

## **Child Welfare Direct Worker Group Interview Protocol**

### **Group Interview Guidelines:**

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the group interview: To gather information about their experiences in their job and with their agency.
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: 1) the group interview is voluntary; 2) they can decline to answer any questions, and they can leave the group at any time; 3) the information will be held in confidence; 4) only evaluation staff will have access to the interview tape and interview data; and 5) group interview participants must not repeat what others have said outside of this group.
- Please remember to ask permission to tape record the interview. They can decline.
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin.

### **Background**

1. Let's begin with some introductions. Please give your name, what agency you work for, your position with that agency, # years with agency?
2. Have you heard of the [LOCAL SYSTEM OF CARE] initiative? What level of involvement have you had with it? For how long?
  - Do any of you participate on the SOC collaborative or other SOC work groups?
  - Have you been involved in implementing any of the changes that have been made through this effort? Which ones? How has that gone?

### **SOC Principles**

3. Now I'd like to turn to some questions about your agency. That is, I'd like to know whether your agency focuses on specific aspects of service delivery more than others and whether you as agency employees feel you receive the resources and support you need to do your job.

Several principles that are sometimes used to guide agency's actions include interagency collaboration, cultural competence, strengths-based approaches, community-based care, family involvement, and accountability. I'll describe each of these more as we go.

There are also several ways in which agencies demonstrate adherence to these principles: by communicating its importance to staff for both their interactions with clients and with others, by training staff and giving them other resources to

adhere to these principles, by rewarding staff whose actions reflect these principles, by using case planning protocols that reflect the principles.

By looking for signs of each of these principles at these different levels of the agency, we can get a sense of the level of emphasis the agency places on each principle. Some agencies will say that a principle is important, but not provide staff with the resources to implement it. For instance, they may tell staff that it is important to use a strengths-based approach but not provide training to do so; or they may emphasize accountability but staff may be too overworked to keep the MIS records up to date. Other agencies may say something's important and make sure their protocols and policies support it; for instance, by hiring staff reflective of the population being served.

- a. I'd like you to think about how much of an emphasis your agency places on each of these principles. Let's start with interagency collaboration (define).....

What level of importance would you say your agency places on interagency collaboration?

- In what ways does the agency emphasize interagency collaboration?
- In what aspects of the agency is it lacking?

**Probes:**

- Are there joint trainings across agencies? Any changes in the past year?
- Do caseworkers do joint case planning with other agencies? Any changes in the past year?
- Over the past year have YOU made any changes re: emphasis you place on collaboration with staff from other agencies?
- Have you seen any changes in the degree to which your agency emphasizes interagency collaboration in the past year?
- As a direct service worker, are there some things about your agency that make it easier to work with other agencies? Some things that make it harder?

- b. Moving on to cultural competence--First of all, how would you define cultural competence in the context of child welfare?

What level of emphasis does your agency put on being respectful of clients' and coworkers' cultures? Of providing culturally-appropriate services to clients?

- Where do you see signs that it's important?
- Where don't you?

**Probes:**

- Have you been trained on cultural competence? Please describe.
  - If so, was this training useful in your work? How?
  - Are the staff reflective of the community you serve?
  - Are staff considerate of their clients' cultural backgrounds in working with them and in service delivery?
- Have you seen any changes in the degree to which your agency emphasizes cultural competence in the past year?
  - As a direct service worker, are there some things about your agency that make it easier to be culturally competent with clients and other staff? Some things that make it harder?
- c. And family involvement? What level of emphasis does your agency put on involving families in decision making and case planning?
- What messages and actions are taken in your agencies to involve families in case planning or decision making?

**Probes:**

- Have you been trained on family involvement, or family-centered case practice? Please describe.
  - If so, was this training useful in your work? How?
  - Reflecting on the families that you have worked with, can you give some examples of how families are involved in case planning? Has this changed at all in the past year?
- Have you seen any changes in the degree to which your agency emphasizes family involvement in the past year?
  - As a direct service worker, are there some things about your agency that make it easier to involve families in case planning? Some things that make it harder?
- d. How about individualized, strengths-based approaches? What level of emphasis does your agency put on using strengths-based approaches with clients and coworkers?
- Which aspects of the agency reflect this principle?
  - Which do not?

