Module 2: A Framework for Practice

Objectives: The purpose of Module 2 is to:

(1) Teach the components of a framework for practice with families that is:
   a. Family-centered
   b. Culturally competent

(2) Teach the elements of family-centered casework, including:
   a. Tenets of family-centered casework
   b. Benefits of family-centered casework practice
   c. Address challenges to using family-centered practice
   d. Tools used in family-centered practice (i.e. eco-map)

(3) Teach the elements of cultural competency, including:
   a. Cultural diversity identification at three system levels
   b. The impact of cultural diversity on families and on casework practice

(4) Demonstrate:
   a. The application of the framework for practice
   b. The use of the eco-map

(5) Empower applicants to apply the framework to their practice using the eco-map.
One of the main goals of this training is to offer the knowledge, attitudes and skills that lead to a family-centered casework practice.

When thinking about family-centered practice, it is helpful to have a theoretical framework or basis for this approach to child welfare practice. For that, we turn to family systems and systems theory.

Systems theory is based on the idea that all elements of our environment impact who we are as individuals and families.

There are 3 levels we will look at in a family system, micro, mezzo and macro. These three levels are the “frame” of our framework for practice.

Another component of the framework is that culture affects the family system at each of the levels, micro, mezzo and macro.

Before we discuss the framework for practice, and how culture affects the family, let’s talk about family systems and family-centered casework practice.

Family systems theory is based on the idea that family systems:

- Are made up of family members
- Are nested in the larger systems of community and society.
- Have unique characteristics which may be perceived as strengths or challenges.
- Engage in “transactional relationships” with those both within and without the family system.
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### Family Centered Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Slide: Family-Centered Practice]</th>
<th>Family-centered casework practice is based in family systems theory; it shares many of the same beliefs. How many of you are familiar with family-systems theory or family-centered practice?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you think of when you hear the term “family-centered?”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Same concepts as child-centered, family focused</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Safety, permanency and well-being of children is first priority</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Family-as a unit-is the focus of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Slide: Why be family-centered?]</td>
<td>On page 8 of your workbook, you have a description of family-centered casework. Take a moment to read it.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are some reasons to be family-centered?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ Families are the primary means by which children are raised in our society.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ Families are our main source of social and economic support when we are young.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ Engaging the entire family system- parents, grandparents, that special neighbor or godparent-leverages all available resources for a child.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ Involving families in decision-making processes strengthens family ties and encourages on-going support for children.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ Helping parents be the best parents they can be is often our surest path to child safety.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ Using the eco-map is a non-threatening way to gather needed information from the family for use in filling out the FASP and other forms.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The eco-map is a tool used to organize this information. We will demonstrate the use of the eco-map a little later.</td>
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</table>
Now let’s return to the framework for practice. We will learn how the family-system and culture are related to the three levels of the framework, while demonstrating the use of the eco-map at each of the three levels.

The three levels we will look at using a family system are micro, mezzo and macro. These three levels are the “frame” of our framework for practice; we will begin with the Micro level.

[Slide: Micro Level] The **Micro Level includes** individuals, couples and members of a household. We will consider the individual first.

[Slide: The Individual] We each have individual characteristics that set us apart from our co-workers and friends. These include personality traits, physical traits, cultural, racial and ethnic identities, gender identity, sexual preference and many others.

**Intersectionality**

Is anyone familiar with the concept of “intersectionality?”

[Slide: Intersectionality] “Intersectionality” is a term used to describe the unique way that personal characteristics, such as age, sex, race and ethnicity intersect with each other in one individual.

We view these characteristics as fluid and flexible.

What are some examples of intersecting characteristics changing over time?

For example, a recent immigrant may strongly identify with their culture of origin, but in time come to identify more strongly with the culture of their new country. Another example, a battered woman who feels powerless while in a battering relationship may feel empowered and capable after receiving education and support.
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### Micro Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Slide: Intersectionality Activity]</td>
<td>Tell about yourself; include information from several categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Use Eco-map Poster]</td>
<td>I will demonstrate by telling my story. See if you can identify characteristics that intersect within me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Slide: Micro system – Individual and Family]</td>
<td>What are some of the characteristics that you heard in my story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Slide: Definitions of Family]</td>
<td>Each person in a family may share some characteristics with other family members such as race or economic status, but each one has characteristics that differ from others in the family, such as age and temperament.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Micro level: Family focus

- Each individual is unique in the way their personal characteristics and experiences come together. When we understand how the person views herself, it helps us better understand how to help.

