

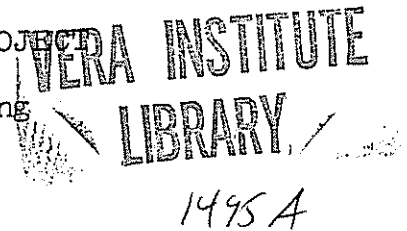
Vera Institute
4/6/82

FOSTER CARE CHILD PROTECTION PROJECT

Pilot Training Program on Preventing

Foster Child Maltreatment

Preliminary Evaluation Report



The training program on preventing foster child maltreatment developed by the Vera Institute was pilot tested in three voluntary foster care agencies in March 1982. Two courses of five three-hour sessions were delivered: one involving staff from Angel Guardian Home and the other involving a combination of staff from Harlem-Dowling Children's Services and McMahon Services for Children. The trainers from the three agencies were participants in Vera's pilot train-the-trainers program. Vera staff monitored the training by observing eight of the ten sessions (each separate session of the training design was observed at least once) and discussing the sessions with the trainers.

Angel Guardian Home is a large agency with a total foster care population of 882 children, most of whom are placed in foster family homes. McMahon Services for Children and Harlem-Dowling Children's Services are relatively small agencies with 189 and 212 foster children respectively, all of whom are placed in foster or pre-adoptive homes.

The course of training at Angel Guardian was held at the agency headquarters and conducted by two experienced supervisors. There were 17 participants, representing the foster care, homefinding, intake, and adoption departments. The foster care experience of the participants varied. A few of the participants were inexperienced workers, six were supervisors (five of whom have MSW degrees), and the remaining workers had varying lengths of experience.

Harlem-Dowling and McMahon held training sessions at the Red Cross building. Two trainers from Harlem-Dowling -- a supervisor and an administrator -- and one from McMahon -- an experienced caseworker -- conducted the training. A total of

nine individuals from the two agencies participated: five from Harlem-Dowling and four from McMahon. In two sessions, however, only six participants attended. The participants in this course of training were generally inexperienced workers; no supervisors attended and three workers had MSWs.

An evaluation questionnaire was distributed to the participants in the two courses of training at the end of the fifth session. (See Appendix A for a copy.) On the whole, participants in both courses of pilot training rated the program favorably. Angel Guardian workers generally indicated higher ratings of the training than those at Harlem-Dowling and McMahon. Evaluation results are described separately for the two courses of training. The results for each item of the questionnaire are tabulated in Appendix B.

Angel Guardian

Most of the Angel Guardian participants rated the training program overall as "excellent" (14 of 17). At least 12 of the 17 participants evaluated the program as "excellent" with respect to: (1) the relevance of the topic areas covered, (2) the interest of group activities, (3) the usefulness of the training for developing or improving skills, and (4) the helpfulness of the trainers. The remaining participants indicated ratings of "good" for these areas.

Participants were asked to judge the extent to which each session of the training program met its stated objectives. (Objectives for each session are listed in Appendix A.) Between 10 and 14 of the 17 participants rated each session as meeting its objectives "completely." Only one participant rated any of the five sessions as meeting objectives less than "considerably".

Session II, which focused on physical punishment of foster children and alternative methods of discipline, was most frequently noted as the "most helpful" session. Session V, devoted to helping workers anticipate and prevent problems in the foster home placement, was most frequently identified as the "least helpful" of the five sessions; however, six participants noted that they found none of the sessions least helpful.

Participants were asked to rate the helpfulness of the training program in developing or improving the following casework skills: (1) communication, (2) assessment, (3) problem-solving, and (4) anticipating problems. Between 13 and 16 participants evaluated the training program as "very helpful" in each of these areas. There were no ratings of "not helpful."

All 17 participants indicated that they "strongly recommend" the training program for other foster care workers.

Comments from participants on the questionnaire and at the concluding session indicated that they found the role play and case study activities to be the most valuable and a few recommended that the program contain more of these group activities. Several participants emphasized that the training was practical and immediately usable. A few participants recommended that the program involve, or be adapted for, foster parents.

