

# **Real Cases Project: Social Work Practice with Organizations/Administration**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Overview of this Course within the Social Work Curriculum**

The course, Social Work Practice with Organizations, focuses on preparing students for direct social work practice with children, adolescents, and their families in an organizational context. Emphasis is placed on administrative issues which promote continuous quality improvement and management strategies, particularly as they pertain to special problems related to life conditions and events that affect children, youth, and families. In addition, the social and practice context which frames the service delivery systems for children is explored.

The course is typically offered as an elective practice course during advanced study at the MSW level. Material delivered as part of this course builds on that which the students have acquired in their foundation curriculum. In particular, it builds upon theoretical knowledge from Human Behavior and the Social Environment core courses and practice principles from Social Work Practice sequence courses.

The specialization creates the opportunity to expand overall child welfare knowledge and analytic skills through an in-depth examination of the needs of children, youth, and families or the dynamics of the child welfare policy arena; to identify and assess a range of analytical and ideological, administration frameworks, to identify and use specialized knowledge for policy and program development; and to develop a more sophisticated understanding of diversity, oppression and the processes of social change. Students advance their capacity to understand, analyze, and modify social administration and services develop specialized policy knowledge related to their long-term professional interests and goals; and learn to generalize what they have learned to other issues and population.

## **B. Relevance of the Case Studies to this Course**

The case studies presented as the central learning source for this project have a great deal of relevance for this course. The cases provided for students, illustrate the importance of sound management practices in assessing good child and family assessment, appropriate intervention strategies, case coordination, use of culturally competent practice, and knowledge and use of self in treatment. The cases also permit students to abstract further to examine the critical importance of continuous quality improvement in child welfare cases.

## **C. Learning Objectives for Using the Case Studies in this Course**

Three specific learning objectives related to using the case studies in this course have been developed. They are:

- To build advanced knowledge of administration in a social service agency.
- To develop a repertoire of fundamental management strategies related to social work with children and their families, and to appreciate the importance of strategic planning and continuous quality improvement of those interventions.
- To deepen self-awareness as a manager in considering personal values, experiences, ethnic, cultural, social and economic factors as they relate to the social work relationship in administrative practice with children and their families.

## **D. Overview of What is Included in this Guide**

Included in this teaching guide are four potential strategies for integrating the three case studies into a course such as Social Work Practice with Organizations. They are:

1. Help students to understand the importance of supervision in managing a child welfare case.
2. Assist students in critically analyzing the philosophy of management by objectives in child welfare cases.
3. Work with students to develop self-awareness about decision-making in child welfare
4. Ensure students understand the importance of leadership in social service systems coordination in cases like the *Alex Bell* case, highlighting examples of where leadership could have assisted in moving this case to a positive more outcome.

## TEACHING STRATEGIES

### A. Strategy One: Brainstorming about Supervision

#### 1. Area/issues of the case study to be highlighted:

Help students to understand the opportunities the workers and their supervisors in these cases had to intervene with children and their families, suggest opportunities that were missed, and how, ideally, would a worker have intervened, and what the implications may have been utilized to promote a positive outcome.

#### 2. Timing within semester:

To implement this strategy, instructors will need to spend approximately 1 hour of one class session near the beginning of the course, when administration principles and practices are usually covered.

#### 3. Teaching methods:

Using the case summaries, instructors will ask students to break into three small groups and brainstorm (recording on newsprint paper) about the three areas of supervision from Alfred Kadushin:

*Administrative* - the promotion and maintenance of good standards of work, co-ordination of practice with policies of administration, the assurance of an efficient and smooth-running office;

*Educational* - the educational development of each individual worker on the staff in a manner calculated to evoke her fully to realize her possibilities of usefulness; and

*Supportive* - the maintenance of harmonious working relationships, the cultivation of esprit de corps. (Kadushin, 2002)

#### Instructor Overview of Supervision

The instructor must provide an outline of these three areas for the students, what follows is an example:

It is helpful to think of the three elements as interlinked (or as overlapping). They flow one into another. If we are to remove one element then the process becomes potentially less satisfying to both the immediate parties - and less effective. It is easy to simply identify managerial supervision with administrative supervision

### Administration

Kadushin presents his understanding of the three elements in terms of the primary problem and the primary goal. In **administrative supervision** the primary problem is concerned with the correct, effective and appropriate implementation of agency policies and procedures. The primary goal is to ensure adherence to policy and procedure (Kadushin 2002: 20). The supervisor has been given authority by the agency to oversee the work of the supervisee. This carries the responsibility to *ensure* that agency policy is implemented - which implies a controlling function - and a parallel responsibility to *enable* supervisees to work to the best of their ability.