- Are there any questions about “intersectionality?”

- Think about the individuals in the case you brought, what are some characteristics that intersect in those individuals?

- The Micro Level also includes family systems. We have learned that one focus of the Micro level is individual family members; now we will learn how the immediate family system is another focus of the Micro level.

- Now we are going to look at how families are defined, characteristics shared by the family and family sub-systems.

- Let’s take a moment to define: what is a family?
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Defining Families

**Family Structure**

[Slide: Family Structure]

| A family may consist of individuals who are related by blood, marriage or strong emotional ties to one another. They may live in one home or more than one home. |

The structure of the family reflects the size and shape of the family. It may be intergenerational, include foster children or be one-generation such as siblings raising siblings. Children may consider a non-related person who cares for them such as mother’s boyfriend as their parent. |

Ask: Let’s identify some examples of different family structures that you deal with in your practice:

- More than one generation living in the same household;
- Families with just a father and daughter
- Two parents and several children who are biologically related,
- Step-families, with or without half-siblings
- Childless couple

Think about the structure of the family in the case you brought. We will demonstrate how to map this later.

In addition to family structure, the **Micro level** is concerned with **Family Characteristics**. Family systems have unique characteristics that transact with systems at the community level and influence the individual members who comprise the family system. We learned about family characteristics in CORE training. On page 9 in your workbook is a list of family characteristics. Take a moment and review the family characteristics that are listed in your workbook. |

Think about the characteristics of the family in the case you brought. What are some of their family characteristics?

Jot down the characteristics that you think are most significant for this family.

How did you decide which ones to include?
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**Sub-systems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The choices we make about which characteristics we focus on are often influenced by our own attitudes, beliefs, training, and life experiences rather than what the family identifies as the problem. Listening to the family’s story and what they identify as the problem may result in better problem identification, better engagement of the family and more effective outcomes.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Sub-systems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Slide: Sub-systems]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have talked about how families have a variety of structures and characteristics. Now we will discuss the subsystems that are found within families. These subsystems may result from the physical structure of the family or from the emotional relationships within the family. Families are made up of many subsystems within the larger family unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Slide: Couples]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about the case you brought, what are some of the family subsystems you would want to note?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Parents of the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Parent and child who live together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you consider parents who live apart but have a child or children together?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents and couples are important subsystems and have a great impact on their children’s lives, and the quality of their relationship affects their children. In your workbook on pages 12 to 14 you have important information on couples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to work toward healthy relationships between parents. This can include modeling appropriate behavior and providing referrals to appropriate counseling resources.</td>
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</table>
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### Mezzo Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demonstrate how to map family sub-systems, family characteristics, family structure and strengths</th>
<th>Let’s map the family characteristics, family structure and the important sub-systems within the family. Be sure to note both strengths and challenges faced by the family. Feel free to use the diversity wheel to help identify strengths and characteristics. Process this activity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Mezzo System**

By noting both the families’ strengths and their challenges, we have gathered important information which we can later use to complete the FASP.

**[Slide: Mezzo Level]**

Next we are going to look at the Mezzo System.

The mezzo level includes the extended family and other systems and sources of support for the family, be it the child, the couple, or an individual parent.

The extended family can be an especially important source of support and resources for the family.

**Demonstrate mapping using examples from responses**

In the case you brought, what extended family members are resources for the family?

**[Slide: Mezzo Level: Community Supports]**

Families are nested in communities and interact with different community systems, such as school, work, the legal system, health agencies and the faith community. Community based systems are found at the **Mezzo Level**.

What are some of the systems within the community that interact with the family in the case you brought?

**Demonstrate mapping community systems**

- Educational systems, employment, social welfare agencies
- Health, legal systems,
- Immigration services,
- Faith Community
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Macro Level

We can think of families as one system nested in a larger system, within “society,” which provides a social, political, historical and cultural context for our development. Each of us is a product of our culture or cultures, and even though we may not agree with or accept everything from our culture or environment we are affected by it. This is known as the **Macro Level**.

