

Social Services Assistant Day 3 – Participant Manual



Strengthening Families Through Everyday Coaching

Practical Coaching Skills

Social Services Assistant Classroom Simulation

Day 3:

New Social Services Assistant Training Agenda

9:00 – 10:30	Welcome Strengthening Families Through Everyday Coaching
10:30-10:45	Lunch Break
10:45 – 12:00	Practical Coaching Skills
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch Break
1:00 – 2:30	Social Services Assistant Classroom Simulation
2:30 – 3:00	Lunch Break
3:00 -4:00	Post Test Wrap Up and Review

New Social Services Assistant Training



UA
LITTLE
ROCK

MIDSOUTH
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, HEALTH,
AND HUMAN SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

Day 3

1

**STRENGTHENING
FAMILIES THROUGH
EVERYDAY COACHING**



2

WELCOME



3

Target Outcomes



- Use a strengths-based coaching approach when working with parents and caregivers.
- Recognize everyday opportunities to encourage and reinforce positive parenting.
- Model appropriate interactions while maintaining professional boundaries.
- Coach parents through common family time situations without taking over.
- Document meaningful observations of parent-child interactions.
- Apply these skills during simulated family time scenarios.

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More Than Supervision: The Social Services Assistant's Role in Strengthening Families

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**Every
Interaction is
an Opportunity
to Strengthen a
Family**

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Who Helped You Grow

*Think About Someone Who
Helped You Grow*

Activity

7



Finding Coaching Opportunities

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Looking for Opportunities During Ordinary Moments

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Greeting a child | ☐ Helping with transitions |
| ☐ Reconnecting after separation | ☐ Comforting a child |
| ☐ Playing together | ☐ Praising positive behavior |
| ☐ Reading a book | ☐ Saying goodbye |
| ☐ Sharing a meal or snack | |

Coaching doesn't just happen during difficult moments.

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Finding the Opportunities

Imagine you're supervising a one-hour family time. Without thinking about problems, what interactions will probably happen during that hour?

Activity

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COACHING VS. CORRECTING

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Social Services Assistant Coaching Principles

1. Assume Positive Intent
2. Recognize Strengths Before Addressing Concerns
3. Build Confidence Through Encouragement
4. Coach Through Questions and Reflection
5. Model Positive Interactions
6. Support Growth, Not Perfection
7. Maintain Safety and Professional Boundaries

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Coaching Principles in Practice

Recognizing Everyday Opportunities to Strengthen Families

Activity

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Coaching vs. Correcting

Coaching
focuses on
GROWTH.



Correcting
focuses on
MISTAKES.

Ask Yourself: Will what I'm about to say build this parent's confidence or simply point out a mistake?

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Which Response Builds Growth?

Which response is more likely to help the parent grow?

Response A

Response B

Activity

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Feedback Families Can Hear

Effective feedback is:

- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Timely
- ✓ Respectful
- ✓ Encouraging
- ✓ Focused on growth

Formula to Effective Feedback:

Notice → Affirm → Encourage

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Build the Feedback

Formula to Effective Feedback:

Notice → Affirm → Encourage

Activity

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Opportunities to Encourage

- Play
- Routines
- Meals
- Transitions
- Comforting a child
- Setting limits
- Praise and encouragement



Coaching Through
Everyday Parenting
Moments

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Parenting Moments Gallery Walk

1. What positive parenting behaviors might you observe?
2. What coaching opportunity might exist?
3. What could you say to encourage that parent?



Activity

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PLAY IS MORE THAN FUN

Through play, children learn to:

- Build trust and attachment
- Communicate thoughts and feelings
- Solve problems
- Practice self-control
- Build confidence
- Strengthen relationships

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What Did You Notice?



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COACHING THROUGH TRANSITIONS

Common Transitions:

- Arriving for family time
- Moving from one activity to another
- Cleaning up
- Ending play
- Saying goodbye



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What Would You Say?



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RESPONDING TO BIG EMOTIONS



Children need adults who:

- Stay calm
- Acknowledge feelings
- Set safe limits
- Help them regulate emotions
- Reconnect after the difficult moment

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What Would You Notice?



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REPAIRING AND RECONNECTING



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Turning a Tough Moment into a Teaching Moment

- A seven-year-old refuses to clean up before family time ends.
- His father becomes frustrated and raises his voice.
- The child begins crying.
- After taking a moment to calm himself, the father kneels beside his son and says:
- I'm sorry I yelled. I was frustrated. Let's clean up together so we can finish our family time on a good note.