Harlem-Dowling and McMahon

Evaluation questionnaires were completed by 7 of the 9 participants in the course combining staff from Harlem-Dowling and McMahon. The training program was rated overall as "excellent" by 2 participants and "good" by 5. All of the participants rated the program as "excellent" or "good" with respect to: (1) the relevance of the topic areas covered, (2) the interest of the group activities (5 rated as "excellent"), (3) the usefulness of the training for developing or improving skills, and (4) the helpfulness of the trainers.

For the first three sessions all participants indicated that they regarded objectives met "completely" or "considerably". For Session IV, one participant rated the session as meeting its objectives "moderately" and one "slightly"; two ratings of "moderately" were noted for Session V. The less favorable ratings of Sessions IV and V coincided with the judgments of both the trainers and the Vera staff who observed the training that these two sessions did not flow as well, nor generate as useful discussion as, the first three sessions.

Session III on establishing and maintaining a supportive relationship with foster parents received the largest number of ratings as the "most helpful" session; Session IV on assessment and intervention strategies was most frequently evaluated as "least helpful".

All 7 participants rated the training program as "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful" with respect to developing or improving the following skills: (1) communication, (2) assessment, (3) problem-solving, and (4) anticipating problems. When asked whether they would recommend the training program for other foster care workers, 4 participants indicated that they "strongly recommend" the program and 2 that they recommend it. (One participant did not respond to this question.)

As in the case of participants from Angel Guardian, those from Harlem-Dowling and McMahon commented favorably on the relevance and practical applicability of the training. Participants noted that the program is valuable for new and experienced workers and is useful for workers in all departments of foster care, including homefinding and adoption. A few participants recommended that the training be delivered in two all-day sessions instead of five 2-1/2 - 3 hour sessions.

Comparison Between the Two Courses of Training

Although both courses of training were regarded as successful and rewarding by the participants and the trainers, Vera staff found the training delivered at Angel Guardian to be superior. A few factors may have contributed to this: (1) the larger number of participants and the involvement of supervisors at Angel Guardian; (2) the greater difficulty in preparation and coordination faced by trainers from the two combined agencies; and (3) the more extensive training experience of the Angel Guardian trainers.

Improvements in Training Design

A follow-up meeting was held with the trainers from the three pilot agencies to discuss the pilot experience. The trainers generally expressed positive

feelings about conducting the training, the responsiveness of the participants, and the practical applicability of the training. Several useful suggestions were made regarding the mechanics of the training program. In particular, there was a consensus that the exercises in Session IV concerning assessment and intervention could be improved by clarifying instructions and by altering slightly the design so that overlap between individual and group activities is avoided. It was also recommended that Session V on anticipating problems in the foster home contain a role play exercise to permit practice in using the knowledge and skills highlighted in this session. These and other suggestions will be considered carefully as Vera staff review and revise the training design, which will be incorporated in the trainer's manual.

TRAINING ON PREVENTING FOSTER CHILD MALTREATMENT

Evaluation Questionnaire

1. How would you rate the training program as a whole?

Excellent Good OK Fair Poor

Comments: _____

2. What is your evaluation of the training program with respect to the following elements?

a. Relevance of topic areas covered to your needs.

Excellent Good OK Fair Poor

Comments: _____

b. Interest of group activities.

Excellent Good OK Fair Poor

Comments: _____

c. Usefulness for developing or improving your skills.

Excellent Good OK Fair Poor

Comments: _____

d. Helpfulness of the trainer(s).

Excellent Good OK Fair Poor

Comments: _____

d. (Cont'd.)

Comments: _____

- 3. The objectives of the training program are listed on the attached pages. For each session, indicate the extent to which you think that the objectives were met.

