

**National Training Institute for Frontline Supervisors (NTIFFS)  
Final Report**

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## I. Project Overview:

The National Training Institute for Frontline Supervisors (NTIFFS) is a Field Initiated Project supported by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and conducted by the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. The project's mission is to build, demonstrate and evaluate a distributed learning and technical assistance model that can be replicated and sustained by project participants. The technical assistance model is intended to enhance the capacity of community-based human service organizations serving people with developmental disabilities to improve their performance in recruiting, developing and retaining direct service practitioners and their supervisors. The project focuses on teaching community agencies how to improve the skills of frontline supervisors whose performance has a direct impact on the longevity, satisfaction and performance of the direct support staff who they supervise. The project's designers predict that improved performance of supervisors will strengthen the performance of the direct support professionals they supervise, improve recruitment results, and enable agencies to retain these employees for longer periods. Such improvements will benefit the community support field which has suffered high rates of turnover among frontline staff and difficulty in recruiting these staff. Stable and competent direct support professionals (DSPs) are critical in helping people with disabilities achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

The NTIFFS Technical Assistance (TA) model implemented in this project includes: (1) teaching organizations to assess their staff recruitment and retention challenges; (2) providing web-based and traditional training on recruitment and retention strategies; (3) conducting 2 intensive "train-the-trainer" (TTT) institutes for 10-15 organization representatives; (4) supporting organizational representatives to provide training to 70-100 frontline supervisors; (5) providing on-site as well as remote technical assistance support and training to organizational representatives; (6) supporting technical assistance efforts by organizational representatives for frontline supervisors; (7) supporting ongoing follow-up measurement to assess the effectiveness of interventions and to guide future intervention work; and (8) developing project products and reports to share the project outcomes with policy makers, provider organizations, and other interested persons.

Through a national competitive application process, the project selected human service organizations in five different states serving people with developmental disabilities to learn the content and methods of the NTIFFS TA Model and to become proficient in delivering it within their own organizations and teaching other organizations how to implement the model. Six of eight organizations from those five states completed the project and achieved significant improvements. Turnover for those six organizations declined from an average of 40% in 2004 to 23% in 2006. Two organizations from one state withdrew from the project in the first year. One of those organizations reported a decline in turnover from 86% to 85% in one year while the other only provided turnover data for one year. Supervisor turnover declined in four of the six organizations that completed the project. Approximately 600 people completed the project's supervisory skill training program, *Removing the Revolving Door*; 200 new direct support professionals were recruited using customized marketing tools that the partners were trained to use; and more than 300 direct support professionals started on a path of apprenticeship or skills certification as a result of project activity.

## II. Evaluation Approach

In the early phases of this project the independent evaluator worked with the project team to create a “logic model”(Figure 1) to guide the evaluative inquiry. The collaborative process of designing a logic model is a formative evaluation method in itself as it provides an opportunity early in a project’s life for the research team to grapple concretely with key aspects of the project by defining: the challenges the project addresses, the theories that support the selection of project interventions, the design of specific interventions to be used, and the predicted project outcomes. This information provides a useful map to determine how to evaluate the project’s progress and impact.

**Figure 1**  
**Logic model for National Training Institute for Frontline Supervisors Project**

Issues/ problems /challenges this project addresses	Theories relevant to this issue area	Interventions	Outcomes	Measures
<p><b>Problem:</b> Knowledge of expert practice in FLS is poorly distributed</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Achieving high quality &amp; Efficient dissemination of expert knowledge to a broader group</p>	<p>Transfer of expert-valid knowledge will improve DSP work conditions</p> <p>DSPs leave prematurely due to poor supervision</p>	<p>Design and implement a TA model structure to offer an effective, efficient and high quality TA product</p>	<p>Expert knowledge is mastered and used at regional levels</p> <p>Process of training &amp; TS dissemination is seen as working and efficient</p>	<p>Observation of training institute</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Observation of local training activities by project staff</p>
<p><b>Problem:</b> System is poorly organized to build regional capacity thru regional leadership &amp; expanding local pockets of excellence</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Building capacity of a region to train others in FLS is important</p>	<p>Local expertise is critical to sustaining interventions and renewing knowledge over time</p>	<p>Build an efficient TA Model with features to build capacity at the regional level</p>	<p>Targets for numbers trained are met.</p> <p>Trainees use information effectively</p> <p>Regional capacity sustains beyond initial efforts</p>	<p>Records of numbers trained throughout project</p>

Issues/ problems /challenges this project addresses	Theories relevant to this issue area	Interventions	Outcomes	Measures
<p><b>Problem:</b> FLS are not competent in critical competencies</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Improve effectiveness of FLS</p>	<p>Training will have a positive impact on FLS performance</p>	<p>Model provides an effective way of enhancing FLS competencies</p>	<p>FLS perceive training as useful, organized, high quality</p> <p>FLS are using skills at work</p>	<p>End of training survey and 6 month follow up survey )</p>
<p><b>Problem:</b> Industry does not support deep learning &amp; networks of expertise in DSP/FLS development</p> <p><b>Project Challenge :</b> Creating a robust community of expert practice around training FLS</p>	<p>Groups working together on joint mission creates energy, enthusiasm, sustainability</p>	<p>Model fosters a community of practice</p>	<p>Presence of an active engaged group –working on FLS training, &amp; ideally other training too</p>	<p>Observation</p> <p>Key informant interviews (MT does these)</p>
<p><b>Problem:</b> Industry does not pay sufficient attention to end user concerns &amp; impact of training on quality of supports</p> <p><b>Project Challenge:</b> Providing satisfaction in training at each point (institute, regions, orgs)</p> <p>Determine impact</p>	<p>Project impact will increase in relationship to satisfaction of customers</p> <p>Impact can and should be measured</p>	<p>Assure project interventions are high quality and responsive to the needs of customers (end users)</p> <p>Implement Metrics that provide reliable and valid measures of important effects</p>	<p>End users of each intervention are satisfied and see training as successful</p> <p>Learners at central and regional levels apply learning at work</p>	<p>Reaction sheets at end of institute &amp; 6 month follow up of institute trainees (End of training reaction sheets for 100 trainees and 6 month follow up)</p>

