

Professionalizing the Art of Being Yourself:
TOOLS TO ENHANCE YOUR ROLE AS MENTOR TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN CHILD WELFARE

Trainer Background: Reina Woods, MSW, serving the profession of social work as an educator, consultant, community organizer, and advocate, her mission is to act as a conduit between current and former foster youth and social work professionals to eliminate the possibility that any child will ever grow up in foster care. Mrs. Woods is a specialist in permanency practice, and has direct experience in community based wraparound service delivery, as well as residential treatment programs for SED youth. Prior to obtaining her MSW, Mrs. Woods worked primarily as a community organizer and advocate, representing the needs of current and foster youth to policy makers, including child welfare administrators and legislators.

Target Audience: Support Professionals who are involved in working directly with either parents or children doing activities such as parenting training, transportation, and/or home visits.

Course Description: *How do we stay true to our authentic selves when we are expected to do things that don't feel authentic to us?* This is the question that will guide our exploration as we embark on a collective- and personal- reflective learning journey examining two key concepts: **1- Teaming from a systems theory perspective**, and **2- The use of the authentic self**. This class emphasizes the power inherent in the Support Professionals commitment to working as a member of the professional team toward the child and family case goals. Some topics that we will look at are: **setting boundaries (mentor vs. friend), introducing your role, first and last visits, trust, confidentiality (what to tell your worker), and working with follow through**. The goal of this class is to equip the Support Professional with a basic framework understanding of their role and to give them an opportunity to discuss common internal (emotional) and external (teaming) challenges inherent in this role.

Training Objectives:

1. The concept of teaming will be presented from a systems-theory perspective, and the trainee will understand how the role of a Support Professional is powerful in helping children and parents move towards positive change.
2. The trainee will anticipate the inevitable situation of having to say “no” to a request from a child or parent, and be able to fall back on the team agreements as a way to justify and de-personalize the “no”.
3. The trainee will practice explaining their role as a Support Professional in a way that emphasizes and defines the mentorship element.
4. The trainee will examine their opinions about the agency's definition of a Support Professional, and will reconcile this definition with their understanding of their authentic self.

WAYS THAT SUPERVISORS CAN SUPPORT THE TRANSFER OF LEARNING FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE JOB

Before THE TRAINING...

5. SUPERVISOR CAN SUPPORT THE TRAINEE IN IDENTIFYING ONE YOUTH OR PARENT WHO THE TRAINEE HAS HAD CHALLENGES WITH. NAME THOSE CHALLENGES AND BE PREPARED TO REFLECT ON THEM IN CLASS.
6. SUPERVISOR CAN HAVE A DISCUSSION WITH THE TRAINEE EXPLORING WHAT BROUGHT THEM TO THE CHILD WELFARE FIELD, SPECIFICALLY, WHAT THEY WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.
7. SUPERVISOR CAN HAVE A DISCUSSION WITH THE TRAINEE ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT STRENGTHS THAT A SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL BRINGS INTO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

After THE TRAINING...

8. Supervisor can observe how the trainee applies what they learned in class, shadowing them on a first meeting with a youth or parent to hear how they introduce their role as a Support Professional and define the boundaries.
9. Supervisor can discuss with the trainee how they understand their role as a Support Professional, and vital part of the professional team, in relation to the systems theory discussion held in class.

Evidence Guiding This Exploration:

Alexander, C. E. (2008). Accepting Gifts from Youth: Reciprocity Makes a Difference. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, 21 (2), 27-35.

Garfat, T., & Charles, G. (2007). How am I who I am? Self in Child and Youth Care practice. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, 20 (3), 6-16.

Gharabaghi, K. (2008). The Vagrancies of Passion and the Dance of Arrogance. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, 20 (4), 23-29.

Oliver, C. (2008). Child Welfare Work: A Life Choice, Not A Life Sentence. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, 21 (4), 70-78.

Reid, C. (2007). The Transition from state care to adulthood: International examples of best practices. *New Directions for Youth Development* , 113, 33-49.

Sercombe, H. (2007). 'Embedded' youth work: Ethical questions for youth work professionals. *Youth Studies Australia* , 26 (2), 11-19.