

Standards, Knowledge & Insight Leading to Success (SKILS)

Training Annotated Agenda

SKILS 161

SKILS is the mandated core training that all new Protective Services Specialists (PSS) receive upon hire with the Office of Children's Services (OCS). SKILS consists of 3 in-person courses: 161 (2 weeks), 162 (2 weeks) and 163 (1 week in person, 1 week in regional office). SKILS Course 161 begins with PreSKILS activities and several online learning modules to prepare the new PSS for Course 161, the first two week classroom session.

As outlined by the OCS Staff Development Plan (SDP), workers complete PreSKILS learning modules on the CWA Blended Learning Community (BLC) electronic learning platform in preparation for classroom learning. These modules guide new PSSs through a series of learning activities, online training, and on the job training that prepares them for their positions at OCS.

WEEK 1

Day 1:

Introduction to SKILS and CWA

Trainees are acquainted with the Child Welfare Academy, the basic process of training, the agenda, learning objectives and are given a pre-test. Trainees are oriented to the OCS Vision, Mission and Core Values. A community of learning is developed, OCS' practice model is introduced including the five protective factors that help keep families strong. The importance of working with Alaska Native Tribes from the beginning of an intervention is shared along with OCS data including racial disproportionality, to give the PSS the magnitude of work. Attention to worker safety is introduced, with the promise of more to come as training proceeds.

OCS Intake and Initial Assessment

The training case used throughout SKILS is introduced and the Protective Services Report (PSR) is shared. The learners use the online case management system (ORCA) to review the PSR. The three determinations made at Initial Assessment are introduced: maltreatment, safety, and risk. Workers use their ICWA Handbooks to determine contact information for the Tribe identified for the case example. An orientation to the Traditional Health and Wellness Guide is provided.

Worker Safety-Environmental Awareness

Worker safety is stressed as being of upmost importance as an initial assessment is being commenced. Trainees learn strategies to keep themselves safe when in the field. Topics include being aware of your surroundings and de-escalation techniques when working with difficult families.

Initial Contact and Information Collection Standards

The protocol for information gathering and the information collection standards are taught. Field guides that outline information collection are reviewed and discussed. A discussion regarding the inclusion of Tribal/ICWA workers and Active Efforts in the Initial Assessment phase is stressed. Examples of sufficient information for safety decision making are reviewed.

Present Danger

Present danger is defined and trainees review several case examples to practice recognizing present danger. Actions associated with intervening subsequent to present danger are presented and discussed.

Child Interviewing

Trainees are reminded of the child interviewing concepts introduced during PreSKILS modules, then use a team based learning activity to discuss child interviewing and practice preparing for a child interview.

Day 2:

Child Interview Practice

Trainees complete a one-on-one video-taped interview with an actor playing a child in an education setting to initiate the initial assessment. Interview strategies are debriefed and there is discussion around screening for types of child maltreatment not indicated on the Protective Services Report. Afterward, workers practice factual and neutral documentation in ORCA. Trainees review sample case notes and discuss quality documentation.

Initial Contact

Preparation, initial introductions, explanation of role, responding to resistance, and other strategies are offered in order to conduct the initial contact with parents in their own home. In a simulation lab designed to look like a parent's front door and living room, trainees watch as trainers take turns knocking on the door to encounter an actor playing a resistant parent. A definition and example of Reasonable and Active Efforts is provided and discussed. The Parent's Rights Brochure is passed out and stressed.

Safety Plan

Concepts associated with safety planning at present danger are introduced, including how to assess alternative caregivers if placement outside the home is determined to be necessary. Trainees discuss how to gather and articulate information needed, including contact with the child's Tribe. On the case used throughout training, trainees complete a safety plan. These plans are discussed, reviewed by trainers, and returned to trainees with feedback on any suggestions for improvements. Because an out of home safety plan is put in place in the training case, a non-emergency petition is handed out to participants and concepts within the petition are discussed.