Issues/ problems /challenges this project addresses	Theories relevant to this issue area	Interventions	Outcomes	Measures
<p><b>Problem:</b> poorly supervised DSPs leave agencies prematurely</p> <p><b>Project Challenge:</b> Teach others how to develop cultures of competence in recruiting, supervising, mentoring and valuing re DSPs</p>	<p>More competent supervisors improves satisfaction and commitment of DSPs</p> <p>System cultures that value and develop DSPs &amp; FLS will improve quality and continuity</p>	<p>Provide TA that facilitates organizational competence in identified intervention plans</p>	<p>FLS and DSPS are competent and have increased commitment to job</p>	<p>Reaction sheets, site data on intervention plans, turnover measure.</p>

The evaluation plan includes several qualitative and statistical components. Project demonstration partners (organizations learning the technical assistance method) participated in surveys following the annual technical assistance workshop as well as annual key informant interviews. The independent evaluator also conducted observations of this institute in project year one. Statistics regarding turnover and retention are gathered by the Project Team. All of these data are used in this evaluation to analyze the project’s movement toward desired outcomes.

Evaluation activities also included a formative component focused on the initial on-site Training Institute that provided the project team with observations and feedback to assist them in refining and improving the Training Institute format and content.

The results of the overall progress and impact of the project are reported here and organized according to the logic model dimensions to determine the project’s impact on the key issues:

- Is the NTIFLS TA model effective and efficient in disseminating expert knowledge about frontline supervisor skill development?
- Is the project building capacity in various parts of the country to serve as communities of learning and practice focused on improved frontline supervisor performance that will sustain beyond the project’s borders?
- Do training recipients see the training as relevant and do supervisors apply the training to their jobs?
- Were the partner organizations able to develop and implement their intervention plans and improve performance and retention of supervisors and direct support staff?

### III. Evaluation Results

## ***Organization of the TA Model for Effectively Dispersing Expert Knowledge***

Improvement in human resource practices is urgent within the community based developmental disabilities service community because the industry has been plagued by difficulties in recruiting and retaining direct support staff resulting in high turnover and vacancy rates. This trend depletes essential resources for support<sup>1</sup> because it is costly to recruit and train DSPs and the inherent discontinuity of staffing that occurs with high turnover erodes the quality of the support rendered to people who rely on DSPs to reach their life goals.<sup>2</sup>

These problem conditions are expected to increase in coming years due to shrinking labor markets and the vast growth of the service sector in the American economy. These trends will create stiff competition among service-based organizations in the effort to find good employees who have a strong commitment to human services.

Such labor conditions pose serious concerns for many people with developmental disabilities who cannot meet basic life needs safely or achieve more ambitious goals without continuity in direct support staff. Research suggests that competent supervisors are key to higher rates of recruitment and retention making the improvement of supervisory performance, a key focus of this project, an important strategy in the quest to attain overall improvements in direct support professional stability and continuity.

While there are a vast number of community based developmental disability service organizations throughout the United States, there are very few sources of research and expert practice regarding improvement of human resource activities in these organizations. Moreover, many of these organizations are small to mid-sized non profits that operate highly decentralized residential and vocational programs making it difficult to find efficient and effective means to train and mentor employees. Also, they do not command the resources necessary to build learning management systems within their organizations that are comprehensive and based on updated research.

The Institute on Community Integration (ICI) at the University of Minnesota is a nationally recognized center for expert knowledge on human resource practices in community based developmental disabilities service organizations. The NTIFFS project was proposed and funded with the express purpose of not only disseminating important knowledge about improving supervisory performance, but also building capacity within selected organizations to serve as an enduring and sustaining source of expertise and training both within their organizations and for others in their region. Each of the partner organizations was therefore seen not only as a partner learning how to teach their own employees new skills, but as a catalyst for sparking and sustaining a regional community of learning and practice focused on best practices in frontline supervision.

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<sup>1</sup> McDonald, C., (1994). Recruitment, Retention and Recognition of Frontline Workers in Long-Term Care. *Generations* 28(3), 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> Laron, S.A., Hewitt, A.S., Lakin, K.C. (2004). Multiperspective analysis of workforce challenges and their effects on Consumer and Family Quality of Life. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 109 (6), 481-500

***Is the NTIFFS TA model effective and efficient in disseminating expert knowledge about frontline supervisor skill development?***

The NTIFFS design is well-crafted to accommodate the decentralized nature of community based service organizations and the field's challenge in funding and delivering high quality employee development programs.

Key parts of the NTIFFS model include: the selection of partner organizations through a competitive process; the use of hybrid learning activities combining on-line learning with telephone meetings leading to a capstone five day conference held in Minnesota; and ongoing technical assistance by the project team supporting the partner organization's development of a plan to replicate training activities within their organizations and with other human service organizations in their regions.

**Partner Selection**

A competitive process was used to select partner organizations is an important strategy that promotes the NTIFFS TA Model success. This assures that the selected partners are motivated and committed to working on project activities. Project activities and expectations are fully disclosed and partners sign an agreement to assure their commitment to the proposed activities. The project provides a back-up mechanism for partner withdrawal by selecting "alternates" to participate in project activities to assure the availability of an organization up to speed on project interventions should a partner drop out. Partners were aware that only five of 100 applications (involving a total of 8 organizations) were selected and felt a strong commitment to honor their selection by working hard to meet expectations.

Two organizations that were part of a consortium in Wyoming withdrew from project activities due to internal reorganization challenges and a booming economy that made it extremely difficulty to staff agencies making it necessary for agencies to narrow their focus to a "survival" level in this arena. The booming prosperity and economic conditions in the state had created a demand for employees that was difficult to meet in the sparsely populated state. This left employers desperately struggling to fill the lower wage and status jobs that are the entry direct support positions in human services. While these are the conditions the project is intended to help remediate through agency capacity development in recruitment and retention, the project's demands of partners were significant and no resources were available to supplement agency staffing making it difficult to move from a crisis mode to a learning mode for the agencies that withdrew.