Activity

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Recognizing Coaching Opportunities



During Family Time,
What do you notice?

- Child behaviors
- Parent strengths
- Opportunities to encourage
- Moments to model
- Safety concerns

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Family Time Observation Challenge

1. What parent strengths did you observe?
2. Where did you identify coaching opportunities?
3. What strengths-based coaching statement could you use?
4. What information would you document?

Activity

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New Staff Training Role Play Instructions

SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT CLASSROOM SIMULATION

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YOUR ROLE IN TODAY'S SIMULATION

- ARRIVAL & RECONNECTION
- SIMULATED FAMILY INTERACTION
- TRANSITION
- GOODBYE & DEBRIEF

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FAMILY TIME SIMULATION

Meet the Jones Family



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SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT SIMULATION



SCENE 1 : Family Time Arrival & Reconnection

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Observation Form

Scene 1 Arrival & Reconnection

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**SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT
SIMULATION**

SCENE 2:
Family Time Interaction

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Observation Form

Scene 2
Family Time
Interaction

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**SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT
SIMULATION**

SCENE 3:
Family Time Transition

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**Observation
Form**

**Scene 3
Transition**

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**SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT
SIMULATION**

SCENE 4:
Family Time
Goodbye & Debrief

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**Observation
Form**

**Scene 4
Goodbye &
Debrief**

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Final Simulation Debrief:

Instead of "What went wrong", let's focus on "What went right!"

1. What strengths did Ashley demonstrate?
2. What coaching opportunities did you identify?
3. When did you choose NOT to intervene? Why?
4. What documentation was most important?
5. What did Leslie teach us about transitions?

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DOCUMENTATION: HOW YOU WRITE MATTERS

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Documentation should answer:

• What happened during the family time? • How did the parent and child interact? • Were there any safety concerns?	• What strengths did you observe? • What did you do during the family time? • What needs to happen next?
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Write one family time contact from one of the simulation scenes you just observed.

Remember to be:

- Objective/Factually Based
- Document strengths
- Document what you observe
- Make no assumptions
- Use professional language

Documentation Exercise

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**Target Outcomes
Evaluation**

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**Social Services
Assistant
Post-Test**

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Social Services Assistant Coaching Principles

1. Assume Positive Intent

- Begin with the belief that most parents want to have a healthy relationship with their children, even when they struggle to demonstrate effective parenting skills.

2. Recognize Strengths Before Addressing Concerns

- Intentionally look for positive parent-child interactions and acknowledge them before offering guidance or feedback.

3. Build Confidence Through Encouragement

- Parents are more likely to try new skills when they feel respected, supported, and capable.

4. Coach Through Questions and Reflection

- Encourage parents to think through situations by asking thoughtful questions instead of immediately providing answers whenever appropriate.

5. Model Positive Interactions

- Demonstrate calm communication, respect, patience, and healthy interactions that parents can observe and practice.

6. Support Growth, Not Perfection

- Focus on progress over time. Every family interaction is an opportunity to build skills and strengthen relationships.

7. Maintain Safety and Professional Boundaries

- A coaching approach never replaces the responsibility to intervene when safety concerns exist. Protecting children remains the first priority.



Coaching Principles in Practice: Recognizing Everyday Opportunities to Strengthen Families

Coaching Principle 1: Assume Positive Intent

Scenario 1: A father appears distracted because his toddler is crying and refusing to sit down for lunch.

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 2: Recognize Strengths Before Addressing Concerns

Scenario 2: A mother remembers to ask her son about school before redirecting him after he interrupts her several times.

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 3: Build Confidence Through Encouragement

Scenario 3: A parent attempts to comfort an upset child by kneeling beside them and speaking calmly.

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 4: Coach Through Questions and Reflection

Scenario 4: A visit ends with the child becoming upset about leaving.

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 5: Model Positive Interactions

Scenario 5: The child interrupts several times while the SSA is speaking with the parent.

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 6: Support Growth, Not Perfection

Scenario 6: During a previous visit the parent struggled to engage the child. Today the parent spends several minutes playing appropriately with the child.

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 7: Maintain Safety and Professional Boundaries

Scenario 7: During play, the parent becomes frustrated and grabs the child's arm too forcefully.