Preparation for Adult Interviewing

Trainees review their Traditional Health and Wellness Guide for information about cultural communication differences. Workers develop a plan for information collection during the next day's mock interviews.

Day 3:

Adult Interviewing in Initial Assessment Practice and Documentation

Trainees conduct a one-on-one videotaped interview with an actor playing a parent. Trainers and peers provide verbal and written feedback on interview strategies regarding the worker's introduction, rapport building, cultural considerations, and information gathering techniques. Documentation of the interview is discussed, then each trainee completes an activity note in ORCA. These activity notes are reviewed by trainers and returned to trainees with feedback. Trainees compare their notes to a case example. The Dictation Guide is provided to trainees and the advantages of utilizing dictation in their work is stressed.

Absent Parents and Diligent Relative Searches

Strategies for finding absent parents and relatives are presented. Policies associated with these searches are put into context, including ICWA, which involves the Tribe in relative searches.

The Maltreatment Assessment Protocol (MAP)

Trainees are reminded of the PreSKILS online module for the Maltreatment Assessment Protocol; the tool used to determine substantiation or no substantiation on the training case. Decision making using the MAP is presented. Trainees practice using the MAP by reviewing the training case and determining a

finding while ruling out other types of maltreatment. Trainees practice documenting their maltreatment findings in ORCA. The 12 subsections of the statute will be reviewed and connected to the ones used in the non-emergency petition.

Day 4:

Voice of a Child

The video *Voice of a Child* is shown to assist trainees in understanding how the system works and how what they do impacts children and families. Trainees are asked to relate the scenario in the video with what they have learned about present danger as we begin discussion about the rest of the initial assessment. Debrief of this video includes a discussion about childhood trauma and an introduction to trauma specific interventions.

Identifying Safety Threats

Safety threats and the safety threshold criteria are presented and discussed in depth. Trainees read the safety threats guide in preparation for two group activities. Trainees review case scenarios and use critical thinking to identify the safety threat that best captures the situation. Trainees take turns articulating how a safety threat crosses the threshold. Trainees then collaborate in groups to identify the safety threats in the training case.

Safety/Risk Analysis

Trainees collaborate to organize information collected during interviews into the Initial Assessment tabs of ORCA. Trainees discuss sufficiency of their safety and/or risk documentation. Trainees are shown and then practice how to include discussions on culture and the impact of trauma in the initial assessment summary. Trainees are presented with an ORCA demonstration for completing this and then practice filling out the tabs in a simulated ORCA environment.

Impending Danger Assessment and Analysis and the FRAN

Using critical thinking practiced in the safety threats activity, trainees review impending danger in the context of the Safety/Risk and Analysis Tabs in ORCA and are given a demonstration within ORCA. Trainees practice filling out the Tabs in ORCA and practice using the Future Risk of Abuse and Neglect (FRAN) to assess for the level of risk present in the home. Finally, using the training case, trainees determine the safety threats and risk level and decide on a safety plan that is least intrusive for the family while managing the safety of the children.

Day 5:

Placement Considerations and Identifying Extended Family

Placement Preferences as identified in the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) are reviewed. Trainees do an activity to highlight their relatives and extended family, with the focus that the ICWA states “extended family”. Trainees get a chance to have a mock interview/meeting to identify additional resources for the training case safety plan. Trainees use the ICWA Handbook to identify how to identify extended family and how this activity is an example of active efforts.

The Safety Plan

Trainees view a video and use critical thinking skills to help understand the concept of assessing a caregiver’s ability of “can and will protect”. This video depicts a scenario at a Child Advocacy Center (CAC). Questions are identified to help the trainees elicit information that will help them assess a non-maltreating parent’s ability to be protective. Trainees review the safety plan in place for the training case to determine if updates are needed to address the identified impending danger and to further support the safety plan participants in a longer term plan.

