

CPS TRANSFORMATION EVALUATION: SUPERVISOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Summary of Findings from the Evaluation of Early SPD Implementation

Supervisor Professional Development Overview

In 2016, the Continuous Learning Team, a working group comprised of DFPS state office and regional staff, conducted a gap assessment of the existing training for CPS supervisors. In general, the group found that new supervisors' training experiences were very inconsistent. Specifically, the Continuous Learning Team identified that new CPS supervisors lacked a realistic understanding of what the job entails and opportunities for hands-on application of their training, existing training was not stage-of-service specific, and new supervisors struggled with learning the administrative tasks under their purview. Further, most new supervisors assumed their new role prior to receiving supervisor training or professional development.

To address these deficiencies in new supervisor training, the Continuous Learning Team undertook a strategic planning process to develop the Supervisor Professional Development (SPD) training model, which offers an enhanced approach for preparing new CPS supervisors for their role. SPD aims to ensure that supervisors are able to practice key job functions throughout their training, using a competency-based framework that focuses on demonstrating proficiency in key areas central to the job functions of a CPS supervisor. The core components of the new model include: 1) protected time for newly promoted supervisors before they assume their responsibilities; 2) mentorship from a tenured supervisor; 3) weekly conferencing with the new supervisor's program director (PD); and 4) completion of standard classroom-based training during the first month after promotion and throughout the first two years on the job.

At the request of the Commissioner, the DFPS Continuous Learning Team accelerated the SPD roll-out timeline and implementation of SPD began in December 2016. During the first six to eight months of implementation, the Continuous Learning Team made adjustments to the model to complete components that were not ready in December 2016 and to address implementation study feedback from the evaluation team. Additionally, during the timeframe of SPD rollout, other important changes were taking place within the agency as well. Caseworkers received a substantial pay raise, additional FTEs were added, and there was increased legislative and media attention on the agency.

Overview of the Evaluation

DFPS contracted Dr. Cynthia Osborne and the Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin to conduct an implementation and outcomes evaluation of the new SPD model. Specifically, CFRP assessed whether SPD training prepares supervisors for their job responsibilities, influences caseworker retention, and whether the model is effective for fostering well-supervised units that perform high quality casework. CFRP developed and administered surveys, conducted focus groups, and assessed casework quality outcomes in DFPS administrative data to address the SPD evaluation research aims.¹

To assess the influence of SPD training on preparedness, retention, and performance, CFRP used a sample of SPD-trained supervisors promoted between December 2016 and May 2017 (approximately the first six months of SPD implementation) and a sample of supervisors who were promoted just before implementation of SPD began, between May 2016 and December 2016. SPD-trained supervisors included in CFRP's analytic sample were all hired during the initial rollout period of SPD, meaning that they received the model in its early form, before all of the core components were finalized and before the agency received and implemented early feedback about the model.

One of the agency's goals in developing the SPD model was to improve caseworker outcomes through improving the quality of supervision provided to caseworkers. To learn how the new supervisor training influenced caseworker outcomes, CFRP tracked retention and performance of caseworkers in SPD supervisors' and comparison supervisors' units for six months, from July to December 2017. Because the caseworker pay raise coincided with the introduction of the SPD training model, CFRP used the July to December timeframe for retention and performance analyses rather than each caseworker's individual tenure within a new supervisor's unit to control for any retention and performance impacts of the pay raise.

Summary of Findings

Overall, under SPD, supervisors are attending training sooner than under the old model, and CPS staff consistently report that SPD training better prepares new supervisors for their job responsibilities. During the early phase of SPD implementation that CFRP evaluated, CFRP did not find an improvement in retention or casework quality associated with SPD; retention and casework quality were similar among units with SPD-trained supervisors and units with new supervisors who did not receive SPD training. However, it is too early to fully assess outcomes associated with the SPD model, specifically because the timeline of SPD implementation only allowed the evaluators to include supervisors promoted during the first six months of SPD implementation in the evaluation and only allowed a six month timeframe of analysis. For this reason, SPD evaluation results should be considered preliminary. DFPS should continue to monitor retention and performance of SPD and non-SPD units to better understand longer term outcomes of the Supervisor Professional Development training model.²

Implementation Study Findings

Supervisors and program directors believe that SPD training better prepares new supervisors for their new responsibilities.

