

Teaching Notes for Reconciling Competing Values in the Delivery of Child Welfare Services Under ASFA, MEPA, and Community-Based Child Protection

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Slide 1

This lecture would be of use in courses on child welfare policy, social work ethics, or child welfare practice. It presupposes basic knowledge of the policies discussed.

Slide 2

This material focuses on the above Federal policies, exploring the potential competing values and possible strategies for resolution.

Slide 3

Discussion is on values because they undergird policy and practice. Some of the value related tasks that must be completed in order to better understand strategies for moving child welfare forward to a time when the newest service approaches can be reconciled with the underlying values and requirements of child welfare policy.

Slide 4

Discussion Question

What are the value-based assumptions underlying each of the concepts on this slide?

Slide 5

Group Activity

Break students into groups and ask them to come up with a child welfare situation where 2 or more of the values from the previous slide would be in conflict. Then ask groups to switch situations, and attempt to resolve the dilemma. Ask for justification of their decision, and a description of the decision-making process.

Slide 8

In the shift from AACWA to ASFA, these provisions de-emphasize continuity and community, which were basic considerations under AACWA.

Slide 10

There are no specific Federal family continuity laws, but this value is expressed in such practices as kinship care, open adoption, placing sibs together, and foster parent legal standing.

Slide 11

Community based child protection is not a policy based in Federal law.

Slide 12

Group Activity

Have students formally debate the following statements:

“A child’s cultural identity and comfort must be a primary consideration in child welfare practice, superceded only by concerns for safety.”

Slide 15

Cannot categorically deny placement solely on basis of race

Slide 20

Discussion Question

What should be the decision protocol when determining if a mother who has given birth to a cocaine-exposed baby should be allowed to retain custody of the child?

An eight year old boy can be placed with his grandmother, with whom he has a close relationship, or uncle, who lives across the country and has met the boy twice. The grandmother lives in a dangerous, high drug and violence neighborhood, where a 7 year old boy was shot and killed last week. The uncle is an affluent architect living in a safe suburban neighborhood. Which is the best placement?

Slide 25

Discussion Question

How can child welfare workers and agencies reconcile the various tensions and conflicts among values and philosophies?

Slide 32

New models of training are emerging that focus more on values.

Slide 38

Emphasis on the importance of providing child welfare workers with the tools to make good choices based in clear understanding of the law, specific mandates, agency policy, and professional values, with “a watchful eye” on potential decision contamination by their own personal values.

Slide 39

Discussion Question

What do we do when there is an impasse?

Slide 40

Discussion Question

What could be an effective forum for discussing and making these decisions, given the time constraints of child welfare practice in many agencies?

Slide 41

Group Activity

Ask small groups of students to choose one of the tools listed above, and create a detailed strategy for its development and implementation.