Maintaining Connections

A video with an ICWA specialist explains the difference between tribal jurisdiction and tribal intervention. Trainees will practice adding relatives/extended family to the Relative Tab in ORCA. Initial Referral to Services is discussed and related to cases opened to Family Services.

Protective Factors

Trainees take an in-depth look at the five Protective Factors first generally, then specific to each parent in the training case : Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Concrete Support in Times of Need, and Social and Emotional Competence. Trainers assist trainees in recognizing that information collection for parent functioning, child functioning, parenting and discipline is also gathering information about the five protective factors.

Initial Referrals to Services and IA Worker Responsibilities After 30 Days

Trainees explore strategies in IA to support families and reduce the incidence of unsafe children and repeat maltreatment due to cases “falling through the cracks”. This will include a discussion of how and when to use the IRS (Initial Referral for Services) and what must be provided for a family when an open IA cannot be closed or transferred within 30 days.

The Initial Assessment Wrap Up

A closing discussion of initial assessment connects to concepts covered throughout the week and an illustrated timeline of the training case and the worker’s practice is written on the board. Trainees discuss case transfer and review the topics important to relay during this meeting and within policy timelines. The Caseworker Visit Guide is introduced and the expectation that for a case open longer than 30 days, there is a responsibility for providing ongoing case worker visits and case planning with children and families. Trainees review documentation completed during the week, ask questions, and make corrections to documentation as needed. Trainees complete a post-test at the end of the day.

Week 2

Day 1:

Welcome to Week 2

Trainees are welcomed back to Week 2 and the first week of SKILS is debriefed. The role of a Family Services PSS is presented and discussed.

Family Engagement

The idea that our work with families is rooted in a professional relationship between worker and client is presented and discussed. Cultural differences are explored and the concept of individual bias is examined through activity-based learning. Family engagement is presented as a technique for building relationships with families and thereby gathering information, developing trust and partnering with families to achieve successful outcomes.

Family Services Assessment - Introduction

Interview strategies associated with introducing the Family Services Assessment (FSA) to families is reviewed from rapport building, explaining the new worker’s role, establishing trust, answering questions, checking in on the safety plan and assessing the family. Workers practice meeting a family for the first time using the training case in the context of the Case Worker Visits Guide. Emphasis is on reflective listening, family engagement and determining the family’s needs. The importance of Tribal input is presented in the Family Services Assessment process to help facilitate cultural continuity and connectivity.

Case Plan Interviewing Techniques

Trainees learn and practice motivational interviewing techniques associated with engaging parents in case planning. Trainees will observe, identify, and be able to talk about interview strategies performed in a

trainer interview demonstration. Trainees will view a video about empathy and discuss how empathy is the first step in helping people make behavior change. Trainees learn how to recognize ambivalence in working with families to help them point out the discrepancies parents have in where they are functioning at the present and how they can move towards the future in being a safe parent. Trainees will review and practice open ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries. The stages of change model is reviewed with associated concepts applied first in general, then to the training case. Trainees will gain knowledge about managing resistance when working with families and explore examples from prior experiences.

Day 2:

Case Planning with Parents

Trainees learn and practice the concepts and strategies associated with case planning by being introduced to another training case. The three types of interviews (initial contact, initial assessment interview and the family services interview) are reviewed. The differences between a safety plan and a case plan are detailed. Each step in the case planning process is identified and discussed. Trainees are introduced to the Protective Factors Brochure to use with parents during case planning and given time to practice using this tool with the training case parents. Trainees analyze the safety threats and guide the development of case plan goals that enhance protective factors and promote behavior change. The protective factors are applied to the new training case to assist in identifying case planning goals. Trainers help trainees discern the difference between goals, activities and the “To Do List” and engage in an activity to solidify this learning. Trainees spend time with the Traditional Health & Wellness Guide to become familiar with the importance of incorporating culturally relevant services into case plans for parents as a way to individualize the case planning process.

