Assessing an Innovative Method for Training Child Protection Investigators

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CPTA Child Protection Training Academy
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS | SPRINGFIELD

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UIS

Traditional Training of CPS Investigators

- Classroom based
- Focus on procedures, requirements etc.
- Little training simulates actual work experience
- Research across disciplines: only 10-15% of training transfers to the workplace

Value of simulating child protection work in training

- 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 the field is not for you

Child Protection Training Academy (CPTA)

- Developed family residence and courtroom simulation labs at UIS for CPS investigators
- Partnership with Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
- Training all new Illinois investigators since February 2016 (N=645)

CPTA Training Team

- Simulation trainer
  - Former DCFS investigator and long-time classroom trainer
  - Has trained hundreds of DCFS investigators
- Standardized patients
  - “Actors” who play role of family under investigation
  - from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine’s Standardized Patient Program
  - Also trained to provide feedback to professionals (doctors and now child protection investigators)
- Courtroom professionals
  - Current and retired judges and lawyers
  - Play roles resembling their real life experience

Connection to Classroom Training

- New DCFS investigators have six weeks of classroom Foundation Training
- Followed by four days of simulation training at CPTA
- New Foundations Training Curriculum written by sim training developers
- A representative case is discussed throughout classroom and simulation training

A Simulation Training week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Introduction	Door Knock	Scene Investigation	Fishbowl Interviews	Pre-Hearing Meeting with Parents
Collateral Calls	Interspersed with Individual Debriefs	Interspersed with Individual Debriefs	Court Prep Training	Court Simulation
Debrief	Overall Debrief	Supervision	Overall Debrief	Overall Debrief
		Overall Debrief		

Program Evaluation

- Initial Evaluation (FY2017)
  - Post-training satisfaction survey analysis
  - Interviews with key formants, including two trainees
  - Observation of simulation training
- 2nd Year Evaluation (FY2018)
  - Study of simulation training process: focus groups and interviews
  - Investigator survey
- 3rd Year Evaluation (FY2019)
  - Turnover study
  - Daily Experience of Simulation Training

Qualitative Study: Simulation Training Processes

- To understand the processes of simulation training and identify the ingredients needed to disseminate this initiative to new communities.
- 32 professionals involved in simulation training were recruited and resulted in 2 focus groups and 8 individual interviews, with a total of 16 participants.
- Analyses focused on:
  1) Skills and effectiveness of the simulation trainer,
  2) Role and impact of standardized patients,
  3) Contribution of professionals in the courtroom simulation.

Skills and Effectiveness of the Simulation Trainer

1) Deep understanding of child protection related policies and procedures

What she's able to do is… she knows procedures really well and how she impacts the students. She helps them to understand this is what procedure says and this is how you implement 'em…kinda like the phrases that we use in the curriculum is "Procedure to Practice." (Classroom Trainer)

2) Rich experience in child protection work and training

She's got a lot of experience in child protection; she's very knowledgeable in procedures, so she's very good at how she wants it run. She's very good at… prepping me as an actor on what she wants me to invoke or what to say. (Professional)

Skills and Effectiveness of the Simulation Trainer (continued)

3) Ability in coaching and modeling

If they [trainees] get stuck at the spot, she might come out and do some coaching, and assist them trying to get beyond that. Because a lot of time our participants come in and they don't know how to ask a question. Or there would be some information they want to get but they are not sure how to do that. So she will help them along with that. (Classroom Trainer)

4) Positive and constructive feedback

I think that's what she's really gifted in…this is… that she can make the student feel comfortable about the feedback and she can provide them with something that's going to help them at that moment for where they're at. (Standardized Patient)

She has a very keen ability to read people, because in any different class there's many different personalities and things like that. So, that kind of is juxtaposed with her ability to give positive feedback and invoke thought in that person to help them be better. (Professional)

Skills and Effectiveness of the Simulation Trainer (continued)

5) A focus on family and classroom engagement

If people don't think you're sincere, if people don't think you have their best interest, they're not going to engage with you, just like in the field. (Simulation Trainer)

She basically uses like family system, kind of a holistic approach, because it's looking at everything, very interactive, very coaching and supportive, very safe learning environment, and very positive. (Classroom Trainer)

