

Staff Retention in Child and Family Services

Communication Skills Workbook 4

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(inside of front cover page)

Dedication

This workbook series is dedicated to child and family service supervisors everywhere who work tirelessly with their staff to make the world a better place for children and families at risk.

Acknowledgements

First, we gratefully acknowledge the authors, Judith McKenzie, John McKenzie and Rosemary Jackson, for their incredible commitment in developing this unique and useful workbook series. This inspired team brought years of child and family service experience and a sense of urgency to the work that comes from "knowing" that children and their families need a stable workforce to help them realize their potential and that effective child and family service supervisors hold the key to staff retention.

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Introduction to Workbook Series

Purpose of this Series

The purpose of this training and series of workbooks is to increase child and family service agencies' effectiveness in developing and retaining their staff by applying information from research and best retention practices to their work.

The foundation for this material is the important mission of child and family service to provide safety, permanence and well being for children, within a context of family-centered practice. Underpinning this foundation is a heightened sensitivity to the potential impact of significant emotional events on child and family service professionals which can lead to excessive stress, burnout and, possibly, secondary trauma. Case materials, tools and skills integrated throughout this workbook series intend to honor and support leaders and supervisors as they cope with the value dilemmas and emotional content found in the "real world" of child and family services.

The ultimate goal of this curriculum is to improve retention practices and outcomes for child and family service agencies. With such an end in mind everybody wins: the staff, the agency, the families and children, and especially the supervisor, whose life is vastly improved by having a stable, loyal workforce.

This curriculum has been designed with a series of workbooks. A workbook is provided for each of the following subjects in the core curriculum series.

- Workbook 1 The Role of Leaders in Staff Retention: provides information, tools and methods for leaders to use to support supervisors in creating and sustaining a positive culture for staff retention.
- Workbook 2 The Practice of Retention-Focused Supervision: provides research information and supervisory competencies for retaining effective staff, including self-assessment and planning tools. It includes methods and tools for setting objectives, structuring the supervisory process and managing stress in the workplace.
- **Workbook 3 Working with Differences**: provides understanding, methods and tools for tailoring supervision to the diverse characteristics, learning and behavioral styles and professional development needs of staff.
- **Workbook 4 Communications Skills:** provides specific information, tools and activities to adapt communication skills to the supervisory relationship.
- **Workbook 5 The First Six Months:** provides a structure, methods and tools for orienting, supporting and training new staff during their first six months on the job, with particular attention to helping staff cope with and manage the stressors of the job.
- Workbook 6 Recruiting and Selecting the Right Staff in Child and Family Service: provides information on promising practices and tools for recruiting and selecting front line staff; includes profiles of desirable qualities needed in front-line supervisors and staff and methods for developing effective collaborations with universities.



Child Welfare is not rocket science. It's harder than rocket science.

- David Liederman, former CWLA CEO

The Underlying Principles of this Training Curriculum

The Staff Retention in Child and Family Service workbook series is based on a review of research literature in child and family service, human services and business. The research focused on the many studies that have to do with staff turnover and retention. Additionally, resilient workers and supervisors who stayed with their current agencies for at least two years were interviewed and surveyed in public and private agencies throughout Michigan to determine what underpins their commitment to the field. There was a strong consensus about what was learned about workplace retention across business, human service work and child and family service, but there were also some significant differences. Understanding the differences between child and family service and business is critical to retaining and developing staff in human service. Those differences are fundamental to the approach that is expressed in this training program and are summarized as follows:

Child and family service is challenging and life-changing work

Child and family service staff, many of whom are young and inexperienced, often make "god-like" decisions every day that have profound effects on the lives and destinies of children and their families. They see and experience the most tragic human conditions, extreme poverty, child neglect and abuse, inter-generational violence and substance abuse. Yet, they have to find a way to assure safety of children while working toward permanence and well being for both children and their families. Child and family service staff do this in a system that is under-funded, under-staffed, and sometimes chaotic and hardened to the plight of the people who are served by it and those who work in it.

This curriculum does not minimize the difficulties of the work (the reality of low pay, high workloads, and high turnover) but it doesn't belabor these issues either. It recognizes that these issues need to be addressed, especially when an agency is not competitive with other similar agencies offering the same service. This curriculum stresses that child and family service retention rates can be improved by understanding and building upon those resilient factors that attract people to and keep them in the profession.

Child and family service is mission and values centered

Those who enter the profession of child and family service are not motivated by profit. They are mission-driven. They are usually motivated by "doing good and making a difference" for others, particularly children who have been victimized. They come to accept that child and family service work is mainly about working with and through parents.

This curriculum offers an understanding of the mission and value-centered nature of this work as a context for all of the materials developed. To undervalue the significance of idealism and a need to help others in the motivation of staff would be wrong. The concept of mission is what energizes child and family service people and needs to be reinforced at every step of the retention process. Attention

to feelings, showing appreciation and strengthening resiliency are essential for prevention of burnout and achieving good outcomes for children and families.

The supervisor in child and family service is the most influential person in staff retention

The research shows that having a good relationship with the front line "boss" or supervisor is one of the most important factors in retention. This is even more essential in child and family service due to the stressful nature of the work. Managing one's own feelings and learning effective relationship skills to help others manage their feelings and assumptions are a big part of the work that has to be done. The inadequacies of the system, along with the multiple demands and challenging relationships, can cause stress, burnout and result in "secondary trauma" for child and family service staff. An effective supervisor will facilitate professional development of his/her staff by consistently modeling effective relationship and strengths-oriented behaviors that help staff grow through their most difficult and/or emotionally charged times and events. An effective supervisor will pay attention to the personal and professional growth needs of their staff and offer recognition, encouragement and support. To do this well, supervisors have to be aware of their own vulnerabilities, while building on their personal style and strengths.

What a new staff person experiences within the first year is crucial to retention

An experienced supervisor recognizes that over half of turnover occurs in a staff person's first year on the job. What a staff person first experiences, especially with their supervisor, will determine whether he/she will stay with the agency and ultimately build a career in child and family service.

Respect for a person's strengths, uniqueness, and rights are the primary elements in the success of all staff retention efforts

How a staff person is treated by the agency and, in particular, by his/her supervisor will become a mirror for how clients will be treated by staff. Honoring and building on staff strengths, including the individual's capacity to cope with stress, learn and change, is key to successful retention in child and family service. Preserving the dignity of the individual is not only important in staff retention. It is a principle that is essential to achieving positive outcomes with families. A fundamental belief in the resiliency of people provides a reservoir of hope in child and family service.

This training curriculum takes the view that all participants: agency leaders, supervisors and staff, are partners in improving retention of staff in child and family service. The agency's culture for retention will be continuously improved only to the extent that people share and learn from one another. Training materials, language and case examples are designed to be strengths-based and respectful of public and private agencies, supervisors, staff and families.

How to Use this Workbook

This training curriculum uses a workbook format for the following reasons:

- Participants who attend a training session have the information and tools at their fingertips to use as reference long after they attend the training
- Individuals can benefit from the program by using the workbooks as self-study tools, if they cannot attend a group training
- Learning activities appear throughout each workbook to encourage agencies and staff to use the materials in small groups during formal staff training or more informal sessions
- Participants attending the training can share the materials and coach others through the program
- Agencies can use the units within workbooks to review and build specific competencies e.g., when a supervisor is new to the position, following a performance review and/or when a need specific to the agency has been identified

Icon	Description
	Activity – this icon represents an activity that can be used by an individual for self-reflection and/or for small group discussions.
	Small Group Activity – this icon represents an activity that is best done in
	small groups where individuals can share insights and learn from each other.
	Quotes – this icon is to represent words of wisdom that are meant to be
	inspirational or to bring home an important point to the user.
	Case Study – this icon represents a case study where content from the
	workbook is applied to typical supervisor/staff situations and interactions.
ab	Important Points to remember – this icon represents a summary of the key
	points contained in the workbook unit.
	Tools – this icon represents a tool that can be adapted and used in the
want of	workplace to further enhance the supervisor's repertoire. All tools are provided in the appendix of each workbook for duplication and use in quantity.
	provided in the appendix of each workbook for duplication and use in quantity.

