



SBC New York

Newsletter

A quarterly newsletter by New York's champions of Solution Based Casework.

- Administration for Children's Services
- Bronxworks
- Catholic Guardian
- Child Center of New York
- SCO Family of Services
- Forestdale
- Good Shepherd Services
- Graham Windham
- Heartshare / St. Vincent's
- Lower East Side Family Union
- Mercy First
- Sheltering Arms



"Sometimes the simple things are the most radical".

Milestone2

Spring/Summer 2015

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Thoughts on Milestone 2: *Co-developing Outcomes*

Case planning is at the heart of casework, both successful and ineffective casework. Like any other profession, careful planning and purposeful implementation will usually result in a quality product. Also like other professions, lack of planning or lackadaisical implementation will usually result in a poor outcome. Using an analogy outside of our field but still relevant, few people would engage an attorney that did not plan a careful trial strategy before entering the courtroom. Even if the attorney was very experienced, few clients would say "just shoot from the hip and we'll see how it goes". If the attorney complained, "I hate all that paperwork, its not really important", would you as client be impressed? Change these scenarios to another profession like a physician or an airplane pilot and our attitudes about the importance of careful planning and detailed implementation is even more compelling. Effective child protection casework decisions often involve equally important issues of personal safety and well-being, i.e. the removal or return of children, the termination of parental rights, or the care of medically fragile infants. Casework planning requires a professional commitment to thoughtful planning and detailed implementation of defined and measurable goals.

What you will read about in this edition of SBC NEW YORK are the highly professional efforts of the agencies that are part of the SBC NYC Collaboration. Each agency has made "best practice" a system wide decision, and working hard to realize their goals of an all SBC Certified staff. Each agency will review their progress on establishing the importance of specific and measurable outcomes tied directly to the safety concerns of the case. Their contributions to the NYC system are evident, and I am proud to be associated with them.



SCO Family of Services

A message from Lydia Ferrer.

When conducting an SBC Initial Training course, I always use a personal example of running track in high school when teaching about Milestone 2: Building Outcomes. I was always terrible at the Cross Country races, but excelled in the sprints and middle distance races. I realized it was because in Cross Country I was running through the backwoods of Pennsylvania, with no end in my line of vision. Midrace I would lose momentum because I didn't feel like the race would ever end. But running in the sprints, where I was able to see that beautiful finish line 100 meters away gave me that extra boost I needed to win.

In my experience, I find that the families we serve often feel the same way in relation to navigating the child welfare system. Having your child taken from your home and being placed into foster care can prove to be overwhelming and seem never ending. It becomes daunting for families to know what the end of the process will look like, let alone to remain steadfast to get there. Outcomes serve as the "finish line" for families. They are statements that the family can take ownership of and push forward to achieve. It is a statement saying that once a family is using a plan to safely achieve whatever developmental task they are struggling in, and the individual is using a plan to manage their high risk behavior, we no longer need to be in their lives, letting the family know that there can indeed be an end to child welfare intervention. It is for this reason, that I feel that while Milestone 2 may be the shortest process, it proves to be one of the most valuable tools in case planning, and collaboration with the families we serve.

Anyone with experience in Foster Care knows that the longer a case remains open and a child remains in care, the more problems begin to arise on that case. It is easy for a worker's attention to be diverted with lower priority concerns (immigration status, housing, Medicaid) and in turn, lose focus

on the issues imminently affecting the safety of the child. Co-creating clear set Outcomes, on both a Family Level and Individual Level upfront, provides both the family and planning agency with a marker of 1) Why the case is open, 2) What the safety factors are keeping the child(ren) in care and 3) When it is safe and appropriate to return the child(ren) home and close the case.



SCO Internal SBC Initial Staff Training

Co Creating Outcomes is also useful to workers inheriting cases. Sandy Rose, one of our Foster Care Case Planners had this to say: "Outcomes provide us with a baseline of what has to be done to make the child(ren) safe. It makes my job easier when I get a case that has clear outcomes that have already been established with the family. It allows me to jump right in, instead of having to start all over. This way the family is not too affected by a worker change, and I immediately know what to work on with that family. "

If you are a visual learner, like me, being able to open a case record and see a concise statement

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telling you the “Who, What and Why” of a case, coupled with a Family Agreement, is invaluable. Not affording the families we serve with purposeful and finite work can leave them and the case planner feel like they are simply “running through the woods.”

