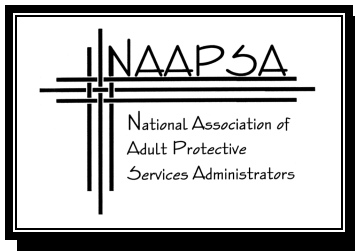# Formative Evaluation of Adult Protective Services Curricula

Introduction

A recent survey of the problems facing state Adult Protective Services programs revealed that at least 18 states identified "The inability to obtain and retain enough staff with expertise in APS to effectively operate existing programs… (and) lack of funds prohibited them from providing the necessary training to develop staff expertise in APS," as major obstacles to APS service delivery. Another NAAPSA study on state APS Training Programs stated that "The extent to which APS practitioners are trained will largely determine how well they are able to serve the target population." The study went on to say that while staff "has been crying for training," most training is developed by APS specialists at the state level who do not have experience in adult learning techniques.

Due to the fact that Adult Protective Services are state, not national, programs, the states have carried the burden of developing and delivering curricula for training local staff and administrators. Only 19 states have specific annual APS training budgets, and of these, 13 have allocations of less than $100,000. Given such limited funding, it has been virtually impossible for most states to develop comprehensive training programs. As a result, many states have shared each other's training materials.

Some of the training curricula developed by the states have been done by ad hoc committees made up of APS line workers and supervisors. As a rule, these materials have not included adult learning techniques, nor have they been evaluated. According to the American Public Human Services Association, "The ability to identify clearly what the desired outcomes of training are, and what the level of learning they represent, is an important element in designing an effective training evaluation." The U.S. Administration on Youth and Families has determined that from 15 to 20% of any project budget should be earmarked for evaluation. However, for most APS programs, which lack training budgets of any kind, evaluation has not been a priority.

In order to assist APS programs in developing and/or evaluating curricula, NAAPSA has developed a Formative Evaluation for APS Curricula. A Formative Evaluation is one which provides criteria with which to guide the development of a curriculum as it is being written, and may also be used to evaluate completed curricula. This tool was created through the cooperative efforts of the NAAPSA Education Committee lead by Susan Castano, NAAPSA Consultant, with additional materials provided by Jane Berdie, MSW, consultant on Education and Training. We are grateful to all of the participants for generously sharing their time and wisdom, and to the Administration on Aging, which provided a grant to the National Center on Elder Abuse for the completion of this project.

Formative Evaluation of Adult Protective Services Curricula
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I.   Target audience

A. Number of persons to be trained
B. Length and frequency of training events
C. APS staff—supervisors and/or line workers
   1. Specialized or generic
   2. Educational backgrounds
   3. Levels of experience
   4. Expectations of training
   5. Local, state or national audience
 D. Other professionals
   1. Who they are—areas of expertise
   2. Who requested this training and why it is needed
E. Community at large—rural, suburban, urban
F. Potential victims
G.   Special needs of trainees—language barriers, cultural differences, disabilities affecting communication, ADA accessibility

II   Learning Objectives

A. Are based on a thorough needs assessment
B. Are identified, clearly stated in behavioral terms, and relevant
C. Are measurable and observable
D. Address cognitive learning, (knowledge, facts), skill acquisition ("how to"), and affective learning (options, attitudes of trainee)
E. Are outcome based

III   Content

A. Reflects best practice
B. Is relevant to job needs of target audience
   1.   Stresses transfer of learning on the job
   2.   Communicates any necessary policies and legal requirements
C. Takes into account cultural, regional, and other diversity issues
D. Is consistent and congruent within the curriculum
E. Has the scope (breadth of coverage) and depth (detail) of content to meet learning objectives
F. Is at an appropriate learning level to meet learning objectives
G. Is sufficiently complete so that trainer has all information needed to train from it

IV   **Organization**

    A. Trainer instructions include
       1. Timed outline, clear table of contents, agenda, labeling of activities, labeling of materials
       2. Broad overview provided early in the training and before each major module
       3. Summaries and segues (transitions) at appropriate points, including a final summary
       4. Training instructions for trainer which are sufficient to guide training delivery and promote consistency
       5. Potential areas of differences in regional practice and how curriculum can be flexibly used
       6. Content that is well sequenced, from simple to complex, universal to exception, fundamental to more advanced and by logical steps suggested by the content
    B. Trainee materials
       1. Are clearly labeled, numbered and easy to locate
       2. Have directions for each activity
       3. Are professional and attractive

V.   **Training Methods**

    A. Reflect adult learning styles
       1. Experiencing: Concrete Experience
          a. Make use of experience that people have (talk about it)
          b. Provide them with an experiential activity which produces data for further learning
          c. Examples: self awareness questionnaire, guided fantasy
       2. Processing: Reflective Observation
          a. Discuss the experience people have
          b. Share reactions and observations of the experiential activity
          c. Examples: report reactions to game or other activity, brainstorm, problem solving discussions
       3. Generalizing: Abstract Conceptualization
          a. Discuss general trends, truths found in the experience people have
          b. Bring together experiences and reactions into conclusions, new concepts and theories
          c. Examples: brief lectures, overheads, handouts
       4. Applying: Active Experimentation
          a. Modifying old behaviors or testing new behaviors
          b. Practicing them in everyday situation
          c. Preliminary demonstration and/or coaching may be helpful
    B. Include a mix of training methods to reflect learning styles
       1. Lectures
       2. Demonstration of skills
       3. Opportunities for practice in applying knowledge and skills
       4. Large and small group discussions
       5. Individual, dyadic, small and large group activities
       6. Case Studies
       7. Role Plays
       8. Simulations
       9. Questionnaires
       10. Audio visual materials
    C. Are consistent with learning objectives
    D. Reinforce use of knowledge and skills on the job
    E. Are doable in the time frames allotted

VI.   **Training Materials**

    A. Handouts

       1. Reinforce training content
       2. Are clear, visually appealing, and varied in format
       3. Can be used as tools and references on the job
       4. Provide clear and complete instructions for all training activities
- B. Overheads/ Power Point/ Flipcharts
  1. Use only key points
  2. Use simple visual models
  3. Are appropriate to the size of the training group
- C. Audio-visual materials
  1. Are carefully chosen for length, content and quality
  2. Are relevant to the learning objectives
  3. Include time for processing
- D. Props
  1. Are integrated into the content
  2. Are easy to use

VII. **Training Evaluation**

- A. Is considered early in the development of the training
- B. Has an identified goal
  1. Reaction: how trainee liked training program
     - a. Desired information included in comment sheet
     - b. Easily tabulated and quantified
     - c. Anonymous
     - d. Room for comments
  2. Learning: what trainees learned as a result of the training
     - a. Needs to be measured in a quantifiable manner and on an objective basis
     - b. Types of evaluation of learning
       1. Pre-post tests for principles, theory, facts
       2. Demonstration or presentation for skill learning
  3. Behavior: changes in on the job behavior
     - a. Requires before and after appraisal of trainee's job performance
     - b. Relates to job performance
  4. Results: whether training has achieved specific, ultimate results desired
     - a. Before and after assessment advisable
     - b. Can be evaluated by supervisor

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