



DCF Case Practice Model-Coaching Change

A Local Office Perspective

**Kara Wood, Director
DCF Division of Youth and Family Services**

**Allison Blake Commissioner
NJ Department of Children and Families**



Presenters

Francine Scott, Deputy Director Case Practice
(Formerly Local Office Manager)

John Ramos, Executive Assistant
(Formerly Implementation Specialist)

Derek Bailey, Supervisor

Jessica Payne, Caseworker



The federal lawsuit recognized that reform would require a focused and staged process to achieve results:

1st Focus on the Fundamentals

Create the conditions that are pre-requisites to...

2nd Implementing Change in the Culture of Practice

Move from a case management service delivery model to a strength-based, family centered, child focused model. Then, DYFS can...

3rd Deliver Results

With improved outcomes for children and families.



NJ Case Practice Model

A strengths-based, family-centered model of practice which achieves **safety, permanency** and **well-being** for children

Components:

- Quality Investigation and assessment
- Engaging Youth and families
- Working with family teams
- Individualized planning and relevant services
- Continuous review and adaptation
- Safe and sustained transition from DCF Involvement



Underlying Tenants of Family-Centered Practice

- Case practice should empower and strengthen families so that they can protect and nurture their own children.
- Families exist within, and interact with, social systems that can be mobilized to help the family.
- Family systems, including the members and their roles, are best defined by the family.



Underlying Tenants of Family-Centered Practice

- Family autonomy is to be respected.
- Families have inherent strengths and capabilities and the capacity to grow.
- Families should be involved in planning placement, maintaining a strong relationship with their child while in placement, and working to implement the case plan for reunification.



What was the Immersion Process?

1) Four original Immersion Offices were identified:

Bergen Central, Burlington East, Gloucester East, Mercer North

2) National Consultants assisted with training and developing coaches: Child Welfare Policy & Practice Group

3) A phased state-wide roll-out was initiated:

NJ Child Welfare Training Partnership and NJ Training Academy as well as University partners from Montclair State University; Rutgers University; Stockton University provided training as new sites were identified

4) DCF Implementation Specialists positions were created to support the statewide roll out .



Creating a Climate of Change

The LOM's Perspective

- Recognize change begins at the top
- Use a parallel process with staff
- Model the core values of respect, empathy, genuineness, and competence
- Sell it to the staff:
 - Use a parallel process with staff
 - Talk it up at staff meetings, management meetings and in the community
 - Celebrate Successes
 - Share the Family voice
- Emphasize the advantages of the change:
 - The CPM is in line with our core values as social workers
 - Shared accountability and responsibility
 - Flexible Funding



Set Up the Structure for Change

- Hire staff who are passionate about Child Welfare work i.e. the BCWIP
- Identify and encourage the champions in your office
- Support leadership as they adjust to the change
- Develop a system to manage emotions of your staff
- Promote creative thinking
- Promote healthy competition - use data to tell the story effectively
- Discuss the logistics up front - make provisions for overtime and develop a flexible funding account



Lessons Learned by the LOM

- Begin by developing intake staff
- Emphasize how engagement and learning the family story results in more thorough investigations and ultimately leads to better outcomes for children and families.
- Find champions of the cause across all levels of supervision.
- Identify champions in all specialty areas i.e. intake, permanency, adoption, adolescent, and foster care units
- Share “lessons learned” with sister offices
- Set realistic expectations
- Be patient – recognize institutional change takes time.



The Role of the Implementation Specialist - John Ramos

- This was a new position created as the Case Practice Model rolled out in the initial sites. Initially there were four Implementation Specialists hired to cover the entire state. Presently there is an IS assigned to each DYFS Area.
- The function of the Implementation Specialist was to coach and mentor staff as they learned how to facilitate Family Team Meetings. The position has evolved to assist in other areas of case practice, including but not limited to identifying areas for performance improvement and facilitating case practice forums.
- The Implementation Specialist motivated and supported staff throughout the state as the model rolled out.



