Transforming Supervision to Support Collaborative Team Efforts in Child Welfare

Rosalyn M. Bertram Ph.D.
University of Missouri Kansas City
Graduate School of Social Work
and
Virginia M. Fatesch Children’s Services Supervisor III
Shannon Morris BS, Social Services Supervisor I
Missouri Department of Social Services
Jackson County Children’s Division

Multi-year Child Welfare Pilot Project

University of Missouri Kansas City
School of Social Work

Missouri Department of Social Services
Jackson County Children’s Division
South Field Office
6 supervisors
36 staff

Pilot Project Sources

NIDRR research by 5 universities on elements necessary for effective team efforts in developmental disabilities
(Eno-Hiemen, 1997)

University of South Florida research on theory base for collaborative practice models, amplified in CMHS-SAMHSA grants examining theory-based team development & supervision. (Malsiak, Bertram, 1991-2001)

Child Welfare Practice Historical Analysis

Origins: 1960’s
Incorrect assumptions of target population
Organizational model: Bureaucratic
Supervisory model: “Bureaucratic
Staff: diverse educational backgrounds
Expert model “goodness-of-fit” assessment: Parent ability vs. child needs

Learning: 1970-80’s
Demographic: poverty, crime & neighborhood
Ecological system theory & family advocacy emerging
Programs are added, not well integrated

Transformation: 1990’s-present
Value-based philosophy guides SOC & collaborative models
Emerging theory base: Ecological Systems & Team Theory
Live supervision & consistent feedback from participants
Complex legal-mandated multi-system response

Stages of Implementation

1. Explore & Adapt: 2004
   a.) leadership buy-in
   b.) GAL, court buy-in
   c.) adjust model to legal mandates
2. Program Installation: 2005
   a.) baseline
   b.) training (is not enough)
   c.) adjust focus/frequency supervision
   d.) establish & refine 2 learning groups
   e.) establish & refine supervisor group
   a.) overcome caution/vulnerability
   b.) instrument development/integration
4. Full Operation (2-4 years)

Core Implementation Components

1. Address organizational & external influences
2. Operationally defined theory-based model
   Team Development
   Ecological Systems
   Family Life Cycle
3. Organizational change
   a.) supervision frequency & focus
   b.) learning groups, supervisor group
   c.) remove program walls
   d.) address vulnerability/exposure
4. Develop model pertinent staff knowledge/skills
5. Ongoing supervision/consultation
6. Ongoing evaluation of these components
19th Annual RTC Conference
Presented in Tampa, February 2006

Baseline Survey of Practice & Supervision
UMKC MSW students, Esther Ashu, Marina Atkinson
ASPU Children's Division & GAL
- Many family/kin invited but few came
- Fewer still actively participated in sharing information
- Over 70% rated Children's Division or Guardian Ad Litem staff as primary decision makers
- Supervision occurred primarily on ad hoc basis
- Supervision focused on most problematic case, administrative concerns, staff morale
- Limited ecological focus
- No understanding of problems-in-context
- Traditional understanding of team efforts
- Primarily "goodness-of-fit" assessment

Theory-based model for team development
Core
Legal
Goals, Rules, Assessment, Plan
Power & challenge of collaborative models
Perspectives of participants differ
Clear structure
Build cohesion
Differentiate roles & responsibilities
Composition affects assessment & outcomes

Theory-based Team Structure
Goals
Assessment
Ecological
Competencies & Assets
Constraints & Challenges
Rules of Operation
Information Sharing
Information needed
How to share it
Decision Making
Especially how to make decisions when not all agree
Conflict Resolution

Challenges & Milestones Year 1
Change Supervision
Vulnerability/Exposure
Regularly scheduled
Case-by-case
Theory-based prompts
Composition, Goals & Rules
Ecological Assessment
Problems-in-context
Plan & Evaluation
Supervisor Learning Group
Develop knowledge/skills
Develop confidence
Assess staff development

Team Structure & Cohesion
Survey Instrument
Constant Team Feedback
Survey team agreement on:
Ecological Composition
Goals
Rules
Ecological Assessment
Summary Assessment
Intervention Plan
Scores team cohesion:
by theory-base & construct
by role

Initial Data
By Construct
Remarkable cohesion
By Role
GAL dissonance
Increased family voice
Overall
+ Guidance for supervision
+ Guidance to develop team
+ Guidance to develop staff
**Next Steps 2006**

- Validate reliability of team instrument
  Integrate into supervision
- Develop & validate second instrument
to measure model pertinent knowledge & skills
  Integrate into supervision

**Next Steps 2007**

Compare family/team composition & demographics with:

- model fidelity (team composition, structure, cohesion) with
- staff knowledge/skills with outcomes

---

**References**


---


