

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Academy for Professional Excellence

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

PCWTA Practice Consultants provide coaching across all levels of Child Welfare to support workforce development and the implementation of a variety of best and promising practices including Safety Organized Practice and Child and Family Team Meetings. Through our newsletter "Stories From the Field" we are able to share the collaborative good work between Child Welfare Leadership, Social Workers, Parent Partners, Practice Consultants and families.

Anecdotal Success In Lowering Caseloads Through SOP Implementation

This is the anecdotal buzz in Yucca Valley where they have experienced a 7% decline in cases, despite an increase in referrals and case filings. Charlie Leslie, Manager, expresses with enthusiasm that she and the supervisors in Yucca Valley attribute this decline in cases.... to the successful use of Safety Organized Practice with families.

Wayne Rutledge, PCWTA Practice Consultant explored "what's working well" with Ms. Leslie and the supervisors regarding SOP implementation in Yucca Valley.

Here are the highlights of what they say:

- SOP provides the social worker and supervisor with increased clarity earlier in the case. This clarity enables the social worker to form a more accurate assessment of the families and work more effectively towards reunification and permanency.
- SOP supports the supervisors and workers to sort out Complicating Factors from Danger.
- Through participation in coaching, supervisors and social workers engage in a critical thinking process, surfacing powerful questions to provide a more accurate assessment

of the family's progress and overall functioning.

Choose A SOP Tool And Try It On

We know that Child Welfare Workers are busy and juggling many responsibilities, and implementation of new practice can be overwhelming. Just try it on!

In the Barstow Office, SSP Cherish Bright participated in coaching with PCWTA Practice Consultant Bill James, to "try on" powerful and solution focused questions in her effort to reconnect a mother with her safety network. The mother had distanced herself from her safety network and this was extremely worrisome for Ms. Bright. Ms. Bright was concerned that communication would be ineffective as her previous communication and relationship with the mother was not very good.

What did this look like?

- In the coaching session Bill and Ms. Bright explored how to utilize powerful and solution focused questions to elicit "what's working well, what are the worries and what are the next steps" with regard to the mother's safety network. Together, they placed a phone call to the mother and successfully engaged the mother in a conversation about how her safety network could support her (instead of IF they could help) and identified next steps in her connection to this network.
- The phone call was a success! The mother not only agreed to reconnect with her safety network she provided contact names and phone numbers as well.
- Then the mother THANKED the social worker for her help at the end of the phone call.

What was the impact for this social worker who took the initiative to "try on" powerful and solution focused questions?

- The social worker stated she had never had a better more productive conversation with the mother, and she certainly never has had the mother thank her for anything.
- The social worker stated to the CW Director that she felt so hopeful after the session that she got the best night's sleep she has had in ages.

What were the take-aways from this success?

When social workers feel confident in the family's Network, they are less anxious and more hopeful about the impact they are having in the lives of families.

- The social worker was able to help a family engage their network by using solution focused questions to guide the change that needed to happen.
- When a social worker lands on good practice and develops good working relationships with families, it aligns with our values as well as Safety Organized Practice.

Coaching Energizes Everyone!

Energized immediately following her coaching session with San Bernardino Parent Partners, Practice Consultant, Tricia Pegues shared the following: "Just wanted to send a positive note to everyone. I just completed a group coaching session on Safety Networks/Safety Circle with the parent partners after a unit meeting. It was amazing. Just to see how excited they are for SOP and for being able to help their families communicate their acts of protection and real behavior change was inspiring. While they were practicing the Safety Circles with each other, it was so great to see them take on the coaching role with each other! This session lent itself to so many parallel process identifiers that I have to say it was one of my most rewarding coaching sessions."

The energy Tricia experienced is an illustration of how parent partners are instrumental to the successful implementation of Safety Organized Practice. They bring valuable energy, passion, knowledge, insight and connection with the family to the process!

Coaching To Support Social Worker Success

When an Investigations Social Worker had difficulty focusing and was feeling overwhelmed with a high number of pending investigations that needed to be closed, she sought out a PCWTA Practice Consultant for coaching support. Together, the social worker and Practice Consultant explored barriers, potential solutions and the positive outcomes of successfully closing these referrals. With the support of the Practice Consultant, the social worker set specific goals for the number of referrals she would close each day. Two weeks later, the social worker checked in with the Practice Consultant. She was not only far more relaxed, but ecstatic as she was successfully achieving her daily goals and the number of referrals had decreased. ***With the support of the Practice Consultant the social worker was able to continue this success through the parallel process of focusing on "what is working well."***

Leadership Support: How a Deputy Director Created a SOP Learning Path

With her ear to the ground in RAMS, Deputy Director Teri Elliot in San Bernardino County recognized an opportunity to build capacity and lower future risk within a family using Scaling Questions. The mother was displaying symptoms of postpartum depression which were presenting risk to her children. DD Elliot connected the social worker with the PCWTA Practice Consultant to explore the use of Scaling Questions with the mother and her support system.

Leadership support is critical to the implementation of SOP. Listening for opportunities in which to use powerful and solution focused questions, DD Elliot successfully created a learning path to support the successful integration of the critical components of SOP into the foundation of learning for staff.

Leadership Growth: Insight Through The Process of Coaching

"As a manager, I have been able to participate in leadership coaching and I've gained a lot of insight into my perceptions of leadership, my style and how it relates to the styles of others, and my measurement of my own success and how to keep my perception in check and refine as necessary for mental health and productivity (Child Welfare Manager)."

Through individual coaching with a PCWTA Practice Consultant, this manager was successfully able develop strategies to:

- Make supervision more meaningful for her direct staff.
- Enhance her tools and skills in management of case staffings.
- Develop tools for maximizing productivity and positivity of the supervision she receives from leadership.

