

Standards, Knowledge & Insight Leading to Success (SKILS)

Training Annotated Agenda

SKILS 163R

SKILS (Standards, Knowledge & Insight Leading to Success) is the mandated core training that all new Protective Services Specialists (PSS) receive upon hire with the Office of Children's Services (OCS). SKILS 163R is the third session in core training for Protective Service Specialist (PSS) staff receive within their first year of hire with the Office of Children's Services (OCS). PSS staff participate in SKILS 163R following completion of SKILS 161R, Intercession A, SKILS 162R, and Intercession B. SKILS 163R focuses on specialized topics including Cultural Humility, Advanced Legal Training, and Child Welfare Ethics and Advocacy. The required second week of 163 (to combine to make 6 weeks of core training for all new PSS), is completed in the regional OCS office by the OCS Mentor team).

SKILS 161R Online WEEK 1

DAY 1:

Reflections from the Field

Participants receive an in-depth review of the Practice Model specific to Initial Assessment and Family Services casework activities. OCS Essential Services are reviewed and emphasized. Caseworker visits are discussed in groups to reinforce activities PSS staff do before, during, and after visits with children, parents, and resource families. Participants practice engaging in difficult conversations and share approaches that they have found helpful from their time in the field. Participants explore critical thinking skills and how these enhance the ability to work with families. Participants discover and recognize confirmation bias and how this fits in with their ability to critically think. The day ends with a panel of parents who are currently going through, or who have recently been through, the child welfare system.

Resilience

Strategies to understand and recognize compassion fatigue, burn out, and secondary trauma are discussed and practiced. Participants examine their own vulnerabilities in the context of secondary trauma, vulnerabilities in others, and then develop strategies for self-care and for participating in a healthy work environment.

DAY 2:

Cultural Humility

The first part of the day, workers define culture, cultural humility and learn how to engage with families from diverse cultural backgrounds while broadening ones' perspective regarding ones' own culture.

Participants explore and integrate culturally relevant services and strategies into case planning while taking into account microaggressions and how to respond in a culturally humble way. A Healing Centered Approach, a strength-based approach to trauma that is “culturally grounded and views healing as a restoration of identity”, is discussed. The conclusion of the morning sets a stage for the afternoon with a focus on the connection to culture and traditional ways of life for Alaska Native and American Indian families as a way of enhancing Protective Factors in a culturally relevant way.

Historical Trauma

Trainers discuss Alaska's Indigenous Peoples, highlighting resilience while exploring historical trauma and its effects on maintaining mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and relational health. Participants go through an experiential exercise called the “Blanket Exercise” that was adapted for Alaska by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and the Alaska Center for Resource Families. Originally developed by KAIROS of Canada to foster reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Canada, the purpose is to increase awareness of historical events as well as the strengths of Alaska Native people in an effort to recognize and reconcile the impacts of historical trauma. As part of the Blanket Exercise curriculum, participants engage in a Talking Circle.

DAY 3:

Child Welfare Ethics and Advocacy

Participants review and apply NASW ethical principles alongside the NASW Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Welfare. Participants have an opportunity to assess development and competence with the Standards and identify action steps to further their development. Participants differentiate between different types of ethical problems: value-based, policy or both. Different types of ethical reasoning are covered (deontological, utilitarian, ethics of care). Participants employ various methods to resolve ethical dilemmas in OCS casework using the NASW guidelines. The concept of trauma mastery is visited briefly, with the specific purpose of exploring its role in professional boundaries and appropriate self-disclosure. Participants explore the role of advocacy and assess underlying values and beliefs related to this role.

Casework with Children and Youth: Vulnerable Populations

Expressive and receptive communication is addressed with the goal of enhanced safety and vulnerability assessments and identification of maltreatment. Workers learn how to create a communication passport that can follow a child and assist providers, caseworkers and educators in meeting their needs. Learners gain an introductory understanding of physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities, including visual and auditory differences, FASD, mobility and cognitive differences. Participants explore the child protection worker's roles and responsibilities with this population, including specific assessment and documentation strategies, developmental screenings and advocacy for public assistance benefits.

The afternoon includes a segment on best practices with LGBTQ+ youth, highlighting emerging data and practice guidelines from the Child Welfare League of America and Lambda Legal.

Participants hone their caseworker skills by rolling up their sleeves and locating actual resources online for future use. Participants are given case studies for which they develop specialized child case plans using current ORCA forms. Case plans are presented to the class for feedback.

DAY 4:

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. YMHFA introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders. Upon successful completion of the online pre-work and the in-class training, trainees will be YMHFA Certified.

DAY 5:

Legal Day

The supervising Assistant Attorney General (AAG) for the Child Protection Section spends the day with workers, reviewing and teaching Child in Need of Aid basics as well as the following topics:

- Review of CINA 101
- Standards and Burden of proof
- Removals & Placement
- .087 Hearings: a special type of placement removal hearing
- Odds & Ends:
 - Confidentiality/Discovery
 - Notices
 - Residual Rights/Psychotropic Meds
 - Family contact
- Evidence & Corroboration