



# EVALUATION BRIEF



## Evaluating CDS Learning Objectives and Competencies across Disability and Child Welfare Fields: Creating a Crosswalk

- Online training continues to grow in use and popularity.
- A 2010 article in the electronic magazine *The Journal* surveyed a group of professionals and noted that three out of four said that online learning fit their schedule, saved time, and allowed them to review educational materials as needed. A recent pilot study of new College of Direct Support (CDS) users—child welfare professionals and foster parents—found similar and even more unanimous results: everyone in the study group said that they would recommend the training to their co-workers.

The CDS child welfare pilot study was a collaboration between MC Strategies | Elsevier and University of Minnesota partners at the Research and Training Center on Community Living/Institute on Community Integration and the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW). One aspect of the pilot study was to evaluate key CDS content and its ability to meet training needs for child welfare professionals (defined broadly to include public and private child welfare workers, supervisors, managers, foster/kin/adoptive parents, and court personnel) working with individuals with disabilities.

CASCW embarked on a two-step process to meet this goal. The first step was to identify accepted child welfare competencies used in the field. The second step was to evaluate which, if any CDS training content, as defined by its training objectives, aligned with the child welfare competencies. The alignment process is called a ‘crosswalk’.



### Purpose

The College of Direct Support is committed to ongoing evaluation of the quality of its curriculum, its ease of use to learners, the usefulness of its human resource functions and its contributions to the lives of persons with disabilities.

A wide range of quantitative and qualitative evaluation activities are being undertaken to provide this information.

The Evaluation Brief provides a sampling of findings from CDS data collection activities occurring at the national, state, agency and individual levels. If you have questions about, suggestions for, or requests of the College of Direct Support in the area of evaluation, please let us know at: [lakin001@umn.edu](mailto:lakin001@umn.edu)



Prior to describing the crosswalk processes, it is important to have a brief understanding of why the child welfare workforce needs additional and improved training related to working with children and families with disabilities. According to the

A first step in determining if CDS could be matched to the training needs of child welfare professionals was to identify a set of child welfare competencies that highlighted the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for working with individuals with disabilities.

### People are saying that...

**“Implicit in our efforts to increase recognition and value the critical work done by direct support professionals is the need for life-long learning and development. The College of Direct Support is an excellent example of how to serve that need in a creative, flexible and cost-effective manner.”** --Renee Pietrangelo, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)

Child Welfare League of America, more than 80% of children in foster care have behavioral, emotional or developmental disabilities. Further, the number of families headed by a parent with disabilities has been shown to be on the rise, and their needs remain unaddressed within the child welfare system. Social workers’ desire for specific skills in working with children, youth and adults who have a variety of disabilities and foster, kin and adoptive parents’ desire for detailed information about how to provide care and support for a child or youth with disabilities has remained largely unmet within child welfare. A significant gap in training exists for these professionals.

Staff from the CASCW identified competencies developed by the Institute for Human Services (IHS) in Ohio as the most complete guides of what is expected from a competent child welfare professional to work effectively with children and adults with disabilities. Child welfare training pioneers Judy Rycus and Ronald Hughes created the “Competency-Based Inservice Training System” for IHS and identified core-level, specialized, and related skills that child welfare caseworkers need to achieve “best practice.” The competency statements containing measures for disability are found within the “related skills” domain and are titled Service Outcomes, Skill Sets, and Competencies for Working with Children with Mental, Emotional or Developmental Disabilities, and Competencies for Working with Adults with Mental, Emotional or Developmental Disabilities in Child Welfare.

The IHS disability related competencies are divided into seven main groups: knowledge of diagnoses/disabilities; observation and assessment; treatment, services and medication; case planning; evaluation of risk, safety and maltreatment; and out-of-home placement.

