

Welcome to the Supervisor eJournal

Welcome to the first issue of the Supervisor eJournal! This first issue focuses on the Promoting Placement Stability and Permanency through Case Manager/Child Visits (also known as Every Child Every Month) training. Future issues will focus on topics related to other advanced skills courses provided through the Professional Excellence Program at Georgia State University.

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We hope this journal will be a resource to help you work with your staff on applying the knowledge and skills they learned in training to their work with families.

Every Child Every Month Case Manager Training Rollout

The Every Child Every Month (ECEM) case manager training is a one-day course, which covers the same content as the supervisor training. Since you've already attended the training, you are in a great position to help your staff members increase their skills related to child and family visits. Training for case managers will continue through September of 2009 and will be provided in each of the 17 regions. Questions about the ECEM case manager training? Contact Amy Mobley at ammobley@dhr.state.ga.us.



Learning Recap

Foster Care Supervisors and Field Program Specialists were the first DFCS staff to complete the Promoting Placement Stability and Permanency through Case Manager/Child Visits training. This training, a critical part of the Every Child Every Month initiative, focused on improving outcomes for children in foster care by promoting the concept of meaningful, purposeful visits with children on a monthly basis.

Here's a quick recap of the top 5 learning points from this course.

5. Research indicates there are several connections between child visits and achievement of CFSR outcomes. For example, workers who visit are better able to manage risks to children; more likely to engage the child and parents in case planning and establish appropriate permanency goals; and more likely to meet the child's educational, medical, and mental health needs.
4. There are four steps of a high quality, purposeful visit: preparation, engagement/the visit, assessment and commitments, and next steps.
3. Visit preparation is a critical, but often overlooked, part of the process. Spending 5 to 10 minutes preparing for visits can save time in the long run.
2. Case Managers should "think developmentally" (i.e. consider the child's or youth's developmental stage) when building a relationship with a child, assessing a child's needs and behaviors, and developing service and permanency plans.

And the number one learning point from this course:

1. Supervisors play a significant role in making sure meaningful, purposeful visits occur with every child every month. Supervisors are the primary force in helping case managers transfer the skills they learned in the training to their work with families.

The remainder of this journal is aimed at helping supervisors fulfill their role in this process. Continue to read for more information.

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates.

The great teacher inspires"

- William Arthur Ward"

We need your feedback!

Do you have a creative name for the Supervisor eJournal? Send us your suggestions. If your name is chosen, you could receive a supervisor gift pack.

Please let us know if you found the Supervisor eJournal helpful and what we can do to make it better.

Send us your comments and suggestions:
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Revisiting the Transfer of Learning Process

"That almost magical link between classroom performance and something which is supposed to happen in the real world" - J. M. Swinney.

Transfer of training is effectively and continuing applying the skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes gained in a learning environment to the job environment.

The goal of training in the workplace is to enhance employee knowledge and skill for the purpose of improving job performance and ultimately organizational performance. We know from research that there are different forces that either support or inhibit the likelihood that transfer and improved performance will occur.

*"I cannot teach
anyone anything.
I can only make
them think."
- Socrates*

In the ECEM supervisor course, we presented information on transfer of learning and the role that supervisors play in that process. What a supervisor does before, during, and after a staff member's training session is the most powerful force for promoting transfer of learning. In fact, the role of the supervisor is more critical than the role of the trainer or the staff member who attends the training!

Sounds a little intimidating, but it's really not that complicated. You should view the promotion of transfer of learning as a part of what you do in effective supervision. For additional information about the transfer of learning process and strategies refer to the supervisor segment handouts from the ECEM training or download additional resources from the Professional Excellence Resource Library on the Education and Training web page (see Helpful Links on page 6).

Strategies to Promote Learning Transfer

Before training

- Meet with staff members before they go to training to discuss what the course is about, why it's important, and your expectations of them as learners.
- Make a plan with case managers to cover caseloads while they are in training. For example, establish "training buddies" to cover each other's cases.

During training

- Stick with the coverage plan and don't interrupt case managers while they're in training.
- Make a plan for reinforcing the learning. For example, plan to debrief with case managers after they conduct their first child visit after completing training. Use this debrief session to reinforce the learning and best practices.
- Decide how you will respond when staff members perform competently (motivation and reward).

After training

- Follow through with your reinforcement plans.
- Support case managers through your responses and attitudes. Assure case managers of your continuing interest in and support of their effort to improve their practice.
- Assign staff members to the kinds of jobs, tasks, or special projects that will give them the chance to use what they learned and require them to actually apply the learning.
- Create "transfer buddies" to provide peer-to-peer support to help each other improve their skills.

Making the “Work” of Supervision Work for You

Supervisory activities such as case record reviews, supervisory consultations, and case consultations account for a significant portion of how you spend your time. Why not make these activities work for you? These supervision duties can also help you promote and monitor the transfer of learning process.

The following are checklists and suggestions to help you determine how well your staff members are applying what they learned regarding making meaningful, purposeful visits.



Record reviews

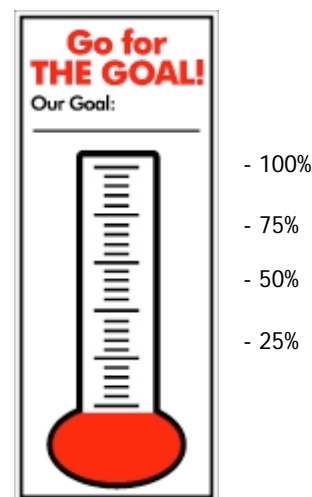
- ☐ Does the case manager's documentation reflect good practice concerning child visits, including private time with the child and observation of the child and caregiver interaction?
- ☐ Does documentation reflect the required frequency of child visits?
- ☐ Does documentation include a list of items that need follow-up?
- ☐ Does documentation reflect completion of planned tasks/follow through on commitments? If not, does it make it clear when items will be addressed?