Session I

___ Completely ___ Considerably ___ Moderately ___ Slightly ___ Not at all

Comments: _____

Session II

___ Completely ___ Considerably ___ Moderately ___ Slightly ___ Not at all

Comments: _____

Session III

___ Completely ___ Considerably ___ Moderately ___ Slightly ___ Not at all

Comments: _____

Session IV

___ Completely ___ Considerably ___ Moderately ___ Slightly ___ Not at all

Comments: _____

Session V

Completely Considerably Moderately Slightly Not at all

Comments: _____

4. Which of the five sessions did you find most helpful?

Session I Session II Session III Session IV Session V

Comments: _____

5. Which did you find least helpful?

Session I Session II Session III Session IV Session V

Comments: _____

6. How would you rate the helpfulness of the training program in developing or improving the following skills?

a. Communication

Very helpful Somewhat helpful Not helpful

Comments: _____

b. Assessment

___ Very helpful ___ Somewhat helpful ___ Not helpful

Comments: _____

c. Problem-solving

___ Very helpful ___ Somewhat helpful ___ Not helpful

Comments: _____

d. Anticipating problems

___ Very helpful ___ Somewhat helpful ___ Not helpful

Comments: _____

7. What is the single most important thing you learned from the training program?

Comments: _____

8. List in order of priority the aspects of the training that you think could be most improved.

Comments: _____

9. Would you recommend the training program for other workers in your position?

Strongly recommend Recommend Do not recommend

Comments: _____

Attachment

TRAINING ON PREVENTING FOSTER CHILD MALTREATMENT

SESSION I

Theme: Orientation and Overview of Foster Child Maltreatment and Risk Factors

Objectives

1. To orient participants to the purpose of the training program, the training approach, and major issues to be addressed throughout the five session.
2. To provide an overview to participants on foster child maltreatment and maltreatment risk factors.

SESSION II

Theme: Discipline and Supervision: Major Foster Child Protection Issues

Objectives

1. To help participants clarify their values and attitudes regarding physical punishment.
2. To develop participants' understanding of the rationale for the regulation prohibiting physical punishment.
3. To help participants identify effective alternatives to physical punishment in response to foster children's behavior.
4. To identify risks of maltreatment in the area of supervision and ways that workers can improve the protection of foster children in this area.

SESSION III

Theme: Developing a Supportive Relationship with Foster Parents as a Key to Preventing Maltreatment

Objectives

1. To help participants clarify the supportive role of agency case-workers in relation to foster parents.
2. To help participants recognize the elements for a supportive relationship with foster parents.

SESSION III (Cont'd.)

3. To help participants identify some of the existing barriers to developing a supportive relationship with foster parents and how they might be overcome.
4. To enhance the communication skills of participants necessary for establishing and maintaining a supportive relationship with foster parents.

SESSION IV

Theme: Problem-Solving -- Assessment and Intervention

Objectives

1. To provide participants with a systematic approach to problem-solving.
2. To enhance participants' skills of assessment and intervention as they relate to issues of child protection.

SESSION V

Theme: Anticipating Problems in Foster Home Placement and Helping Foster Parents Prepare for Handling Them

Objectives

1. To provide participants with an overview of major factors that may influence the behavior of foster children and the interaction of foster children and foster parents.
2. To help participants recognize the significance of anticipating potential problems in foster home placements.
3. To enhance the skills of participants in identifying problems that may arise in foster home placements and in intervening with foster parents to help prevent problems or manage them effectively.

APPENDIX B

PILOT TRAINING ON PREVENTING FOSTER CHILD MALTREATMENT

Evaluation Results
(17 Participants)

I. Angel Guardian Home

1. Overall rating of training program

Excellent - 14 OK - 0 Poor - 0
Good - 3 Fair - 0

2. Rating of training program with respect to:

a. Relevance of topic areas

Excellent - 15 OK - 0 Poor - 0
Good - 2 Fair - 0

b. Interest of group activities

Excellent - 12 OK - 0 Poor - 0
Good - 5 Fair - 0

c. Usefulness for developing or improving skills

Excellent - 12 OK - 0 Poor - 0
Good - 5 Fair - 0

d. Helpfulness of trainers

Excellent - 15 OK - 0 Poor - 0
Good - 2 Fair - 0

3. Extent to which objectives of each session were met

SESSION I

Completely - 13 Moderately - 0 Not at all - 0
Considerably - 4 Slightly - 0

SESSION II

Completely - 11 Moderately - 0 Not at all - 0
Considerably - 5 Slightly - 1

SESSION III

Completely - 14 Moderately - 0 Not at all - 0
Considerably - 2 Slightly - 0 No response - 1

