Department of Children's Services

POLICY

5.3 Case Manager Certification	
Application: To all newly hired DCS case manager candidates.	
Authority: TCA: 37-5-105 (3). 37-5-106	**Standards: COA:** PA-PDS 1; PA-PDS 2; PA-PDS 3, PA-PDS 4; PA-JJCM 2; PA-CFS 2; ACA: 4-JCF6E-01-04
Commissioner:	**Date:**
Original Effective Date: 06/15/23 Current Effective Date: 06/15/23	Supersedes: None Last Review Date: 06/15/23
Glossary: None	

Policy Statement:
The Department of Children's Services recognizes that for Case Managers to master the skills to effectively work with children, families, and teams in accordance with DCS Practice Standards, they must receive adequate preparation and supported practice opportunities.

Purpose:
To outline the process for new Case Manager Certification and support during the first six months of service.

Procedures:

A. Newly Hired Case Managers

1. All Case Management 1-3 series staff are required to become a certified case manager by successfully completing Pre-Service training and certification assessment prior to receiving a case load.
2. Case Manager 4 (CM 4) supervisors hired from outside the agency will not be mandated to participate in Pre-Service Certification training. Local regional leadership will make the determination if a CM 4 supervisor new to the agency will attend the entire Pre-Service Certification training or portions. A Pre-Service waiver will not be required if a region elects to forego Pre-Service certification training. The CM 4 supervisor will be required to successfully complete the Supervisor Certification program. Additional information related to Case Manager Supervisor Certification can be found in the ***Supervisor Certification Manual***.

3. When a new Case Manager is hired, regional Human Resources staff informs the regional On-the-Job Training (OJT) Coach. The OJT Coach completes a nomination form, apprising the Office of Training and Professional Development of the hire and enrolling the new hire in the next available Pre-Service training group.
4. Certified Case Managers who are transferring specialties are eligible to attend specialty training with the existing Pre-Service training group. Local regional leadership will make this determination.
5. Non-caseload carrying case managers hired at the Child Abuse Hotline (CAH) complete a separate pre-service training through the Hotline.
6. The Pre-Service Training Calendar is available at: ***https://www.teamtn.gov/dcs/divisions/training/pre-service/calendars.html.***

B. Case Manager Certification (Pre-Service)

1. Case Manager certification is a six-month, competency-based training process consisting of classroom training, simulation labs, skill practice labs, and on the job training (OJT).
2. The training process consists of eight weeks of classroom training and labs and sixteen weeks of OJT. The ***Pre-Service Certification Manual*** outlines the specific training structure, including topics covered in each classroom training and lab

C. On-the-Job Training

1. On-the-Job Training occurs under the guidance of the peer mentor, supervisor, other designated experienced staff and gives the candidate an opportunity to see and practice casework tasks.
2. Candidates are provided an **OJT Checklist**, specific to their program area, which outlines required and recommended casework tasks that they need to learn, beginning with basic concepts and building in complexity over time. The OJT Checklist serves to reinforce concepts presented during classroom and lab training.
3. OJT is structured to guide the new hire through shadowing an experienced worker completing casework tasks, co-leading casework tasks with an experienced worker, and eventually leading casework tasks with the support of an experienced worker.
4. An **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)** reflects completion of training and OJT activities and assessment of progress and development to inform the final decision regarding Pre-Service Certification. The plan includes strengths, opportunities for growth, and strategies and action steps for professional development. The Professional Development Plan (PDP) is the final component of the ILP and will be completed by the Support Team and the new case manager at the completion of the Case Presentation. The PDP will be used as a guide for the new hire and will be reviewed

by the case manager and supervisor during monthly performance briefings through the remainder of the first year of service.

D. New Hire Support

1. A Support Team is developed for each case manager candidate to provide guidance and assistance for the duration of the Pre-Service certification process. The support team includes the candidate's immediate supervisor, the candidate's assigned peer mentor, the regional OJT Coach, and assigned trainers.
2. Each case manager is assigned a Peer Mentor with at least one year of experience in the same program area as the candidate. Preference is given to Peer Mentors who have at least two years of experience and who have completed Mentor Certification training.
3. The Support Team meets regularly during the certification process to provide guidance, assess progress, provide feedback, and plan additional needed OJT activities and supports for the candidate

E. Roles and Responsibilities

1. During the Pre-Service process, the OJT Coach is the main conduit of communication for the support team. OJT Coaches facilitate new hire orientation to Pre-Service for case manager candidates, facilitate support team meetings, create and maintain an ILP for each new hire, conduct individual coaching sessions with new hires, facilitate the certification panel and development of the ongoing learning plan for the remainder of the new hire's first year of service.
2. Trainers facilitate the delivery of Pre-Service classroom and skill lab training, document the candidate's progress training progress in the ILP, and provide additional professional development if requested by the Support Team. Trainers may attend Support Team meetings as available.
3. The candidate's supervisor assigns a peer mentor to the candidate, utilize the OJT Checklist to ensure meaningful activities are planned for each OJT week, participate in Support Team Meetings, debrief training and field activities with the new hire, hold weekly conference with the candidate during OJT weeks to assess progress and provide support, accompany the new hire during case activities at least once during the OJT period to assess progress and provide support.
4. Peer mentors demonstrate best practice and model professionalism, orient the candidate to casework, collaborate with the candidates supervisor and OJT Coach, participate in support team meetings, utilize the OJT Checklist to ensure quality of the OJT experience, demonstrate how to perform key casework tasks by providing shadowing opportunities and debrief experiences, support the new hire during co-

leading and leading by providing direction, feedback and debrief opportunities, notifying the supervisor of all concerns and situations in which additional support may be needed. The expectation for casework during preservice is to follow the model of: new hire shadowing the mentor, then coleading with the mentor, and, eventually, leading while the mentor shadows the new hire.

