



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP & MARRIAGE EDUCATION TRAINING

www.hrmet.org

*Improving the Lives of Children Through
Healthy Couple Relationships and Stable Homes*

**Georgia
Summary Evaluation Report: 2015**



For more information about the training in Georgia, contact

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Helen Carter, Pike County

Barbara Collins, Muscogee County

Betty English, Augusta-Richmond County

Cindee Sweda, Cobb County

Also, thank you to the following organizations for their support and promotion of the training:

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (<http://www.gafcp.org>)

Strengthening Families Georgia (<http://gayconline.org/resources/sfg>)

Together Georgia (<http://www.gahsc.org>)

For more information and resources to support healthy couple relationships, visit
www.gamarriages.org

Overview of HRMET

Promoting the health and safety of children starts with a safe and stable home. Parents with healthy couple and co-parenting relationships are better able to meet the needs of their children. The *Healthy Relationship and Marriage Education Training* (HRMET) was developed, with funding from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau, to prepare professionals to understand and support healthy co-parenting, couple and marital relationships for families being served in the child welfare system. This includes biological, foster, and adopting parents as well as youth. This training is also applicable to professionals who work with families and youth in other settings as well. The *theory of change* guiding the design and initial testing of this evidence-informed training is described in:

Futris, T. G., Schramm, D., Lee, T. K., Thurston, W. D., and Barton, A. W. (2014). Training child welfare professionals to support healthy couple relationships: Examining the link to training transfer. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 8 (54), 560-583. doi: [10.1080/15548732.2014.953719](https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2014.953719)

Futris, T. G., & Schramm, D. G. (2015) The healthy relationship and marriage education training project: Lessons learned in program development. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 53 (3). Available at <http://www.joe.org/joe/2015june/a4.php>.

The HRMET offers research-based information and user-friendly tools to facilitate the teaching of healthy relationship skills. During this 1-day training, participants received and processed the application of tools that can help strengthen couple and family relationships. The training curriculum builds on Cooperative Extension's existing resources, including the principles and skills described in the National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Model. See the table below for a brief overview of the training, and visit www.nermen.org to learn more about the model and www.hrmet.org to learn more about the training.

This report summarizes the feedback shared by the professionals who completed the one-day training in *Georgia* in 2015. Trainings were promoted statewide through partnerships with state and county agencies that support families. Cooperative Extension Faculty in *Family and Consumer Sciences* from the *University of Georgia*, who contributed to the development of the training curriculum and materials, facilitated the training. More information about the training and additional resources available from UGA Cooperative Extension to support healthy couple relationships is available at www.gamarriages.org

Overview of the Training Content and Resources.

Module	Overall Objective ^a	Time (Minutes)	Resources/Tools ^b	
			CWPs	Clients
Introduction	Understand the relevance of healthy couple relationships to child welfare and what healthy RME involves.	60	4	0
Care for Self	Engage clients in cultivating individual wellness and health in order to support the health of their couple relationship	30	1	11
Choose	Support clients in making deliberate and conscientious decisions to be committed, intentional, proactive, and strengths-focused in their relationships.	45	1	7
Know	Help clients develop intimate knowledge of their partner's personal and relational needs, interests, feelings and expectations.	45	1	7
Care	Guide clients in expressing kindness, respect, and understanding to facilitate positivity and stability in their relationships.	45	1	6
Share	Demonstrate to clients the value of developing and maintaining couple time, a shared sense of couple identity, and a close friendship in healthy relationships.	60	1	8
Manage	Clarify to clients that conflict is normal in couple relationships, and share strategies to manage stress, listen to understand, accept differences, and ensure emotional and physical safety when conflict arises.	60	1	10
Connect	Help clients become better connected with their family, peers, and community as a source of support to them and their couple relationship.	30	1	4

Outputs: Training Participants

A total of 87 professionals from 24 counties across Georgia completed the 1-day training in 2015. Trainings were conducted in Columbus (5/20/15; n = 13), Macon (7/1/15; n = 43), Augusta (8/7/15; n=11), and Marietta (8/27/15; n = 20). Participants represented professionals from a range of public and private agencies serving families across Georgia (see Appendix A for a listing of the various agencies represented).

Since 2011, 584 professionals across Georgia have completed the Healthy Relationship and Marriage Education Training.

