Expanding the Family Circle
Module III

The Mezzo Level: Application
We are going to:

1. Take a closer look at the 3 levels of the eco-system
2. Talk about how each of these levels relate to the families we work with
3. Think about how a family’s information and story help us to work more effectively and efficiently with that family at each level
Framework for Practice: Ecological Systems and Intersections

Macro Level: Social, Political, Historical

Mezzo Level
Community, Extended Family

Micro level: Individual, Family

Extended Family

School

work

Historical Events

Social trends and Issues

Family/Individual

Macro Level: Social, Political, Historical
Mezzo Level

- Mezzo Level
MEZZO-LEVEL

The Mezzo level is the “cushion” between the macro level forces and the family.
Mezzo Level

MACRO LEVEL

Extended Family & Kin

MICRO LEVEL
MEZZO-LEVEL

• At the mezzo level, we are concerned with community and extended family.
• When working with Native American families, we are concerned with Clan and Tribes as well as grandparents, aunts and uncles.
Native American Model

The tribe has an important role with decisions involving children.

This is cultural as well as the result of a difficult history of Native American children being removed from their homes.
ICWA, How it came to be

• 1878 - Indian children were systemically removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools or with non-Indian families far away from their home and families.

• 1978 - ICWA, was put in place in response to these policies which were detrimental to Indian families.
ICWA

An important component of ICWA is that Caseworkers must research and identify children in placement who possess Native American ancestry and follow specific guidelines when placing a child.
Indian children were taught that the Indian way of life was wrong—they were brainwashed to believe their native ways were “savage” and inferior to European ways.

- Children were forbidden to speak their native language.
- Children were forbidden to practice their native religion.
- They were denied privacy and time to think.
- The children had many rules and harsh punishment.
- The children were shamed and humiliated.
ICWA

• First part of video tells us of the history of Native American Tribes in New York.
• “Historical Trauma” of Native Americans
ICWA DVD

• Why are tribes referred to as Nations?
• What makes Native American Children different from children of other ethnic groups?
• Why is cultural heritage important to ICWA?
What is unique about Indian Nations?

- They are sovereign nations
- They signed agreements called “treaties” with the US government
- ICWA gives Tribal Nations more authority over their children
What is different about Native American Children?

- They may not be citizens of the US, instead they may be wards of the state.
- They may belong to a sovereign Nation or Tribe.
- ICWA laws are designed to protect Indian children from being systematically removed from their family and community.
Why was ICWA needed?

Children were being systemically removed from their families; affects were

- Childhood trauma,
- Difficulty with relationships in adulthood,
- Loss of Indian traditions and language.
Native American Stereotypes

• Can you tell who is Native American by how they look?
• Can you tell who is Native American by their name?
• How can you tell who has Native heritage?
What does ICWA mean for caseworkers?

• Must determine affiliation with Native Tribes
• Record all information regarding inquiries, tribal contacts and responses
• Collaboration with Native Workers
ICWA

Tribal Social Worker can:

• Be the best resource for info
• Clarify current and future tribal legal involvement
• Identify tribal resources for child
• Identifying family members who may not live on the reservation.
How is lineage determined in Native American families?

• Tribes determine their membership.
• Membership may be determined by maternal or paternal lineage.
• Tribes need mother’s maiden name and father’s name in order to determine membership.
Tribal Notification

- Registered Mail/Return Receipt
- NICWA information in Reference Section
- New York State information on ICWA Desk Guide in the back of workbook
New York State Contact Information

Kim Thomas, Native American Affairs Specialist
NY State Office of Children and Family Services
Ph. (716) 847-3123
Email: Kim.Thomas@DFA.State.NY.US
ICWA Guidelines

Placement Preferences:
• First- Identify extended family
• Second- Identify Tribal family
• Third- Non-Native American family

Any placement must be approved by the tribe
• Adoptions may be over turned if not approved
Collaboration

Collaboration Points
• - Respect for Tribes
• - Know the Law
• - Timely notification
• - Work with Tribal SW
• - Active Efforts – ICWA
• - Include extended-extended family
Multiethnic Placement Act & ICWA

- No conflict
- Congress wrote MEPA to exclude Native American children
- Native Children are citizens of Sovereign Nations
Tribal Court

- Tribe has jurisdiction when child resides within a reservation.
- Tribe and State have concurrent jurisdiction when child resides off reservation and is not a ward of the tribal court.
- ASFA does not supersede ICWA.
Extended Family or Kin

- “Kin” can include aunts, uncles, cousins, older siblings and many other relatives.
- It can also include non-related “kin” such as godparents, family friends, or other interested parties.
- In many communities of color, kin are often called upon to care for children that have no blood relationship.
Mezzo Level

MACRO LEVEL

Community supports

MICRO LEVEL
Diversity Issues to Consider When Making Referrals

- Language barriers
- Dietary concerns
- Gender concerns
- Age
- Handicapping conditions
Questions when Considering Referral

• What supports does the family already have?
• What supports does the family need?
• What supports are culturally appropriate for this family or individual? (Considering race, ethnicity, education, gender, physical ability, language, etc.)
• Are the available resources able to meet the needs of this family?
• If not, how will the appropriate resources be obtained?
BARRIERS to INCLUSION

- When there is a court order to stay away
- When there has been domestic violence
- When there has been sexual abuse
- When the person was too ill to travel to the meeting
- When the person lives out-of-state
- When the person is a professional who can’t take time to attend
WAYS TO GET INPUT FROM THOSE WHO CANNOT ATTEND

- Letters
- Telephone contact, conference calls
- Proxy, taped message, video tape
Engaging Family Systems

Engaging family systems and community systems is beneficial to case planning. It helps to meet the requirements of:

• ICWA
• ASFA
• Grandparents Rights Law
Community Systems

Community systems provide support and challenges to the families we work with.

• Thinking of the case you brought, what support services does the family have?
• You will want to have these in mind when your planning FGC.
Apply to Case

Did the community organizations include any of the following?

• School
• Work
• Church
• Community organization
• Treatment or counseling services
Community Systems

- What supports does the family need?

- Are the needed services available?

- What are the barriers to obtaining needed services?
Extended Family

Extended family can be a resource. Thinking of the family in the case you brought:

• Who is in the extended family?
• What resources do they have?
• You will want to think about these resources when planning the FGC.
Apply to Case

Did you include any of the following family?

- Grandparents
- Aunts
- Uncles
- Clan or tribal contacts
- Any other kin?
Mezzo Level

The mezzo level includes:

• The extended family
• The clan or Tribe
• Community supports, agencies or organizations.
MEZZO-LEVEL

The Mezzo level is the “cushion” between the macro level forces and the family.