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This Issue's Theme: Certification

SBC NEW YORK!



Quarterly

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AND MUCH MORE!

Pictured above: Matthew Davis of Catholic Guardian Services and Karen James of Forestdale discuss effective case planning and Solution Based Casework. This initial training in SBC was recently hosted by Good Shepherd Services.

Implementation and Certification: Supporting Best Practice in our Agencies and with our Families

This issue of SBC New York! focuses on the implementation of Solution Based Casework. In particular, skills related to certification are of critical importance as staff and agencies grow in their practice of SBC. Jessica Davis Godwin, NYC Implementation Manager, and Jeff Steen, newsletter editor, recently met to discuss these topics.

Jessica Davis Godwin: The science of implementation and the awareness of the complexities of implementation have grown in agencies in New York City simultaneous to the local introduction of Solution Based Casework. The adoption of evidence-based and evidence-informed models within community agencies and the NYC

Administration for Children's Services has been supportive to the implementation of SBC. Further, as agencies implement SBC they are cultivating expertise that can inform their rollout of other innovative models.

Jeff Steen: What are some key components that promote the successful implementation of Solution Based Casework? For instance, it seems that initial and ongoing trainings are one vital part of this process.

Jessica Davis Godwin: Yes, training is an important component of implementation, both for newly hired staff and as a refresher for existing staff. We know that training is one part of implementation. Before and

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during the initial training phase, agencies assess readiness to implement the model. For successful implementation, principles from the model will need to be integrated into supervision to support the SBC skill development of case planners. To support supervisors, management will want to assess its administrative functions of human resources, such as job descriptions and performance management and evaluation; the IT systems are also involved, especially to manage the data from the Certification tools. The adoption of SBC has implications for quality improvement and program performance metrics.

Supervisors' and case planners' skill attainment is a primary indicator of the quality and effectiveness of the initial stages of SBC implementation. Through ongoing support and guidance, managers will notice changes with staff skill development, much as the model focuses on staff noticing the often small changes happening for families.

I'm increasingly devoting more time to implementation rather than direct coaching or training of agencies. We know that there are certain elements that promote successful implementation. One component is the availability of ongoing training for new hires. Each agency has an SBC implementation team comprised of program managers responsible for driving supervision and SBC certification. Their leadership coordinates the needed support of their QI and QA colleagues in their agency. Each agency's implementation team meets at least monthly, some meet twice a month, to assess how the training is meeting the staff needs; how ongoing supervision is going; and, how the certification process is rolling out and where it is getting stuck. They focus on resolving these issues so that they're consistent with the agency's other practice and policies. The implementation team is looking broadly at management issues such as professional development, feedback data and how it is collected and used to inform agency decisions, and program management. Feedback loops are essential internal communication strategies, allowing agencies to explore how administration is getting information to & from supervisors regarding what's working and what's not working; how supervisors are accessing information about the efforts of case planners; and, ultimately how families are experiencing these relationships. It's also important to acquire implementation-related feedback from constituents outside of an agency, to engage

with schools, courts and other arenas that are touching our families' and workers' lives.

Jeff Steen: One of the priorities of an agency's implementation team is to guide the certification process. Through case record reviews, observation, and interviews, the ways in which these skills are understood and implemented in practice can be assessed. Say more about certification: How can agencies most effectively roll out this process? Within New York City, what has been learned about implementation and practice through initiation of the certification stage?

Jessica Davis Godwin: We know that compliance drives change. They are interconnected. Without management driving skill development, practice, and documentation using SBC, it will not happen. And, managers, particularly in NYC, have to manage a multitude of competing priorities for their time and attention. SBC is no different – it requires the attention of management to succeed. SBC supports managers with Certification tools that focus on the SBC skill development and encourages the professional development of case planners, supervisors, and managers alike.



Jessica Davis Godwin reviews a genogram with a new case planner. Genograms are created during Milestone 1 and are regularly reviewed throughout engagement with a family. Genograms help to identify who is in a family and the resources they might be able to offer to support safety and wellbeing.

