

FOCUS ON SUPERVISION

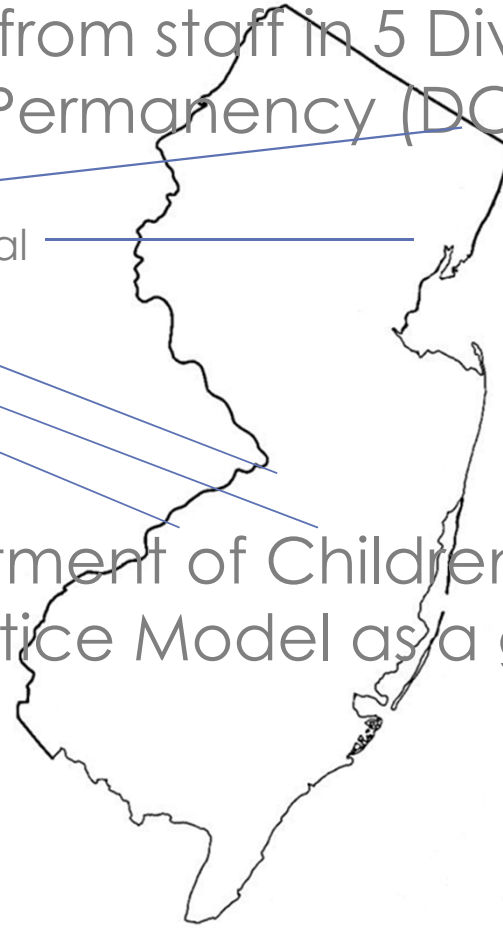
Department of Children and Families
Case Conferencing Project Evaluation
April 2013

Evaluation Questions

- How was the joint case conference process viewed by staff?
- Was there a change in DCP&P supervisory practice due to the joint case conferencing initiative?
- How was this change viewed by DCP&P supervisors and workers?

Evaluation Strategy

- Collected data from staff in 5 Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) offices:
 - Bergen Central
 - Western Essex Central
 - Mercer North
 - Burlington East
 - Gloucester West
- Used the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Case Practice Model as a guide to develop survey items.



Evaluation Strategy

Evaluation components included:

1. **Post-conference** feedback by participants of the joint conferences.
2. **Pre-/post surveys** for supervisors and workers regarding actual current practice.
3. Three **focus groups**, one each for supervisors, workers and community agency consultants.

1. Post-Joint Conference Feedback

Number of joint case conference recorded

Local Office	Conferences	Responses
Bergen Central	31	88
Burlington East	23	64
Gloucester West	29	83
Mercer North	13	23
Western Essex Central	7	20

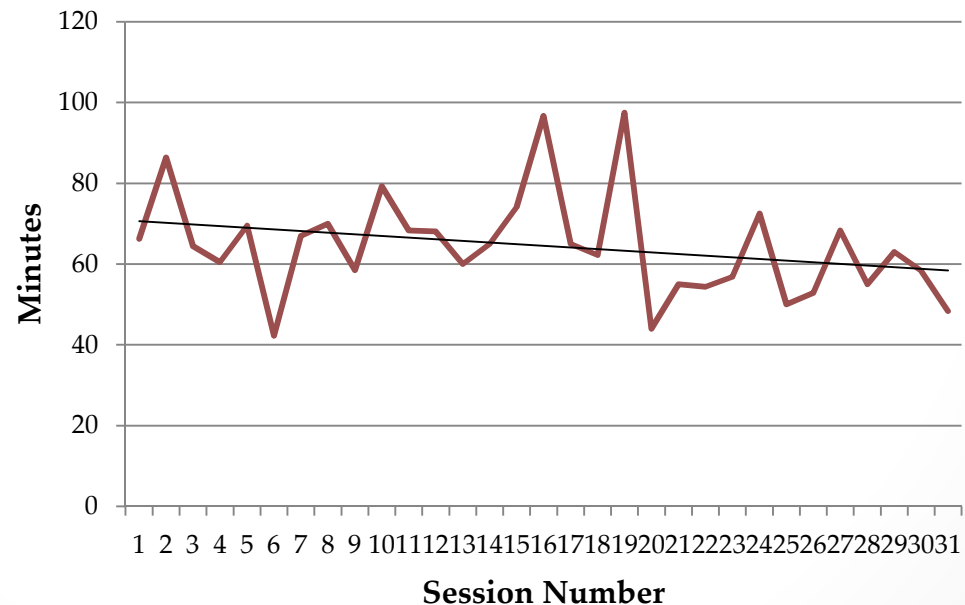
- 103 joint conferences
- Respondents were evenly divided between DCP&P staff and community agency staff

