



SBC NEW YORK!



Quarterly

**Volume 1, Issue 1
Summer 2014
Celebrating our first issue!**

Made possible with the generous support of the Tiger Foundation!

IN THIS ISSUE:

Celebrating our Families	2
Solution Based Casework: Foster Care Staff Adopt s Practice Model	3
Mock Record Reviews	4
In Service to Our Children and Families: A Paradigm Shift	7
Social Work and Solution Based Casework	8

AND MUCH MORE!

Pictured above: Good Shepherd Services recently hosted an initial training on SBC. In the image above, case planners from local agencies practice tracking, searching for exceptions, and other skills that help reach consensus with families

Looking Back and Moving Forward: Solution Based Casework in New York City

Recently, NYC Implementation Manager Jessica Davis Godwin sat down with Jeff Steen to provide a brief history of SBC in New York City and to offer a few suggestions for agencies that are implementing the model. Here's an excerpt from this discussion.

Jeff Steen: Describe, as you've come to experience it, Solution Based Casework.

Jessica Davis Godwin: I was fortunate to have learned Solution Based Casework when I was working at Graham Windham, at their residential campus. That

was about three and a half years ago. And what I could see was that it was essential for programs that were in the everyday life of their operations focusing on the youth in the families. It gave them a framework to engage their larger care network, including their family of origin. So I could see the potential to be effective both in residential and foster care while having a much easier fit in prevention where kids were already in the family.

Continued on page 5





Celebrating our Families: Innovative Practices

Marie Dunn

In the spirit of Solution Based Casework, agencies committed to partnering with families and with each other include the following:

Graham Windham
(since 2011)

<http://www.graham-windham.org/>

Good Shepherd Services
(since 2012)

<http://www.goodshepherds.org/>

SCO Inc.
(since 2012)

<http://sco.org/>

Episcopal Social Services
(since 2012)

<http://www.essnyc.org/>

Forestdale Inc.
(since 2012)

<http://www.forestdaleinc.org/>

Administration for Children's Services, FSU (since 2013)

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/>

Lower East Side Family Union (since 2013)

<http://lesfu.org/>

MercyFirst
(since 2013)

<http://www.mercyfirst.org/>

Catholic Guardian Services (since 2013)

<http://www.catholicguardian.org/>

Child Center of New York (since 2014)

<http://www.childcenterny.org/>

BronxWorks
(since 2014)

<http://bronxworks.org/>

HeartShare St. Vincent's
(since 2014)

<http://www.heartshare.org/>

Normalizing is one of the key components of Solution Based Casework Practice. As a result it was evident after tracking the series of events that some of Graham Windham's staff were uncertain about making shifts in the way they do practice. In essence, this was normal human behavior on a universal level. Brazilian lyricist and novelist Paulo Coelho penned, "When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change; at such a moment, there is no point in pretending that nothing has happened or in saying that we are not yet ready. The challenge will not wait. Life does not look back. A week is more than enough time for us to decide whether or

not to accept our destiny." This quote embodies the introduction of Solution-Based Casework (SBC) Practice to Graham Windham Foster Care Agency. SBC was indeed a challenge and an opportunity for staff as well as families at Graham Windham. Furthermore, understanding the key concepts and skills of SBC while focusing on Graham Windham's mission was an integral part of the implementation process. This helped to foster a positive relationship and partnership between staff, families, and caregivers. SBC quickly became the new "lens" that Staff utilized to view the families that they work with. Consequently, in order to demonstrate positive

behavior change Graham Windham's staff developed a specific and smart plan; "Celebrating Families Monthly" to ensure that we acknowledge our family's progress. This plan was co-created by Graham-Windham's Family Permanency Planning Unit FB9 to celebrate the success and accomplishments of our families.

Continued on page 6



Graham Windham staff Marie Dunn and Ruby Reaves with the Vera family

Solution Based Casework: Foster Care Staff Adopt a Practice Model

Catholic Guardian Services launched Solution Based Casework in our Foster Boarding Home, Residential Care, and Treatment Family Foster Care programs. This selection marks the first time the agency has adopted a unified casework practice model. Adopting the model is part of the agency's overall commitment to improving the quality of service to clients.

SBC implementation is taking place in two phases: first is the Case Consultation Phase and the second is the Casework Applications phase. During the first phase, case consultations are held weekly between caseworkers and supervisors. Also, coaches consult with supervisor's bi-weekly and have "coaching calls" with the developer. The second phase, Case Applications, started when caseworkers were assigned designated SBC cases and started applying related skills. In the near future, it is anticipated that Supervisors will have developed skills needed to help Caseworkers ultimately become certified as SBC practitioners.

