

# CPS TRANSFORMATION EVALUATION: CPS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## *Summary of Findings from the Evaluation of the CPD Training Model*

### Introduction to CPD

In January 2015, DFPS began using the CPS Professional Development (CPD) training model to train and equip new caseworkers. The CPD model takes an experiential approach to training to provide new caseworkers with a better understanding of the reality of their job early in training. The CPD model then aims to better prepare caseworkers who are a good fit for their new role, thereby increasing staff competency, work quality, workforce stability, and ultimately outcomes for families. The CPD model was rolled out gradually across DFPS regions in 2015, and since November 2015, all new caseworkers have been trained using the CPD model. CPD includes a 12 to 13 week training period, during which time new caseworkers are paired with a mentor (a tenured caseworker) who works with the new caseworker to prepare her to work cases independently. The training period includes classroom trainings and field training with the mentor, during which time the caseworker gradually assumes responsibilities related to her mentor's caseload. After new caseworkers begin independent casework, they are given a partial caseload that gradually increases until they reach a full caseload at six months of tenure.

### Overview of the Evaluation

DFPS contracted Dr. Cynthia Osborne and the Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas to conduct an implementation and outcomes evaluation of CPD to examine whether the training model is associated with improvements in caseworker preparedness, retention, and quality. To assess whether caseworkers trained under CPD are more prepared for their job, remain with the agency longer, and perform higher quality casework, CFRP developed and administered surveys, conducted focus groups, and assessed casework quality outcomes in DFPS administrative data.<sup>1</sup> CFRP took advantage of the gradual rollout of the model to compare caseworkers trained under CPD to caseworkers hired during a similar timeframe but trained under the old model, Basic Skills Development (BSD). CFRP examined caseworkers hired into the caseworker position for the first time between October 1, 2014 and April 30, 2016 and observed these caseworkers for 18 months after their hire date. Therefore, the evaluation timeframe for the final analysis spans from

October 1, 2014 to December 31, 2017, with the period of analysis for each caseworker determined by her hire date.<sup>2</sup>

### Summary of Findings

Overall, CFRP finds that CPD is an important step in the right direction for the agency. Workforce stability improved under CPD, with more caseworkers staying with the agency until at least 18 months, leading to an increase in caseworker continuity for children in TMC. Further, across most measures examined, caseworkers who stayed with the agency through 18 months performed better than caseworkers who left, indicating that CPS is retaining higher quality caseworkers.

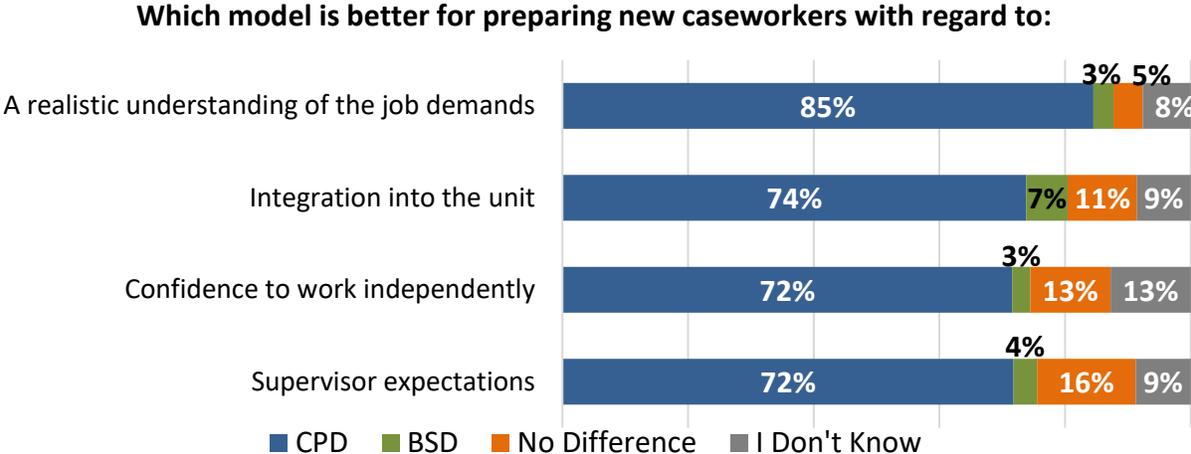
CFRP did not find a consistent difference in casework quality between CPD-trained and BSD-trained caseworkers, however, casework quality improved substantially during the evaluation period and quality improvements correspond to increased attention by agency leadership to meeting key policy measures. These findings indicate that, overall, the agency is making important progress towards improving services to children and families.

### Implementation Study Findings

**CPS staff consistently report that the CPD training model is the right approach for training new caseworkers and that CPD better prepares caseworkers than the previous training model, BSD.**

CPS staff overwhelmingly reported that the hands-on and experiential training under the CPD model is the right approach for training new caseworkers. Supervisors asserted that CPD-trained caseworkers receive a more realistic understanding of their job responsibilities earlier in their training, begin developing skills more quickly, and are more prepared when they begin to work cases than their counterparts trained under the BSD training model, shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Supervisors' Perceptions of Caseworker Preparedness (n=878)



Source: Statewide Survey I (November 2015) and Statewide Survey II (May 2016). Notes: Responses are pooled across the two survey waves. For repeat respondents, the first observation is used.

