Child Welfare Policy and Practice for Supervisors

Version 2.0, 2013

Goals for the Training

In this training we will:
- Provide strategies for supporting social workers in following the laws and policies that govern our work
- Share strategies for monitoring outcomes and effectiveness
- Reinforce our shared understanding of the core values that guide social work in California

Agenda

- Policy and Practice related to the California Themes of Practice
  - Safety, Permanence, and Well-being
  - Fairness and Equity
  - Engagement
  - Teaming
  - Evidence-based Practice
  - Strength-based Practice
  - Outcomes-informed Practice
Learning Objectives

- Learning Objectives tell you specifically what you are going to learn.
- Adult learning occurs best when participants identify and focus on a specific outcome.

Matching Game

- Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (1997, 23%)
- Adoption and Safe Families Act (1980, 68%)
- Fostering Connections to Success (2008)

Accountability

- Adoption and Safe Families Act
  - ASFA identified three goals for child welfare:
    - Safety
    - Permanency
    - Well-being
  - ASFA requires increased accountability via ongoing quality improvement.
5 Key Provisions of ASFA

Read about these 5 key provisions and explain them to your partner or group

- Permanency Hearings
- Permanency Timeline
- Reunification Guidelines
- Safety Checks
- Accountability

Activity

☐ How can supervisors help social workers meet ASFA requirements?

How do you emphasize Permanency?

☐ A final, legal, forever home via reunification, adoption or guardianship
☐ Reunification is the first choice for permanency
☐ It requires concurrent planning – working on reunification AND adoption or guardianship
☐ It includes assessment of potential adoptive families wherever they reside
☐ A long term foster placement (APPLA) is NOT permanency
The seven themes of practice are included throughout the core curriculum:

- Safety, Permanence & Well-being
- Engagement
- Teaming

Themes of Practice (continued)

- Fairness and Equity
- Strength-based Practice
- Evidence-based Practice
- Outcomes-informed Practice

Themes in Action

We use every interaction with families, youth and children throughout the life of each case to:

- assess safety,
- promote child and family well-being, and
- promote permanency and permanent connections
Themes Self Assessment

- Identify your strengths and needs related to the California themes of practice
- Flag this page with a post-it note

Child and Family Services Review

- County Self Assessment (CSA)
- System Improvement Plan (SIP)

An Interdependent System

- California is a county run child welfare system, but county funding is linked to meeting state requirements
- Changes in laws are interpreted by the state through All County Letters (ACL) and then become county policy
- The CFSR includes a federal review of the state’s progress and a state review of the counties’ progress
Division 31 Guides Process

- Face to face contact requirements
- Case planning timelines

Process **AND** Outcomes

- Compliance
  - Supporting staff to meet federal, state, and local regulations
  - Monitored via compliance data (timely case plans, meeting reunification timelines, monthly visits)
- Outcomes
  - Identifying practice and systemic changes to improve outcomes for families
  - Uses data to identify areas for change and measure progress

3 Levels of Process and Outcomes

- Macro – Federal standards and the PIP
- Mezzo – C-CFSR and county goals
- Micro – Linking individual case plan goals

*Where is your focus?*
Linking Process and Outcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processes (Taking Action)</th>
<th>Outcomes (Reaching Goals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook an egg</td>
<td>Eat a nourishing breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go on a date</td>
<td>Establish a relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a book</td>
<td>Increase understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline a child</td>
<td>Well-behaved child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a class</td>
<td>Enhanced skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide case management</td>
<td>Ensure child is safe and in a permanent home</td>
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</tbody>
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Measuring outcomes

- **Composite measures** – use multiple indicators to measure complex concepts
- **Weighting measures** – used in composite measures to allow some indicators to have more influence
- **Federal measures** – measures required by the federal government and used in all states
- **California measures** – specific measures used only in CA

Federal and State Outcome Measures

- **Measure Safety, Permanency and Well-being**
  - Safety: Recurrence of maltreatment
  - Safety: Maltreatment in foster care
  - Permanency: Time to permanency
  - Permanency: Reunification rate
  - Permanency: Adoption rate
  - Well-being: Medical and dental care
How is California doing?

- 65% of those who reunified in 2011 did so within 12 months
  - The national goal is 75.2%

- 12% who reunify end up returning to foster care (re-entry)
  - The national goal is 9.9%

Measuring well-being

- Sibling relationships
- Least restrictive placements
- ICWA eligibility and cultural considerations
- Authorization for use of psychotropic medication
- ILP participation
- Young adult self-sufficiency

Improving Outcomes with the SIP

- Identify outcome or systemic factor needing improvement
- Measure current performance
- Set improvement goal
- Identify improvement strategy and rationale
- Set milestones to reach improvement goal including timeframes, and person responsible
Evidence-based Practice

- What is evidence-based practice (EBP)?
  
  ... the use of programs, services and interventions that have proven to be effective at addressing a specific problem.

