

The DFPS training curriculum and resources Praesidium reviewed, including the online course, Child Sexual Aggression Resource Guide, and CPS Professional Development Core Competencies Training – Sexual Abuse, comprise a comprehensive approach to training and reinforcing the various learning modalities. Trainings build on one another and serve different purposes—some are more foundational, while others are more task-oriented.

At this time, many caregivers and caseworkers have already been trained on the material reviewed by Praesidium. As noted below, DFPS agrees in principle with many recommendations in this report and can consider operationalizing them; however, DFPS suggests that if the training is modified, it be provided on a going forward basis to new caseworkers and caregivers who have not already completed the existing training and to existing caseworkers and caregivers as refresher training, when such training is required.

### ***Scope of Work***

The Praesidium report's Scope of Work mischaracterizes DFPS trainings and materials as being developed to guide understanding of child-on-child sexual abuse *prevention*, as these trainings and materials are primarily focused on *identification and reporting* of sexual abuse, including child-on-child sexual abuse. This focus on identification and reporting is consistent with the Court's orders directing DFPS to ensure that all caseworkers and caregivers are trained to recognize and report sexual abuse, including child on child sexual abuse, and for DFPS to create a clear policy on what constitutes child on child sexual abuse.

In addition to the online course titled "Recognizing and Reporting Child Sexual Abuse: A Training for Caregivers," caregivers receive pre-service training through their child placing agency (CPA)/employer (general residential operation (GRO)). Pre-service training content, such as PRIDE Session 7 – Responding to Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse, includes much of the same content Praesidium recommends.

### ***Online Course Section A. Course Development and Learner Engagement***

DFPS agrees with Praesidium's feedback in Report Findings Section A. Course Development and Learner Engagement. Prior to developing the online course, DFPS staff discussed the potential benefits and shortcomings associated with placing the training on the public website versus the external Learning Management System (LMS). Ultimately, DFPS placed the training on the public website due to the substantial additional resources that would have been required to support external users accessing the training via LMS. Although functionality and data analytics are somewhat limited, the training is nonetheless consistent with the Court's orders. DFPS appreciates the thoughtful recommendations Praesidium offered. However, many of them are impossible to implement due to the limitations of the public website. Recommendations DFPS can consider operationalizing include:

1. Create a Table of Contents menu that can be accessed at any time within the course to facilitate direct access to slide content for review.
2. Evaluate opportunities to improve readability level (such as, shorter sentences, bulleted lists, condensed text) to reflect comprehension and accessibility for wider audience.
11. Revise Knowledge Check to be a pass/fail test, rather than a forced pass, to better hold learner accountable to understanding course content by requiring a pass for course completion.
12. Revise Knowledge Check to include additional applied learning and scenario-based questions to better evaluate learner competency and application of content.
13. Create a question bank that randomly selects a defined number of questions for each individual's Knowledge Check so the learning experience will be slightly different for each learner each time.

15. Consider adding a list of course objectives to the completion certificate to demonstrate overall training content that was reviewed.

***Online Course Section B. Sexual Abuse Prevention Content***

DFPS would like to reiterate that this course is designed to help caregivers recognize and report sexual abuse, in accordance with the Court's orders, not to teach caregivers about sexual abuse prevention, teach children about anatomically correct terms, or to prevent or manage sexual activity between children (though other trainings may include such content). DFPS appreciates Praesidium calling attention to some unclear wording concerning the definition of sexual abuse and can reword the content to more clearly communicate the definition.

Recommendations DFPS can consider operationalizing include:

4. Revise the Reporting Sexual Abuse section to include clear guidance as to whether and to what extent sexual behavior problems and/or sexually aggressive behaviors should be reported by caregivers to the abuse hotline and shared with CPS caseworkers.

DFPS can add language about reporting incidents of child on child sexual abuse to the Texas Abuse Hotline. However, sexual behavior problems are not generally reported to the hotline. Appropriate avenues to report a sexual behavior problem include reporting to the child's caseworker, therapist/treatment team, and/or agency case manager.

6. Incorporate content from the Child Sexual Aggression Resource Guide's "Immediate Intervention and Response" section (pages 20-25) into the online course.

***Electronic Documents Section A. Child Sexual Aggression Resource Guide***

The recommendation to create revised Child Sexual Aggression (CSA) Resource Guides for different target audiences requires further consideration. Resource guides are intended for use by DFPS caseworkers. Extensive time and resources may be required to implement this recommendation and DFPS may not be the most appropriate entity to undertake it. Entities with whom DFPS contracts utilize their own training curriculums and develop their own protocols. DFPS provided the CSA Resource Guide to various caregiver organizations to use as a foundation for any training curriculum they wanted to develop and many representatives of these caregiver organizations participated in the development of the guide.

***Electronic Documents Section B. CPS Professional Development Core Competencies Training – Sexual Abuse***

Recommendation #4 is already in CPS policy concerning child visits, and in the Resource Guide, concerning safety visits. To better understand the utility of implementing Recommendation #6, DFPS requests additional information, as it is unclear from the report what observations led to this recommendation.

Recommendations DFPS can consider operationalizing include:

1. Identify specific core competencies caseworkers should demonstrate in understanding child sexual abuse and administer an evaluation or assessment against those identified competencies for each caseworker prior to them working alone in the field.

2. Ensure recognition of child on child sexual abuse is included within overall discussion of child sexual abuse.
3. Ensure core competencies include guidance as to what caseworkers should do when they hear sexual slang words within vague or explicit disclosures from children.
5. Update case examples to include a variety of instances in which child sexual abuse may occur in the field including child on child sexual aggression.
7. Further flesh out the instructor guide to provide more consistent descriptions and information on child sexual abuse within the child welfare system.

***Electronic Documents Section C. DFPS Modules 1-4 Storyboards***

DFPS agrees with Praesidium's recommendation to utilize several case examples of child on child sexual interactions in every module to allow the learner to continuously think through multiple scenarios and dynamics for determining whether the behavior is normal development, problematic, or sexually aggressive. However, DFPS would like to consider incorporating case examples within additional training resources to reinforce learning, rather than to add more scenarios to this training.