How might you respond:



Family Time Observation Challenge Activity

Today, you are supervising a one-hour family time visit between Kelli, Marcus, and their two children, six-year-old Liam and two-year-old Maya. When Kelli and Marcus arrive, Liam immediately runs toward them. Kelli bends down, opens her arms, and says, *"There's my boy! I've been waiting to see you."* Liam hugs her tightly. Marcus walks over to Maya, who initially stays close to her resource parent. Rather than immediately picking her up, Marcus kneels and holds out his hand. Marcus says, *"Hi, baby girl. Daddy's right here when you're ready."* After a few moments, Maya reaches for him. Marcus smiles and picks her up. Kelli looks over and says, *"She just needed a minute. You did well giving her some time."*

The family moves to the play area, where there are dolls, toy cars, coloring supplies, puzzles, books, and pretend kitchen items. Liam asks Marcus to race toy cars with him while Maya brings Kelli a toy plate and spoon. Kelli pretends to taste Maya's food and says, *"Mmm! Did you make this for Mommy?"* Maya laughs and brings her another plate. Across the room, Liam becomes excited when his car wins a race. Marcus says, *"You got me again! You've gotten really good at this."*

After several minutes, Kelli encourages everyone to play together and suggests that the family pretend they are running a restaurant. Liam wants to be the cook, Maya carries toy food to everyone, and Kelli and Marcus pretend to be customers. When Maya repeatedly takes food from Liam's pretend kitchen, Liam becomes frustrated. Liam says, *"Stop it, Maya! You're messing everything up!"* Marcus responds quickly, *"Liam, she's little. Just let her have it."* Liam crosses his arms and says, *"You always take her side."* Kelli responds to Marcus, *"He was playing with it first. You don't have to get onto him."* Marcus becomes defensive and says, *"I wasn't getting onto him. I'm trying to keep them from fighting."* The parents briefly focus on each other rather than on the children. Liam becomes quiet, while Maya continues playing. Kelli notices Liam's expression and shifts her attention back to him. Kelli says, *"Liam, I can see you were frustrated because you were using that food. Can we find something Maya can use, too?"* Marcus pauses and adds, *"Yeah, buddy. I should've listened first. Show me what you were*

making." Liam begins explaining his game. Marcus listens, and Kelli helps Maya choose other pretend food.

Later, Maya begins coloring. She accidentally draws on the table instead of the paper. Kelli quickly says, *"Maya! No! You know better than that."* Maya drops the crayon and begins to cry. Marcus says quietly, *"Ash, she's only two. I don't think she meant to."* Kelli responds, *"I know, but she has to learn not to color on things."* Instead of arguing, Marcus says, *"You're right. We do need to teach her. Maybe we can show her where the crayons go."* Kelli pauses, takes a breath, and kneels beside Maya. Kelli says, *"Crayons go on the paper. Here, Mommy will help you."* Maya picks up the crayon and begins coloring on the paper. Kelli praises her by saying, *"That's it. You're coloring on your paper."* Marcus smiles and says to Kelli, *"That worked."*

Near the end of the visit, you remind Kelli and Marcus that there are five minutes remaining. Marcus tells Liam, *"We have about five more minutes, so let's choose one last thing to do."* Kelli tells Maya, *"We're going to clean up, read one book, and then it will be time to go."* Liam immediately says, *"I don't want you to leave."* Marcus responds, *"I don't want to leave either."* Kelli adds, *"It's hard to say goodbye when we've had a good time. We're going to enjoy these last few minutes together."* The family cleans up and chooses a short book. Kelli holds Maya while Marcus reads. Liam sits beside Marcus and helps turn the pages.

When it is time to leave, Liam begins to cry and holds on to Marcus. Marcus looks uncomfortable and says, *"Come on, buddy. Don't cry. You're okay."* Kelli responds, *"It's okay for him to be sad."* She kneels beside Liam and says, *"You wish we could stay longer, don't you?"* Liam nods. Marcus kneels beside them and says, *"Me too. But we'll see you again. We love you."* Together, Kelli and Marcus hug Liam. Kelli kisses Maya goodbye, and both parents tell the children when they will see them again.

Small Group Activity:

Discuss the following questions.



1. What parent strengths did you observe?

2. Where did you identify coaching opportunities?

3. What strengths-based coaching statement could you use?

4. What information would you document?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Scene being Document:

___ Arrival & Reconnection

___ Family Interaction – Play

Transition

___ Goodbye & Debriefing



Write Your Family Time Contact: Use your observations from one of the simulations to write a clear, objective family time contact as you would document it in the case record. Use additional pages, if necessary.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

Before submitting, check your documentation: Is it objective? Does it describe observable behavior? Does it identify strengths? Did you avoid assumptions and opinions? Is the language professional and respectful?