Module 3: The Mezzo Level

Objectives: The purpose of Module 3 is

1) To identify components of the mezzo level of the framework.

2) To have participants apply the mezzo level of the framework to casework practice.

3) To have participants identify strengths and challenges in using the mezzo level of the framework in their practice.
### Module 3: Mezzo Level

**Overview**

**Using the Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using the Framework</th>
<th>Now that you have a sense of this overall framework of practice, we’re going to apply it to the families you work with. We’re going to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Take <strong>a closer look</strong> at the Mezzo Level of the eco-system (indicate on eco-map);</td>
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<td>2. Talk about how the Mezzo level <strong>relates to the families</strong> we work with, and;</td>
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<td>3. Think about how a family’s information and stories at this level will help us gain greater knowledge to work <strong>more efficiently and effectively</strong> within our caseload.</td>
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<td>[Slide: Mezzo Level]</td>
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<td>First we will examine factors at the mezzo level which can either moderate or exacerbate the affect of the macro level on the family at the micro level, and look at how the framework is applied to the case you brought at the Mezzo level. The mezzo level is a <strong>cushion</strong> between the family and macro level forces.</td>
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<td>[Slide: Mezzo Level – Framework]</td>
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<td>For example, even though racism exists in our country, families who are surrounded by a supportive community with multiple resources maybe less affected than families with no supports or resources.</td>
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<td>[Slide: Mezzo Level: Cushion]</td>
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<td>At the Mezzo level, we are concerned with extended family, clan and tribal connections. We are also concerned with community supports such as school, work, helping agencies, organizations and institutions.</td>
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<td>[Slide: Community and Extended Family]</td>
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<td>First we will discuss the extended family, kin, clan and tribal connections; then we will engage in an activity to demonstrate mezzo level supports are used to support the family. We will also look at the challenges and benefits of involving extended family and community members.</td>
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<td>State:</td>
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<td>The mezzo level includes the extended family – such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, unrelated interested parties, such as godparents, or a parental figure such as a parent’s friend. When working with Native American or American Indian families, it is required to include the Clan or Tribe of the child.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Module 3: The Mezzo Level

### ICWA

[Slide: ICWA]

Because this Mezzo level is so important to Native American families we’re going to talk about the mandates for American Indian Children under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978, that differ from those of other ethnic groups.

[Slide: Boarding School Legacy]

Can I have a show of hands, how many of you are familiar with why ICWA came to be? Starting in 1878 with Lt. Pratt’s Carlisle School, Indian children were systemically removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools or with non-Indian families far away from their home and family.

[Slide: ICWA: How it came to be]

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.

**SHOW DVD: CHAPTER I HISTORY** (8 min.)

Watch the audience for reactions and emotional response to the video.

Process video making sure to elicit points on the right.

**TRAINERS NOTE:**

“ICWA: What Caseworkers Need to Know,” has 6 chapters that can be used together or individually; each runs approximately 8 minutes.

Chapter 1 of the DVD focuses on Native American tribal history in New York State. As you watch, keep in mind the following questions:

- What is unique about Indian Nations or tribes?
- What makes American Indian Children different from children from other ethnic groups?

About Indian Nations or Tribes

- They are sovereign nations
- They made agreements with the government in which the government was responsible to provide care for the Native people. ICWA gives Tribal Indian Nations more authority over their children and prevents their systematic removal.
Ask: What is different about Native American or American Indian Children?

- They are not citizens of the US
- They may belong to a sovereign Nation
- ICWA laws are designed to protect them from being systematically removed from their family and community

Relatives are determined by linage in Native American families?

- Clans are extended-extended family,
- Membership is often determined by maternal linage.
- However some tribes use paternal linage.

ICWA Guidelines

ICWA desk guides are available from OCFS, Native American Affairs Office

[Slide: ICWA Guidelines]

New York State has followed the Federal mandates requiring caseworkers to follow certain procedures regarding Indian children.

You have each received a desk guide published by OCFS that reiterates the main points of ICWA. Let’s take a moment to review them.

Placement Preferences:

- First - Identify extended family
- Second – Identify tribal family
- Third – Non-Native American family

Any placement must be approved by the tribe.

[Slide: New York State Contact Information]

Kim Thomas is the Native American Affairs Specialist for New York State Office of Children and Family Services. You have her contact information in the resource section of your workbook.

Are there any questions about ICWA?
### State:

ICWA is a good example of how political and social issues at the Macro level influence the community and family. We learned from the video that families benefit from being part of a larger community. This is true not only for Native American families, but families from many different ethnic groups.

ICWA recognizes the value and importance of extended family members in the life of a child and in the health of the couple relationship.

Extended family can help support parents in both emotional and practical ways. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, or other extended family can be a “cushion” between macro level stressors and couples. For example, grandparents may help with financial strains, or by giving sage advice. God parents or a parent’s friend may be a resource even though there is no blood or marital relationship.

Community based services can also be supportive and act as a cushion to between Macro pressures and families. For example, Centro Civico in Amsterdam, New York provides support and advocacy for Spanish speaking and other families in their area.