Progressing Toward Certification: Celebration of a Colleague's Successes Milagros Briggs



Julia Stevens, Case Planner at Catholic Guardian Services, was recently recognized for her outstanding work with families. Presented with an award at the agency's management meeting, her successes practicing in a manner that reflects priorities of Solution Based Casework were noted.

Julia has been employed with Catholic Guardian Services for nearly three years. After work with the agency's preventive services division, Julia transferred to foster care during the time the agency adopted SBC. She is still adjusting to being a case planner in foster care but admits she has learned a lot in less than a year in this arena. Julia was trained in SBC in February. She believes the training helped her learn more inclusive language when talking with clients. Being that it is solution focused, it provides the case planner opportunities to speak with their clients about what they'd like their new plan to be and the specific and measurable

actions steps they'll take to achieve these goals. As SBC is evidence informed, it helps case planners connect theories with practice and provides a conceptual map that guides work with families. For example, Milestone 1, building a consensus, provides specific skills that support engagement with clients. Julia explained she was taught a variety of techniques in the SBC training to help meet clients where they are and find out their concerns in their own words. This promotes attainment of a consensus about what happened in the past and what can be done to create change. She explained it as "old plan, new plan. The old plan of action was not working so now we need to come up with

Guardian Services. She believes this process is important as it can help to legitimize this new way case planners interact with their clients. SBC certification helps to ensure that case planners are successfully completing Milestones and practicing the associated skills. She notes that this would give her confidence to continue to work with families. Julia believes one way to support the process of becoming certified would be to have someone already certified in SBC attend their weekly SBC consultations. This would create a safe space for asking questions and growing as professionals. Once certified, Julia is excited to in turn encourage other case planners practice SBC.

"Being Certified in SBC would give me confidence. I'd love to be a part of bringing it to the field and encourage other case workers: if I could do it, you could do it."

a new plan." SBC starts really simple and gets more specific as time progresses, inviting continual input from families.

Julia described one of the main differences between Solution Based Casework and services-as-usual: with SBC, families have input on their plans. She believes giving families some type of say-so empowers them to achieve their goals. She described Milestone 4, documenting and celebrating, as an exciting component of the model because it promotes celebration of a family's success. In her opinion this strategy helps acknowledge clients' progress and makes them feel respected.

Julia hopes to be in the first round of staff selected to go up for certification at Catholic

Some advice she proposes to new case planners learning SBC is to remain patient with themselves. Slow progress may be hard to see but when you look back from the beginning, you can see the change. She attested to this by acknowledging that the recognition of her successes came as a complete surprise because it was very hard for her to see her own growth. To conclude Julia stated, "It's going to be a process but I think slowly I see it working. That gives me confidence!"

Milagros Briggs is a Master of Social Work student at New York University. An intern at Catholic Guardian Services, she can be reached at mbriggs@catholicguardian.org

Lessons Learned from Three Rounds of Certification Wesley Santos

SBC New York! features the work of the following agencies, our local partners who have adopted Solution Based Casework:

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/>

Good Shepherd Services is a leading youth development, education and family service agency with more than 80 programs that serve over 26,000 children, youth and families each year. We give vulnerable youth in New York City the opportunity to take ownership of their future, making a difference today and for the next generation. Supporting the mission and goals of the organization, GSS adopted Solution Based Casework as our practice model in 2012. As a local leader in the implementation of SBC, we've learned a lot throughout this process, particularly related to certification.

SBC Certification is intense. Knowing and understanding the infrastructure it takes to make the certification process manageable and having clarity around expectations on all levels will determine how successful you are in your process. This begins with a plan created by a strong, supportive Implementation Team that's committed, optimistic and solution-focused. This team, comprised of agency leadership, should know and understand the work and be clear on how SBC is being implemented at their agency. Just as important, team members should be able to make executive decisions and have the ability to execute them at the program level.

