

## Executive Summary

**Course Title:** Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT)

### Outline of Training:

In 2004, the State convened the California Safety Assessment Workgroup, in response to the Federal Child and Family Services Review. A State Program Improvement Plan (PIP) was formulated and one of the goals of the PIP was the implementation of a statewide comprehensive assessment approach in working with families. This would include determining levels of safety, risk, parental protective capacity as well as family strengths and needs. The overall approach of the PIP shifted the criteria for accountability toward a cycle of continuous improvement focused on achieving results related to safety, permanence and well-being.

The CAT is a comprehensive safety, risk and protective capacity system which is endorsed by the California Department of Social Services and meets the requirements of the California Safety Assessment Workgroup. The [SPHERE Institute](#), a non-profit policy firm established by scholars from Stanford University, evaluates the data gathered by the assessment tools. Overall data collection and analysis are to provide important feedback at both the local and State level regarding trends in child welfare practice.

The CAT incorporates five tools, which document assessment observations at seven specific decision points through the life of a case. The tools are not intended to be prescriptive. They are intended to supplement a social worker's knowledge and skills used in making sound professional judgments by:

- Guiding social worker's consideration of factors related to the three core elements of assessment—safety, risk and protective capacity—through the life of a case.
- Creating a record of assessment results at critical decision points through the life of a case.

AT the completion of this training the participants will be able to effectively implement the CAT system. This training builds upon the core curriculum “Critical Thinking in conducting assessments” (Don’t actually know the official name).

At the training the participants will have an opportunity to review the development of the Comprehensive Assessment Tool. They will review the Statewide Safety Assessment System and then “mix and match” the standard areas for review to enhance furthering learning of the definitions that the CAT is built upon.

Using a vignette the participants will have the opportunity to fill out each of the five CAT and in both small and large group work examine how assessments are conducted. As part of this process participants will identify elements of strength based and culturally competent assessments. There is also an opportunity to examine issues of fairness and equity and how individual values and biases effect assessments.

**Target Audience:** This training is designed for staff that is making child welfare assessments regarding the safety, risk and protective capacity of families. The primary audience is child welfare social workers, supervisors and managers.

### **Outcome Objectives for Participants:**

The participant will examine the history of the CAT.

The participant will analyze the recommended Statewide Safety Assessment System.

The participant will demonstrate knowledge of the Standard Areas for Review.

The participant will identify elements of strength based, culturally competent assessments and distinguish issues of fairness and equity in conducting assessments.

The participant will demonstrate an ability to complete the CAT forms accurately.

### **Ways that Supervisors can support the Transfer of Learning from the classroom to the job...**

#### **BEFORE the training**

Prior to the training it is imperative that the supervisor have a discussion with staff regarding the CAT, why the county has chosen this particular Assessment System and any implementation issues, including the date of implementation. The supervisor should review the executive summary with staff highlighting that training is being offered and comprehensive training materials will be provided at the training to help the participant in this implementation process.

## **AFTER the training**

What can the supervisor do after the training to support the training?

The Supervisor plays a critical role in the implementation of the CAT. Ways to support the participant after the training include; checking in with the participant with regards to any questions or challenges the participant may have regarding specific county implementation and filling out the first few CAT together, possibly in supervision.