6) Sincere concern about trainees' learning experience and well-being

She gives 100 percent. Like this is your time. This is just ours. It's like you're in this bubble and it's like this is really where we need – "I need to know how you're feeling before you leave because it's so important to make sure that this was a growing experience." And I really appreciate she spends the needed time if someone is struggling or if they're not – they have a lot of questions. She honors what their immediate needs are and it's not something that gets forgotten or put to the side. Because when you're in the heat of the moment, that's the learning, that's the growing right then and there. (Standardized Patient)

Skills and Effectiveness of the Simulation Trainer (continued)

7) Passion for and commitment to child protection work

She is an excellent trainer… She is very supportive and she is very passionate about what she does, particularly when it comes to child protection. (Classroom Trainer)

She's wonderful to work with, really she is. We're always trying to improve everything we do. We go in there really trying to give 150 percent every time… She says it's in the marrow of her bones. It's just so instilled within her… it's contagious. You just really want to do more and more and better and better. (Standardized Patient)

Role and Impact of Standardized Patients

1) the importance of being in character to make simulations realistic

as far as the actual emotion of what they're going to experience in the field, yeah, you can't do that with someone you know.

one of the students I think even did comment that he had seen me and so that made it harder for him to take it realistically.

2) not allowing their character to become too aggressive with trainees

On one case, a girl actually, her feedback was she felt threatened because I make a statement. If I pushed you, what would you do? You'd step back and try to catch yourself. And so, I guess and I didn't realize it, I got a little too close…she felt very threatened by that and that was not my intention because that takes us above the level of aggression and deflection and aggression that we're giving to the student to learn how to deal with.

3) provide feedback to trainees about their behavior

One student on Day One made no eye contact with me and I gave him that feedback. On Day Two the eye contact improved quite a bit. But his little tic of not looking sometimes was still there. But yet I could see that he was aware of it because he was actually making a point to make eye contact. So I mean that made me feel good as an individual involved in the program… the character reacted better to it because the first day with no eye contact, Tyrel's character doesn't like that. He's going to feel very disrespected and get a little bit more agitated.

Professionals in the Courtroom Simulation

- Retired judges and other current or former professionals donate their time to play the roles of the state's attorney, defense attorney, judge, and guardian ad litem.
- Recruitment in a snowball fashion.
- Their interest in improving the child protection and juvenile court system

Because we work so closely with DCFS, this is such an intricate part of our everyday job. We welcomed the opportunity to participate in this program and assist in any manner that we could. This simulation training that they do prepares them for talking to 'em specifically. So if I can be involved in that process and help them understand the types of information that I need them to be able to give to me so that I can do my own job, but also help them do their job, as well, and elevate both our divisions, then that is something that I wanted to dedicate my time to. (Active Professional)

Professionals in the Courtroom Simulation (continued)

- Correction of potential misconceptions about legal professionals

  They thought the judge already knew all of this information. And we were just going through a little dog and pony show. In fact, the judge doesn't know any of that information. All he knows is what he's told in court. So I wanted them to understand that so they understood how important it was that they get this information to the judge. They also didn't really understand sometimes even the state's attorney's role, because they sort of thought the state's attorney was DCFS's lawyer somehow, which we're not. (Retired Professional)

  The defense attorneys are just there to do their job. And their job is to nitpick at what you do. And it is not personal. It is not a personal attack against you. Or against what you've done. But it is their job as representing a parent whose child has been removed from them to make sure that this process was a fair process. And that's hard. That's hard for people to be questioned on why they did certain things. (Active Professional)

The Active Ingredients of the CPTA program

- Skills and abilities of the trainer, the standardized patients, and the courtroom professionals
- Working relationships and procedures this team had developed

Post-training satisfaction survey

- Newly trained investigators are invited to complete a satisfaction survey immediately post- training
- Open-ended questions and rating scale items used
  - Results from open-ended questions are presented in the next slide
  - Results from the rating scales are presented later in this presentation

