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Moving from procedure to practice: a statewide child protection simulation training model

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ABSTRACT

In FY 2015 the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services partnered with the University of Illinois Springfield to develop the Child Protection Training Academy in order to redesign the six-week classroom training for new investigators and create an experiential component. This paper chronicles the goals of the partnership and the planning and implementation of the Academy.

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The young woman exits her car clutching a folder and some handouts. She approaches the front door of a house that looks like it has seen better days. Knocking on the door, she visibly takes a deep breath and waits for someone to answer. She hears a male voice yell "Who is it?" and she steels herself for conflict before the door is even opened. In as strong a voice as she can muster, the young woman announces that she is a child protective investigator for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Everything about this encounter seems real in the moment for this young woman. However, this is a training simulation taking place at the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS) . The family members she meets on the other side of the door are actors from the nearby medical school's Standardized Patient Program and the house is a simulation laboratory adjacent to campus. This young woman and her fellow trainees from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) each navigate their way to the house for the initial interview meant to simulate client engagement. Fellow trainees are watching remotely via monitors in a nearby classroom as each investigator participates in a simulation meant to replicate what new child protection investigators will experience in the field.

Through a partnership with DCFS, the Department of Public Administration and Center for State Policy and Leadership at (UIS) developed the Child Protection Training Academy to provide experiential learning as a complement to traditional classroom training for child protective

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investigators. As of February 2016, all new DCFS investigators receive simulation training at a mock house and a mock courtroom. Originally, all simulation training took place at the UIS campus; an allied simulation laboratory opened in Chicago in April 2019 and new investigators in Cook County complete their training at the Academy's Chicago lab. As of this writing, over 750 new investigators have completed simulation training. This article describes the development and implementation of simulation training at the Child Protection Training Academy.

Front-line child protection investigators deal with family environments that are constantly shifting, requiring finely tuned decision-making skills and considerable ability to engage families (see, e.g., DePanfilis, 2018). Investigators must connect with families who have reason to be suspicious and they must listen carefully and empathically. At the same time, they need to conduct a thorough investigation and think critically to assess the truth and ensure children's safety. They must keep track of an array of different procedures and the necessity to document each one of them. They must engage and work with diverse professionals with varying goals, perspectives and values, and prepare if necessary to testify in family and/or criminal court and submit to cross-examination. They sometimes make the wrenching decision to remove children from their home to protect their safety. They must keep their emotional bearings while confronting human misery and dysfunction. It is not surprising then that child welfare research suggests that child protective services worker can experience considerable stress. One study found that almost half of workers in their sample had a high risk of compassion fatigue (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006), and others have reported that a number of child welfare workers report clinical levels of emotional distress related to secondary traumatic stress (Bride, Jones & McMaster, 2007; Cornille & Meyers, 1999).

Given the demands of working with families in child protection, transferring knowledge gained in training into practice to bolster investigators' skills and confidence is essential (Liu & Smith, 2011). Traditional Child Protection Foundation Training in Illinois has historically combined instruction in statutory practice and agency policies with case examples, often drawn from the trainer's own experiences in the field. These "war stories" can be illustrative but may be counter-productive if procedures have changed over the years and the "war story" no longer represents best practice. Classroom Powerpoints can highlight procedures and protocols, explaining the "why and what", but fall considerably short of the critically important "how" of engaging families. For new investigators in DCFS, the "how" is what builds confidence and competence, developing the expertise needed to step across the threshold and initiate investigations of child maltreatment.

Research indicates that as little as 10 to15% of training content is actually transferred to practice in the workplace (Kontoghiorghes, 2004). Collins, Amodeo, and Clay (2007) evaluated numerous federally funded training projects

to determine if training had the necessary impact on new workers. These authors recognized that classroom instruction models can be effective for transfer of certain learning tasks but stated "they may be highly limited when applied to the complex nature of intervening with families with great challenges" (p. 1501). These gaps in knowledge and skills can be filled in by on-the-job training in most professions, with new employees shadowing other employees, or working as part of a team until more confident to work independently. In many jurisdictions, new child protection investigators may have limited opportunities to practice skills compared to junior employees in other professions. Unlike doctors, lawyers, and many professionals, child protection investigators in Illinois have few opportunities to be a junior partner on a large team or to observe more experienced colleagues in action. Although new investigators can partner with more experienced investigators for a period of time, caseloads in Illinois have been too high to allow long periods of apprenticeship and supervisors can rarely accompany their caseworkers. Compared with the business sector, the failure to transfer training skills in the child protection services poses greater risk; the former may result in a loss of revenue and the latter to the very real risk of harm or death to children and the individual child protection worker (Curry, McCurragher, & Dellman-Jenkins, 2005). These realities increase the need for training to provide opportunities for practice that take new investigators out of the classroom and into situations that give them opportunities to apply new skills.