Post-Joint Conference Feedback

Use of Tools/Conference Duration

- The Case Conferencing Tool was used 89% of the time. The Genogram was used 96% of the time

Average
Conference
Length was:
65 Minutes



Post-Joint Conference Feedback

	Percent A/SA
The group leaders created a climate which encourage staff to participate in today's case conference	99.6
I learned useful ideas/process or skills by attending today's case conference.	97.9
Participating in these exercises is helpful to me in my DCP&P job role.	98.1
The information presented in today's case conference along with the discussion was sufficient to develop a sound case plan.	98.9
The group leaders used the principles of the DCF Case Practice Model in their approach to today's case.	99.7

Post-Joint Conference Feedback

	Percent A/SA
The group leaders modeled behaviors that I will try to replicate in case conferences I hold with subordinates.	99.5
The group leaders were responsive to participant questions.	99.6
I support the decisions made at today's case conference.	99.6
Overall, I found today's case conference helpful and informative.	98.9

How Supervisors viewed Joint Case Conferencing

	SA	A	D	SD
Attending these Case Conferences Sharpened My Supervisory Skills	31	46	23	0
I am More Conscious about the Supervisory Environment I Create When Conferencing	31	61	8	0
Having Support Staff Attend the Conference Helped Create a Team Atmosphere	51	45	4	0
Private Agency Staff Brought New Perspectives to Cases	37	41	22	0
Overall, the Joint Case Conferences were Worth the Time	38	46	14	2

Post-Conference Feedback

Some representative comments. What did you find most helpful and informative?

- Added insight; brought out new and/or overlooked information
- Pre-conference preparation
- Genogram and ecomaps were valuable tools
- Brainstorming as a group; getting different perspectives and suggestions for alternative approaches
- Identifying next steps based on information about past work by the agency

Post-Conference Feedback

Did you say or do anything differently from past practice?

- Got **extensive case history** information and explored the family dynamics
- Tried to manage conference time more effectively
- **Allowed the worker to tell the family's story** without interrupting and asking questions
- The conference was **very focused**
- We were able to **break down the family history to reveal past patterns** of parental behavior

2. Pre-Post Surveys

- ✓ Supervisors rated themselves on how they addressed the following areas of practice with their workers as well as their own behavior.

• Level of Engagement	• Case Tracking
• Assessment	• Supervisory Environment
• Case Planning	• Case Conference Training and Collaboration

- ✓ Workers rated:

• The quality of case conferences
• The utility or practical value of the case conferences
• The level of felt support from the supervisor

Pre-Post Surveys

- Pre-test survey administered around the time of the two-day training for participating supervisors and their community agency counterparts.
- Post-test survey administered 10 months later.
- Survey was anonymous, administered on-line.
- Participants were asked to provide their local office name along with their first initial and last 4 digits of their SSN so that the pre- and post-surveys could be matched.

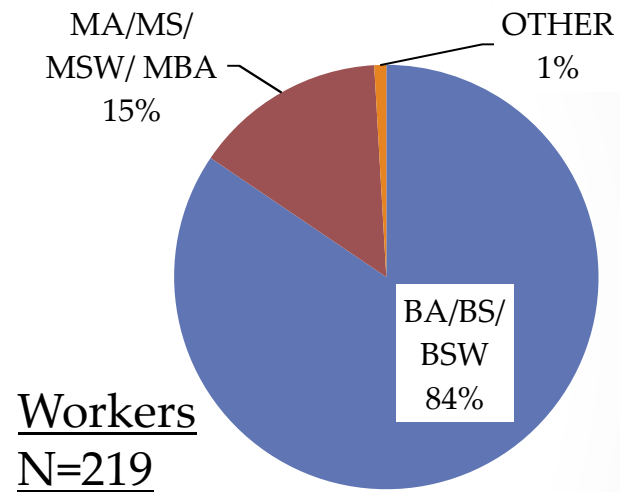
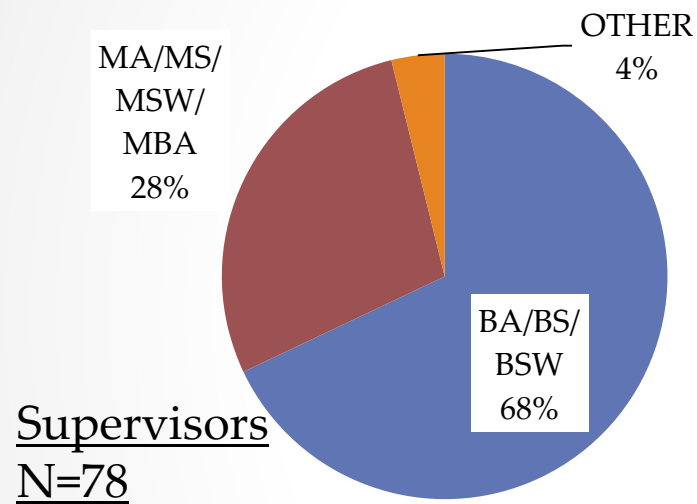
Pre-Post Surveys