Trainee qualitative data from post-training survey

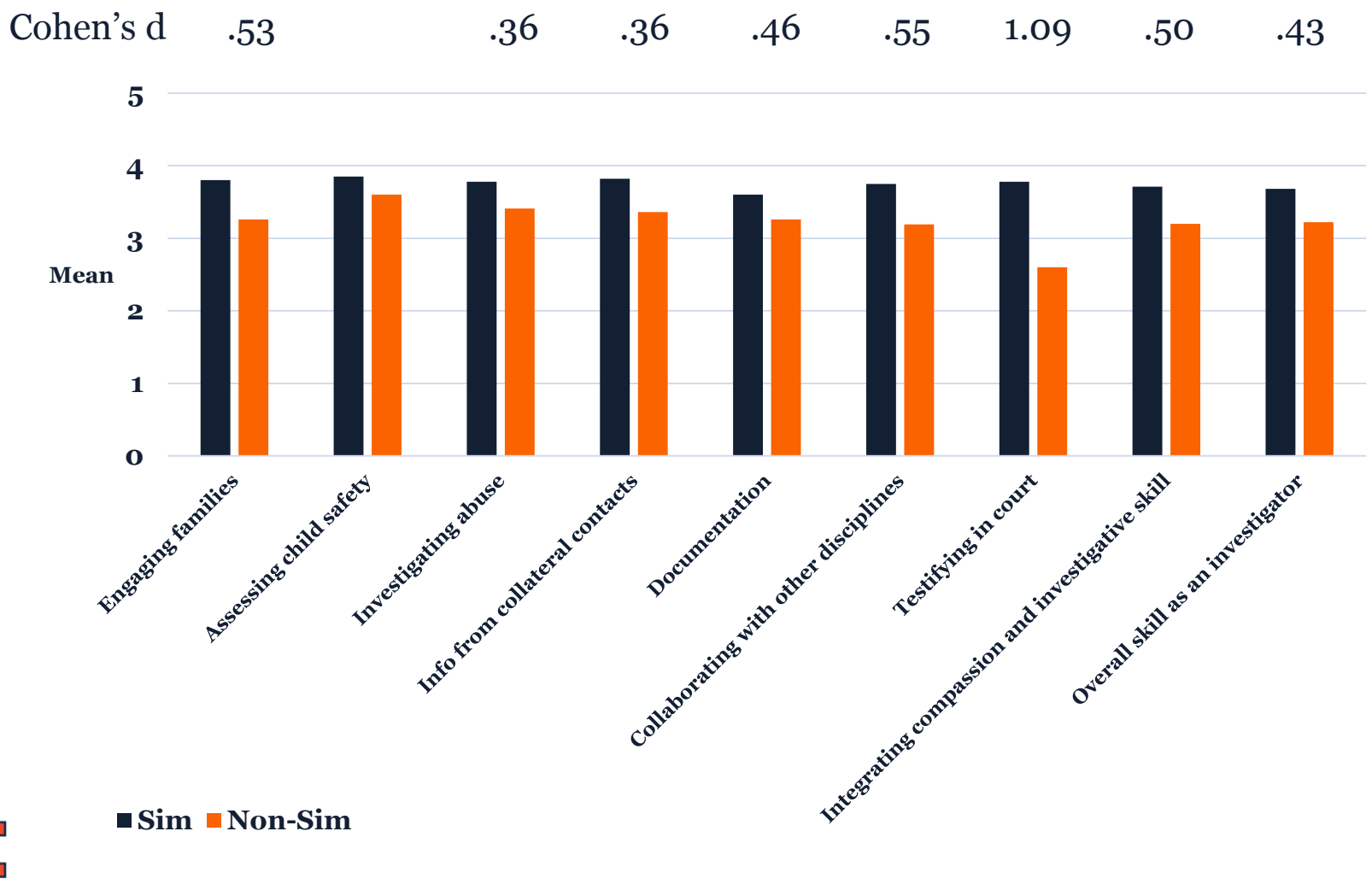
Value of simulation training

- *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.*
- *From the moment that I look at the facility…interacting with the actors and doing all of that, it's so very real… I can tell you that because I felt very real sense anxiety, a real sense of urgency, like I really have to pay attention……You really have to use all the skills that we have talked about the in classroom.*

Survey of all current DCFS investigators

- To assess the impact of simulation training on DCFS investigators' experience of their work.
- An online survey was sent to all current DCFS investigators
- 259 DCFS investigators (35% response rate)
- Analysis compared:
  - Sim group of investigators with simulation training (n=122)
  - Non-sim group of investigators without simulation training (n=115)

