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## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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### Curriculum Development

The Common Core Curricula is the result of a multi-year statewide collaborative effort to develop standardized curricula for California’s newly hired child welfare workers. Development and implementation of the Common Core Curricula was mandated by California’s Program Improvement Plan (PIP) as part of the 2003 federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). Although in-service core training had historically been provided by the Regional Training Academies (RTAs), the IUC and county staff development departments, the PIP stipulated that the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) “*develop a common core curriculum for all new child welfare workers and supervisors that is delivered by all training entities statewide.*”

The **Statewide Training and Education Committee (STEC)** developed the initial series of Common Core Curricula in FY2004/2005, marking the first implementation of new worker training that was *standardized* for the entire state. The purpose of statewide standardization is to achieve consistency and equity in the application of best and evidence-based practice in all 58 California counties. Each of the content areas of the Common Core has a set of measurable learning objectives for knowledge, skills and values essential to the provision of excellent service to families and children who participate in California’s county child welfare programs.

### Values Underlying the Development of Common Core Training

STEC used the following underlying values in developing recommendations for common core training:

- Common core training is grounded in social work values and ethics.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics states, “Social work administrators and supervisors should take reasonable steps to provide or arrange for continuing education and staff development for all staff for whom they are responsible. Continuing education and staff development should address current knowledge and emerging developments related to social work practice and ethics...” (NASW Code of Ethics, 1996, revised 1999, Section 3.08).

CalSWEC’s Standards and Values support the use of ongoing training as a form of best practices: “Standards of practice are by their nature subject to change. In view of shifting societal standards, as well as advancing knowledge

- Common core training builds upon, but is not limited to, new worker training currently underway in California, and utilizes existing training structures.
- Standards encourage flexibility in the way counties meet identified training needs.
- Standards encourage the application of best practices aimed at improving outcomes for children and families, by training strategies that progress from knowledge acquisition to building and demonstrating skills.
- Standards endorse training delivery methods for common core training that yield measurable learning objectives and that provide the basis for evaluation of knowledge, skills, and attitude acquisition in order to promote positive outcomes for children and families.
- Standards are consistent with those endorsed by California's Title IV-E university programs for the bachelor's and master's degrees in social work.
- Common core training encourages inclusion of community partners, whenever possible, in order to share responsibility for child safety, permanency, and well-being.

### Levels of Standardization

STEC determined that content areas of the Common Core would vary in their level of standardization:

Two content areas have **standardized information and standard delivery**, statewide:

- *Child Maltreatment Identification, Part 1: Neglect, Physical Abuse, and Emotional Abuse*
- *Child Maltreatment Identification, Part 2: Sexual Abuse and Exploitation*

Five other content areas have **standardized information**, with detailed instructions on delivery:

- *Framework for Child Welfare Practice in California*
- *Child and Youth Development in a Child Welfare Context*
- *Critical Thinking in Child Welfare Assessment: Safety, Risk, and Protective Capacity*
- *Family Engagement in Case Planning and Case Management*
- *Placement and Permanency*

Fourteen topics have **standardized competencies and learning objectives**:

- *Basic Interviewing*
- *Caregiver Substance Abuse and Child Welfare Practice*
- *Child Welfare Practice in a Multicultural Environment*
- *Court Procedures*
- *CWS Documentation for Use in the Legal System*
- *Domestic Violence*

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about children, human behavior, and human ills, standards must be subject to continuous reflection and review.” (CalSWEC Website)

[http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CalSWEC\\_Standards\\_Revised.html](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CalSWEC_Standards_Revised.html) and  
[http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CalSWEC\\_Values\\_Revised.html](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CalSWEC_Values_Revised.html)

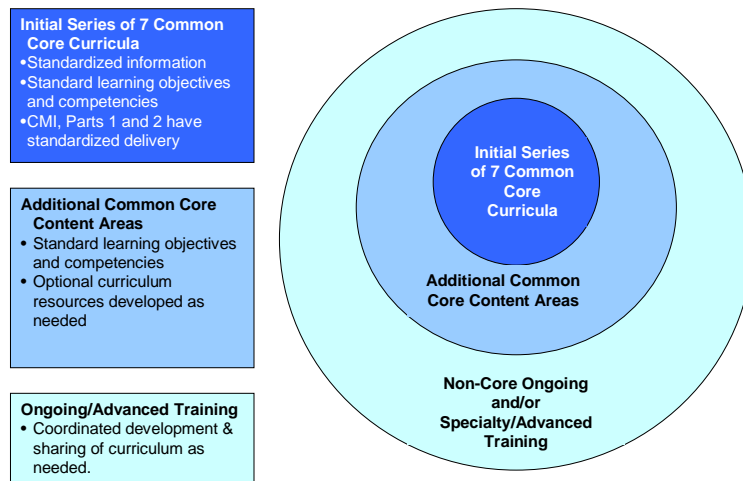
- *Health Care Needs of Children and Youth in the Child Welfare System*
- *Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)*
- *Mental Health and Mental Disorders*
- *Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) / Interethnic Adoptions Provisions (IAP)*
- *Self-care for New Child Welfare Workers*
- *Statewide Automated Case Management System*
- *Supporting Educational Rights and Achievement*
- *Values and Ethics*

CalSWEC, the Regional Training Academies, counties, and the Inter-University Consortium serving Los Angeles County are currently developing, adapting, and sharing curriculum resources that address all of the learning objectives for these fourteen areas. CalSWEC is coordinating this effort by conducting statewide surveys of available curriculum resources that can be posted on the CalSWEC website beginning in 2008. Curriculum resources for many of these areas were developed previously by CalSWEC and its coordinating partners as part of the Standardized Core Project (SCP) in 2001. Topic areas of the 2001 Standardized Core Project are available from CalSWEC upon request.

