

## COURSE DESCRIPTION\*

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of this training module is to educate child welfare professionals on primary and secondary traumatic stress in child welfare work. It provides education and training on the nature of traumatic stress as well as individual coping skills and social support strategies that, if implemented, may reduce the impact of STS on work performance and individual worker well-being.

**Assumptions Underlying Training:**

- Child welfare professionals frequently experience emotional stress as a result of the nature of their work.
- One of the types of stress often experienced by child welfare professionals is STS.
- STS cannot be prevented since it is a normal human response to abnormal events such as violence and/or disasters.
- The effects of STS can be prevented from developing into a more serious condition.
- Management of STS is essential to mitigating its impact.
- Individual coping skills can be developed that can assist in the management of STS.
- Social support is important to the management of STS.
- A reputable body of knowledge on STS on which to base a proactive psychoeducational training workshop is currently available.

**Audience:** The primary audience for this training is child welfare professionals, caseworkers, and supervisors. It is this group that is most directly and personally affected by the emotional stressors that accompany this challenging work. Professional child welfare managers are also an important target group. They are responsible for proactively identifying potential and real-time stressors and providing the appropriate leadership, training, and support to the direct-service staff as they encounter and deal with the pressures of the child welfare work environment.

*\* The information in the course description is for trainer preparation only. None of this material is intended to be delivered verbatim to the workshop participants.*

**Training Design:** This is a psychoeducational training intervention based on a cognitive-behavioral model. The learning environment is interactive and requires active participant involvement. It is six hours in duration and is divided into three separate blocks (or sessions). Participants undergo block I first and then proceed to blocks II and III. Block I describes the nature, scope, and impact of STS—an occupational fact of life in child welfare work. Block II provides training on the development of individual coping skills. Block III features individual and institutional strategies for improving and enhancing social support. Both individual coping skills and adequate social support have been shown to be effective in ameliorating primary and secondary traumatic stress. Each block has one general goal and a series of supporting objectives. Achievement of the objectives results directly in the accomplishment of the block goal. Training effectiveness is evaluated with on-site pre- and posttests, and off-site six-week evaluations. NOTE: It is sometimes impossible to adequately cover block III in the six hours allowed. Rather than lengthen an already intense training day, agencies may want to conduct block III in its entirety in a separate two-hour session, ideally the day following blocks I and II.

**Expected Long-term Outcomes of the Training:**

- Work performance of child welfare professionals will improve.
- Retention of child welfare professionals will improve.
- Morale of child welfare professionals will improve.
- Stress-induced physical and mental health problems among child welfare professionals will decrease.
- Sick leave rates will decrease.
- Cost-benefit ratio of child welfare operations will improve.

NOTE: The above outcomes can be measured and evaluated over time using longitudinal research designs. Training can then be modified or refined based on the evaluation results.

**Training Resources Needed:**

- **Facility:** A large well-lighted room with seating for approximately thirty participants. Seating should be at six round, square, or rectangular tables of five persons each. Tables are spaced as far apart as possible to minimize disruption during group work.

- **Equipment:**

- Post-It chart paper on easels with colored markers (1 at each table and 1 for trainer)

- Overhead transparency projector and screen

- Television monitor with VCR

- Podiums (2) with table in between

- Microphones, remote operation (if required)

- Name tags

- Pointer

- **Training Aids:**
  - Practical exercises
  - Visuals
  - Individual workbooks
- **Materials Provided by Participants:**
  - Pen or pencil
- **Materials Provided by Trainers:**
  - Handout materials and individual workbooks, as required by the lesson plan
  - Evaluation forms, as desired

**Important:** It is expected that the teaching points that must be made in order to accomplish the training's learning objectives will come from **both** the trainers and the participants, since there will be a broad and deep range of child welfare experience in the audience. Trainers should be ready to tactfully and actively hear, record, and validate (or reframe for correctness and clarity if necessary) all participant input to the larger group. The script incorporates one such approach to this trainer challenge and the individual work packet is organized to facilitate orderly note taking by participants.