It also entails a responsibility not to lose touch with the rationale for the agency - 'to provide a first-class service for people who need it (or in some cases are required to have it, in order that they or others may be protected from harm)

### Education

In **educational supervision** the primary problem for Kadushin (2002: 20) is worker ignorance and/or ineptitude regarding the knowledge, attitude and skills required to do the job. The primary goal is to dispel ignorance and upgrade skill. The classic process involved with this task is to encourage reflection on, and exploration of the work. Supervisees may be helped to:

- Understand the client better;
- Become more aware of their own reactions and responses to the client;
- Understand the dynamics of how they and their client are interacting;
- Look at how they intervened and the consequences of their interventions;
- Explore other ways of working with this and other similar client situations

### Support

In **supportive supervision** the primary problem is worker morale and job satisfaction. The primary goal is to improve morale and job satisfaction (Kadushin 2002: 20). Workers are seen as facing a variety of job-related stresses which, unless they have help to deal with them, could seriously affect their work and lead to a less than satisfactory service to clients. For the worker there is ultimately the problem of 'burnout'.

Kadushin argues that the other two forms of supervision focus on instrumental needs, whereas supportive supervision is concerned with expressive needs.

[T]he supervisor seeks to prevent the development of potentially stressful situations, removes the worker from stress, reduces stress impinging on the worker, and helps her adjust to stress. The supervisor is available and approachable, communicates confidence in the worker, provides perspective, excuses failure when appropriate, sanctions and shares responsibility for different decisions, provides opportunities for independent functioning and for probable success in task achievement. (Kadushin 2002: 292)

### Exercise

After a careful assessment of the three case studies, the groups will discuss each point in time where there appears to be a critical intervention or systemic breakdown

Once compiled (allow 30 minutes), the groups will post so the entire class can view. In the full class discussion (allow 30 minutes), look for points of agreement and themes. The instructor will reinforce examples from each of the three areas of supervision. Each of the three supervisory functions, administrative, educational, and supportive could be reviewed in this context and viewed from the perspective of the worker and the supervisor.

Students can explore alternative styles of supervision and growth through continuous education by reading the Weinbach reading.

#### 4. Materials:

Newsprint, markers, case studies

#### 5. Supporting readings:

Kadushin, A. & Harkness, D. (2002). *Supervision in social work*. New York: Columbia University Press, introduction, chapters 1-3.

Weinbach, R. (1998). *The social worker as manager*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Chapter 6, pp. 152-175.

#### 6. Evaluation plan for strategy one:

At the end of the course, add two Likert Scale items regarding the specifically identified teaching / learning strategy to the overall course evaluations:

How much did the use of the supervision brainstorming exercise on the three cases impact your learning in this course?

Strongly

Somewhat

Not Much

Not at All

How well prepared are you to appropriately make use of supervision in your practice with children, youth, and families?

by Very Prepared      Somewhat Prepared      Ill Prepared      Not at All

## B. Strategy Two: Discussion about Management by Objectives

*Management by objective works - if you know the objectives. Ninety percent of the time you don't.* - Peter F. Drucker

### 1. Area/issues of the case studies to be highlighted:

This strategy involves focusing on each section of the case studies and analyzing each their objectives.

### 2. Timing within semester:

It is suggested that this strategy be used toward the end of the semester.

### 3. Teaching methods:

Assist students in critically analyzing the repertoire of objectives that were present in the case studies.

Utilizing the guide from the overview, ask students to evaluate their style of setting objectives.

## Overview of Management By Objectives

Management by objectives (MBO) is a systematic and organized approach that allows management to focus on achievable goals and to attain the best possible results from available resources. It aims to increase organizational performance by aligning goals and subordinate objectives throughout the organization. Ideally, employees get strong input to identify their objectives, time lines for completion.

MBO includes ongoing tracking and [feedback](#) in the process to reach objectives.

### Core Concepts

According to Drucker (1990) managers should "avoid the activity trap", getting so involved in their day to day activities that they forget their main purpose or objective. Instead of just a few top-managers, all managers should:

- participate in the [strategic planning](#) process, in order to improve the implementability of the plan, and

- implement a range of performance systems, designed to help the organization stay on the right track.