Improving educational outcomes through experiential learning and simulation

Though education researchers have advocated for experiential learning (Kolb, 2015; Kreber, 2001) and active learning for some time (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1998), there is little evidence that interactive training beyond role plays is used in training of child welfare professionals (Bogo, Shlonsky, Lee & Serbiski, 2014). Experiential learning emphasizes the importance of concrete experience and of reflection on those experiences as a way to improve transfer of learning and retention (Kolb, 2015). Simulation, a form of experiential learning, incorporates the process illustrated by Kolb's model, emphasizing realistic environments and meaningful reflection. McGaghie (1999, p. 9) defined simulation as "a person, device, or set of conditions which attempts to present evaluation problems authentically" allowing the student or trainee to respond to the situation as he or she would in the field. Simulations have been a component of training curricula in various fields for decades. Use of simulations in the military has been documented as far back as the 18th century, and, simulators have been used in aeronautics training since the late 1920's (McGaghie, 1999). Simulations have commonly been used to train nurses and doctors, sometimes on skills related to child abuse. Most medical studies of simulation report

positive trainee satisfaction (Anderst, Nielsen-Parker, Moffatt, Frazier, & Kennedy, 2016; Mitchell, et al., 2015; McWilliams & Botwinski, 2010; Victor-Chmil & Foote, 2016).

Simulation training in child welfare is at an early stage of development; thus, Bogo and colleagues' literature review (Bogo et al., 2014) on this topic found only three studies, all of which focused on simulation training on child abuse interviewing skills. The length of the trainings across the three studies ranged from two hours to one day. Rawlings and Blackmer's (2019) study postdates the Bogo et al review, and it also involves relatively brief simulation training focused on interviewing clients. Simulation training creates a process similar to the use of realistic job previews (RJP), a method intended for prospective workers to rule in or rule out careers in child protection (Faller et al., 2009; GAO, 2003). But RJPs provide a glimpse of what to expect in child protection work while simulation allows the worker to actually experience realistic encounters. While simulation training is becoming more common in workforce development strategies, we have found no other report in the literature of a program like the Child Protection Training Academy, which provides a week of simulation training on a wide range of investigative skills in child protection for all new investigators in a state.

Developing the Child Protection Training Academy

Development and implementation of the CPTA originated in the first author's experience of simulation training at the National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) in Minnesota in 2010 (Vieth, 2013). The Center established several experiential learning labs, including a mock house to practice recognizing and reporting child maltreatment and a mock courtroom where trainees can practice testifying in child maltreatment cases. While attending a training at NCPTC, the first author saw the potential of simulation training for her students in the Child Advocacy Studies academic certificate program. As a former investigator for DCFS, she also saw the potential for training child protection investigators and other frontline child welfare professionals in Illinois.

The availability of a small, unused frame home on the campus helped to expedite the plan, and the university administration provided considerable in-kind support. The first author discussed the new simulation model with a colleague from DCFS and began exploring how to provide simulation training for new investigators. Following several organizational meetings with key DCFS administrators, UIS contracted with DCFS for a year of research and development to advance a simulation training program through the creation of the Child Protection Training Academy.

Simulation training for new DCFS investigators was designed to be provided in conjunction with the Department's Foundation Training, its long-standing training program for new investigators. In 2014, the first author met with the

fourth author, then working at DCFS, to explore how to combine the two forms of training. The fourth author was a former child protection investigator and a long-time classroom trainer at DCFS. She did not design Foundation Training, but was the primary trainer using it. DCFS recognized a need for updating Foundation Training and provided considerable latitude under the contract with UIS to design simulation training and to re-design Foundation Training. An additional reason to re-design Foundation Training was DCFS' publication in October 2015 of a substantially revised set of procedures on investigation, the so-called Procedures 300 that guide all child protection practices in Illinois. Foundation Training not only needed to be improved but needed to be consistent with Procedures 300.