Across focus groups and surveys of new supervisors, supervisor advisors, and program directors, staff reported that SPD training is an important step in the right direction for preparing new supervisors for their role. New supervisors consistently reported that key elements of the model, including the protected time to attend training before taking over a unit, mentorship from an advisor, conferencing with the program director, the addition of the classroom training “Developing Your Workers’ Critical Thinking Skills,” and field experience contributed importantly to preparing supervisors for their new responsibilities.

New supervisors received more timely training, but key elements of the model were implemented inconsistently during the early phases of implementation.

Under SPD, all new supervisors complete the key portions of supervisor training, Beginning Manager’s Training (BMT) and Supervisor Basic Skills Development (BSD), within the first month after they are promoted. Prior to the introduction of the SPD training model, one-third of new supervisors did not complete BMT until at least 45 days after promotion and almost 85 percent of new supervisors took more than one month to complete BSD.³ Under SPD, new supervisors also attend Developing Your Workers’ Critical Thinking Skills, a new training designed to teach supervisors how to build their units’ analysis, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, which supervisors consistently described as one of the most important parts of training.

The SPD model specifies that new supervisors should complete one month of field and classroom training before taking over supervisory duties for their unit. During the early implementation period, approximately half of new supervisors reported taking over management responsibilities for their new unit, such as staffing cases or handling personnel issues, prior to completing field and classroom training. New supervisors who took over supervisor responsibilities early reported that it was difficult to focus during training and stressful to balance the training responsibilities with the demands of taking over their unit.

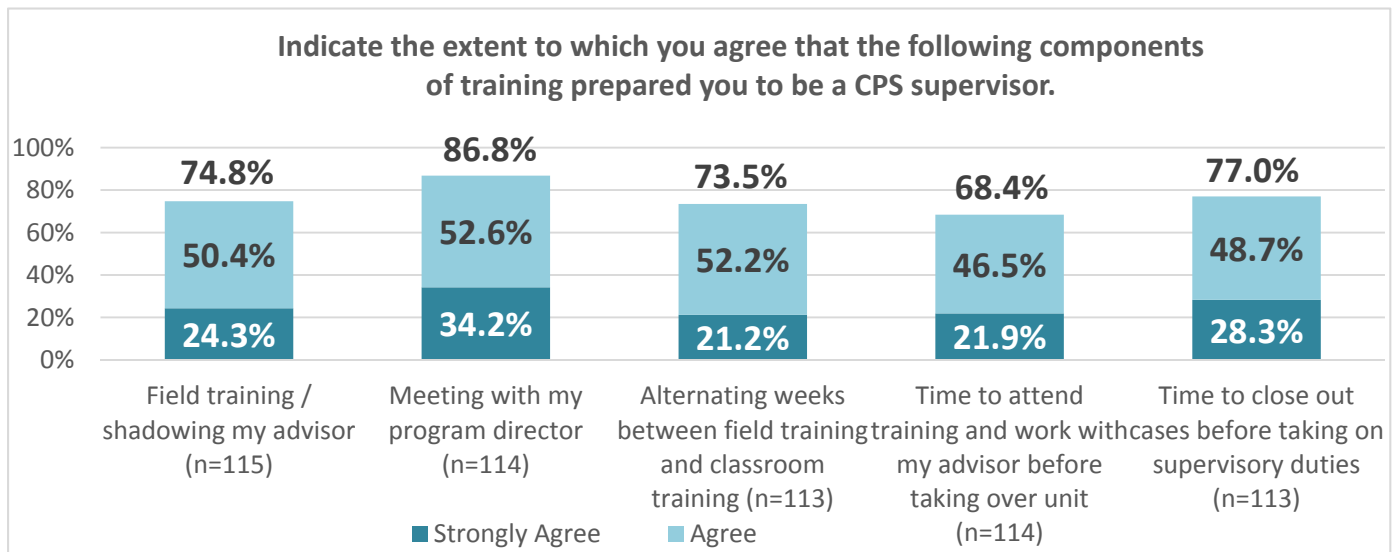
Under SPD, new supervisors are required to meet weekly with their program directors and supervisor advisors during training. On surveys and during focus groups, new supervisors reported that when these weekly conferences occurred, they were often a very helpful tool for learning and growth. However, fewer than 40 percent of new supervisors in the SPD evaluation sample reported consistently meeting with their advisor weekly during the training period. Further, many advisors and program directors were uncertain about their specific roles and responsibilities under the model and advisors were unsure what material they were expected to teach new supervisors and what content would be taught in class. Fewer than half of new supervisors strongly agreed that their advisor and program director fully understood the training and demonstrated practices and attitudes consistent with the practice model, indicating that

