



Mentor Certification Field Guide FY19

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Introduction to Child Welfare Mentor Certification

The Mission of the Child Welfare Services Training Unit is to support and enhance the OKDHS Child Welfare workforce through training, mentoring and educational opportunities, to improve the safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families involved in the DHS system.

Mentor Certification promotes these outcomes through a structured training plan. The plan includes:

- 5 days of focused classroom training;
- Guided field experience;
- Certification of the mentor's knowledge and skills.

This “***Mentor Certification Field Guide for Supervisors***” will explain the Mentor Certification process, outline what you can expect from the CWS Training Unit, and detail what is expected from you and the mentor. Please review this Guide **with the mentor** to ensure you both understand the requirements of the activities and training.

Exploring Purpose

A well trained, skilled and supported workforce is the foundation for Oklahoma Child Welfare to achieve desired outcomes for children and families. Mentor Certification was developed for tenured staff classified as CW Specialist III and tasked with mentoring CW Specialists. Implementation research indicates training alone does not result in practice change. Training provides necessary foundational information such as exposure to concepts, theory, and an introduction to skills that can be practiced in a safe place before utilizing with families. Mentors ensure Specialists have immediate and frequent opportunities to practice and apply what they learned during their training and reinforce the application of new skills. If training is not supported effectively, practice will not change within Oklahoma Child Welfare.

The purpose of Mentor Certification is to ensure tenured staff can provide intensive coaching in required competencies before working independently with CW Specialists. The Certification mirrors CW Specialists' demonstration of competencies prior to working with families. The mentoring is designed to ensure the Certification is based on the skill-based competencies of interview observation, interview feedback and field observation of a CW Specialist. Mentors practice using corrective feedback with the CW Specialist and coaching toward an enhanced skill level.

Overview of Mentor Certification

Sequencing Order: Mentors must complete the steps in the certification process in order. For more detailed instructions regarding Pre and Post work for each training please see the details section for each training at www.cwtraining@oucpm.org.

CW 3032 - Motivational Interviewing (includes pre and post work, 1 training day)

CW 3029 - Introduction to Mentoring Basics (online)

CW 3300 - Coaching for Mentors (2 training days)

- Online Boosters for CW 3300

CW 3442 – Follow Up to Motivational Interviewing (1 training day)

CW 3444 - Mentor Certification Test Prep (1 training day)

CW 3445 - Mentor Certification Testing

Online Training:

Coaching provides an environment where Specialists are challenged and supported to try new skills and techniques in a setting that is safe enough to be vulnerable enough to receive feedback on skills, which does not indicate the process is easy or comfortable. It may be challenging. This mirrors the same process we take in our work with our clients.

Coaching focuses on the actions, responses, and decisions of a Specialist in providing services to the children and families they serve. Effective coaching is critical to building Specialists' competencies, including reinforcing Oklahoma Child Welfare ethics and values, practice/Quality Service standards, encouraging self-reflection and critical thinking skills building upon training to enhance performance, and supporting the Specialist through decision-making and crises. Self-reflection allows the Specialist to examine and consider ways to improve their own practice.

The foundation of the Coaching Pyramid (tier 1) consists of (a) a skillful coach who provides clear feedback, listens, and builds trust with the learner; (b) a qualified coach who has the necessary knowledge, qualifications, and effective abilities to coach; (c) a structured coaching process by which both parties understand and agree upon the coaching goals; and (d) a safe and supportive coaching environment that provides a place to reflect and think. Once the foundation is in place, the learner will reap primary benefits (tier 2) including (a) clarity and focus, which provide a sense of clear direction and purpose; (b) self-confidence, which leads to improved competence and success in working with families; and (c) motivation to achieve, which fosters greater accountability and an enhanced desire for the learner to succeed. (SOURCE: Coaching Toolkit for Child Welfare Practice).

Mentors model, in a parallel process, the idea of how we think about our clients is the way we will be with our clients. For example when we view clients as “bad parents” and “incapable of change” it alters our interactions harming our engagement and ultimately our desired outcomes. Mentors are being observed by Specialists and you are modeling how Child Welfare wants them to approach their work with families, ie strength-based vs deficits, solution focused vs barriers focused, believing people can change because they do change and practice standards such as “we actively and continuously seek to learn who families are what they need”. The approach you take as a Mentor to helping Specialists is how Specialists learn to approach their work with families. Mentors demonstrate and reinforce best practices through a process of continuous improvement and a commitment to desired outcomes. Much as Specialists defer to the family to identify its strengths and desired outcomes, Mentors, through the artful selection of well-crafted reflective questions, encourage a Specialist to do the hard work of learning to think critically about their practice.