During the research and development year of the first contract, the first author recruited Harkmore Lee, then director of a similar simulation training project at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (see Academy for Professional Excellence, 2019a, 2019b), to facilitate a two-day demonstration simulation training for DCFS administrators in Illinois, with financial support from the Illinois Children's Justice Task Force. Over 60 DCFS administrators attended, as did the UIS Chancellor. The demonstration cemented DCFS' and the university's commitment to simulation training.

A key feature of experiential learning is the ability to construct environments that are realistic. In preparation for the first training, UIS refurbished the unused house on campus with furniture and props gathered from campus offices, garage sales, and even items left behind by students. The house is a two-bedroom, single story home, equipped with digital cameras and audio throughout. It includes an entryway, dining area, living room and child's bedroom. An environment was created to simulate the home of an economically disadvantaged and behaviorally challenged family struggling to care for its children. The house as outfitted is very messy: liquor and pill bottles are scattered about, and there are even simulated dog feces and "dirty" diapers on the floor. The second bedroom is equipped with a computer connected to the camera software, enabling the trainers to observe the simulation. To make the simulation realistic and workable, only one or two trainees participate at a time, while the others watch and learn on a large screen located in a campus classroom nearby. For the courtroom simulation, the theater department at UIS created a courtroom set that is installed in a large TV studio on campus. With the addition of a few props located on campus (state flag, clock and desks for court personnel), the mock courtroom became a reasonable facsimile of local courtrooms.

Other factors helped to facilitate the development of the new Child Protection Training Academy. The Center for State Policy and Leadership at UIS provided fiscal oversight for the Academy contract developed between UIS and DCFS, and the UIS Chancellor and Department of Public

Administration supported several key expenditures, including the technology that enables the remote viewing of the simulations in the adjacent classroom. The first author also advocated with a State Senator and State Representative to write Public Act 99–0348, passed in 2015, which requires DCFS to maintain a child protection academy and provide a mock residence and courtroom. By establishing it in law, Public Act 99–0348 helps make simulation training resistant to changes in administration. As of this writing, the enabling legislation has been revised to further institutionalize simulation training in Illinois. Finally, DCFS approved hiring for a number of new DCFS investigative positions, facilitating the delivery of simulation training to a host of new investigators.

The project team also developed the human capital for simulation training. They worked with DCFS' Office for Learning and Professional Development to prepare additional classroom trainers from the university and from DCFS to work from the curriculum. They also recruited "actors" from the long-established standardized patient program at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. Standardized patients are members of the community who learn to play the role of patients in order to train medical and other service professionals. Though typically not individuals with formal theater training, standardized patients learn to be in character and simulate how patients actually interact with professionals. They are also trained to provide feedback after the simulation, an incredibly important learning function. The CPTA team also recruited a retired judge and other current or former professionals to donate their time to play the prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, judge, and Guardian Ad Litem, professionals with whom child protection workers interact in the courtroom simulation.

The team created a "life of the case" approach, to integrate all child protection training and connect the classroom and the simulation experience. Early in the re-designed classroom training, the classroom trainer introduces students to an actual DCFS case that ended tragically with the death of a child. The "Caleb case" (a pseudonym) had been studied carefully in conjunction with an investigation by the Illinois Office of the Inspector General. Trainees learn about the family members, the facts of the case, and DCFS' intervention, with identifying information changed to protect the family's privacy. The case then becomes the touchstone for all the trainees' learning, both in the classroom and the simulation laboratories. Like the family on which they were based, Caleb's family is bi-racial and economically disadvantaged, and the allegations concern child neglect and physical abuse. The thread running from the first day through the end of training is each trainee's simulated responsibility to do an investigation in the case. Throughout, trainees must ask these questions: What did we know about this family? What have we just learned? What more do we need to learn? How do we think critically about everything we have learned to make good decisions? Students are taught to use this

conceptual thread throughout every didactic and simulation experience. New lessons are continually related back to this family.