Training began in October 2013, with all staff participating in a 2 ½ day training provided by a certified SBC trainer. All four milestones of the model were covered, in addition to addressing the

importance of using a genogram throughout the development of a case to identify family members and support systems. The next series of training was for Supervisors and was provided by the model developer, Dr. Dana Christensen. Since then, the agency has developed a variety of initiatives to promote utilization of the principles and skills of SBC.

Transitioning to a new model of case management can be uniquely challenging for all involved. The agency has created internal and external workgroups made up of program supervisory staff and agency administrators to address critical implementation and practice concerns, including certification, training, research and documentation.

This article is reprinted from the Spring 2014 newsletter of the Center for Evidence Based Implementation and Research at CGS

Curtis Still is Director of Program Development with the Center for Evidence Based Implementation and Research at CGS and can be reached at cstill@catholicguardian.org



Staff at Catholic Guardian Services discuss family level outcomes at a recent case consultation



Mock Record Reviews and SBC Implementation Sharon Dillon

MercyFirst staff was initially trained in Solution Based Casework in Fall 2013. Since then we have implemented the model across all programs: Therapeutic Family Foster Care, Family Foster care, Residential and Preventive Services.

Although the implementation process has been challenging, we have tentatively scheduled our first certification round for late summer. A Mock Case Record Review with Jessica Godwin, the NYC SBC Implementation Manager, was arranged for June to ensure case reviewers rate with fidelity. The entire process was 3 ½ hours, extremely informative, and time well spent. Our review team, as recommended by SBC, consisted of program directors—our coaches—the SBC Coordinator, and QI staff, totaling nine participants.

The process began with us individually reading a selected case while together, utilizing the SBC Certification Assessment for Case Planners Case Record Review Guide to rate the documentation and provide rationales for our scoring. The real work began with our discussion around rating selection and the evidence supporting our decisions. Jessica provided valuable feedback regarding specific questions and we had the opportunity to debate and receive clarity. We found helpful reviewing the questions and specifically indicating where they were or were not documented, including in progress notes, FASPs, genogram, Family Agreements, and Action Plans. There were several of us whose ratings

were either too high or too low and in reviewing our decisions came away with clarity, the need to be more in the middle, and ensure that we can adequately provide rationale to support our decisions.

This hands-on process was extremely helpful and will prove beneficial; therefore it is our recommendation that the Mock Case Review be provided to case review staff as well as supervisors earlier on in the implementation process. SBC agencies may be well served in receiving the Mock Case Review about 4 months after the initial training, when case planners are beginning to work with their first actual cases. This valuable training will provide clarity to coaches and supervisors, and information utilized to provide support and training to case planners. As part of this process agencies should then also conduct their own mock reviews of case records to help establish their team's inter-rater reliability. Follow-ups with staff after the mock reviews are key to ensure there is a feedback loop. Ultimately, the Mock Review will enhance skills and answer many lingering questions regarding implementation and subsequent documentation.

Sharon Dillon is Director of Coordination and Implementation of Evidence Based Models at MercyFirst and can be reached at sdillon@mercyfirst.org



Continued from page 1
After I left Graham Windham I had the opportunity to coach and support the management of the implementation of SBC at SCO in their foster care and prevention services and also at Good Shepherd for their first year of implementation. So I was integrally involved with those two agencies' implementation processes as a consultant, working alongside Dana and in a very hands-on way: going to all their field offices, meeting all their managers and supervisors and many of their case planners.

From there, two years ago, it really took off, and a lot of my time became training with Dana and bringing in some of the SBC coordinators from Washington state who had several years of experience under their belt, broadening Solution Based Casework in

New York City to other agencies like Episcopal, Forestdale, and Lower East Side Family Union, then Catholic Guardian and MercyFirst. In the middle of last year, before implementing at Lower East Side Family Union, Dana and I trained all the managers at all five boroughs of the Family Services Unit at ACS. And so the implementation in New York City has grown leaps and bounds as ACS has also adopted other evidence based interventions. So the science of implementation and the awareness of the complexities of implementation have grown in agencies in New York City simultaneous to implementing SBC, so that's been supportive of implementing SBC. Most recently, Child Center of New York, BronxWorks, and Heartshare St. Vincent's adopted SBC.

Jeff Steen: What kinds of feedback might you want to offer agencies at this point in the implementation process?

There are many shifts occurring in how services are delivered in New York City. What might you like to say at this stage in this process?

Jessica Davis Godwin: I'd

like to remind agencies to continue and regularly have implementation meetings. I encourage them to meet with me and/or other implementation teams quarterly or semiannually to see what's working at other agencies and what they're doing well and where they can improve. I would remind them that supervisors are the engine of change, and looking at supporting their supervisors in using SBC in supervision, using SBC in case management and in as many cases as possible or in all cases is essential. So using those supervisors to drive supervision in the SBC framework will help agencies meet their outcomes, both to retain and support staff and to help their kids and families.