The project's expectations of participating partners were significant, and a primary theme among partners throughout the project was the challenge in finding time (in addition to regular job expectations) to participate in the project activities. This and other projects with similar demonstrations would benefit by the allocation of fiscal resources to provide incentives for participating partners to participate and to reduce the burden on existing employees. While financial incentives were not necessary to secure the participation of the highly motivated partners, such resources could provide each organization with the support for staff to spend the time necessary to be more comfortable with project's expectations and requirements. The project

staff at the institute modeled the effective methods of active adult learning and partners were given opportunities to discuss and practice these methods providing a “laboratory” to try out new practices in a supportive environment. The culture of cooperation, collaborative learning and respect for participants that was established at the institute was reported in interviews as a factor in the power of this learning experience. Again, these values are what the project leaders were modeling for participants to learn and apply in their own organizations.

### **Training Institute Hybrid Approach and Technical Assistance**

A key intervention of the project was the delivery of residential training institutes held in Minnesota convening the partners to learn skills and build relationships as a learning community. The initial institute was organized to give participants five weeks of pre-conference on-line learning and assignments supported by weekly TA phone calls. The pre-conference learning period comprised an initial group phone call with all partner organizations and the entire project team followed by weekly phone calls between each organization and the project team member assigned to provide TA. Partners provided high praise for the individualized calls of each organization with their TA contact stating their TA contact helped them to feel comfortable and provided excellent technical information. They also were extremely positive about the attitude of the project team in making themselves available any time outside of the scheduled phone meetings. The use of periodic phone calls in the pre-conference period was seen by participants as vital to their learning providing an incentive to “get organized” for the meeting and to answer questions on learning.

Future projects may want to explore web meeting technologies that permit streaming media and video and audio interactivity to support participants from geographically dispersed locations. This technology also lends itself to archiving training materials in video and audio podcasts thereby making the resources available for new learners or for refreshing skills of the partners who were in attendance. Such archived lessons would be highly useful to the institute participants in their efforts to bring critical information to others in the formative early months of building capacity. Participants have access to a well-crafted online Removing the Revolving door (RRD) in the College of Frontline Supervision and Management (CFLS) curriculum but the Train the Trainer aspects of the on-site institute would be worth capturing and archiving.

Most participants agreed that the pre-institute learning time frame (five weeks) was too short given the amount of material to cover suggesting that it would be more realistic to have an 8 to 10 week advance learning period. Due to the necessity of implementing the project and achieving prescribed milestones within the allotted grant interval, the project team did not have the luxury of providing a more extensive pre-conference learning period in the first year. Formative evaluation conversations with the project team reveal that they were aware of the overly compressed learning period and would make adjustments to the TA approach in future activities.

Some participants found the flow of the instructional design to be confusing stating that they were expected to select best practice strategies for their intervention plans before they had mastered the concepts of the best practices. This was received as helpful and constructive

formative feedback by the project team and their decision to extend the learning period in future implementation should help with this problem

Most participants agreed that the materials were well organized and helpful. The exception to this was that participants would have liked to receive the TA questions and issues to be discussed on phone calls in advance of the phone calls.

The benefit to the group call was to enable everyone to meet other partners and to identify that they were all facing the same challenges. Aside from this benefit, most participants felt that the group phone call was too long and not helpful in other areas.

### **On-Site Institute**

Two representatives from each participating organization were brought to Minneapolis for a five day learning experience in year one shortly after the conclusion of the first phase of distance learning and coaching, and again in year two. Institute participants were observed to be highly engaged and motivated with the learning processes occurring during the initial five day institute held in Minneapolis as a capstone learning event to the preliminary instruction on-line and on the phone. Everyone praised the logistics of the travel and hotel arrangements saying that this enabled them to focus fully on the learning activities without worrying about day to day details.

People saw the institute goals as realistic and relevant and thought the right people and were resources were available. The timing of the institute was universally endorsed as well. Participants liked having the institute in close time proximity to the completion of the pre-learning segment. It enabled them to maintain momentum on their intervention planning while ideas remained fresh. The power of the on-site institute was that people entered with knowledge, knowing that TA is available and were able to connect their initial plans with what others were doing and were not afraid to share ideas and learn from others. A majority of the institute participants said that networking with peers and learning about the methods, challenges and ideas of their peer project participants was what they enjoyed most about the institute. Several people suggested said that there should be more time in the institute devoted to hearing from the other agencies about their experiences, plans and challenges.

One important shift was recommended to workshop organizers by participants. Their advice was for project staff to move away from an individualized view of each agency's training strengths to a more global perspective of what methods, in general, are more effective than others, and to have a more extensive opportunity to "brainstorm" methods they could be used to transmit what they were learning to other agencies throughout their home regions. They also wanted a stronger sense of whether the project as a whole was meeting expectations.

In a survey conducted at the end of the institute the participants identified specific elements that were most helpful to them including:

- ✓ Networking with others
- ✓ The recruitment toolkit
- ✓ Resources on the project web site

- ✓ Learning and watching training techniques
- ✓ Discussing ideas
- ✓ Seeing the course put into practice
- ✓ Expert consultation and technical assistance
- ✓ The recruitment plan
- ✓ Learning from others

A consistent recommendation for improvement of the institute was to offer more hands-on activities, more examples and more interactive learning experiences.

In moving to the next phase of the project after the institute, most participants were confident of sharing what they had learned within their own agency, but were much less confident in their ability to actively disseminate knowledge outside of their agency. Survey comments show that most people shared a concern about finding the time to implement the project activities after the institute.

