

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**CHILDREN'S DIVISION**

**P.O. BOX 88**

**JEFFERSON CITY, MO**

**September 8, 2004**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS, AND  
CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

**FROM:** FREDERIC M. SIMMENS, DIRECTOR

**SUBJECTS:** IMPLEMENTATION OF REVISED STARS PRE-SERVICE  
CURRICULUM

REVISIONS TO THE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST  
HANDBOOK

**REFERENCE:** CHILDREN'S DIVISION

**DISCUSSION:**

The purpose of this memorandum is to announce the implementation of revisions to the STARS Pre-Service Curriculum and Family Development Specialist Handbook.

The Child Welfare League of America has recently developed and published revisions to the STARS Pre-Service Curriculum. These revisions to Foster STARS/Adopt STARS have been ongoing since its original publication, as new information has been collected, needs reassessed, and input provided from many trainers across the country. These ongoing efforts have culminated in this revised edition of Foster STARS/Adopt STARS, and these efforts will continue as we strive to meet the ongoing training needs of prospective foster/adopt families.

In addition to the work by CWLA, the Children's Division Staff Training and Development Unit has completed additional work with the curriculum to ensure that it meets the standards and specialized needs of Missouri's Child Protection System.

The curriculum revisions fall into two categories—format and content. Proposed content changes grew out of new federal legislation and its impact upon the field (for example: the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act and the need to prepare resource families for the growing number of cross-cultural placements); emerging needs of children and families (for example: the increasingly challenging behaviors of children and the need to train resource families in de-escalation skills); and areas that were identified through evaluation and feedback as in need of strengthening (for example: more information and attention to sexual abuse issues).

The **format changes** focus on strengthening the curriculum so that the trainer may more easily and/or more competently present and facilitate the training process. These changes include enhancements to how the Trainer’s Guide is formatted, as well as structural changes in how the sessions are organized or how activities are conducted. Most format changes grew out of the experiences of trainers across the country. Format changes include:

- Better instructions to activities (For example: The “Developmental Jigsaw Puzzle” has revised instructions that are easier for the trainer to follow and enhance learning for participants.)
- Enhanced visual aids (For example: The use of more videos.)
- More variety in training (For example: Efforts were made to ensure a good mixture of presentation and group activities based on feedback from trainers.)
- Refinement of format (For example: Some activities were shortened to make them simpler and more appropriate for pre-service—such as “Charlie’s Situation” in Session Two.)
- Less redundancy (For example: The Lifebook presentation now occurs only in Session Five.)
- A more “user friendly” manual (For example: There is now consistency among all references to pages in the STARSbook.)

Persons experienced in using the previous edition of the Foster STARS/Adopt STARS Trainer’s Guide, will need to become familiar with the enhancements and changes to the new Trainer’s Guide, videos, STARSbooks, and Family Development Specialist Handbook.

The **content enhancements** to Foster STARS/Adopt STARS focus on strengthening competence through:

- The addition of new information, research, knowledge, or statistics that inform or enhance learning directed toward previously identified competencies (For example: More up-to-date and comprehensive information is provided about child attachment.)
- The addition of material that expands understanding or promotes a higher level of learning than was previously the case. This could include additional presentation of material, new

resources or an additional activity (For example: Additional information and an activity were added to enhance knowledge of sexual abuse.)

- The addition of content to promote learning of a new competency (For example: New adoption competencies were incorporated into the curriculum, and relevant content added.)
- Ensuring up-to-date statistics, information, and sources (For example: More current statistics were added for abuse and neglect.)
- The weaving of certain content throughout the curriculum in order to strengthen the overall philosophy and approach related to a given competency category. (For example: Efforts were made to strengthen the overall competency category “Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families.” Efforts were made to address birth parent issues/concerns throughout the curriculum.)

Significant enhancements were made in the following content areas:

- Sexual abuse
- Cultural competence
- Understanding of adolescence
- Permanency planning
- Impact of trauma
- Strengthening understanding and relationships with birth families
- Discipline

In addition, as copies of the Pre-service curriculum are received in the local offices, Section III “About This Foster STARS/Adopt STARS Revision” provides detailed information regarding revisions to each of the individual pre-service sessions.

**Each circuit and contracted provider will be receiving 2 copies of the following materials in order to fully implement the curriculum locally. The materials will be shipped to each circuit and contracted provider in approximately two weeks from the date of this memorandum. Additional copies will be made available upon request based on need.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Each circuit will be responsible for distributing copies of the following materials to the local STARS training teams:

- Revised STARS Pre-service Curriculum which includes the revised STARSbook information.

- Revisions to the Family Development Specialist Handbook, sections Step 8B and Step 9 (complete FDS books will not be shipped as revisions are contained in these two sections only.)
- Revised “Making a Difference” video, (statistical revisions were made to the narration during the introduction.)
- “Making a Difference” video vignettes (new to this curriculum.)
- “Family Forever” video (new to this curriculum.)

Copies of STARSbooks for each participant being trained locally can be obtained in the normal manner by contacting [Linda Lefebvre](#), Children’s Division Staff Training and Development Unit at 314-416-2781. The current supply of STARSbooks, which are only compatible with the now outdated curriculum, are limited and available until the supply is depleted. Once the supply is depleted only the revised version of the STARSbooks, compatible with the newly revised curriculum, will be available.

Effective immediately, all STARS training teams should begin using the revised materials.

All portions of the curriculum (trainer’s guide, videos, STARSbooks and FDS Handbook) must be implemented together for appropriate and efficient use of the curriculum and assessment process. In addition to the impact upon trainers conducting local training sessions, staff in the role of the Family Development Specialist will need to familiarize themselves with content changes, STARSbook changes, and revisions to the STARS Connections (homework assignments). Review of revisions of Step 8B and 9 will be necessary to adapt to the change and order of content during the at-home consultation meetings as part of the Mutual Assessment process.

For sites who have incorporated the video “Developing Resource Families” into their current curriculum, this video has gone unchanged and has not been impacted by these revisions.

**NECESSARY ACTION:**

1. Review this memorandum with all Children’s Division staff, including local STARS training teams and contracted providers.
2. Replace existing “Making a Difference” video with the revised version.
3. Effective immediately, begin utilizing the revised Family Development Specialist Handbook upon receipt of the new material.
4. Effective immediately, begin utilizing the revised STARS materials. All portions of the curriculum, videos, STARSbooks etc. must be implemented at the same time.
5. All question regarding this memorandum should be referred through normal supervisory channels to Jeff Adams, Staff Training and Development Coordinator, at 314-416-2781.

FMS/JA