



Planning, Development & Implementation: Adhering to Social Work Ethics

Case Example: Transforming Ontario's Child Welfare System

Ontario College of Social Workers & Social Service Workers
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Overview: Planning, Developing & Implementing Policy

- The Paradigm of Social Work/Social Services Ethics & Approaches
- Case Example Background/Context
- Building the Case for Change
- The Importance of Core Principles
- Consulting Key Stakeholders/Building Consensus
- Connecting the Policy Dots
- From Development to Implementation
- Conclusion

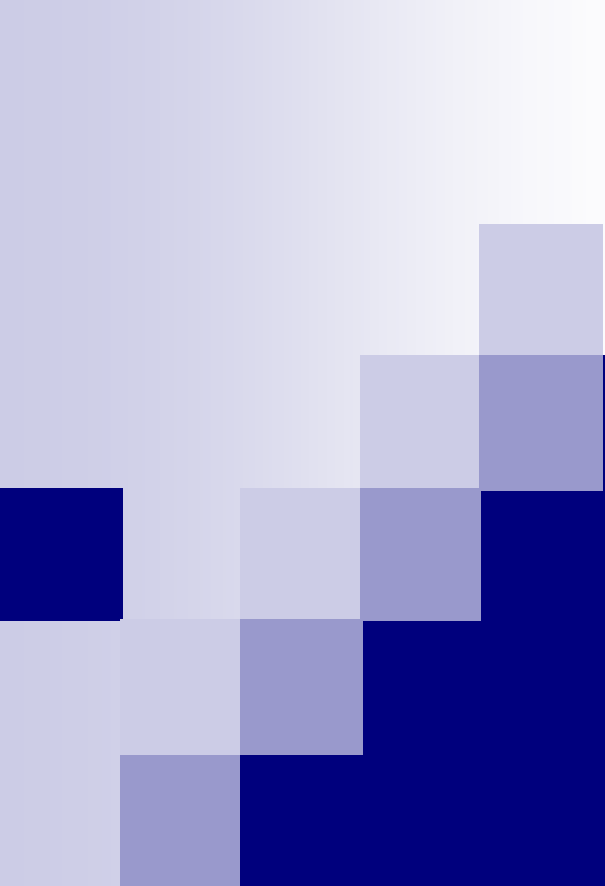
Applying Social Work/Social Services Ethics

- Best Interest of the Client is Primary
- Principles of Integrity & Objectivity
- Competent Delivery & Confidentiality
- From Individual to Broad Societal Impact

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The Social Work/Social Services Approach

- Comprehensive Systemic/Evolutionary Framework
- Community Development Approach and Engagement
- Strengths - Based Values
- Respect for Diversity



Case Example: Background/Context

Ontario's Child Welfare System

- Child protection is the responsibility of Ontario's 53 children's aid societies (CASs) which are non-profit, independent corporations operated by community-based boards of directors:
 - 6 CASs are Aboriginal agencies
 - 3 CASs are faith-based - 2 Catholic (Toronto, Hamilton) and 1 Jewish (Toronto)
- Societies are mandated under the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) as the only agencies with the legal authority to provide child protection services in Ontario.
- CASs employ over 7,000 staff - approximately 80% are direct service workers, many trained in social work or related disciplines.
- The province's role is to legislate, regulate, monitor and fund children's aid societies; the province provides 100% funding.

Legislative Authority for Child Welfare

- The paramount purpose of the *Child and Family Services Act (CFSA)* is “to promote the best interests, protection and well being of children.”
- Under the *CFSA*, a child is a person up to the age of 18 years. Child protection services provided by a *CAS* are for children up to age 16 years, and those 16 and 17 year olds who are already subject to a child protection order.
- The Act sets out the functions of a children's aid society:
 - investigate allegations or evidence that children under the age of 16 years may be in need of protection;
 - protect, where necessary, children who are under the age of 16 years;
 - provide guidance, counselling and other services to families for protecting children or for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protection of children;
 - provide care for children assigned to its care under the *CFSA* (foster care, group care);
 - supervise children assigned to its care under the *CFSA*; and
 - place children for adoption.