Sim-trained group rated their Certification Training more highly



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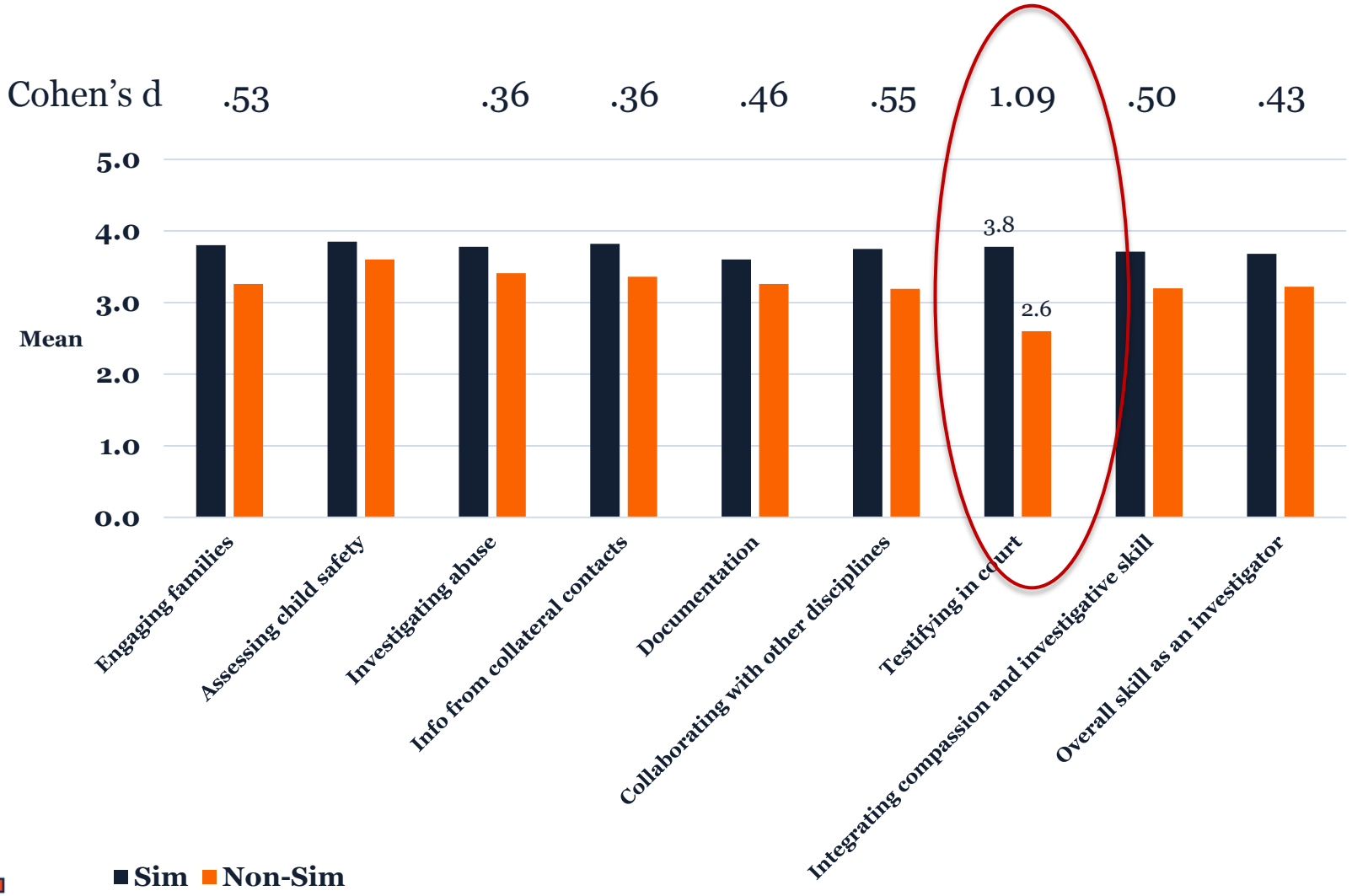


