Initial Assessment Specialist Certification (IASC) Program

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Summary

This policy describes the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) Initial Assessment Specialist Certification (IASC) program. Successful completion of the IASC program shall include completion of the IASC online modules, foundation trainings, internal trainings, practicas, assignments and skills assessments, as well as satisfactory and up to date Performance Planning and Development (PPD) evaluations. The IASC shall be required for all new Initial Assessment Specialist (IAS) hires.

Policy

The DMCPS Professional Development Section oversees the delivery and coordination the IASC and verifies that all IAS employed by the agency satisfactorily complete the IASC program.

The purpose of the IASC is to ensure that all new DMCPS IAS hires fulfill their Child Protective Services/child welfare responsibilities at a ***basic level of proficiency*** in accordance with the Wisconsin Child Protective Services Safety Intervention Standards, Access and Initial Assessment Standards, and Wisconsin Children's Code. This is accomplished through a structured, rigorous, and competency-focused approach to new staff development. The certification program integrates formal training, performance feedback, and evaluation into a unified system in which all processes focus on a common goal and purpose—preparing new staff to perform the most essential function of an IAS to keep children safe at every point of contact.

The IASC is a comprehensive training program delivered by DMCPS Professional Development Section in concert with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS). The IASC training program objectives are designed to build the following knowledge, skills, and abilities of newly hired IAS workers as set forward in the IAS position description:

- Knowledge of, and skill in, the application of the principles and practices of the applicable professional code of ethics.
- Knowledge and application of family systems theory, child and family development, crisis intervention theory and the dynamics of child abuse and neglect with a strength-based approach to working with children and families.
- Knowledge of current social and economic issues and ways in which these issues affect individuals and families.
- Ability to analyze, interpret and apply laws, regulations and best practices pertaining to federal and state human service programs, particularly those laws relating to child welfare.
- Knowledge of human service and health resources (locally and nationally).
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships within the agency, contracted partner agencies, other social service agencies, courts, schools, public officials, professionals and the community.
- Ability to work with a culturally diverse population.
- Ability to identify and recognize changes in human behavior including non-verbal and verbal cues.
- Ability to maintain accurate, current case record documentation and prepare clear, concise reports based on documentation of case information and practice.
- Ability to demonstrate resilience in stressful situations that involve the well-being and protection of children and families as well as individual personal safety (both physical and mental).
- Skill in conducting interviews, as well as gathering, synthesizing and analyzing information/data to form a conclusion.

Procedures:

Completing the Program
- All courses must be attended; all course assignments completed successfully, all skills assessments passed and all PPDs are satisfactory and up to date, before an IAS is considered Certified.
- Once an IAS has successfully completed the entire IASC program, and all data related to his/her completion has been verified, a certificate will be issued to the IAS and that will serve as notice that they have completed all requirements of the IASC program.
- A transition meeting shall take place between Professional Development staff, the certified IAS and their permanent team. This meeting shall discuss the required trainings to be completed by 24 months of employment per the Wisconsin Administrative Rule, DCF 43, current needs of the IAS, as well as other tasks which require completion now that the certified IAS is ready to take on cases independently.
- Each IAS shall complete at least 30 hours of in-service training in each 2-year period, beginning on March 1 of an odd year, after their 2 year Foundation Timeline. DMCPS may specify what courses are required to meet the 30 training hours. The training course taken during the IASC process will be counted toward an IAS' first 30-hour training requirement.

The training courses, assignments, and skills assessments that make up the IASC program are outlined in the IASC Program Syllabus. The syllabus is subject to change and all changes to the program must be approved by the Division Administrator, Deputy Administrator, and Section Manager of Professional Development. Some changes may require recommendations from the

IASC Advisory Team (see below). Changes will be tracked in the business process document Change Log. At a minimum there will be an annual review of the program.

The IASC Program Syllabus will be maintained and updated, as needed, by the Professional Development Section Manager.

Exemptions
Exemptions from IASC program courses can be made for newly hired IAS at the discretion of the Professional Development Section and Initial Assessment Bureau.
- The newly hired IAS has documentation that indicates he/she has successfully completed equivalent courses.
- The newly hired IAS passes required skills assessments. If a newly hired IAS does not pass a skills assessment, a Learning Plan will be developed to provide structured support to the IAS and he/she will be required to retake courses related to those assessments.

Initial Assessment Specialists Transition to Independent Case Work
IAS may take on limited case assignments while participating in the IASC. While working on case assignments, the IAS must always be under the close supervision of an IAS- Advanced or Training Team Supervisor. Highlighted below are the case assignment responsibilities the new IAS may take on during the IASC program:
- After successful completion of WCWPDS: Access, DMCPS: Access and eWiSACWIS: Introduction, the new IAS will be able to work independently in Access taking calls with live clients. Their reports shall be reviewed by Access Mentor/Supervisor and feedback will be given to the IAS and the Professional Development Section.
- After successful completion of Intro to IA, Information Collection, and Safety in CPS, as well as passage of the Safety Skills Assessment, the new IAS will be able to enter case notes and participate in client interviews during shared case assignments under supervision of IAS- Senior/Advanced.
- After successful completion of the Engagement Skills Assessment, the new IAS will be able to assume secondary assignment which includes, but is not limited to, interview clients, complete IA documentation and Safety Analysis and Plan (SAP), and responsibilities under the close supervision of Training Supervisor, IAS- Senior/Advanced.

