

# **Family Development Training and Credentialing Program**

## **What is the Family Development Training and Credentialing Program?**

The Cornell Family Development Training and Credentialing Program is a professional development course and credentialing program for frontline family workers to learn and practice skills of strength-based family support with families.

This interagency training and credentialing program is available to frontline family workers from a wide range of government, private, and not-for-profit agencies as well as business and large corporations.

Family development staff members work with families across the life span including families with young children, teen parents, retired people, people with disabilities, and many other groups.

## **Why is the FDC necessary?**

For too long, services have been available only when a family is in crisis or about to disintegrate. Public interventions have focused on “rescuing and fixing” families rather than helping families develop their capacity to solve problems and achieve long-lasting self-reliance.

## **How the Empowerment Skills for Family Workers curriculum was developed**

The Family Development Training and Credentialing system (FDC) has been pioneering the paradigm shift from the “deficit” model of family assistance to an “empowerment-based” model of family development since the mid-1980s. In 1990, the New York State Council on Children and Families called together fifteen major state agencies to talk about a new approach build on family strengths. The New York State Department of State’s Community Services Block Grant Program, directed by Evelyn Harris, took a leadership role among the state agencies. They invited Cornell University’s Empowering Families Project into the discussion because of Cornell’s pioneering work in training human service workers in empowerment skills. The state agencies, convened by the NYS Council on Children and Families and known as the Commissioner’s Work Group on Family Support, agreed that an interagency training and credentialing program for frontline workers should be developed and named the Family Development Credential (FDC). They decided to begin with frontline workers and later offer specialized training to agency supervisors and state agency staff.

## **FDC in other states**

Cornell University has helped 18 other states nationwide to develop family support training and credentialing systems modeled on the FDC. All use the Empowerment Skills for Family Workers curriculum. Thousands of agencies and organizations nationwide have adopted a strengths based paradigm using the Family Development Credential curriculum.

States that offer the FDC: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, District of Columbia.

## **FDC in the State of Illinois**

In 2004, the Midwest Learning Center for Family Support at Family Focus, Inc. sent Margie Perzynski and Lina Cramer to Cornell University in New York for the credentialing training at which time they became certified FDC Instructors. It was also at this time that a collaborative agreement between the Midwest Learning Center for Family Support and Cornell University was signed designating the Midwest Learning Center as the point agency for the Family Development Credential in the State of Illinois.

There are now thirteen family workers who have completed the Family Development Credential successfully and 14 FDC facilitators.

## **Who is this training for?**

Professionals from a wide range of public and private agencies and businesses across the nation have earned the Family Development Credential (FDC): family support staff, home visitors, social welfare and community action workers, nurses, probation officers, advocates, teachers, case managers, Head Start family workers, Office for Aging staff, youth workers, police officers, community health workers, probation officers, TANF workers, child protective case workers, and program volunteers.

## **FAMILY DEVELOPMENT CREDENTIAL (FDC)**

### **Competencies the Empowerment Skills for Family Workers**

**In this training the following Family Development skills and competencies are reviewed and studied:**

- 1: Family Development: A Sustainable Route To Healthy Self- Reliance
- 2: Communicating with Skill and Heart
- 3: Taking Good Care of Yourself
- 4: Diversity
- 5: Strengths-based Assessment
- 6: Helping Families Set and Reach Goals
- 7: Helping Families Access Specialized Services
- 8: Home Visiting
- 9: Facilitating Family Conferences, Support Groups and Community Meetings
- 10: Collaboration

*Empowerment Skills for Family Workers: A Worker Handbook*, is written by Claire Forest, Director of the Cornell Empowering Families Project, NYS College of Human Ecology at Cornell University.

## What does a worker need to do to receive the FDC Credential?

**FDC Course** – Participate in approximately 90 hours of course instruction, led by an official FDC instructor.

**Portfolio Advisement** – Students work with a trainer portfolio advisor who provides guidance to complete required portfolio work.

**Portfolio Development** – Prepare a portfolio that contains, for each of ten chapters:

-Responses to at least three “Activities to Extend Your Learning” from the Worker Handbook.

-Plan and carry out at least one skill practice for each chapter.

-Share this with your portfolio advisor and document it in the portfolio.

The last section of the portfolio contains three Family Development Plans that the worker creates with one family, to demonstrate an ability to work with family member(s) as they choose a goal and begin to take steps toward that goal.

**Examination** – Successfully complete an examination based on the Worker’s Handbook. This exam was created by Cornell University and is scored by them.

### In Illinois:

The Family Development Training and Credential is sponsored by The Midwest Learning Center for Family Support at Family Focus, Inc., Chicago, IL

[www.midwestlearningcenter.org](http://www.midwestlearningcenter.org)

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