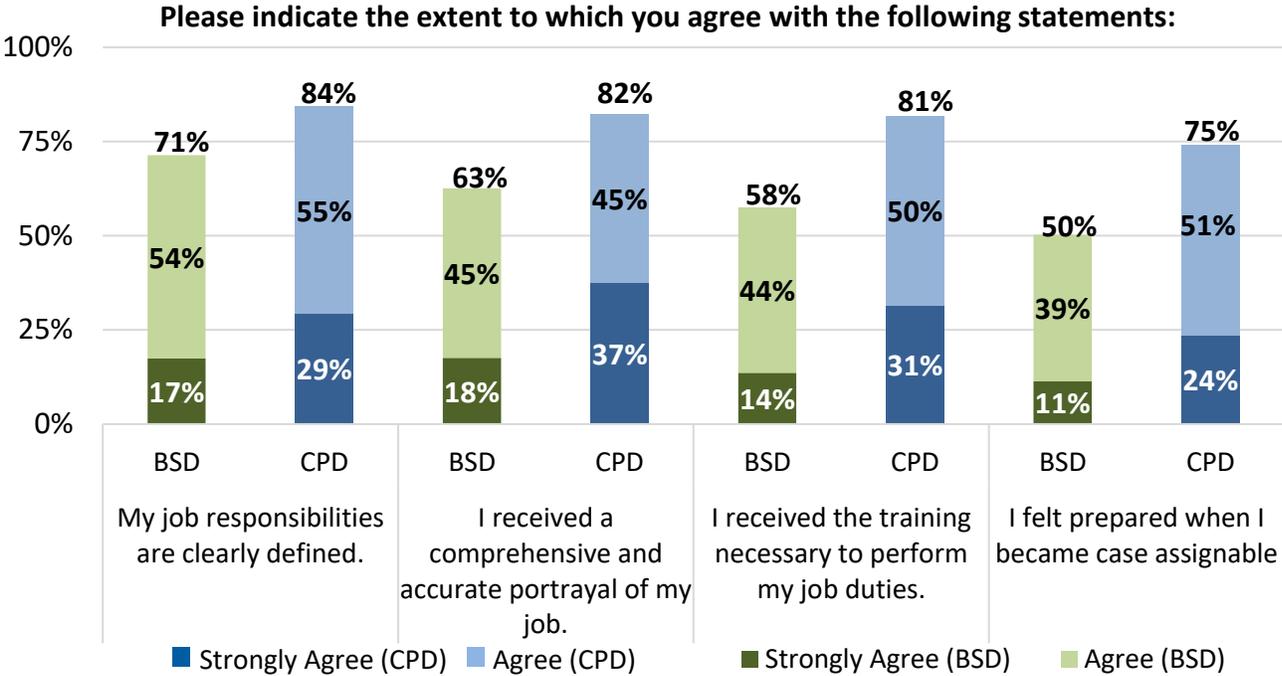
In addition to reports from supervisors and tenured caseworkers that new hires are more prepared under CPD than under BSD, CPD-trained caseworkers were more likely to report that they received a comprehensive portrayal of what their job involves during training, which is one of the key mechanisms by which the agency aims to facilitate a better assessment of fit early in a caseworker’s training

*“I think the CPD model gives an accurate picture of what the job will entail from the beginning, which allows a potential worker to see if this is what they want to do”.*

-Supervisor

As shown in Figure 2, more CPD-trained new caseworkers than BSD-trained caseworkers reported that they felt prepared for their job at the end of training. Three-quarters of CPD-trained caseworkers reported that they felt prepared when they began working cases independently, compared to half of BSD-trained caseworkers. The majority of CPD-trained caseworkers rated their training experience highly and CPD-trained caseworkers indicated that the instructional quality is high, the material was applicable to their job, and the length of training is appropriate.

Figure 2: New Caseworkers’ Perceptions of Training by Training Model (n=1,027)



Source: Statewide Survey I (November 2015) and Statewide Survey II (May 2016). Notes: Responses are pooled across the two survey waves. For repeat respondents, the first observation is used. Limited to caseworkers who are case-assignable. CPD n=674; BSD n=353.

CPD-trained caseworkers also reported higher levels of job satisfaction than their BSD-trained counterparts. On self-reported measures of job satisfaction, over half of case-assignable CPD-trained caseworkers reported that they were very satisfied with their jobs, compared to less than one-third of BSD-trained caseworkers.

*“The strengths of the CPD model [are] that the individual gets hands-on experience on the daily tasks and job responsibilities of a caseworker and has firsthand knowledge about how to engage a client in services”.*

-Veteran Caseworker

Outcomes Study Findings: Retention

**CPD-trained caseworkers were 13 percent more likely than BSD-trained caseworkers to remain in their job for at least 18 months.**