Debriefing Small Group Activities

When discussion questions and/or other activities are used in a small group, it is helpful for someone to act as a facilitator and recorder of notes to engage the group in responding to at least two additional questions:

- What lessons did we learn from this experience?
- What implications does this have for what we will continue to do, start or stop doing in the future?

Sequence of Workbooks

All the workbooks were designed to stand-alone and can be used in any sequence based on the organization's and/or an individual's needs and priorities.

Each workbook has numbered units. For example Unit 3 in Workbook 3 will be numbered Unit 3.3. Units extracted from a workbook can be used in management and supervisory staff meetings, brief "Lunch and Learn" sessions, or in supervisor support groups. Using this material in the workplace is highly recommended because the sharing of ideas and synergy among like-minded people can aid and support individual growth and/or agency-wide culture change.

Participants can feel free to duplicate and share all activities and tools contained in these workbooks. Please acknowledge the source of the information when reproducing the materials.

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4.0 Communication Skills for Retention Focused Supervisors

Learning Objectives:

- Understand how thoughts, feelings, assumptions and behavior impact communication
- Learn to encourage staff to communicate what they are thinking, feeling and doing through the use of effective listening and observation
- Increase effectiveness in asking questions
- Increase the ability to assist staff in making positive changes through the use of constructive feedback and constructive confrontation
- Understand the role that recognizing staff accomplishments and giving encouragement play in retaining staff
- Learn to employ empathy to increase supervisory effectiveness

Using retention focused communication skills allows supervisors to support staff in being the "expert" on their practice. Supervisors who start with the assumption that staff have strengths that can be developed are more likely to let them know that their abilities are respected and will avoid dwelling on what they have done wrong. These supervisors begin first by asking about successes and then give positive feedback for accomplishments. They are willing to apologize for mistakes or misunderstandings that are their responsibility and they do not let problem issues go unaddressed. They place a high premium on helping staff communicate their needs and assumptions and they look beyond behavior to what underlies their responses. Finally, retention focused supervisors utilize confrontational skills that help staff grow and develop.

Effective communication is an art *and* a science. For retention focused supervisors, learning the art is understanding how to best communicate with individual staff. The science of communication includes several elements that are present in every attempt at communication. These elements include: what is being communicated, how it is being communicated, why it is being communicated and those factors which enhance or distract from the communication.

The chart that follows depicts what is involved in communication.

Elements Of Communication

Mode (what)	Medium (how)	Purpose (why)	Influencers
 Focus/attention Listen Observe Talk Respond Behave/act 	 Verbal / words Non verbal Hearing Seeing Doing Eye movement Body language Action Create a visual Write Illustrate 	 Casual/entertain Inform/instruct Clarify Encourage Give feedback Confront issues Convince/sell Problem solve Express emotion Show empathy 	 Personality Assumptions Beliefs Emotions Trust Role - as perceived by self and by others Distractions - noise both internal and external



Retention focused supervisors need to pay attention to how their own behavioral style, feelings and biases impact how they communicate with staff. Understanding personal influencers is vital to being an effective communicator. Workbook 3, *Working with Differences*, addresses many of these influences.

The next several units of this workbook cover the following competencies:

Challenge staff to rethink their blind spots, assumptions and values

Communication Skills: I model the relationship and communication skills that I want my staff to emulate with their clients. If asked, my staff would say that I		
Tailor my communication based on who I am, who my staff are and what the situation requires		
Listen carefully to what is being communicated and summarize what I hear		
Ask questions that draw out additional information		
Look for and evaluate nonverbal cues		
Identify and work with the feelings behind the words		
Keep an open mind and ask open questions		
Tell the truth and give thoughtful feedback that focuses on actions and not attitude		
Give feedback that works to instruct and assist staff rather than alienate them		
Ask clarifying questions to better understand staff emotions, attitudes and behaviors		

Important points to remember

Retention focused supervisors employ effective communication techniques that are strengths-based and allow staff to be the expert on their practice.



- Retention focused supervisors make the extra effort to communicate their willingness to work through issues that arise. They place a high premium on helping staff to communicate their needs and assumptions and they look beyond behavior to what underlies their responses.
- Several elements are present in every attempt at communication. These elements include: what is being communicated, how it is being communicated, why it is being communicated and those factors which enhance or distract from the communication.
- Supervisors will need to pay attention to how their own behavioral style, feelings and biases impact how they communicate with staff. Understanding personal influencers is vital to being an effective communicator.



The basic building block of good communications is the feeling that every human being is unique and of value.

- Unknown author

4.1 The Impact of Behavioral Styles, Feelings & Assumptions on Communication

Feelings and assumptions are at the very heart of the work that is done in child and family services. Like the iceberg diagram pictured here, thoughts and feelings lie below the surface and can't be readily seen. Behaviors are often the only visible part of feelings and assumptions.

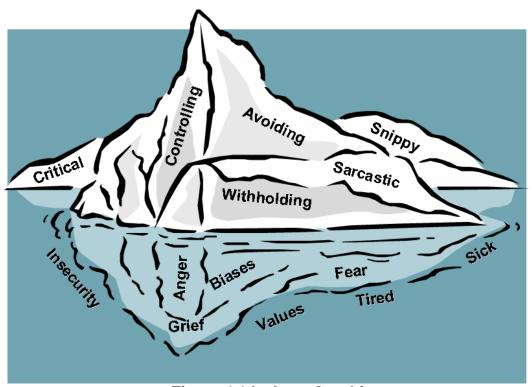


Figure 4.1 Iceberg Graphic

Supervisors and staff are trained to be aware of underlying feelings and assumptions in the work that they do with children and families, but often these skills are left behind when they deal with each other. When this happens, staff's behavioral style, thoughts and feelings do not have an appropriate avenue for expression. Likewise, supervisors may not be aware of how their behavioral style, feelings and assumptions affect their communications with staff. (Refer to Workbook 3 for detailed information about understanding and working with various behavioral styles).

Looking beyond the words and behaviors to understand how feelings and assumptions shape our communication helps to paint a clearer picture of how to work more effectively with staff and colleagues.

This will require that supervisors be vigilant in looking for what lies beneath actions of staff by uncovering the thoughts and feelings that are below the surface. This is especially true when staff and colleagues feel stressed and/or under attack or when supervisors are dealing with staff whose personality and/or style of relating are very different from their own.

The best way to assure that a supervisor fully understands what their staff are saying is to hone communication skills that are designed to get to the heart of assumptions, feelings and beliefs. The communications skills discussed in the following units are designed to do just that.

The case study *Tim and Janet* that follows is designed to give supervisors an opportunity to identify the feelings and assumptions that can be underlying supervisory interactions.

Activity: Identifying Feelings and Assumptions



Instructions:

- 1. Please read the case study.
- 2. Answer the questions that follow.

Case Study: Tim and Janet

Janet has been on Tim's adoption team for six months. She came to the agency as an experienced foster care worker. Janet has been working with the Costello family who has filed a petition to adopt Billy, a ten-year-old boy with emotional problems. Billy was the first adoption placement that Janet made when she was hired and he has always been one of her favorite children. She has had reservations about the Costello's adopting Billy from the beginning. Recently Billy has begun to demonstrate problematic behaviors and the Costello's have been calling Janet frequently for support and resources.

Tim is having a bad day. He has just received an unpleasant call from the Costello's. After hanging up he goes to look for Janet. He finds her in the lunchroom with other staff. He scowls and yells across the room that he needs to talk with her right away. They go into his office.

Tim: I just got a call from Mr. Costello and he wasn't happy. What is going on?

Janet: Well, Mr. Costello called me a couple of days ago. He said that he is really concerned about his wife. She is feeling worn out with Billy. I really think that Mrs. Costello's expectations are just too high for Billy. After all he has been through, you'd think she'd cut him some slack. I made an appointment to see them this week, but then when we found out licensing was coming so I had to cancel with them.

Tim: Mr. Costello sounded really upset. It sounds like they need your help right now. Did you reschedule with them?

Janet: Well not yet, but I plan to.

Tim: What do you mean, you plan to? You need to move it up to the top of your to-do list.

Janet: (*Stares at her note pad*)

Tim: Mr. Costello said that he had concerns about Billy's attachment to Mrs. Costello. Do you know what he's talking about?