Profile of Our Children

- Total children served in care almost 30,000
- Almost 9,000 Crown wards
- Over-representation of First Nations children in care
- 801 adoptions completed in 2005/06
- Access ordered for 75% of Crown wards
- For 67% of Crown wards, permanency plan is long term foster or group care
- 82% of Crown wards diagnosed with "special needs"
- Placement change average every 22 months

Service Activities & Trends

- Children served in a year approximately 320,000
 - 290,000 in community
 - 30,000 in care
- Broad continuum of service both non-residential and residential
- Open 24/7 with extensive police and court involvement
- Work environment is fraught with controversy, legal implications and risk
- Public, government and media scrutiny is extensive



Building the Case for Change

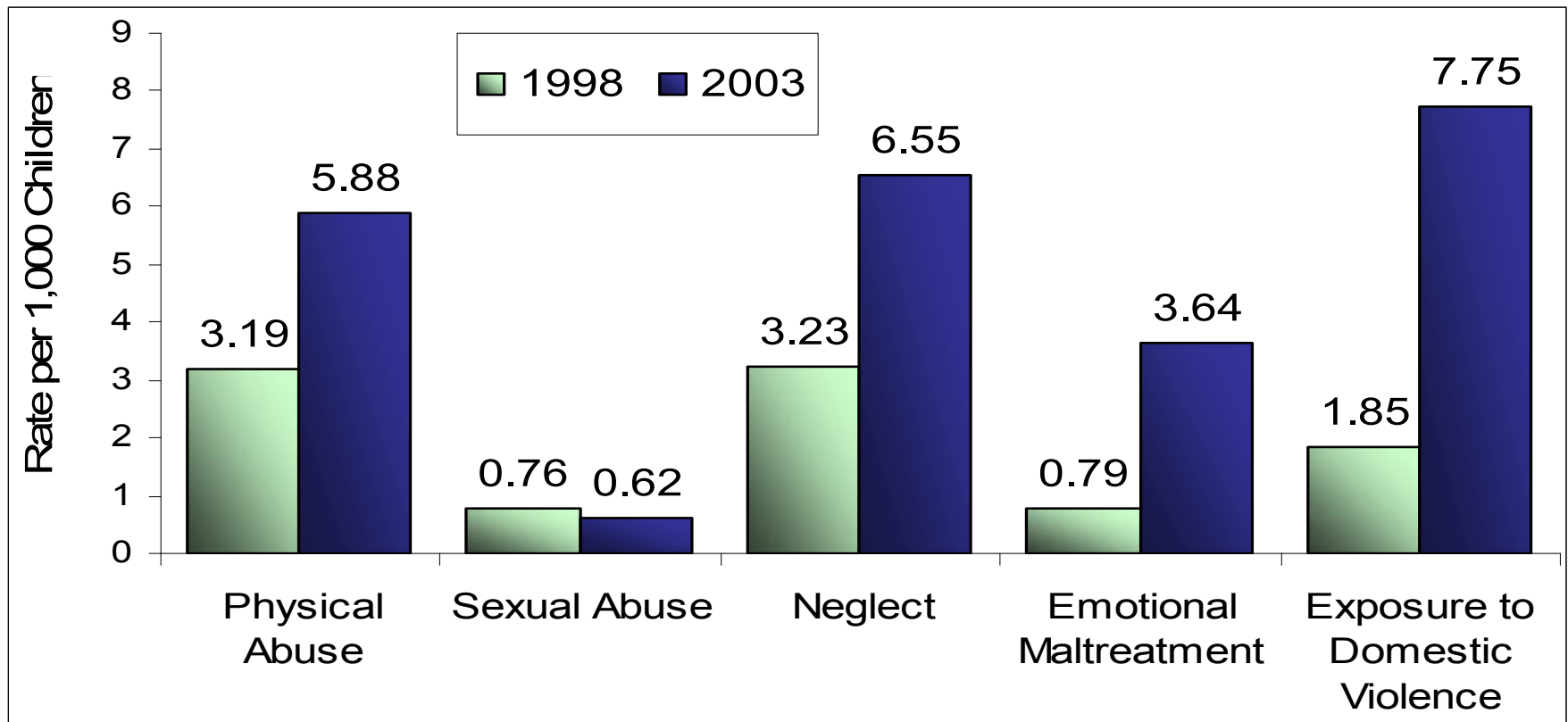
First Wave of Reforms: Child Welfare 1998-2000

- 1998-2000 Reform occurred in response to Coroner's Inquest (1996), Mortality Task Force Report (1997) and Minister's Panel of Experts Report (1998).
- Legislative amendments to CFSA (e.g., inclusion of neglect).
- New funding framework.
- Clarified mandatory reporting responsibility for professionals.
- Mandatory structured and standardized approach to case decision making.
 - *Unprecedented increase in service volume as an unintended consequence of 1998-2000 child welfare reforms.*

Call for Action

- Number of child abuse and neglect investigations doubled between 1998 and 2003 and more than tripled since 1993; the rate of substantiation has increased by 149% since 1998.
- Number of children in care increased from 10,000 in early 1990s to approximately 19,000 in 2004.
- Province spending over \$1.2 billion a year on child welfare services, more than twice as much as the late 1990s.
- Most of this expansion due to a dramatic change in the profile of children and families served:
 - Typical abuse in the early 1990s involved acute problems such as sexual and severe physical abuse;
 - Increasingly, workers responding to cases involving neglect, emotional maltreatment and exposure to domestic violence in addition to these other forms of maltreatment.