Supervisory conferences and case consultations...Face time with your staff!
Individual worker conferences are a valuable tool for enhancing worker performance. The atmosphere should encourage staff input and should be a time for you to coach, provide feedback, and document employee performance.

- ☐ Are there barriers that might prevent the case manager from conducting purposeful, meaning visits with each child every month?
- ☐ Does the case manager understand the specific practices for each step of the child visit cycle?
- ☐ Does the case manager need assistance in working out scheduling conflicts with caregivers?
- ☐ Could the case manager benefit from having a more experienced worker go on visits with him/her? Do I need to go on a visit with the case manager to observe and provide feedback?

Unit Meetings

- ☐ Discuss child visitation in your unit meeting. Encourage staff to share their successes and challenges and involve the entire team in brainstorming solutions or celebrating successes.
- ☐ Review a specific visitation step with your staff. Use the material from the training to help you.
- ☐ Brainstorm a way for the unit to measure successful completion of visits each month. A graph is one possible idea. Compare visits due to visits achieved and watch as your unit moves toward the 100% goal.



For more suggestions on how to make the work of supervision work for you, go to the Professional Excellence Resource Library on the Education and Training web page (see helpful links on page 6).

Best Practices Highlight

Listening to the Silence, Documenting the Invisible – Wendy Haus Hanevold Ph.D.

The Every Child Every Month program emphasizes the importance of connecting with each child in placement at least once a month. It is essential that case managers be fully prepared to effectively interview each child. The first actions, which lead to being fully prepared, occur prior to ever meeting with the child. The case manager should obtain as much history and background information as possible, and review current information about the child in his/her placement. Also, decisions need to be made about the goal of the meeting, including identifying concerns and priorities related to child safety, permanency and well-being. The case manager should develop questions based on these priorities and concerns, as well as opening comments and strategies to engage the child. Each of these activities should occur in advance of the actual interview, but the final actions that contribute to an effective child interview cannot be planned in advance.

After presenting the opening gambit, the interview will move into the plane of improvisation. In order to be an effective interviewer, the case manager now has to put down his/her papers and agendas and be ready to follow the child. It is time to listen with the head and the heart. The interviewer cannot judge or criticize. Accept the child where he/she is. Focus on gathering information, not coaching or disciplining.

To truly listen, one has to be a clear channel. It takes practice to fully listen to a child. Practice being comfortable with silence. Practice being mindful and present. Find time to sit quietly without distractions for three minutes. Listen to the silence. Find peace in the silence. If you are not okay with silences, you may jump in and fill the silence with more questions and words. Filling this space often means you may miss the important information that is being presented in the silence.

An effective interview has three layers. The first layer is the surface level of the interview. It is built of the words that are spoken in response to questions or comments. This layer is easy to obtain and document. Only a small percentage of communication is in the first layer.

The second interview layer is the level just below the surface. It is revealed in the way that words are spoken. It is the space between words. Are there

long silences? Are the silences comfortable? Does it seem like the child won't talk or is having trouble speaking (i.e. language challenges)? Is the child hypervocal -- showering the interviewer with a flood of words but losing the topic? A long pause before an answer can indicate thoughtfulness, fear, or shame.

The third layer is the bedrock level of nonverbal cues. Warning cues of concern will often be presented in tiny gestures -- a downward movement of the eyes, a frown that is quickly covered by a smile. What was the emotional climate during the interview (serious, sad, avoidant, silly, nervous)? Describe facial expressions and gestures. Did words and expressions match? Did something feel off key?

The best interview is one that is primarily focused on the deeper layers. It is an interview in which words and nonverbal cues and gestures are considered of equal importance. It is an interview that takes place in sanctified time. The listener is fully present and the child is welcome to share ideas, words and feelings without ANY response beyond clarification and validation.

The Every Child Every Month visit is designed for the case manager to gain both an informational and emotional snapshot of a child at a particular moment in time. If you are lucky, the child will just tell you what they are thinking and feeling. If the child will not or cannot share his/her thoughts or feelings, the information can still be documented in the description of nonverbal cues. Document if something feels unbalanced, incomplete or incongruent. If the interviewer has connected on all three layers, he/she will have gathered a powerful set of data that will guide the agency in the goal of providing safety, permanency and well-being for each child in placement.



Wendy Haus Hanevold, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist who specializes in working with families (parents, couples, children and adolescents) who are undergoing major life transitions (Adoption, Foster Care Placement, Kinship Care, Divorce and Step-families)

Success Graffiti

Have you heard the expression, *success breeds success*? Why not deliberately showcase your unit's achievements with child visits? Try hanging a poster or banner in your work area to celebrate and encourage success. Encourage your staff to "document" their success stories with a little graffiti.



Sometimes the solution to a problem lies in front of us and yet we fail to see it.

What has your staff done with the job aids and participant materials they received in the ECEM training? Are they using these resources or have they placed them on a shelf or in a drawer-- never to be seen again?

Supporting the use of job aids is another transfer of learning strategy. Ask your case managers about this material and request that they use it in their work.

"The case manager now has to put down his/her papers and agenda and be ready to follow the child. It is time to listen with the head and the heart. "

- Wendy Haus Hanevold, Ph.D.

Helpful links:

Professional Excellence Resource Library

<http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/portal/site/DHR-DFCS/menuitem.8237042e9dbda3aa50c8798dd03036a0/?vgnextoid=9d8e375cbf34d110VgnVCM100000bf01010aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=58b629c8facb0110VgnVCM100000bf01010aRCRD>

Here you can download additional reading material, the interviewing and safety references from the Every Child Every Month training, and more information about the transfer of learning process.