The classroom and simulation training in Illinois are also designed to encourage trainees to examine their own feelings and values related to child protection work. The CPTA team emphasizes making simulation training safe for trainees to explore and share their experience; to that end, they do not "score" the trainees or provide them any data post-training on trainees' progress, but instead use metrics that have been created to capture key benchmarks of the trainees' experience in the simulation. Child protection work is not for everyone, and some trainees may discover that investigating child abuse and neglect is unlike what they imagined working for DCFS to be. They may recognize that conducting investigations may be too emotionally challenging for them. This can be a good outcome if it prevents individuals from undertaking work for which they are not suited. Simulation training may lead to more self-examination than traditional training. This could lead appropriately to more self-selections out of working for DCFS, which could reduce worker turnover later. Based on literature on transfer of learning in other professions, the program developers had originally recommended one day a week of simulation in the standard training regimen, with each simulation related to that week's classroom content. The cost of trainees traveling weekly to Springfield was prohibitive, however, and DCFS recommended structuring the training as five weeks of classroom and in-service training in the trainees' region, followed by five days of simulation training on the UIS campus. The current simulation training format is currently under review and may shift over the next fiscal year if all partners agree to increasing the opportunities for simulation.

Implementation

The first combined classroom and simulation training was conducted in February 2016. Not long after the launch of the Child Protection Training Academy, the fourth author moved from her administrative role at DCFS to a full-time position at UIS as the Director of the Academy. Working with the Academy's Principal Investigator (the first author) and the DCFS child protection classroom trainers, the fourth author developed a simulation manual that provides a road map for the week-long simulation training on campus. The first edition of the manual was based on the "Caleb" case, which was used for the first two years of training to ensure that all new investigators experienced the same case. The manual also communicated the importance of maintaining small classes for simulation week to provide sufficient time for each investigator's simulation and debriefing. After attempting to train a few larger classes of investigators the CPTA team determined that it was critical to limit the size of the classes to 10 to 12 new investigators at one time. Any larger

than that and the time in the simulation lab and debriefing is compromised, and participants feel rushed to complete the critical observations and exchanges with the "family members" responsible for the alleged maltreatment. In 2018, the CPTA staff grew to include a Curriculum Designer/Lead Simulation Trainer and a Logistics Coordinator who work closely with the DCFS Office of Learning and Professional Development to ensure the fidelity of the simulation training model. During this timeframe the team also addressed the concern that new investigators were coming to simulation week with information about the Caleb case, passed on to them by well-intentioned colleagues from their field office. This required the development of a new case for simulation week with updates to the character profiles and a new orientation for the actors. The simulation manual was updated and new experiential components were added, including "fishbowl" interviews with the parents, allowing the investigators a collective experience crafting follow up questions that further developed their understanding of the alleged maltreatment. In the fishbowl activity, each family member sits "in the round" with the investigators with one investigator taking the lead with questions provided by the rest of the group.

The simulation training week

Simulations typically consist of 7 to 8 minutes of role-playing with actors for each trainee, followed by 5 minutes of debriefing, with the timing of both fluctuating based on each participant's reactions in the scenario. During the debrief, the simulation trainer checks in with the trainee to learn about their experience and assure their well-being. Then the simulation trainer and actors provide feedback while the other trainees watch and learn from their peers. Guided by the simulation trainer, the actors vary the scenarios throughout the day to broaden trainees' experience. For example, one iteration of a scenario might feature a telephone call to the house from a grandmother trying to distract the investigator, an action that did not occur in the same scenario earlier in the day. Each day ends with a group debrief in which the trainees discuss their overall experience of the day, consider what they have learned, and plan what they need to do the next day. When logistically possible, the trainees' classroom trainer also attends the simulation training to provide additional assistance and continuity from the previous five weeks with the participants.

Day One of simulation training begins with an orientation to simulation. Then the facilitator simulates a call to the reporter in order to gather the initial information provided to the hotline. Day Two, titled Knock on the Door, focuses on gaining entry to the home by articulating who the participant is and the purpose of the visit. Once inside, the participant focuses on engaging the family member(s) present in the home. The ability to engage families is central

to investigators' mission and underlies every action they take with the family. Once the family member understands the purpose of the investigator's visit it is necessary to explore the need for a temporary safety plan for the two children involved in the investigation.