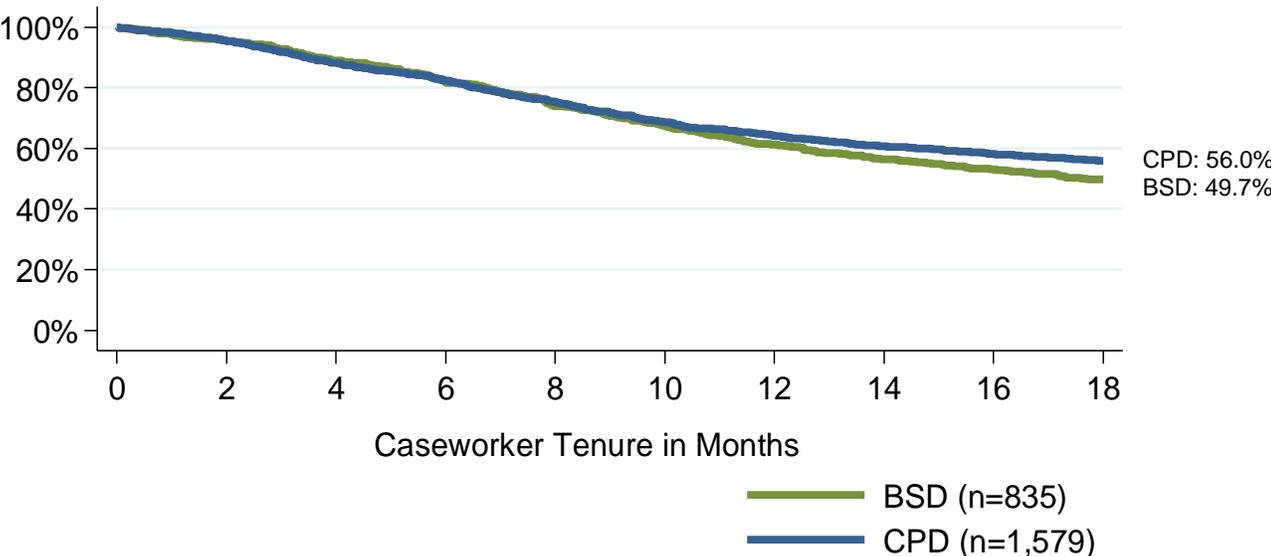
To assess whether the CPD model led to a more stable workforce, CFRP assessed retention among all caseworkers who were hired by the agency for the first time between October 1, 2014 and April 30, 2016. Workforce stability was examined over each caseworker’s first 18 months of

employment. Overall, we found that CPD-trained caseworkers were 13 percent more likely than their BSD-trained counterparts to still be employed as a caseworker after 18 months on the job.<sup>3</sup> Among CPD-trained caseworkers, 56 percent of new hires were still working as caseworkers at 18 months of tenure, compared to just under half of BSD-trained caseworkers. The retention difference between CPD and BSD persists even when controlling for stage of service, region of hire, gender, and average daily caseload.

If caseworkers trained under CPD had left the agency at the same rate as BSD caseworkers, we would expect an additional 91 caseworkers to have left the agency within 18 months of hire. In other words, the agency avoided the cost of recruiting, hiring, and training an estimated additional 91 caseworkers during the evaluation timeframe and the children and families served by these caseworkers did not experience a disruption in services associated with turnover.

The difference in retention between CPD and BSD caseworkers is illustrated in Figure 3, which presents survival curves representing the probability that a caseworker will still be employed with DFPS at every point over her first year of employment, by training model. As shown in Figure 3, a wedge between the two groups of caseworkers begins around 10 months and the gap widens from 10 to 18 months, which means that compared to BSD-trained workers, CPD-trained caseworkers are increasingly more likely to stay as time passes from 10 to 18 months on the job.

Figure 3: 18-Month Survival Analysis of CPD and BSD Caseworkers (n=2,414)

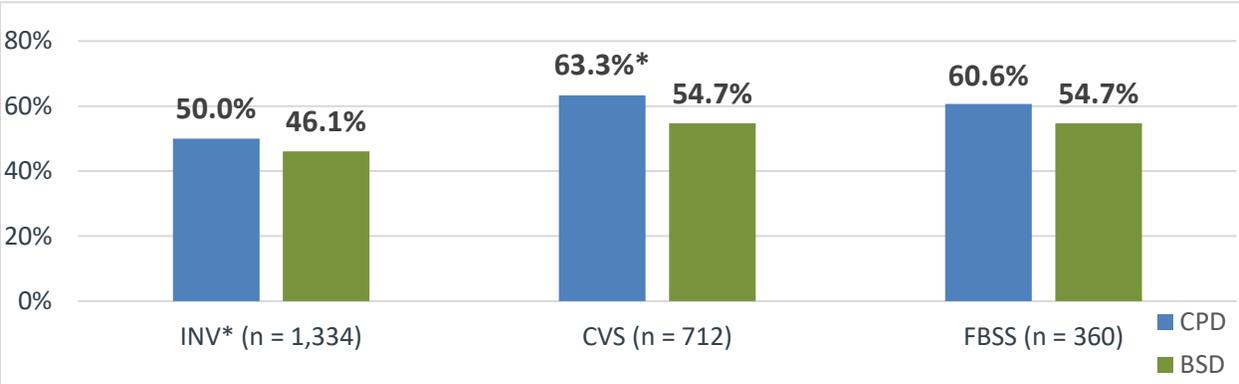


Source: CAPPs data and CPD-Tracking Log data provided by DFPS current through December 31, 2017. Note: Sample is limited to caseworkers first hired between October 1, 2014 and April 30, 2016.

Retention patterns are different within each stage of service (investigations, conservatorship, family-based safety services), as shown in Figure 4. CPD-trained and BSD-trained caseworker retention looks similar among investigative and family-based safety services caseworkers, but among conservatorship workers, CPD-trained caseworkers are significantly more likely to remain with the agency until at least 18 months, indicating that conservatorship caseworkers are driving

the overall difference in retention between CPS and BSD. Investigators are less likely to reach 18 months tenure than CVS or FBSS caseworkers, regardless of whether they are BSD-trained or CPD-trained.