In the next issue of the newsletter, she will discuss SBC implementation processes, offering recommendations on how agencies can most successfully bring about and maintain change in their practices.

Jessica Davis Godwin is NYC SBC Implementation Manager and can be reached at jdavisgodwin@gmail.com

Continued from page 2

On April 25, 2014, FB9 took the opportunity to recognize Birth Parents and Foster Parents. Case Planners Nicole Robinson and Ruby Reaves made this possible when they collaborated with their supervisor and developed a partnership. The plan was measurable and specific. Several families were celebrated for their outstanding progress.

Just to name a few of our families' recent accomplishments: Mr. Edson Vera (non-respondent on the case) developed a partnership with his case planner Ruby Reaves, and named his plan *"I don't have nothing to do with this case plan."* He was successful in having his two sons Zion and Aden Vera return to his care via trial discharge. Mr. Cory Ragland worked diligently with his case planner Nichole Robinson and developed his plan *"Family Time Plan"* and eventually his two children Tymel and Tyquashia Ragland were both trial discharged to him on March 17, 2014. Mr. Delron Bryant successfully completed a Parenting Skills Program, and demonstrated learned behavior changes which were apparent in the manner in which he interacted with his son, Myshawn Bryant, during supervised agency visits. Mr. Bryant will continue to use his *"Stay Calm Plan"* to stop himself from going from 0-10 with his emotions during the visits. Foster parents/

caregivers- Nyree Sanneh and Wesley Hardin were both present at the celebration and were also recognized for their dedication and the support that they provided to the families.

The families were elated and thankful for the warm and intimate party that honored their resilience. Each family was given a Certificate of Achievement and Target and Dunkin Donuts gift cards to celebrate their progress. Additionally, The supervisor also took the opportunity to acknowledge staff: Regional Director-Jo-Annetta Rhodes, case planners Nichole Robinson and Ruby Reaves, case aides Giatrice Hulasie and Cecil Palm and recruitment manager Anne Reid. These staff members all worked diligently and helped to make this event a huge success. This was indeed a moment to treasure; the celebration was filled with sheer elation as the intended outcome was achieved.

Marie Dunn is a Supervisor at Graham Windham and can be reached at dunnm@graham-windham.org



**"Let's celebrate change together, brainstorming new ideas and searching for empowering solutions." Tara Baker
Case Planner, BronxWorks**

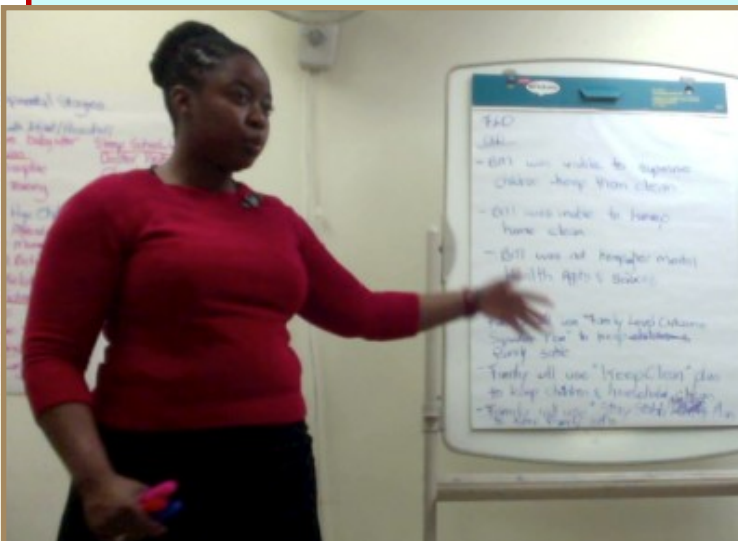
Foster parents Nyree Smith and Christopher Belcher with Graham Windham supervisor Marie Dunn (center)

In Service to Our Children and Families: A Paradigm Shift

Eraine Cameron

Mildred has been known to the child welfare system for many years, ever since her three children were placed in foster care because of allegations of substance abuse and inadequate guardianship. ACS indicated that the biological mother should engage in anger management and remain drug free. Mildred participated in some services offered by the agencies and was skeptical of others because she felt that her issues could be resolved without ACS interventions. Mildred spoke about her struggles to find ways to manage her anger and maintain a sober lifestyle to better care for her family. She stated that she often got into fights and that this prevented her from being the kind of mother she wanted and needed to be. Solution-Based Casework (SBC) was explained to her as a framework to support the building of a partnership with the family throughout the life of their case. This process encourages families to search for times when they were taking care of their children without putting them in danger.