Primary Forms of Substantiated Maltreatment in Ontario



Source: Fallon, Trocmé et al. (2005) Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect

Child Welfare Program Evaluation - 2002-03

- Highlighted need for:
 - Stronger emphasis on outcomes
 - Investment in research
 - Development of single information systems
 - More attention to shared services and infrastructures

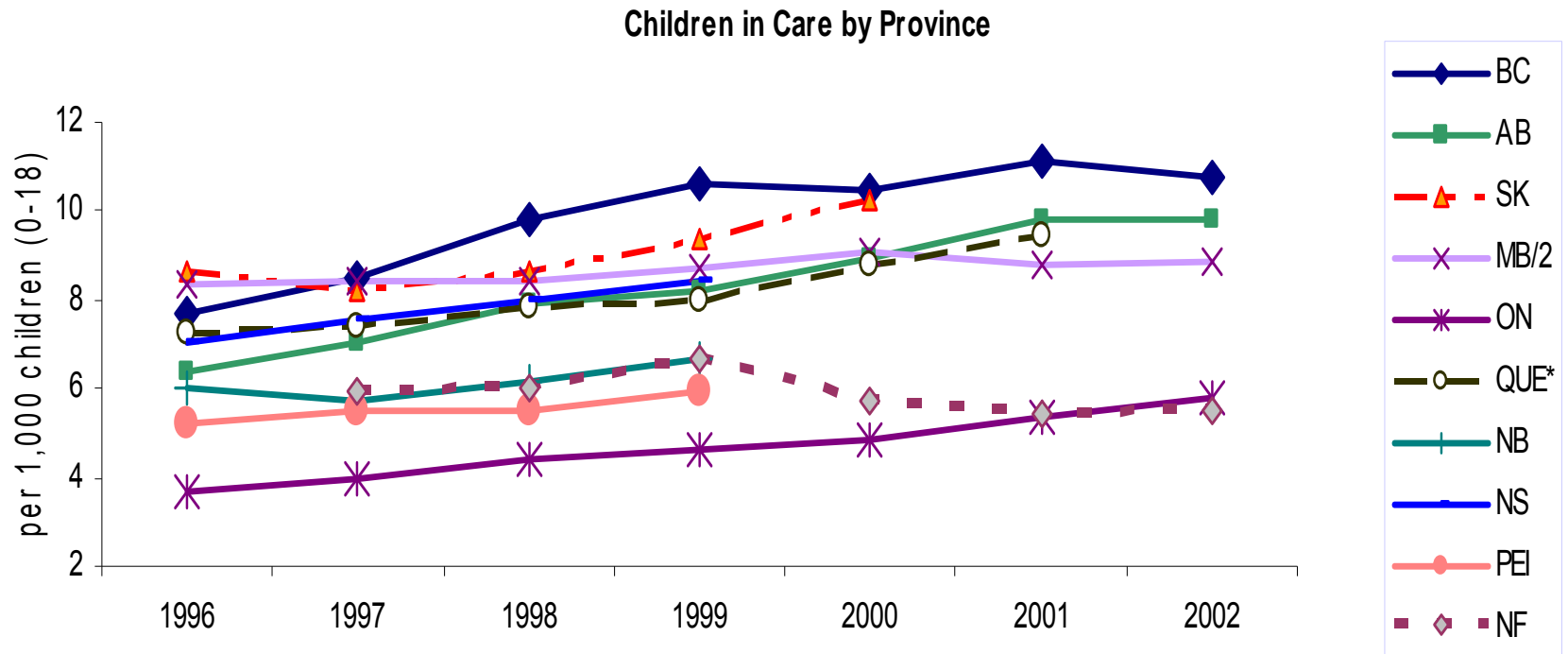
- Encouraged:
 - Less reliance on court interventions
 - Implementation of Looking After Children
 - Clearer and stronger connection with children's mental health
 - Differential approach to intake and assessment
 - Rethinking of funding approach

- Included an Inter-jurisdictional Review

- Report released in 2004

Children in Care

Next to Newfoundland-Labrador, Ontario had the lowest rate of placement in out-of-home care.