On Day Three, trainees conduct a scene investigation of the house and immerse themselves further in the critical thinking they need to consider evidence. In the simulation, the parents (actors) maintain that the injury resulted from an accident with the child's rocking chair and a tall floor lamp. Trainees ask the parents to recreate what happened using a toddler-sized simulation doll – part of the training is learning how to articulate this to parents. Trainees observe and measure objects, take photographs, and assess whether parents' accounts are plausible. Following the reenactment, the trainees walk through the house with the parents and check safety; discussion items the trainees encounter include pill bottles, alcohol, dog feces, dirty diapers on floor, weights in the child's room, long cords on the blinds, and exposed wiring. After the scene investigation, each trainee explains their observations (with photographs) to their supervisor, played by the simulation trainer. They learn how to document their findings in preparation for court testimony.

Day Four consists of a simulation of parent interviews and court testimony preparation. Before the simulation of the parent interview, all trainees formulate specific questions for parents together. During the simulation, trainees as a group interview the father actor and the mother actor separately in the classroom. The trainee who takes the lead interviewing parents is allowed to pause the interview and to ask for support from the trainers and their peers. Every trainee is offered the opportunity to take the lead in the interviews. To prepare trainees for court testimony, a retired Assistant State's Attorney developed and delivers a two-hour presentation on court proceedings and testifying skills.

Day Five is the courtroom simulation of a juvenile court hearing regarding the custody of the two children involved in the investigation. At the end of the previous day the participants make the determination to take protective custody of the two children, based on the evidence they have collected and the interviews they have conducted. Prior to the start of the hearing, trainees simulate meetings with the parents and explain the purpose and possible outcomes of the hearing, including the chance that the judge will rule in favor of the Department's decision to take protective custody. Trainees then testify in the mock courtroom. Attorneys for and against DCFS question them while the judge and the family listen. At the conclusion of the hearing, the simulation trainer, the legal professionals, and the family provide feedback to the investigators.

Problem-based learning

In 2019, the CPTA enhanced simulation training by adding a training method called Problem-Based Learning (PBL). The First Author partnered with colleagues at the University of Missouri to develop Project FORECAST, a project funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (University of Missouri at St. Louis Children's Advocacy Center, 2019). The two universities developed FORECAST (Foundations for OutReach through Experiential Child Advocacy Studies Training) to train faculty nationally in an effort to build a more trauma-informed workforce. As partners on the five-year training grant, the CPTA team adopted a set of decision-making skills grounded in Problem-Based Learning (PBL). The team transferred the lessons learned from the SAMHSA FORECAST grant to the classroom instruction during the simulation week on campus, recognizing that PBL is essential to developing critical thinking skills and enhancing the simulation experience. Problem-based learning is a method in which trainees are presented with problems to solve rather than content to memorize. Traditional classroom instruction remains a passive and somewhat non-participatory environment for workforce development, while problem-based learning increases the trainees' ability for active learning. In the problem-based learning process, trainees' learning is organized around active efforts to gain the knowledge they need to use critical decision making while recognizing how frequently they tend to rely on hunches and hypotheses rather than facts. A well facilitated problem-based learning process emphasizes the gathering of facts and the elimination of hunches that are often grounded in assumptions and biases. The problems that CPTA trainees are presented with are practice dilemmas in composite child protection cases based on real investigations in Illinois. The CPTA facilitators act as guides as the trainees return to problem-based learning each day of their simulation in order to re-test their hypotheses after additional facts are obtained. The goal is to train the new investigators to adopt this process once in the field in order to improve critical thinking and case outcomes.

Program evaluation

Given the investment in the CPTA program and the need to develop this innovative method, program evaluation data are needed both to provide evidence of its value and shape program improvement. The second and third authors have been evaluating CPTA since 2016 using both qualitative and quantitative methods (for detailed information on the methodology and results, see Chiu & Cross, 2018, 2019; Cross & Chiu, 2018; Cross, Tittle, & Chiu, 2017). One component was a process evaluation to explore how the simulation training program was developed. Evaluators conducted focus groups and interviews with the program developers, trainers, standardized patients and volunteer courtroom professionals. The

process evaluation identified a number of resources the training team used to develop the program. The simulation trainer made use of multiple skills she had developed through her previous experience as an investigator and a trainer and experience preparing simulation training: interpersonal skills, knowledge of child protection work, skill in designing and staging simulations, capacity to provide emotional support, and ability in coaching and modeling. The standardized patients were rigorous about staying in character and trained to make feedback as specific as possible and calibrate the style of providing feedback to the capabilities of each student. The volunteer courtroom professionals' experience enabled them to correct misconceptions about legal professionals. Misconceptions included believing that judges read investigators' reports ahead of time (judges are not able to do that and depend on investigators during the court proceedings for information) and considering an attorney's cross-examination as a personal affront.

