



FOURTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON FAIRNESS & EQUITY ISSUES IN CHILD WELFARE TRAINING

Infusing Issues of Fairness and Equity in Training Vignettes and Curriculum

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Summary of Presentation

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The goal of this workshop was to provide participants with a forum to discuss issues and challenges related to incorporating fairness and equity into curriculum and vignettes. Ms. Molinar stated that a broader goal was for all the trainers in California to be knowledgeable about issues of fairness and equity, to be comfortable discussing those issues, and have the training and skills to integrate the material seamlessly.

Three reasons we might not be infusing fairness and equity into training, specifically through vignettes:

1. Time: Discussions about fairness and equity are time-consuming and trainers don't want to open a discussion only to cut it short.
2. High Risk: If the trainer is not comfortable with possible situations arising from vignettes, she/he is not going to use the vignettes that have fairness and equity infused into them.
3. Evaluations: Trainers' success is determined by the participant evaluations and therefore they may avoid issues that have potential to upset participants.

Participants were encouraged to do a brief self-assessment and determine whether they were comfortable as a trainer infusing fairness and equity issues. Even though we are not all fairness and equity experts, we have to know where we stand in order to help people understand the issues.

Currently, most training materials do not include discussions about fairness and equity. The question should be raised about how much time should be added to training in order to sufficiently cover fairness and equity issues.

Some considerations trainers should consider when writing a vignette:

- Cultural factors
- Language considerations (what language is spoken by the child? by the parents?)
- Acculturation issues (have they recently immigrated?)
- Generational issues

- Other issues, such as class, sexuality, and neighborhoods
- Consider the outcome of the assessment, service interventions, and the availability of resources, and determine how that also can affect decision making.

Issues for training a fairness and equity vignette

Trainers need to be experts in understanding disproportionality, facilitation, communication, and managing groups. Additionally, training fairness/equity issues is essential even though trainers may feel uncomfortable with this subject and may not be authorities on culture.

Disproportionality is about more than just the statistics and it has to also be incorporated at the practice level.

- Does the trainer want to use a stereotypical vignette? A colorblind vignette?
- Let the audience know why you are using a particular type of vignette and acknowledge the stereotypes that are present in the content when debriefing afterwards.

Discussion comments and suggestions after the activity

- It is also important to identify tools that can be used by individuals to identify their own biases. One may not realize one's blinders or biases. Tools such as the Harvard Implicit Bias test can be helpful for child welfare workers and supervisors.
- A parallel process can also be happening with supervisors during training. For example, supervisors can model the practice of taking fairness and equity issues into consideration when reading investigative narratives and reports. For example, was culture considered and was it documented anywhere in the case?
- Engaging in fairness and equity discussions is important. Training needs to be coordinated to continue these discussions over time.
- When working with a particular region or county, we have sometimes gone to their staff and requested a real scenario. Even if these scenarios may be somewhat stereotypical, they are real cases that provide credibility and relevance. Names should be changed to protect confidentiality. Using an element of stereotypical, cultural behavior doesn't mean we are promoting that stereotype, but trainers walk a fine line when determining how to infuse fairness and equity issues without perpetuating stereotypes.
- Use a completely colorblind vignette, even without names, so that trainees can't make any stereotypical any assumptions. Then, take that same vignette and adapt it for different cultural or ethnic groups and then have a discussion about the differences in the assessments. See what rises to the top in terms of discrepancies between the groups and focus on what are the real risk factors. What are the bottom-line safety issues for this child that we should be considering?

- For vignettes based on actual cases, use a disclaimer. The more real you can be in your vignettes, the better. A disclaimer can prepare the audience about your intent and training objectives to enlighten trainers about fairness and equity issues.
- Keep the main vignette colorblind and the facts the same, but break the larger class into groups so that the ethnicity of the family in the vignette is different for each group. Give each player in the scenario a picture that corresponds to a family member with facts about them listed on the back. It would be important to include a warning that the activity may stir up some disturbing feelings. Acknowledge up front that the groups are being manipulated and then discuss the reasons for doing so during a debrief afterwards.
- Our training materials typically mimic our institutions in the attempt to be colorblind. This often applies to our court report writing. Workers often don't address issues of race or culture. However, ignoring race and cultural factors can promote bias.
- Does the involvement of a mandated reporter affect emergency response workers? Sometimes the concerns of another professional included as part of the report can sway the direction of assessment of the CWS response.
- When addressing fairness and equity issues in your vignettes and in your training materials, it is important to look for the same descriptions and information that we would want to see in investigative narratives or court reports and hear in supervision with our workers.