Findings Summary: Supervisor Professional Development

July 2018

during this early timeframe program directors and advisors needed more training and guidance about the SPD model.

Figure 1: New Supervisor Assessments of SPD Training Components



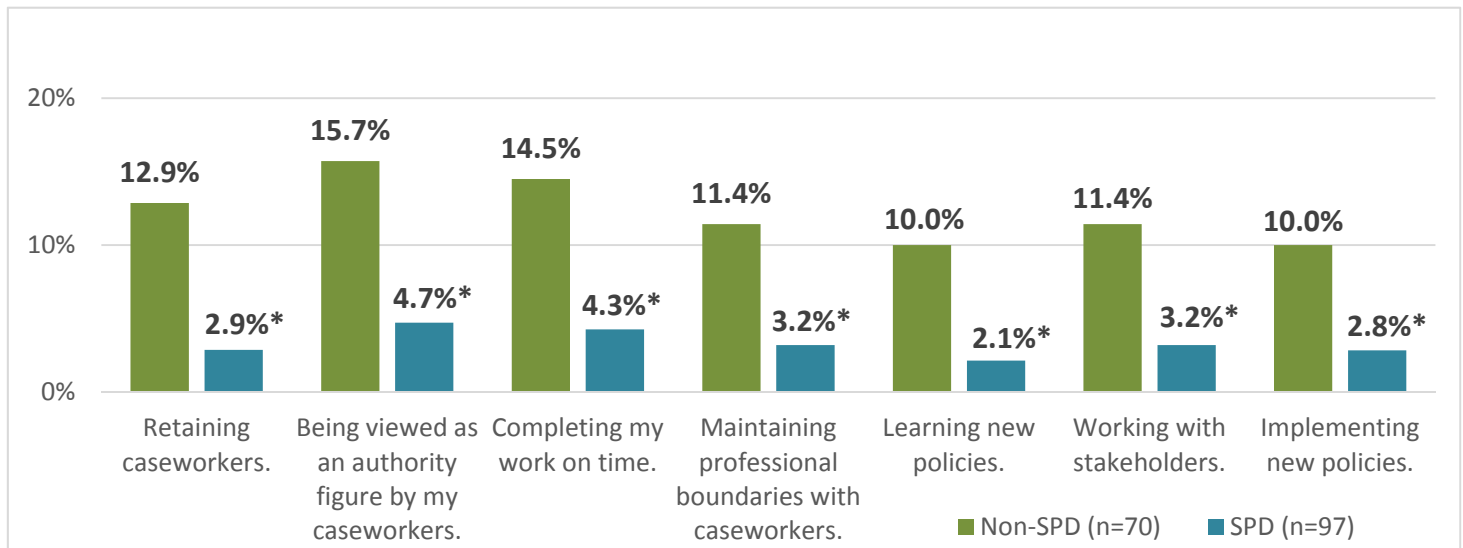
Source: Supervisor Experience Survey- Supervisors (August 2017).