This report summarizes the information shared by 58 participants (67% response rate) on a post-survey administered following the training¹. The 58 respondents reported learning about the training through a community partner (31%), their supervisor/director (29%), a Listserv (12%), former training participant (10%), or some other source (24%; e.g., co-workers, specific organizations, hosting facility). As well, reasons for attending the training included professional growth (64%), it was recommended by their supervisor (24%) or an instructor/professor (7%), continuing education (36%), it was required (5%), and/or other (7%; e.g. “Good price for amount of CEUs provided”, “useful on my job”). Also, 33 respondents (58%) reported that they attended the training with at least one co-worker (n=26) and/or their supervisor (n=14).

Based on data collected from 58 of the survey respondents, below is a general profile of the participants:

- Age: 22 to 73 (M = 48.31; SD = 12.27)
- Gender: Female (88%)
- Race: African American (40%); Caucasian (56%); and Other (4%)
- Education: High School (4%), Associate’s (5%) or Bachelor’s (23%) degree, Advanced Degree (68%)
- Marital status: Married (63%); Single in a relationship (13%); Single not in a relationship (11%); Divorced/Separated (11%); Widowed (4%)
- Years in current position: less than 1 year to 47 years (M = 8.95; SD = 9.88)
- Foster or adopting parents: 4 (7%)

As well, of these 58 respondents, 29 (51%) self-identified as currently working in the child welfare field. Of those who described their position (n = 56), 9 (16%) were county caseworkers, 4 (7%) supervisors/directors, or 4 (7%) administrators/staff, and 39 (70%) were “other” professionals (e.g., parent educator, trainer, therapist/counselor, program administrator or staff). To further ascertain respondents’ experience in the field and the number of families that could potentially benefit from healthy relationship education, the participants were asked to report on the number of youth and families they served in the past month.

Average number of youth and families served in the past month

	Mean	SD	Range	Sum
Number of Adolescents	22.5	35.47	0-150	945
Number of families that include a married couple	10.70	21.40	0-100	471
Number of families that include a cohabiting couple	7.05	13.21	0-50	296
Number of families that include a single-parent/caregiver	12.78	18.35	0-100	588

See Appendix B for more information regarding the items included on the survey and summarized in this report.

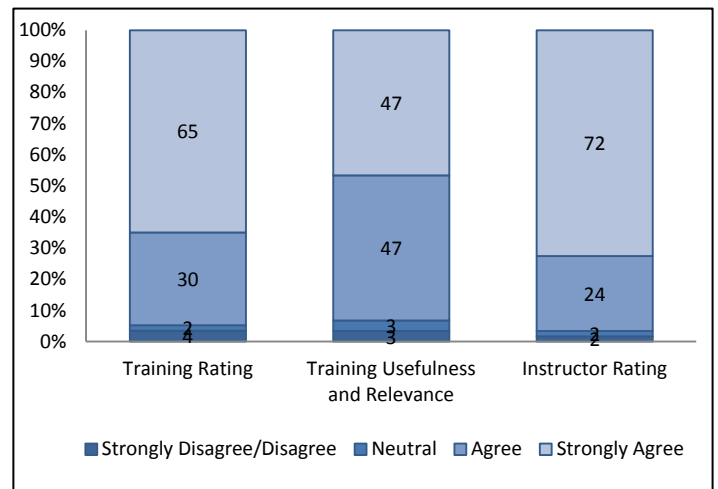
Affective Reaction: Training and Instructor Feedback

Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of the training (2 items), the usefulness and relevance of the training to their work (3 items), and their impressions of the instructor (4 items). Appendix B includes specific information for each item assessed.

As summarized in the figure, of the 58 respondents, most (95%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training met their expectations and was worthwhile, was useful and relevant to their work, and that the instructor was knowledgeable and presented material well.

When asked overall, how satisfied they were with the training, 95% indicated that they were satisfied (n=18) or very satisfied (n=37).

Respondents were also asked about what they thought was most useful about the training. Primarily, respondents mentioned *tools and materials*, *level of engagement during the training*, and *personal as well as professional applicability* of the information shared (see example items below). When asked what they thought was least useful about the training, a small number of participants shared concerns or recommendations related to *time distribution* (“conflict management needs more time” “spent a disproportionate amount of time discussing very basic concepts instead of addressing how to adapt the materials to different audiences”), and with *diverse audiences* “lack of inclusion of same-gender couples/families” “I felt like it was all geared around married couples”). Last, when asked if they would recommend this training to their co-workers or others, 98% responded “yes.”