### Managerial Focus

MBO managers [focus on the result](#), not the activity. They delegate tasks by "negotiating a contract of goals" with their subordinates without dictating a detailed roadmap for implementation. MBO is about setting yourself [objectives](#) and then breaking these down into more specific goals or key results.

### Main Principle

The principle behind MBO is to make sure that everybody within the organization has a clear understanding of the aims, or objectives, of that organization, as well as awareness of their own roles and responsibilities in achieving those aims. The complete MBO system is to get managers and [empowered employees](#) acting to implement and achieve their plans, which automatically achieve those of the organization.

### Where to Use MBO

The MBO style is appropriate for [knowledge-based enterprises](#) – such as a child welfare agency when staff is competent. It is appropriate in situations where one wish to build employees' management and [self-leadership](#) skills and tap their [creativity](#), [tacit knowledge](#) and initiative.

### Setting Objectives

In MBO systems, objectives are written down for each level of the organization, and individuals are given specific aims and targets. "The principle behind this is to ensure that people know what the organization is trying to achieve, what their part of the organization must do to meet those aims, and how, as individuals, they are expected to help. This presupposes that organization's programs and methods have been fully considered. If they have not, start by constructing team objectives and ask team members to share in the process.

For MBO to be effective, individual managers must understand the specific objectives of their job and how those objectives fit in with the overall company objectives set by the board of directors. A manager's job should be based on a task to be performed in order to attain the company's objectives... the manager should be directed and controlled by the objectives of performance rather than by his or her supervisor.

Here are some ways to think about becoming effective:

1. Get very clear about your intention. Actions are meaningless if you don't know what your client wants... Work on getting extremely clear on what your intention is. The clearer you are with your intentions, the more engaged you are with your client(s) the more powerful your actions will be.
2. Start with the end in mind. Develop a clear picture of what you want to achieve & plan backwards – from future to present. Articulate in as much detail as possible what it is you want.
3. Write it down! The act of writing makes the intention more real, and supports your commitment to it. The process of writing makes the intention more real.
4. Develop a plan with measurable objectives, milestones and target dates. Work from the future to the present when designing your plan. Strategize actions that will be effective, and that leverage your strengths and talents.
5. Have others support you. Let others know what you're doing, co-workers and especially supervisors, so they can support you. The more communicative you are about your goals and plans, the more likely you'll achieve them. Letting others know what you're up to both reinforces your commitment, and creates synergy as now other people are enrolled in the possibility of your intentions/actions.
6. Design a strategy and give it enough time to have it work. Be flexible enough however, to know when to use alternate approaches and strategies for achievement.
7. Create systems to monitor your progress, and be consistent with them. This doesn't mean that daily or hourly monitoring is necessary – it does mean that creating a feedback loop, even if you're the only one participating in the feedback loop, is vitally important. Make time available on a regular basis for self or project review.
8. Utilize your support system, and identify a "co-worker coach" who is committed to your success. Develop a structure to ensure that your co-worker coach and you will communicate on a regular basis. The accountability factor is significant in helping you to stay on track.
9. Appreciate all that you're doing to stay on track, and celebrate your progress along the way! Express gratitude to those who are supporting you, as well as to yourself.
10. Protect yourself from people or things that don't support you. You want to surround yourself with people and things that are going to nourish you and propel you closer to the realization of your objectives with your clients.

The exercise should take between 30 minutes and one hour to complete. The instructor should have a full knowledge of the NYS CONNECTIONS system to discuss with students how management by objectives could be



reinforced using this computer based child welfare case management system. A review of the FASP – Family Assessment Service Plan should also be an integral part of this discussion.

#### 4. Materials:

None

#### 5. Supporting readings:

Mordock, J.B. (2002). *Managing for outcomes: A basic guide to the evaluation of best practices in the human services*. Washington, DC: CWLA, Chaps. 1 & 4.

CONNECTIONS materials for review.

#### 6. Evaluation plan for Strategy Two:

At the end of the course, add two Likert Scale items regarding the specifically identified teaching / learning strategy to the overall course evaluations:

How much did the use of the discussion of management by objectives on the case studies impact your learning in this course?

Strongly                      Somewhat                      Not Much                      Not at All

How well prepared are you to appropriately utilize the management by objectives approach for your children, youth, and families in practice?