EBP Key Terms

- Model Fidelity - the extent to which an intervention is implemented as intended by the designers of the intervention

- Empirical Research - research conducted 'in the field'

- Anecdotal Evidence - information based on casual observations scientific analysis

Additional EBP Terminology

- Generalizability
- Sample size
- Statistical significance
- Program evaluation
- Outcome research
- Process research
- Causality
- Correlation
Tool for Evidence-Based Practice

- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare
- Rates interventions on a scientific rating scale and a child welfare relevancy scale

The Scales

Well-Supported  →  Concerning

1  2  3  4  5

Trauma Treatment

Definition of Trauma Treatment (Child & Adolescent)
- Scientific Basis in the Field
- Research on the Treatment
- Provider Acceptance
- Does it Work?

Utility of Trauma Treatment (Child & Adolescent) Clearinghouse

Programs in this topic area
- The purpose of this publication is to provide information on the utility of Trauma Treatment (Child & Adolescent) Clearinghouse
- The programs featured have been evaluated using the CEBHC rating framework, which includes evidence-based principles.
Icebreakers

- Improvement strategy rationale:
  - **Empirical evidence** supports using Icebreaker Meeting because **data show** that birth mothers who are connected to and welcomed in the foster home visit their children more frequently, and visiting frequently is **highly predictive** of reunification.

Implementation

- A set of activities designed to put something into practice
- Taking planful steps to introduce a program or activity and documenting the steps so that they can be assessed and considered as part of the evaluation of the program

Implementing Icebreakers Toolkit

Icebreaker Meetings: Building Relationships Between Birth and Foster Parents

Building working relationships between birth parents, foster parents, and caseworkers can be extremely important for foster children, and using icebreaker meetings can be an effective mechanism for doing that. However, to be successful, an agency seeking to introduce icebreakers must understand how the practice works. This publication is designed to:

- Give agencies an overview of icebreaker meetings;
- Describe a step-by-step process for planning and implementing icebreaker meetings;
- Identify common barriers and roadblocks to successful implementation of icebreaker meetings;
- Identify implementation steps that are often overlooked or missed;
- Share successes and examples of agencies using icebreaker meetings;
- Share samples of icebreaker documents and materials developed by agencies from across the country; and
- Provide a self-assessment tool to guide your planning and implementation.
Supervisors and Implementation

- Work in your table groups to complete the Implementation Practice Worksheet on the role of the supervisor in implementing new programs or policies.
- Think about it as an action plan you would use to implement Icebreakers in your unit.

Making the Transition

- One of the most challenging transitions is that of worker to supervisor in an organization.
- Supervisor does not mean “SUPER WORKER”. It means supporting others so that they can do “super work”!

Fairness and Equity

- The vision: all children and families will achieve similar benefits and achieve equally positive outcomes.
- The reality: disproportionate over-representation of African American and Native American children in foster care
  - 6% of the children in the general population are African American, but 19% of the children entering foster care are African American.
Disproportionality Data

- This is important information
- Ask questions to be sure you understand
- This tells us the numbers, not the why, or the what to do, we’ll talk more about that later

Disproportionate Reports

Child Welfare Agencies receive a disproportionately high number of referrals on African American families.

Disproportionate Entry Rate

- Of the children who entered foster care in 2011:
  - Black children and Native American children were over-represented
  - White, Hispanic, and Asian children were under-represented
Disproportionate In-Care Rate

- Of the children in foster care in 2011:
  - Black children and Native American children were over-represented
  - White, Hispanic, and Asian children were under-represented

Disproportionate Exits

- Exits from foster care show a reverse trend, with greater proportions of White, Hispanic and Asian children exiting care and smaller proportions of African American and Native American children exiting.

Bias within the System

Our practice is not effectively serving African American and Native American families to provide them with the positive outcomes that other groups experience.
Disparity

Disparity refers to differences identified by comparing one group to another group.

Disparity

Disparity & Disproportionality

“Major factors affecting children’s entry into foster care included African American families’ higher rates of poverty, families’ difficulties in accessing support services so that they can provide a safe home for vulnerable children and prevent their removal, and racial bias and cultural misunderstanding among child welfare decision makers.”

(GAO, 2007 as cited in Putnam-Hornstein and Needell, 2011)
The Poverty Effect

While we cannot say why people are poor, we can say with certainty that most children who come to the attention of the child welfare system are poor. And we also know that the poverty rate varies dramatically across racial groups.

Putnam-Hornstein and Needell, 2011

Bias within the Culture

- People of color experience more poverty due to past and present racism and bias.
- Among families experiencing poverty, racial disparity is not present and is even reversed – African American and white families have similar rates of involvement with child welfare.
- BUT there are many more African American families living in poverty, thus contributing to disproportionality

Differences in Need

- The National Incidence Study (NIS 4) identified higher rates of abuse and neglect in African American families
- Other studies (Finkelhor et al, 2005) found no differences in maltreatment rate based on race or ethnicity
- There is a significant need for additional research
What Can We Do About It?

Read the section titled *Making a Difference in the Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Welfare* trainee content.

