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

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NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE EVALUATION SUMMIT
AUGUST 2011
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 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)
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?


References continued