Very Prepared              Somewhat Prepared              Ill-Prepared              Not at All

### C. Strategy Three: Management is About Making Good Decisions

*Making good decisions is a crucial skill at every level.* - Peter F. Drucker

#### 1. Area/issue of the case studies to be highlighted:

Work with students to develop self-awareness of their decision-making ability by highlighting the dynamics and issues in the three cases that they most identify with, supporting them in their critical analysis of such, and reinforce the important knowledge and use of self in professional decision-making practice with children, youth, and families.

#### 2. Timing within semester:

This strategy can be used at any point in the semester in this course, and is designed to be flexible to the needs of the instructor.

**3. Teaching methods:**

If instructor wishes, this decision-making self-awareness exercise can be used as a small group or paired 15-30 minute discussion. If he/she wishes, this decision-making self-awareness exercise can also be made into a short written paper assignment.

Students will be asked to reflect on the following questions as they relate to the case studies.

- What are the five critical decisions that you think should have been made in these cases?
- What are the five best decisions that were made in these cases?
- What were the five worst decisions that were made in these cases?
- How clear are you in reading these cases that you would have made different decisions than were made in these cases?
- Do you think your supervisor would have provided you with better guidance than the worker in these cases?
- Have you ever been less than properly supervised?
- Have you had experiences when you felt less than adequately supported in your position?
- How did that feel?
- How might your own experiences of class, culture, race, gender impact on your decision-making with these families?
- How might your own experiences of family / parenting / your own rearing and/or adolescence help or hinder your work with these families?

**4. Materials:**

None

**5. Supporting readings:**

Depanfilis, D. (2005). Child protective services. In G. Mallon and P. Hess (Eds.) *Child welfare for the twenty-first century: A handbook of practices, policies, and programs* (pp. 290-301). New York: Columbia University Press.

Shlonsky, A., & Gambrill, E. (2005). Risk assessment in child welfare. In G. Mallon and P. Hess (Eds.) *Child welfare for the twenty-first century: A handbook of practices, policies, and programs* (pp. 302-318). New York: Columbia University Press.

**6. Evaluation plan:**

At the end of the course, add two Likert Scale items regarding the specifically identified teaching / learning strategy to the overall course evaluations:

How much did the use of the self-awareness decision-making exercise on the cases impact your learning in this course?

Strongly                      Somewhat                      Not Much                      Not at All  
 How well prepared are you to appropriately know and use decision-making as a tool in practice with children, youth, and their families?

Very Prepared              Somewhat Prepared              Ill-Prepared              Not at All

#### **D. Strategy Four: Role of Leadership in Case Planning**

*Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.*

- Peter F. Drucker

##### **1. Area/issues of the case studies to be highlighted:**

Ensure students understand the importance of leadership in social service systems coordination in cases like the three cases, highlighting examples from the case studies where the communication and follow-through between mental health providers and community agencies may have placed the children and their families at greater risk, and emphasizing the leadership role social workers often play in intervention coordination.

##### **2. Timing within semester:**

This strategy might best be used at the end of the course, after students have had substantial content regarding the dynamics of children, youth, and families in systems of care.

##### **3. Teaching methods:**

Personal energy is an important component of personal and social service productivity. Most people cycle between positive and negative energy states during the work week. But the percentage of time spent in positive and negative moods varies significantly. Some people seem to be overwhelmingly negative, while others in similar circumstances can remain much more positive. Increasing the time spent in positive states will improve personal productivity.

The following ten tips suggest ways to facilitate a more positive leadership.

##### **1. Work first on your relationships.**

Relationships are both our best sources of happiness and our biggest sources of problems and frustrations. Developing good relationships and improving or ending the poor relationships in your life will increase your personal energy.

An effective tactic to start improving your relationships is to develop better personal boundaries and standards and work on reducing tolerations.

##### **2. Develop a routine to start every day in a positive mental state.**

It is very helpful to start the day with a routine that creates positive energy. Many people find activities like an early morning walk, exercise, meditation, quiet time, etc., effective in getting their day off to a positive start. It is easier to stay positive, if you can start with a positive attitude.

3. Learn how to monitor your current mental state and changes to it.

This is a complex area, but if you can link negative mood changes to a source or cause, then you are frequently in a position to quickly change back. The important point here is once you are in a negative state, get the message or value from the situation, and then take some action to return to a positive state. This is discussed more in #6 below.

4. Create an energizing physical environment.

Invest some time and money to make your personal surroundings pleasing and energizing to you. Some small items may make a big difference to how your personal space affects your moods.

Poor lighting can lower your mental state, especially in the winter. Some people report a big improvement in their mood just by cleaning up their bedroom and making the bed before leaving for work. Clutter is de-energizing to many people. A sink full of dirty dishes is de-energizing to some.

