



Objectives

- Describe the distinctive characteristics of religiously affiliated/church-related agencies in the social work practice field of child welfare.
- Articulate the distinction between integrating faith and spirituality in direct practice and integrating faith and spirituality into organizational processes of an agency.
- Identify practice dilemmas and approaches in relating to professional colleagues that are located in faith-based organizations, congregations, public child welfare services, and government funding agencies. Explore models of innovative programs in church-related agencies.

Who Are Our Learning Resources?

- Name
- Brief description of experience with faith-based child welfare

A Brief History

- Informal care in homes of congregational members
- 19th Century: The development of orphanages
- 20th Century: Transformation to a spectrum of services with the changing population of children and families needing services
- Late 20th Century: Move from residential to growing community-based service programs
- A large and sometime even majority of actual services to children and families in many communities

Distinctive Characteristics of Faith-based Child and Family Welfare Service (FBCFW) Programs

- Multiple funding sources, with increasing reliance on government contracts—consequent multiple allegiances and sources of accountability
- A disconnect in some agencies between clergy/CEO and professional social work staff
- A lack of understanding by professional social work staff of the significance of the religious setting

(cont.)

More distinctives . . .

- A history of working with the most vulnerable children and families
- Ready access to a wide range of resources through their connections to congregations and communities of faith
- Commitment to providing services strengthened and reinforced by religious beliefs and values.
 - Changing behavior, eliminating self-destructive habits and building character are the work of building souls: a task that religious child care facilities are uniquely capable of performing; Loving while being hated requires the kind of dedication that doesn't come from a state license (Melton, 2003)
- Committed to nurturing the spiritual growth/development and religious expression of children in their care
- Promote society's most enduring values

An Example: The Values of Sr. Mary Euphrasia (Maryhurst)

- A person is of more value than the world. Each person, whether client or staff has ultimate value. This respect for persons permeates activities, policies, and procedures.
- Spirituality is an integral part of every person. As a result, spiritual development is a primary goal in the treatment process, and spiritual goals routinely appear in individualized treatment plan.
- The environment reflects the loving care of a generous and nurturing Creator. Beauty is a means of reaching souls. A home-like environment is essential: it gives children a sense of safety and stability.
- Healthy, honest and open communication among all persons at all levels in the agency is an indicator that the charism is operative. The primary Good Shepherd Value -- that a person is of more value than a world -- is demonstrated when persons communicate in a respectful manner. (Maryhurst website)

Model 1: FBCFW Programs as Direct Providers

- adoption and/or foster care services
- after-school programs
- counseling and therapy services; crisis care services
- education services
- family preservation services
- in-home and parent training classes
- mentoring programs
- recreation services
- residential services such as group homes and/or other congregate facilities
- summer program/camping services
- transitional living services
- vocational training services
- * unplanned pregnancy and maternity services

Model 1: Examples

- Hoyleton
- KBHC
- From the group?

Model 2: FBCFW Programs as Intermediaries

Some FBCFWAs provide congregations with training, resources, and consultation to help them start and sustain social ministry programs. In many cases, these local congregations, by virtue of their knowledge of and established place in the local community, are in the best position to provide many of the hands-on services needed by its children and families. Many of services are similar to and/or overlap with the services described above.

Model 3: FBCFW Programs as Partners with Congregations

FBCFWAs and congregations work together as equal or near-equal collaborators or partners in the delivery of services to children and families in their communities. Under this model, both the FBCFWA and the congregation(s) contribute components essential to the service being delivered

- Missouri Baptist Children's Homes and Services
- Buckner Baptist Benevolences

Model 4: Public and Non-sectarian Agencies Working With Faith Communities

In some cases, organizations that clearly would not consider themselves “faith-based” (such as state child welfare services or secular agencies) have begun working successfully with congregations and religious communities in the provision of services to children and families

- One Church/One Child
- Covenant to Care (Connecticut)
- Interagency partnerships in Segwick County, KS (Lewandowski & Glen Maye, 2002)

Integrating Faith into Direct Practice in FBCFW Programs

- Understanding one’s own faith and spirituality and ways it is a resource to you and to your clients
- Being culturally competent with the religious and spiritual contexts of the clients you serve, and using these as resources
- Addressing conflicts between your own faith and spirituality with those of clients, and finding ways to respectfully deal with these differences as you would other cultural differences

Integrating Faith into Agency/Organizational Processes

- Knowing the mission historically and currently and how it relates to organizational and direct practice decisions
- Articulating the relationships with sponsoring religious groups and their members and addressing conflicts created by multiple funding streams
- Finding ways to build on the strengths, both in practice but also in developing programs, of being faith-based: the access to volunteers, the ability to engage whole communities of support, etc.
- Do what faith-based organizations do best—work with congregations, volunteers, communities. Highly professionalized services that have little or no role for volunteers and faith communities probably should not be the central focus of the agency, even if you do have some programs in this category.
- Keep coming back to the the religious/faith motivation of volunteers, staff, board—and overtly nurture this connection.
- Learn to speak the language of congregations as a member of the community and church leader.
- Be prophetic, an advocate for children and families, rooting your advocacy in scripture, church teaching, church history.

Case Studies: Social Work Practice Approaches and Dilemmas in FBCFW Services

- What do you bring?

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