- Strength-based Practices
- Teaming
- Culturally Relevant Services

Promising Practices

- Watching our Language
- Strength-based, Trauma-Informed and Solution-Based Casework/Social Work
- Teaming and other Participatory Practices (FGDM/TDM)
- Intensive Family Preservation
- Using Culturally Relevant Providers

Talking about culture in supervision

- Ask about the cultures of families and model an approach that
  - Looks to the family as the expert on their culture
  - Includes open discussions of bias and assumptions
  - Models self-reflection about intersection of cultures
  - Models effective management of power and authority
Stereotype

- A belief that members of a group generally possess some characteristic ...[that] is treated like an inherent characteristic that every person in this category is presumed to possess.

Stereotype Activity

- Pick a category within one of the groups.
- Select a facilitator to lead your discussion.
- Brainstorm a list of stereotypes the group.
- Don’t list your stereotypes. List the beliefs of the mainstream culture.
- Write the stereotypes on the chart pad page given to you by the trainer.
- Pick one stereotype and plan a discussion about it

Stereotypes and Child Welfare

- How do these stereotypes affect our work?
  - With different cultures?
  - With fathers?
  - With youth?
- Addressing bias is a lifelong task and something that we should all consider in every interaction with families.
Strength-based Practice

- Identify family strengths and resources that can be used in providing services and supporting a family.
- Use family strengths as benchmarks to assess the status of a family over the course of time.
- Use community-wide strengths to develop resources in the community.
- “The goal of strength-based practice is to activate an individual’s sense of responsibility for his or her actions...through a focus on potential rather than pathology.” (Clark, 2001).

Benefits of Focusing on Strengths

A strengths-based approach helps families:
- feel the social worker is interested in their success
- think the relationship they are developing with the social worker is important
- feel more optimistic
- feel more able to make positive changes in their lives

(from Redko et al., 2007)

Building on Strengths

- All families have strengths.
- When families and their resources are involved in decision-making, outcomes can improve.
- The family’s culture is a source of strength.
- Building on functional strengths already present in families results in more lasting changes in the family after the child welfare intervention is over.
Supervising Strength-based Practice

- Focus on exploring the social worker’s successes and applying them to different situations.
- Approach disagreement by analyzing the basis for the disagreement. Explore values and seek to understand differences.
- Avoid crisis-driven supervision.

Self-Assessment

- Complete the self-assessment.
- Answer the three follow-up questions to develop your own improvement strategies.

Eliciting Strengths

- Talk about strengths as external qualities anyone can achieve.
- Ask questions
  - Change questions
  - Exception questions
  - Miracle questions
  - Scaling questions
- Express belief in the ability to change
- Identify key strengths and strategize about how to build them, including behaviors, abilities, and skills
Based on a True Story
- Read the vignette individually
- Work as table groups to answer the strength-based supervision questions.

What is Engagement?
- Involvement, investment and participation in the child welfare intervention by both the social worker and the family that results in making the best possible use of the offered service.

Engagement and Reactance
- How can social workers overcome reactance?
  - Share power
  - Manage power differentials
  - Use empathy
  - Set congruent goals
  - Encourage self-determination
  - Share information
  - Prioritize goals
Engaging supervision

- How do you model engagement in supervision with staff?

Cross Cultural Engagement

- Don’t make assumptions
- Ask questions and seek consultation
- Seek feedback from families about the services provided and the quality of your relationship with them
- Spend time with the family

Engaging Fathers

- Make a good first impression!
- Avoid bias or gender stereotypes
- Look for interventions that specifically support fathers
- Provide services or referrals to help with unemployment, educational needs, substance abuse, and parenting skills
- Listen when fathers express anger and validate their frustration
Engaging Youth
- Listen
- Give youth many opportunities to make decisions on their own, increasing the impact of the decisions over time
- Including youth in meetings and other decision making processes

Engagement Practice in Action
- Read the interaction between the social worker and parent
- Work as table groups to identify an engaging strategy to help the social worker increase engagement behaviors

Supervising Teaming Practice
- Teaming is collaboration that results in actual participation in decision-making and agreement in service planning
- Supervisors have several key tasks related to teaming:
  - Maintain model fidelity
  - Use supervision to give feedback and reflect on teaming practice
  - Help staff build skills in consensus building and conflict resolution
Developing a Positive Working Alliance

- Agree on individualized treatment goals
- Agree on the responsibilities and tasks of each party needed to reach goals
- Choose goals that build on past successes and/or strengths
- Don’t use labels
- Maintain a nonjudgmental stance

Barriers to Participation

- The key barrier is poor management of the power differential
- How can you overcome this barrier?
  - be truthful and transparent
  - listen to the family’s assessment of the child welfare concerns
  - listen to the family’s assessment of the child welfare agency

Helping Social Workers Build Teams

- Help social workers develop a case presentation style that is truthful and transparent.
- Help social workers address both the agency’s concerns and the family’s concerns.
- Help social workers gather and respond to feedback from the family about their interaction with the agency.
My Learning Plan

Questions?