A subsequent onsite meeting was convened mid-way through the project's life. This meeting was used as a peer learning vehicle where partners had the opportunity to describe the nature of the activities underway in their agencies, reflect on barriers and pathways to success, and obtain feedback and ideas from the other partners. Interviews conducted with partners throughout the course of the project revealed very high levels of satisfaction with the arrangements and peer learning activities. Most partners described the "learning community" aspects of the on-site meetings including peer feedback, brainstorming, benchmarking and discussion as among the most important experiences of the project and a process that contributed significantly to their ability to stay motivated and receive guidance about change.

The project team took extraordinary measures to assure that participants were comfortable with travel plans and with the time they spent in Minneapolis. This concern was commended by the participants who felt highly valued and, in turn, left with the desire to return this consideration by succeeding in their part of the project

Despite these motivating sessions and the frequent outreach to partners via telephone and a newsletter, two agencies participating in the initial partner body chose to discontinue their work on the project. In both cases internal organizational and resource issues made it too difficult to participate in the project. It is important to keep in mind that the partners did not have access to

"As part of their classwork, participants developed realistic job previews for targeted positions that will assist them in identifying appropriate candidates. The final project involved collaboration between program managers and program directors in developing a specific intervention to meet an identified recruitment or retention need in their program. Feedback from the participants has been overwhelmingly positive, and appears to be helping to initiate a culture change in the organization. The modules in the training correspond with areas of concern identified in the recent staff survey, so should also help to improve morale overall."

Report by Bancroft Neuro-Health describing the application of lessons learned in the NTIFFS project and their impact on organization participants.

sufficient resources through the project to hire additional staff to take on project duties. In all cases organizations called upon existing employees to expand their duties and take on the project work. A common theme of participants was the lack of time available to do project work in addition to their regular job.

To recap, the TA model's incorporation of highly organized and individualized phone conferencing with small groups led by an expert TA "Coach" and paired with carefully outlined learning assignments is a highly effective way to organize learning across distance and time. The expertise, responsiveness and support of the project team were evident in all technical assistance interactions enhancing the motivation and learning of project participants. Future implementation should extend the early learning period or reduce the amount of material to be covered in a shorter period. Organizations should have the opportunity for sufficient grounding in the theories and practices of the course before integrating these theories and practices into their organizational intervention plans.

***Is the project building capacity in various parts of the country to serve as communities of learning and practice focused on improved frontline supervisor performance that will sustain beyond the project's borders?***

A concern of the TA model and intent of the project was to provide an effective model for moving expert knowledge beyond the partner agency borders to others in their region by replicating the training that partners received from experts in Minnesota. In answering the project's impact on this question, in the early part of the project the evaluation lens was focused on the extent to which project knowledge about frontline supervisor performance was disseminated within the partner agencies and applied at the partner agency level. This is a necessary pre-requisite to establishing a foundation for the participant agency to serve as a catalyst in building regional capacity in the NTIFFS content and practices. The second part of this question – whether project impact has penetrated the region surrounding each agency and whether it has sustained beyond the boundaries of project resources was an evaluation concern in the last year of the project.

In interviews conducted early in the project and at the end, partners were unanimous in their support of the project's success in creating a "community of learning and practice" among the partner agencies. They cited the annual on-site training institutes in Minnesota as key to promoting the learning community and derived great satisfaction from networking with peers across the country and having the opportunity to discuss similar challenges in a supported environment. The project team received high praise for their level of expertise in bringing the community of partners to a deeper understanding of recruitment and retention practices through technical assistance and "train-the-trainer" programs that modeled effective active learning adult education methods. Statistics gathered by the project team displayed in Table 1 and key informant interviews also indicate that there has been a significant penetration of the project's expert knowledge at the agency level fulfilling the project goal of creating a pocket of expertise in workforce development that could further disseminate knowledge throughout a region.

Partners were asked in final interviews to reflect on the project goal of reaching beyond their agency boundaries to build regional capacity in workforce development by replicating the

lessons they had learned from the workforce experts in Minnesota. Their answers indicate that within most partner agencies, there is a strong and enduring community of learning and practice with greater capabilities in workforce development. Five out of the six final partners also fulfilled their external training goals described in their intervention plans indicating that the model is effective in extending the community of learning beyond agency borders.

Barriers to outreach beyond partner agency borders reported by partners included: no resources for marketing; regional conditions affecting interest in training; partner problems with meeting internal agency project goals; and limitations in training budgets. For example, one agency had difficulty extending the learning across the divisional borders of their own agency making it difficult to focus energy outward when their own “house” was not yet in order. Another agency met their outreach goal and had trained 21 people throughout the state and hoped to do more in the subsequent year but received a response from just three people. This must be considered in the context that the project did not contain funds to assist partners in marketing their training to others, and many employers in this state were unduly focused on basic survival – finding people to fill a high number of vacancies generated by the booming economy.

A third small agency was successful in meeting its goal of training 10 people from other agencies and ended up training 16. Of these, 12 completed the training and will be teaching their own agencies the RRD curriculum demonstrating that this method can succeed in the right conditions. It is important to note that the CEO of this agency was leading the NTIFFS team and this was not the case in the agency that did not succeed as well in dissemination.

Another CEO led Partner team was successful in meeting its goal of mentoring 10 other agencies in the RRD skills. Their approach evolved as they became more experienced and they realized they needed to enter a written agreement with mentee agencies stating the time commitment and expectations. Mentee agencies also needed assistance from the mentoring agency in obtaining agency “buy-in” from leadership. This agency described that their most effective methods for training others were onsite group meetings stating that agencies had less success in completing online modules. They also recommended avoiding Course 4 of the CFSM as the first course for new learners due to its focus on statistics.

Two project partners representing larger agencies located in the same state created a plan to jointly offer a “Train the Trainer” project for other state providers and trained a total of 19 participants in two separate sessions covering the northern and southern tiers of the state. In addition to the training, the partners will provide ongoing technical assistance to the providers as they implement the RRD curriculum in their organizations. One of these partners is also developing a basic “New Supervisor Orientation” training to provide new supervisors and managers with the tools they need to be successful. Information specific to performance management, HR law, quality improvement, licensing, and finance will be included, along with a reference manual and guidelines. This training will be offered quarterly, with a target implementation date of the first quarter of the new fiscal year. That organization provides supports to persons with disabilities in many states and has now rolled out the training throughout their national network.