5. The Case Manager candidate actively participates in learning including fully engaging in training, completing all learning assignments by designated timeframes, being present and focused during OJT activities. Candidates should seek clarification and guidance when needed, share information and concerns with the Support Team, and always demonstrate professionalism.
6. Additional information regarding roles and responsibilities can be found in the ***Pre-Service Certification Manual.***

F. Candidate Assessment

1. Case Manager competencies are based on DCS Practice Standards and are outlined in the ILP. Competency domains include Engagement, Teaming, Assessment, Planning, Implementation, Tracking and Adjusting, Child Welfare Mission and Values, Communication, Self-Management, and Documentation Skills. A Pre-Service Competency Rubric outlines levels of proficiency for each domain and is used to calculate a total competency score. Competency assessments occur in the context of the Support Team Meeting.
2. Candidates are assessed on the competency rubric at multiple points during the certification process to identify strengths and needs and plan for ongoing and increasingly independent casework practice.
3. The final step before certification is the Case Presentation Assessment. The case presentation is based on one of the candidate's training cases and is a skills demonstration encompassing the concepts and techniques learned throughout the Pre-service process. The case presentation is assessed by a panel consisting of the supervisor, OJT Coach, and peer mentor. Regional leadership may designate additional staff to be members of the panel. At the conclusion of the presentation, the competency rubric is used to score the oral presentation and case documentation samples. A passing score of twenty-four (24) will result in a recommendation to the region for certification. A failing score will result in the candidate not being recommended for certification.

G. Training Case Assignment

1. Candidate readiness for training case assignment is assessed using the competency rubric at the conclusion of classroom training weeks, during week seventeen (17) of

Pre-Service training. A score of twenty (20) will result in the assignment of one (1) to two (2) training cases for which the new hire accepts primary responsibility, with the support of the supervisor and peer mentor.

2. Every two weeks following the initial assignment of training cases, the support team will assess the candidate's ability to complete needed casework tasks on the assigned cases. If the candidate is successfully managing the current cases one to two additional cases may be assigned.
3. During Pre-Service Training, up to the twenty-fourth (24th) week and/or certification of newly hired case manager, new case managers are assigned no more than a total of five (5) cases at one time.
4. New hires may exceed case assignments only with the approval of the Commissioner.
5. Case assignment for the newly certified case manager and up to one year of service is outlined in DCS Policy ***31.7, Caseload Assignment for DCS Staff.***

H. Waivers and Modified Pre-Service

1. Case managers in the following categories may be waived from the completion of Pre-Service training requirements.
   - **a)** Stipend / Certification students complete all pre-service requirements while in college including an internship with DCS. They are considered certified case managers when hired.
   - **b)** Former DCS certified case managers with at least 12 months experience who leave and return to the department within 12 months retain their certification.
   - **c)** Current case manager transferring to a new specialty area are exempt from Pre-Service training with the following exceptions:
     - Specialty training. The region may waive this requirement and take responsibility for ensuring the transferring case manager is trained in the new specialty.
     - TFACTS training in the new specialty area
     - Simulation Labs
     - CANS/FAST certification
2. Regions may request a modified Pre-Service track in the following circumstances:
   - **a)** Returning case managers with a 13–36-month service gap.
   - **b)** Case managers with at least 12 months of similar post pre-service child welfare experience in another state.
   - **c)** Private provider case managers who were trained using the DCS Pre-Service curriculum.

3. The modified track consists of the first 16 weeks of Pre-Service training, which includes Introduction to DCS, Core training, Specialty training, TFACTS training, simulation labs, and eight weeks of OJT.
   - **a)** During OJT, the candidate's supervisor must shadow the case manager to assess their skills based on the competency rubric. Case assignment will be assessed by the supervisor and mentor with no more than 1-2 cases assigned within a two-week period and no more than a total of 5 cases assigned prior to certification. Case assignment may begin at the conclusion of specialty area training.
   - **b)** The candidate will complete the Case Presentation Assessment during week 17 of Pre-service, following the completion of classroom training. If the candidate is unable to achieve a passing score, they will complete the remaining weeks of OJT and may attempt a Case Presentation Assessment in the 24th week.
4. Pre-service waivers do not include waivers for specific training required by policy unless the candidate can provide proof of equivalent training. All candidates must complete Child Passenger Safety, TFACTS training, Simulation Labs and CANS or FAST training regardless of waiver status.

Forms:

None

Collateral Documents:

31.7, Caseload Assignment for DCS Staff

Supervisor Certification Manual

Pre-Service Certification Manual