

Real Cases Project: **Social Work with Children**

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INTRODUCTION

A. Overview of this Course within the Social Work Curriculum

The course, Social Work with Children, usually focuses on preparing students for direct social work practice with children, adolescents, and their families. Emphasis is placed on assessment and intervention strategies, particularly as they pertain to special problems related to life conditions and events that affect children. In addition, the social and organizational context which frames the service delivery systems for children is generally explored.

The course is typically offered as an elective practice course during the advanced year of study at the MSW level. Material delivered as part of this course builds on that which the students have acquired in their foundation year. 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.

B. Relevance of these Case Studies to this Course

The case studies presented as the central learning source for this project has much relevance for this course. In these cases, illustrations of the importance of good child and family assessment, appropriate intervention strategies, case coordination, use of culturally competent practice, and knowledge and use of self in treatment abound.

C. Specific Learning Objectives Related to Using these Case Studies in this Course

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

- To build advanced generalist knowledge of assessment and to learn assessment techniques specific to practice with children.

- To develop a repertoire of fundamental intervention strategies related to social work with children and their families, and to appreciate the importance of dose and timing of those interventions.
- To deepen self-awareness in considering personal values, experiences, ethnic, cultural, social and economic factors as they relate to the social work relationship in direct practice with children and their families.

D. Overview of What is Included in this Guide

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

1. Help students to understand the opportunities the workers in these cases had to assess and treat the needs of the children and their families; how many were missed; how, ideally, a better assessment of these children and their families could have been done; and what the implications of better assessments may have been.
2. Assist students in suggesting and critically analyzing a variety of potential treatment interventions that may be useful in work with these cases.
3. Work with students to develop self-awareness by highlighting the dynamics and issues in the each of 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 practice with children.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

For each strategy suggested, a clear summary of the particular issue to be addressed is highlighted. Suggestions as to when and how the teaching / learning strategy should be employed are included, as are the materials and resources to support its implementation. Finally, an evaluation plan as to whether or not the learning objective has been realized is presented.

A. Strategy One: Brainstorm / Discussion on Assessment

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

Help students to understand the opportunities the workers in each of the cases had to assess the needs of children and their families, how many were missed, how, possibly, a better assessment of the children and their families could have been done, and what the implications of a better assessment may have been.

2. Timing within the semester:

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

3. Teaching methods:

Using one or more of the case summaries, instructors will ask students to break into small groups and brainstorm (recording on newsprint) at least five questions the social worker should have asked while doing a careful assessment of the child and family's situation.

Once compiled (allow 30 minutes), post so the entire class can view. In the full class discussion (allow 30 minutes), look for points of convergence; reinforce the importance of open-ended, thoughtful assessment techniques; strategize about what information may have been gained and how that could have helped in thinking of appropriate interventions. Urging students to think about and articulate what their *verbatim* questions might have been had they been the caseworker of record simulates the kind of theory-driven, real-world practice we hope they will be capable of soon. How and what kind of useful information might have been gained? What might have been the consequences (both intended and unintended) of asking these assessment questions? What might have been some possible avenues of intervention had the worker not asked these questions?

4. Materials:

Case Studies; Newsprint; Markers; Tape

5. Supporting readings:

Readings from the following list may be selected by faculty based on the educational level of students in the class, the level of student proficiency expected by the instructor from the exercise, the relative weight given the exercise by the instructor within the context of the entire course, the interests / expertise of the instructor, and the particular clinical emphasis desired.

Fraser, M., & Terzian, M.W.. (2005). Risk and resilience in child development: Principles and strategies of practice. In Mallon, G., & Hess, P. (Eds.) *Child Welfare for the Twenty-First Century: A handbook of practices, policies and programs*. NY: Columbia.

Cohen, E., Hornsby, D.T., and Priester, S.. (2005). Assessment of children, youth, and families in the child welfare system. In Mallon, G., & Hess, P. (Eds.) *Child Welfare for the Twenty-First Century: A handbook of practices, policies and programs*. NY: Columbia.

