

Capacity Building Center for States Podcast

Simulation Training: Evaluation Findings

Keeping It Real Series

NARRATOR:

What have we learned about the effectiveness of simulation training? Does it prepare new investigators for their jobs any better than other methods? We asked Ted Cross, an evaluator with the University of Illinois Children and Family Research Center. He told us about their study design and how they discovered that child welfare investigators not only have more confidence in their abilities to do their jobs but are also more likely to stay with the agency. Listen to what he has to say.

TED CROSS:

We've been surprised by how enduring some of the impact is. We gathered data from sim-trained investigators at three time points. Right during the simulation week, we tracked their confidence day-by-day-by-day, and we see increases there. We get their opinion data right after they have completed the training, again, very positive scores.

But we also did an investigator survey in which we surveyed them a year or two after they've had the simulation training, and we compared them to investigators who did not have the simulation training—more experienced investigators because they joined DCFS before simulation training was available. And we found that even 1 to 2 years after the simulation training, those with simulation training valued their training more highly and they reported that they had an easier time acquiring two skills that are specifically taught in simulation training: doing evidence-based documentation and testifying in court.

And testifying in court is a really important piece because your typical investigator is not going to get a lot of on-the-job training on that, it's not something that happens every day. It's challenging and consequential, but you don't get a lot of experience on—the job, but you do get that experience in the Sim Training Lab. And the sim-trained investigators reported—and they weren't asked about sim training, they were asked about the ease of acquiring this skill. They felt it was easier than those who had not had the simulation training, who were actually more experienced. So, we saw these effects even a year or two later.

We also saw that the sim-trained investigators were less likely to report considering leaving their job, and then when we actually analyzed the administrative data, they were less likely to leave the job. We have to be a little cautious about that, because you're comparing two different eras, before 2016 and after. There may be other differences between the groups, but I think it's telling that the sim-trained investigators felt more prepared, and they were less likely to be considering leaving the job or leaving the job within 2 years.

NARRATOR:

Many thanks to the representatives of the University of Illinois Children and Family Research Center, the University of Illinois Child Protection Training Academy, and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services for their contributions to the Keeping It Real resources. This recording was created by the Capacity Building Center for States, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau under contract number HHSP23201500071I.