New and Existing System Partners

Systems Partners were incorporated into the model in each Immersion Site Offices. These included:

- A. Domestic Violence Liaison
- B. Clinical Consultant
- C. Child Health Units
- D. Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselors



The Coaching Process

- There are three tiers in the coaching process:
 - Master Coach
 - Coach
 - Facilitator.
- Coaching was based on the “See One Do One” Model – it was recognized that this model did not provide sufficient experience for most staff and further opportunities for observations and practice have been incorporated.
- Coaching is viewed as a parallel process.
- It is essential to debrief with staff members throughout the coaching process.

See handouts # 1, 2 and 3



The Preparation Interview

- The preparation interview or “prep” is a key step in the Family Team Meeting Process.
- The person who plans to facilitate the FTM meets with the identified family member or members in person to discuss the FTM process.
- During the prep the facilitator helps the family member to develop their team, identify outcomes, identify strengths, identify needs, and share their family story.
- After the identified person is prepped then all other team members are prepped as well. This can be done in person or via telephone.

See Handouts #4 and #5



The Family Team Meeting

- The FTM is a meeting where families come together with those who are supportive of them in an effort to develop a plan to help them meet their goals.
- The meeting is held at a time and location that is convenient for the family.
- Participants must be invited by the family and the agency does encourage the family to invite key players.
- It is the family's meeting; the facilitator and co-facilitator are there to help the meeting run smoothly. The Division is just one voice at the meeting.
- Typically there is food at the meeting as breaking bread helps people bond.

See Handouts # 6



Steps of the Family Team Meeting

- Welcome
- Purpose
- Outcomes
- Non-Negotiables and Confidentiality
- Ground Rules
- Family Story
- Strengths to Achieve Outcomes
- Identification of Individual and Family Needs
- Brainstorm How to Meet Needs
- Develop a Plan and Assign Responsibilities
- Assess What Can Go Wrong
- Closing



One Caseworker's Story-Jessica Payne

- Was a champion of the Case Practice Model from the beginning because it was in line with my philosophy about the work.
- The LOM recognized that the caseworker was a natural “champion” and supported her to be developed as a facilitator.
- The LOM designed the FTM coordinator position as a way to keep momentum going.



One Caseworker's Story

- Developed as a Master Coach
- Developed case carrying staff as facilitators
- Recognized that Master Coaches were “lone rangers”
- Identified the role of the Master Coach in the Local Office



The Caseworker's Lessons Learned

- Talk to the staff about compliance vs. change.
- The “Family Story” helps us tap into the human aspect of child welfare work.
- Clearly identify the roles of everybody in the agency.
- Staff need to own the practice
- Stay true to the model



The Supervisor's Perspective-Derek Bailey

- As a result of the child welfare reform, the ratio of supervisor to worker was 1 to 5, with permanency workers carrying 15 families and no more than 10 children in out of home placement.
- The LOM identified the supervisor whose skill set and values were in line with the CPM and supported him in being developed as a facilitator.
- As a facilitator, the supervisor recognized that Family Team Meetings are powerful and effective.
- A statewide protocol had been initiated which required the supervisor assigned to the family attend every FTM. This became unmanageable and the protocol was tweaked to include an agency person who is in an authority/ decision making position.
- It was recognized that supervisors should attend meetings as a support to the worker whenever possible.



The Supervisor's Perspective

- Time management is essential.
- Thorough case record reviews need to be done in order to effectively facilitate a Prep (preparation interview) and a Family Team Meeting.
- Conferencing with the worker is essential before going out to complete “the Prep”.
- Workers need guidance in streamlining the process appropriately.
- The supervisor role is significant in helping to keep the team members focused and in assisting the family in identifying the underlying needs and seeing the “big picture”.
- Supervisors need to insure fidelity to the model.



Lessons Learned by the Supervisor

- Lead by example.
- Do not mandate Family Team Meetings; support staff as they are undergoing the change process.
- Be thoughtful and planful when identifying staff to be coached as facilitators.
- Assist in identifying the families with whom teaming may be most effective when first introducing the practice.
- Seek support from higher levels of management in order to do this work effectively.



The Road Ahead



We are excited to continue on this important journey of strengthening our practice and improving outcomes for families. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the children and families we serve, supported by the wider community of stakeholders and providers.

While this work is demanding, there is nothing more important than improving outcomes for New Jersey's vulnerable children and families.