Weaver, C.J., Keller, D.W., and Loyek, A.H. (2005). Children with disabilities in the child welfare system. In Mallon, G., & Hess, P. (Eds.) *Child Welfare for the Twenty-First Century: A handbook of practices, policies and programs*. NY: Columbia.

Fenster, J. (2005). Substance abuse issues in the family. In Mallon, G., & Hess, P. (Eds.) *Child Welfare for the Twenty-First Century: A handbook of practices, policies and programs*. NY: Columbia.

Hegar, R.L., & Scannapieco, M. (2005). Kinship Care: Preservation of the extended family. In Mallon, G., & Hess, P. (Eds.) *Child Welfare for the Twenty-First Century: A handbook of practices, policies and programs*. NY: Columbia.

Postmus, J.L. (2005). Domestic violence in child welfare. In Mallon, G., & Hess, P. (Eds.) *Child Welfare for the Twenty-First Century: A handbook of practices, policies and programs*. NY: Columbia.

Webb, N. B. (2003). *Social Work Practice with Children*, 2nd edition. New York: Guilford. Children's problems and needs (pp. 3-16). Children in substance-abusing families (pp. 287-315).

Hazen, A., Connelly, C., Kelleher, K., Landsverk, J., and Barth, R. (2004). Intimate partner violence among female caregivers of children reported for child maltreatment. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 28, 3, 301-319.

Jonson Reid, M., Kim, J., Barolak, M., Citerman, B., Laudel, C., Essma, A., Fezzi, N., Green, D., Kontak, D., Mueller, N., and Thomas, C. (2007). Maltreated children in schools: the interface of school social work and child welfare. *Children and Schools*, 29(3), 182-191.

Smith, B.D., & Mogro Wilson, C. (2007). Multi-level influences on the practice of inter-agency collaboration in child welfare and substance abuse treatment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(5), 545-556.

Hazen, A.L., Connelly, C.D., Edleson, J.L., Kelleher, K.J., Landverk, J.A., Coben, J.H., Barth, R.P., McGeehan, J., Rolls, J.A., and Nuskowski, M.A. (2007). Assessment of intimate partner violence by child welfare services. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(4), 490-500.

Green, B.L., Rockhill, A., and Furrer, C. (2007). Does substance abuse treatment make a difference for child welfare case outcomes? A statewide longitudinal analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(4), 460-473.

DiLauro, M. (2004). Psychosocial factors associated with types of child maltreatment. *Child Welfare*, 83, 1, 69-98.

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 case study-based assessment brainstorming exercise impact your learning in this course?

Strongly Somewhat Not Much Not at All

How well prepared are you to appropriately assess the needs of children in practice?

Very Prepared Somewhat Prepared Ill Prepared Not at All

B. Strategy Two: Possible, Probable and Successful Interventions**1. Areas/issues of the case studies to be highlighted:**

Assist students in discovering, developing, critically analyzing, and evaluating the likely outcomes of a range of potential interventions that could have been offered to the children and their families in the case study examples.

2. Timing within the semester:

It is suggested that this strategy be used toward the end of the semester, after a range of interventive techniques have been introduced and explored with the class.

3. Teaching methods:

This strategy could be offered as an exercise in critical thinking and evidence-based practice technique. Given what students have assessed as the needs and strengths of the child(ren) and/or families of one or more of the case studies, this strategy is designed for them to enhance their capacity to suggest and craft appropriate interventions. Students will be asked to form groups (possibly the same as may have been used in Strategy One) and choose one of the case scenarios to focus on. Next, they will be asked to draft a list of ideas of all the possible intervention strategies they know that could be helpful to this child or rationales on paper prior to presenting their arguments orally. Discuss the pros and cons of too much / not enough intervention in general, and what might have been the appropriate dose and timing of some interventions in each of the cases, specifically.

The exercise should take between 30 minutes and one hour to complete.

4. Materials:

Case studies.

5. Supporting readings:

Readings from the following list may be selected by faculty based on the educational level of students in the class, the level of student proficiency expected by the instructor from the exercise, the relative weight given the exercise by the instructor within the context of the entire course, the interests / expertise of the instructor, and the particular clinical emphasis desired.

