

# STANDARDS, KNOWLEDGE & INSIGHT LEADING TO SUCCESS (SKILS) TRAINING AGENDA

## Four Week Curriculum

SKILS is a mandated four week core training that all new front line workers receive upon hire with the Office of Children's Services (OCS). SKILS Part I focus is on orientation to OCS, working with diverse cultures, the Practice Model, Intake and Initial Assessment. Competency based training with specific emphasis on family engagement, interviewing, information collection, safety threats and risk factors, analysis and assessment is completed by the end of week two. After completion of SKILS Part I, the workers go back to their offices for three weeks of on-the-job training. The trainees then return for SKILS Part II, weeks three and four, which focuses on Family Services practice delivery once a case is opened for ongoing services due to safety threats or high risk to a child within his/her own home. Permanency goals, protective capacity assessment, case planning, conditions for return home of children in care and case closure are the focus within SKILS Part II. Before workers have completed SKILS, they will also receive legal and ORCA training.

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### WEEK ONE

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#### **Monday, Day 1 Morning – Lead Trainer: Jay C. Bush**

##### Module 1, Introduction to SKILS and FYSTA

Welcome! Trainees and trainers introduce themselves. Trainees are acquainted with the Family & Youth Services Training Academy (FYSTA), the basic process of training and the four week agenda of SKILS.

##### Module 2, Introduction to the OCS Practice Model

The OCS' Practice Model will be presented and trainees will discuss how the model will apply to their practice, with emphasis on the federal Child and Family Services Review Outcomes and Guiding Principles, in their day-to-day work with families and communities. 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. Trainees have the opportunity to explore and discuss their role in attaining the Vision and Mission of OCS through their day-to-day work with families.

#### **Monday, Day 1 Afternoon – Lead Trainer: Jay C. Bush**

##### Module 3, Basic Communication and Communication Across Cultures

A basic model of communication is presented to the trainees, followed by presentation and discussion of Scollon and Scollon's 7 rules for improving interethnic communication. Trainees view the 4<sup>th</sup> part of Fr. Aleksa's series on *Communication Across Cultures* then discuss how communication is affected by racial/ethnic identity and status differences between families and OCS staff.

##### Module 4, Cultural Awareness, Historical Trauma, Disproportionality

This module provides trainees with an overview of cultural value differences between various ethnic and racial populations, with special emphasis on American Indian, Alaska Native (AIAN) people and non-AIAN people. Trainees are presented with the various events of Historical Trauma to the First People. Finally, there is a discussion with trainees about disproportionality within the child welfare system, why this might be occurring and work that has been done to address the phenomena.

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### **Tuesday, Day 2 Morning – Lead Trainer: Jay C. Bush**

#### Module 5, Introduction to Safety Decision Making through the Life of the Case

Trainees are introduced to the assessment of child safety process and its terminology. The concepts and definitions of safe and unsafe, safety threats, the safety threshold, present and impending danger, analysis, protective capacities, safety interventions, safety plans, etc. are introduced and explained. Key points are: the worker needs to learn and understand who the family is through information gathering and assessment, decision making should be based on an individual assessment of the family, and the assessment of safety continues through the life of the case.

### **Tuesday, Day 2 Afternoon – Lead Trainer: Stephanie Vaughn**

#### Module 6, OCS Process and Intake

Module six will move into a presentation of how a family's case moves through the OCS system. Using a flow chart that depicts the progress of the work through the life of a case and critical decision points along the way, the overview is the visual introduction to the work flow and how the remainder of the training will progress using one case example from beginning to end as illustration.

This is followed by a presentation on the definitions, from the OCS Policy and Procedure Manual, of the various forms of child maltreatment including physical abuse, neglect, mental injury and sexual abuse. The trainees are then introduced to the first order of business with the agency - Intake. Included in this discussion are: methods for gathering information from the reporter, how to screen Protective Services Reports, how to prioritize the needed response, and how to complete the interview with the caller.

### **Wednesday, Day 3 Morning – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts**

#### Module 7, Intake

Using the *OCS Field Guide for Information Gathering* and the definitions learned of child maltreatment, present danger, impending danger and high risk, this module shows the trainees the actual practice of Intake. Trainees will formulate questions, gather information, and make decisions within Intake. Using intake examples, trainees will practice developing open ended questions for interviewing, screening an intake in or out, deciding when to conduct enhanced intake, and how to assign a response priority. Interview and engagement strategies will be introduced and used in this context. Trainees will conduct practice phone interviews in triads to demonstrate these skills and will practice documenting the intake interview.