Feedback from the Manager on the implementation of the takeaways from the coaching process:

- Successful supervision with a superior in which she was able to guide the discussion toward solution-focused exploration rather than an "ask/answer" format."
- Modeling of Appreciative Inquiry during a difficult case staffing to guide the supervisor and social worker through the process of critical thinking as opposed to taking a directive approach. The social worker thanked the manager for "helping him see things in that perspective and stated he felt the decision that we reached was sound and made a lot of sense, even though the outcome was much different than he had originally had his mind set on."

When Social Workers and Leadership "Try On" SOP Through Individual and Group Coaching, This Is The Impact:

"This is awesome stuff" (San Bernardino County Social Worker during Module 1 Training).

"Thank you so much for your time today, it was very helpful to me. I felt stuck with this one, and now I believe I have cleared my thoughts and can look at it with a new lens. It truly takes a team to make this system work well for our families." (San Diego County Social Worker in an email following a coaching session).

"Chocolate makes life better. You make life better here for me!" written by a San Bernardino County Social Worker on a sticky note pasted to two pieces of Ghirardelli chocolates, which were placed on top of a completed satisfaction survey.

"As for coaching insights/experiences, overall my coaching sessions have been extremely helpful as I have become more used to my management role the past year, and now in-charge duties. What I refer back to most often is how important the parallel process is across all levels of staffing, and then to the clients we serve. I think that is what I have become most mindful of in my interactions now, and to be honest, I had not really considered or understood its importance prior to my coaching sessions. Thank you for the coaching and encouragement! (Child Welfare Manager).

Taking SOP Out Into The Field: Demystifying Mapping

Implementation takes time and success is a process! As your comfort level with the use of SOP tools increases, try taking these tools out into the field. "Safety Mapping" with a family

will support the gathering of accurate information for a rigorous and balanced assessment. By slowing us down and helping us to think critically, Safety Mapping allows us to identify harm, danger and safety; and to develop next steps in creating and supporting safety, well being and permanency.

Mapping in the office between the PCWTA Coach and the Social Worker, in supervision between the Supervisor and Social Worker and within Unit Meetings has been very effective in increasing comfort level with this new tool and ensure we, as professionals, are critically thinking through the harm, danger and safety.

Try taking it out into the field! When you sit down to interview or communicate with families, try using the mapping process to elicit more accurate information. You don't need an outside coach or facilitator to conduct a mapping with a family. In fact, mapping was designed with the hope of being done in the family's home. This often results in clear communication, good working relationships with the family, and agreed upon Danger Statements and Safety Goals.

Safety Mapping with families involves just a few simple steps:

- Sit down with parent(s) and if available their support network at the "kitchen table".
- With paper and pen at hand ask the family and their network what they think is working well? Then ask the family and network what they are worried about.
- Together come up with some next steps that would move the family forward in creating safety for child.

You can stop there! That is all it takes! However, if you are feeling ambitious and the conversation is going well with family, you can sort the items to identify harm and danger and safety or create harm and danger statements with the family and a safety goal so everyone knows where we are and where we need to go.

Still hesitant? Take a minute to think through these Solution Focused Questions to help you explore your readiness for this new tool!

Exception question: When was there a time you were hesitant to try something new, but finally took the plunge and did so? How did this make you feel? What was the outcome?

Preferred future: If you woke up tomorrow morning and a miracle happened while you were asleep, and you were sitting at the kitchen table with a family mapping and it was going really well, what would that look like? How did you get there?

Coping: How have you coped in the past when you were really busy and overwhelmed and someone asked you to do something new? How did you work through that? Who supported you? What was the outcome?

Position: If I made a major decision about your life without your input or told you how it was going to be and what you needed to do, how would you feel? What would you think? How

would you react?

Scaling question: On a scale from 0-10, with 10 being totally comfortable/confident conducting a mapping with a family in their home and 0 being totally uncomfortable/not confident conducting mappings in the office in front of co-workers, let alone in the home with a family, where do you fall? What got you to that number? What one thing could you do to move up just one number?

Introducing the PCTWA County Consultants, Supervisors and Practice Consultants

Who are the County Consultants who manage and support coaching at the Leadership Level?

Audrey Toussant, MSW	San Bernardino County
Anzette Shackelford, LCSW	Orange County, Acting County Consultant Imperial County
Nancy Satterwhite, LCSW	Riverside County
Amy Jaffe, MPA	Los Angeles and Ventura County
Darlene Hill, MSW	San Diego and Imperial County
Jenni Ahsing, MSW	Acting County Consultant San Diego County

Who are the Supervising Practice Consultants who provide training, ongoing professional development, supervision and support, and where do they work?

Jenni Ahsing, MSW	San Diego, Orange, Imperial and Riverside Counties
Bill James, LCSW	San Bernardino County

Who are the Practice Consultants who work with Child Welfare Managers, and where do they coach?

Mark Miller, MPA, MA	San Bernardino County
Peter Dahlin, MS	San Diego County

Who are the Practice Consultants who work with the Child Welfare supervisors, special workers, parent partners collaborating on the line level with families, and where do they coach?

Wayne Rutledge	San Bernardino County, Eastern Region
Lili Miles, MA	San Bernardino County, Central Region
Kim Khoury, MS	San Bernardino County, North Desert Region
Candice Kimbell, LCSW	San Bernardino County, Placement and Resource Division
Kate Bedwell, MSW	San Bernardino County, Western Region
Tricia Pegues, MS	Riverside and San Bernardino County
Laurie Fortin, LCSW	San Diego County
Wanjiru Golly, PhD	Orange County
Steven Wells, MC	Orange County

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