Figure 4: Percent of Caseworkers Retained at 18 Months by Stage of Service (n = 2,406)

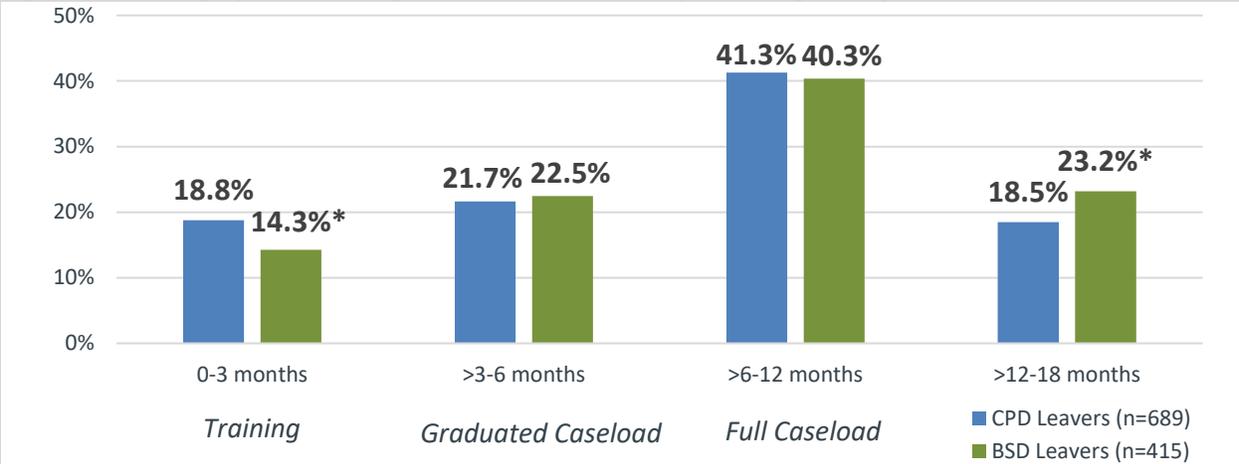


Source: CAPPS data and CPD-Tracking Log data provided by DFPS current through December 31, 2017. \*Indicates significance at the p=0.05 level; INV caseworker retention is lower than CVS or FBSS retention; CVS CPD retention is higher than CVS BSD retention.

**Among all early leavers, CPD-trained caseworkers are more likely to leave during training and less likely to leave after one year of tenure.**

One goal of the experiential approach employed under CPD is to help new hires assess if the caseworker position is a good fit for them early on, ideally before they carry a caseload, to minimize service disruption to clients and minimize the agency resources spent training staff who will ultimately leave. Among all CPD- and BSD-trained caseworkers who left before reaching 18 months of tenure, BSD-trained caseworkers had about one month more tenure, on average, at exit than CPD-trained caseworkers. As a proportion of all early leavers, more CPD-trained caseworkers left during training (zero to three months after hire) than BSD caseworkers, who were most likely to leave between one year and 18 months after hire (see Figure 4). The trend of CPD leavers exiting earlier in their tenure than BSD leavers is an important step in the right direction for the agency and indicates that the experiential approach of CPD is working as intended to help new caseworkers assess early on in training if the position is a good fit.

Figure 5: Timing of Exit Among 18-Month Leavers by Training Group (n = 1,104)



Source: CAPPs data and CPD-Tracking Log data provided by DFPS current through December 31, 2017. \*Indicates significance at the p=0.05 level.

### Outcomes Study Findings: Casework Quality

To compare the performance of CPD-trained and BSD-trained caseworkers, CFRP worked with the agency to select casework quality measures for each stage of service (investigations, conservatorship, and family-based safety services) that are based on CPS policy, measurable using agency administrative data, and meaningfully assess casework quality. For each casework quality measure, CFRP calculated the average success rate, or the proportion of cases for which the measure was completed according to policy requirements, based on IMPACT documentation. CFRP compared CPD-trained caseworker and BSD-trained caseworker performance from each individual caseworker’s hire date through 18 months of tenure:

1. Timely Attempted Initial Contact (Investigations): Proportion of investigations for which the caseworker attempted initial contact with a parent or child on the case within 24 hours for Priority 1 (P1) investigations or 72 hours for Priority 2 (P2) investigations<sup>4</sup>
2. Successful Timely Initial Contact (Investigations): Proportion of investigations for which the caseworker successfully made a face-to-face initial contact with a parent or child on the case within 24 hours for P1 investigations or 72 hours for P2 investigations
3. Timely Investigations Closure (Investigations): Proportion of investigations closed within 45 days of the investigations stage opening<sup>5</sup>
4. Monthly Face-to-Face Contact (Conservatorship): Proportion of children with a required face-to-face visit for which the caseworker completed a face-to-face visit with the child.<sup>6</sup>
5. Timely Initial Contact (Family-Based Safety Services): Proportion of cases for which the caseworker successfully made a face-to-face contact with at least one parent or child on the stage within 10 days of the FBSS stage opening<sup>7</sup>
6. Monthly Face-to-Face Contact (Family-Based Safety Services): Proportion of cases with a required face-to-face visit each month for which the caseworker completed a face-to-face visit with at least one parent or child on the stage<sup>8</sup>

The following section summarizes findings from CFRP’s analysis of casework quality.

