

## Executive Summary

**Course Title:** *Writing Court Reports*

**Outline of Training:** *The first part of the class will be a review of the required legal findings at each of the critical stages of the dependency process, which will include a small group activity of discussing and identifying issues at the various stages. The next portion of the class will cover several topics, including documentation, discovery and rules of evidence related specifically to reports. Activities include a practice documentation from pictures and activity with small or large group to identify admissible or inadmissible evidence. Class will then cover who are report "consumers" and how they use court reports. Large group will identify and list "consumers".*

*The next part of the class will cover report construction, using overhead transparencies of report formats. Will cover suggested content for the various parts of reports, with emphasis on supporting evidence and analysis sections and how to relate analysis to required findings. The class will cover effective writing style for reports. Will be an exercise to identify and reword passive voice writing. Also will be examples of inappropriate use of biased language.*

**Target Audience:** *This course is targeted to child welfare workers who are writing court reports, including detention, jurisdiction, disposition, review and 366.26 reports. Supervisors that are reviewing and assisting workers with reports will also benefit from the course. The course will benefit newer and veteran staff.*

**Outcome Objectives for Participants:** *Staff will be able to identify the critical legal issues that need to be addressed at each stage of the dependency process for which a court report is prepared. Staff will be able to write reports that contain sufficient legally admissible evidence to support the recommendations to the court. Staff will learn to relate the analysis part of reports to the required legal finds to make their reports more persuasive to the court. Staff will be able to write reports that have logical internal structure and are "user friendly" for the court and other parties in the dependency process. Staff will be able to identify and avoid using biased, confusing, and other writing errors that detract from the effective report writing.*

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

**BEFORE the training**

*Supervisors could pass on to the trainer in advance of the training areas of concern or where there needs to be improvement. Supervisors could have workers bring examples of reports to the class where it was suggested the report was not effectively written.*

**AFTER the training**

*Supervisors can encourage workers to work with a partner, who participated in the training, a few times a year who will give a detailed critique of a report to their fellow worker. Supervisors can make sure workers are clear about what are the critical legal findings for cases in which reports are about to be written and what evidence the worker has to support the recommendation before the worker writes the report.*