Janet: Sure I do, but I told the Costello's not to expect him to attach right away. Mrs. Costello says that Billy won't take direction from her, is openly disrespectful and last week he threw a glass of Coke at her. She is getting to the point that she can't tell me one good thing about him. She always complains about him. This really upsets me because I told the Costellos everything about Billy before I even placed him. They knew everything going in. Why are they acting like this is such a surprise?

The phone on Tim's desk rings.

Tim: (*Reaches for the phone*) This might be important.

Tim hangs up the phone several minutes later.

Tim: OK, where were we? Oh, yeah, Mrs. Costello strikes me as someone who really gets a lot out of being a "mom." She home-schools her kids and the family seems really centered around them. How do you think Billy's rejection of her is making her feel?

Janet: Pretty bad I guess. She really is the earth mother type. I think her whole identity is wrapped up in being a mom. The problem is that she doesn't listen to me. She acts like I don't know anything one minute and the next she wants me to fix it. Anyway, how can I help her if she won't try anything I suggest?

Tim: Based on what you know about Mrs. Costello, how easy do you think it is for her to admit that she needs help?

Janet: (*Crosses her arms across her chest*) Well I really made her prove that she could handle a kid like Billy before I placed him because I knew he really needed someone to make a commitment to him. He just can't handle another rejection.

Tim: This kind of work is tough. You have to learn that it's different than foster care where the main goal is to find a safe environment for children. If you're going to do adoption work you're going to have to change your perspective and work to support the family. You can't protect this kid forever. Frankly, I don't think you'll find a better family than the Costellos.

Janet: I understand the difference between foster care and adoption, but I'm not sure the Costellos do. I can't believe how Mrs. Costello has responded to the problems with Billy. She wanted to be his mom, now that she is, she can't handle him.

There is a knock at the door and the administrative assistant comes in to get Tim's weekly statistical report. He takes several minutes to rummage through the pile on his desk in an effort to locate the report. Janet is twisting her pen as she waits.

Tim: Well it looks like you've still got some work to do with the Costellos. Avoiding them isn't going to help. I want you to ask Penny to go out with you on your next home visit. She has tons of adoption experience.

Janet: (*Gets up and starts walking out.*) Sure, why not? Maybe then you'll see that the Costellos are the real problem here!

1.	List the assumptions that Tim may have made and the corresponding feelings that these assumptions provoke in him.
2.	List the assumptions that Janet may have made and the corresponding feelings that these assumptions provoke in her.
3.	List the behaviors Tim exhibits that are based on his assumptions and feelings.
4.	List the behaviors Janet exhibits that are based on her assumptions and feelings.
5.	Consider and record what Tim could have done differently in this situation.

The situation depicted between Tim and Janet is extreme in some aspects, but not wholly unheard of in interactions between supervisors and their staff. The information on communication skills that follows is designed to help supervisors avoid this type of situation, and help them address issues with their staff.

Tools and techniques to address the feelings, assumptions and behaviors that arise in supervisory interactions are presented in detail in the following units.

Important points to remember

 Feelings and assumptions are at the heart of the work done in human services.



- Supervisors need to understand their own behavioral style, feelings and assumptions to be able to understand those of their staff.
- Communication skills designed to support staff, by getting to the heart of their assumptions, feelings and beliefs, are important tools for retention focused supervisors.
- Understanding the impact of one's own behavioral style, feelings and biases as well as those of staff is vital to being an effective communicator.
- Good communication skills allow supervisors to surface staff feelings and assumptions to assist them in being more effective in their work with children and families.

4.2 Listening and Observation

What Do You Mean I'm Not Listening?

As the foster care supervisor in a large agency, Alice has a million things to do this morning. She is meeting with her program manager, Vivian, at 10:00 AM and she hasn't gotten all of the placement statistics ready yet. She is also finishing up a six-month performance review for her newest foster care worker. She has to get the performance review to him before he leaves for a home call in an hour. There are four phone calls that she has to return before noon. To top it all off, she really needs to get out of the office on time tonight to make it to her daughter's dance recital. If she really concentrates, she can get it all done on time.

Just as she dives into the placement statistics, there is a knock and her door and one of her workers, Deb, says: "I've got a problem with the Beales case, do you have a minute?" Alice knows she doesn't have time to deal with Deb, her mind is on her meeting with her program manager, but she waves her into her office and says: "What's up?"

As Deb begins to tell Alice about how she is experiencing Mrs. Beale's resistance to working with her foster child's birth mother, Alice's mind is wandering. She is wondering if she will get the placement statistics finished before 10:00. She hears the words Deb is saying, but doesn't hear the increasing frustration in her voice.

Alice says: "Deb you know Mrs. Beales is one of our best foster moms, why can't you work this through with her?" Deb mutters: "You haven't heard a word I've said," as she leaves Alice's office.

Listening: A Master Skill

Simply put, listening is the foundation for all communication skills. This is not new information for people who work in the child and family services field. While many supervisors want to listen to staff, it is easy to slip into giving advice in the heat of the moment, correcting and/or giving directives. With the multiple demands supervisors have to manage day-to-day, good communication skills, including effective listening, can be pushed to the back burner. This unit will look at listening and becoming an effective listener. The skill of listening will need to be mastered to be able to hone all of the remaining communication skills that are discussed in this workbook.

Effective listening is an essential component to relationship building between supervisors and their staff. This seems to be a simple concept, but it is hard to do consistently. Being able to listen to what the staff person has to say and how he/she says it, as well as recognizing the emotion behind what is being said, is key to effective supervision.

Modeling effective listening skills is also vital to helping staff learn how to listen more effectively in their work with children and families. When it comes to learning how to effectively communicate with clients, the most powerful role model that a staff person has is his/her supervisor.

The following quick quiz is designed to help supervisors take a look at their listening skills with staff as well as help them discover the areas where they might be taking a short cut at the expense of effective communication.

Activity: Listening Skills Quiz



Instructions:

- 1. Read the following statements and think about your listening style with your staff. Answer true or false to each statement listed.
- 2. When you have finished the quiz, go back and look at the areas that you answered as true.
- 3. Circle areas that you may want to consider working on as you go through the remainder of this workbook.

Tool: Listening Skills Quiz



- T F 1. When staff talk to me, I pretend to listen even if I become distracted or my thoughts drift.
- T F 2. When I know what the staff person is going to say, I answer right away, before he/she has finished talking.
- T F 3. I find myself interrupting my staff to interject a thought or a question.
- T F 4. I have a hard time encouraging staff to talk about their feelings when discussing a case.
- T F 5. When trying to explain something, I don't think to ask my staff if they understand what I am saying.
- T F 6. When I am unsure of what a staff person is trying to say to me, I find it hard to ask for clarification.
- T F | 7. I find it difficult to see things from my staff's point of view.
- T F 8. I routinely use sarcasm or jokes when communicating with staff.
- T F 9. I get so caught up in thinking about how I am going to respond to the staff person talking that I forget to listen to what is being said.
- T F 10. When a staff person talks to me about a problem, my first response is to offer a solution to the problem.
- T F 11. I find myself coming to a conclusion even before I have heard all of the information.
- T F | 12. I respond to suggestions or opinions of the staff person with "yes, but..."
- T F 13. I find it difficult to put off responding to a staff person even when I need time to think about what I am going to say.
- T F 14. I make assumptions about the thoughts and/or feelings of the staff person who is talking.
- T F 15. When I don't have time to give a staff person my full attention, I have a hard time telling him/her that we will need to schedule a time later in the day to talk.

Small Group Activity: Practicing Listening



Instructions:

- 1. Choose a partner that you don't know well. Decide on a topic (e.g.: where you will go for lunch, a place you have visited, etc.)
- 2. Have each person in the dyad alternate talking about the topic in one sentence lines. The catch is that before each of you speaks, you must silently count to 5 following the end of the alternate person's sentence.
- 3. Continue with the scene you have chosen, following the five-count rule for two minutes.
- 4. When you have finished answer the questions that follow.

1. How did it feel to have to wait before you added your thought?	
2. Did you find it easy or hard to wait to talk?	
3. Did you change your mind in the five seconds regarding what you were going to say?	
3. Did you change your mind in the rive seconds regarding what you were going to say.	

