

Coaching to Support Solution-Based Casework (SBC) in Child Welfare - Washington State DSHS, Children's Administration (Webinar, September 2012)

What is this resource?

- SBC is an evidence-based, family-centered casework management model for child welfare. Details of difficult situations are normalized, tracked and contextualized; consensus building is sought and guided. Outcomes measured by skill development in the specific areas of concern. Tenets at the heart of SBC: prioritize the family partnership; focus on pragmatic solutions to everyday life problems; help families document and celebrate success.
- Goals/benefits of coaching: enhancing fidelity to evidence-informed model of practice; supporting transfer of learning; encouraging a parallel process; strengthening peer support.
- Making SBC practice a reality involved: establishing a practice model coaching unit; hiring six coaches for three regions; investing in coaches' professional development; providing field and expert coaching.
- Field-level coaching: individual coaching sessions (supervisor/worker); group consultation; assessment & planning reviews; field work; family staffings; staff meetings; trainings/workshops.
- Expert-level coaching: planning and coordination; product development; policy and practice procedures.

What are the critical findings?

- Need support of statewide and regional leadership and champions for the model in all offices.
- Practice model is now aligned with child safety framework, policy and information systems and is operationalized through various methods (e.g. family team meetings, safety/case plans). Make practice model part of training for new social workers so understand language and results expected.
- Local coaching and tools for assessment, case planning and case management must be practical. Case consultations with specific agendas were very impactful format for coaching. Include outside facilitators to get feedback on practice at all levels of agency
- Performance review instruments (performance indicators) must be tied to practice model and research. Must have information and support systems in place when needed in order to connect training to staff/supervisors/management and the ability to measure outcomes.
- Normalize the change process and do not react punitively to resistance.
- Training as orientation is not effective for systems change; must focus on competencies and skill-building.
- Need for management to understand details of how new processes/policies impact frontline. Management should observe staff to see what is happening in the field and be able to model SBC.
- Over communication is better than under-communication in times of change.
- Coaching influence must be extended to management hierarchy.

What are the implications for our work?

- Coaching moves systems change efforts beyond "train and hope..." and provides staff with content experts, promotes a culture of ongoing learning, reinforces a parallel process and allows coaches to become change agents.
- Implementation is more than a training plan: need to define the goals/outcomes desired, make infrastructure changes early, communicate to the masses, secure visible leadership support, and integrate across agency.
- When developing a coaching program: identify who will coach and coaching goals; communicate coaches' role early and often; assess coaches' geographical area and numbers; develop coaching competencies and evaluation process; provide professional development and peer support opportunities for coaches; celebrate and credential coaches
- Need to hold staff accountable for outcomes and adherence to practice model