 participants completed pre-training and post-training assessments. Three Experienced Refresher Training (REF) sessions were conducted, and 66 participants completed pre-training and post-training assessments.

New Hire Training participants' demographics are summarized in chart 1, participants by state agency and table 1, participants by work county. Among the 73 participants in NHT training, the average amount of child support work experience was 23.9 months. With regard to sending agency, 50.7% of the participants worked in the CWAs, 26.0% worked in the Probation Child Support Enforcement (PCSE) Units, 9.6% worked in the Family Division, 6.8% worked in the DFD, 4.1% worked in the Vicinage Finance Divisions, 1.4% worked in the AOC, and 1.4%

worked for a vendor. Participants worked in the following counties: Essex (12.3%), Burlington (11.0%), Mercer (17.9%), Union (9.6%), Middlesex (6.8%), Hudson (5.5%), Warren (5.5%), Atlantic (4.1%), Camden (4.1%), Cumberland (4.1%), Gloucester (4.1%), Passaic (4.1%), Bergen (2.7%), Monmouth (2.7%), Ocean (2.7%), Hunterdon (1.4%), and Salem (1.4%).

Demographics for Experienced Refresher Training participants are summarized in chart2, REF participants by state agency and table 2, participants by work county. Among the 66 participants in REF training, the average amount of child support work experience was 10.3 years. With regard to sending agency, 40.9% of the participants worked in the PCSE Units, 39.4% worked in the CWAs, 15.2% worked in the Family Division, and 3.0% worked in the Vicinage Finance Divisions. Participants worked in the following counties: Hudson (18.2%), Atlantic (13.6%), Union (12.2%), Essex (9.1%), Cumberland (7.6%), Salem (7.6%), Gloucester (6.1%), Warren (6.1%), Burlington (4.5%), Cape May (3.0%), Mercer (3.0%), Bergen (1.5%), Middlesex (1.5%), Morris (1.5%), Ocean (1.5%), Passaic (1.5%), and Somerset (1.5%).

Assessment of knowledge outcomes, New Hire Training (NHT). The percentage of correct scores on the pre-training assessment ranged from 45% to 51%. The mean score was 49%. The percentage of correct scores on the post-training assessment ranged from 70% to 79%. On average, participants increased their scores by 25 percentage points after training, raising the average post-training assessment score to 74% (table 3). Further, a paired pre- and post-training assessment indicated that the increase in participants' post-training scores was statistically significant: $t(72) = 19.60, p < .001$. The effect size of $d = 2.23$ is considered very large. It can be concluded that the training had a large, positive effect on the participants' knowledge of the Child Support Program (table 4).

Assessment of course feedback, New Hire Training (NHT). The scores on the course feedback form are measured on a scale of one to ten. Higher scores indicate higher levels of satisfaction. The overall training score ranged from 8.16 to 9.30, with a mean score of 8.57. The modules score ranged from 8.00 to 9.10, with a mean score of 8.45. The materials score ranged from 8.29 to 9.20, with a mean score of 8.67. The facility score ranged from 7.42 to 9.20, with a mean score of 8.31. The instructor score ranged from 8.38 to 9.60, with a mean score of 8.89 (table 3).

Assessment of knowledge outcomes, Experienced Refresher Training (REF). The percentage of correct scores on the pre-training assessment ranged from 57% to 61%. The mean score was 58%. The percentage of correct scores on the post-training assessment ranged from 72% to 80%. On average, participants increased their scores by 17 percentage points after training, increasing the average post-training assessment score to 75% (table 5). Further, a paired pre- and post-training assessment indicated that the increase in participants' post-training scores was statistically significant: $t(65) = 15.27, p < .001$. The effect size of $d = 1.54$ is considered very large. It can be concluded that the training had a large, positive effect on the participants' knowledge of the Child Support Program (table 4).

Assessment of course feedback, Experienced Refresher Training (REF). The overall training score ranged from 7.44 to 8.99, with a mean score of 8.42. The modules score ranged from 7.39 to 8.82, with a mean score of 8.26. The materials score ranged from 8.86 to 9.23, with a mean score of 9.00. The facility score ranged from 8.02 to 8.50, with a mean score of 8.27. The instructor score ranged from 8.68 to 9.35, with a mean score of 9.03 (table 5).

Pre-training assessment and post-training assessment mean by module. As noted above, the participants in both courses, NHT and REF, have shown an increase in their scores from the pre-training assessment to the post-training assessment. When the questions are separated by module, the same results are found (table 6). The highest post-training scores are found in the same two modules in both the New Hire and the Experienced Refresher training: Establishment (88% NHT, 85% REF) and Financials (80% NHT, 85% REF). The modules exhibiting the lowest post-training assessment scores differ by type of training. In the New Hire course, the lowest post-training score occurred in the Locate module (63%). In the Experienced Refresher training course, the lowest post-training score occurred in the Modification module (67%).