**Casework quality was relatively high among CPD-trained and BSD-trained caseworkers, and casework quality improved over time.**

Prior to comparing casework quality between CPD-trained and BSD-trained caseworkers, CFRP drew two important conclusions about casework quality during the evaluation timeframe (October 2014 through December 2017): casework quality is relatively high for caseworkers in both training groups, and casework quality improved substantially over the evaluation period.

Across the measures examined, casework quality was relatively high throughout the analysis period, with the exception of timely investigations closure. For example, CPD-trained caseworkers, on average, attempted initial contact within the policy-specified timeframe on between 86 and 98 percent of their new investigations each month. For several of the casework quality measures, specifically monthly face-to-face contacts, casework quality rates were so high that there was little room to improve under the CPD training model. The one exception to the trend was timely investigations closure, for which the average monthly success rate was typically around 50 percent. However, this measure is different from the other performance metrics in that many other factors besides caseworker performance influence the time needed to close an investigation. Policy specifies that investigations should close within 45 days, but CFRP found that approximately half of all investigations during the evaluation timeframe took longer, with the vast majority of investigations (over 80 percent) closing within 90 days.

Casework quality improved substantially over the evaluation timeframe across numerous measures examined by CFRP. Quality improved similarly among CPD-trained and BSD-trained caseworkers, indicating that the factors influencing quality improvement were not specific to the CPD training model. In particular, the average rate of successful timely initial contact increased 20 percentage points among CPD- and BSD-trained caseworkers between August 2015 and November 2017. In other words, the average caseworker documented in IMPACT a successful timely initial contact on 75 percent of her new investigations in August 2015 and documented a successful timely initial contact on 95 percent of her new investigations in November 2017. Table 1 shows the average success rate of each casework quality measures among CPD- and BSD-trained caseworkers over time.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1: Casework Quality over Time**

	CPD			BSD		
	Aug '15	Nov '17	Difference	Aug '15	Nov '17	Difference
<b>Attempted Timely Initial Contact</b>	90.9%	98.7%	<b>+ 7.8 pp</b>	86.6%	98.2%	<b>+ 11.6 pp</b>
<b>Successful Timely Initial Contact</b>	75.5%	95.5%	<b>+ 20.0 pp</b>	72.9%	93.3%	<b>+ 20.0 pp</b>
<b>Timely Case Closure</b>	52.6%	58.8%	<b>+ 6.2 pp</b>	52.4%	61.6%	<b>+ 9.1 pp</b>
<b>Completion of CVS Monthly FTF</b>	93.6%	94.7%	<b>+1.1 pp</b>	97.6%	94.8%	<b>-2.8 pp</b>
	Nov '15	Nov '17	Difference	Nov '15	Nov '17	Difference
<b>Timely FBSS Initial Contact</b>	87.1%	87.6%	<b>+ 0.5 pp</b>	83.8%	85.3%	<b>+ 1.5 pp</b>
<b>Completion of FBSS Monthly FTF</b>	96.3%	98.2%	<b>+ 1.9 pp</b>	92.1%	96.6%	<b>+ 4.5 pp</b>

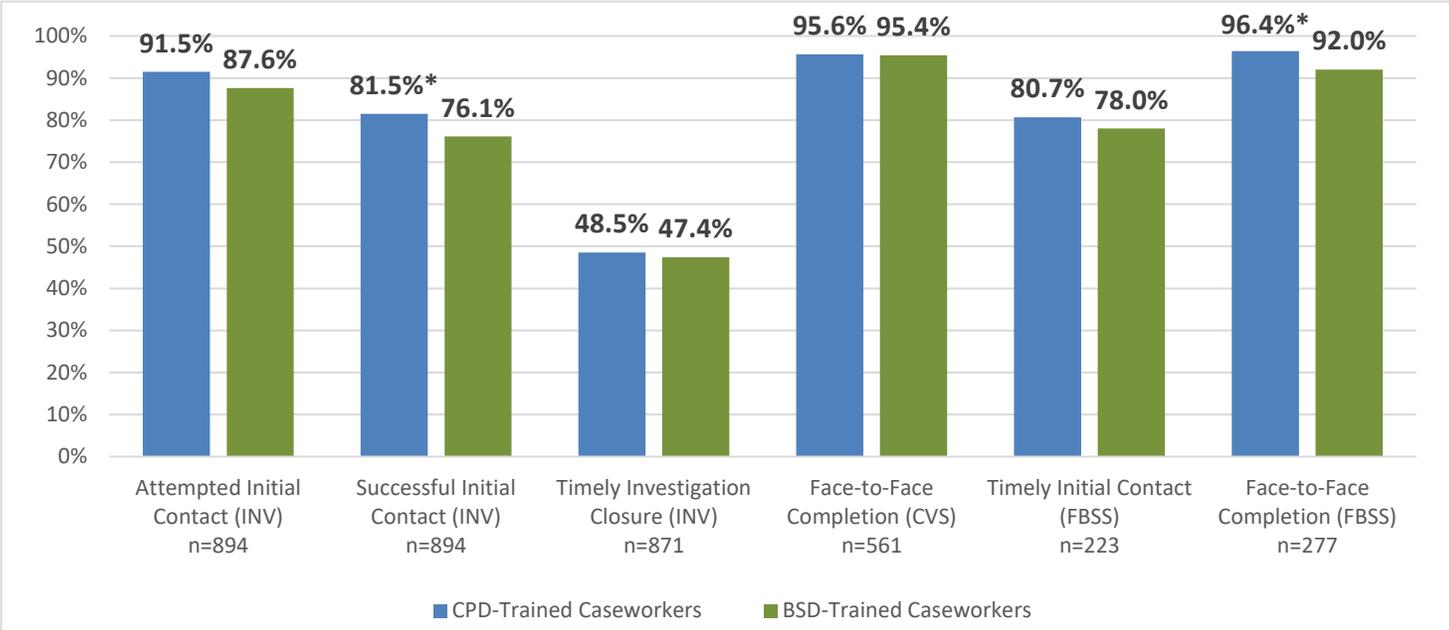
*Source: CAPPs and IMPACT data current through December 31, 2017. Note: Proportions above represent the average success rates of all CPD and BSD trained sample caseworkers who were employed in the month of analysis. "Start" month is Aug 2015 for INV, and Nov 2015 for FBSS, determined by the first month with at least 20 caseworkers in both the CPD and BSD sample.*