Sample comments regarding what was most useful.

- *It was very practical information!*
- *The skills book. that provides/offers training sheets to share with clients for homework or just for discussion and skills to do in session*
- *Reinforcing the understanding that functional partner relationships benefit family ability to cope with critical situations.*
- *Seeing new ways to present the material to clients. Having a notebook of handouts, activities, and other resources.*

Having the trainer to show how the training relates to your job and your own family. He was an excellent trainer and he involved the group.

- *The most useful was learning different resources that were available in my area. Also learning the different things that happened with extension office was helpful.*
- *The format that makes it possibly to share in a variety of settings*
- *The demonstration of the water bottle. Showing and explaining how you cant receive or see information clearly when you are upset or stressed, and the benefit of letting your anger settle like the crystals before addressing a situation.*
- *The toolkit; I'll be able to use it in various ways--not just with couples, but with youth. The ""practices""—i.e. ""stress"" and crabby vs. caring responses*
- *The presenter and the wonderful resources provided in the printed materials I was able to leave with.*

Utility Reaction: Appropriateness for CWP's and Clients

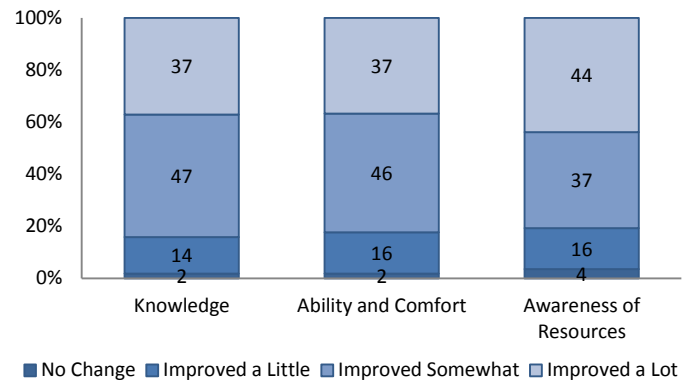
Next, given the focus of the training, questions were asked of professionals to determine how they viewed the potential helpfulness and relevance of healthy RME in the child welfare field (see Appendix B for items). Overall, positive feedback was shared by those who responded to the survey: The vast majority (95%), on average, agreed or strongly agreed that RME was relevant to their clients (M=4.4) and professionals (M=4.4).

Sample comments regarding appropriateness for CWP's and Clients.

- *It is very important for child welfare workers to be educated in healthy relationships! Many of the workers that we work with do not understand the full picture of what healthy relationships look like.*
- *By having awareness and knowledge about enhancing marriages/relationships, this will help strengthen and improve Family Communication, Family Interaction, Family Bonding, and Family Cohesiveness.*
- *Education is key. Most families I serve do not model responsible behaviors because they simply do not know what those behaviors are.*
- *Good information I will use with my clients.*
- *The content was excellent and definitely improved the services I can offer my clients!*

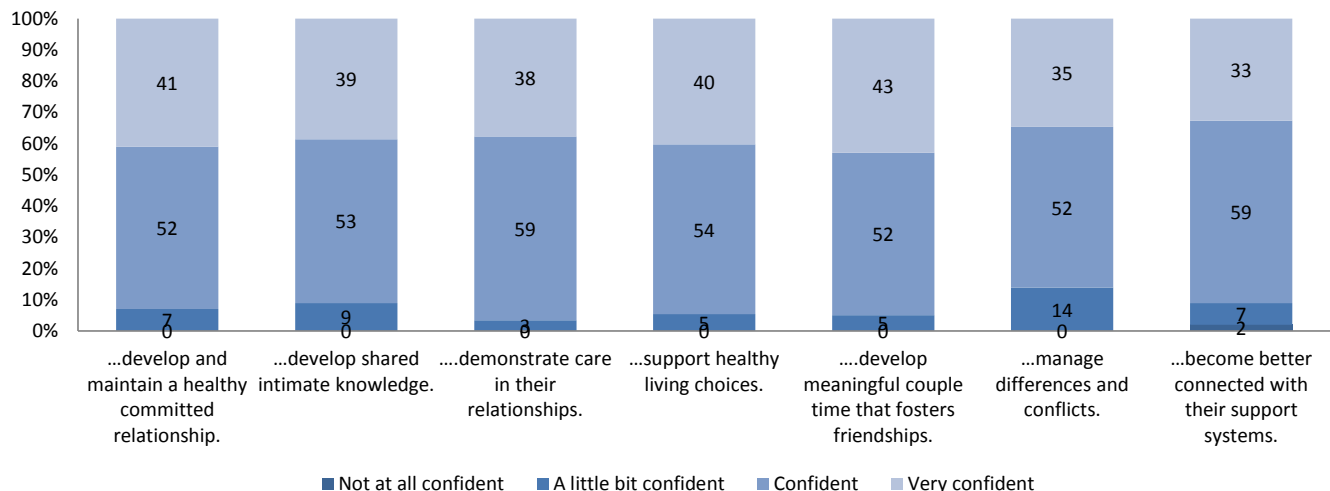
Learning: Change in Knowledge, Ability/Comfort, and Resource Awareness