Trainees participate in a structured group interview activity that prepares them for completing an assessment of the parent’s protective factors and provides the skills they need to develop behaviorally (SMART) based goals and objectives in partnership with parents.

Day 3:

Videotaped Interviews

To practice interview strategies in the case planning stage, trainees complete a one-on-one videotaped interview with an actor playing one of the parents from the training case example. This interview is a time to practice introducing Protective Factors and engaging the parent in a needs assessment; identifying their strengths and areas of growth to then create goals in the case planning process. The Traditional Health & Wellness Guide is used to assist in the interview. These interviews are viewed by trainers and peers who offer verbal and written feedback. This feedback deepens the learner’s understanding of conducting quality interviews.

Case Planning

Trainees complete a written case plan for the parent they interviewed in the mock interviews. They are encouraged to utilize the Traditional Health and Wellness Guide to identify services that are culturally appropriate for the family. These written case plans are discussed, reviewed by trainers, and returned to trainees with feedback. Trainees compare their notes to the model case plan on the training case.

Day 4:

Family Services Assessment – Case Planning with Children

Trainees discuss strategies for case planning with children and their caregivers. Each required goal for children is reviewed and examples are discussed. An emphasis is placed on cultural continuity for children and how this can be accomplished. Trainees learn about “The Trauma Screening Tool” and practice using the tool in the training case. Because everyone involved with OCS is impacted by trauma, trainees learn how to help parents become trauma informed for themselves and when parenting their children. Trainees practice identifying and documenting in ORCA trauma informed service providers in a children’s case plan.

Case Management

Trainees are introduced to the concept of case management and their role in the management of case. Trainees will explore all the areas of their position that is case management, ensuring it is family centered, strengths based and engaging with families.

Quality Case Worker Visits

Trainees discuss the stages of a quality caseworker visit, before, during and after. Trainees learn strategies to continue to support and evaluate progress of the family through the life of the case. Interview strategies that help a worker assess safety, permanency, and well-being during monthly home visits with are discussed using the Caseworker Visit Guide. Trainees interview actors portraying the parents and children from the training case to practice gathering information regarding the children's safety, permanency, well-being, and the parent's progress on case plan goals and activities. Trainees practice documenting that information in a case note.

Family Services Assessment – Evaluation

Trainees learn and practice strategies to evaluate a parent's progress in becoming a safe parent. Using the training case, they practice gathering information and documenting progress including the family's natural supports and updates from service providers. Trainees use the ICWA Handbook and the definition of Active Efforts to identify whether active efforts were provided on the training case. Trainees practice applying concepts related to the stages of change to evaluate progress. The Evaluating Progress towards Goal Achievement Guide is reviewed and linked to the stages of change. The trainees revisit the identified safety threats and protective factors in the training case to determine the progress made on the case plans and whether there are continued active safety threats. Trainees identify how to use the evaluation process to move towards in-home safety planning, trial home visits and if necessary, alternate permanency planning. Trainees conduct a case plan evaluation for the training case and compare theirs to the one in the training case.

Monitoring Trial Home Visits

Trainees learn the importance of monitoring trial home visits with families and how to continue to utilize safety plan participants to assist in this process. Trainees will identify the necessary activities they must do and things to avoid during this high risk time in the life of a family. The Tribe is highlighted as an important partner in this process and through collaboration, promotes successful outcomes for children families.

Family Services Wrap Up

Using an illustrated timeline, trainees do one final review of the Family Services workflow and decision making covered in the training case. Critical points in the life of the case are reviewed, and trainees discuss additional questions about the training case and the general process. Case closure is presented and a post-test is completed.

Day 5:

CINA 101 in Initial Assessments and Family Services

This module is trained by an attorney from the Attorney General's office and focuses on the laws that govern OCS involvement with families, legal interventions with families from the initial CINA Petition through permanency to adjudication. The Indian Child Welfare Act is emphasized and discussed in this context. How to connect family engagement strategies and the OCS Practice Model to legal intervention and participation in a court process is also explored.