An increase in the percentage of questions answered correctly is shown for each module in both the New Hire Training course and the Experienced Refresher Training course. In the New Hire Training course, the greatest increases occurred in Establishment (34 percentage points) and Case Closure (33 percentage points). In the Experienced Refresher Training course, four

modules showed an increase of at least 20 percentage points; Enforcement (22 percentage points), Case Closure (23 percentage points), Interstate (21 percentage points), Establishment (20 percentage points). With the exception of Case Initiation, all of the modules showed an increase of at least 15 percentage points. Case Initiation scores increased by just one percentage point between the pre-training and the post-training assessment.

Analysis of open-ended questions. Four open-ended questions are included in the New Hire Training and Experienced Refresher Training course feedback surveys. Participants are asked to describe strengths of the program, areas for improvement, and additional training needs. They are also invited to make additional comments.

New Hire Training participants (table 7) most frequently cited the quality of the instructors as a strength of the program (32.6%). Other strengths cited included informative training (15.2%); the games, which kept training fun (13.0%); and provision of a good overview of child support (10.9%). With regard to areas in need of improvement (table 8), it is interesting to note that “none” (25.8%) was the most common response. Other areas included simulations (12.9%), financials (9.7%), interstate (9.7%), and the commute and location of training (9.7%). There was one response to additional training needs that bears noting. Interstate was most frequently cited as a topic for additional training (37.0%). Two additional topics recommended for training were ACSES (7.4%) and CSENet (7.4%). Some of the participants (7.4%) noted that they are unsure what training topics would be helpful to them (table 9). Under additional comments (table 10), the greatest percentage of participants wrote that, overall, the training was “great” (30.5%). Others described the training as useful and necessary (13.9%) and cited the high quality of the instructors (8.3%). Some participants said that the location of the training and the directions provided on the Web site need to be improved (8.3%), and others said that the training is too long (8.3%).

Some of the responses to the Experienced Refresher Training survey are similar to those reviewed from the New Hire Training survey. For example, participants most frequently cited the quality of the instructors as a strength of the program (32.4%) (table 11). Other responses cited the training manual (27%), a good overview of child support (18.9%), informative training

(13.5%), and games kept training fun (8.1%). Only the reference to the training manual as a strength was different from NHT responses (only 6.5% of NHT participants cited the manual). With regard to areas in need of improvement (table 12), the most common response was that the training covers too much information for the time allotted (33.3%). Respondents also cited the following areas for improvement: topics included in the Refresher course were too basic for the participants (22.2%), classroom temperature (11.1%), and more agency-specific relevance (11.1%). In addition, 16.7% of the participants indicated “none” in response to the improvements question. With regard to additional training needs (table 13), the REF participants are interested in most of the same topics listed by the New Hire participants. Interstate (45.9%) was the most common response, followed by CSENet (16.3%), enforcement (10.8%), and ACSES (8.1%). Under additional comments, an overwhelming majority of participants stated that, overall, the course provided great training (72.7%). The other responses expressed a desire for more training like this (18.2%), and one respondent explained that he/she would like to see various levels of the Refresher course (i.e., beginning, intermediate, and advanced courses) (table 14).

Conclusion

The purpose of this evaluation was to measure the outcomes of the New Jersey Child Support Institute training courses. Results suggest that the program has been highly effective in increasing participants’ knowledge. The training program also received very favorable ratings in terms of participant satisfaction.

Appendix

Table 1. NHT Participants by Work County (N = 73)

County	N	%
Mercer	13	17.9
Essex	9	12.3
Burlington	8	11.0
Union	7	9.6
Middlesex	5	6.8
Hudson	4	5.5
Warren	4	5.5
Atlantic	3	4.1
Camden	3	4.1
Cumberland	3	4.1
Gloucester	3	4.1
Passaic	3	4.1
Bergen	2	2.7
Monmouth	2	2.7
Ocean	2	2.7
Hunterdon	1	1.4
Salem	1	1.4
Total	73	100.0

Table 2. REF Participants by Work County (N = 66)

County	N	%
Hudson	12	18.2
Atlantic	9	13.6
Union	8	12.2
Essex	6	9.1
Cumberland	5	7.6
Salem	5	7.6
Gloucester	4	6.1
Warren	4	6.1
Burlington	3	4.5
Cape May	2	3.0
Mercer	2	3.0
Bergen	1	1.5
Middlesex	1	1.5
Morris	1	1.5
Ocean	1	1.5
Passaic	1	1.5
Somerset	1	1.5
Total	66	100.0

Table 3. Results of New Hire Training Program

Date	Site	Pre ^a	Post ^a	Increase ^b	Overall				
					Training	Modules	Materials	Facility	Instructor
5/14/07	Princeton	51%	78%	27	9.30	9.10	9.20	9.20	9.60
6/4/07	Cherry Hill	51%	79%	28	8.60	8.40	8.48	8.49	9.09
6/18/07	Parsippany	50%	70%	20	8.16	8.00	8.29	7.42	8.48
9/28/07	Princeton	45%	70%	25	8.23	8.29	8.71	8.13	8.38
Mean		49%	74%	25	8.57	8.45	8.67	8.31	8.89

^a Average score (% correct answers).