### **CFRP found no consistent connection between training and caseworker performance on selected casework quality measures, but trends indicate CPD-trained caseworkers performed somewhat higher-quality casework.**

CFRP compared the average success rates of CPD-trained caseworkers and their BSD-trained counterparts during their first 18 months of tenure across each casework quality measure, and examined time period, caseload, and region to understand the influence of outside factors, such as the caseworker pay raise or changes in caseload levels. Overall, CPD-trained and BSD-trained caseworkers performed similarly on most casework quality measures CFRP examined. One exception is that among investigators, although CPD and BSD caseworkers attempted initial contact at similar rates, CPD-trained investigators were more likely to *successfully* make face-to-face contact with a parent or child on a new investigation than their BSD-trained counterparts. Similarly, FBSS caseworkers trained under CPD completed more monthly face-to-face contacts than BSD-trained caseworkers. For the other casework quality measures, success rates on casework quality measures were similar between the training groups, as shown in Figure 6.

Overall, CFRP did not find a clear connection between CPD-training and improvements across casework quality measures. However, the lack of a consistent pattern of improvement does not mean that training is not improving casework quality. The selected casework quality measures do not assess the full range of skills caseworkers need to perform high-quality casework; many important indicators of quality cannot be measured with available data. However, CPD-trained caseworkers performed better on several of the process measures, and supervisors consistently reported that CPD-trained caseworkers are more prepared than BSD-trained caseworkers, indicating that CPD-trained caseworkers are somewhat higher quality than BSD-trained caseworkers.

Figure 6: Average Success Rate of Casework Quality Measures by Training Model



Source: CAPPS and IMPACT data current through December 31, 2017. Notes: \*Indicates statistical significance at the p=0.05 level after controlling for time period, caseload, and termination. See CPS Professional Development Methodological Summary for calculation details.

**Caseworkers who reached 18 months of tenure prior to leaving the agency generally performed better than caseworkers who terminated prior to reaching 18 months, indicating that the agency is retaining higher-quality workers.**

Caseworkers who stayed in their position for at least 18 months performed better than caseworkers who left before reaching 18 months of tenure on most of the casework quality measures (CVS monthly face-to-face completion is the only exception). For example, as shown in Table 2, caseworkers who left before reaching 18 months of tenure typically completed 6.6 percentage points fewer successful timely initial contacts than their counterparts who remained with the agency until at least 18 months, irrespective of training model. The fact that in each stage of service caseworkers who stayed with the agency through 18 months performed better than caseworkers who left indicates that CPS is retaining higher quality caseworkers. Further, caseworkers who will eventually leave are leaving sooner under the CPD training model, indicating that CPD training is facilitating earlier exit of caseworkers who are not a good fit for the agency.

Table 2: Factors That Influence Quality: Successful Timely Initial Contact (n=894)

Factor	Average Influence on Casework Quality
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<b>CPD Training</b>	2.3 percentage point decrease in success rate *
<b>Caseworker Terminated By 18 Months</b>	6.6 percentage point decrease in success rate *
<b>Months After October 2016</b>	8.8 percentage point increase in success rate *
<b>Five Additional Cases on Caseload</b>	1.1 percentage point decrease in success rate *

Source: CAPPs and IMPACT data current through December 31, 2017. \*Indicates significance at the p=0.05 level.

**Time period and caseload significantly influence casework quality.**

During CFRP’s analysis of casework quality, several factors emerged as important predictors of casework quality outside of the CPD training model. First, time period is the most important predictor of casework quality in each investigations and family-based safety services casework quality measure examined. Over the evaluation time period, numerous policy changes, legislative changes, and other external events occurred that influenced the measures under study. In particular, October 2016 for investigations measures and January 2017 for family-based safety services measures, are associated with an increase in casework quality in those months and each subsequent month of analysis. Both of these time periods correspond to noteworthy external pressure, including media and legislative attention, and internal agency directives focused on improving casework quality. The January 2017 time period also corresponds to a substantial pay raise for caseworkers. Table 2 uses successful timely investigations initial contacts as an example to show the relative influence of factors outside of the training model that influenced casework quality; the pattern is similar for the other measures as well.<sup>10</sup> In each month after October 2016, a caseworker’s rate of successful initial contact on a new investigation was, on average, 8.8 percentage points higher than in months before October 2016.

