

LESSON PLAN/NARRATIVE

Day 2

Module 3: Engagement of Clients

Time 1.5 hours

Rationale: Supervisors can model engagement by valuing and appreciating their workers' relationship with the family. Engagement of the family is the first step to achieving case plan goals. If supervisors are able to approach their workers from a position of respect then workers will be able to mirror this process for their families. Supervisors can model the importance of the professional helping relationship by communicating expectations, by coaching, and monitoring how workers engage families. Family-focused services rely on family strengths in order to succeed. Therefore, the family must be engaged and involved with the agency at the outset. Supervisors must be able both to model effective interviewing skills to their workers, and to use these skills when interacting with their workers. The environment for both families and for workers must be trusting, respecting, and safe in order for supervisors to supervise effectively and for families to benefit from services. The community should be engaged in child protection at all levels of service. Supervisors must be able to apply their client engagement skills to other relevant parties in the community. Casework that focuses on partnerships must put a premium on engagement processes, including identifying and focusing on strengths.

Learning Objectives:

1. Define assumptions of solution-based interviewing
2. Identify and apply six skills that facilitate engagement of clients

Activities

1. Explain assumptions of solution-based interviewing and ask participants if they agree with assumptions.
2. Describe six Family Solutions engagement skills.
3. Brainstorm ways that skills can be used in practice (group activity as skills are presented).
4. Discuss barriers to client engagement and use of Family Solutions skills.
5. Facilitate role play to demonstrate engagement skills.

Materials

- Solution Based Interviewing Techniques handout
- Solution Based Interviewing Guide
- Externalization handout
- Universals handout
- Smith Family Case Scenario
- ASFA Critical Steps of Engagement

Glossary of Terms

- Affirmations
- Empathy
- Engagement
- Normalizing
- Repowering
- Reframing
- Universalizing

Trainer's Instructions

1. **Introduce the module by presenting the purpose and objectives.**
2. **Provide a basic overview of rationale and skills for engagement of clients using the following as a model:**

We are utilizing a Family Solutions approach with Comprehensive Family Services. Comprehensive Family Services builds on family strengths. In order to be successful, it is of vital importance for the CFS team to engage the family from the first contact. The family must have ownership in the relationship to ensure the safety and well being of all members. We should engage the family around a concern for the child's safety and help them achieve a clear understanding of the safety and risk issues for the child.

It is also important that we explain to our families the agency roles. They may not feel there is a safe dialogue environment. We must be clear in our expectations so there is not break down of communication, thus resulting in failure to achieve the desired outcome.

By maintaining a supportive role, work with the family to identify a comfortable place for them to meet with the CFS team. Also, encourage their participation to determine what agency and community partners might best meet their needs.

Engaging families requires that we be culturally responsive by acknowledging and honoring all racial and ethnic groups, by accepting they may have different traditions, rituals and values. In today's society, we also recognize a variety of family structures. For example, blended families, same sex couples, etc. Families have the right to practice their own traditions and beliefs as long as the safety and well being of the family is not adversely affected.

Practice active listening with the families. Be aware of your non-verbal communications (body language, eye contact, etc) so the family will understand that you share their concerns and are interested in what they have to say.

The relationship between the CFS team and family must be one of mutual respect and cooperation. We must create an atmosphere that allows families to visualize their success while we refrain from directing their every move. This may mean that we help the family define what it can do for itself and where the family or individual members need help. We need to continue to empower families and build supportive relationships. We may also need to assist our families in building the same type of relationships with other professionals in the community.

3. **Review specific skills that Family Solutions contributes to engagement process. Distribute Solution Based Interviewing Techniques handout. Ask participants to give an example of each skill after you describe it.**

Family Solutions offers some specific suggestions on how to engage clients or form a partnership in the child protection process. There are a number of skills that can be used to build partnerships with families:

- *Affirmations: This involves giving credit or praise to families for the things they do well or successes they experience. There are four skills that can make affirmations work:*
 1. *Recognize family strengths and praise them. Ongoing workers should recognize and praise progress at least monthly. People change only to the degree that they feel competent. Be behavior specific in the praise.*
 2. *Search for exceptions to the problem. There are many times when the problem does not exist or the family uses a different way of dealing with the problem. Family Solutions assumes that these exceptions exist.*
 3. *Use “repowering” questions. This means that they have been empowered before and you build on their competence. These are process questions, or ownership questions, like “How did you choose? What made you decide? What did you think? How did you decide on this good course of action? Why did you decide this course of action rather than another one?”*

- *Empathy: Express understanding of the family’s feelings and circumstances. Asking “what must it be like. . .?” will help you come to grips with the family’s reality, as it appears to them. It’s not sympathy or pity, but it is your ability to sense what they are feeling, identify it, and bring it to the table. It’s not empathic to say “I’m sorry you feel that way”. You must establish the difference between compassion and pity. Compassion allows us to imagine what their situation is like. People do not like to feel that they are being pitied. Empathic responses should be short, compassionate, and direct. It is the way you use your intervention, you work them in. Example—“that is tough, that is sad, that hurts, doesn’t it?”*

- *Externalizing: Use of language that refers to the problem as if it existed outside the client or family. This language conveys that the client and worker are in partnership against the problem. Focus on the side or part of the client that wants to overcome the problem.*

- *Normalizing: Normalize developmental issues. Say, “Most families with toddlers struggle with that issue.” Do NOT normalize or universalize behaviors that are harmful.*

- *Reframing: Giving a different perspective about an event; lets you see things differently.*

- *Permission to Access: You say, “Can I ask you?” This is asking permission to talk about the situation. You must first ask permission to talk about the issues. This is a more respectful approach. If they say no, go back to empathy. Say, “I respect that. This is tough.” Redirect to an easier subject to discuss. Seek first to understand. Get to know the family before going after the issue. They must know that you are interested in them as a person.*

4. **Play Engagement video. Facilitate role play of engagement skills by participants in training session. Give opportunity for questions before role play. Use the Smith Family Case Scenario as the foundation for role plays. During role play, walk around and observe and/or assist participants in their role plays. Role plays should be done in pairs/small groups of persons from the SAME TEAM. Explain purpose of role play and role of audience in activity:**

You are going to split up into pairs and role play a worker-client dialogue. You will do this twice, so that you each get a chance to be both the worker and the client. Remember the engagement skills that we have discussed and use these when you can. Use the Smith Family Case Scenario that we discussed at the beginning of the day to do your role play. Following the role plays, we'll come back and talk about what worked and what you experienced as both the worker and the client.

5. **Distribute ASFA Critical Steps of Engagement. Explain that critical indicators/steps have been developed for each stage of the child protection process in accordance with ASFA mandates. These handouts are meant to be tools for participants to refer to as needed on the job.**