



# Research Brief: Workforce Impact of QIC-EY Training

Cross-site Findings for State and Tribal Child Welfare Workers

## Summary

Across both reports, QIC-EY was associated with stronger worker readiness, more youth participation in hearings and planning, and positive movement in agency culture related to authentic youth engagement. The strongest comparative evidence was among state case-workers; the tribal findings also showed great promise.

## Why This Matters

Authentic youth engagement is increasingly recognized as a core feature of high-quality child welfare practice. QIC-EY defines authentic engagement as intentionally partnering with children and youth about their lives, on their terms, in ways that make sense to them, and the initiative's training and coaching model is designed to help agencies strengthen relationships, improve permanency planning, and elevate youth voice in decision-making.

This emphasis is supported in the broader literature. Reviews of child welfare participation research consistently find that trusting relationships, safe opportunities to speak, and adult willingness to share power are central to meaningful participation (McCafferty & Mercado Garcia, 2024). Youth-focused studies similarly show that engagement is strongest when meetings are warm, predictable, and genuinely responsive to young people's preferences (Furrer et al., 2023). Research on permanency planning also suggests that intentional facilitation strategies can improve how youth participate in decision-making processes that shape their futures (Augsberger, 2014).



## What was Reviewed

This brief synthesizes findings from two cross-site QIC-EY workforce reports. The state worker report examined baseline and 6-month follow-up survey data from 703 participants across Michigan, Montana, Missouri, Nebraska, and Rhode Island, including both QIC-EY and comparison groups. The tribal report examined baseline and 6-month follow-up survey data from 63 participants from Southern Plains Consortium, Yakama Nation, and Hawai'i. In the tribal report, supervisors and caseworkers were combined in the analysis because of sample size, and the cross-site analysis did not include a comparison group.

Across both reports, the workforce survey assessed nine outcomes tied to the QIC-EY logic model, including preparedness and capacity, youth participation in planning and hearings, philosophy and culture related to youth engagement, implementation of youth-centered practices, and longer-term workforce outcomes.

## Findings for State Workers

The state worker findings provide the strongest causal evidence in the two reports because they compare QIC-EY participants to a comparison group over time. Overall, the pattern suggests that the clearest short-term workforce effects were among caseworkers, with more modest but still meaningful effects for supervisors.

Among supervisors, the QIC-EY group showed statistically significant improvements over the comparison group on 5% of all sub-outcomes. The strongest supervisor improvement was in Outcome 8, increased implementation of policies and practices reflecting a system commitment to youth engagement, particularly increased activities geared toward engaging youth. Supervisors also showed some gains in Outcome 6, marked change in philosophy and culture related to youth engagement, including stronger commitment to youth engagement and greater organizational commitment to change. The comparison group outperformed QIC-EY supervisors on 2% of sub-outcomes, specifically one hearing-participation item for youth ages 14 to 17.

Caseworker results were more consistently positive. From baseline to 6-month follow-up, QIC-EY caseworkers outperformed the comparison group on 16% of all sub-outcomes: 13% with statistically significant differences and 3% with some statistically significant differences. The comparison group did not show statistically significant improvement over QIC-EY caseworkers on any sub-outcome. By outcome area, the largest concentration of improvement appeared in workforce preparedness and capacity, where 44% of sub-outcomes showed significant improvement for QIC-EY caseworkers. Additional gains appeared in youth participation in permanency planning (14%), youth participation in hearings and case planning meetings (a combined 25%), and philosophy and culture related to youth engagement (18%).

In practical terms, the state-site findings indicate that the training was associated with greater confidence in engaging youth in case and permanency planning, stronger confidence related to cultural permanency, more active youth participation in hearings and planning processes, and stronger commitment to meaningful youth engagement and partnership.

### State Caseworker Overall Outcome Changes

**Table 1.** Percent of sub-outcomes with statistically significant greater improvement from baseline to 6-month follow-up.

Outcome	Number of sub-outcomes	QIC-EY group: Significant improvement	Comparison group: Significant improvement
Increased workforce preparedness/capacity in the engagement of children and youth	9	44%	0%
Increased levels of efficacy & job satisfaction	3	0%	0%
<i>Increased youth satisfaction with the level of engagement child welfare and courts staff have with them</i>	—	<i>Captured in youth survey</i>	<i>Captured in youth survey</i>
Increased number of children/youth participating in permanency planning	7	14%	0%
Increased number of children/youth participating in permanency planning hearings and case planning meetings	12	25%	0%
Marked change in philosophy and culture related to engagement of youth by child welfare staff and court personnel	11	18%	0%
Increased implementation of policies and practices reflecting child welfare systems' commitment to engagement practices	8	0%	0%
Increased levels of efficacy & job satisfaction (long-term)	8	0%	0%
Relational permanence	1	0%	0%

The state caseworker table shows that the largest concentration of measurable change was in preparedness and capacity, followed by youth participation in planning and hearings and broader philosophy/culture shifts. Notably, no state outcome area showed significant advantage for the comparison group in the caseworker summary table.