This exercise illustrates how supervisors may be formulating responses prematurely. This can lead to miscommunication and misreading staff intent. Slowing down and paying attention to what staff are saying is vital in developing retention focused supervision skills.



I remind myself every morning: nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening.

Larry King

It is easy to lapse into communication skills that take short cuts or cut-off interactions with staff. Often supervisors are unaware that they are not listening or responding to what is being communicated as much as to what they think they are hearing. The following listening tool is designed to make sure that effective listening is occurring:

Tool: Executing Effective Listening

Listen carefully

- □ Make a conscious effort to allow time to listen
- □ Focus your complete attention to the task of listening.
- □ Minimize distractions, both internally and externally.
- □ Work to maintain body language that encourages communication: lean in toward the staff person, keep arms uncrossed, nod
- ☐ Maintain eye contact as culturally appropriate
- □ Refrain from thinking of a response

Pay attention to non-verbal behaviors

- □ Look for eye contact from the staff person as is culturally appropriate
- □ Make note of the staff person's posture: sitting up straight, slouching, arms crossed or uncrossed
- ☐ Make note of the staff person's facial expression
 - What does the look on the staff person's face tell you about his/her feelings?
- ☐ Make note of the staff person's breathing
 - What does the staff person's breathing tell you about his/her feelings?

Paraphrase and summarize what you hear

- □ Focus on the staff person's message avoid forming responses prematurely
- ☐ Check to see if you understood what is being said by restating the essence of what was
- ☐ Ask questions to check out whether or not your perceptions are correct

Draw out additional information

- ☐ Ask questions that require additional details and understanding
- □ Check to make sure you have accurately heard what is said ask clarifying questions
- □ Focus on the staff person's perceptions rather than the "facts"

Work with feelings

- ☐ Ask the staff person to talk about his/her feelings rather than simply the facts
- ☐ Identify the feelings that you hear
- ☐ Ask if you are labeling these feelings correctly
- □ Learn to be comfortable with lapses in the conversations or periods of silence



Listening

When I ask you to listen to me, and you start to give me advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me, and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

LISTEN: All that I ask is that you listen, not talk or do - just hear me.

When you do something for me that I can do for myself,
you contribute to my feelings of inadequacy.
But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,
no matter how irrational,
then I can quit trying to convince you
and go about the business of understanding what's behind my feelings.

So, Please listen and just hear me and if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn - and then I will listen to you!

Anonymous

Observation Skills

When supervisors really listen, they are able to take the time to observe what is happening in the interaction between themselves and the staff person. Looking for and understanding staff's non-verbal communication is important for supervisors because so much of how people communicate is through their body language. This includes the non-verbal movements made as a part of communication, anything from waving hands to involuntary twitching of facial muscles.

Much of all non-verbal communication is unconscious and is influenced by lifestyle, family, cultural background, and other factors. Just as verbal communication can be misunderstood, so can body language. It is just as important for supervisors to be aware of their own body language and what they are communicating in a non-verbal way, as it is to be aware of each staff person's non-verbal communication. Awareness is the first step to interpreting non-verbal communication. As with verbal communication, ask for clarification regarding the non-verbal communication of another when needed.

Maximizing body language to enhance communication skills is a skill that retention focused supervisors will want to master. The following tool, *Nonverbal Techniques to Improve Communication*, is designed to give supervisors tips to improve their communication skills and help staff to do the same.

Tool: Nonverbal Techniques to Improve Communication



- ☐ Make a conscious effort to pay attention to your body language and the body language of the staff person
- □ Ask for feedback from others regarding your non-verbal communication, as you may be unaware of your own body language
- ☐ Make sure that you and the staff person are within a comfortable distance from each other Avoid being too close, which can be seen as confrontational Avoid being too far away, which can be seen as lacking interest
- ☐ Make an effort to be relaxed and attentive resist distractions that take your focus away form the interaction at hand
- □ Pay attention to posture:

Avoid slouching, which can be seen as too relaxed or disinterested Avoid sitting rigidly, which can be seen as too intense or angry

- □ Signal that you are interested by leaning in slightly toward the staff person you are talking with
- ☐ Maintain frequent and varied eye contact:

Avoid staring, glaring, or looking away

Adjust eye contact to take into account what is culturally acceptable for a specific person

☐ Give appropriate nonverbal communication while the staff person is talking:

Nodding approval

Smiling

Looking intent or concerned

- Make sure that your gestures don't compete with your words for attention
 Don't use your feet and legs as a barrier
 Use open gestures such as unclenched hands, uncrossed arms and legs
 Don't let your gestures reveal frustration, anger or impatience limit wild gestures and movements
- □ Monitor your speech:

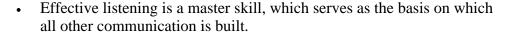
Be conscious of your rate of speech – don't talk too fast Avoid sounding impatient or hesitant Control the tone of your voice - avoid sounding cold and harsh Maintain a clearly audible voice - neither too loud nor too soft

☐ Be aware of your facial expressions

Work to keep your facial expressions interested and open

Even subtle facial expressions can signal disinterest or judgment

Important points to remember





- Being able to listen not only to what the staff person is saying, but also to the emotion behind the words is an essential component in building strong supervisory relationships with staff.
- Effective listening includes focus; paying attention to non-verbal behavior; paraphrasing and summarizing; drawing out additional information; and acknowledging feelings.
- Observational skills are important in listening because much of how people communicate is through their body language.
- Supervisors need to be aware of both their body language and that of staff and (just as in verbal communication) they need to be able to ask for clarification when they need it.

4.3 Effective Use of Questions in Supervision

Once supervisors are effectively listening and observing, they can use questions to help staff look at specific issues, situations, assumptions and feelings. A variety of types of questions will be looked at in this unit including: clarifying questions, open questions and feeling questions.

Clarifying Questions

Clarifying questions are designed to stimulate thought and are used to help staff communicate what they know or feel about a situation. The best clarifying questions are those that put aside assumptions and are posed in an interested and even curious manner. They are used to draw out the staff person; find out how he/she sees the situation; encourage him/her to expand on the information being offered and/or help him/her to think about the situation in a new or different way. Clarifying questions are reasonable questions that try to understand what staff are experiencing. They are also opportunities for the supervisor to guide the staff person's decision-making.

Some of the objectives in using clarifying questions as well as some examples of question starters are listed in the following tool, *Utilizing Clarifying Questions Based on Objective*.



Tool: Utilizing Clarifying Questions Based on Objective

If the Objective is:	Example of a Clarifying Question:
1. To obtain information	What happened when
2. To look at relationships or causes	How does respond towhen What happened when you
3. To develop new ideas	How else could you
4. To test new ideas	What would happen if you did
5. To focus the discussion	Can we go back to
6. To advance the discussion	What are the next steps
7. To broaden the discussion	What else do we need to think about
8. To bring out opinions and attitudes	How would you feel if What do you think about
9. To suggest an idea, action or decision	What do you think would happen if you were to
10. To come to agreement or a conclusion	Can we say thatrepresents our thinking

Activity: Using Clarifying Questions



Instructions:

- 1. Think of one troublesome interaction that you have had with a staff person in the last week and write a brief description of that interaction in Box 1.
- 2. In Box 2 write down all the thoughts and feelings you had during that interaction.
- 3. In Box 3 write down what you remember saying during the interaction.
- 4. In Box 4 write down what you would like to say if you could redo the interaction. Be sure to ask as many clarifying question as you can think of that you could have used in that interaction.
- 5. In Box 5 give a brief description of your actions during the interaction.
- 6. In Box 6 give a brief description of how you would change your actions in the future.

Box 1	Box 2
The difficult situation was:	What I may have been thinking or feeling during this situation:
Box 3	Box 4
What I said during the interaction:	What I wish I had said: (Include clarifying questions)
Box 5	Box 6
What I did during the interaction:	What I will do next time:

The case study, *Sam*, is designed to give supervisors an opportunity to enhance their skills in the use of effective listening and clarifying questions. The study looks at the issue that workers might face in the first six months on the job.

Activity: Using Effective Listening and Clarifying Questions in Supervision

Instructions:

- 1. Please read the following case study.
- 2. Answer the questions that follow.



