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Experiential Training for Child Protection Investigators: The Illinois Simulation Training Lab Experience

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Child protection investigators must learn an enormous amount in a short period

- Following procedures
- Engaging families
- Collaborating with multiple disciplines
- Dealing with crises
- Making decisions
- Handling their emotions



Traditional training of Illinois CPS investigators

- Classroom-based
- Considerable attention to procedures, requirements etc.
- Very little simulates actual work experience
- Research across disciplines: 10-15% of training transfers to workplace



Value of simulating child protection work in training

- Trainees learn what child protection work is like
- They learn in multiple ways
 - Practicing the behavior
 - Getting feedback from debriefs
 - Observing other trainees' actions and debriefs
- Trainees are more engaged
 - Sensory – visual, auditory, olfactory
 - Emotional
 - Critical thinking
- Best way to determine a field is not for you



University of Illinois at Springfield Simulation Labs Program

- Developed family residence and courtroom simulation labs for CPS investigators
- Partnership with Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
- Training all new Illinois investigators since February 2016
- 19 trainings and 273 trainees to date





Youtube Videos

Overview of Simulation Training Program

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbRXVyn9dWI>

Clips of Simulations

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZlpHIJ35Z0>

Dedication of the Simulation Training Lab (see especially 11:37 to 18:26)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FriOvDCdQ9Q>



Connection to DCFS Foundation Training

- New DCFS investigators have six weeks of classroom Foundation training...
- Followed by four days of simulation training at UIS
- New Foundations Training Curriculum written by sim training developers (Susan & Betsy)
- A representative case is discussed throughout classroom and simulation training



Sequence of a simulation training week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Introduction/ Supervision	Knock on the Door Simulation	Scene Investigation Simulation	Pre-hearing meeting with parents
Collateral calls 1.Reporter (ER nurse) 2.Attending physician (ER doc) 3.Alleged perpetrator's mother (grandma) 4.Primary care physician	Interspersed with individual debriefs	Interspersed with individual debriefs	Court simulation
Debrief	Overall debrief	Overall debrief	Overall debrief



Actors have a strong role in simulations

- Partnership with Southern Illinois University School of Medicine's Standardized Patient Program (SPP) and Resident Training
- SPP actors play family members in simulated residence and court
- Trainees report that actors are life-like and compelling
- Retired and active professionals play roles in court simulations

Average scores on post-training online survey

Item	Mean	SD
I felt prepared to participate in the SIM lab	3.5	.6
The simulation environment was a safe learning environment	3.8	.4
I felt the training was conducted in an environment conducive to learning	3.8	.4
The scenario environment was realistic. I was able to incorporate my training into practice	3.8	.4
The SIM lab provided a realistic experience of the challenges I will face when working in the field	3.8	.4
Participating in the scenarios helped to increase my confidence in my role	3.7	.5
I felt respected during my debriefing	3.8	.4
The debriefing sessions provided valuable feedback	3.8	.4

Note. 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree

Sources: Items – Betsy Goulet & Susan Evans; Data Collection – Sweet, P., Center for Applied Information Technology, Western Illinois University



Themes in post-training survey

- Value of simulation training
- Extending it to more skills and locations
- Devoting more time to simulation training



Value of simulation training -quotes from trainees

- The SIM Lab is an awesome opportunity to receive "hands on" experience in Training. This will be the "closest" that one can get to real life, prior to being out in the Field as an Investigator.
- Discussing procedures is beneficial in a classroom setting is, but physically applying techniques in simulation had a more dramatic, memorable and deeply ingrained effect on my learning and retention.
- This was by far the best experience I have had in regards to being able to APPLY the skills we learned in class. The actors and environment were realistic and I quickly forgot that I was part of a simulation
- This was the best DCFS training I have had thus far. I feel very confident in my ability to implement information gained. I am also aware of the things I need to continue to work on to grow.



Trainees suggested extensions of simulation training

- Additional investigation components
- Interviewing a child
- Initial report of child maltreatment
- Protective custody
- Investigations in hospitals or schools
- More characters: police, doctors, substance abuse clients
- Safety assessment and planning
- Train current investigators and private agency workers
- Simulations in an urban environment and real neighborhoods



Interviews with trainees -- quotes

...the closest we can get to real life in terms of a true immersive model... it's going to better prepare the person on the front end so that when they go out, when they first knock on the door isn't their actual first knock on the door

You are hearing from people that have actually done the job and giving you back their professional feedback.

It exceeded all of my expectations..... interacting with the actors and doing all of that, it's so very real... I felt a very real sense of urgency, like I really have to pay attention.....it's all very realistic in terms of really really having to use those observational skills, really being able to be cautious and dealing with a lot of different factors coming in

...the simulation lab was the most valuable part of the training...In the classroom setting, you can't really mock the body language or how somebody is going to react to something you say or different movement.



Future goals

- Develop pilot training for supervisors, which increases supervisors' ability to support simulation training
- Simulations for other child welfare practices
 - Ongoing family work
 - Permanency
 - Multidisciplinary teams
- Participate in the National Simulation Consortium



Our emails

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