Coaching is focused on asking questions that will help the Specialist seek and find their own answers to situations in which there is more than one possible solution. Effective coaching navigates and supports the Specialist without taking over and doing for the Specialist what they can learn to do, thereby enhancing critical thinking skills (ie parallel process with empowering families to meet their own needs). Coaching guides the Specialist through evaluation of outcomes to learn what lessons can be learned as it relates to the purpose of Child Welfare, thus modeling the CQI process. It allows the Specialist to synthesize information to create a working theory that guides problem solving. In essence it works to advance Specialists’ autonomy and decision making especially as it relates to safety and providing support as needed while recognizing mistakes are possible and growing from them.

Utilizing motivational interviewing techniques to coach Specialists around changing behavior includes the Mentor giving up the role of “expert” (in the coaching process) and seeing the Specialist as the expert to determine the best path to change. This is modeled when the Mentor inquires about the desired/hoped for outcome of the session (i.e. motivation to learn). The “expert” role is best viewed as when the Mentor is doing most of the work by telling the Specialist what to do, whereas in coaching the Specialist is asked to do most of the work, thereby increasing critical thinking skills and developing a greater sense of confidence and competence. Specialists with enhanced confidence and competence perform better with families while also serving as a buffer against challenges that occur, thus leading to higher retention which directly affects family outcomes.

The Mentor has empathy for the Specialist and how they view the events around them, supports the idea that the Specialist has the capacity to make changes, rolls with resistance regarding how they view the problem or solution (ie invite the Specialist to explore other points of view), develops discrepancy between what the Specialist wants and actions that may move them away rather than toward, ie listen for change talk.

Motivational interviewing involves drawing out ideas from the Specialist, not imposing ideas. An important note to consider, a Mentor after providing time for the Specialist to think about their work, may need to provide concrete suggestions when a Specialist is not able to create and would always ensure safety when a Specialist's decision making process is deemed inappropriate to the family's needs.

There is a better chance of lasting change when the Mentor draws out the motivation and skill of the Specialist versus telling them what and how to do something. Mentor's questions should be real vs disguised advice, are sincere and come from a place of curiosity, not leading to a particular outcome, open ended and invite reflection, begin with what and how vs why and yes and no questions, (analogous to our use of open ended questions vs leading).

Examples of questions include: Were your actions consistent with how you think, want to act? If no, what were you thinking when you acted in this manner? What training did you utilize that influence your decision? What are other options/possibilities, if you had the chance to do this over would you do anything differently? What possible options do you have? How has this experience changed how you think? Mentors model engagement and collaborative working relationships for Specialists thus increasing the likelihood they do the same with clients.

Each Specialist will be motivated by something different and the best way to support change is to elicit options from Specialist as to the best way for change in their behavior to take place.

The Mentor will use strengths based/solution focused approaches when coaching Specialists. Coaching relies heavily on supporting the Specialist's self-efficacy, or belief they can change. The Mentor is self-aware about their own belief about the Specialist's ability to change and aware of how they are presenting that, verbally and non-verbally, to the Specialist. In regard to motivation, mentors recognize that people are most satisfied by achievement and recognition. The Mentor should recall it is important when coaching to place a greater focus on reinforcing behavior you want to continue more than negative consequences for behavior you want to stop. The focus is doing more of the things a Specialist is doing well and encouraging the Specialist to identify areas for growth.

Enrollment:

Mentors may enroll themselves online with the following instructions:

1. **Open DHS LMS** www.okdhsllearning.org
2. Select "Find Learning"
3. Select "All Courses"
 - a. Enter the workshop number for the step of the certification you would like to attend.
 - b. Select "Find"
 - c. Enroll in the next available date that can be accommodated by your schedule.

PLEASE NOTE:

Some classroom portions of the Mentor Certification will have restricted enrollment. In these instances, please email ChildWelfareTraining@okdhs.org with your name and the session you would like to be enrolled in. You should receive a response in 48 working hours.