## Findings for Tribal Workers

The tribal findings should be interpreted more cautiously because the cross-site analysis did not include a comparison group, and supervisors and caseworkers were combined. Even so, the results show meaningful movement in several areas that matter to child welfare agencies, particularly where the QIC-EY training and coaching materials were culturally adapted for local contexts.

Across the combined tribal worker sample, participants showed statistically significant improvement from baseline to the 6-month follow-up on 13% of all sub-outcomes, and all significant improvements were medium in magnitude. No statistically significant declines were observed, which is a positive indication of the effective uptake of the training for the tribal sites. By outcome area, the clearest gains were in youth participation in permanency planning hearings and case planning meetings, where 33% of sub-outcomes improved, followed by philosophy and culture related to youth engagement, where 27% improved, and increased implementation of policies and practices reflecting systems commitment to engagement, where 13% improved.

These changes matter for implementation because they suggest the training may have affected both attitudes and practice. Participants reported stronger beliefs that youth should be kept informed throughout case planning and permanency planning, stronger beliefs that permanency includes legal, relational, and cultural dimensions, increased youth-adult interaction in planning, and stronger youth engagement in hearings and meetings. For tribal and culturally responsive settings, that broader permanency framing is especially important.

### Tribal Worker Overall Outcome Changes

Table 2. Percent of sub-outcomes with statistically significant improvement from baseline to 6-month follow-up. The report combined supervisors and caseworkers for this analysis.

Outcome	Number of sub-outcomes	Percentage of statistically significant improvements
Increased workforce preparedness/capacity in the engagement of children and youth	9	0%
Increased levels of efficacy & job satisfaction	3	0%
<i>Increased youth satisfaction with the level of engagement child welfare and courts staff have with them</i>	—	<i>Captured in youth survey</i>
Increased number of children/youth participating in permanency planning	7	0%
Increased number of children/youth participating in permanency planning hearings and case planning meetings	12	33%

Outcome	Number of sub-outcomes	Percentage of statistically significant improvements
Marked change in philosophy and culture related to engagement of youth by child welfare staff and court personnel	11	27%
Increased implementation of policies and practices reflecting child welfare systems' commitment to engagement practices	8	13%
Increased levels of efficacy & job satisfaction (long-term)	8	0%
Relational permanence	1	0%

**Discussion: What These Findings Suggest for Workforce Impact**

Viewed together, the two reports suggest that QIC-EY is most likely to influence the child welfare workforce in four connected ways. First, it appears to strengthen frontline readiness. The strongest state-site findings were among caseworkers, who reported greater confidence and skill in engaging youth in case and permanency planning. That is important because case-carrying staff are often the workers who directly shape whether young people are informed, prepared, heard, and supported in planning processes.

Second, the findings suggest that QIC-EY may improve practice behavior, not just attitudes. Across both reports, some of the clearest changes were in youth participation in permanency planning hearings and case planning meetings. That pattern aligns with QIC-EY's emphasis on moving from abstract support for youth voice to concrete, everyday engagement practices embedded in casework and supervision.

Third, the results point to culture change. The state supervisor findings and the tribal findings both suggest movement in workers' philosophy, agency expectations, and implementation conditions related to youth engagement. The broader literature helps explain why that matters: meaningful participation is more likely when adults create relationally safe, structured, and genuinely responsive environments, rather than simply inviting youth into meetings without changing how power operates in those spaces (McCafferty & Mercado Garcia, 2024; Furrer et al., 2023).

Fourth, the findings indicate that QIC-EY may help agencies broaden how they think about permanency. Improvements tied to cultural permanency, relational permanence, and youth-adult interaction are especially relevant for agencies working with tribal communities, culturally diverse populations, and youth whose strongest senses of permanence may not be limited to legal outcomes. This broader framing is consistent with QIC-EY curriculum content that centers relational, cultural, and legal permanency as interconnected rather than separate goals.

At the same time, the reports suggest realistic implementation lessons. Many measured sub-outcomes did not reach statistical significance, and most of the state-site effects were small. That does not mean the training lacked value. Rather, it reflects the reality that workforce practice and agency culture often change incrementally and may require repeated opportunities to apply skills, supervisory coaching, policy reinforcement, and adaptation to local context. For a state partner considering adoption, the practical takeaway is that QIC-EY is a credible workforce development strategy for improving staff preparedness, increasing authentic youth participation in planning processes, and building a more youth-centered practice culture. The strongest short-term returns may be seen among case-carrying staff, while longer-term value may come from embedding the training into supervision, policy, and agency routines.

## References

Augsberger, A. (2014). Strategies for engaging foster care youth in permanency planning family team conferences. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 43, 51–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.04.015>

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