5. Carefully monitor your self-talk.

Negative self talk is a common source of low moods. When you are hearing negative self talk, be alert to the unrealistic, overly negative messages. Focus on getting any truthful message, then shifting out of overly self-defeating criticism. It is true that we are usually our own worst critic.

6. Develop methods of shifting yourself to a more positive state.

Once you are aware of your negative moods, and have developed your own method of getting the value out of the bad mood, then craft methods of moving back to a positive mood. These methods can include positive self talk, taking action towards a desirable goal, and interacting with another person.

7. Deal with problems effectively.

Problems are a part of life. Few people enjoy problems; but in many cases we can learn from them. It may help to ask yourself several questions, such as:

- What am I contributing to this problem?
- What Life Lesson have I been missing here?
- What is the worst that can happen and how can I improve on that?
- What am I doing right?
- What am I going to do differently?

Getting into a habit of using problems as learning experiences can help us avoid becoming de-energized when they occur.

8. Focus your energy on attracting more of what you want.

Time and energy spent dwelling on problems is frequently better spent pursuing desirable goals. It helps to examine your own contribution to any difficulties and understand how you may need to change. Then be sure to ask others directly for what you want from them; don't fall into the trap of under communicating.

In this way, you are always making course corrections and moving forward. I have found it helpful to print out a list of goals and my theme for the week first thing Monday morning. This seems to help me get started on a positive note.

9. Be a positive energy source with others.

Negative energy seems to attract negative results. Keeping your own mood positive can encourage positive moods and suppress negative behavior in others.

10. Avoid using negative energy as an energy source

Many people have a shortage of positive energy in their lives and use negative energy as their energy source. They create busyness, use deadlines, crises, and problems to keep them going. In many cases, their motivation patterns shift completely from seeking pleasure to avoiding pain. In most cases, serious burnout is the eventual result of becoming dependent on negative energy sources.

A select group of students will be asked to take on the roles of the worker in these cases and his or her two supervisors, one of whom is a Commissioner level person., in relation to the cases in a live

class presentation of an Emergency Case Conference. The goal of the emergency case conference is to ensure the safety and well-being of the children, but also for the students to learn about positive and negative leadership styles in supporting positive outcomes for families. The following roles are to be represented: Social Worker; Social Worker's Supervisor; Commissioner.

After the simulated emergency case conference (allow approximately 15 minutes), students who played roles are asked to give feedback about how they viewed both the processes and potential outcomes of the conference. Then, under facilitation of the instructor, the discussion is open to the entire class. This discussion can last for 30 minutes. The instructor should then summarize critical feedback given.

#### 4. Materials:

None

#### 5. Supporting readings:

Drucker, P.F. (1990). *Managing the non-profit organization*. NY: HarperCollins, p. 9-27.

Kluger, M.P., & Baker, W. (1994). *Innovative leadership in the nonprofit organization: Strategies for change*. Washington, DC: CWLA, chapter 2.

Milner, J., Mitchell, L., & Hornsby, W. (2005). Child and family services reviews. In G. Mallon and P. Hess (Eds.) *Child welfare for the twenty-first century: A handbook of practices, policies, and programs* (pp. 707-718). New York: Columbia University Press.

#### 6. Evaluation plan:

At the end of the course, add two Likert Scale items regarding the specifically identified teaching / learning strategy to the overall course evaluations:

How much did the use of the role play on systems coordination and leadership regarding the cases impact your learning in this course?

Strongly                      Somewhat                      Not Much                      Not at All

How well prepared are you to utilize your own leadership with regards the needs of children, youth and their families?

Very Prepared                      Somewhat Prepared                      Ill-Prepared                      Not at All

## CONCLUSION

### A. Recap

The case studies present numerous learning possibilities for a course like Social Work Practice with Organizations. Nearly every learning objective typically developed for a course such as this one could be achieved through a strategy linked to the use of these case studies. Objectives regarding the use of supervision, management by objectives, the use of self in relationship to decision-making, and the role of leadership in case planning are only some of the themes addressed in this teaching guide.

### B. Suggestions for Future Courses

Future courses could build on the strategies presented here. Active learning techniques such as role playing, debates, small or large group discussions as well as in depth reading assignments and reflective paper assignments are offered here as effective tools to aid in the learning and teaching process. Instructor creativity with and adaptation of these and other techniques are encouraged with regard to any number of other learning objectives for this or any other course.