Kazdin, A. E. & Weisz, J. R. (2003). *Evidence-Based Psychotherapies for Children and Adolescents*. New York: Guilford.

Webb, N. B. (2003). *Social Work Practice with Children*, 2nd edition. New York: Guilford. Contracting, planning interventions, and tracking progress (pp. 100-118). Working with the family (pp. 119-142). School-based interventions (pp. 190-214).

Smokowski, P. R. (1998). Prevention and intervention strategies for promoting resilience in disadvantaged children. *Social Service Review*, 72(3),

Ficarò, R. C. (1999). The many losses of children in substance-disordered families: Individual and group interventions (pp. 294-317). In N. B. Webb (Ed.), *Play Therapy with Children in Crisis*, 2nd edition. New York: Guilford.

Dore, M. M., Nelson-Zlupko, L., & Kaufman, E. (1999). "Friends in Need": Designing and implementing a psychoeducational group for school children from drug-involved families. *Social Work*, 44, 179-190.

Allen-Meares, P. (1995). *Social work with children and adolescents*. New York: Longman Publishers. Chapter 3, Developmental considerations: Assessing and intervening, pp. 45-60. Chapter 7, Abused, neglected, and sexually victimized children and adolescents, pp. 117-142. Chapter 8, School failure and special populations, pp. 143-164.

O'Neil, G.S. (1997). Focusing on strengths in a special education class: a primary prevention, *Social Work in Education*, 19 (4) 279-284.

Corcoran, J. (2000). Family interventions with child physical abuse and neglect: a critical review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 22 (7), 563-591.

Chaffin, M & Friedrich, B. (2004). Evidence based treatment in child abuse and neglect. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26, 11, 1097-1114.

Grogan Kaylor, A., Ruffolo, M.C., Ortega, R.M., and Clarke J. (2008). Behaviors of youth involved in the child welfare system. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 32, 1, 35-49.

Littell, J., & Girvin, H. (2004). Ready or not: Uses of the stages of change model in child welfare. *Child Welfare*, 83, 4, 341-366.

Carlson B.E. (2006). Best practices in the treatment of substance-abusing women in the child welfare. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*. 6(3), 97-115.

Sternberg, K.J., Lamb, M.E., Guterman, E., and Abbott, C.B. (2006). Effects of early and later family violence on children's behavior problems and depression: A longitudinal, multi-informant perspective. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 30, 283-306.

Perkins, D., & Jones, K. (2004). Risk behaviors and resiliency within physically abused adolescents. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 28, 5, 547-563.

Staudt, M. (2003). Mental health services utilization by maltreated children: Research findings and recommendations. *Child Maltreatment*, 8, 3, 195-203.

Taussig, H., & Talmi, A. (2001). Ethnic differences in risk behaviors and related psychosocial variables among a cohort of maltreated adolescents in foster care. *Child Maltreatment*, 6, 2, 180-192.

Clausen, J.M., Landsverk, J., Granger, W., Chadwick, D., and Litrownik, A. (1998). Mental health problems of children in foster care. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 7 (3), 283-296.

Leathers, S.J. (2006). Placement disruption and negative placement outcomes among adolescents in long-term foster care: The role of behavior problems. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 30, 307-324.

Waldrop, D. (2003). Caregiving issues for grandmothers raising their grandchildren. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 7, 3, 201-223.

Murphy, S.Y., Hunter, A.G., and Johnson D.J. (2008). Transforming caregiving: African American custodial grandmothers and the child welfare system. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 35(2), 67-89.

Folsom, W., Christensen, M., Avery, L., and Moore, C. (2003). The co-occurrence of child abuse and domestic violence: An issue of service delivery for social service professionals. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 20, 5, 375-387.

Renner, L.M., & Shook Slack, K. (2006) Intimate partner violence and child maltreatment: Understanding intra- and intergenerational connections. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 30, 599-617.

