

## Caseworker Traineeship

### Traineeship Concept

The material that follows represents a model for structuring a one-year traineeship for the Caseworker or equivalent local entry level titles, including a suggested process and forms for tracking and evaluating trainee progress and performance through the traineeship. Due to wide variations in local district size, organization, staffing needs, staff development capabilities and internal procedures and civil service policies and procedures, the model can be modified to meet particular local circumstances.

Generally, traineeships formally recognize that qualified but inexperienced appointees to positions of significant complexity, such as Caseworker, require a period of orientation and progressive training experiences to attain a level of competence needed to function fully in the position. The traineeship seeks to provide uniformity and structure through a combination of exposure to increasingly complex work situations with decreasingly close supervision, supplemented by formal and informal training experiences. Trainee progress and performance is closely monitored and periodically evaluated throughout the duration of the traineeship. Trainees are compensated at a lower rate than those at the fully functional level of the particular title, in recognition of the greater value of experienced workers.

Trainee appointments are made in the same manner as appointments to other competitive positions. Candidates must meet established minimum qualifications, take and pass an appropriate civil service examination and be appointed from the resulting eligible list. Trainees are considered in most local civil service rules to be probationary employees for the duration of the traineeship, and upon successful completion, are elevated to the full level and salary of the title without further examination.

Establishing a Caseworker traineeship can also have benefits in worker retention. Workers who complete the traineeship will have made a time commitment to the position, and a meaningful salary increase upon completion may provide incentive to remain with the agency through the traineeship and beyond. Depending upon how the traineeship is integrated within the existing local salary structure, an increase upon completion could reduce the salary disparity that exists in many districts between Caseworkers and their counterparts in the Probation Department, making a change of employment to that agency less attractive. Finally, both in status and salary, a traineeship provides a recognized distinction between the new worker and the value of trained, experienced Caseworkers.



## Establishing the Traineeship

Depending upon local personnel policies and procedures, it may be possible to establish the Caseworker Traineeship (and other types of traineeships, as well) without having to actually classify a separate "Caseworker Trainee" title with an individual position specification and attendant qualifications.

Successful trainees will advance to the full Caseworker level, so the title classification can remain Caseworker, while the individual appointed to the title can be considered as having trainee status as a Caseworker. A single classification that recognizes a distinction between incumbents with trainee status and those at the full - or journey - level can avoid unnecessary and perhaps cumbersome initial classification and later reclassification actions each time a trainee transitions to the full Caseworker level.

The local personnel officer or civil service commission has final authority to determine the appropriate classification method, but this Department's Office of Human Resources Management is available to discuss possibilities, and to provide advice and assistance preparatory to establishing the traineeship.

## Minimum Qualifications

The Department's minimum standard for open-competitive appointment to Caseworker (or equivalent titles) is a bachelor's degree or, at local option, certification as a Registered Nurse and one year of experience in that field. Some localities have exceeded the standard by specifying a particular major field of study and/or some level of related experience. Minimum qualifications for the Caseworker Traineeship must meet the Department's minimum standard for Caseworker and generally, will meet the district's existing minimum qualifications where they exceed the standard. It is not the intent of the traineeship, as provided in this model, to allow for lesser qualified trainees, but to address the need for those meeting the basic qualifications to gain skill levels and experience necessary for full Caseworker level performance.

It is recommended, however, that localities consider allowance for candidates with higher level training and experience qualifications to enter directly into full level Caseworker status. Candidates with previous casework experience in other agencies or those with advanced degrees in social work or human services fields, for instance, although they will require a period of orientation, may not benefit from or need to undergo the formal traineeship. In a single title classification situation, as described above, agencies can be afforded the

option of filling a vacancy at either the full or trainee status level. Higher qualified candidates which may appear on the Caseworker eligible list may be certified separately from others with the basic qualifications.

As with classification, the process of certifying eligible list candidates will be determined by the local personnel officer or civil service commission but, again, OHRM staff is available to discuss possibilities prior to traineeship implementation.

### Salary Structure

A primary tenet of the traineeship concept is a meaningful salary advance upon completion, as recognition of a transition in status and increase in worth to the agency, and as a retention incentive. The optimal implementation will have trainees begin at a salary level equal to the current Caseworker starting salary in the given district, with an advance to some point in the salary range or, perhaps, to the current salary level of the next higher title in the Casework series. Local salary structures and ranges within salary grades vary widely, and some may readily accommodate trainee advances. In many instances, however, implementation of the traineeship will require salary grade or range increases at each level of the title series. Initial transition of current Caseworkers with one year or more service to the determined full level salary when implementing the traineeship may be necessary. These cost factors may be seen as prohibitive, but should be weighed against the value potential of staff retention, better, more uniformly trained staff and the benefits of a longer, closely monitored probationary period.