At GSS, certification planning consisted of many conversations within this Implementation Team had been meeting twice a month. We have understood and framed certification within the context of our ongoing staff professional development



process. SBC Certification highlights workers' proficiency in some skills and identifies which skills they need to improve upon. It focuses on how workers use the model to organize their cases and partner with families. It also highlights how well supervisors are able to support and emphasize skill development, as opposed to more task-oriented supervision.

Every member of our Implementation team contributed ideas, and we reached consensus on what the process itself would look like. There were many details to be considered. We created a timeline with clear deadlines to distribute to all staff. This kept everyone informed and on track during each round of certification. The length of an agency certification round will depend on many factors. Each agency will need to decide how much time is necessary to conduct each round of certification. When we were allotting time for observations, interviews and case record reviews, we realized we also had to factor in time for what needed to happen after the reviews were completed.

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Post-review activities include approving the completed certification tools, entering the data into customized Excel worksheets, analyzing the data, preparing the final results to send to the workers, allowing for a rebuttal period and leaving enough time before the next round to prep for the following round.

We carefully considered how to manage and address the additional workload demands of certification. One of our first concerns was how to capture ratings and rationales and calculate scores, especially due to the size of our agency, the number of reviewers involved and the complexity of the certification process (i.e., workers being assessed on a customized set of skills as they go through multiple rounds). We partnered with additional staff within our Program Evaluation and Planning Department to design Excel worksheets to meet these needs. We also decided who would actually conduct interviews and case record reviews (supervisors conduct observations), in addition to who would approve all certification tools once they were submitted. Depending on the size of your group (interviewers, reviewers and approvers), agencies should also determine whether or not to limit the number of staff participating in any given round of certification. Effectively managing this workload will be extremely important if you hope to keep to all of the deadlines on your certification timeline.

Once we outlined our timeline and details, our Implementation Team also reached consensus on how to prepare staff for SBC Certification. We invited all

supervisors and SBC coaches to attend an orientation session that detailed the intricacies of the certification process from beginning to end. This included information sharing, break out groups and world café-style brainstorming. Everyone in attendance received a folder with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation containing details of the certification process, a copy of the plan created by the Implementation Team containing phases of work leading up to and including SBC Certification, the certification tools, the Caseworker's Skills Checklist, a timeline for our first round of certification and other material. The SBC Coaching sessions that followed focused on further preparing our supervisors in preparing their workers for certification. In addition to the Orientation, we also trained our supervisors, interviewers and case record reviewers on the certification tools. We used discussions, role plays of interviews and an actual case record for staff to practice completing the tools. We discussed each skill in detail and assessed each rating and rationale. We emphasized the importance of being clear in rationales to ensure that these properly reflect the rating for each skill.

We have learned that keeping the lines of communication open and having a point person who makes him/herself accessible to all levels of staff will make the certification process more manageable. Staff will have many questions and it will be important to address these effectively and efficiently. Every detail of the certification process needs to be consistently discussed, in order for SBC Certification to remain an attainable goal.

Using and sharing a timeline with clear deadlines and taking the time to conduct trainings, coaching sessions and one-on-one support will make workers, supervisors and coaches feel more confident about their ability to be successful.

At Good Shepherd Services, we recently completed Round 3 of SBC Certification. To date, this was our largest group yet with 46 workers participating. In Rounds 1 and 2, we had a total of 45 workers participate in SBC Certification. We are proud to say that 15 workers, 7 Supervisors and 3 SBC Coaches have achieved SBC Certification. Just as we did after Round 1, we will celebrate those individuals who achieved SBC Certification in Round 2. In October, we will have a celebration in their honor at our main office. We have invited workers' direct supervisors, all SBC Coaches, the Implementation Team, the NYC SBC Implementation Manager and our Executive Director. This will be quite a celebration for everyone who has worked diligently at achieving SBC Certification. We look forward to celebrating many more in the months to come!