Mildred was excited about the paradigm shift brought about by SBC and talked about several instances in which this approach guided her to enlist family support to assist her with her children. With her SBC-trained case planners, she was able to develop her own plan to address her anger and proper supervision of her children. Even though some of her ideas were unrealistic she now exudes absence of ownership and pride that she was involved in the process. Mildred's three children were paroled to the biological father and she is actively involved in maintaining a safe, healthy lifestyle for her children. There was some challenge in arriving at a consensus on all aspect of the case since Mildred did not view her arrest as a lack of supervision for her children since they were in school, and she had called her father to pick them up. Eventually, she agreed that because of her inability to manager her anger that led to her arrest, she was unable to maintain proper supervision of her children. After engaging together within the SBC model, it was interesting to see how the biological mother developed her plan with little assistance from the case planner. Mildred was asked about her experience organizing her case in a way that reflects the principles of SBC, particularly developing her FLOs, ILOs and action plan. Her response to these experiences was that *"it feels exhilarating, it feels honest, does not feel forced and it feels like my own!"*



Reviewing individual and family level outcomes, Supervisor Patrice Barnes-Hylton of Catholic Guardian Services

Acknowledgements:

SBC New York! is dedicated to promoting the well being of families, honoring the service of staff, and advancing the practice of Solution Based Casework

Dana Christensen
Founder,
Solution Based Casework
dana.christensen@louisville.edu

Natalie Bowlds
Operations Director,
Solution Based Casework
natalieb@solutionbasedcasework.com

Jessica Davis Godwin
Implementation Manager,
NYC SBC
jdavisgodwin@gmail.com

SBC New York! welcomes articles, photographs, and other submissions featuring our agencies' important accomplishments in the implementation of Solution Based Casework. Please contact **Jeff Steen** for additional information about the newsletter: jsteen@catholicguardian.org

Special thanks to **Joseph Monroe**, intern at Catholic Guardian Services, for his graphic design assistance with the newsletter: jmonroe@catholicguardian.org

Paying tribute to Tiger Foundation for the generous support that makes possible the advancement of Solution Based Casework!



Delron Bryant with his son Myshawn, joining families and staff of Graham Windham to acknowledge the many important accomplishments he's made to improve the wellbeing of those he loves

Social Work and Solution Based Casework

Jeff Steen

Recently, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) released guidelines to promote best practice in a number of specialties, including health care, substance abuse, and geriatrics. Importantly, the NASW Standards for Practice in Child Welfare provides recommendations to foster professional excellence in this ever-changing arena. Knowledge, values, and skills related to direct practice, administration, and policy within the child welfare system are identified, addressing critical topics like advocacy, cultural competence, permanency

planning, and professional development. Attentive to risk and wellbeing, the Standards also highlight the importance of engagement and collaboration, urging the ongoing development and implementation of evidence-informed approaches to support intervention efforts.

The three tenets of SBC reflect well the principles advanced in the NASW Standards for Practice in Child Welfare. Prioritizing the family relationship, focusing on pragmatic solutions, and documenting and celebrating success are at the heart of SBC.

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8

Informed by collaboration, these aims contribute to the identification of individual and family level issues that bring cases into care so that new plans promoting healthy functioning and improved outcomes can be leveraged. Similarly, the NASW Standards urge engagement and relationship-building to support ongoing assessment and intervention. Both NASW and SBC, therefore, advocate for treatment plans that are family-informed and mutually constructed. While traditional child welfare systems focus on the prescription of services to alleviate presenting problems, NASW and SBC encourage a commitment to promoting behavioral change to differently guide and document this process.

As a social worker, I've found that the priorities of Solution Based Casework resonate well with me. For instance, Solution Based Casework is informed by perspectives of primary importance to social work, including family life cycle theory and solution-focused therapy. The model's

advancement of relapse prevention supports dignity and worth—a core value of social work—encouraging providers to meet clients where they're at and build consensus as relationships are formed. The NASW Standards and urge the adoption of a strengths-based perspective; SBC's inclusion of efforts to explore developmental tasks and search for exceptions promotes an understanding of both risk and resilience.

As the landscape of child welfare continues to evolve, social workers' roles and responsibilities are likely to become even more complex. Through the implementation of Solution Based Casework, service providers, administrators, and policy makers are differently enabled to respond to critical needs and affect change.

Jeff Steen is Clinical Trainer with the Center for Evidence Based Implementation and Research at Catholic Guardian Services and can be reached at jsteen@catholicguardian.org

A videographer with Rana Faure Photography captures a scene during a recent filming of SBC videos in New York City. The video clips will be released later this year and will serve as a staff training resource for local agencies: for additional information, visit www.ranafaure.com



“ SBC gives me a starting off point that makes sense, getting to know the family and understanding where they are coming from before referrals and recommendations are made. Instead of blanket recommendations, after working with the family I listen more carefully and work to implement their recommendations. Families are able to take more ownership throughout our work together. ”

**Meghan Yetman,
Case Planner, BronxWorks**