Based on discussions of dissemination with partners, facilitators to dissemination include: Leadership involvement; formal provider networks; collaboration across agencies; and well-capitalized agencies that can afford to mount marketing and training in anticipation of revenues.

To recap this section, the six participating agencies were highly engaged as a community of learning and practice. All agencies transferred the expert knowledge to their own agencies with five of the six agencies motivating agency wide participation in high performance practice and one larger more hierarchical agency achieving division wide dissemination. Five of six participating agencies were successful in meeting their plans for external dissemination. These results indicate that the project was highly successful in its goal of creating a model for disseminating expert knowledge in a manner with the potential to provide a sustained chain of capacity building.

***Do training recipients see the training as relevant and do supervisors apply the training to their jobs?***

Data collected by the project team at the end of the three year implementation period provide clear evidence that there is significant application of the NTIFFS content and practices within the agency partner sites and that all agencies have begun to share information beyond the borders of their organization.

Practices that were most often changed were the introduction of a Realistic Job Preview Video (100% adopted this practice and 2,021 people viewed an RJP); the revision of job candidate interview, welcoming and orientation processes (88% of partners engaged in these activities with these interventions experienced by 1,708 people). Three fourths have improved statistical tracking of staffing indicators including turnover and retention data. High levels of participation were also recorded in many other performance indicators of the project. In fact penetration fell below two thirds participation in only 4 of 30 indicators tracked by the project team: experiencing promotional opportunities; participating in credential or apprenticeship programs; participating in CDS training; and providing training other than RRD for other agencies. None of these factors are seen by the evaluator as intrinsic to the stated scope of this project. It is important to note as well that these activities come with high costs (promotional, providing additional training to other agencies) or high difficulty or both (credentialing and apprenticeship). The exception to this is participation in CDS which was free to project participants but supervisory skills were a greater focus and the project did enroll 317 people in on-line supervisory skill development through the CFSM.

**Table 1**

**Penetration of Project Interventions**

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>N Impacted</b>	<b>N Orgs</b>	<b>% of Orgs</b>
<b><i>Leadership Development and Agency Capacity Building</i></b>			
Attend Removing the Revolving Door (RRD) TTT Partner leadership team personally complete College of Frontline Supervision and Management Courses (CFSM)		8	100%
		8	100%

**Penetration of Project Interventions**

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>N Impacted</b>	<b>N Orgs</b>	<b>% of Orgs</b>
Partner agencies participating in project TA calls		6	75%
<b><i>Supervisory Development</i></b>			
Attend RRD own agency	447	8	100%
Attend other supervisory training own agency	238	6	75%
Registered for CFSM online own agency	237	8	100%
Registered for CFSM online other agency	156	6	75%
Attend RRD other agency	143	5	63%
Provided other sup training other agency		1	13%
<b><i>Changes in Recruitment and Hiring Practices</i></b>			
Viewed a Realistic Job Preview	2,021	8	100%
Employees welcomed in a new way	635	7	88%
Interviewed using revised procedures	552	7	88%
Received revised orientation	521	7	88%
Viewed customized RJP	469	5	63%
Participated in recruitment or hiring bonus program	429	7	88%
Recruited with project marketing toolkit	194	5	63%
<b><i>Direct Support Professional (DSP) Training and Development</i></b>			
Participating in credential or apprenticeship programs	448	3	38%
Participating in revised DSP training	222	5	63%
Received training through the College of Direct Support (CDS)	101	3	38%
N in competency based training	92	3	38%
N in mentoring program	85	5	63%
<b><i>High Performance Retention Strategies</i></b>			
Participated in employee recognition program	459	7	88%
Participated in promotional opportunities	446	3	38%
Assess Recruitment Retention and Turnover data annually		8	100%
Use participatory management style		6	75%
<b><i>Systems Change Activities</i></b>			
Participate in professional association activities	388	5	63%
Shared information with other agencies	152	8	100%
Participated in conference presentations on NTFFS Project	147	5	63%
Provided TA to other organizations	49	6	75%
Legislators contacted regarding direct support workforce concerns	19	6	75%

Employees completing one or more CFSM lesson

317

Number of CFSM lessons completed

3,075

In a survey completed at the end of the first year training institute in Minnesota, participants reported that the content of training was extremely well aligned (4.7 on a 5 point scale where five is “to a great extent”) with the challenges they meet every day on the job. They also reported that the training transformed their performance on the key training objectives significantly (4.8) and also improved overall job performance significantly (4.6). Also, participants rated all aspects of the experience: Administration, Content, Design, Instruction and Impact above 4 on a five point

scale where five was the highest rating. These ratings exceed national normed indicators for judging the effectiveness of training.<sup>3</sup>

Later on, when asked about what has worked well in the project and how participants have benefited, participants offered the following comments:

“The supervisors that are going through the curriculum are very eager with the information and excited about implementing these new ideas. So I would say one of the biggest benefits is seeing the mind sets of the supervisors changing with this project.”

“Seeing our group of staff who have the same responsibilities but who have not worked closely together to come together and work well together. This project will begin to allow the Frontline Supervisors and DSPs become more involved instead of just being told what will happen.”

“Personally, I have become more inspired about my job and my contribution to the organization. I feel that this program is embraced throughout our management and I have the privilege of being the operation to introduce this program to the foundation.”

“This was a once in a lifetime opportunity. We appreciate your hard work, guidance and support. We will always be impacted by this training. We always are discussing what we learned and how we can implement this into our program.