The program evaluation team also analyzed data collected from trainees. In an online survey provided by DCFS that trainees completed immediately post-training, trainees answered eight questions measuring aspects of their experience of simulation training. On a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, trainees scored an average of 4.1 on feeling prepared to participate in the simulation, and an average of 4.4 to 4.6 on all other questions (experiencing a safe learning environment, experiencing an environment conducive to learning, feeling the scenario environment was realistic and helped them incorporate their training into practice, feeling they had a realistic experience of challenges in the field, feeling that participating increased their confidence in their role, feeling respected during their debriefing, and feeling they received valuable feedback from debriefing sessions) (N = 406). The program evaluation conducted a content analysis of open-ended comments on the survey. The most prominent theme expressed was the need to expand simulation training: providing more time for simulation training, doing simulations on additional child welfare tasks and populations, and offering simulation training in other locations in Illinois.

The program evaluation team also developed the Daily Experience of Simulation Training (DEST) measure to assess change in trainees' confidence over the course of the simulation training week. At the beginning of simulation training (baseline) and the end of each simulation training day, trainees' used an online survey to rate their confidence on 13 different work skills (e.g., gathering information from collateral contacts, engaging families, assessing safety, answering pointed questions from parents and caregivers, addressing underlying conditions such as domestic violence). Repeated measures analyses of variance were conducted with the 41 respondents who completed the DEST at every time point. Differences across time points were statistically significant for all 13 items (p <.001). The mean confidence level across all CPS work skills also differed significantly across 6 time points (p < .001). The confidence level

of working as a DCFS investigator increased 48% between the baseline and last day. We also used all available data (included those from trainees who did not complete the DEST at every time point) to calculate the effect size for the difference between baseline and Day 5 for each confidence item (N = 85 to 87 depending on item). This yielded Cohen's d statistics of .91 or higher across all items, which represent large effect sizes according to Cohen's (1992) standards. These results indicate substantial increases in confidence.

In addition, the program evaluation team conducted a survey of DCFS investigators on the job to assess the longer-term effect of simulation training. All currently employed DCFS investigators were emailed a link inviting them to participate in the survey. The response rate was 35%. Just over half of investigators had received simulation training ("sims", 51.5%, n = 122) and just under half had not received simulation training, because they were hired before simulation training was established ("non-sims", 48.5%, n = 115. Using Welch-Satterthwaite t-tests, we found that Sims had significantly higher scores on 8 of 9 items assessing how well investigators thought their initial training prepared them for their work (all p's < .05). The difference on testifying in court was unusually large (Cohen's d = 1.09) – the rating for how well training prepared them for testifying was much higher for the sims than the non-sims.

Survey respondents also rated the difficulty of acquiring different job skills. Sims and non-sims were compared using ordinary least squares regression analysis that controlled for differences in age and experience and other variables (N = 130). For most skills, sims and non-sims did not differ. However, in one regression analysis (N = 159), the sim group averaged almost half a point lower (b = −.44, $p < .05$) on creating evidence-based documentation, when other variables were statistically controlled. In another regression analysis (N = 160), the sim group averaged more than half a point lower (b = −.67, $p < .05$) on acquiring the skill of testifying in court, when other variables were statistically controlled. A lower score indicates an easier time acquiring these skills. Sims and non-sims did not differ significantly on job satisfaction, after controlling for other variables.

Ordinary least squares and logistic regressions were also used to compare sim and non-sim respondents on items from the Turnover Intention Scale, a standardized measure of human service professionals' thoughts about leaving their job (Aarons, Sommerfeld, Hecht, Silovsky, & Chaffin, 2009). Sims and non-sims did not differ on most items nor on their overall turnover intentions score. However, in one logistic regression (N = 190), there was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) on the item, "I am actively looking for a position at another department of DCFS." The odds that a non-sim respondent checked "yes" on this item were 4.04 times greater than the odds that a sim respondent did so. In another logistic regression (N = 183), there was a difference that was nearly statistically significant ($p = .052$) on the item, "As soon as I find a better job, I will leave DCFS." The odds that a non-sim

respondent checked "yes" on this item were 3.42 times the odds that a sim respondent did so.