What are some recent historical events that have an impact on our lives?

- War in Iraq
- (9/11)
- Katrina

Social norms are not event based like historical influences. They are part of our culture and times.

What are current social forces that have an affect on our lives?

- The price of gas
- The current political climate

We are also affected by larger social trends in ways that we probably don’t even realize. One trend for example, is owning a computer. Almost all professional communication is done by computer today, whereas a decade ago few people even owned a computer.

What social issues or social trends can you think of that affect the family in the case you brought? Jot down any historical events, social issues or trends that you believe might have impacted the family in the case you brought.

Social issues are mapped at the Macro level of the eco-map.
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Review of framework

[Slide: Framework for Practice]

Laminated Poster: Eco-Map

Trainer note: The purpose of this activity is to make the connection between the levels of the eco-map and the levels of the framework. It will help the participants learn how to apply information from the family to each level of the eco-map.

Activity

We have learned that the framework for practice is based on systems and family systems’ theories. The family system is nested in the community and the larger society. We heard that families have unique characteristics, structures and subsystems. And individuals have characteristics that intersect to make them unique. We learned that family systems interact with other systems that have their own culture and agenda. Culture as we learned earlier influences systems at every level of the environment.

When working with entire family systems, it is important to visualize the family and quickly identify its members, the transactional relationships between them, and the community supports and systems involved with the family. One tool to help accomplish this is the eco-map.

We have found that once you become familiar with family-mapping, it can be a handy tool to use in your practice.

You have been jotting down information about the family in the case that you brought today from each of the levels, -the Micro, Mezzo and Macro levels. I want you to put that information on the sticky pads that are coordinated to the color for Micro level, then the Mezzo level and finally the Macro level of the Framework. When you have completed a sticky note for each level, go stick it to the appropriate level on the eco-map that is hanging on the wall. Take a few minutes to identify information from each level and record it on the sticky notes.

If there are any questions I will be happy to answer them.

Which level made you think the least? Which one made you think the most? What did you learn from this activity?

Trainer note: When all the sticky notes have been posted process the activity.

Ask:
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Family Conferencing

We are now going to view a webcast called Family Group Conferencing: Bringing the Family into Family Centered Practice. This webcast was presented by the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Welfare on December 8, 2004.

Ask:

How many people are familiar with Family Group Conferencing or have participated through their work with Family Group Conferencing?

What do you believe is the purpose of Family Group Conferencing?

What has the Family Group Conferencing “looked like” when you were involved?

State:

In an effort to assist and support Child Welfare Practitioners in New York State to implement Family Group Conferencing into their casework practice, each Regional office has a Family Group Conferencing Trainer to train designated personnel in each agency on how to conduct family meetings.

Does anyone know the FGC trainer in your area?

While there are many models for Family Group Conferencing, this webcast focuses on one model that the state of Oregon, as well as other states and countries have implemented.

After we view the webcast we will talk about the key principles and elements of Family Group Conferencing.
Ask:

Be sure to elicit from group key principles (listed right)

[Slide: Principles of FGC]

Let’s talk about the components of Family Group Conferencing.

During the webcast, Dr. Karin Gunderson stated that this model of FGC was an “empowering system”, what do you think she meant by that?

- Family Centered- Family is decision maker, not an individual
- Strength Based- Assumes all families have strengths and builds on them.
- Collaborative
- Culturally Responsive and Competent
- Child Interest is Paramount-this is first and foremost
- Families know their Children Best - kids are best looked after in their own families
- Family is the Key Decision Maker at Every Step

What elements would have to be present in order for you to conduct a FGC in a successful, empowering manner?

- Family voluntarily participates
- Widest network of family are invited
- Family always has “private time” to meet and develop a plan
- Preparation of all parties before conference
- Plan is agreed to, if it meets SAFETY concerns
- Follow up and Support of the plan
Dr. Gunderson also spoke of the FGC consisting of a four part process:

1. The Referral- there is a decision to be made, not just “rubber stamping” a decision that has already been made.
2. Preparation Stage- families are fully informed and give fully informed consent, family leads meeting and safety is paramount.
3. The Meeting- information is given by professionals, the family is the decision maker.
4. Follow up- supporting and resourcing the plan.

