

TITLE: Adapting and Installing a Coaching Program for Child Welfare Supervisors: Lessons Learned from Initial Implementation

AUTHORS: Vickie McArthur, Alanea Hanna, Mary Eibes, Stacy Dunkerley, Becci Akin, Kaela Byers

CLUSTER AREA: Child Welfare

ROUNDTABLE

Examination of causes of a high rate of foster care placement and low reunification and adoption rate in one midwestern state highlighted a need to develop robust supervision and support to promote consistent, high-quality frontline social work practice in the child welfare system. A growing body of evidence shows that coaching and feedback predicts improved skills, higher quality services, and better outcomes (e.g., Beidas et al., 2012; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Mannix et al., 2006). Coaching has been identified as an integral part of supporting practice changes. Coaching has been recognized as a key support for workers and supervisors learning new practice models, such as safety-centered practices (Authors, 2017; Hatton-Bowers, Pecora, Johnson, Brooks, & Schindell, 2015) and family assessment skills (Snyder, Lawrence, Weatherholt, & Nagy, 2012). Therefore, a coaching model (the Atlantic Coast Child Welfare Implementation Center (ACCWIC)) was adopted, adapted, and implemented, targeting child welfare agency supervisors in both public and private agencies, including those providing investigations and assessments; in-home services; family preservation; foster care; and adoption services. We theorized that in addition to this overarching belief in the power of supervision, coaching would assist supervisors in supporting workers in their practice with families by strengthening their own use of critical thinking skills as a supervisor, building their confidence in their supervisory skills, and increasing consistency in quality supervision. Coaching content is focused on developing strengths-oriented, family-centered supervisory capacity and skills in the key priority topics of: (1) parent and youth engagement, (2) risk and safety assessment, (3) family centered assessment and case planning, (4) relative/kin connections, (5) secondary traumatic stress, and (6) antiracism practices. The adapted coaching model has built-in flexibility that allows for adjustments that are specific to each implementation site.

This roundtable will engage in a dialogue detailing the experience of adaptation, installation, and initial implementation of a coaching program to strengthen the child welfare workforce and achieve better family permanency outcomes. As a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic, this model was also adapted from an in-person training model to full virtual implementation, resulting in both challenges and opportunities not otherwise evident. Presenters will share their experiences as members of the development and implementation team. The first two presenters will detail the underlying philosophy, evidence, and structure for the coaching program. The rest of the panel, including expert coaches delivering the model, will describe installation of implementation drivers, facilitators, barriers, and CQI processes and outcomes. Discussion with roundtable participants will include implementation strategies, key considerations, and lessons learned.