-Lydia Ferrer, SBC Coordinator
SCO Family of Services



SCO Internal SBC Initial Staff Training
Held in March 2015

SCO Family of Services continues to make strides in the “2015 YEAR OF CERTIFICATION.” We have excitedly adopted the new 2.0 certification method and are busy getting our coaches and

supervisors familiar with the new database. We have also begun to hold our first supervisor seminars for our foster care and preventive programs. SCO projects hope to have 25 supervisors certified by the close of 2015 using the 2.0 method. SCO currently has 2 certified trainers and an additional employee engaged in the TOT process. We have begun working concurrently to plan for innovative ways to sustain the model throughout the agency. We are looking to begin a “shadowing” program in which new workers shadow SBC certified workers to learn SBC skills first hand. We continue to strive toward full implementation and fidelity of the Solution Based Casework practice throughout our foster care and preventive programs at SCO.

Tiffany Cunha has worked with the Preventive Program at Forestdale for approximately one year. Ms. Cunha was trained in the SBC model in July, 2014. She has been supported and encouraged in the use of the SBC model. Ms. Cunha is intelligent, energetic, dedicated, and pragmatic in her approach to her work. Thus, it is no surprise that she immersed herself in the SBC model. Ms. Cunha did not have to participate in the first round of the SBC certification process, however, she wanted to. It is, equally, no surprise that she was successful.

When did you first learn about Solution Based Casework? As you started w practice the milestones and skills, how did you notice your work changing?

I learned about SBC when I became an employee at Forestdale. Before then I had briefly heard the term in Social Work school but was able to get fully trained and understand SBC when coming to Forestdale. I noticed that my work became more focused, it was easier to create goals with the family and with the help of the family agreement I had clear steps and points to address with the family.

Describe how SBC is changing your relationships with clients, your colleagues, and your supervisor.

I feel that the role of the case worker becomes clearer when doing SBC with the families. They are better able to understand what the goals are and what the focus of preventive services are with the families. I find the objectives help pinpoint the issues in the family and guide working with families towards resolving those issues.

Congratulations on getting certified in SBC. What did you learn through that process? And what suggestions can you offers offer staff member who are preparing for certification?

Through the certification process I learned a more thorough and intensive model of working with families. I learned that when consensus is built with a family and objectives are determined the goals become clearer and the family is more aware of what needs to be done and where the case is going. I suggest to other staff members that they begin the process by getting to know the family. Don't go in there and ask 20 questions expecting the family to divulge everything right off the bat. Give yourself time to learn about the family and get to know the family and it will get to a point that you may not need questions you

may find the exceptions and strengths just by being in the moment with the client and using your attentive listening skills. Don't focus so much on filling out the paperwork and making sure you get consensus and an FLO on the first visit. It may take 3 or 4 visits but you will build a better relationship with the family and get better results.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on Milestone 2. As families are engaged, we work with them to establish a consensus. Can you talk about the approaches you're taking to help families identify the changes they want to make?

I let the family tell me what they need and then I use the FLO and ILO chart to give it a name. For example if a family tells me "Joey keeps going late to school and is failing 3 classes" then I know the issue is "educational success for Joey." I listen attentively then when the family and I have consensus on what the issue is. I give them the SBC term and explain it to them. For me, it's all about letting the family explain. With the help of SBC I guide the family and help them create goals and a plan of action.

Your colleagues at Forestdale are encouraged to see that you're succeeding in efforts to practice in ways that reflects the values of SBC. What does it mean to you to be doing the important work you're doing as a case planner?