Cultural factors to keep in mind if you are helping a family build their mezzo level support include the following:

- Language barriers
- Dietary concerns
- Gender concerns (such as men in a parenting group for moms)
- Age
- Physical limitations

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**Trainer’s Note:** This information is a repeat of Module 2. If participants grasped concepts in Module 2 this section can be skipped.
Module 3: The Mezzo Level

Community Supports

In order to best meet the needs of families we must engage many systems in the change process.

Each organization is a system within a system. It is connected to the family and many other systems. Systems like individuals are influenced by social and political influences.

It is not easy to find the perfect service for every client. What are some roadblocks that you have run into? How did you get around them? What are other questions that come to mind at this level of the eco-system?

- What resources and support does the family already have?
- What resources or support does the family need?
- What resources and supports are culturally appropriate for this family or individual? (Considering race, ethnicity, education, gender, physical ability, language, etc.)

As we previously heard during the webcast, there are many individuals at the community and extended family level that can and should be included in Family Case Conferences.

The following activity will help us to identify who some of them are.

I will give an overview of the activity, and then we will do it step-by-step together.

Yarn Activity

[Slide: Yarn Activity]
I have cards with family and community members written on them. Everyone will represent someone. **This is not a role-play.** As I hand you the card, form a circle here (indicate).

When everyone has received a card and taken their place, I will read a case scenario. When you hear the name of person you are representing, raise your hand and the person holding this ball of yarn will toss it to you.

Take hold of the yarn. When the next person is mentioned, toss the ball to them.

**Participants pass yarn. The result is a criss-cross pattern in the middle of the circle.**

Clearly, it can be complicated when you have so many people involved. Imagine trying to get input from all of these people at different times.

Now I’ll demonstrate a different method.

I, as the case worker, invite each of you to meet with me in one large meeting early in case planning. As you can see, it is less confusing to have everyone joined in the circle at once, rather than trying share information individually with each one.

What did you learn from this activity?

What surprised you? How did it feel?

This is only one example of how a family-centered approach to casework practice can help you work efficiently towards child welfare outcomes to meet the requirements of ASFA, ICWA and the Grandparents Rights Law.

Having everyone sit down together facilitates communication and can help in the steps towards meeting the child welfare goals.
There are times when we cannot include all family members in the same meeting.

Ask: What reasons might it be inappropriate or impossible to include some family members?

- Court order to stay away
- Domestic violence
- Sexual abuse
- Illness
- When the person lives out-of-state

State: When the person is a professional who can’t take time to attend

Case Application

Ask: How might you get input from someone who has important information to contribute, but cannot be at the case conference?

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

There is not any one right answer to some of these questions. In contemplating who to include in family meetings, ask yourself if excluding a family member meets the needs of the family, or the needs of the caseworker.

Caseworkers are mandated to inform and investigate all family resources depending on family situation. New legislation identifies the importance and the rights of fathers, grandparents and other family members to be notified of child welfare proceedings.

Information about the mandate for notification of family members and the rights of grandparents is in your workbook.

Thinking about the case you brought, what are some support systems that the family already has in place? Take a minute and fill them in on your eco-map.

What are some support systems that need to be connected with the family? Take a minute and fill those in on your eco-map.
John and Maria Fuller were recently “Hot-lined” for leaving their ten year old daughter, Robin home alone. Maria’s mother and father, Lydia Perez and Miguel Perez, will occasionally watch Robin, but Maria and John don’t like to ask them very often due to Miguel’s poor health. John’s parents Ruth and George Fuller live nearby, but do not have much contact with John and Maria.

Robin stopped attending the after school program at the Community Center. Robin’s teacher, Mrs. Albert said that Robin’s grades have dropped since she stopped getting help from Mrs. Rodriquez, the after school program’s homework support person.

Robin meets with Mrs. Hanson, the school social worker to discuss feelings about not seeing her biological father, Tom Garner. Tom’s brother, Paul, and sister-in-law, Tina, are Robin’s godparents. Tina likes to take Robin shopping, and ice skating.

Maria has contacted Linda, her employment counselor to find training for a new job. John attends AA meetings almost everyday with his sponsor and meets with his probation officer, Mr. Harris weekly. While Maria attends Al-anon meetings, Robin meets with a children’s counselor, Amy.

John and Maria’s priest, Father McCullough is very supportive of the families in his parish and has often been there to help John and Maria with their family problems.

### Fuller Family and Community Supports

| 1. Mother – Maria Fuller                      | 2. Father – John Fuller                      |
| 3. Maria’s Mother – Lydia Perez              | 4. Maria’s dad – Miguel Perez               |
| 5. John’s Mother – Ruth Fuller               | 6. John’s father – George Fuller            |
| 13. Homework Support – Mrs. Rodriquez        | 14. AA Sponsor                              |
| 15. Robin’s counselor- Amy                   | 16. Father McCullough                       |
| 17. Robin                                   | 18. John’s P.O. - Mr. Harris                |