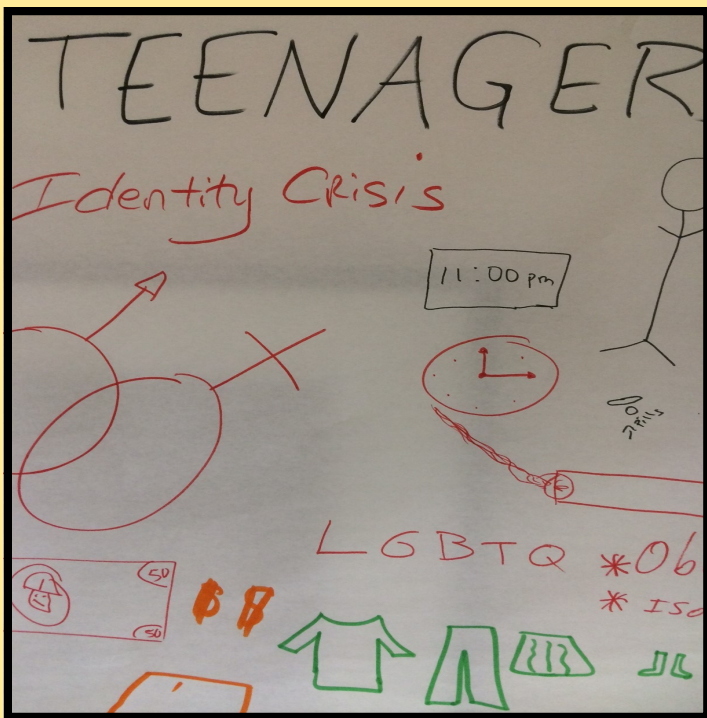
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Paying tribute to Tiger Foundation for the generous support that makes possible the advancement of Solution Based Casework!

Building an Infrastructure that Supports Certification

Sharon Dillon

Implementing the Solution Based Casework model across programs has had its challenges. In our efforts to prepare case planners for the certification process, the SBC Coordinator has provided booster trainings, coaching during consultations, and Mock Case Record Reviews. The NYC SBC Implementation Manager has also made herself available to facilitate Mock Case Record Reviews, to ensure that reviewers adhere to model fidelity. In addition, an all-day SBC Refresher was offered by the SBC Developer, Dana Christensen, during the summer. This refresher provided more clarity and an opportunity for staff to ask questions and discuss case issues. Staff has been receptive to the supports offered and seems eager to learn and “get it right”. Some are overly zealous, while others are cautious in



At a recent training in SBC, participants learned about developmental stages and identified the related challenges that families sometimes encounter. Subsequent role play activities allowed training participants to practice making statements that normalize the developmentally-specific challenges of families.

their approach.

Successful implementation falls mostly on the shoulders of the supervisors, therefore they have to keep Solution Based Casework at the forefront and consistently assess their staff's skill acquisition. Having been trained alongside their case planners, supervisors are also learning with them. This in itself might rattle even the most seasoned supervisor, since their role has been as the “expert”. This change has made some more tentative in their approach to practice and has caused hesitation to request help when needed. These issues are being actively addressed at MercyFirst.

A couple key lessons have been learned through the development of an agency infrastructure that supports certification. Specifically, case planners and supervisors benefit greatly from regularly scheduled booster sessions. And, everyone can benefit from a user friendly tip sheet highlighting practice strategies and SBC, similar to the guide recently developed by Good Shepherd Services SBC Coordinator, Wesley Santos. Since training offers a basic introduction, additional individual supports and teaching around practice issues are essential. Therefore, supervisors, coaches and the SBC Coordinator are pivotal in helping case planners achieve proficiency.

The MercyFirst Implementation Team also plays an important role in the journey to certification. Meeting consistently and involving supervisors, program directors or coaches, management and executive staff allows for all levels of the organization to be a part of the decision making process and demonstrates the agency's commitment to the model.

Hampered by staff turnover and the implementation of new initiatives and mandates, we continuously re-evaluate our certification timelines. With 2014 being named the year of SBC certification, we remain focused on initiating our first certification round this winter, but our timelines will be based on staff readiness and their consistency with SBC implementation. Our continued efforts will focus on regularly offered booster sessions focused on individual needs and practice issues as well as specifically designed supports for supervisors.