In summary, new supervisors, supervisor advisors, and program directors generally agreed that SPD is an important step for supporting high quality supervision within the agency, but not all aspects of the model were fully in place and ready during training for the first cohorts of new supervisors. CFRP provided implementation feedback to the agency on an ongoing basis to enable the agency to strengthen the model.

SPD-trained supervisors reported a somewhat higher level of preparedness when they began supervising and reported experiencing fewer common challenges.

Eighty-one percent of SPD-trained supervisors reported that they felt “Very Prepared” or “Somewhat Prepared” when they took over their unit, compared to 69 percent of non-SPD-trained supervisors, though this difference is not statistically significant. Key areas that SPD-trained new supervisors reported a higher level of preparedness and confidence in than non-SPD supervisors included understanding and implementing CPS policy, supporting caseworker development, retaining caseworkers, evaluating and recognizing high quality performance, and communicating changes in practice to staff. Further, the proportion of new supervisors who indicated that they had experienced challenges related to CPS policy and working with caseworkers was significantly lower among SPD-trained supervisors than among supervisors not trained under SPD, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proportion of New Supervisors who Experienced Common Supervisor Challenges



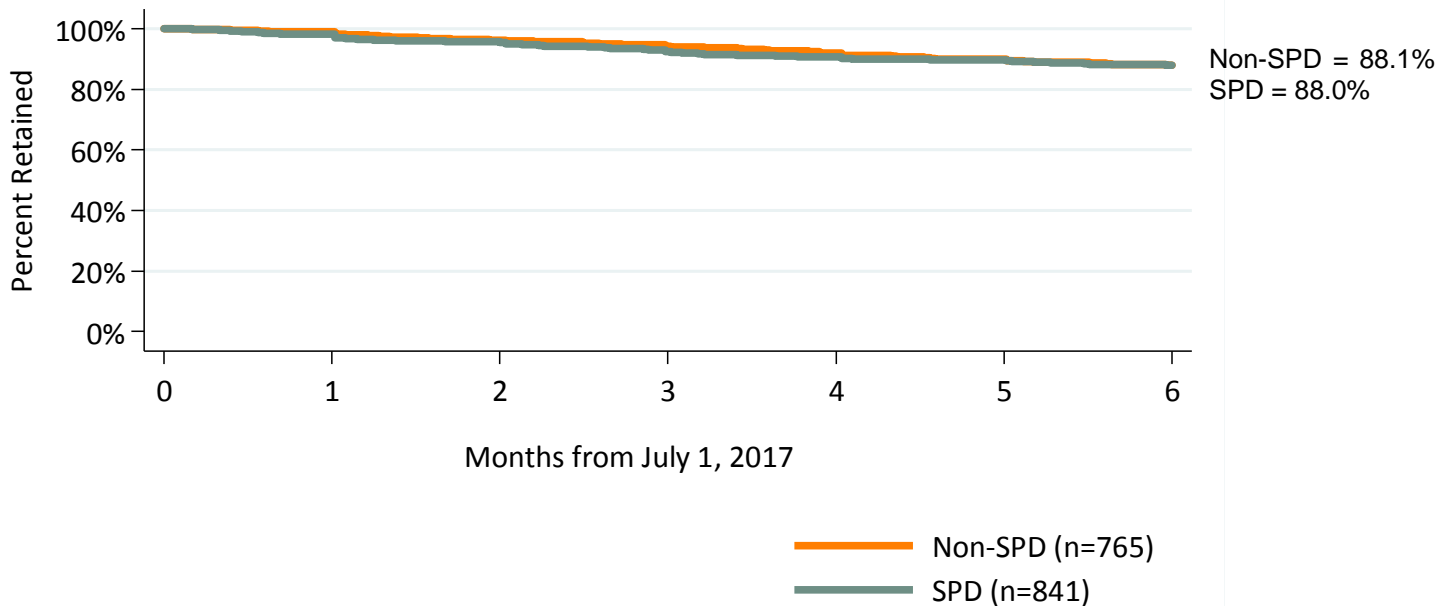
Source: Supervisor Experience Survey – Supervisor (August 2017). Note: *Indicates significance at the 0.05 level. Figure displays the proportion of supervisors who strongly agree that they have experienced each challenge