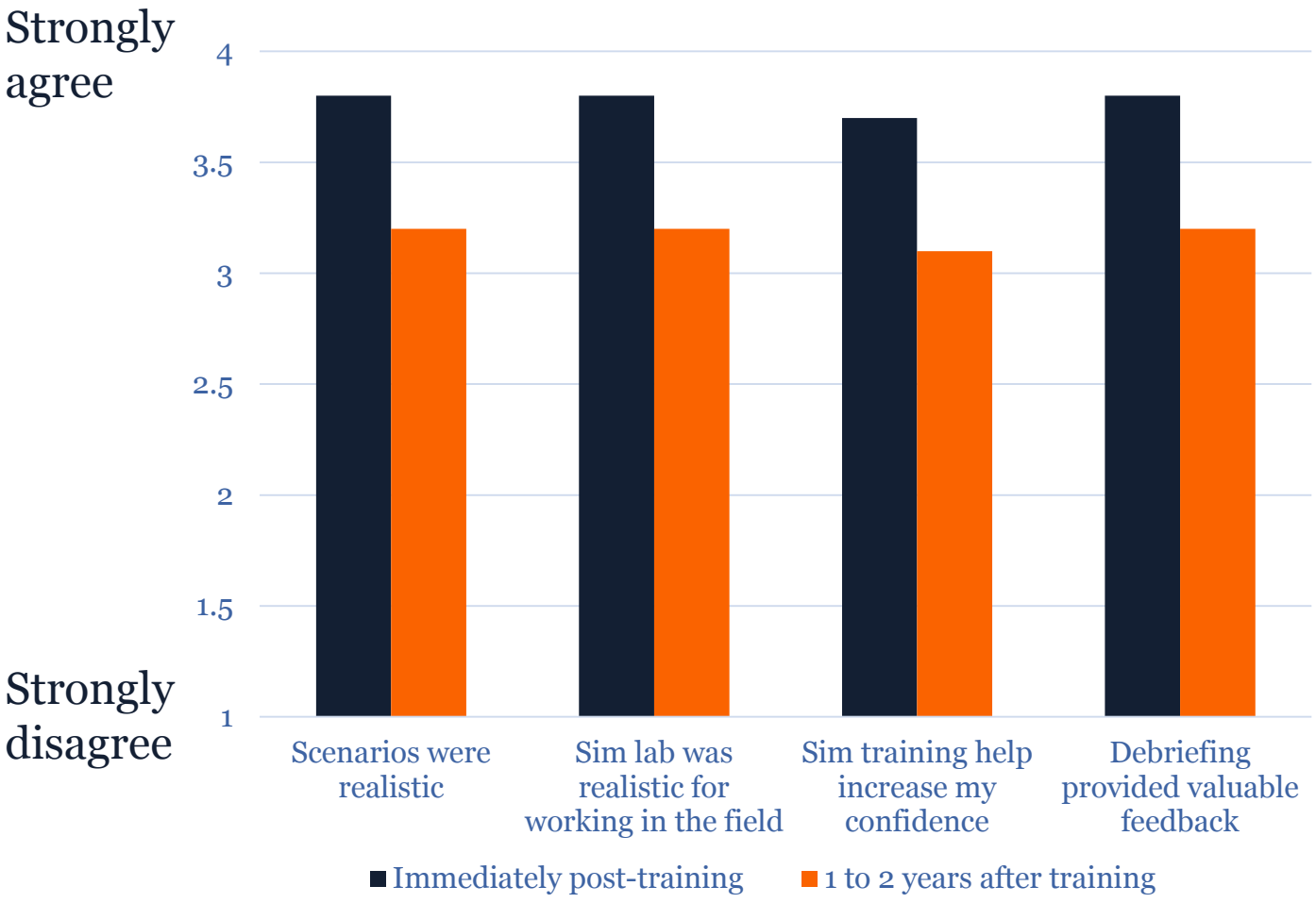
Other differences between sim and non-sim group on investigator survey

- Sim group found it easer on average to acquire the following skills:
  - Creating evidence-based documentation
  - Testifying in court
- No differences on other skills