It is possible to establish the traineeship with trainees starting at a salary level less than the current Caseworker starting salary. This would avoid cost increases, but would result in districts trying to attract candidates with the same qualifications presently sought for Caseworker, but at a lower salary. Except where Caseworkers are now considered as being well paid, this approach could stifle recruitment and is not recommended.

## CASEWORKER TRAINEESHIP

### OVERVIEW

This is a one-year probationary traineeship and upon satisfactory completion trainees are advanced, without further examination, to the full Caseworker level. Trainees will be required to participate in a number of formal and on-the-job training activities, and will be exposed to increasingly complex casework situations with progressively less close supervisory direction. The traineeship is structured to provide the knowledges, skills and abilities required at the full Caseworker level.

Supervisors are expected to develop an individual traineeship development plan (IDP) for each trainee using the appropriate forms and containing tasks, standards for satisfactory completion of the tasks and specific training for each trainee. This material should be selected from appropriate sections of the overall Caseworker Traineeship Master Plan, depending upon the trainee's assigned services area, possibilities for rotation through other services areas and the trainee's past work/life experiences and educational background.

Evaluation of the trainee's performance will be required at intervals of 4, 8 and 12 months, and IDPs should be revised as may be necessary due to significant changes in trainee assignments.

### GUIDELINES

#### Responsibility of Supervisors

The supervisor's role is to ensure that the trainee is provided the guidance, training, development and evaluation necessary to successfully advance to the full Caseworker level, to include:

- o Within two weeks of the trainee's appointment, develop the IDP and have it approved by the second supervisory level and any reviewer level which the agency may have established.
- o Orientation of the trainee to the unit's function, work, organization and staff relationships.
- o Providing developmental assignments, ensuring that the trainee understands the reasons, scope and background for the assignment, and is given feedback and advice and redirection, as necessary, as the assignment progresses.
- o Ensuring that the trainee receives the training required or deemed necessary for proper development during the

traineeship, allowing adequate time away from the job site and assignments to attend pre-scheduled training activities.

- o Meeting with the trainee as often as appropriate to evaluate assigned work and assess the trainee's progress.
- o Two weeks prior to the completion of each evaluation interval, formally evaluating the trainee's performance against the IDP, discussing such performance with the trainee and recommending remedial or additional developmental training where there are weaknesses or problems with the trainee's performance.
- o Providing a documented final recommendation indicating trainee completion of all requirements of the traineeship and advancement to the full Caseworker level.

### Responsibilities of the Trainee

The successful completion of the traineeship will depend largely on the quality of the trainee's participation and his/her performance and attitude on the job. Therefore, it is critical that the trainee recognize the importance of responsibilities which include the following:

- o Identifying areas of self strengths and weaknesses and planning for self development.
- o Completing assigned work in a timely manner, requesting further information or assistance as needed.
- o Participating in required and recommended training sessions.
- o Completing reading assignments and self-study programs.
- o Seeking conferences with supervisor, as necessary, to discuss assignments and developmental activities.
- o Developing and/or maintaining a positive and constructive approach to job responsibilities.

## CASEWORKER TRAINEESHIP REVIEW PROCESS

The individual traineeship development plan (IDP) is prepared by the trainee's supervisor within two weeks of the trainee's appointment. The trainee should participate in developing any portions of the IDP not required by the overall Caseworker Traineeship Master Plan. The IDP is reviewed and approved or amended by the second level supervisor and any higher level reviewer the agency may have designated, and the finalized IDP is signed by the trainee, supervisor and reviewer(s).

Performance Evaluations are prepared by the trainee's supervisor two weeks prior to the end of each evaluation interval (4, 8 and 12 months from the date of appointment) and forwarded through the established review structure. Finalized evaluations are signed by the supervisor and reviewer(s).

The supervisor schedules a conference with the trainee to discuss the finalized evaluation, to advise the trainee of strengths or weaknesses in performance, to mutually determine corrective developmental activities to address deficiencies or further improve performance and, if necessary, to discuss revisions of the IDP due to changes in the nature of work assigned. The trainee signs the evaluation and is offered opportunity to submit and append a written statement if (s)he disagrees with the evaluation.

At the end of the final evaluation interval, the supervisor notifies the agency personnel coordinator that the trainee has completed all traineeship requirements and that the trainee should be elevated to the full Caseworker level and status.