The professionals were asked how much they felt they improved in their knowledge, ability and comfort, and resource awareness related to incorporating healthy RME and information into their work. As summarized in Appendix B and illustrated in the figure, the majority of respondents reported they improved 'somewhat' or 'a lot' in knowledge (84%), ability/comfort (83%) and resource awareness (81%).



Learning: Confidence in Teaching RME

Based on the seven core concepts taught from the National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Model (see Table on page 3), most of the participants (> 90%), on average, felt confident in helping individuals and couples develop the skills to form and maintain healthy relationships (see figure below).



Sample comments regarding confidence in teaching RME

- *Very confident. I am looking forward in using this training with teenagers as an activity during the month of February for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. This particular month focus on teens and this would be a good time to introduce healthy relationships.*
- *I plan to integrate the above topics into my practice.*
- *I came away better prepared because of a very thorough review (at my level) of some of the basic and intermediate things that sometimes get either forgotten, or just pushed to the side when there are so many competing pressures (certainly including managed care restrictions on number of sessions/amount of time available with clients).*
- *I appreciate the tools that I can take and put into practice for everyday use. It's good to be reminded and bring it back to the basics; we get caught up in the mundane activities of life and forget the simplicity of what we know to do.*

Learning Transfer: Application of Materials

When asked what they will do differently now as a result of the training, responses included plans to use their new skills both professionally and personally:

- *I will do better with my own family; I will be intentional with the time I spend listening and ""slow down"" when my children try to bid for my attention. I give myself to my work and it's a good thing but my children deserve their time as well, first and foremost.*
- *I will use the interactive demonstrations. I will use some of the video's and focus more on teaching skills to help enhance relationship. This class helped me see myself and agency more as a resource and helping agencies. And a reminder, that when you are working with clients they me, or my agency as their resource. They expect help from me or my agency. This help will come in the form of teaching skills that can improve their lives, their relationships and the lives of their children, and help teenagers or children to become more productive, and less stressed, and feel more safe at home.*
- *Pay closer attention the parental relationships with the child and be more aware of how those parental relationships drive the child's behavior*
- *I now have additional specific tools I can draw from, thereby becoming better able to adapt to the seemingly infinite variety of people/cases that I come in contact with.*
- *Utilizing the tools to evaluate/assess where relationships are, to better understand how to help them move forward*
- *Incorporate more into therapy sessions with couples in the future. Use thee worksheets as well.*
- *I will use these tools in my personal life and I plan to hold classes to share this info.*
- *Utilize the extension office more. Spend more one on one time with clients teaching different things*

Organizational Support

Because the translation of training information into practice may more likely occur within the context of a supportive organizational system, we asked participants questions related to supervisor and coworker support. As illustrated in the figure, of the 54 participants who responded, most felt that their supervisor (93%) and co-workers (93%) would be somewhat or very supportive of them using the information and tools from the training with the individuals and families that they serve.