Case Study: Sam

Sam is a new CPS worker that has been on Kerry's staff for five months. He began State employment straight out of graduate school. Sam has always appeared to be confident in his approach. He has recently come back from an adjudication hearing on a neglect petition. Kerry sees him in the hall and asks him about the hearing.

Kerry: How'd it go on the Smith case?

Sam: OK, I guess. (Grimaces)

Kerry: Doesn't sound like it was that OK. What happened?

Sam: Well it's the defense attorney. He's something else.

Kerry: Yeah, well there are some real hard-core attorneys out there.

Sam: Well it's not just that. It's that I know the guy. Our kids were on the same soccer team last year. Before the hearing we were in the waiting room talking about last season and everything seemed fine.

Kerry: What happened when you got on the stand to testify?

Sam: Well the guy tries to destroy me. Made it seem like I hadn't done what I should have on the case. Questioned the way the petition was written up. Cut me off when I tried to explain myself. He asked questions but wouldn't even let me answer them. I felt like an idiot!

Kerry: Attorneys take courses in how to make witnesses look and feel incompetent. That's one of their best tactics and it sure feels uncomfortable when you're in the hot seat. You have to remember that testifying in court is a skill and it takes time to learn how to do it well. You can't let him get to you.

Sam: Yeah, well the worst part of the whole thing was that once we get out of the court room, he acts like nothing happened. He wants to know if my kids are going to be on the team this year. He's got to be kidding, like I'm going to want to talk to him after the way he treated me.

Kerry: You know that you can't take this stuff personally. Court is an adversarial system and both the worker and the attorney have a role to represent. The attorney is just doing his job, which is to find no credibility in the case. He's not really attacking you, Sam, he's just doing his job. He was probably shocked when you took it personally.

Sam: Yeah, I know, but I've worked hard on this case and I don't like someone making me out to be a slacker who isn't doing what I'm supposed to do. He was just so smug about it!

Kerry: Sounds like we need to talk about this some more. When is our next supervision scheduled?

1. Circle the effective listening techniques Kerry used in her conversation with Sam.
2. Identify any additional effective listening techniques that Kerry could have used.
3. Identify the thoughts and feelings that might be underlying Sam's communication with
Kerry.
4. Underline the clarifying questions that Kerry used in her conversation with Sam.
5. Identify any additional clarifying questions that Kerry could have used.

Small Group Activity: Using Effective Listening and Clarifying Questions in Supervision

Instructions:
1. Select two participants to role-play the situation between Sam and Kerry.
2. Have the person role playing Kerry utilize the effective listening and clarifying questions identified to enhance his/her role.
3. Have the remaining group members serve as observers to the role-play.
After the role- play, answer the following questions:
1. What techniques did "Kerry" utilize?
2. How did "Sam" respond?

Open Questions

Clarifying questions are open-ended questions. When used by supervisors, open questions are designed to assist staff with their casework role, help them understand their emotional response to the job, support the relationships between staff members and supervisors and serve to strengthen the relationships between staff and the children and families with whom they are working. Modeling and encouraging the use of open questions is one of the building blocks of a supervisory relationship that creates a framework of support for casework staff. The following are characteristics of open questions and some practice tips for using them:

Characteristics of Open Questions:

- Questions that give staff more choices to talk about how they see the situation
- Asked without preconceived ideas about the person or situation
- Asked in such a way that they can't be answered by a yes or no
- Questions that demonstrates an interest in staff and how they perceive the situation
- Asked in a way that requires staff to give thoughtful answers

Practice Tips:

- Always listen more than you talk
- Keep an open mind
- Be curious about the situation and ideas being presented
- Avoid preconceived ideas about the situation being discussed
- Try to understand how what the staff person is saying makes sense to him/her
- Resist the urge to talk about solutions prematurely
- Explore the staff person's words that appear ambiguous
- Be careful not to make assumptions

Activity: Closed vs. Open Questions

Instructions:

- 1. Look at the examples of closed vs. open questions in the chart below.
- 2. Change the closed questions listed to open questions.

Closed Question	Open Question
Do you need help preparing for court?	What would be most helpful to you as you get ready for the next court hearing?
Did you have a problem with Mrs. Smith yesterday?	I am wondering what happened between you and Johnny's mother yesterday when she left the visiting room angry?
Is there a problem between you and Sue?	If you had a better working relationship with Sue, what would be different?
Did you talk to the mother about using time out before she uses corporal punishment?	
Did you have a question about your performance review?	
Has the foster mother come to terms with Dean's placement plan?	

Please refer to the appendix to see additional sample responses.

Feeling Questions

Open questions that clarify feelings take into consideration the emotions that staff are experiencing and ask them to talk about them. Feeling questions ask staff to look at how a given situation is impacting them. This allows the supervisor to gain an understanding of what is happening with a staff person before feelings are acted out in counter-productive behaviors. As with open questions, feeling questions are invaluable in helping supervisors build trust with staff and can help model the types of interactions that staff need to have with children and families.

Activity: Formulating Feeling Questions



Instructions:

- 1. Look at the examples of situations and corresponding feeling questions in the chart below.
- 2. Fill in feeling questions for the situations listed.

Situation	Feeling Question
Staff person is frustrated about a foster parent's indecision about adopting the child in her care.	How are you handling things? I know the last time we talked you were pretty frustrated over the Smith's indecisiveness about adopting Shawn.
New CPS worker after a frustrating day in court.	
Foster care worker who has had an unpleasant phone conversation with an angry foster parent.	
Residential caseworker who is having difficulty engaging the family of one of the children on her case load.	

Please refer to the appendix to see additional sample responses.

The following case study is designed to give supervisors an opportunity to enhance their skills in the use of open questions and feeling questions.

Activity: Using Open Questions and Feeling Questions in Supervision



Instructions:

- 1. Read the following case study.
- 2. Answer the questions that follow.

Case Study: Abby



Abby is a recent college graduate who has been on the job for three months as a foster care worker. Karen, her supervisor, is pleased with her progress and thinks she has the potential to become a successful foster care worker.

Abby has recently been assigned to Kenny and Josh Thompson who have lived with Mrs. Richmond, an experienced foster mother. Abby is Mrs. Richmond's fourth foster care worker for the Thompson siblings this year. Abby knocks on Karen's door and asks her if she has a minute to discuss the Thompson case.

Abby: I wanted to run a couple of things by you.

Karen: Sure, have a seat.

Abby: Well it's Mrs. Richmond, you know, Kenny and Josh's foster mom.

Karen: What's going on?

Abby: Well she is really impossible. I mean I have tried to schedule a time to get out there to see her and she keeps canceling. This is the third appointment she has cancelled in the last two weeks.

Karen: How does that feel to you?

Abby: Well she's really starting to get to me. I have tried everything with her and she acts like she doesn't have time for me. I'm getting the run around and no matter what I do, I can't get her to follow through with me.

Karen: Have you tried catching up with her when she brings the boys in for therapy?

Abby: Last week I had an emergency with the Bryant family, so I couldn't talk to her when she dropped the boys off for therapy. I thought I'd catch her after the appointment, but Mrs. Richmond had her older son pick the boys up. I think she is avoiding me.

Karen: Well how are the boys doing?

Abby: They are pretty excited about starting visits with the birth mom. They seem a lot more open when I see them at the office. In the Richmond home, they act like they can't be bothered when I try to talk to them. When they come into the office they're always asking about when they can move back with their mom.

Karen: How do you think Mrs. Richmond is taking all of this? You know she has had those boys on and off for the last two years?

Abby: I'm not sure. I guess it's got to be kind of hard on her, but that's part of the job of being a foster parent, isn't it? The fact of the matter is, I really don't know that much about her. She has never really let me get to know her.

Karen: Based on what you know about this case, how do you think Mrs. Richmond is feeling about having a new worker when the boys are about to returned to their birth mother?

Abby: (Deep sigh) Well I guess it can't be easy. I'd like to help her, but she's not making it easy for me to work with her.

Karen: Keep trying. She'll come around. Let me know if she keeps giving you the run-around. I can always call her.

1. Circle the open questions Karen used in her conversation with Abby.
2. Identify any additional open questions that Karen could have used.
3. Please list the thoughts and feelings you think Abby may have been experiencing in her conversation with Karen:
4. Underline the feeling questions that Karen used in her conversation with Abby.
5. Identify any additional feeling questions that Karen could have used.

