



CHILDRENS JUSTICE INITIATIVE
CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE:
“CONNECTIONS MATTER”

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FAMILY CENTERED
SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY CENTERED SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE



ENGAGEMENT: The act of sharing in the activities of a group;

Engaging families is essential to Family Centered Social Work practice. The family must be actively involved in the work in order to implement Family Centered Social Work practice. Engagement may be practiced in a variety of ways, including but not limited to: valuing the family's culture and relationships, demonstrating respect, integrity, and competence as well as offering support.

The establishment of a common goal (with "buy-in") is also required for engagement to work effectively. The families must agree that services are needed, as well as shared in the County Child Protection systems goal of Safety, Permanency and Well-being for all children.



ASSESSMENT: The act of judging or assessing a person or situation or event;

An accurate assessment of the families' strengths and needs is crucial to Family Centered Social Work practice. Understanding the individual family system and culture is required to complete an accurate assessment. Assumptions cannot be made about or for the family as the only expert on the family is the family. A assessment of a family must be centered upon a skillfully conducted interview. The family must understand why you are asking the questions that are being asked. The interview must be one in which you can provide and support the basis for the questions to increase the likelihood that you will obtain thorough and accurate information. Effective Family Centered Social Work practice relies on the quality of your assessment.

Structured Decision Making Tools for Assessments:

- Safety Assessment
- Needs and Strengths
- Risk Assessment
- Risk Reassessment
- Reunification Assessment
- Child Well-being Tool

Other Assessment areas for evaluation:

- Family history
- Basic Needs
- Income Management
- Life Skills
- Physical Health
- Family Concerns/Needs
- Family Culture



COLLABORATION: The act of working jointly;

Working together will always produce a better outcome for the family involved in Family Centered Social Work practice. A family that is involved with the development of their own Case Plan is far more likely to comply with the Case Plan tasks than a family who is offered a Case Plan developed solely by the Social Worker.

The process of Family Group Conference (FGC), or Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is another Family Centered Social Work practice that yields a more desirable outcome for families. The County Child Protection system, that allows for and supports the decisions generated **by the family for the family** is Family Centered Social Work Practice at its best.

Supports for Collaboration:

- Integrity
- Role identification
- Full Disclosure
- Listen to the families' story
- Empathy
- Understanding the family's culture
- Acknowledging the family's strengths



STRENGTH BASED: An asset of special worth or utility;

Involvement in the Child Protection system is often perceived by families as the County conveying to the parents that you are bad parents and/or they don't love their children. The vast majority of the families that become involved in the Child Protection system are good parents, who love their children however they have made some poor choices. The perception is often deficit based; focusing on what you did wrong, or how you have failed your children. Strength Based Social Work practice is a concept that focuses, highlights and builds upon the strengths of the family to address the challenges. An accurate assessment of the family strengths is required to focus, highlight and build.

An example of strength based Family Centered practice is as follows:

A parent has had one month of urine analysis' that resulted in a confirmation that the parent has been using drugs within the past 30 days. The subsequent week the parent submits three additional urine analysis that results in confirmation of **no** drug use. Strength based Family Centered Social Work practice would be to contact that parent immediately, share the results, and acknowledge the change in the abstention of drug use. Additionally, strength based Social Work practice would be to have a dialogue with the parent to ascertain what the intervention (change in the parents life during the past week), that resulted in abstaining from drug use for a week. Upon identification of the intervention (parent went to church, broke up with the boyfriend etc) , the Social Worker would support the parent in maintaining the intervention/environment in order to increase the likelihood of ongoing abstinence.

Supports for Strength Based practice:

- Understand what the family does well
- Identify, encourage and celebrate progress
- Stay positive especially when the family is discouraged