I have always said and strongly believe that social work is a calling not a career. Even though with this job comes a tremendous amount of stress and responsibility which is a constant struggle, at the end of the day if I helped one family get out of the system, if I helped one family succeed I have made a difference in the world. That is my life motto. "Wherever there is a human in need, there is an opportunity for kindness and to make a difference."- Kevin Heath CEO More4kids

Good Shepherd Services is currently in the full implementation stage and exploring ways to strengthen the implementation of Solution Based Casework as its casework practice model. On average, new case planning staff participate in SBC Initial Training within 3 – 4 months of being hired. New Supervisors participate in SBC Supervisor Training also within the same time frame. In addition, all staff receive skills-based trainings throughout the year to reinforce the 4 SBC Milestones and the skills needed to execute the work. At GSS, SBC is being implemented in 3 of its child welfare divisions, Foster Care, Prevention and Juvenile Justice. Each division receives tailored coaching sessions from the SBC Coordinator, geared to meet program needs, on a consistent basis. To coordinate all of these moving pieces, an SBC Implementation Team was created. It meets twice a month to discuss implementation efforts, policy and practice, program culture shifts, certification, model fidelity and sustainability. The team includes the SBC Coordinator, Deputy Director of Program Evaluation and Planning and the Division Directors of programs implementing SBC. The leadership and commitment

of this team, to ensure that model implementation is proceeding as planned, has been extremely crucial to the growth of SBC implementation and certification. As the conversation shifts to sustainability, their role will become that much more vital.

Advances in Certification:

Good Shepherd Services started its first round of SBC Certification in March 2014. As of April 2015, GSS has completed 4 rounds of certification and certified a total of 56 staff (36 Case Planners, 13 Supervisors and 7 Coaches). In late February 2015, a Certification Celebration was held in honor of the 25 staff who achieved SBC Certification in Round 3. The event began with music, a slideshow and an ice cream social where the honorees, their supervisors, division directors and a few Assistant Executive Directors gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of staff. The event culminated with the presentation of certificates and a group photo to commemorate the event.

April SBC Coordinator meeting hosted by Good Shepard Services.

All agencies were present for a discussion on SBC training and certification.



Graham Windham

An Update

Since beginning implementation of SBC on Valentine's Day (2011), Graham Windham has been able to assist 87 planners and 28 supervisors in achieving SBC Certification!! Currently we have 33 planners and 6 supervisors in varying stages of certification. In the last couple of certification rounds, we have had several planners that were able to hit a home-run and achieve certification in their 1st round!! Those planners came from varying programs within the organization: Marie Wyatt (foster care), Wadia John (preventive), Kaya Ceci (preventive) and La-Tisha Smith (family treatment foster care). A special thanks to their supervisors, Shaniece McKenzie, Banabas Awedoba, Tyi Maisha Ellis, and Ashley Aplin in the support and guidance as they learned and practiced new skills!!

At this phase of implementation, Graham Windham's focus is on continuing to support new staff as they are introduced to SBC and existing staff who have achieved certification in attempts to ensure sustainability. As such, In January 2015, Graham

Windham launched its first ever pre-service training innovative for all newly hired planners and supervisors. This includes, two weeks of intensive training, including NYC SBC Initial training, Safety/Risk, Documentation, Mindful Practice, and Trauma Stewardship. During this time, new hires are not assigned a caseload and are provided three opportunities to shadow new hire "Buddies". Buddies are SBC certified planners/supervisors that showed strong performance in their Employee Evaluation System. The Buddies have volunteered to provide shadowing experiences; as well as provide a progress note for the case contact for use in the Documentation Training. We are also in the process of developing advanced SBC skill based training in areas that many planners and supervisors struggle. Graham Windham is excited to assess the impact of pre-service training/skill based training, and ongoing coaching, on SBC practice/sustainability and staff retention. In the coming year, we will focus on supervisors and supporting their learning/teaching of SBC as an integral part of supervision.

Catholic Guardian Services

Full Implementation

Catholic Guardian Services is now in the "Full Implementation" stage. We are preparing for certification and sustainability. New staff members are routinely trained within their first month of employment. Understanding the "bell curve" in learning a new model, staff is provided booster sessions to address specific areas or skill sets within the model where they are experiencing difficulties. The agencies Implementation team continues their monthly meetings with discussions focused on

identifying and addressing staff needs. In addition Coaches are meeting monthly with the SBC coordinator to continue discussions on developing issues and concerns regarding "work products" and practice. Coaches then attend the mandatory "Supervisor's Seminars" which also meet monthly. At those meetings, the discussion is focused on proficiency in "Work Products" and assuring model fidelity and adherence.

