

# Social Services Associate (SSA) Training

## Annotated Agenda

### SSA 140

Social Services Associate (SSA) 140 is for workers who have been hired as Social Services Associates statewide. This training is an introduction to the OCS Practice Model and includes pertinent topics to enhance working with children and families. There is a deliberate focus on the various ways SSAs support casework provided by the Protective Services Specialists. Understanding and practicing how to supervise family contact is also emphasized. SSA Training is hosted 1-2 times per calendar year depending on the need and as requested by the Office of Children's Services (OCS).

#### Day 1:

##### Introduction to SSA Training and CWA

Welcome! Trainees and trainers introduce themselves. Trainees are acquainted with the Child Welfare Academy, the basic process of training, the agenda of SSA Training, SSA Training learning objectives, and the CWA online resources for ongoing training in the field.

##### Types of Abuse and Mandatory Reporting

Trainees reconnect with the online learning on mandatory reporting they did in preparation for SSA Training by reviewing the definitions of the various forms of child maltreatment including physical abuse, neglect, mental injury and sexual abuse. Trainees then participate in a Team Based Learning activity on identifying signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and their duty as a mandated reporter.

##### OCS Process and Practice Model

The OCS vision, mission and practice model are discussed including the ways in which they are involved during Initial Assessment and Family Services. Trainers walk the trainees through the various processes including the interview protocol and information gathering and discuss ways in which SSAs can, and do, contribute to this work. Trainees become familiar with the safety threats and protective capacities by determining which apply to a common case example. They review a sample case plan to identify the ways in which an SSA can be involved in working with a family to establish safety, permanency, and wellbeing.

#### Day 2:

##### Strengthening Families

Trainees learn strategies to engage families utilizing a strength based approach as well as how to incorporate the five Protective Factors in their work with families. Trainees will learn strategies to develop trust and collaborate with families to achieve successful outcomes. The trainer will go over each Protective Factor found in the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Brochure.

##### Parent and Family Engagement

The idea that our work with families is rooted in a professional relationship between worker and client is presented and discussed then is expanded to include the relationship between workers, their communities and tribal partners. Family engagement is presented as a technique for building relationships with families and thereby gathering information, developing trust and collaborating with families to achieve successful outcomes. Identifying and highlighting parent strengths is encouraged as an effective tool for engagement.

## Day 3:

### Introduction to the Indian Child Welfare Act

History of ICWA, Purpose of ICWA, placement preferences, and Active efforts are discussed. Trainers introduce trainees to the ICWA guide and help them familiarize themselves with this resource. Trainers walk trainees through determining preferred placements as well as distinguishing between active efforts and reasonable efforts.

### Cultural Iceberg

Using an iceberg as an analogy, trainees are asked to share aspects of their surface culture and deep culture in pairs and in the large group. This activity leads trainees to a deeper understanding of components of culture and the cultural ways in which they are similar or different from their colleagues and the children and families they work with.

### Trauma Informed Care

Concepts associated with Trauma-informed Care are introduced. Trainees identify different types of trauma and discuss intervention strategies, both for the child and for the parent. Trauma informed care as a way of assessing and intervening through a trauma lens is emphasized.

### Putting it All Together: Safety, Permanency, and Wellbeing

Trainees apply tips and strategies for coping with typical challenges they have experienced or are likely to encounter when working with children and families. This part of the training is drawn to an end with trainees looking at a case note and identifying the ways in which the worker promoted safety, permanency, and well-being with a family.

## Day 4:

### Family Contact

Trainees complete an activity where they practice applying concepts relevant to levels of supervision, determining levels of supervision, and resources for supervision. Trainees debrief the activity to continue to develop family contact strategies. Trainees review a family contact plan with a real case example and identify roles and responsibilities as an SSA.

### Child Development

The *Field Guide to Child Functioning* is distributed. The trainer gives an overview of the sections and how this guide can be useful to understand child behavior and documenting and supporting family contact.

## Day 5:

### Worker Safety

Trainees learn strategies to de-escalate people who are in a crisis. Verbal intervention strategies will be emphasized but physical non-violent crisis intervention strategies are also learned and practiced.

### Worker Safety-Environmental Awareness

Trainees learn strategies to keep themselves safe when in the field. Topics include environmental awareness, dangerous animals, active shooters, and wilderness safety.