### **Wednesday, Day 3 Afternoon – Lead Trainer: Jay C. Bush**

#### Module 8, Family & Tribal Engagement/Family Centered Practice

This module covers the concept and practice of working with families through the person/family-centered strength-based model. 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. Engagement is also used to promote collaborative working relationships between workers and tribal partners. Video presentations are used to show trainees both

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positive and negative ways of engaging with families.

### **Thursday, Day 4 – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts**

#### *Module 9, Introduction to Initial Assessment, Present Danger and Protective Action Plans*

The trainees will be presented OCS' Policy and Procedures for assessing present danger and engaging caregivers in protective action plans. Using case examples, trainees will be introduced to family engagement and interviewing strategies used to gather information, to assess for present danger and, when present danger is apparent, how to engage caregivers in developing a plan that will keep the child safe while being family centered. Using these skills in the cultural context of the family and assessing for present danger through the life of the case will be emphasized. The trainees will practice documenting present danger and a protective action plan.

### **Friday, Day 5 – Lead Trainer: Stephanie Vaughn**

#### *Module 10, General Interviewing*

Trainees will be shown basic interviewing techniques via lecture and demonstration. Discussion will include techniques appropriate to children and adults and the importance of relationship- building throughout the interview process. Trainees will view video presentations of good interviewing techniques and practice interviewing with the instructors.

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### WEEK TWO

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#### Monday, Day 6 – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts

##### Module 11, The Initial Assessment - Six Questions, Impending Danger Assessment, Protective Capacities and Analysis

This module focuses on OCS' Policy and Procedures for assessing impending danger, protective capacities and analysis. Using case examples, trainees will practice family engagement and interviewing strategies to gather information, assess initial protective capacities, assess and analyze impending danger, and complete an initial assessment summary. Using these skills in the cultural context of the family, updating the initial assessment and reassessing for impending danger through the life of the case will be emphasized. The trainees will practice documentation of the information needed to complete an initial assessment.

#### Tuesday, Day 7 – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts

##### Module 12, The Safety Plan

This module continues the process of initial assessment focusing on OCS' Policy and Procedures for family engagement and other family supports in safety planning when safety threats have been determined to exist within the family. Using case examples, trainees will complete an in-home safety plan analysis and learn how to engage caregivers and other supports in developing a safety plan that is family centered. Trainees will understand and practice safety planning both as a means to prevent out of home placement and as a way to facilitate the safe and expedient return of children to their homes after out of home placement has occurred. The cultural context for using these skills will be emphasized. The trainees will practice documenting an in home safety plan, analysis and safety plan.

#### Wednesday, Day 8 Morning – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts

##### Module 13, Child Interviewing Skills

The trainees will learn and understand interviewing strategies as they apply to the initial assessment of a child alleged to be unsafe. Trainees will understand how these strategies can be applied to ongoing contact with children and adults. The trainees will understand and practice how to prepare for an interview, how to initiate an interview, how to develop rapport with the child, how to gather information, cope with barriers to listening, and how to conclude an interview. Developing open ended questions, using the "funnel technique," and rapport building as means to both establish a relationship and gather information will be emphasized. Trainees will review and analyze digital recordings of initial contact interviews.

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### **Wednesday, Day 8 Afternoon – Lead Trainer: Jay C. Bush**

#### Module 14, Adult Interviewing Skills

Building on the material the trainees have been given in the morning session, the trainer will present the casework interviewing guide and adult interviewing techniques. Emphasis is placed on the importance of rapport building in the initial interview which leads to relationship building in subsequent interviews. It is stressed that the purpose of the casework interview is two-fold; to gather information and to build a helping, professional relationship.

### **Thursday, Day 9 – Lead Trainer: Jay C. Bush**

#### Module 15, Interviewing Practice

Trainees will divide into small groups and interview actors playing either a child or an adult in a practice case example. Trainers, trainees, and actors will provide feedback to interviewers on interviewing skills. Interviews are recorded onto a disc which goes into the trainee's portfolio to be reviewed by the trainee and their supervisor.

### **Friday, Day 10 Morning – Lead Trainer: Stephanie Vaughn**

#### Module 16, Family Contact Standards

The morning session is a lecture and discussion on the permanency goal of reunification and a presentation on the current Family Contact Standards and various levels of visitation between families and children in the foster care system. Using current research findings, emphasis is placed on how increased parent/child contact helps achieve the permanency outcome of family re-unification. Maximizing parent/child contact (visitation), and policy standards for supervision during visits are presented and discussed. The trainees will brainstorm and plan for increased parent/child contact in their own cases.