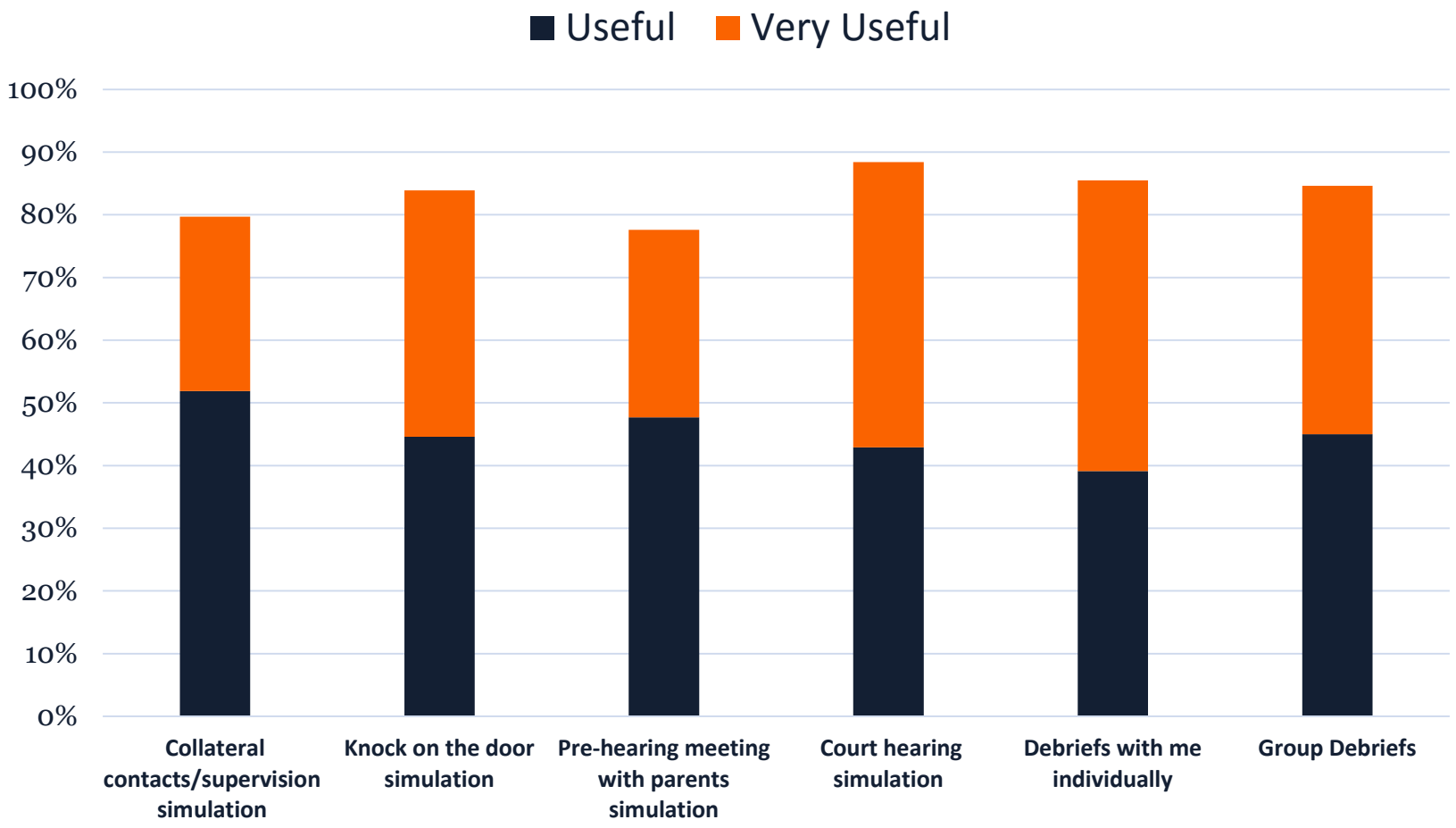
Comparing Non-Sim and Sim Groups on Intention to Leave their Job

Question	Difference in Odds
Looking for another job within DCFS	4.19 greater odds for non-sim group
Leaving DCFS if another job becomes available	3.55 greater odds for non-sim group

Average satisfaction with sim training immediately afterward and 1 to 2 years later