**Probes:**

- Have you been trained on a strengths-based approach? Please describe.

- If so, was this training useful in your work? How?
  - Does the agency's assessment form include an assessment of strengths? Please describe.
  - Reflecting on the families that you have worked with, can you give some examples of how you incorporate strengths in your case planning? Has this changed at all in the past year?
- Have you seen any changes in the degree to which your agency emphasizes using strengths-based approaches in the past year?
  - As a direct service worker, are there some things about your agency that make it easier to use a strengths-based approach in your work? Some things that make it harder?
- e. Community-based services and care? What level of emphasis does the agency place on community based services?
- Which aspects of the agency reflect it and which do not?
  - How has this impacted your work with families?

**Probes:**

- Are staff informed of community resources? Is there a listing of available community-based resources and services by area of need (substance abuse, etc.)?
  - Do staff consider informal services that may be more culturally appropriate and involve families' community members (e.g., religious or cultural services and activities, assistance from friends and family)
- Have you seen any changes in the degree to which your agency emphasizes community-based services in the past year?
  - As a direct service worker, are there some things about your agency that make it easier to provide families with community-based services or care? Some things that make it harder?
- f. Accountability. What level of emphasis does your agency put on accountability?
- Which aspects of the agency reflect it and which do not?

**Probes:**

- Do supervisors use the data to identify strengths and needs in their units?
  - Do supervisors regularly share data with staff and elicit their input into the meaning of the findings?
  - Does the agency collect data that is useful to your work with families? Please describe.
  - What kind of data would be useful to you?
- Have you seen any changes in the degree to which your agency emphasizes the use of data in agency planning in the past year?
  - As a direct service worker, are there some things about your agency that make it easier to work with data and information systems? Some things that make it harder?
3. Are staff encouraged and rewarded for focusing on and implementing strategies designed to increase the use of SOC principles. Is any one principle focused on more than others?
- 4 Finally, in thinking about these six principles, what changes would you like to see your agency make to better serve children and families?

That's all of the questions I have for you – before we finish, do you have any for me?

## **Partner Agency Group Interview Protocol**

*Note about sampling:* Group interviews should include 3 representatives from three or four different partner agencies – including both provider agencies and other categorical systems (one option is to have two sets of group interviews – one for provider agencies and one for other categoricals). Either way, there needs to be a few representatives from each agency to get a sense of how the systems are working together and implementing the SOC principles.

### **Group Interview Guidelines:**

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: To gather information about their experiences working with <NAME> child welfare agency and the implementation of SOC principles in their community.
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: 1) The group interview is voluntary; 2) they can decline to answer any question, and they can leave the group at any time; 3) the information will be held in confidence; 4) only evaluation staff will have access to the interview tape and interview data; and 5) group interview participants must not repeat what others have said outside of this group.
- Please remember to ask permission to tape record the group interview. They can decline.
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin.

### **Background**

1. Let's begin with some introductions. Please give your name, what agency you work for, and your position within that agency?
2. Have you heard of <NAME OF SOC PROJECT>? What level of involvement have you had with it? For how long?
  - Do any of you participate on the SOC collaborative or other SOC work groups?
  - Have you been involved in implementing any of the changes that have been made through this effort? Which ones? How has that gone?

### **Contact with Child Welfare Agency**

3. Let's start by having each of you tell the group in what capacity you work how <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY>– for instance, are you a contracted provider of services for them, do you work with them when you serve the same children, do you attend joint trainings?
4. Given your experience, what do you think are <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY>'s strengths? What are your concerns about that agency?

#### INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

5. How well would you say that your agency and <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> collaborate?

##### **Examples to use as probes:**

- Do you feel that staff members in each agency understand each others' responsibilities, mandates, and challenges?
  - Do you work together when you serve the same family to avoid duplication of efforts and services and to minimize the number of case meetings a family has to go to?
  - Do you have joint trainings?
  - Do staff members from your two agencies know when the other agency is serving the same clients and know what services they are providing?
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- Have you seen any change in this collaboration in the past year? If so, in what ways? How has this affected your own work?
  - **Has your own agency changed in its emphasis on interagency collaboration? In what ways?**

#### CULTURAL COMPETENCE

6. Would you describe <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> as culturally competent? If so, why? If not, why not? (i.e., how are they defining cultural competence?).