Outcomes Study Findings: Retention

From July to December 2017, caseworkers in units led by SPD-trained supervisors were equally likely to remain with the agency compared to caseworkers in units with a new supervisor who did not receive SPD training.

To address the question of whether SPD-training promotes agency workforce stability, CFRP compared the retention of caseworkers in units with supervisors trained under SPD and caseworkers in units with supervisors not trained under SPD, from July 2017 through December 2017.⁴ As shown in the survival curve in Figure 3, retention rates are similar between SPD and non-SPD led units for the six months between July 2017 and December 2017, and caseworker retention within both the SPD-trained group and non-SPD-trained group was very high.⁵ Six months is a relatively short time period to assess retention, however, especially for caseworkers who are not necessarily new to the agency.

Figure 3: Six-Month Survival Analysis of Caseworkers in SPD and Non-SPD Units (n = 1,606)



Source: CAPPs data and SPD-tracking log data provided by DFPS current through December 31, 2017.

Outcomes Study Findings: Casework Quality

To compare the performance of caseworkers in units led by SPD-trained supervisors and comparison supervisors, CFRP worked with the agency to select casework quality measures for each stage of service that meaningfully assess casework quality. For each of the following measures, CFRP calculated the average unit success rate among caseworkers in units led by SPD-trained supervisors and supervisors trained before SPD began, from July 2017 through December 2017:

1. **Timely Attempted Initial Contact (Investigations):** Proportion of investigations for which the caseworker attempted initial contact with a parent or child on the case within 24 hours for Priority 1 investigations or 72 hours for Priority 2 investigations⁶
2. **Successful Timely Initial Contact (Investigations):** Proportion of investigations for which the caseworker successfully made a face-to-face initial contact with a parent or child on the case within 24 hours for P1 investigations or 72 hours for P2 investigations
3. **Timely Investigations Closure (Investigations):** Proportion of investigations closed within 45 days of the investigations stage opening⁷
4. **Monthly Face-to-Face Contact (Conservatorship):** Proportion of children with a required face-to-face visit for which the caseworker completed a face-to-face visit with the child.⁸

Findings Summary: Supervisor Professional Development

July 2018

5. Timely Initial Contact (Family-Based Safety Services): Proportion of cases for which the caseworker successfully made a face-to-face contact with at least one parent or child on the stage within 10 days of the FBSS stage opening⁹
6. Monthly Face-to-Face Contact (Family-Based Safety Services): Proportion of cases with a required face-to-face visit for which the caseworker completed a face-to-face visit with at least one parent or child on the stage¹⁰

Caseworkers in units led by SPD-trained supervisors performed similarly to caseworkers with a supervisor not trained under SPD.

Across each of the casework quality measures, caseworkers in SPD-led units performed similarly to caseworkers in units led by a supervisor who did not receive SPD training. Investigators in SPD-units documented attempts to see a principal face-to-face on a new investigation in a timely manner, documented successful initial face-to-face contacts, and closed investigations within 45 days at the same rate as caseworkers in non-SPD-units. Similarly, FBSS caseworkers in SPD-units completed timely initial contacts at the same rate as FBSS caseworkers in non-SPD-units.¹¹ Rates of monthly face-to-face contact completion appear to be similar between SPD-trained units and non-CPS-trained units in conservatorship and FBSS, though a longer timeframe of analysis is needed to test for statistical significance on these measures. Findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Average Success Rate of Casework Quality Measures by Training Model