Lower East Side Family Union

An Update

Lower East Side Family Union (LESFU) is steadily moving forward towards SBC Certification using the 2.0 system. As with many of the other agencies, dealing with transitions and competing priorities is always a challenge to the day to day work. Despite this, we have remained invested in SBC implementation and certification. Most recently, we have been focusing on four Case Planners who have been identified for the certification process using the new system. With Jessica and Sherri, we shared our agency's action plan for certification and continue

to familiarize ourselves with 2.0. We have created internal systems to support our efforts, including managing SBC work products.

In addition, we are looking forward to our first Supervisory Seminar on April 27th. With the process being more streamlined, and as a smaller agency, we anticipate achieving certification by using all available resources and supports. Overall, we are optimistic about the steps we are taking, and will continue to get us closer to our goal.

Mercy First

An Update

As case planners embark on milestone 2 with families, they become more tenuous about their skills and the level of commitment they will receive from clients. One such worker expressed his ambivalence and was reminded by his supervisor that his child welfare experience and skills around partnering with families will get him through. He found that role play in supervision as well as modeling were instrumental in him focusing on the tasks at hand, as well as knowing that if it all does not “go well” he will have other opportunities to try/practice again.

“Don’t rush the process” is a term I have repeatedly heard from staff who have demonstrated a commitment to SBC implementation. This is not just a “one shot deal. The family has to be comfortable and trust you before they will identify/commit to family and individual level outcomes”. Case planners seem to get hung up on using the language from the initial training manual, instead of thinking practically. Staff therefore become anxious and subsequently gets in their own way. Therefore, please save the SBC phrasing for consultation and supervision, use every

day language that families can easily understand. For example; based on what we have been talking about that is not working for you or your family, what do you want to change to make your situation better?

Case planners report that it is extremely helpful when supervisors provide an opportunity for them to debrief after they have met with a family. Furthermore, providing supports (examples, walking them through expectations/recommendations regarding the next steps) and reinforcing the tasks/steps of each milestone (e.g. **Milestone 2**; moving from verbal discussions to more specific actions around long-term safety, and ensuring that families are co-creators of the **Family Agreement**) as they practice in the field are key to the improvement of their skills sets.

MercyFirst is committed to helping staff stay focused on the strategic development of their skills which we know will result in improve outcomes for children and their families. Furthermore, noticing signs of growth and celebrating change is a responsibility shared throughout the agency, and applies to our youth, their families and **staff!**

Staff Working on Implementation of Solution Based Casework



Norma Forde
Hilda St. Catherine
Shanna Gonzalez
Felice Henderson
Lydia King
Gillian Hudson
Rosaly Chernofsky



Evelyn Pedraza
Ieysha Witherspoon
Susan Gordon
Rosaly Chernofsky



Marie Semexant
Jami Unger
Kim Nolan
Justine Brown
Alaiza Tapia
Sherry Brumel
Rene Taylor
Maria Pena

Sheltering Arms

An Update

Staff at Sheltering Arms has been more receptive to the new 2.0 SBC certification system, and is encouraged by the step by the step, partialized certification process. Most indicate that the various work products are presented in a more organized manner, more streamlined and achievable.

A time line has been developed projecting that in another 6 months, over 75% of case planners should be certified. Currently, staff is working diligently to complete tasks for Milestone 1, and is preparing to move on to Milestone 2. Staff continues to use the SBC language, in their everyday casework activities; effectively empower their families, and motivate them towards permanency. One positive feedback has to do with using the process to feature areas of change within families, and to engender empathy for birth parents and families.

We are excited to continue this process of engaging our birth families in outcomes that promote safety and well being for our children.

Senior case planners, Kathryn Hall, left, and Peta-Gaye Woodbine, are charged with the function of supporting case planners in all aspects of SBC, primarily in the area of individual and group training. Their efforts have proven to be invaluable, and the positive feedback from staff is encouraging.



Senior Case Planners:
Kathryn Hall
Peta-Gaye Woodbine