Caseload also influences casework quality across all measures; caseworkers with higher caseloads typically had a lower casework quality success rate than caseworkers with lower caseloads. For example, for each five additional cases that a caseworker carried during a month, she typically performed one percentage point worse than a caseworker carrying fewer cases on the proportion of successful timely initial contacts on new investigations.

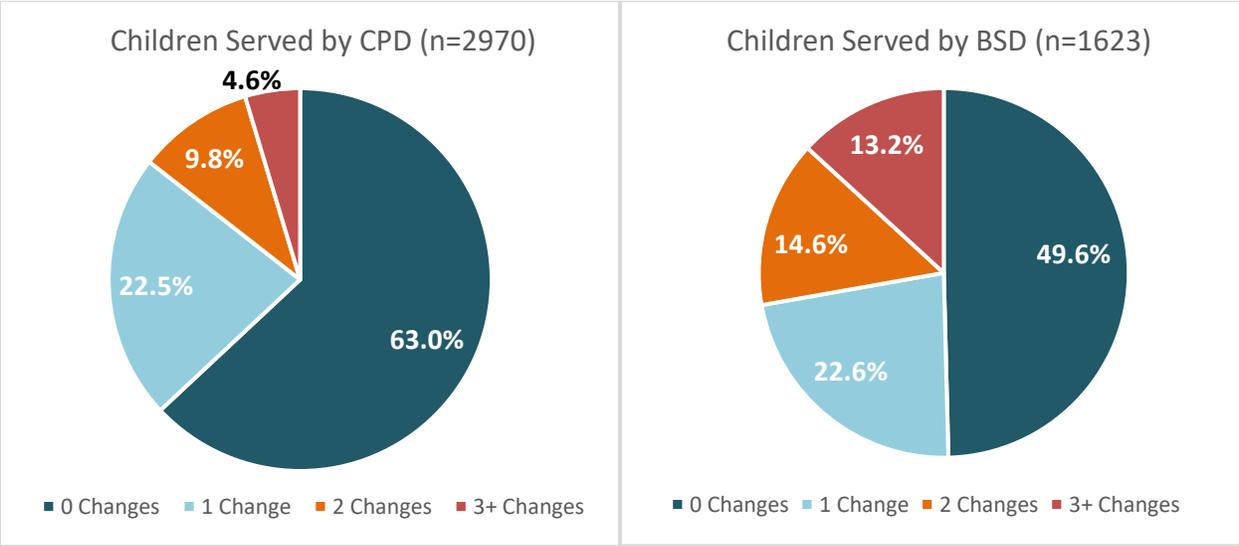
Overall, some improvement in casework quality during the evaluation time period is attributable to CPD training, specifically for successful initial face-to-face contact in investigations and completion of monthly face-to-face in FBSS. However, time period effects were *most* important in explaining improvements in performance during the evaluation; casework quality was significantly higher in later months of the analysis relative to earlier months for investigations and FBSS measures. More specifically, casework quality across all measures is significantly higher in months after October 2016 in investigations and after January 2017 in FBSS. One factor that may have contributed to the improvement in casework over time is the agency-wide focus on meeting policy-based casework measures, specifically in documenting face-to-face visits with children.

### Outcomes Study Findings: Impact on Children

#### Children in TMC assigned to CPD-trained caseworkers experienced fewer caseworker changes than children assigned to BSD-trained caseworkers.

Out of a sample of more than 4,500 children who were assigned to a CPD- or BSD-trained caseworker within their first month of Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC), children served by a CPD-trained caseworker were significantly more likely to keep the same caseworker throughout the rest of their time in TMC. Just under half of the children served by BSD-trained caseworkers kept the same caseworker for the rest of their TMC period (in other words, they did not experience a caseworker change).<sup>11</sup> By comparison, 63 percent of children served by CPD-trained caseworkers kept the same caseworker for the rest of TMC, as shown in Figure 7. The lower level of caseworker changes under CPD is statistically significant after controlling for region and time period. The increase in workforce stability under the CPD model is likely the main factor contributing to caseworker continuity during TMC. During TMC, caseworkers work closely with both children and parents to ensure safety and plan for timely permanency. Reducing caseworker changes during TMC is an important positive step for the agency that directly improves service to children and families.

Figure 7: Number of Caseworker Changes during TMC by Training Group (n=4,593)