	SPD Units	Non-SPD Units	Significant Difference?
Attempted Initial Contact (n=127)	97.4%	98.3%	No
Successful Initial Contact (n=127)	93.1%	94.7%	No
Timely Investigation Closure (n=127)	58.3%	56.7%	No
Completion of CVS Face-to-Face (n=68)	95.8%	94.2%	N/A*
FBSS Timely Initial Contact (n=55)	87.9%	91.3%	No
Completion of FBSS Face-to-Face (n=55)	98.3%	98.0%	N/A*

Source: CAPPs data and SPD-Tracking Log data provided by DFPS current through December 31, 2017. *A longer timeframe of analysis is needed prior to testing for statistical significance on measures related to monthly face-to-face contact.

Conclusions

In CFRP's analysis of caseworker retention and caseworker performance from July to December 2017, caseworkers in units with a SPD-trained supervisor remained with the agency and performed similarly to caseworkers in units led by supervisors who did not receive SPD training. However, for several key reasons, these results should be considered preliminary and the agency should continue to monitor the influence of SPD training on workforce stability and quality. First, supervisors included in the SPD-training sample were hired at the very beginning of SPD implementation, when the model was still being finalized, program directors and advisors were still learning about their role, and the agency was learning how to implement the model

consistently across regions and supervisor cohorts. SPD-trained supervisors in CFRP's sample did not all receive the full and complete SPD model, and therefore findings might be different for later training cohorts. Additionally, because the evaluation took place less than a year after the model rolled out and because the caseworker pay raise limited the time period for which we could fairly compare SPD-supervisor units with other units, the timeframe for analysis (six months) may be too short to accurately assess variation in retention and performance across groups. CFRP recommends continued analysis of SPD-training to learn how agency workforce stability and quality are influenced over time by the introduction of the SPD training model.

Authors

Cynthia Osborne, Ph.D.

Director, Child and Family Research Partnership
Associate Professor
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs
The University of Texas at Austin

Jennifer Huffman, MPAff

Senior Research Associate
Child and Family Research Partnership

Anna Lipton Galbraith, MPAff

Program Services Director
Child and Family Research Partnership

Preferred Citation

Osborne, C., Huffman, J., Lipton Galbraith, A. (July 2018). *CPS Transformation Evaluation Final Report: Summary of Findings from the Evaluation of the CPD Training Model*. Child and Family Research Partnership, LBJ School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin.

© July 2018, Child and Family Research Partnership, All Rights Reserved.

The Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) is an independent, nonpartisan research group at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin, specializing in issues related to young children, teens, and their parents. We engage in rigorous research and evaluation work aimed at strengthening families and enhancing public policy.

¹ See CFRP's Supervisor Professional Development Methodological Summary for complete details.

² For full results, please see CFRP's May 2017 memo to the agency regarding early SPD implementation, November 2017 interim results presentation, and June 2018 final presentation to the agency.

³ As reported on the Supervisor Experience Survey.

⁴ For the retention analysis, CFRP identified all caseworkers who worked in units led by a supervisor in the SPD-supervisor or comparison sample on July 1, 2017 and were still working for the same supervisor on December 31, 2017 (unless the caseworker terminated).

⁵ CFRP controlled for caseworker tenure, supervisor tenure, region, stage of service, and caseworker gender in the final retention model.

⁶ CPS Handbook 2243.1

⁷ CPS Handbook 2292

⁸ CPS Handbook 6411.2

⁹ CPS Handbook 2530

¹⁰ CPS Handbook 2530

¹¹ CFRP controlled for supervisor region, mean caseworker caseload, proportion of terminated caseworkers, mean caseworker age, and mean caseworker tenure as of July 1, 2017 when comparing casework quality by training group.