In final interviews conducted with five of the six completing agencies, on average, partner leadership teams rated the overall project impact on supervisory skills, attitudes and application somewhat lower than in initial stages but still meeting nationally established norms<sup>4</sup> for effective training. Informants reported that the impact on skills and attitudes was 3.8 on a scale where 5 indicates significant positive impact. **Barriers to improved competence** cited by informants included the presence of some longer-term staff who found it difficult to change and/or were less motivated to change; the compressed timelines of completing training that made it harder for staff to assimilate and master training; and, the lack of resources to implement project activities making it harder to move information through agencies in some cases. Success in achieving an impact did not appear to be associated with agency size but more with agency’s organization of work for example, more hierarchical organizations that extend less autonomy to teams seem to fare more poorly in skill development. As mentioned earlier, partners were primarily working within existing budgets and staffing to complete the additional responsibilities of project work. Making the project work in a low resource environment seem to be connected to the commitment of agency leadership to the project; readiness to change as indicated by the presence of agency

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<sup>3</sup> Van Buren, Mark, E. & Erskine, William. (2002) Learning Outcomes: ASTD’s Fourth Annual Report on Standards for Evaluating Organizations’ Investments in Education and Training. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

<sup>4</sup> Van Buren, Mark, E. & Erskine, William. (2002) Learning Outcomes: ASTD’s Fourth Annual Report on Standards for Evaluating Organizations’ Investments in Education and Training. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

activities (outside of the NTIFFS Project) focused on making some changes in professional development

Pathways to change noted in interviews included: becoming more aware of data and using it to track progress; greater knowledge of effective practice; better communication with peers about high performance practice; mentoring; the high relevance of the content to the supervisors being trained; and the attention that the project focused on supervisors providing recognition and understanding of their need for development.

When queried about the extent of RRD application by supervisors on the job at the end of the project, partners reported an average rating of 3.8 where five is “significant application.”

**Barriers to application** cited included: perceptions that supervisors required a high level of prompting and guidance to apply the new skills (this was cited in a setting of a larger, more centralized facility); and excessive job demands on supervisors diminishing opportunity for quality work, especially being on-site with their staff.

**Facilitators to application** of skills included agency wide support of applied interventions (e.g., putting new staff photo and “welcome” message into the agency newsletter to support a new welcoming process); shift in values and expectations (e.g., moving away from the goal of “filling the shift” to the goal of “hiring the right person”); coordination of intervention with non-supervisory staff (e.g., change in receptionist role in a revised hiring process); providing incentives to mentors; development of a professional attitude especially with regard to focusing on positives rather than negatives and positive reinforcement of skill application.

These comments and findings offer a glimpse into the workings of the important organizational changes and performance outcomes that are underway as a result of project activity including improved communication, better team work and a realignment of mental models of work. These comments reinforce the project’s relevance and contribution to the participating organizations. They also provide important evidence that the knowledge and theory offered by the project is applied in the day to day work activities of supervisors in participating groups.

***Were the partner organizations able to develop and implement their intervention plans and improve performance and retention of supervisors and direct support staff?***

Each partner agency developed its own customized intervention plan that takes into consideration their organizations conditions, needs, strengths and barriers to workforce development. Table 1 provides one window into the extensive array of interventions that agencies incorporated into their plans and the high degree of success they enjoyed in implementing these interventions. These findings are reinforced by key informant reports of their success and challenges in bringing knowledge to others beyond their agencies’ borders

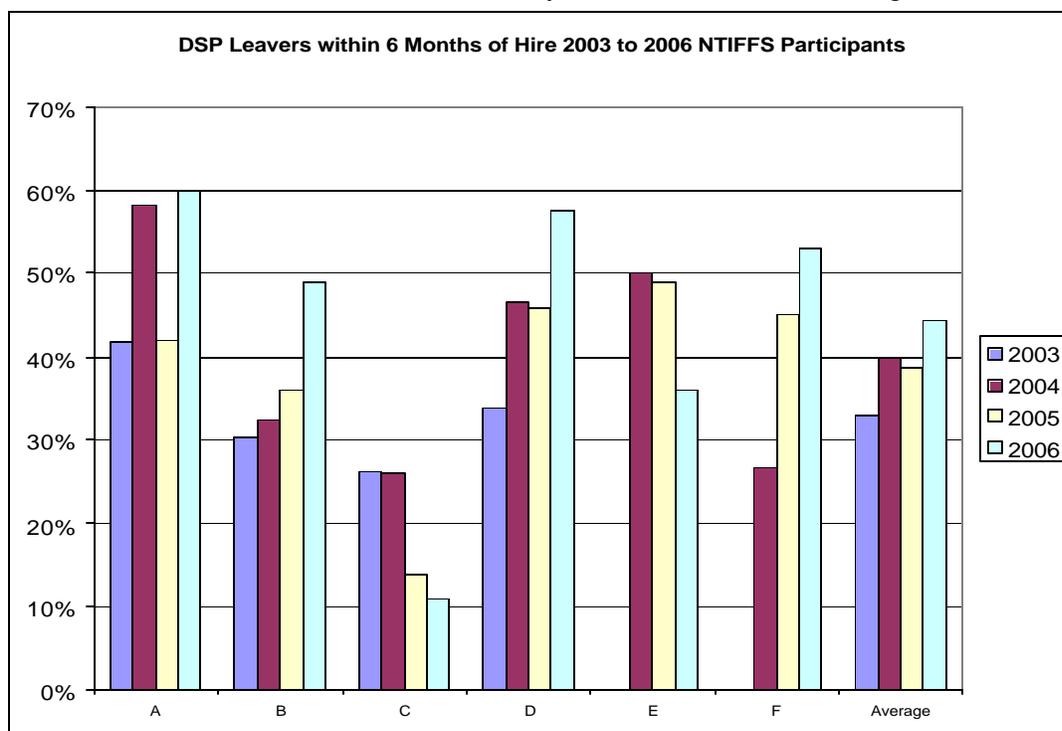
Four of five key informants reported in final interviews that they had collected data on participant satisfaction with the training they had provided and these data indicate high levels of learner satisfaction with their learning experiences indicating that they had succeeded in their intervention plan of offering high quality training.