Sharon Dillon is Director of Coordination and Implementation of Evidence Based Models at MercyFirst and can be reached at



Third Time is a Charm: Reflecting on Certification **Marie Dunn**

I often find myself saying “Our inner strength is revealed when we are confronted with unexpected challenges”. The introduction of the SBC model was indeed a challenge to me when it was first introduced at Graham Windham. I was then an overwhelmed case planner in graduate school, and the last thing I wanted to do was sit with clients to assess, evaluate and develop plans. “Really? Where in the world did they expect me to find time?” That was my exact thought, and I was very frustrated. I was not open to the changes that came with the adoption of SBC. I wanted to be left alone to work with clients the way I was accustomed. To make matters worse, I was also told I had three tries to get certified. Again, I thought to myself, “It’s okay, I have time. In fact, I have at least three chances to get this right.”

I immediately rationalized that completing my graduate work was far more important than learning “this SBC model.” I detached myself, or rather I kept myself disconnected from SBC. I really thought I had this figured out because there was one thing I was certain of: the loans I had taken out to complete my education at Fordham were definitely not giving me three chances to get this right. That was the decisive factor; actually learning SBC was the last thing on my agenda. My then Supervisor constantly told me “Ms. Dunn you have to focus and prepare, don’t wait until the last minute.” “Yeah right” no disrespect but I really had more important things to worry about right now than SBC. At least that was my thought until the first round came, and I failed.

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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.

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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

The next issue of SBC New York! will focus on Milestone 1 and the ways in which local staff are building consensus with families. Submission deadline: December 2014.

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The second round came and went, and of course I failed. Nonetheless, from my perspective I still had one more chance. Who cared? I sure did because I am not a failure so this bothered me. Furthermore, in the still of the night when I was all alone, the realization hit me that my co-workers passed. "Damn!" I thought when the emails went out congratulating staff who passed. The embarrassment that hit me filtered through the core of my entire being. I was secretly embarrassed. What hurt the most was the fact that I failed myself because I had been closed to learning and integrating principles of SBC into my professional life.

I was up to round three and I realized that SBC was not going anywhere. Now, I had time to process "this SBC model" because I was almost finished with graduate school. I was also more focused and motivated because I actually wrote a paper for my Clinical Practice Class about the SBC model. Guess what? I did a phenomenal job, and I realized after all SBC was not as intimidating as I'd thought it was. I started understanding the core concepts, and I became open to the learning process.

I'm compelled to share the internal processes that I encountered because it is very important on various levels. This was indeed a teachable moment for me. In essence, the journey towards certification as a Case Planner was a difficult one. I walked away from this process with several lessons:

Change is scary because I was no longer in my comfort zone, and I was afraid to fail.

Change is inevitable.

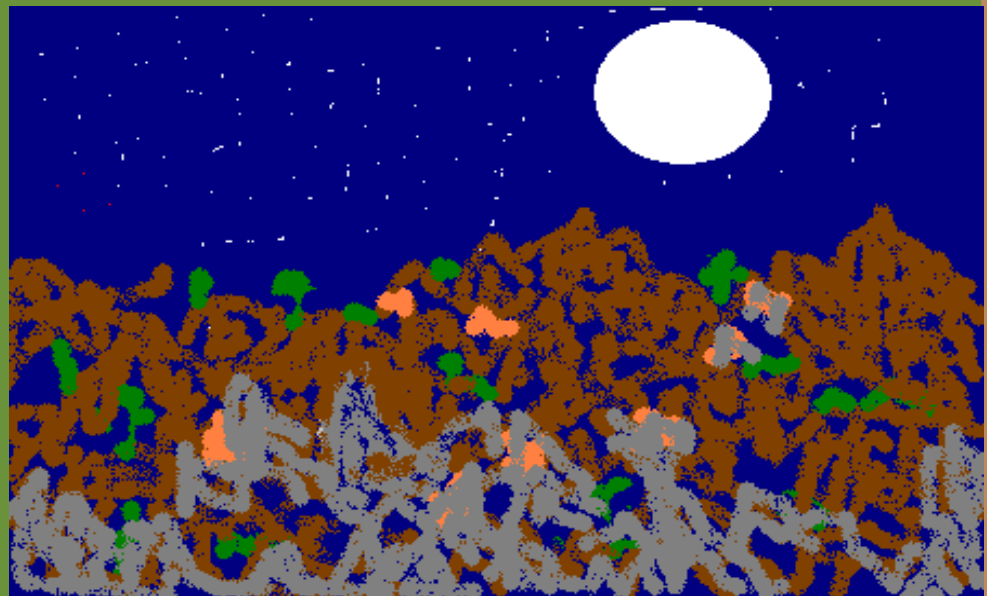
Preparation is one of the key components to success.