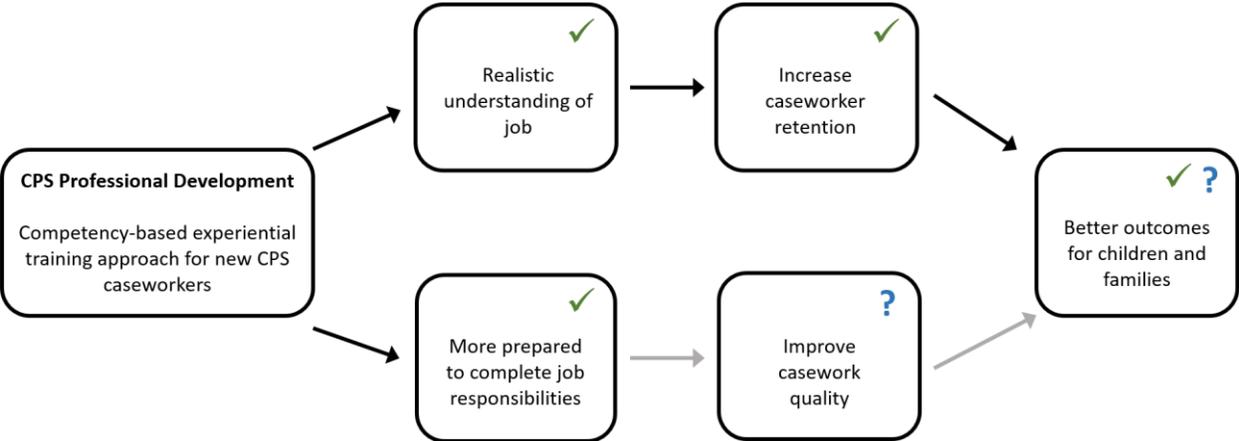


Source: CAPPs and IMPACT data current through December 31, 2017. Notes: Sample is limited to the TMC period for children assigned to a BSD or CPD-trained caseworker within the first month of TMC; only caseworker changes after assignment to the focal caseworker are counted.

### Conclusion

The CPD model is an innovative approach for training new CPS caseworkers that emphasizes field-based training and individualized learning to better prepare caseworkers for the demanding job of serving Texas’s most vulnerable children and families. DFPS designed the CPD training to provide new caseworkers with a realistic portrayal of the job and hands-on experience in the competencies needed to be an effective caseworker. By introducing the training model, the agency aimed to improve outcomes for children in families in two ways, illustrated in Figure 8. First, the agency expected to improve caseworker retention by providing caseworkers with a more realistic portrayal of their job and addressing issues of fit early on in training. Second, the agency endeavored to improve casework quality by better developing caseworkers’ competence during training through hands-on practice and mentorship. Both of these aims were directed toward the ultimate goal of improving the outcomes of the children and families the agency serves.

Figure 8: Outcomes of CPD Training



The CPD model improved the extent to which caseworkers have a realistic understanding of their responsibilities and the retention of caseworkers during their first 18 months of employment. By providing new caseworkers’ with a realistic portrayal of their job responsibilities, the agency has been better able to address issues of fit with the job early-on in training and improve retention of high-quality caseworkers who complete training and begin independently working cases. Most importantly, the improvement in caseworker retention has a measurable impact for children in the care of CPS. By improving caseworker retention, the agency is making progress toward reducing disruptions in services and cultivating a tenured workforce. Notably, the effect of CPD training on caseworker retention was independent of the pay raise caseworkers received in 2017.

The connection between the CPD training approach and improvements in casework quality is more tenuous. Although supervisors and caseworkers report that the CPD model is better preparing new caseworkers for their job responsibilities, we did not find that the CPD training model is clearly associated with improvements in casework quality. Importantly, the agency made marked improvements on most of these casework quality measures during the evaluation

time period. However, the improvements were primarily driven by internal directives targeting performance rather than the new training model.

The lack of a clear connection between the CPD training model and improvements in the casework quality measures does not mean that the training does not enhance casework quality. Instead, it may be a reflection of the training emphasizing proficiency in quality areas that we could not measure for the evaluation, such as family engagement or case planning. Although the types of competencies the training is designed to bolster are theoretically linked to improvements in the casework quality measures assessed in this study, the examined measures are largely related to timeliness, which is only one measure of quality and does not fully capture the quality of interactions and services.

We also found that the caseworkers the agency is retaining are generally higher performing on the casework quality measures than those who leave the agency. As such, the increased retention associated with the CPD training is promising for improving the quality of the workforce through retention of higher performing caseworkers. To enhance the effects of the new training approach on retention and casework quality, the agency should use training assessment and casework performance data to ensure that caseworkers who require remediation are targeted early-on.

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*The Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) is an independent, nonpartisan research group at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin, specializing in issues related to young children, teens, and their parents. We engage in rigorous research and evaluation work aimed at strengthening families and enhancing public policy.*

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<sup>1</sup> See CFRP's CPS Professional Development Summary of Outcomes Study Methodology for complete details.

<sup>2</sup> For full results, please see CFRP's interim reports to the agency from December 2015, June 2016, and December 2016 and the May 2018 final report.

<sup>3</sup> Differences in retention by training model persist when controlling for differences in region, stage of service, and gender

<sup>4</sup> CPS Handbook 2243.1

<sup>5</sup> CPS Handbook 2292

<sup>6</sup> CPS Handbook 6411.2

<sup>7</sup> CPS Handbook 2530

<sup>8</sup> CPS Handbook 2530

<sup>9</sup> Though the full evaluation timeframe spans from October 1, 2014 (first BSD sample caseworkers hired) until December 31, 2017 (last-hired CPD caseworkers hit 18 months of tenure), Figure 6 displays results from August 2015 and November 2017 because August 2015 is the first month with a sufficient number of CPD caseworkers in the sample and November 2017 is the last month for which timely case closure data were available to CFRP at the time of analysis.

<sup>10</sup> See CFRP's June 2018 Final Evaluation Report Presentation.

<sup>11</sup> See CFRP's CPS Professional Development Summary of Outcomes Study Methodology for details on CFRP's analytic sample.