### **Friday, Day 10 Afternoon – Lead Trainer: Tammy Sandoval**

#### Module 17, Family & Tribal Engagement/Family Centered Practice

The afternoon session will consist of a comprehensive review of the first 9 days of training from intake through the decision to either end the intervention at Initial Assessment or to open and transfer the case to Family Services. Each of the critical decision making points will be reviewed and how one decision informs the next. Trainees will learn the steps in preparing the family and their case for transfer to Family Services in order to provide the family with a smooth transition from Initial Assessment to Family Services. Tips will be shared with trainees for areas of focus between the time that they return to their office and their return to SKILS 112.

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### WEEK THREE

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#### Monday, Day 11 – Lead Trainer: Stephanie Vaughn

##### Module 18, Reconnect to SKILS and Community Assessment and Reports

This morning session brings the trainees back into the training milieu and begins with de-briefing and discussion about the trainees' experiences in the interim between SKILS 111 and SKILS 112 when they returned to their job sites. As the trainees discuss the events they have experienced, the trainer will remind the trainees of the previous work in SKILS and help trainees integrate their SKILS experience with what they have experienced on the job.

In the second half of the morning the trainees report on their Community Assessment assignment. This assignment is designed to get the trainee into their home community to network with community providers and resources for families and children that they will be using for their families in the future. The trainees report to the entire group to allow the other trainees to learn about different communities as well.

The afternoon session continues the Case Transfer presentation from the afternoon of Day 10. Looking at Case Transfer from the receiving Family Services worker's perspective and moving the training focus from Initial Assessment to Family Services. The work of permanency, family/ child engagement in Protective Capacities Assessment and case planning, conditions for return home are introduced. The transition of the helping relationship established between the Initial Assessment worker and the family to the Family Services worker is emphasized.

#### Tuesday, Day 12 Morning – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts

##### Module 19, Assessing Child Functioning and Conducting Quality Caseworker Visits with Children

This module will cover OCS policy and standards for worker/child contact. Recognizing the relationship between meaningful caseworker/child visits and placement stability, safety, well-being, and timely permanency is stressed to the trainees. The trainer will present the effect of foster care placement on a traumatized child's attachments and identify methods to help the child develop connections and enhance attachments while in care. The module will also address the four steps of a high-quality, purposeful caseworker/child visit and the interpersonal helping skills, verbal and non-verbal techniques, and questions that encourage a child to fully share information about his/her safety, permanency, or well-being. The trainees will practice how to ask questions and make observations to assess child functioning, assess attachment, and to assess the impact of abuse, neglect and trauma on child development.

#### Wednesday, Day 13 Morning – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts

##### Module 20, Assessing Child Functioning and Conduction Quality Caseworker Visits with Children Con't.

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In this module, the trainees will practice planning for a caseworker/child visit based on a case example based on the information shared in the previous module. They will practice interviewing children based on their developmental age and the unique priorities of each child. It will be stressed that a visit should be used to involve a child in permanency planning and case planning process. They will practice using information gathered during an interview with a child to assess the situation, make commitments, and determine the next steps in the case. Proper documentation of the visit will also be practiced.

### **Wednesday, Day 3 Afternoon – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts**

#### Module 21, Adolescent Engagement

Using the knowledge and skills developed in the previous modules on children and youth, the trainees will ask relevant questions to a panel of foster care alumni. They will connect the discussion to their understanding of permanency planning, case planning, the impact of separation on development, and to adolescent functioning. The trainees will develop strategies to assist youth in transition from custody with the state to independent living and adulthood.

### **Thursday, Day 14 – Lead Trainer: Jay C. Bush**

#### Module 22, Adult Functioning, Engagement and Assessment

This day will focus on OCS's work with adults by first understanding normal adult development and how development and functioning are affected by grief and loss, a history of trauma and maltreatment, mental health issues, and substance abuse. After covering adult development, the training will move on to parent functioning and how this is also affected by the factors listed above including the presence of protective capacities. The day will end with trainees reviewing questions 4 and 5 of the 6 Questions and relating the material covered previously in the day with how to gather and assess information in order to complete the assessment of adult functioning and parent functioning. Emphasis is placed on the importance of caseworker visits with parents/families, engagement and the ongoing development of the professional relationship.