The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when someone asked me what \bar{I} thought, and attended to my answer.

Thoreau, Henry David

Small Group Activity - Using Open Questions and Feeling Questions in Supervision



Instructions:

- 1. Select two participants to role-play the situation between Karen and Abby.
- 2. Have the person role-playing Karen utilize open and feeling questions.
- 3. Have the remaining group members serve as observers to the role-play.

After the role-play answer the following questions:

1. What techniques did "Karen" utilize?

2. How did "Abby" respond?

Important points to remember

• Clarifying questions, open questions and feeling questions can be used by supervisors to help staff look at specific issues, situations, assumptions and feelings.



- The best questions are those that put aside assumptions and are posed in an interested and curious manner. They are used by supervisors to gather more information and to help guide staff in the decision making processes.
- Modeling and encouraging the use of open questions is one of the building blocks of a supervisory relationship that creates a framework of support for staff.
- The use of feeling questions by supervisors gives them an understanding of what is happening with a staff person before feelings are acted out in counter-productive behaviors. They also help build trust between staff and supervisors and can be used to help model the types of interactions staff need to have with children and families.

4.4 Using Constructive Feedback and Confronting Issues

Giving Constructive Feedback

A big part of the job of supporting staff is giving them feedback. Constructive feedback can be the basis for important teaching moments between supervisors and staff and is vital to staff's professional growth. How that feedback is delivered can either help staff improve their performance or cause them to shut down and miss valuable learning experiences.

There are supervisors that find it difficult to talk to staff when problems arise. Some of these supervisors overlook the issue until it really becomes problematic. Others work to give feedback, but staff experience their attempts as negative for the most part. Constructive feedback is an ongoing process that is designed to help staff learn and grow while keeping their sense of self-esteem intact. Being able to address issues in a way that staff can hear is essential to helping them grow on the job. It is also an opportunity for supervisors to model the type of interactions that staff will be recreating with children and families in the field.

Activity: Strategies for Giving Constructive Feedback



Instructions:

Look at the table that follows:

- 1. Read the left hand column, "What the Supervisor Said or Did," that gives an example of how the supervisor reacted in the situation.
- 2. Review the middle column, "Feedback Tips," that contains examples of how to give feedback.
- 3. In the right hand column, "What the Supervisor Could Have Said or Done," fill in the way that you think would be best to give constructive feedback for each of the situations described.

What the Supervisor Said or Did	Feedback Tips	What the Supervisor Could Have Said or Done
The Situation: The staff person	is late for supervision.	
"You are always late for supervision. You know that we have a standard meeting time and yet you consistently disregard it."	Focus on staff actions and not attitude: Address those things that you can see with your own eyes. This allows you to be clear and descriptive in your feedback to staff and helps staff not to feel personally attacked.	"I noticed that this is the third time this month that you are late for our supervisory meeting. When you are late it impinges on my time with other staff. Is there something we can do to help you get to our meetings on time?"
The Situation: A complaint abo	lout the worker is received by the sup	pervisor.
"Mrs. Jones called to say that you didn't show up for your meeting with her. This is no way to build trust with our foster parents."	Phrase your feedback as a question: This softens the feedback and offers staff an opportunity to discover for themselves what they are doing that is problematic or needs work.	
The Situation: The supervisor fires back a response.	approaches the staff person with	a criticism and the staff person
"You have an attitude	Avoid Phrasing your	
problem."	comment so that a negative follows "you": This usually leads to staff becoming defensive, cutting you off and generally not hearing what you have to say.	

What the Supervisor Said or Did	Feedback Tips	What the Supervisor could have Said or Done
The Situation: The staff person	n has just turned in his third late i	report on the Jones siblings.
"Your reports are always late! You never make your deadlines."	Delete the use of "always" and "never" in your feedback: Remember that being specific is the key to constructive feedback.	
The Situation: The supervisor	confronts the staff person in the	lunchroom.
Looked for and found the staff person in the lunchroom and said: "How many times have I told you to talk with me before you schedule comp time. You are too far behind on your paperwork to leave early today."	Never give constructive feedback to a person in front of others: Your goal is to leave staff feeling confident and motivated to improve. When you criticize in front of others you will only make staff angry and defensive.	
The Situation: The supervisor out sheet indicated.	found out that the worker was	not on a home visit as her sign
Gave feedback when she was frustrated and/ or angry about the situation.	Use a supportive, calm tone when you give feedback: When what you are saying is sincere, is not blaming and is aimed to help staff, you can avoid coming across as sounding angry, stern or hesitant.	

What the Supervisor Said or Did	Feedback Tips	What the Supervisor could have Said or Done
1	has just been informed by her pr g without informing the supervise	2
Left the meeting with the	Think before you give	
program manager and went directly to the staff person's office: "I can't believe you would blow off a mandatory training! What were you thinking?	constructive feedback: Make sure you understand the situation before you say anything. If this means waiting to get more information before giving feedback, do it! When you do comment, try doing so by making suggestions and offering observations rather than rushing to tell staff how to improve their behavior.	

Please refer to the appendix to see additional sample responses.

Activity: Personal Reflection **Instructions:** Take a minute to think about the information on constructive feedback and answer the following questions: 1. What did I learn about my ability to give constructive feedback? 2. How can I apply what I have learned to my role as a supervisor? 3. My plan to improve my ability to give constructive feedback in the next month is:

Confronting Issues

What makes it so hard for supervisors to confront their staff? Most supervisors will admit that they don't want to make their staff feel uncomfortable or hurt their feelings, so often they avoid confronting issues on a regular basis until these smaller issues become big problems. Confronting issues is simply an extension of giving feedback. Much of the feedback that supervisors give has to do with issues in staff performance. Confronting issues is an extension of feedback that often has to do with an ongoing performance issue. As with any type of feedback, confronting issues is designed to help staff develop professionally.

This workbook segment will focus on strategies for supervisors to use in helping their staff to look at issues and concerns that, if left unattended, will develop into problematic situations. It is not meant to be a primer on dealing with disciplinary problems, but rather a set of strategies that can help supervisors effectively challenge their staff to deal with problems as they arise. Staff are required to routinely work with children and families who are dealing with difficult situations. To be successful in their work, they need to know how to confront problems and to work through them successfully. One of the ways that they come to understand problem resolution is through interactions with their supervisors.

Opportunities to role model good confrontation skills are never in short supply when supervisors are managing diverse staff, who come to the work with a variety of values and working assumptions. Sometimes supervisors shy away from confronting issues because they fear that conflict with staff will occur. There are many myths when it comes to problem clarification as illustrated in the following table:

Myth	Reality
Directly confronting problems with staff always results in negative responses	Confronting problems with staff helps them to gain confidence and control
Confronting staff will make them uncomfortable and they will just shut down	Without confrontation, staff will not be able to change and grow
Confronting difficult issues with staff is to be avoided	Avoiding issues that need to be dealt with only deepens misunderstandings/ problems
Confronting problems directly with staff damages relationships	Resolving problems strengthens relationships
The supervisor's point of view needs to prevail when dealing with difficult issues	Working to understanding staff's viewpoints and making a commitment to resolving the conflict helps staff grow

A supervisor who is effective in assisting staff in managing problems acts as a consultant to help staff use problem situations as opportunities for personal and professional growth. In order to do this, the supervisor needs to:

- Establish solid working relationships with staff
- Utilize advanced communication skills
- Help staff challenge themselves
- Assist staff in clarifying problems
- Set goals with staff to overcome the problem

The following tool *Check List for Confronting Issues* will provide guidelines when confronting staff is necessary.

