

**Center for Girls, Young Women and Their Families
Department of Children and Families and Advisory Team
Summary of Meeting on August 8, 2013**

Overview

There is an old story about the horrifying spectacle of people hurtling downstream and the response of two observers of their plight. One tries to pull them out as they go by, while the other, after a moment's thought, goes upstream to find out how they got into the river in the first place. The moral is clear: Prevention is more effective in the long run than repair. That certainly has merit, and if we move past the obvious, the tale offers a useful way to think further about our clients (students) and the challenges our world and multidisciplinary professionals encounter on a daily basis. In such cases, the situation upstream is complex and raises important questions: Do our students and their families jump into the water (via drug addiction, irresponsibility, psychological distress) and/or are they pushed (by poverty, inadequate education, and multiple traumas)? Probably both, so any helpful interventions at the source would require an acknowledgement of all the factors and a sophisticated understanding of how they interact.

For helpers at the water's edge who pull the people out as they go rushing downstream, there is another set of meaningful questions. Is each person struggling in the water an isolated individual, and how are they connected to others? Who else is moving downstream and how must the rescuers handle the connections among the separate people and problems? The reality of those connections, and the need to see and work with them, are central themes that fortified our initial conversation on August 8. For multidisciplinary professionals in the water; best practices, implementation science, and workforce development indicates that the strategic triangle of *ability-effort-support* is sustained by:

1. Recognition and awareness of the parallel process between effective service delivery to students and respectful relationships among multidisciplinary staff;
2. Identification of relevant multidisciplinary competencies and skills;
3. Opportunities to practice and refine skills in the field through linkages between training, supervision, program development and workforce development;
4. On-the-job coaching and mentoring from experienced professionals;
5. Regular assessment and feedback about performance;
6. On-going resources to sustain growth and development;
7. Understanding that Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is an occupational hazard for those that provide direct services to traumatized populations; and,
8. Routine feedback from students, families and colleagues about the efficacy of professional encounters.

Process and Structure

Irene Yanaros has provided a wonderful summary of our time together (please see attached). She captured many of the essential components of our conversation, and the

ways in which we hope to work together on behalf of very vulnerable girls, young women and their families. At the heart of our discussion is the meaning of implementing a strengths-based educational and therapeutic program that will augment the existing continuum of care, include clear identification of the students and families to be served, and emphasize the dynamic interplay of family-centered, gender-responsive and trauma-informed principles and practices.

The primary work of this Advisory team is to support the evolving CJTS program at Solnit South, and development of an effective helping system that reflect the core principles and practices recognized in research and literature as leading to healthy outcomes (Bertolino, 2010; Duncan, Hubble, Miller & Sparks, 2010, among several others). During our meeting, we briefly highlighted seven core values that form the foundation of strengths-based engagement and practice, which include:

1. Client and student attributes and contributions;
2. Therapeutic alliance and professional relationship;
3. Cultural competence;
4. Change as a process;
5. Expectancy and hope;
6. Method and factor of fit; and,
7. On-going feedback from students, families and professionals.

Practical Matters

Bill Rosenbeck, Michelle Sarofin, Cindy Butterfield and Stephen Tracy (and their DCF colleagues) described the administrative and operational goals and objectives of the new Unit, and acknowledged the importance of receiving and integrating the experiences and perspectives of professionals and families representing multiple agencies and communities as the process evolves. Communication and coordination of these efforts, in conjunction with the Girl's Network and other community-based services, was also highlighted. The next scheduled meeting on *September 12, 2013 at Solnit South from 1-3* will connect this Advisory team with the Girl's Network to maximize resources and solidify the connections within and across the continuum of care.

We acknowledged that one size does not fit all, and the CJTS Unit will not be "all things to all persons." What we did acknowledge is that education, safety, community involvement and therapeutic readiness are the cornerstones for enhancing the lives and relationships of the students and families that come to the attention of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Our aim is to offer creative and humanistic alternatives.

We hope that this is a reasonably accurate summary of our time together, and understand that while we are trying to focus on the new Unit, there are many broad areas to consider. Please contact Irene, Bill and Mike directly should you have further questions or suggestions about the content of these summaries.

Take good care in the meantime, and many thanks for your contributions.