### ***Will activities sustain beyond the NTIFFS three year project period?***

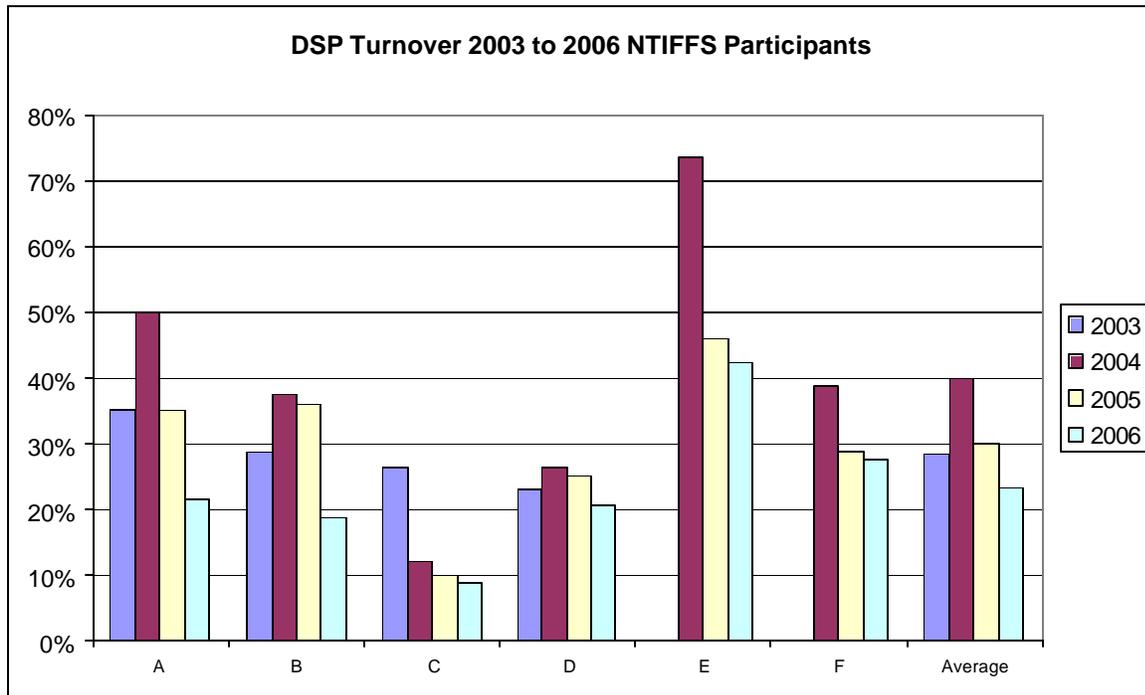
Key informants were asked to discuss their plans for carrying project activities forward with all reporting plans for some level of continuation. One large agency planned to limit its future work to internal agency training remarking that turnover has improved so much that it is motivating to continue. Another agency also planned to continue the internal transformations it had achieved as a result of project intervention including” mentoring, improved interviewing and job descriptions, and employee recognition programs. A third agency indicated it will continue with some external training and focus as well on reinforcing new knowledge internally and sustain changes they had made in instituting an RJP, and revised interviewing and orientation. Another agency also will continue both external and internal activities including RJPs, Behavioral Interviewing as well as training new supervisors. The final informant will focus internally on training new supervisors and look forward to accessing new courses in the College of Frontline Supervision for continuing education of supervisors.

### ***Project Impact on Turnover and Retention***

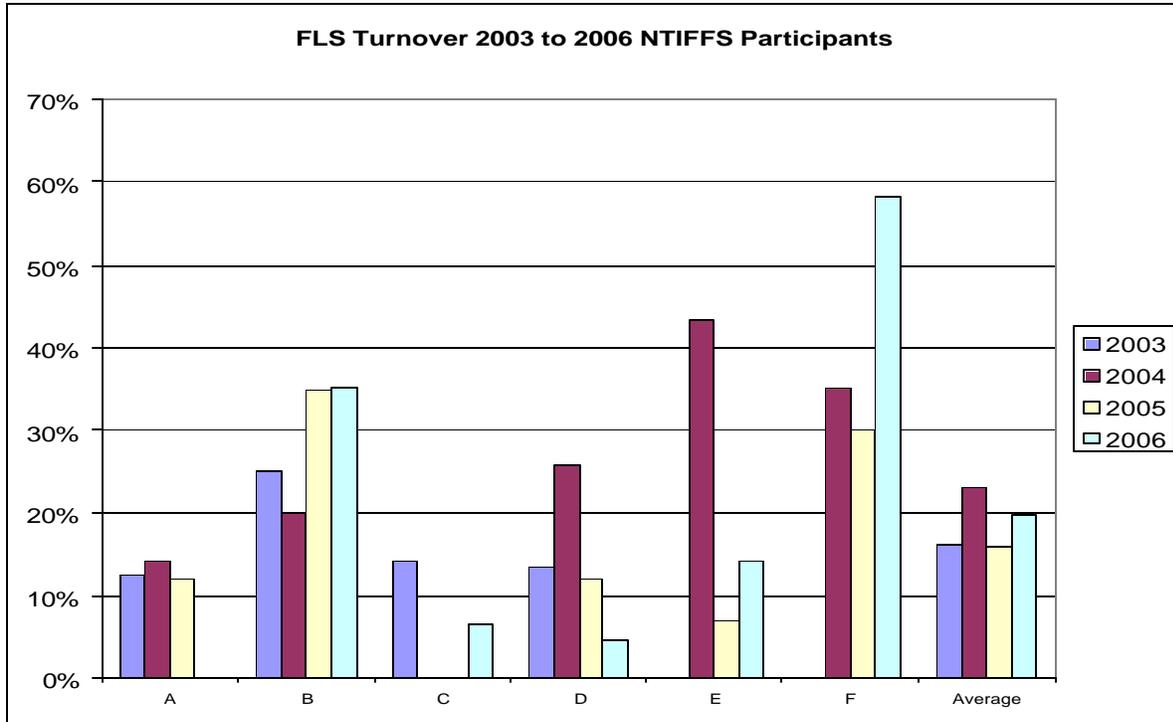
One disappointing statistical outcome showed that despite the broadly reported implementation of Realistic Job Previews, an intervention intended to reduce the turnover of newer hires, the number of DSP leavers within six months of hire rose on average over the project period. Only two of the six organizations reported improvements in this outcome (in both of those cases, the improvement was dramatic). A deeper analysis of the intensity and fidelity of agency implementation of this intervention, regional economic factors, and other factors that might contribute to this outcome will be necessary to understand the meaning of these data.