Tool: Checklist for Confronting Issues



Strategies to confront:

- ☐ Check assumptions
 - Find out about the staff person's perceptions
 - Look into your perceptions
- □ Work to build rapport
 - Find out how the staff person sees the problem
- □ Discuss and define the problem
 - Discuss experiences with the problem
 - Clearly define the situation
- □ Ask for behavior change
 - Discuss the benefits of change
 - Work to get staff buy-in
- □ Jointly prepare a plan to put the change into action
 - Develop specific steps
 - Set time frames to implement the change

Fine-tuning Confrontation Strategies:

- □ Set a time that is conducive to talking about the issue
 - Refrain from insisting on immediately discussing an/or resolving the issue
 - Make sure the staff person is in a "place" that he/she can attend to the problem
- □ Use "I" statements such as:
 - "I think that you are angry with the Jones family because they seem to be needing some extra help."
- □ Refrain from using "You" statements such as:
 - "You have a problem with the Jones family that is interfering with your objectivity."
- □ Stay focused on the issue at hand
 - Stick to one issue at a time
 - Refrain from bringing others' issues into the discussion
- □ Keep the situation from escalating
 - Pay attention to non-verbal behavior
 - Take a break if the situation becomes heated
- □ Resist threats and ultimatums
 - Describe the consequences attached to the behavior should it occur in the future
- ☐ Revisit the issue to review whether or not the problem has been resolved

Alice Utilizes Problem Confrontational Skills

Alice is not looking forward to this morning. She has a meeting scheduled with Ashley, her youngest foster care worker. Alice is concerned that Ashley is not working well with some of the agency's older and more experienced foster parents. Yesterday, Alice happened to run into Mrs. Johnson in the waiting room.

Mrs. Johnson is a well-respected foster parent who has broken in many of the new staff. Mrs. Johnson told Alice that she was having trouble working with Ashley, who she describes as "still wet behind the ears" and not being interested in getting her input as to how the children are doing in her home. Last week Ashley didn't show up for a scheduled home visit. This is not the first time Alice has heard complaints about Ashley from foster parents and more recently, other staff.

Communication skills that help supervisors deal with difficult situations involving staff need to be designed to help strengthen the relationship between the supervisor and the staff person. But difficult situations between supervisors and staff are made more complex by the demographic differences between the two people and if not dealt with correctly, can damage instead of strengthen the relationship.

Part of the job of supervisor entails communicating information to staff that they may not like and, if behavioral changes are needed, may strongly resist. Being able to deliver this type of information in a way that the staff person can hear it and respond requires some planning on the supervisor's part.

Jack Mendelson¹ talks about the need for supervisors to put together an action plan that will help them get off on the right foot with the staff person while making sure that the behavior or the cause of conflict is addressed. The action plan includes the following steps:

- Check assumptions
- Work to build rapport
- Discuss and define the problem
- Ask for behavior change and discuss the benefits of change
- Jointly prepare a plan to put the change into action

These steps are reflected in the case scenario that follows.

¹ Jack Mendelson, "An action plan to improve difficult communication – promoting diversity in the workplace"

Differing Assumptions

Alice

Having been involved in child and family service for the better part of 10 years, Alice knows that she doesn't have much patience with young, inexperienced staff who don't work well with the foster parents and co-workers. She just knows that Ashley thinks that as the worker she knows more than the foster parents. After all, Ashley is fresh out of school and Alice knows that brand new workers who come straight out of school and into child and family service with their Master's Degrees haven't had time to really understand what the job entails. They lack life experiences. Some of them never do get it, they just move on to more lucrative jobs.

Ashley

Ashley has been with the agency for six months having come directly from graduate school to the agency. She is not looking forward to the meeting with her supervisor this morning as she knows that things have not been clicking for her on the unit. She is very sensitive to negative feedback from superiors and has a hard time asking for help. She is sure that the meeting has something to do with her missed visit to Mrs. Johnson's home. She has a hard time dealing with Mrs. Johnson who intimidates her and finds it hard to ask for help from other more experienced staff. After all if she asked all of the questions she had, everyone would know she doesn't know what she is doing.

Check assumptions: Everyone makes assumptions especially when working in situations where diversity is present. The first step requires supervisors to take an honest look at their assumptions and to decide if these assumptions are impacting how they see the situation. It's important to remember that if the supervisor has assumptions, the staff person will as well. Being ready to address and let go of assumptions will help the process.

Establishing Rapport

Alice is preparing for her meeting with Ashley. She knows that she needs to deal with her about the problem that she is having with Mrs. Johnson. Alice is concerned that if she does not deal with this issue now, it will become a bigger problem. Still she is not looking forward to having this discussion.

Ashley arrives at her office at the scheduled time. Alice greets her: "Hi Ashley, come in." Ashley sits down with her arms folded across her chest. Alice asks about Ashley's Dad, who has Alzheimer disease. Ashley relaxes a bit and says that her mom is having a hard time with the constant care he requires. Alice registers her concern and tells Ashley about the experience she had with helping to care for her mother during the last six months of her life.

After a few minutes of talk, Alice tells Ashley that as she knows, she had run into Mrs. Johnston earlier in the week. She says she was concerned by the fact that Ashley missed an appointment with Mrs. Johnson. She tells her that this is not the first complaint she has had from foster parents then asks Ashley to tell her what happened.

Ashley related that she was running behind after the Bennett visit and couldn't get across town to Mrs. Johnston's on time. She had called her to reschedule, but Mrs. Johnston didn't want to reschedule. She knows that Mrs. Johnston doesn't like her. She says Mrs. Johnston just wants to "run the show."

Work to build rapport: Beginning the communication process with respect, warmth and genuine concern is vital to the success of any plan to deal with difficult situations. Using the staff person's name at the beginning and throughout the discussion helps to personalize the discussion. This is also an opportunity to ask about and really listen to how the staff person sees the problem or situation. Taking the opportunity to build rapport when there is an issue that must be dealt with sets the stage for creating and maintaining effective communication not only around the issue at hand, but in the future as well.

Clarifying the Problem

Alice lets Ashley know that she sees foster parents as a very important member of the treatment team and that Mrs. Johnston is one of the best foster parents she has ever worked with. When she suggests Ashley figure out a way to work with Mrs. Johnston, Ashley becomes quiet. Alice asks her what she thinks the problem is.

Ashley says: 'Mrs. Johnston doesn't think I know anything. She is always telling me that unless I've raised kids, I can't give her any advice. She just makes it so hard to work with her that I guess I've been avoiding her."

Alice is surprised that Ashley has been so forthcoming in her definition of the problem and says: "That couldn't have been easy for you to tell me Ashley. I want you to know that I really appreciate your honesty."

Alice suggests that Ashley set up a meeting for them both to go out to meet with Mrs. Johnston. Ashley doesn't look happy, but she agrees to arrange the home visit.

Discuss and define the problem: This requires that the supervisor has already done some preliminary work and has an idea of what he/she would like to see happen. Depending on the staff person and the situation, the supervisor will either define the problem for the staff person or work with them to get their input and define the issue together. Ideally this is a good opportunity to help the staff person focus on making the problem situation as clear as possible by discussing his/her specific experiences, behaviors and feelings. The supervisor's job is to listen carefully and help the staff person focus in on the issues and clarify his/her point of view.

Working Toward Change

Alice meets Ashley at Mrs. Johnston's house. Ashley is already there and is engaged with Mrs. Johnston's foster children, six-year-old Jeff and five-year-old Joey. They are busy showing her their action figures. Alice is sitting in the kitchen with Mrs. Johnston when Ashley joins them.

Mrs. Johnston begins to talk about her latest battle with Jeff's school. She tells Alice and Ashley that the principal is threatening to expel him because of his disruptive behavior. She says she is worn out being called up to the school on a daily basis. Ashley looks surprised and says that she can't believe Jeff is a problem at school as he is always so charming when she visits with him. Further she thinks he is bright, articulate and she would expect that he would do well at school.

Mrs. Johnston tells her that he is fine in a one-to-one situation, but that she knows how disruptive he can be in a group and especially in school. Alice asks Mrs. Johnston to talk a bit more about her observations of Jeff, which she is happy to do.

When they leave the home, Alice asks Ashley to stop into a nearby restaurant for a cup of coffee. There Alice tells Ashley that she can see that her strengths lie in the relationship that she is able to establish with the children, but that she will need to work at forming helping relationships with the foster families as well. Alice suggests that once this happens, she will not find Mrs. Johnston so intimidating.

They talk for a bit about what help Mrs. Johnston is going to need in dealing with the school. Ashley says that she wants to talk to the teacher and set up a meeting with the principal. Alice reinforces this idea and suggests that she involve Diane, an experienced foster care worker on the unit who has a great deal of information on special education services including Individualized Educational Planning meetings. Ashley agrees to follow up with Diane.