Sim group's appraisal of their simulations 1 to 2 years after they received them



1-useless to 5-very useful

Summary of Findings

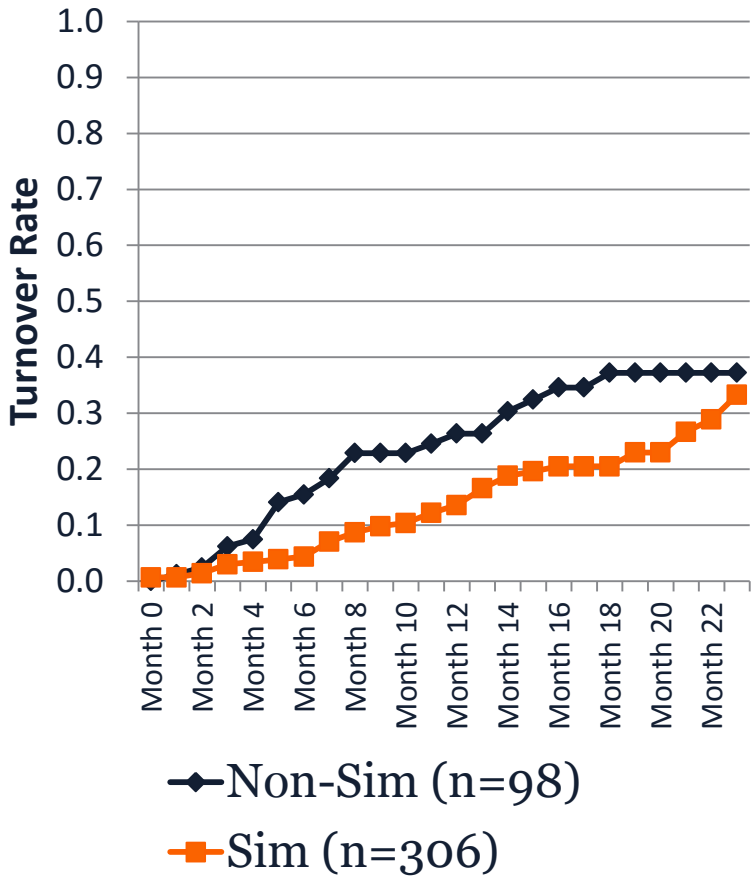
- Sim group rated their initial training more highly.
- Sim group reported less difficulty acquiring skills of…
  - Creating evidence-based documentation
  - Testifying in court
- No sim vs. non-sim difference on job satisfaction
- Sim group were less likely to answer yes on:
  - I am actively looking for a position at another department of DCFS.
  - As soon as I find a better job, I will leave DCFS.
- Sim group continued to value simulations even 1 to 2 years after training.

Turnover Analysis of Employment Data

- Sim group compared to non-sim group on the likelihood of leaving their job within 2 years of starting it
- Sim group
  - Child protection investigators who started their job between February 2016 and January 2018
  - All received simulation training
- Non-sim group
  - Child protection investigators who started their job between February 2016 and January 2018
  - Sim training was not available then so none of them received it
- **Non-sim group was almost twice as likely as sim group to leave their job within two years**

Turnover through time

- Observation period: two years from starting job
- Over most of that period, the non-sim group was more likely to leave their job
- No difference at the two year point



Implications

- Many findings suggest positive impact of simulation training
- Trainees appreciate sim training highly and report several positive effects
- Some of the most positive effects concern unique advantages of sim training (e.g., simulation of testifying)
- Sim-trained trainees were less likely to be thinking about leaving their job and stayed longer at the job
  - But we must be cautious because sim-training and non-sim trained eras could differ in numerous ways

Limitations

- Some professionals did not participate in the focus group and interviews.
- We cannot generalize from the CPTA team to all simulation trainers
- Many investigators did not complete surveys
- Comparison of sim-trained and non-sim-trained confounded with history
  - Investigators hired before and after 2016 may differ in many ways in addition to sim-training
  - Classroom training has also been improved since 2016
- We lack objective data about investigators' performance

Limitations (continued)

- Comparison of sim-trained and non-sim-trained confounded with history
  - Investigators hired before and after 2016 may differ in many ways in addition to sim-training
  - Classroom training has also been improved since 2016
- The investigator survey measured investigators' subjective reports and lacks objective data on their performance

Future plans

- Measuring changes in trainees' confidence over the course of the sim training week
  - Daily Experience of Simulation Training (DEST) measure - trainees can complete on their phone
- CPTA expanding training to experienced workers and supervisors
  - Program evaluation will assess their experience

Conclusion:
Sim training is a promising practice

- Deserves ongoing support
- Should be tested with various skills and types of trainees
- More research in other states is needed
  - It would be good to compare counties with sim training to counties without sim training

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