Ontario Child Welfare Secretariat

- Established in April 2004 to move ahead with proposals for implementation of priority child welfare program evaluation recommendations.
- Multi-disciplinary team with experience in children's aid societies; research and evaluation; legal services, and ministry corporate and regional policies and processes.
- Continuous comprehensive internal and external stakeholder participation through consultations, reference groups and advisory committees.
- Linked to separate Aboriginal engagement & strategy



The Importance of Core Principles

Guiding Principles

1. ***Outcome Focused:*** Program, policy, funding and legislative directions will achieve better child safety, permanency and child well-being.
 2. ***Balanced Service Approach:*** Maintain a strong emphasis on child safety, build on family and community strengths, encourage prevention and early intervention and achieve continuity of care and relationships for children and youth.
 3. ***Research Based:*** Best practice and research will help guide transformation. A research and evaluation agenda will track key policies implemented.
 4. ***Sustainable and Flexible:***
 - Acknowledge Ontario's diversity; one size will not fit all
 - Solutions must be sustainable, flexible and equitable
 - Planning must be multi-year focused
 5. ***Accountable and Integrated:*** Governance to focus on ends, not means. Better child welfare outcomes encouraged through integrated efforts within and between sectors.
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Consulting Key Stakeholders/Building Consensus

Stakeholder Engagement

- Children & Youth in care
- The voices of Families
 - Birth
 - Adoptive
- Legal Aid Ontario
- Office of Children's Lawyer
- Ministry of Attorney General
- Service & legal staff from both Ministry and Agencies
- Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy
- Adoption Council of Ontario
- Coroner's Office
- OPS Shared Services Bureau
- Ministry of Finance
- Ontario Works
- Prov. Directors of Service Differential Response Committee
- Ont.Assoc. of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) Quality Assurance Committee
- Single Information System Working Group
- OACAS Kinship Care Working Group
- Adoption Task Group
- Judiciary

Aboriginal Engagement

- Chiefs of Ontario
- Native Associations
- Aboriginal Agencies
- Key Leaders & Staff



Connecting the Policy Dots

GOAL: AN EFFECTIVE, SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM THAT PROTECTS CHILDREN AT RISK OF MALTREATMENT AND IMPROVES THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE

DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE

Alternate responses at the front end of the child welfare system. Less adversarial, more customized response(s) to lower-risk situations. Responses will employ strength-based assessments.

PERMANENCY PLANNING

Earlier achievement of permanency for children, via a continuum of alternatives such as Kinship Care, Customary Care, private custody arrangements and enhanced adoption options.

COURT PROCESSES

Availability of mediation services will achieve more timely resolution of issues for children. Improved and more efficient agency and system legal processes will reduce court delays.

SUPPORTED BY:

Research/Evaluation Framework

Supports achievement of positive client outcomes through evidence-based practice.

Single Child Welfare Information System

Provides enhanced capacity to track and report specific child and family profile and outcomes data.

Outcomes Focused Approach to Accountability

More effective, appropriate and rational accountability relationship between ministry and CASs.

ENABLED BY:

A SUSTAINABLE, SIMPLIFIED AND FLEXIBLE MULTI-YEAR FUNDING MODEL THAT FACILITATES EFFICIENT AND STRATEGIC USE OF RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE DESIRED CLIENT OUTCOMES

Legislative Reforms – Goal: To enable transformation of child welfare in Ontario

- *Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006* (Bill 210 amended the *Child and Family Services Act* in 5 key areas:
 - Openness in adoption so children can continue beneficial and meaningful relationships with family and/or community members after adoption.
 - Increased options for permanency planning, including kinship care.
 - New processes for review of decisions of a children's aid society or licensee and client complaints regarding societies.
 - Mandatory consideration of Alternative Dispute Resolution required.
 - Enhanced requirements for consultation and notice to an Aboriginal child's Band or Native Community.

Differential Response - Goal: The right service at the right time

- New Child Protection Standards and Assessment Tools are based on a differential response model that:
 - Supports a customized and less adversarial response at intake - full forensic investigation required, if appropriate.
 - Maintains a strong focus on child safety, well-being and permanence.
 - Strengthens assessment and decision making by:
 - Implementing a family centred team decision making model;
 - Moving to "next generation" clinical tools; and
 - Implementing specialized supplementary screening tools.