The six partners from five states who finished the project saw significant decreases in direct support professional turnover by the end of the project. On average, DSP turnover was reduced from an average of 28% (four partners) in 2003 to 23% (six partners) in 2006. For the four organizations that provided data all four years turnover was reduced from an average of 28% to an average of 18%. For the two organizations that provided data only for 2004 through 2006, turnover was reduced from 57% to 35%. Across the six partners, DSP turnover was reduced from 40% in 2004 to 23% in 2006.



Data on frontline supervisors (FLS) turnover indicate that 4 of 6 partners had significant decreases in turnover. Four agencies experience and average decrease of 6.5% in turnover during the project period. Two organizations reported increases in FLS turnover.



### ***Other Project Outcomes***

Agency partners were asked to comment on the positive outcomes they considered to be most significant – these are summarized here:

- ✓ The creation of a competency based performance evaluation system that provide so wage increases for increased competence
- ✓ Increased competence of frontline supervisors that positively influence staff and clients
- ✓ Significant decreases in turnover (this agency’s direct support turnover dropped from 36% annually in year two of the project to 19%)
- ✓ Training provided opportunity for cross agency networking among supervisors
- ✓ Instituting a mentoring program helped staff to feel important and valued
- ✓ Knowing that you are able to effect change and not powerless in reducing turnover
- ✓ Changes in marketing jobs leading to more applicants and cost savings by eliminating news ads and using a web page and solid employee cash incentives for finding job candidates
- ✓ Changing the job title from “residential trainer” to direct support professional and people feel more valued
- ✓ Reducing 6 month turnover through an RJP and high performance interviewing processes

Participants were asked what their advice would be to other organizations considering a project such as this one. Their responses included:

- Don't be too ambitious. Pick a small part of the project and try that first, before moving on to larger projects

- Allocate sufficient resources to remain on course- and then consider doubling the resources.
- Go for it! This is a great experience and whatever you do - big or small - will impact your recruitment and retention
- Teach the RRTD in conjunction with the CFMS. And don't rush it! By being "gung ho" and teaching all the RRD components in 6 weeks as outlined by my supervisor did not, in my opinion, allow supervisors to assimilate and "buy in" to the concepts. Therefore, we have had to do much re-training on an individual basis if someone is interested in new recruiting and retention strategies.
- They must have the passion and commitment for removing the revolving door because there is a lot of work involved in this project. However, the results are incredible and it is well worth the time and energy.

Other comments made on the final evaluation survey included:

- A very valuable and beneficial project. Would have been useful to have a face-to-face meeting at the end of the project. (**Note**: there was a subsequent opportunity for the partners to gather in Montreal Canada for a presentation of project outcomes to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at their 2006 Annual meeting).
- The national networking was great and the UMN folks were a pleasure to work with.
- This was a once in a lifetime opportunity. We appreciate your hard work, guidance and support. We will always be impacted by this training. We always are discussing what we learned and how we can implement this into our program
- Some of the modules of the CFMS would be more effective if they included segments that could be used by supervisors in training/reinforcing the concepts with DSPs (especially the teamwork module. It would be nice to have a PowerPoint attachment that FLSs could download and use to help their teams evaluate and develop their teamwork.) It could also be beneficial to be able to print lessons so the completed hard copy could be referred to in the future.
- The tools noted are effective and it is a concept that once you embrace it you can easily adopt it into your culture.

In summary, the qualitative and quantitative data on the NTIFFS project demonstrate that participants are very satisfied with the quality of support and information they received receiving from the NTIFFS project team and that they are applying these skills and practices within their agencies as well as beyond their agencies validating further use of the NTIFFS approach with some important modifications discussed in preceding sections..

The results indicate that the project shaped powerful transformations in the workforce development practices of participating organizations and facilitated positive outcomes in improving recruitment and retention as well as transforming the thinking and communication at the agency level about workforce development. These agencies now serve as a new and rich source of expertise in workforce development within their regions. A remaining challenge for these agencies will be to find regional resources to provide a foundation for the ongoing

dissemination of the important project lessons and fueling the movement to strengthen this vital workforce.

### **Project Products and Presentations**

Larson, S.A., Hewitt, A., & McCulloh, N. (2006). *Training Supervisors to Address Recruitment and Retention Challenges: Results of a 3 year demonstration project*. Montreal, Quebec Canada: Presentation at the International Social Inclusion Congress.

McCulloh, N. (2007). Training Frontline Supervisors in Workforce Development: The NTIFFS Project. In S.A. Larson, N. McCulloh, A. Hewitt, and T. Laliberte (Eds.). *IMPACT: Feature Issue on Direct Support Workforce Development*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Research and Training Center on Community Living.

McCulloh, N., Hewitt, A., Larson, S.A., Laliberte, T., & Sauer, J. (2007). *Workforce Development -12: A Guide to Providing Technical Assistance to Assist Employers to Find and Keep High Performing Direct Support Professionals*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Available electronically at: <http://rtc.umn.edu/dsp/publ.asp>

Taylor, M. (2007). *National Training Institute for Frontline Supervisors (NTIFFS): Final Evaluation Report*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Research and Training Center on Community Living.

Project Website: <http://rtc.umn.edu/ntiffs>