

# **Partnering with Public and Private Child Welfare Agencies: Exploring Successes and Challenges through the Strengths Perspective**



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# Overview



- Introduction
- Evidence
- Methods
- Discussion
- Guiding Questions
- References

# Evidence



- **There's a gap between what's done in research and what's done in practice** (Bellamy et al., 2008)
- A number of the debates need to be understood within the context of the historical development of different agencies (Morrison, 1996; Zlotnik, 2002)
  - Particularly to how things have evolved between child welfare and universities over the years
- A number of the data are grounded in macro evaluations and very few are qualitative in their approaches
  - **where's the voice of the workers and the supervisors to think about** how we change the way in which to improve partnerships

# Methods



- Evaluations of current field instructor
- Evaluations of field supervisors

# Discussion



- Challenges
- Successes
- Solutions
- Future Directions

# Challenges



- Not all supervisors have the same skill (e.g. interpersonal, organizational, etc.)
- Sometimes supervisors are supervising too many students
- Resources are limited within the agency
  - Financial cutbacks, organizational change (Morrison, 1996)
  - Personal factors (Westbrook, Ellis, & Ellett, 2006)
- The demands of the social work programs versus the demands of the child welfare agency (Zlotnik, 2002)

# Successes



- Active collaboration requires having persons who are well versed in more than one institutional language and are able to translate for one another (Clark 2003)
- Field liaison who serves as the the connection between the field and the university (Clark 2003; Gleeson, 1992)
- curriculum changes – advanced child welfare practice course, steering committee, increased site visits, incorporating field supervisors into all aspects of the learning process (seminar, steering committee, feedback, training, etc.)

# Solutions



- Follow-up with workers after graduation (e.g. 6 months, 12 months, 18 months)
- Include graduates in the planning and evaluation of programs within the agency
- Demonstrate intentionality and authenticity about our (schools and agencies) commitment to students who pursue a career in child welfare
- More training of supervisors
- Interorganizational networking (Bellamy et al., 2008)
- Engagement from the agencies and universities are critical (Westbrook, Ellis, & Ellett, 2006)

# Solutions cont.



- Clear expectations
- Open communication
- Access to resources (e.g. resources of the university)
- Offer individualized training
- Think creatively about ways to bridge the partnership
- Build on the agencies and supervisors strengths
- Incorporate the agencies and supervisors in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the partnership (e.g. steering committee of CWTP)
- Quarterly field supervisors meeting

# Future Directions



- Intergroup Teaching Activity

# Guiding Questions



- Do collaborations with schools of social work make a difference for the field of child welfare? If so, how and why?
- Why is it an ongoing challenge to prepare social workers for child welfare practice?
- What components are missing from successful partnerships between child welfare agencies and universities?
- What role does agencies play in helping and/or hindering successful partnerships?
- What role does universities play in helping and/or hindering successful partnerships?
- What has been successful in these partnerships?
- Do our most vulnerable children deserve anything less than a successful partnership between child welfare agencies and universities?
- Do our master level social workers deserve anything less than a successful partnership between child welfare agencies and universities?
- A degree in social work has been shown to have been positively related to the retention of public child welfare workers (cited in Westbrook, Ellis, & Ellett, 2006), but why are there many challenges with building successful partnerships between agencies and universities?

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