SESSION IV

Completely - 10 Moderately - 0 Not at all - 0
 Considerably - 6 Slightly - 0 No response - 1

SESSION V

Completely - 10 Moderately - 0 Not at all - 0
 Considerably - 4 Slightly - 0 No response - 3

4. Session found most helpful

Session I - 2 Session III - 3 Session V - 3
 Session II - 8 Session IV - 5 All helpful - 4

(Some participants checked more than one session as most helpful.)

5. Session found least helpful

Session I - 2 Session III - 0 Session V - 4 No response - 2
 Session II - 1 Session IV - 2 None least helpful - 6

6. Rating of helpfulness of training program in developing or improving the following skills:

a. Communication

Very helpful - 13 Somewhat helpful - 4 Not helpful - 0

b. Assessment

Very helpful - 16 Somewhat helpful - 1 Not helpful - 0

c. Problem-solving

Very helpful - 14 Somewhat helpful - 3 Not helpful - 0

d. Anticipating problems

Very helpful - 15 Somewhat helpful - 2 Not helpful - 0

9. Recommendation of training program for other workers

Strongly recommend - 17 Recommend - 0 Do not recommend - 0

PILOT TRAINING ON PREVENTING FOSTER CHILD MALTREATMENT

Evaluation Results
(7 Participants)II. Harlem-Dowling Children Services and McMahon Services
for Children

1. Overall rating of training program

Excellent	- 2	OK	- 0	Poor	- 0
Good	- 5	Fair	- 0		

2. Rating of program with respect to:

a. Relevance of topic areas

Excellent	- 4	OK	- 0	Poor	- 0
Good	- 3	Fair	- 0		

b. Interest of group activities

Excellent	- 5	OK	- 0	Poor	- 0
Good	- 2	Fair	- 0		

c. Usefulness for developing or improving skills

Excellent	- 2	OK	- 0	Poor	- 0
Good	- 5	Fair	- 0		

d. Helpfulness of trainers

Excellent	- 2	OK	- 0	Poor	- 0
Good	- 5	Fair	- 0		

3. Extent to which objectives of each session were met

SESSION I

Completely	- 3	Moderately	- 0	Not at all	- 0
Considerably	- 4	Slightly	- 0		

SESSION II

Completely	- 4	Moderately	- 0	Not at all	- 0
Considerably	- 3	Slightly	- 0		

SESSION III

Completely	- 4	Moderately	- 0	Not at all	- 0
Considerably	- 2	Slightly	- 0	No response	- 1

SESSION IV

Completely - 2 Moderately - 1 Not at all - 0
 Considerably - 2 Slightly - 1 No response - 1

SESSION V

Completely - 3 Moderately - 2 Not at all - 0
 Considerably - 2 Slightly - 0

4. Session found most helpful

Session I - 0 Session III - 4 Session V - 1
 Session II - 3 Session IV - 1 All helpful - 1

5. Session found least helpful

Session I - 0 Session III - 0 Session V - 2
 Session II - 0 Session IV - 3 None least helpful - 2

6. Rating of helpfulness of training program in developing or improving the following skills:

a. Communication

Very helpful - 4 Somewhat helpful - 3 Not helpful - 0

b. Assessment

Very helpful - 6 Somewhat helpful - 1 Not helpful - 0

c. Problem-solving

Very helpful - 3 Somewhat helpful - 4 Not helpful - 0

d. Anticipating Problems

Very helpful - 5 Somewhat helpful - 2 Not helpful - 0

9. Recommendation of training program for other workers

Strongly recommend - 4 Do not recommend - 0
 Recommend - 2 No response - 1