National Child Welfare Workforce Institute
Learning, Leading, Changing

Culturally Competent Systems of Care

Dettlaff, A. J. & Rycraft, J. R. (2009). Culturally competent systems of care with Latino children and families. *Child Welfare, 88*(6), 109-126.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This journal article offers the details of an evaluation of a federally funded training initiative designed to teach child welfare workers to provide culturally competent, community-based services. The training initiative utilized a Systems of Care (SOC) framework and was focused on working with Latino children and families.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, and child welfare workers must be able to provide culturally competent services to this population. Specifically, the child welfare workforce must understand how issues such as immigration, acculturation, values, and traditions affect service provision and engagement. **A system of care is a service delivery approach that fosters interagency collaboration and integrates various services to meet the unique needs of families.**
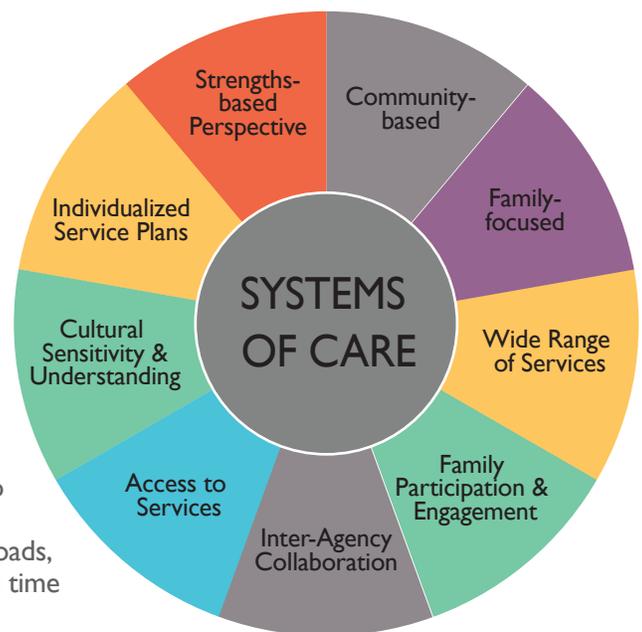
Findings of this study indicate that the SOC model is linked to improved service outcomes, but that implementation may be challenging.

The SOC training and implementation:

- Increased participants' knowledge of Latino Culture and understanding of the value of culture in the assessment process;

- Improved services to clients, family involvement in decision-making, and engagement;

- Led to positive service outcomes, establishment of supportive networks, and a greater number of face-to-face contacts.

However, only 40% of the participants were able to fully implement the SOC model. Challenges to implementing the SOC model included high workloads, staff turnover and shortages, limited resources, and time constraints.

Principles of the Systems of Care Model

SYSTEMS OF CARE

- Strengths-based Perspective
- Community-based
- Family-focused
- Wide Range of Services
- Family Participation & Engagement
- Inter-Agency Collaboration
- Access to Services
- Cultural Sensitivity & Understanding
- Individualized Service Plans

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

- Agencies must commit to making changes to see improvements in service delivery, and explore the options of integrating a SOC framework into practice by preparing workers to provide culturally competent services.

- Administrators need to prioritize keeping manageable workloads and allow workers the time and resources needed to make changes to their practice.

- If an agency is unable to fully implement SOC, it should focus on promoting SOC principles.