The College of Direct Support is an internet-delivered multimedia, competency-based training curriculum for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors supporting individuals with disabilities. The College of Direct Support is available for review at <http://collegeofdirectsupport.com>. For more information about the College of Direct Support write Bill Tapp ([bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com](mailto:bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com)) or Donna Kosak ([donna@collegeofdirectsupport.com](mailto:donna@collegeofdirectsupport.com)) or call the College of Direct Support (toll-free) at 877-353-2767. The College of Direct Support is a program of MC Strategies/Elsevier and the University of Minnesota



Next, CASCW staff evaluated CDS learner objectives against HIS child welfare competencies and created a crosswalk between the two. This involved a side-by-side comparison of the IHS competencies with CDS courses and lessons.

- The child welfare competency list was
- used as the “anchor” content and placed
- into the left column of a two-column table.

A separate document containing all CDS lesson objectives was prepared and in a systematic fashion the CDS objectives were searched to exact the location where content would be delivered within CDS that would aid the child welfare professional in gaining the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to achieve competency, as described in the IHS competencies. Table 1 provides an example of the completed crosswalk related to knowledge of adults with developmental disabilities who are involved in the child welfare system. As shown in the table, CDS provides a robust opportunity for learning related to this competency statement.

CDS courses and lessons evaluated that best met the IHS competencies in the areas of observation and assessment were treatment, services, medication; and case planning. Of particular note are the courses entitled, Functional Assessment; Introduction to Medication Support; Working with Families and Other Support Networks; and Person-Centered Planning. In clear language the courses and lessons define key terms and use visual prompts and tools to help the user learn about effective interviewing and assessment, for example, and how to dispense medications. Real-life



### Table 1: Example of Cross Walking Competencies and CDS Content

#### Child Welfare Competencies — Adults

**Competency 9:** Understands how negative stereotypic attitudes and misconceptions regarding developmental disabilities and mental illness or emotional disorders can interfere with the provision of service to clients with these conditions.

#### College of Direct Support Courses

**Course 1:** Introduction to Developmental Disabilities: Lesson 1, A Brief History of Developmental Disabilities;

**Course 8:** Positive Behavior Supports: Lesson 3, Understanding Positive Approaches

**Course 17:** Functional Assessment: Lesson 2, Understanding Behavior and Participating in the Functional Assessment Process; Lesson 3, Strategies for Gathering and Organizing Functional Assessment Information



examples and short quizzes bring to life and reinforce theories of behavior modification and task-centered practices that are applicable to child welfare work, especially with adults. To fully meet IHS child welfare competencies pertaining to children, the CDS curriculum would need to create specific courses on working with children with developmental disabilities. Childhood

emotional and behavioral disorders would need to be delineated, plus the assessment, family treatment planning, and out-of-home care of this population. Additionally, a section on parenting/heading a household while also living with a developmental disability would allow the CDS curriculum to more completely meet the IHS competencies that focus on family life.

## ○ Recommendations

The CDS-Child Welfare Crosswalk enables child welfare agencies and individual users to identify their unique training needs related to working with adults and children with disabilities and match that with the content in CDS. Child welfare professionals can target their learning hours in a way that maximizes efficiency and allows them to hone in on the most applicable and relevant content to their identified learning needs. To access the full CDS-Child Welfare Crosswalk click <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/CASCW/attributes/PDF/CDSCrosswalk.pdf>.

Findings of this crosswalk evaluation activity apply to both child welfare audiences as well as other disciplines who work with people with disabilities in a variety of capacities. Child welfare organizations might consider using this crosswalk as a framework for training at the individual worker, substitute caregiver, and organizational levels. This crosswalk could also be utilized as a guide throughout the child welfare industry to mark the critical importance of including disability training throughout child welfare training, while also providing a clear road map of how to integrate existing content into such training. While the crosswalk provides clear linkages to the CDS content most relevant to child welfare work, it also provides insight into which areas need further development as outlined above.

For other social service areas also working with people with disabilities, findings imply that they may be wise to also conduct such evaluative (crosswalk) activities as a first step to integrating the CDS curriculum into their staff training regimen while also identifying areas which will need additional curriculum development.

For more information about the evaluation of the College of Direct Support being conducted by the University of Minnesota, contact Derek Nord at [nord0364@umn.edu](mailto:nord0364@umn.edu).

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