Features of Ontario's Model

- Ongoing child risk and safety focus
- Range of customized interventions
- Utilization of child and family strengths/needs
- Active referral of children and families for early intervention and prevention services in their communities
- Involvement of wider range of informal and formal supports
- Collaborative decision making via family group decision making, kinship care and mediation
- Permanency starts at intake and throughout the life of the case
- Clinical tools will continue to be important aides in decision-making
- Greater utilization of professional judgement
- Streamlined documentation formats; more time with families
- Effective engagement and more positive worker/client relationship
- Flexibility to support new/emerging best practices or interventions for specific types of cases

Permanency/Adoption Strategy – Goal: More children and youth for whom secure, family based permanency plans are achieved – “forever family”

- Continuum of permanency planning options that:
 - Promote resilience and permit timely permanent plans; and
 - Balance need for positive outcomes with need to reduce disruption to child's relationship with family, community and culture.
 - The continuum, referred to as, “Pillars of Permanence”, includes:
 - Admission prevention
 - Kinship service and kinship care
 - Customary care
 - Foster care
 - Legal custody
 - Adoption
 - Youth leaving care
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Court Processes - Goal: To reduce delay and divert cases where appropriate

Current Ontario Context

- Approximately 25% of the CFSA applications in the Ontario Court of Justice and almost 41% in the Family Court of the Superior Court of Justice took more than 120 days to reach disposition.
- Ministry moving forward with mechanisms to promote timely resolution of child welfare matters.

Alternatives to Court

- Children's aid societies exploring ways to facilitate case planning that identifies and uses alternatives to court where appropriate.
- Bill 210 requires mandatory consideration of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and permits appointment of Child's Counsel before a court application. Supporting regulations will prescribe methods of ADR.
- Child protection mediation and family group conferencing used in child welfare cases across Ontario and in various jurisdictions around the world.
- Province-wide ADR strategy with flexibility to accommodate traditional/cultural forms of ADR (i.e., methods established by First Nations communities or Aboriginal organizations).

New Funding Model - Goal: Flexible and sustainable within available resources with policy driving the funding direction

- Multi-year funding approach:
 - Is flexible
 - "Multi-year" permits planning over the longer term (3 years)
 - "Results-based" shifts basis for funding allocations from service volume to outcomes and performance
 - Provides incentives to achieve better outcomes
 - Moves the sector towards managing within available resources

 - Direct and facilitate transformation through strategic allocation of resources such as:
 - Building community capacity
 - Developing quality assurance and research capacity
 - Strengthening families and enhance support to family based care
 - Enhancing options for permanence through supports

 - Promotes shared services approaches
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Accountability - Goal: A streamlined, rationalized balance - focus more on "ends" less on "means"

- Revised Joint Directive issued to all children's aid societies from ministry and Ontario's Chief Coroner in March 2006; creates detailed requirements for reporting and review of deaths of children who received services from a children's aid society.

- Ongoing development of an accountability framework that will:
 - Streamline, rationalize accountability relationship
 - Increase focus on monitoring of outcomes
 - Require CASs to establish quality assurance capacity
 - Reinforce board responsibility
 - Reinforce ministry role as service system manager
 - Provide for objective complaint mechanisms

Research/Outcomes - Goal: Evidence-based policy and practice

- Child Welfare Research Fund established in 2005/06 to support research in the areas of differential response, permanency, alternative dispute resolution, and to coordinate research efforts in key areas such as risk assessment, domestic violence and/or foster care and child outcomes.
- 2006/07 research call generated ten research and evaluation initiatives, many of them multi-site or regional collaborations.
- Ten projects received a total of approximately \$900k in 2006/07 grant funds.
- Partnerships with Universities and Researchers

Single Information System (SIS) - Goal: Capacity to track and report child, family, and broader system outcomes data

- Three year project (2005-2008) to design and develop a single information system (web-based) for all 53 children's aid societies in Ontario with the capacity to:
 - Track and report child, family and broader system outcomes data.
 - Link to common financial, human resource and document management systems.
- Data dictionary being developed to ensure consistency in agency recording/reporting.
- SIS piloted in three children's aid societies early in 2007.
- Pilot project results will be evaluated to develop a business case for full implementation.



From Development to Implementation

Build In Advisory Mechanisms to Address Planning & Implementation

- Clients First - children, youth, parents and consumers of service
- Regional Ministry staff as change agents
- Field Advisory committees for each area of focus
- Regular communication/newsletters
- Regular Town-Hall meetings
- Thematic Symposiums focused on key Policy Directions



Conclusion

Lessons Learned/Strategies for Success

- Address the barriers to successful implementation
- Engage stakeholders and create opportunities for ownership
- Be open to and act on the feedback
- Identify champions and imbed transformers
- Fund the critical elements, invest and provide incentives
- Provide broad based and specific training
- Pilot the thorny issues
- Partialize the puzzle - take a balanced and phased approach
- Give the policy a face
- Celebrate and profile success
- "Walk the Talk"
- Relentless Implementation
- Stay true to the core principles and professional ethics



Questions/Discussion