Sample comments regarding perceived support

- *Both my co worker and supervisor were in the training and they are both very supportive with using the knowledge and the tools. I have also shared with other co workers.*
- *I own my company. . . I will incorporate them within our organization and require our staff to use them.*

Conclusion

Overall, based on responses from professionals who completed the 1-day training in 2015, similar outcomes were found when compared to past HRMET reports. Specifically, evaluation data indicates:

- The training increased knowledge and general feelings of efficacy about working with individuals and families on ways to support healthy couple relationships.
- Most of the participants indicated that the training was useful and relevant to their work, and particularly favored the tools and skills they had opportunities to practice in training and apply afterwards.
- The majority of participants felt their co-workers would be supportive of the materials, and they intended to apply their new resources both professionally and personally.
- Overall, respondents shared favorable reviews of the training and indicated they would recommend the training to others.

Sample of additional comments from participants.

- *Great information with excellent presentation and a great place to meet! Thank YOU!*
- *I enjoyed the training, it expanded my knowledge level and resources for working with couples to develop health relationship as it relates to raising healthy children. I look forward to participating the ""Elevate"" training as a next step in my professional learning opportunities.*
- *I would love to collaborate or work with the Extension service in some fashion. I believe that this type of education is needed and that what we do does make a difference. I was impressed by the organization of the trainings and the competence of the instructors.*
- *Overall, the program materials were excellent and Dr. Futris was an excellent trainer. I would recommend the program to child welfare workers, especially those engaged in the foster system. Very well done!*
- *The training was FANTASTIC and very useful!!*
- *I plan to use the resources in the toolkit to further assist the families and youth I work with as well as in my own personal life.*
- *This was a highly USEFUL workshop, as opposed to merely theoretical workshops we so often have presented, that have little direct application taught.*
- *The instructor was engaging, down to earth and humble. Clearly he is accomplished at speaking and listening. His personal stories allowed one to relate to him and to the material.*
- *The training was applicable directly to the population I serve, both in theoretical and in practical ways. It was especially helpful to leave the training with knowledge and helpful tools that can be implemented immediately.*
- *Trainer had great knowledge of what he was teaching and not only did it help with relationships at work but all my own relationship.*
- *I enjoyed the training. I like the idea of focusing on teaching individuals and couples skills to enhance their relationships which will overall make for a better quality of living in the lives of children.*

Appendix A: Agencies Represented at the 2015 Trainings

- Advocates for Children
- Annie E. Casey Foundation – Atlanta Civic Site
- Bartow County Schools
- Bartow Family Resources/Relationship Center
- Bibb County DFCS
- Bradford Health Services
- Childkind, Inc.
- Clayton County, UGA Extension
- Cobb County, UGA Extension
- Coliseum Center for Behavioral Health
- Columbia Co Juvenile Court
- Community Connections
- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Creative Community Services, Inc.
- DD Eisenhower Army Medical Center
- Faith Bridges Foster Care
- Family Advocacy Program
- GA Division of Family and Children Services
- HEARTS for Families
- Hospice Care Options
- Jones County Operation Early Intervention
- Life Management Group
- Lighthouse for Families
- Lutheran Services of Georgia
- Maranatha Bible Church
- Mohammed Schools of Atlanta
- New Horizons
- Nurse-Family Partnership of Columbus, GA
- On the Path Children and Family Sciences
- Open Door
- Pastoral Institute
- Piedmont Counseling Services
- Reba Brown LCSW, Inc.
- Rockdale County Public Schools
- Sacred Heart Church Office
- Ser Familia, Inc.
- Serenity Behavioral Health System
- The Methodist Home
- UGA Extension
- UGA, Carl Vinson Institute
- Unison Behavioral Health
- Waterman House

Appendix B: Survey Items and Scores.