In the event that, at any time during the traineeship and after serving a minimum period (where minimum probationary service has been established by local rule, policy or practice), the trainee is determined and documented to be unsatisfactory and likely to continue so, trainee service is terminated in the same manner as non-trainee probationary service.

It is recommended that agencies establish a review entity above the second supervisory level and that where possible the entity be a board of high level services staff and a member with administrative responsibilities. The board would serve as the final review for IDPs and evaluations to ensure equity and consistency with the intent of the traineeship and terms of the Caseworker Traineeship Master Plan. The board would also control the quality of written plans and evaluations, serve as an appeals level for unsatisfactory evaluations and provide trainees an impartial forum for discussion of problems or concerns encountered during the traineeship.

## FORMAL TRAINING

### General Guidelines:

At the beginning of the traineeship, the supervisor should review the trainee's educational and work experience background which, in addition to the trainee's assigned service area, will help to determine individual training needs. The supervisor and trainee should discuss the trainee's background, perceived needs and areas of interest and, considering the availability and scheduled offerings of formal training, develop a training plan and schedule for the duration of the traineeship. The plan and schedule should be reviewed periodically, but at least upon completion of the four and eight month traineeship evaluation periods, and revised as necessary. Training schedule changes and operational needs may dictate revisions in addition to demonstrated needs for remedial or specialized training observed during the evaluation periods.

### Core Training:

Orientation - In addition to general orientation afforded all new employees, Caseworker Trainees should receive specialized orientation related to the agency's services component, to include topics such as:

- Organizational structure and reporting relationships.
- Organizational policies, procedures and related processes.
- Overview of individual service areas and programs.
- Interrelationship between services and the other agency organizations and programs.
- Interrelationship with SDSS.
- Overview of social services agencies and services available within the community.
- Overview of EDP systems related to services programs.

Orientation should occur as soon as possible after the trainee is appointed, but no later than one month into the traineeship.

Beginning Training - During the traineeship, all trainees should complete Basic Training for Social Services Staff (trainees with degrees in social work may be exempted) and, depending on primarily service area assignment, one course. Provided through the Office of Human Resources Development, SDSS, these include:

- Child Welfare Permanency Planning Core
- Child Protective Services Core
- Protective Services for Adults (PSA) Institute

Elective Training - Further formal training should be planned based upon such factors as trainee educational and work experience background, interests, observed strengths/weaknesses, assigned service area, agency operational needs and coursework schedules. These may include individual skills and/or more specialized or advanced service program training skills. Training may include such areas as:

- Writing skills
- Oral communications
- Interviewing
- Stress management
- Time management
- Interpersonal relationships
- Professionalism/professional ethics
- Cultural diversity

Reading Assignments - Outside reading assignments related to the provision of services in general or specifically to the trainee's assigned services area should be developed to supplement classroom training or where familiarity with such material is otherwise necessary. Readings should include such items as:

- Relative selections from Social Services Law and Regulations
- State Administrative Directives and manuals
- Services plans
- Individual case records
- Case studies
- Professional publications

## ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING

### General Overview

On-the-job training experiences should be developed to expose trainees to a variety of casework situations and related activities, issues and problems in a structured manner. Such experiences should become increasingly complex and/or diversified, with decreasing supervisory control and intervention as the traineeship progresses. In addition to casework related assignments, trainees may be assigned to review selected case histories, assisting experienced workers, observations, attending case reviews, meetings and conferences on services related issues, and research activities.

### Rotational Assignments

On-the-job exposure of trainees to service areas outside of the assigned area is encouraged and, where practical considering agency operational needs, trainees should complete one rotational assignment for a minimum one month of the traineeship. As with the primary assignment, rotational assignments should include limited caseloads, close supervision, readings, observations, etc. Primary supervisors must coordinate with rotational supervisors in assessing trainee performance and progress.

CASEWORKER TRAINEESHIP  
INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Trainee: \_\_\_\_\_ Service Area: \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Appointment Evaluation  
to Traineeship: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUPERVISOR

This plan is to be developed by you, after discussion with the Trainee, within two weeks of the Trainee's appointment, with revisions thereafter as may be necessary due to substantial change in the Trainee's work assignments or training needs. The completed plan should be signed by you, the reviewer and the trainee, and will serve as the basis for evaluation of performance during the traineeship.

The attachments are:

- Form A. SUMMARY OF TRAINEE EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE
- Form B. INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE PROGRAM
- Form C. INDIVIDUAL TRAINING PLAN

FORM A

Trainee's Name \_\_\_\_\_

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SUMMARY OF TRAINEE EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Information about the trainee's educational attainments and work experience should be provided, including degree(s) held, major and secondary field of study, relevant coursework completed, any specialized knowledges or skills, and prior employment experience, including volunteer work.