We’ve talked about the key principles, the key elements, the four part process and the purpose of FGC; now let’s think about what the meeting would actually look like.

What do you think the “atmosphere” or the “environment” of the meeting should be?

1. Held in a neutral place, not in a home or agency;
2. Includes family members who could not attend via speaker phone or letter;
3. Consider any domestic violence issues or other safety concerns and plan accordingly to ensure safety of all participants;
4. Includes young people if appropriate;
5. Includes food;
6. Takes as long as the family needs {usually 4 to 6 hours.}

Dr. Gunderson also spoke of the meeting having three distinct phases:

Phase One: Information- this focuses on the present and future NOT the past

Phase Two: Private Family Time- family develops their plan

Phase Three: Presenting the Plan- plan is given to worker, if safety concerns are met, then plan is approved
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trainer spends time processing and acknowledging participants concerns. Some responses may be: difficult shift from professionally driven to family driven process; system challenges and negative beliefs, lack of follow through</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As we said before we viewed the FGC webcast, there are many different models of FGC; however, they share some universal principles and elements. We are now going to view a FGC model that is used in Washington State by the Organization of African American Children Services (OASIS). It is a model that speaks specifically to African American Culture and is based on Kwanza principles. This webcast is also was presented by Hunter College on December 8, 2004. As you view this webcast, think about the similarities and the differences to this FGC model versus the previous model and then we will discuss them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VIEW WEBCAST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were some of the similarities in this model and the previous FCG model? Be sure to elicit the following:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- safety of children is paramount and children’s voices are heard;
- family is the decision maker;
- strength based;
- participants consist of a wide net of family members and those close to the family;
- partners with family, community and agency work collaboratively; |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask:</th>
<th>What were some of the differences?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Elicit: structure of meetings- progressive series of 3 family engagement meetings; held in church or relatives home; centers around the African American culture</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were some of the unique elements of the African American culture that this FGC model was very responsive to?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Elicit that the “church is the village” in the African American culture and conducting the meetings 80% of the time at the church and 20% at grandmother’s home or a relative’s; speaks specifically to the Kwanza principles-many of which overlap with the Maori principles in the New Zealand FCG model.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask:</td>
<td>Did anything else in this webcast leave you with any feelings or thoughts?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[This section is optional depending on where the training is being held.]

State:

VIEW WEBCAST

| Ask: | We are going to view one last model of FGC. This model again is used in Washington State and has proven to be very impacting for working with Native American families. |
|      | Although there are differences with this model, there are still many consistent elements of this model to others we have already discussed, what are the consistent principles? |
|      | *Elicit that the families are the decision makers; FCG includes extended family and others; feeling of collaboration; safety is paramount, model is based on Native American culture.* |
|      | As we heard in the webcast, 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. We will be viewing a video later in the training that will provide you with historical information that clearly supports the necessity of the 1978 passage of ICWA.
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**State:**
Incorporating any FGC model into your casework practice also provides you with a framework to conduct your work in a family centered and culturally competent manner. These models also support the legislation, rules, regulations and mandates we are required to meet by providing structure and direction when working with families.

With the passage ASFA and Grandparent Rights provisions, we are required to identify extended family.

All of the FGC models that we just viewed emphasized the importance of “casting the widest net” in terms of who would be present at a FGC.

What are some of the benefits of involving a non-resident father or extended family with the service planning process?

- Elicit that fathers can be resources for emotional and financial assistance to the child, transportation, child care, father may have extended family who would want to be involved with the child; could result in a relative placement as opposed to foster care placement, etc.

- Often times “casting a wider net” can be extremely challenging for a caseworker.

- What are some of the challenges that you have encountered or think you may encounter with involving non-resident fathers or extended family in a FGC?

  - Allow participants to voice concerns

  - How have you or could you overcome some of these barriers?

  - Using the case you brought and the eco-map you have been working on with this case, who would you include in a Family group conference? If you are not going to include someone, how would you get their input?

  - Are there any questions regarding the framework or family case conferencing?

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**List on flipchart**

Be sure to mention domestic violence issues if the group doesn’t mention it

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  - Are there any questions regarding the framework or family case conferencing?