### **Friday, Day 15 Morning – Lead Trainer: Jay C. Bush**

#### Module 23, Adult Functioning, Engagement and Assessment Con't.

The morning begins with a discussion on discipline and punishment, how they are separate and how to assess these as a result of the information collected within the 6 Questions. Material covered on the preceding day will be reviewed as part of this presentation and the importance of tying Questions 4, 5, and 6 together in order to form a complete and accurate assessment of parents and how this requires ongoing face-to-face contact with parents and a positive professional relationship between the worker and the client.

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**Friday, Day 15 Afternoon – Lead Trainer: Stephanie Vaughn**

### *Module 24, Permanency and Introduction to Protective Capacities Assessment (PCA)*

The afternoon session consists of a brief lecture on the process of permanency planning and the permanency goals as described in policy. The trainees are reminded of the need for safety, permanence and well-being for the children served by OCS and are given information regarding the limitations to foster care and the need for timely and appropriate permanency for children in OCS custody. Discussion of importance of relative searches is also covered.

The afternoon includes a brief introduction to the next week's work on Protective Capacities Assessment (PCA) and case planning.

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### WEEK FOUR

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#### Monday, Day 16 – Lead Trainer: Stephanie Vaughn

##### Module 25, Protective Capacities Assessment (PCA): Preparation and Introduction Stages

This morning begins with an overview of Protective Capacities Assessment (PCA) and starts the two days of training on how to work with the family within the helping relationship to analyze the existing protective capacities and those capacities that need to be enhanced in order to help the family become protective of the children and mitigate, moderate or eliminate the impending danger safety threats. The first stage of the assessment, Preparation, is covered in this morning's discussion. This stage proceeds from the work of the case transfer and assures that there is sufficient information for the Family Services worker to move forward with the family. Small group and dyad exercises are used to enhance the trainee's practice of Preparation.

The second stage of PCA, Introduction is covered in the afternoon. Trainees will learn to engage the family members in the process of assessment and, through the professional helping relationship, help the family clarify what the PCA and OCS involvement with the family means to them. Trainees will draw on previous training days on interviewing, relationship-building and cultural awareness to work in small groups to practice the new skills of the Introduction Stage.

#### Tuesday, Day 17 – Lead Trainer: Stephanie Vaughn

##### Module 26, Protective Capacities Assessment: Discovery and Change Strategies Stages

The morning session covers the Discovery stage of PCA. Focusing our ongoing work with the family on discovering what needs to change in order to mitigate, moderate or eliminate the impending danger safety threats, how the diminished protective capacities can be enhanced and helps the worker and family seek agreement on the change. Trainees will draw heavily on previous sessions on interviewing, relationships and cultural awareness and begin to integrate these into their practice.

The afternoon session completes the PCA process with the Change Strategies and Case Planning Stage where trainees finalize the work of the PCA and prioritize the changes needed for success in mitigating or eliminating impending danger safety threats and confirm the family's commitment to the change process. The trainees are reminded of the need to re-affirm the family's right to self-determination and the discussion moves to identifying needed services and finalizing the case plan with the family.

#### Wednesday, Day 18 – Lead Trainer: Stephanie Vaughn

##### Module 27, Case Planning, Re-Evaluation of Permanency Goals

The lecture and discussion this morning centers on case planning and how a Family Services worker continues to work with the family over the course of their involvement with OCS. Discussion includes conditions necessary for returning a child home from foster care with an in-home safety plan, on-going

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evaluation of the success of the change strategies and case plan, and concurrent planning as needed.

The afternoon session is a continuation of the morning session and adds information of safety re-assessment and case closure. The trainees complete a final exercise that helps bring the work with families and child to a close, and give the trainees a chance to experience first-hand what closure and transition means.

### Thursday, Day 19 – Lead Trainer: Tom McRoberts

#### Module 28, Child In Need of Aid (CINA) 101

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

### Friday, Day 20 – Lead Trainer: Tim Huffman

#### Module 29, ORCA – Online Resources for the Children of Alaska

ORCA training provides a worker the opportunity to take a case from the creation of the initial assessment all the way to the case closure process. During the one or two-day training workers are provided a 'fake' case in a test environment. After the trainer demonstrates a particular part of the case management system (i.e. initial assessment, case planning, etc.), the worker then has the opportunity to create and complete the piece of work utilizing the ORCA How-Do-I-Guides. Throughout the training the ORCA expert will also implement discussions on policy as it relates to timelines of work in ORCA. Additionally, workers are provided a quick overview of essential reports and other reference material (SharePoint, ORCA in-site). Supervisors, managers or those with special job classes are provided additional one-on-one training to meet their ORCA needs.