RULES OF ENGAGEMENT:
BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR BEST CASEWORK PRACTICE

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Workshop Description

Clients who interact with persons from helping professions, either voluntarily or involuntarily, do so with reluctance, hesitancy, and wariness. The ability to break down walls of distrust, fear of the unknown, and move towards change and goal attainment requires adept skill in the rules of engagement. An error made by helping professionals is equating compliance with engagement.

The concept of engagement seems simple but it is complex and difficult to do in the arena of child welfare. The importance of client engagement is widely recognized due to its positive influence on child welfare outcomes. Textbooks devoted to the helping profession emphasize the necessity of engaging families. The Child Protective Services: A Guide for Caseworkers shares “engaging families and children is integral” (DePanfilis, 2018). Despite the wealth of information which stresses the benefits of engagement or varying intervention approaches available to apply in practice, engagement remains a hit or miss. Several challenges exist which hinder the engagement process: worker difficulty shifting from paternalism to partnership, perspective from which workers and clients view engagement, and worker/ client power struggles.

This session will focus on understanding the relevance of engagement to improving outcomes, overcoming barriers which impact client engagement, and basic skills that can be applied in practice.
Family Engagement

Family engagement is a family-centered and strengths-based approach to making decisions, setting goals, and achieving desired outcomes for children and families. At its best, family engagement encourages and empowers families to be their own champions, working toward case goals that they have helped to develop based on their specific family strengths, resources, and needs.

Why Family Engagement

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT is integral when working with families.

The benefits include:

- Enhancing the helping relationship
- Promoting family “buy-in”
- Building family decision-making skills
- Enhancing the fit between family needs and services
Barriers to Family Engagement

- Paternalism
- Power Struggles
- Compliance
- Biases and Perceptions
Keys to Family Engagement

- Empathy
- Acceptance
- Non-judgmental
- Active Listening
- Respect
Family Engagement Checklist

☐ Ask open ended questions

☐ Remain professional

☐ Listen empathetically

☐ Be cognizant of space and body language

☐ Acknowledge family members’ feelings

☐ Focus on the family’s strengths

☐ Summarize statements
References