Affective Reaction: Training and Instructor Feedback	N	M	SD	Range
Overall how satisfied were you with this training?	58	4.55	.73	1.0-5.0
Training Rating				
Overall computed score (2-items; alpha = .88)	58	4.41	.79	1.0-5.0
The course/training met my expectations.	57	4.33	.81	1.0-5.0
The course/training was worth my time.	58	4.48	.86	1.0-5.0
Training Relevance and Usefulness				
Overall computed score (3-items; alpha = .94)	58	4.38	.71	1.33-5.0
The content was relevant to the work I do or plan to do.	58	4.38	.72	2.0-5.0
The course/training provided knowledge and skills for assessing and working with individuals and couples within the child welfare system.	58	4.41	.82	1.0-5.0
The content of the course/training was compatible with the needs of the individuals/families I work with.	58	4.34	.71	1.0-5.0
Instructor Rating				
Overall computed score (4-items; alpha = .87)	58	4.56	.61	1.75-5.0
The instructor(s) seemed knowledgeable about healthy relationship and marriage education.	58	4.64	.74	1.0-5.0
The instructor(s) seemed knowledgeable about the child welfare profession.	58	4.41	.73	1.0-5.0
The instructor(s) was engaging of participants/students	58	4.60	.62	2.0-5.0
The instructor(s) answered questions clearly	58	4.60	.77	1.0-5.0
Utility Reaction: Appropriateness for CWPs and Clients	N	M	SD	Range
Clients				
Overall computed score (2-items; alpha = .84)	58	4.43	.70	1.0-5.0
Child welfare clients' participation in marital/couple relationship enhancement programs can help reduce incidences of child abuse and neglect.	58	4.40	.70	1.0-5.0
The clients I work with can benefit from participating in programs that focus on enhancing marriage/couple relationships.	58	4.47	.80	1.0-5.0
Professionals				
Overall computed score (3-items; alpha = .90)	58	4.41	.69	1.0-5.0
The knowledge and skills I learn about working with couples will help me perform my job more effectively.	58	4.38	.79	1.0-5.0
Child welfare workers need knowledge and skills about enhancing marriage/relationships in order to do their job more effectively.	58	4.47	.68	1.0-5.0
Understanding characteristics of healthy marital/couple relationships will strengthen my assessment and case planning skills to reduce abuse/neglect.	58	4.40	.79	1.0-5.0

Learning: Change in Knowledge, Ability/Comfort, and Resource Awareness	N	M	SD	Range
Change in Knowledge				
Overall computed score (3-items; alpha = .84)	57	3.17	.71	1.00-4.00
My understanding of specific skills that support healthy couple relationship development.	57	3.33	.76	1.00-4.00
My awareness of strategies to strengthen the couple relationships of clientele who are diverse in culture, race, gender, social class, sexual orientation and age.	57	2.89	.96	1.00-4.00
My knowledge of ways to help individuals/families that I work with manage challenges in their relationships.	57	3.28	.70	1.00-4.00
Change in Ability/Comfort				
Overall computed score (4-items; alpha = .91)	57	3.11	.75	1.00-4.00
My ability to assess for marital/couple relationship problems with the individuals/families I work with.	57	3.12	.80	1.00-4.00
My comfort discussing with the individuals/families I work with how their marital/couple issues and problems impact their child's safety, permanency and well-being.	57	3.16	.80	1.00-4.00
My ability to formulate culturally appropriate interventions for specific individuals/couples to strengthen their couple relationships.	57	3.23	.82	1.00-4.00
My comfort with providing information to individuals/families that I work with on ways they can improve their marital/couple relationships.	57	2.91	.93	1.00-4.00
Change in Resource Awareness				
Overall computed score (2-items; alpha = .79)	57	3.07	.87	1.00-4.00
My awareness of resources available that I can use with individuals/families in supporting couple relationships.	57	3.26	.81	1.00-4.00
My awareness of local educational and counseling services that strengthen couple relationships that I can refer individuals/families to.	57	2.88	1.09	1.00-4.00
Learning: Confidence in Teaching RME				
Confidence in helping individuals/couples develop skills				
Overall computed score (7-items; alpha = .95)	58	3.47	.51	2.00-4.00
Develop and maintain a healthy committed relationship. (CHOOSE)	58	3.34	.61	2.00-4.00
Develop shared intimate knowledge. (KNOW)	57	3.30	.63	2.00-4.00
Demonstrate care in their relationships. (CARE)	58	3.34	.55	2.00-4.00
Support healthy living choices. (CARE FOR SELF)	57	3.35	.58	2.00-4.00
Develop meaningful couple time that fosters friendships. (SHARE)	58	3.38	.59	2.00-4.00
Manage differences and conflicts. (MANAGE)	58	3.21	.67	2.00-4.00
Become better connected with their support systems. (CONNECT)	58	3.22	.65	1.00-4.00
Organizational Support				
Overall, how supportive do you believe your supervisor/administrator will be of you using the knowledge and tools gained from this training with the individuals and families that you serve?	58	3.72	.60	2.00-4.00
Overall, how supportive do you believe your co-workers will be of you using the knowledge and tools gained from this training with the individuals and families that you serve?	58	3.69	.61	2.00-4.00



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