



Engaging Practice Standards

How Supervisors Can Support Their Workers

In addition to your own Practice Standards, your workers have their own set of core activities and Practice Standards. It is important that you help support your workers as they implement their best practice behaviors. Below are some strategies you can use to support your workers as they implement their Practice Standards. These strategies are different and more effective than telling or directing your workers, because they give your workers a "hands-on" approach and experience to see how the Standards should look in practice. As a supervisor, it's also important to complete the Worker Practice Standards training yourself, so you are familiar with the Practice Standards as you support your workers.

Modeling

- Model behaviors of engagement during all interactions with your workers, families, and others by demonstrating best practice body language, asking engaging and open-ended questions, and using reflective listening.
- Model engaging best practice behaviors during individual case staffing meetings by keeping family voice at the forefront of every staffing.
- During case staffing, point out successes and strengths of families your workers are assigned and ask them to do the same.
- Make strengths-based and family-focused questions a part of each meeting with your workers, such as "what strengths does the family bring..." and "what is important to the family...". By asking these questions, it will prompt the worker to reframe their thinking and obtain this information regularly from the family.
- Utilize your staff and their existing skill set. If you notice that one of your workers is a champion at implementing the Engaging Practice Standards into their practice, ask them to take on a leadership role by modeling these behaviors for your unit.

Coaching

- Set aside specific time during consultation to answer questions and provide guidance to workers as they implement the Practice Standards.
- During supervisory meetings, talk with your worker about their cases. Discuss your worker's engagement with their families and how this may be impacting the outcomes of the case.
- Consult with your workers to assist them in understanding and adjusting cultural considerations as well as preferences, like gender pronouns, in all interactions with families.
- Talk with your workers about how to build relationships with families from other cultural group in an appropriate and effective manner and how culture may play a significant role in body language. Show your workers and provide them examples of what this looks like, such as leaning in vs. leaning out or arms folded vs. arms down.
- Consistently provide feedback to staff on their engagement skills, such as being fully present when meeting with families, establishing rapport with families, preparing in advance for meeting with families, and keeping family voice at the forefront of all conversations.
- Remember that feedback should be oriented to the experience level of the worker.
- Talk with your workers about being mindful in how they talk about families in all interactions and situations, regardless of whether the family is present, to minimize negative talk. This sets their mindset about families, so they are positive and strengths-based in all interactions with and about families.

Field Observation

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- Regularly observe your workers in the field for real-time coaching and feedback on communication skills with families, courts, tribes, service providers, and others.
- Field observation is especially helpful for new staff to provide coaching and set expectations.
- After observing your workers in the field, provide feedback through an immediate staffing about their performance.

Building Rapport

- Create a welcoming environment that fosters the development of trust and respect and provides opportunities for staff to feel engaged and develop their own engagement skills.
- Build and maintain rapport with all your workers by creating a collaborative environment and encouraging feedback, input, and new ideas from your workers; actively listen in all interactions; being mindful of your body language; communicating with transparency and honesty; and motivating and empowering your workers.
- Build rapport and encourage your workers to do the same with families they work with during unit meetings, case staffing, and field observations. Take time in unit meetings to acknowledge family strengths
- Start every meeting by acknowledging family strengths. It's important that you acknowledge family strengths in the same way you would acknowledge weaknesses or areas of need, and encourage your workers to do the same.
- During meetings with workers, reframe conversations so family voice is at the forefront and ask questions that are strengths-based, such as "how do you think the family feels about what's going on?", or "what would the family say if you asked them about what's worrying them?"...
- During meetings with workers ask them questions like
- Do not get complacent because good engagement is an active practice. It is important to be consistent and demonstrate the need to not only engage, but to maintain and sustain that engagement.

Case Staffing

- Provide case-level assistance when needed and model the Practice Standards when doing so.
- Point out and talk about the successes and strengths of the family during case staffing and ask the worker to do the same. Offer flexibility and be considerate of each worker's needs. Some workers may need staffing more regularly than others based on their level of experience and performance.
- Support your workers in staffing and unit meetings as they implement the Practice Standards. Check in with workers to see if they have questions or areas where they are struggling.
- Ask your worker to complete their Practice Standards self-assessment and identify areas where they may need additional guidance. After they have completed and reviewed their self-assessment, review it with them and together identify any additional areas where guidance is needed. Work together on a plan for how you can support them.
- Ask your workers to come prepared to talk about their cases during supervision. One way to do this is to have workers begin filling out a "staffing sheet" before supervisory meetings.
- Meet with your workers prior to their interactions with families to ensure they are fully prepared based on the individual needs of the family.
- Check in with your workers after they meet with families to be sure they follow up on items previously heard from families, or items they need to understand more comprehensively, and provide guidance where needed.
- Talk with your workers about the importance of accurate documentation and encourage them to document visits shortly after they occur, so the information is still fresh.

Unit Meetings

- Occasionally, plan activities for your unit meetings that highlight the Engaging Practice Standards, such as playing a game like charades where your workers can guess the body language message. You can use these fun games as a teaching opportunity for your entire unit.
- During unit meetings, ask your workers to share a success story they have had. You can also ask your workers to share a challenge facing them and have your staff work through the challenge and identify solutions as a team.

Field Observation

- Regularly observe your workers in the field for real-time coaching and feedback on engagement skills with families, courts, tribes, service providers, and others. Field observation is especially helpful to provide coaching and set expectations for new staff.
- During field observation, actively engage in meetings and home visits by considering the family's perspective, honoring differences and information shared, and demonstrating partnership with the family.
- After observing your workers in the field, provide feedback through an immediate staffing about