     Although the Wisconsin Administrative Rule DCF 43.04 authorizes an IAS to take primary assignments (e-WiSACWIS assignment of the case) after completing Online Pre-Service trainings, DMCPS does not assign cases to IAS staff in the IASC program until they complete Intro to IA, Information Collection, Safety in CPS, and pass the Safety Skills Assessment. Even after the completion of these requirements, IAS' do not work cases independently. They work in pairs with other trainees who have also passed the required trainings and assessments or are partnered with an IAS-Senior/Advanced until the IASC program is completed and they transition to their permanent team.

IAS will apply skills to actual cases under close supervision. Case assignments are individually selected by Training Team Supervisors familiar with each new staff member's demonstrated abilities. New IAS are introduced to "real" families gradually and are challenged to apply

Access and Initial Assessment Standards and principles under controlled conditions. At the successful completion of all trainings, assignments, and skills assessments, as well as having satisfactory and up to date PPD(s), the new IAS will receive their IASC certificate of completion.

Data Tracking and Verification
Because of the importance of this certification program, it is essential that the data about participants' activities is tracked and recorded accurately and in a timely manner. The Professional Development Section is responsible for keeping records on all IAS participating in program courses and verifying all data and making sure there is corresponding supporting documentation for all work completed before certifying newly hired IAS.

The program tracking method will be outlined in an internal business process document titled the IASC Program Syllabus: Tracking. The tracking method may be subject to change and all changes in the method must be approved by DMCPS and HR. Changes will be tracked in the IASC Program Syllabus: Change Log.

The IASC Program Tracking Procedure document will be maintained and updated by the Professional Development Section Manager and reviewed by HR.

The IASC Program Tracking Procedure will be stored on the (S) Share Drive in the Professional development folder, and IASC Tracking Sub-Folder.

Roles and Responsibilities

Task	Responsibility	Description
Delivery and Management of Training Program	DMCPS Professional Development Section Staff and WCWPDS	Develop and deliver training to new IAS in the IASC program. Enroll staff into the program, make sure staff are attending and completing course work, support staff as they move through this program, and manage training staff.
Tracking Progress of IAS	WCWPDS Professional Development Section Staff	DMCPS is responsible for verifying all attendance and completion of activities, such as documenting attendance for classes and all written assignments and skills assessments.
Verifying and Reporting on Progress	DMCPS Professional Development Section Manager	Review all data on course participation and report on progress to DMCPS Executive Management Team.
Certifying IAS	DMCPS Professional Development Section Manager	Certifies all IAS that have completed all coursework, assignments and assessments. DMCPS Division Administrator shall sign Certifications which are sent to the Certified IAS.
Completing all courses, assignments and Skills Assessments	New IAS	Attend and complete all trainings in the IASC Syllabus. Complete all assignments. Pass all Skills Assessments.

Training Program Evaluation	DMCPS and WCWPDS	Review the effectiveness of the delivery of the IASC Syllabus (trainings, assignments and Skills Assessments).
IASC program change Recommendations to the Division Administrator	IASC Advisory Team	The main goal of the Advisory Team is to review IASC program change requests and make recommendations for final approval.

IASC Advisory Team:
Goal: The goal of the Advisory Team is to review IASC program change requests and make recommendations for final approval when necessary.

Note: This team will make recommendations on requested changes to the IASC program. All recommendations will be tracked on the (S) Share Drive. This team shall meet at least once annually.

Recommended participation on the IASC Advisory Team would be:
- DMCPS Division Administrator
- DMCPS Deputy Administrator
- DMCPS Professional Development Section Manager
- DMCPS IAB Bureau Director
- Human Resources Designee
- WCWPDS Director/Designee

Requesting Changes to IASC Program
All changes to the IASC Program are to be submitted to the Professional Development Section Manager who shall present them to the DMCPS Division Administrator. The Division Administrator who will decide if the IASC Advisory Team will convene regarding the request. The IASC Advisory Team shall meet on an annual basis, or more often, if warranted.
- If the change being requested can be approved by the Professional Development Section Manager and Deputy Administrator there is no need to bring it to the Advisory Team. Changes such as;
    - Course title changes
    - Modifying training due to policy/statutory updates
- If the Professional Development Section Manager and Division Administrator feel they require input before making the final decision on approving a change; the Advisory Team will be asked to review and make recommendations. Changes that need the IASC Advisory Team input include, but are not limited too;
    - Adding or removing courses
    - Changes to the content, objectives and format of a course
    - Changes to assessment content or skills assessment rubrics

This process must be used for **all changes** including those to policies, curriculum, and other general information pertaining to the program.

Once a change is approved the appropriate document will be updated and the details and dates of the change added to the document change log on the (S) Share Drive, to maintain a record of changes.

Changing the program will be allowed on a limited basis and must be documented on the IASC Program Syllabus Change Log. There will be an annual review of the IASC Program, syllabus and policy.

Related Resources:
Wisconsin State Administrative Code, Training for Child Protective Services Caseworker and Supervisors Chapter DCF 43
IASC Program Syllabus
IASC Program Syllabus: Tracking
IASC Program Syllabus: Change Log