FORM B

Trainee's Name \_\_\_\_\_

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INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

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I. Major Activities/Tasks

Describe the major activities and tasks which the trainee must be able to perform satisfactorily.

II. Performance Standards

Describe the expected level of performance and/or the criteria used to determine satisfactory performance.

(Attach additional sheets, as needed.)

FORM B (2)

Trainee's Name \_\_\_\_\_

III. Other Aspects Of Performance

Describe other aspects of performance which should be taken into consideration, including those knowledges, skills, abilities and personal characteristics the trainee must possess or attain in order to satisfactorily carry out the major activities and tasks entered in Section I.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Trainee's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

FORM C

Trainee's Name \_\_\_\_\_

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INDIVIDUAL TRAINING PLAN

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- I. Describe the on-the-job training activities to be guided by the supervisor, to include activities such as research on specific issues, review of completed casework, study of particular files, exposure to various casework activities and situations working with experienced staff, observation activities, attendance at meetings, conferences, etc.

FORM C (2)

II. FORMAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES: Describe all activities planned, to include formal classroom training, workshops, presentations, professional conferences, etc.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dates(s)</u>	<u>Source of Instruction</u>
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III. READINGS AND REFERENCES: Specify policy and procedures manuals, laws, rules and regulations, periodicals, case studies and texts with which the trainee should become familiar.

(Attach additional sheets, if needed)

CASEWORKER TRAINEESHIP  
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND RATING

Trainee: \_\_\_\_\_ Service Area: \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Appointment Evaluation  
to Traineeship: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUPERVISOR

1. Two weeks prior to the end of the evaluation period, provide the Trainee a blank copy of this form to use as a worksheet for both self-analysis and for providing input in assessing performance. Completion of the worksheet by the Trainee is optional.
2. Considering input from the Trainee, if any, and seeking clarification, as necessary, complete Sections I, II and III and submit the form, with a recommended rating of the Trainee's overall performance during the evaluation period, to the reviewer. Include any Trainee input, and arrange to discuss your evaluation and rating with the reviewer.
3. Upon approval of the reviewer, schedule an appraisal interview with the Trainee to discuss performance and the assigned rating. This meeting should also serve to discuss any needed revisions, such as changes in tasks, recommended additional training, rotational assignment(s), etc., to the Trainee's Individual Development Plan covering the next evaluation period.
4. Have the trainee sign and date acknowledgment in Section III, provide the trainee with a copy and retain a copy for your files (the original and additional copies may have to be provided for the trainee's personnel file and/or appropriate administrators to advance to the full Caseworker level upon traineeship completion, according to your agency's procedures). Optionally, Trainee may attach written comments concerning the evaluation.

FORM D (2)

Trainee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

II. SUMMARY OF ACTUAL PERFORMANCE:

For each major activity, task or objective outlined in the Trainee's Individual Performance Program (Form B of the Individual Development Plan), fully and specifically describe the Trainee's performance during the evaluation period, to include whether the Trainee met or failed to meet established performance standards.

FORM D (3)

Trainee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

III. OTHER ASPECTS OF PERFORMANCE

Describe other aspects of Trainee performance taken into consideration in the overall evaluation during this evaluation period. Include the Trainee's progress in attaining and demonstrating the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform at the full Caseworker level and assess any personal characteristics and behaviors that may affect job performance. This section may also be used to recommend supplemental training that may be helpful in addressing observed weaknesses in performance.

FORM D (4)

Trainee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

IV. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND SUPERVISOR'S RECOMMENDATION

A. Check the rating that best summarizes the trainee's overall performance:

( ) Outstanding ( ) Satisfactory ( ) Unsatisfactory

B. Supervisor's Recommendation:

( ) Advance Trainee to the full Caseworker level

( ) Continue in Traineeship

( ) The Trainee should be terminated from employment

Supervisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Trainee's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**OUTSTANDING:** The Trainee's performance is clearly exceptional and consistently exceeds expectations for this point of the traineeship.

**SATISFACTORY:** The Trainee generally meets performance expectations in a capable, competent manner and has progressed consistent with this period of the traineeship.

**UNSATISFACTORY:** The Trainee clearly does not meet performance expectations at a minimally acceptable level, requires significant extra direction, cannot be relied upon to complete normal work functions timely and effectively and/or has not responded satisfactorily to the training provided. If retained in the traineeship, there is need for immediate and substantial performance improvement.