The program evaluation team also obtained employment data from DCFS data to compare sim-training investigator and non-sim trained investigators on the likelihood of actually leaving their job. The sim group (n = 306) included all DCFS investigators who started at DCFS between February 2016 and January 2018. The pre-sim group (n = 98) included DCFS investigators who started to work at DCFS between February 2014 and January 2016. Investigators' employment status was assessed for a two-year period following their start date (sim-trained investigators were hired too recently to have a longer tracking period). A Cox regression analysis showed that the odds of leaving their job for the non-sim group was 1.8 times greater than the odds of leaving for the sim group, after controlling for gender, race, age, degree, education level, specific position and certificate training score ($p < .05$).

In summary, a number of program evaluations results were positive about CPTA simulation training: trainees rated their experience positively, during and after simulation training and later when they were on the job. Investigators with simulation training rated their training more highly than investigators without simulation training. Sim-trained investigators reported greater ease learning about evidence-based documentation and testifying in court. They were less likely to intend to leave their job or actually to leave their job. The caveat, however, is that the simulation training "era" at DCFS could differ in many ways from the era before simulation training began, so there could be several explanations for differences between non-sim trained investigators (hired before February 2016) and sim-trained investigators (hired after February 2016). DCFS hiring practices could have differed and working conditions such as caseload could be different as well. Despite this caveat, the totality of program evaluation data provide considerable support for the value of CPTA simulation training.

Expanding simulation training for DCFS

With increased scrutiny on child welfare outcomes as a result of a number of tragedies involving children previously involved with DCFS, the Department, under a new administration, has adopted simulation training as one of the strategies for improving decision-making in the field. In April 2019, the Academy worked with DCFS' Office for Learning and Professional Development to launch a second training site in Chicago that also features a mock residence and courtroom and provides simulation training for new DCFS investigators. The new site makes travel more convenient for many new investigators, while also freeing up time at CPTA in Springfield to expand simulation training to new categories of DCFS employees and multidisciplinary team members from Children's Advocacy Centers.

Recently the CPTA team and DCFS expanded simulation training model to supervisors and seasoned investigators. This training emphasizes problem-based learning within a simulated supervisor-worker phone call to process scene investigation information and determine whether the worker needs to take protective custody of two young children. DCFS also anticipates training all of their existing intact, permanency and placement workers as well as the private agency staff who are assigned intact cases.

Impact of the CPTA

As of this writing (May, 2020), the Child Protection Training Academy is now an established element of training of investigators in Illinois DCFS for the foreseeable future. Although exact calculation is not possible yet, we estimate that a majority of child protective investigators currently working in Illinois have received simulation training.

We see benefits for all the organizations participating in CPTA. Experience with the program and evaluation data suggest that, through its collaboration with CPTA, Illinois DCFS has upgraded training for all new child protection investigators. DCFS can point to good news in the evaluation results suggesting decreased turnover in child protection investigators (Chiu & Cross, 2019) since the introduction of simulation and a revised Foundations Training. DCFS can explore the degree to which changes in training, changes in working conditions or hiring practices, and/or factors might also explain this improvement. The University of Illinois Springfield has developed a training facility and method that it can use to serve both child welfare agencies and other potential areas of human service practice that can benefit from training methods carried out in a mock house and/or mock courtroom. Through its work on the program evaluation, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is helping develop a fertile area for new research that could inform improvements in training nationally.

Considerations for replicating the model

Cynthia Crosson-Tower (2003) explains that she was prompted to write her book "From the Eye of the Storm: The Experiences of a Child Welfare Worker" after a student in one of her social work courses asked her as the semester ended "But what's it really like, out in the field?" (p. v). The Child Protection Training Academy model was born of a similar desire to create a more realistic experience for frontline professionals, many of whom, like Dr. Crosson-Tower's student, choose careers in child protection without really understanding the turbulence and upheaval they will encounter in the field. This paper was written for much the same reason as Dr. Crosson-Tower's book – to share the lessons learned and to offer guidance for other states or

communities interested in a different and promising approach to child protection training. The concluding section will cover three primary replication considerations: dissemination, costs, and collaboration strategies.