### **Completion of the Common Core**

All fully standardized content areas of the Common Core must be completed within twelve months from the date of hire, with the exception of *Child Maltreatment Identification, Part 2*, which must be completed within twenty-four months from the date of hire. Of the fourteen topics that are standardized at the level of competencies and learning objectives, the *Statewide Automated Case Management System* must be completed by the end of the first year of service, and all other topics must be completed by the end of the second year of service.

**Figure I: Conceptual Map of California's  
In-service Training Categories for New Child Welfare Workers**



### **Foundational Themes to Guide Practice and Curricula**

Five foundational themes were identified and interwoven in every content area of the Common Core Curriculum series. The curriculum *Framework for Child Welfare Practice in California* introduces new workers to these themes.

#### Working Definitions of the Foundational Themes:

##### *Fairness and Equity*

A principle that promotes equivalent opportunity for all children and families to achieve positive outcomes from child welfare interventions. Fairness and equity issues often concern reducing disparities in service access across population groups and diminishing overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the child welfare system. Policies, procedures, and/or practices based on fairness and equity principles consider the unique sociocultural context of each individual and frequently involve the expansion of culturally responsive community resources.

##### *Family & Youth Engagement*

Practices and strategies congruent with relevant sociocultural dynamics that effectively engage parents, youth and extended family members in a respectful and collaborative manner in the assessment, intervention and case planning processes.

##### *Strength-based Practice*

Practice that identifies strengths in an individual, family, or system, and the formulation of service arrays and interventions that acknowledge and build on those strengths. A strength-based approach honors and respects the dignity of family members and incorporates the family's

collective knowledge about the resources and strengths in their family system. Strength-based practice involves joining with the family to reach goals for improvement in family functioning.

#### *Outcomes-Informed Practice*

Practice that supports and is informed by federal and state outcomes. All training in California supports the federal outcomes of Safety, Permanency and Well-Being. California also has developed state-specific performance measures. These performance measures are referenced in the curricula where they apply. For more information on the performance measures in California, please refer to the website for the California Child Welfare Performance Indicators Project at the Center for Social Sciences Research (CSSR) at UC, Berkeley:

[http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare/](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/).

#### *Evidence-based Practice (“EBP”)*

The application to service delivery of research evidence related to child welfare, integrated with clinical expertise and client values. The existing body of research reflects varying levels of methodological rigor and efficacy, and differences in applicability to child welfare practice. Where available, research on child welfare practice is integrated into the common core.

### **Training Evaluation**

The evaluation components of the Common Core Curricula were developed concurrently with the creation of the curricula content. They are based on the *Training Evaluation Framework Report* developed by CalSWEC in FY 04/05 in response to the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). In addition to evaluating trainee satisfaction with the entire Common Core, four of the seven curricula in the initial series of the Common Core are evaluated by knowledge testing.<sup>2</sup> In this level of evaluation, trainees are tested on the knowledge that they acquired during the training in order to assure that the material is being presented effectively.

For *Child Maltreatment Identification, Parts 1 and 2*, embedded skill evaluations are employed. By this method of evaluation, trainees are evaluated on the skill of identifying child maltreatment when presented with case scenarios. Trainees practice the skill and are evaluated during the course of the training. Analysis of the satisfaction, knowledge and skill evaluation data is used to assist training evaluation experts to improve the training.

More information on the *Training Evaluation Framework*, as well as on training evaluation generally, can be found at: <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CWTraining.html>.

### **Revision Process**

Major revisions to the Common Core Curricula are conducted every three years or sooner, based on developments critical to effective social work practice. Minor revisions occur systematically as needed, to reflect current practice and changes in policy and legislation. Each common core

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<sup>2</sup> *Framework for Child Welfare Practice in California and Child Maltreatment Identification, Parts 1 and 2* do not offer knowledge testing.

curriculum is numbered by version number (Version 1.0, 1.1, 1.2, etc.). The latest version of each curriculum is posted on the CalSWEC website.

### Principles and Values of the Revision Process

The following principles and values are applied to the design of the revision process:

- Content will reflect “state of the art” knowledge and applications
- Content will apply transfer of learning principles and strategies
- Content will support and expand upon the competencies established in the Title IV-E bachelor’s- and master’s-level social work programs
- The revision process will draw upon the combined expertise of practitioners and university partners

Additionally, periodic revisions of the Common Core Curricula aim to advance fairness and equity principles throughout the child welfare system and expand support for improved outcomes for children and families.