^b Percentage points.

Table 4. Mean Percentage of Items Correct on Pre- and Post-Training Knowledge Assessments

	Pre		Post		df ^c	t	Effect Size (d)
	M ^a	SD ^b	M ^a	SD ^b			
NHT (n = 73)	48.80	11.50	73.60	10.70	72	19.60***	2.23
REF (n = 66)	58.70	11.90	75.40	9.60	65	15.27***	1.54

***p<.001.

^a Mean.

^b Standard deviation.

^c df = Degrees of freedom.

Table 5. Results of Experienced Refresher Training Program

Date	Site	Pre ^a	Post ^a	Increase ^b	Overall				
					Training	Modules	Materials	Facility	Instructor
8/13/07	Princeton	57%	72%	15	7.44	7.39	8.86	8.30	8.68
8/20/07	Cherry Hill	61%	80%	19	8.83	8.82	8.90	8.02	9.05
8/27/07	Parsippany	57%	74%	17	8.99	8.58	9.23	8.50	9.35
Mean		58%	75%	17	8.42	8.26	9.00	8.27	9.03

^a Average score (% correct answers).

^b Percentage points.

Table 6. Mean Percentage of Items Correct on Pre- and Post-Training Knowledge Assessments, by Module

Module	NHT			REF		
	Pre ^a	Post ^a	Increase ^b	Pre ^a	Post ^a	Increase ^b
Establishment	54	88	34	65	85	20
Locate	45	63	18	53	68	15
Enforcement	47	71	24	52	74	22
Financials	55	80	25	68	85	17
Interstate	43	70	27	54	75	21
Modification	42	67	25	52	67	15
Case Initiation	60	76	16	71	72	1
Case Closure	42	75	33	55	78	23

^a Average score (% correct answers).

^b Percentage points.

Table 7. Strengths (NHT)

	<i>N</i>	%
Quality of instructors	15	32.6
Informative training	7	15.2
Games – kept training fun	6	13.0
Good overview of child support	5	10.9
Excellent/good	4	8.7
Interactive nature of training	3	6.5
Training was interesting	3	6.5
Quality of manual	3	6.5
Total	46	100.0

Note: Items do not add up to 100%.

Table 8. Areas in Need of Improvement (NHT)

	<i>N</i>	%
None	8	25.8
Simulations	4	12.9
Financials	3	9.7
Interstate	3	9.7
Commute and location	3	9.7
Confusion between written materials and teaching	2	6.4
Enforcement	2	6.4
More agency-specific relevance	2	6.4
Activities	2	6.4
Modifications	2	6.4
Total	31	100.0

Note: Items do not add up to 100%.

Table 9. Additional Training Needs (NHT)

	<i>N</i>	%
Interstate	10	37.0
ACSES	2	7.4
Unknown	2	7.4
CSENet	2	7.4
Court-related information	1	3.7
Agency relevant information	1	3.7
Enforcement	1	3.7
Child Support Guidelines	1	3.7
Financials	1	3.7
CWA	1	3.7
Confidentiality	1	3.7
Everything	1	3.7
Systems and interfaces	1	3.7
Establishment	1	3.7
Codes	1	3.7
Total	27	100.0

Note: Items do not add up to 100%.

Table 10. Additional Comments (NHT)

	<i>N</i>	%
Overall, great training	11	30.5
Training is useful and necessary	5	13.9
None	4	11.1
Quality of instructors	3	8.3
Location and directions need improvement	3	8.3
Training is too long	3	8.3
More agency-specific relevancy is needed	2	5.5
Too many games	2	5.5
Games too hard	1	2.7
Need more breaks	1	2.7
Room temperature is too cold	1	2.7
Total	36	100.0

Note: Items do not add up to 100%.

Table 11. Strengths (REF)

	<i>N</i>	%
Quality of instructors	12	32.4
Quality of manual	10	27.0
Good overview of child support	7	18.9
Informative training	5	13.5
Games – kept training fun	3	8.1
Total	37	100.0

Note: Items do not add up to 100%.

Table 12. Areas in Need of Improvement (REF)

	<i>N</i>	%
Too much information in short time	6	33.3
Information too basic for refresher	4	22.2
None	3	16.7
Classroom temperature	2	11.1
More agency-specific relevance	2	11.1
Commute and Location	1	5.5
Total	18	100.0

Note: Items do not add up to 100%.

Table 13. Additional Training Needs (REF)

	<i>N</i>	%
Interstate	17	45.9
CSENet	6	16.3
Enforcement	4	10.8
ACSES	3	8.1
Establishment	1	2.7
Location	1	2.7
Case closure	1	2.7
Tickler report	1	2.7
Case management	1	2.7
International cases	1	2.7
Military cases	1	2.7
Total	37	100.0

Table 14. Additional Comments (REF)

	<i>N</i>	%
Overall, great training	8	72.7
Need more training like this	2	18.2
Provide different levels of Refresher course: beginning, intermediate, and advanced	1	9.1
Total	11	100.0