Postmus, J.L., & Ortega, D. (2005). Serving two masters: when domestic violence and child abuse overlap. *Families in Society*, 86, 4, 483-490.

Kohl, P.L., Edleson, J.L., English, D.J., and Barth, R.P. (2005). Domestic violence and pathways into child welfare services: findings from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27(11), 1167-1182.

Kohl, P.L., Barth, R.P., Hazen, A.L., and Landsverk, J.A. (2005). Child welfare as a gateway to domestic violence services. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27(11), 1203-1221.

Shim, W.S., & Haight, W.L. (2006). Supporting battered women and their children: perspectives of battered mothers and child welfare professionals. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 28(6), 620-637.

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 case study-based “possible, probable and successful” intervention exercise impact your learning in this course?

Strongly Somewhat Not Much Not at All

How well prepared are you to appropriately plan for the intervention needs of children in practice?

Very Prepared Somewhat Prepared Ill-Prepared Not at All

C. Strategy Three: Self-Awareness Exercise

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

Work with students to develop self-awareness by highlighting the dynamics and issues in each of 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 practice with children.

2. Timing within the 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. If he/she wishes, this self-awareness exercise can be used as a small group or paired 15-30 minute discussion. If he/she wishes, this self-awareness exercise can be made into a short written paper assignment.

3. Teaching methods / activities:

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

- Who cares about these children? How do you know?
- What feelings does this promote in you as a parent / citizen / social worker to be?
- How would it feel to be this alone / unsupervised / scared / not cared for?
- Have you ever been less than properly supervised? How did it feel?
- Have you had experiences when you felt less than adequately supported at home? At work? At school?
- What was that like?
- What did you do?
- How did that feel?
- How might it have felt to the children in the case examples?
- How do you feel toward the parents / caretakers here?
- How responsible do you think parents / society should be held with regard to their children's well-being?
- How might your own experiences of family / parenting / your own rearing and/or childhood / adolescence help or hinder your work with these families?

4. Materials:

Case studies; Reflective Question List

5. Supporting readings:

Barth, R.P., Lloyd, E.C., Christ, S.L., Chapman, M.V., and Dickinson, N.S. (2008). Child welfare worker characteristics and job satisfaction: a national study. *Social Work*. 53(3), 199-209.

Stalker, C.A., Mandell, D., Frensch, K.M., Harvey, C., and Wright M. (2007)/ Child welfare workers who are exhausted yet satisfied with their jobs: how do they do it? *Child & Family Social Work*. 12(2), 182-191.

de Boer C., & Coady, N. (2007). Good helping relationships in child welfare: learning from stories of success. *Child & Family Social Work*, 12(1), 32-42.

Whitaker, T., & Clark, E.J. (2006). Social workers in child welfare: ready for duty. *Research on Social Work Practice*. 16(4), 412-413.

Peters, J. (2005). True ambivalence: child welfare workers' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about kinship foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 27(6), 595-614.

Kondrat, M.E.(1999). Who is the "self" in self-aware: professional self-awareness from a critical theory perspective. *Social Service Review*. 73(4), 451-477.

Harris, M.S. (1997). Developing self-awareness/racial identity with graduate social work students. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 67(3), 587-607.

Skrypek, M.M., Wells, S.J., Bauerkemper, K., Koranda, L., & Link, A. (2008). Developing a case typology for children in out-of-home care: child welfare worker perspectives. *Families in Society*. 89(2), 302-311.

Aiello, T. (1999). *Child and Adolescent Treatment for Social Work Practice: A Relational Perspective for Beginning Clinicians*. NY: Free 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 exercise on the three case studies impact your learning in this course?

Strongly Somewhat Not Much Not at All

How well prepared are you to appropriately know and use yourself as a tool in practice with children and their families?

Very Prepared Somewhat Prepared Ill-Prepared Not at All

CONCLUSION

A. Recap

The three case studies present numerous learning possibilities for a course like Social Work with Children. 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 child and family assessment, appropriate intervention strategies, case coordination, use of culturally competent practice, and knowledge and use of self in treatment 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.