##### **Examples to use as probes:**

- Are CW agency staff sensitive to clients' cultures?
  - Do they consider clients' cultural needs in case planning
  - Are the staff reflective of the clients they serve? Do they have enough staff who speak the client's language (e.g., Spanish)?
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- Have you seen any change in the cultural competence of <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> in the past year? If so, in what ways?
    - Any joint trainings on cultural competence in the past year?

- How do the cultural practices of <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> affect your own work? If so, in what ways?
- **Has your own agency changed in its emphasis on cultural competence? In what ways?**
  - Are staff sensitive to clients' cultures?
  - Do they consider clients' cultural needs in case planning
  - Are the staff reflective of the clients they serve? Do they have enough staff who speak the client's language (e.g., Spanish)?

**Probe for provider agencies ONLY:**

- Does <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> require your staff to provide culturally competent care? If so, in what ways do they require this?
- Do staff in your agency follow it?
- Is it enforced?

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

7. In your experience, does <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> involve families in decision-making in a meaningful way? What have you seen that makes you feel that way?

**Examples for probes:**

- What role do families play in case planning?
- Are families respected and treated like partners?
- Do you know if families sit on the SOC collaborative body?
- Do families assist in any child welfare and related trainings?
- Have you seen any changes in the way that <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> treats families in the past year? If so, in what way?
- Has the way that <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> treats families affected your own work? If so, in what ways?
- **Has your own agency changed its emphasis on family involvement?**
  - What role do families play in case planning?
  - Are families respected and treated like partners?

**Probe for provider agencies ONLY:**

- Does <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> require your staff to involve families in a meaningful way? If so, in what ways do they require this?
- Do staff in your agency follow this?
- Is it enforced?

## INDIVIDUALIZED, STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

8. What about using strengths-based approaches? In your experience, does <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> take a strengths-based approach toward its families? What have you seen that makes you feel this way?

### **Examples for probes:**

- Do caseworkers focus on families' successes rather than their failures?
  - Do caseworkers assess family strengths and build on them in case planning?
  - How do they assess family strengths (name of instrument)?
- Have you seen any changes in the focus on strengths within <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> in the past year? If so, in what way?
  - Has <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY>'s level of emphasis on strengths vs. deficits affected your own work? If so, in what ways?
  - **Has your own agency changed its emphasis on individualized, strengths-based care? In what ways?**
    - Do staff members focus on families' successes rather than their failures?
    - Do staff members assess family strengths and build on them in service planning?
    - How do they assess family strengths (name of instrument)?

### **Probe for provider agencies ONLY:**

- Does <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> require your staff to use a strengths-based approach? If so, in what ways do they require this?
  - Do staff in your agency follow this?
  - Is it enforced?
9. How about offering community-based care? Do you feel that you can comment on the degree to which <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> makes every effort to serve children and families in their own communities?

- What level of commitment to providing community-based care have you seen in working with <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY>?
- Have you seen any changes in the emphasis on community-based care within <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> in the past year? If so, in what way? (e.g., increased identification and use of informal supports; expansion of services?)
- Has <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY>'s level of emphasis on community-based care affected your own work? If so, in what ways?
- **Has your own agency changed its emphasis on community-based care? (Examples? e.g., increased identification and use of informal supports; expansion of services?)**

**Probe for provider agencies ONLY:**

- Does <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> require your staff to serve children within their own communities? If so, in what ways do they require this?
- Do staff in your agency follow this?
- Is it enforced?

ACCOUNTABILITY

10. Can you describe the extent to which <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> utilizes data to monitor the effectiveness of services?
- Have you seen any changes in the emphasis on quality assurance, or monitoring of practices to assess impact within <NAME OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY> in the past year? If so, in what way?
  - **Has your own agency changed its emphasis on accountability (that is, data is increasingly used to assess the impact of agency policies and practices?)**

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

11. How would you define a System of Care?
12. Has [INSERT SITE NAME] been successful in establishing a System of Care? Why or why not?

13. How useful have the SOC principles been for your work with families?

14. That completes the questions I have for you. Before I leave, are there any parting thoughts or questions you'd like to share about the topics we've discussed here today?