Beginning to disseminate the model

Over the past three years numerous states have inquired about the Illinois simulation model, requesting assistance and materials that inventory the steps taken to develop simulation labs for child protection professionals. The number one response to these inquiries has always been "you need to experience it to fully appreciate it". University and child welfare agency teams have been encouraged, when possible, to travel to the Academy to sit in the house while a simulation is conducted in order to gain a sense of the process, from the initial anxiety of the worker knocking on the door to the intensity of the debriefing. Visitors have expressed how they have felt their own hearts begin to race as the worker enters the home, sharing an empathetic nervousness with the trainee. This immersive experience has resulted in one state's recent launch of their simulation training program, utilizing the Illinois model and facilitator's manual. Observation of the space, the technology used, the interactions with the standardized patients and discussions with the trainees has been extremely useful for other programs as they develop their implementation strategies.

Costs

Though available resources will vary tremendously from one area to the next, most people are surprised to learn how little capital is needed to launch a simulation training program. Simulation labs can be created quite easily out of existing spaces with donated and repurposed furniture and props. Universities often have under-utilized space on campus, including apartments and houses that are no longer used for their original purpose. The little house on the first author's campus had been at one time a residence, then the campus childcare center and later the campus credit union. As previously mentioned, it had fallen into disrepair and likely would have been demolished if not for its rebirth as a residential simulation lab. At two universities where the first author has trained, the Child Advocacy Studies program built small "houses" inside sections of university classroom buildings. Partnering with a theater program often results in a mutually beneficial agreement – the Illinois mock courtroom was built with leftover materials from the theater program's set design workshop with the promise of sharing the "set" with the university's moot court team.

Inquiring programs often assume that the technology needed for simulation training will be cost-prohibitive but after establishing two simulation sites, the Illinois Academy has several very affordable and efficient systems for capturing

the simulations and allowing for "clips" to be reviewed by trainees. The newer digital cameras purchased for the second simulation site were lower in price and even more sophisticated than those purchased when the first sim lab was opened. Costs related to personnel can be addressed through an effective collaboration with an organization with significant training responsibilities that is in a position to provide funding.

Collaboration

Implementation of a simulation training program has relied on effective collaboration among public service and academic professionals. For over six years the University has been partnering with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to support and expand simulation training for child protection investigators. This partnership has been integral to the program's growth and in the last two years was highlighted by the state legislature as part of the workforce development plan for other child welfare professionals. Through annual contracts the Academy receives funding for simulation facilitators who work alongside the Department's regular classroom trainers during the week-long simulation training in both sites. The contract also supports the use of the sim labs and the Academy's logistical coordinator who schedules the various trainings, actors and courtroom volunteers. Collaboration with current and retired juvenile court professionals has led them to volunteer to serve in their former or current roles in the mock hearings held during the simulation week. Recently the Academy partnered with the State Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers to develop a multidisciplinary team simulation pilot, bringing together five CAC teams to work a child sexual abuse case together, interviewing the "parents" and collecting evidence in the mock house. Positive feedback on the training has resulted in the development of plans to offer the training to additional CAC teams over the next fiscal year.

Conclusion

This article focuses on the development of simulation training as a response to the need in Illinois. But Illinois is just one outpost of a national movement. The Minnesota and California efforts cited above are well-established, and we found documentation of simulation training for child welfare in a number of other states as well (Children's Advocacy Centers of Mississippi, 2019; Children's Advocacy Centers of North Carolina, 2019; Northwest Arkansas Community College, 2019; Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, n.d.; Shanesy, 2015). Moreover, Project FORECAST, and the expansion of CAST programs in over 70 universities, community colleges, law schools, and seminaries are diffusing knowledge about simulation training and problem-based learning in communities throughout the United States. We think these developments have emerged from a growing

recognition of the social and emotional demands of child protection work and the imperative to help workers develop the behavioral skills they need in the field. We should value the training of child welfare professionals enough to increase its quality. Their training experiences should more closely match that of professions like law, medicine and aeronautics that routinely use different forms of simulation training.

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