Embracing change and challenge only makes you a better person.

The third time to me was indeed a charm because I mastered SBC. I was open, and I absorbed the core concepts. I was no longer fearful, and I realized that my employment at Graham Windham was also very important because I had to repay my student loans. In order to do so I needed my employment. Consequently, I had to assess, evaluate, look at my desired outcome (to pass SBC), and develop a smart plan (to pass SBC). This was all possible because I acknowledged my shortcomings and was willing to change the behaviors that caused me to fail the first two rounds. In the end I was able to celebrate my success in becoming a certified Case Planner.

Here we go again! I graduated with my MSW and was offered a promotion as a Unit Supervisor, only to find out I had to become certified as a Supervisor. Of course I accepted the position, but knowing I had three chances was yet again very attractive. Only this time I was not going to fall prey to that. I soon realized the hurdles got higher. Not only did I have to submit cases and go through the process, I now had to depend on my staff to produce their work. I thought to myself "this just was not making sense." I was livid but I had to keep my thoughts to myself. I forfeited my first round because this was just too much, and honestly this time around I did not have the time. I was super busy trying to figure out how to manage my staff, while learning how to become an effective supervisor. Nonetheless, I was adamant that I was going to pass the second round "because I did not have time for this back and forth".

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Pictured above: Mind Games, a computer-generated design by Jacqueline Santana, Administrative Assistant in the Training Department at Catholic Guardian Services. She can be reached at jsantana@catholicguardian.org

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Moreover, I was also focused on getting my assigned Case Planner-Nichole Robinson obtain her certification.

I am elated to share that this process was amazing. I was confident, receptive and open to change. Excitingly, Ms. Robinson obtained her certification. I also got certified as a Supervisor on my second round. I must say thank you to my Case Planner, Ruby Reaves, for the excellent work that she did with that particular case that was chosen for my certification round. I'm also grateful to Regional Director-Jo-Annetta Rhodes and SBC Coach Latavia Lee. I am a firm believer that I did not do this all by myself: God was standing right next to me at all times.

In closing, Ms. Robinson, and myself were both recognized for our accomplishments at the Graham Windham Celebration held on October 2, 2014. Life and the work we continue to do with our children and families at Graham Windham is worth celebrating on a diurnal basis. Here is to change, Solution Based Casework, the new road map to permanency, and all of our successes in New York City.

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We are grateful to The New York Community Trust for generously supporting SBC for the past few years. The Trust has provided a total of \$550,000 toward SBC implementation since 2012, including \$150,000 to three agencies (Good Shepherd Services, Graham Windham, and SCO Family of Services) in 2012, and \$200,000 in 2013 and 2014 for five agencies (Episcopal Social Services, Forestdale, Good Shepherd Services, Graham Windham, and SCO Family of Services). The funds enabled each agency to maintain an internal staff SBC Coordinator, a critical role for building the agencies' capacity to train and coach staff, and to drive the implementation process, including SBC certification.

In addition, Casey Family Services and New Yorkers for Children continue to support SBC training for the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS), which is implementing SBC in all boroughs of their Family Service Unit and one Child Protective unit.

From our agencies and the families we serve:

"It is important to celebrate with the family even if they show only small steps with their progress. In the end, we embrace change with the family."

Tejal Parekh, Case Planner at Episcopal Social Services

Thank you!