



## **BUILDING SOCIAL WORK CAPACITY-ResourceGuide**

### **Para Professionals In the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions, and Competencies**

(Global Social Service Workforce Alliance)

*"The term para professional refers to someone who is typically not university educated (i.e., does not have a degree in the social service field). Para professionals take on a myriad of titles and roles within the larger social welfare system. They work under supervision of professionals in various fields and may be trained to help make decisions about services and supports...*

*Para professional workers can be paid or volunteer and can work within government structures, as well as in civil society organizations. They may be identified as volunteers, community workers or by other names specific to a particular program or function... Para professional social service workers receive specialized courses providing foundational skills in basic social service delivery, which can vary by context and need and often consist of a series of short courses and field experiences in order to quickly produce graduates who can begin working with communities in need."*

A strong social service workforce is a vital element to the delivery of quality OVC care services.

Unfortunately, in low-resource environments, it can prove challenging to find well-trained, credentialed social work staff. One solution is to utilize para professionals working at the community level, employing their knowledge of context and culture to support vulnerable children and families. The informal nature of these roles means there is often no framework for ensuring quality of training or supervision, leading to a lack of support for the para professionals and compromised quality of care for those they serve.

This document serves two primary functions. First, it offers a set of guiding principles for working with para professionals to how these workers can be trained, developed, deployed and supported.

Additionally, it provides a competency framework for para professionals that can be used to provide program guidance, accountability and inform training and supervision.

Finally, this resource also includes a detailed example of the functions and competencies specific to Child and Youth care workers (beginning on page 37). This tool will undoubtedly be helpful to any individual or organization working with para professionals to care for vulnerable children and families.

## **Additional Resources**

### **Para Social Worker Training Manual & Curricula: Partnering to Strengthen the Capacity of Community-Based Caregivers to Support OVC**

(Institute of Social Work, Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center and Jane Addams College of Social Work)

### **Making Social Work Work: Improving Social Work for Vulnerable Families and Children Without Parental Care Around the World**

(Every Child)

### **Community Based Social Work for Children and Families: Manual on Prevention and Reintegration**

(Save the Children UK)

### **Working with Children and Their Environment: Manual of Psychosocial Skills**

(Terre de Hommes)

### **Working with Community Members and Workers in the Social Services**

#### **[Webinar]**

(Social Service Workforce Strengthening Alliance)

### **Development of the Child and Youth Care Work Profession**

#### **[Webinar]**

(Global Social Service Workforce Alliance)

\_\_\_\_Although CAFO recommends these resources for further exploration, it does not necessarily endorse all principles throughout, nor agree with all opinions of each author.\*