Survey Response Rates were satisfactory

	Pre-test	Post-test
Supervisors	90%	82%
Workers	77%	67%

Pre-Post Surveys

Education and Experience



	Years in Current Position	Years in Social Services
Supervisors	7.9	15.8
Workers	4.7	8.7

Pre-Post Surveys: Supervisors

- The survey item self-ratings are meant to **reflect current practice of the supervisor** during case conferences, i.e., how they determine worker performance, case strategy and progress.
- Each statement about supervisory practice could be rated from Almost Always to Never. [Case Conference Training and Collaboration statements are rated Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree].
- **When compared to the pre-test, the overall self-rating of supervisory practice at the post-test was statistically significantly higher [$t(15) = 2.41, p < .05$].**

Pre-Post Surveys: Workers

Worker Assessment of Case Conferences

- Worker post-test ratings were not statistically different from the pre-test.
- Mean ratings for the Usefulness of the Conference and perceived Level of Support were slightly lower, while the mean rating for the perceived Quality of the Conference was slightly higher.
- Forty-two percent of workers reported that case conferences were now held weekly vs. 34 percent at the time of the pre-test.

Pre-Post Surveys: Workers

When asked if they have noticed any changes in how case conferences were conducted, 44 percent of those responding (N=48) answered “Yes.”

- Case conferences are **conducted more often**.
- Case conferences are **more directed** towards well-being, safety and permanency.
- Case conferences are **more organized** and discuss the progression of the case from the beginning to the present situation.
- It has become **more consistent**.

Pre-Post Surveys: Workers

When asked if case conference have become more helpful as they work with families, 82 percent of those responding (N=54) answered “Yes.”

- They are helpful for problem solving.
- They can be helpful if I am having an issue or need to brainstorm.
- Through conferences I am able to understand what needs to be done in my cases.
- When a case is conferenced, I do come away with a different view on how to work with a family.

3. Focus Groups

Supervisors

- Two-day training helpful.
- Community providers offered excellent clinical support.
- Workers were initially resistant but found conferences beneficial.
- Workers felt empowered to present.
- Feeling of working as a team.
- Helpful for cases with multiple referrals or long-term cases.
- Have conducted conferences without the provider using the same approaches.
- Need additional training on genogram, substance abuse, MICA, and mental health.

Focus Groups

Workers

- **Experience** at joint case conferences was very good.
- The provider was able to give input and feedback to guide the case and help with the genogram.
- The **additional eyes** helped move cases that were stuck.
- **Tools** such as the genogram, ecomap and timeline were useful to find underlying issues.
- **Workers felt they had a voice** during the conferences.
- **Conferencing will carry over to regular practice; the experience was very positive.**
- The genogram and ecomap training must be extended or put online.

Focus Groups

Community Providers

- Thought records would be in shambles but found consistency when reading case files.
- **Initial experiences were terrific**; excited to collaborate in the co-facilitator role.
- **Developed a partnership as well as relationship.**
- **DCP&P staff preparation for the conferences was mixed**; genograms were available most the time, rarely had an ecomap.
- Initially supervisors were resistant in presenting to outsiders. The process began to flow once it was realized **the conference was a safe place.**
- Case's open for a long time and cases in court with multiple referrals lend themselves to conferencing.
- Felt the conferences will have an impact moving forward. **Saw changes as a result of coaching; the group became more problem-solving oriented.**

Conclusions and Take Away

- Joint case conferences were viewed very positively in post-conference feedback and in the focus groups.
- Despite methodological issues with a pre-/post- design and self-reporting, there is evidence that supervisors believed they were more likely to engage in case conferences that were more thorough and aligned with the case practice model after participating in joint case conferences.
- Supervisors reported increased attention to both the environment they fostered during case conferences and conference content.

Conclusions and Take Away

- Worker felt conferences were more helpful.
- The workers supervisors also found that the introduction of tools such as the genogram and timeline were useful to understanding cases.
- Sustaining and building on the initiative will require an investment by local office leadership. Perhaps continuing periodic “open to all staff” conferences in each local office.

Conclusions and Take Away

- Additional strategies include:
 - Further (and ongoing availability for new staff) training in the use of genograms, ecomaps and in how to optimally prepare for a conference.
 - Encouragement for continued use of in-office staff resources as part of a team approach during conferences, e.g., domestic violence or substance abuse specialist.
 - Further participation of the casework supervisor – as the in-office clinical expert – in conferences with complex or difficult issues.

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