Alice sets up a follow up meeting with Ashley for the end of the week where they will finalize the plan for Ashley to help Mrs. Johnston with Jeff.

Ask for behavior change and discuss the benefits of change: Supervisors need to be clear about what changes they would like to see. If rapport has been established and the staff person has participated in defining the problem, and is open to developing new perspectives, changing behavior will be easier to discuss.

At this stage the supervisor needs to listen to the staff person's ideas and even objections to the proposed change. Sometimes supervisors will need to help the staff person conceptualize what the change could be like. Often the plan will need to be modified, but the objective is to get the staff person's buy-in. One way to do this is to discuss the pay off to the staff person for implementing the change. Sometime there are tangible benefits such as favorable job

assignments or opportunities for training and sometimes the benefits are not visible such as a feeling of accomplishment.

Helping Ashley to Make Changes

At their meeting Alice asks Ashley to review her plans to help Mrs. Johnston with Jeff.

Ashley lets Alice know that she has already contacted the school for a meeting and that her coworker, Diane, has agreed to accompany her. Alice lets Ashley know that she is pleased with her follow through and asks what the next stage of the plan will entail.

Ashley seems a little puzzled so Alice says: "How are you going to involve Mrs. Johnston in your work with the school?" Ashley indicates that she hadn't really thought about involving Mrs. Johnston. Alice lets her know that in order to get Mrs. Johnston's buy-in and improve their working relationship, Ashley needs to involve her in the process. Ashley agrees and suggests that she invite Mrs. Johnston to the school meeting.

Alice helps her to work on a plan that includes learning more about special education rules and regulations as well as certification criterion. Ashley suggests that she bring Mrs. Johnston information about what she learns.

"Now that's a great idea! You're thinking like an experienced foster care worker now," Alice tells her with a smile.

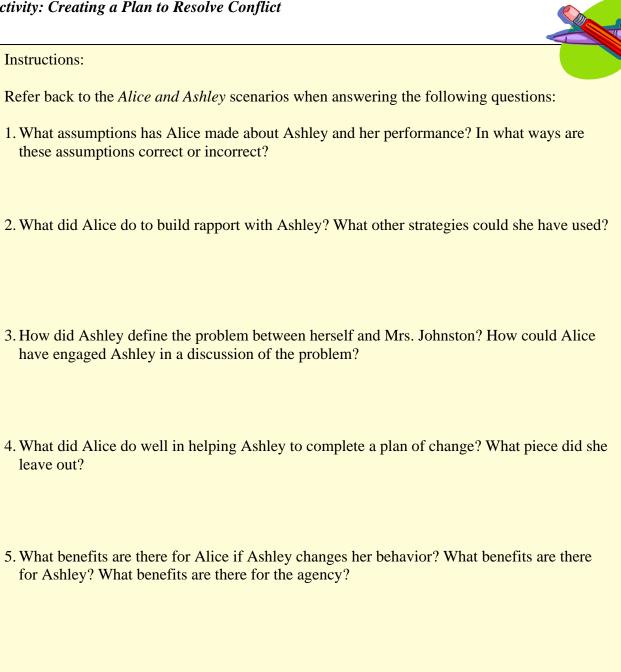
Jointly prepare a plan to put the change in action: Creating a plan requires that the entire discussion of change be broken down into specific steps that each person will take with an accompanying time frame. This solidifies the discussion and makes sure that the change will be implemented. Some discussion of potential obstacles to the plan may be appropriate, but focusing on obstacles only serves to delay implementation of the planned changes. Supervisors who utilize empathetic listening during this phase enable the staff person to work through and take responsibility for the plan. The final stage of the plan requires that supervisors monitor the situation to see that each step of the plan is followed up on.



One of the tests of leadership is the ability to recognize a problem before it becomes an emergency.

Arnold Glasgow

Activity: Creating a Plan to Resolve Conflict



Important points to remember

• Feedback is the basis for important teaching opportunities between supervisors and staff that can either help staff improve their performance or cause them to shut down.



- Many supervisors miss valuable opportunities to help staff learn on the job because they find it difficult to give staff feedback when issues or problems arise.
- Constructive feedback is an ongoing process that is designed to help staff learn and grow while keeping their sense of self-esteem intact. Good feedback focuses on specific actions; is phrased as a question; is delivered in person and not in front of others; is given in a supportive and calm way; is given after careful consideration.
- Confronting issues before they become major problems is a responsibility of retention focused supervisors.
- When confronting issues the following steps need to be taken: check assumptions; build rapport; define the problem; ask for behavior change; and make a plan with staff to put the change into action.

4.5 Using Empathy in the Supervisory Relationship

Empathy is the ability to step into the shoes of someone else while clearing the mind of all biases, in an attempt to understand the person's point of view. Empathy is a key retention strategy with staff who are confronted daily with problems and issues that take a toll on their minds and spirit. Having an empathetic supervisor gives staff someone to talk to who understands the difficulties of the job, and who will listen with an open mind.

Empathy between supervisors and staff is the foundation for building trusting relationships that teach staff problem solving skills. Modeling empathy in the supervisory relationship sets the example for child and family service staff to employ empathy in their work with children and families. Empathy is also a powerful tool that supervisors use to help defuse the tension that is ever present in child and family service work. It is a sophisticated communication skill that requires the supervisor to be able to listen and respond without personalizing what is being communicated. This is a skill that many child and family service professionals may feel competent in when working with children and families, but which becomes more difficult when communicating with staff and colleagues.

To most people empathy sounds like a reasonable concept, but for many it is not that easy to put into practice. Listening to what staff have to say is one thing, but it is easy to fall into the trap of giving advice or explanations instead of offering understanding.

Common Mistakes Made when Empathy is the Goal

- Giving advice "Well what you need to do is..."
- Consoling "You've had a tough week, try not to be so hard on yourself..."
- Interrogating "Who else was involved with..."
- Educating "Remember what we learned at last week's in-service..."
- Explaining "As you know this is part of the protocol that we are required to follow..."
- **Telling divergent stories** "Oh I know just how you feel, I remember the time that..."
- Correcting "You know that being out sick is no excuse for not making arrangements to have your appointments rescheduled."
- **Sympathizing** "I know how hard this disruption has been for you."
- Putting up barriers "Don't worry, it's not important that..."
- Admonishing "How many times have I told you..."

Without empathy, supervisors will not be able to create a positive working environment for staff. Being able to work effectively with staff to forge strong supervisory relationships with them

requires that supervisors look for what is beneath the surface of staff's actions as well as their words. Approaching situations with staff with a mind that is free of judgments allows supervisors to look deeper to identify the staff person's feelings and needs. Responding to those needs models good relationship building and frees staff to work more effectively with children and families.

Gerard Egan ² gives some helpful tips for giving quality empathetic responses that include:

- Take time to listen and reflect on what is being said guard against jumping into an empathetic response too quickly
- Use short but effective responses sometimes when one is trying to be accurate in responding the tendency is to be long-winded. Make empathetic responses frequent, but short
- Make empathetic responses geared to the person one way to do this is to adopt the emotional tone of the staff person being responded to

Responding with empathy requires that supervisors let staff know that they are listening and that they want to understand what they are telling them. This is especially helpful when the message the staff person is sending is about feelings and needs. The best way to make sure that a response is empathetic is to use a four-step process:

- Step 1. Ascertain the message that underlies the words that are being spoken.
- Step 2. Listen for what the staff person's unstated fears, feelings or underlying concerns are.
- Step 3: Make an initial inquiry.
- Step 4. Reflect back to the staff person by paraphrasing what was heard. The most nonthreatening way to do this is by asking questions that reflect the supervisor's understanding of what the staff person has said.

It is important to remember that there may be several messages that underlie the staff person's statement. It is vital for supervisors who are practicing empathy to make every attempt to understand what these messages are. Supervisors may want to make more than one initial inquiry to see if they are on the right track with the staff person. In the final analysis, it is important to remember that supervisors may never know all of the underlying messages, but making the attempt to understand will help to strengthen relationships with staff.

Finally, try to refrain from moving into a helping mode with staff when practicing empathy. Problem solving can happen after the staff person feels that the supervisor is empathetic about his/her particular issue. Only after that occurs will the supervisor want to follow up with open and clarifying questions that help to move into the problem solving phase.

² Egan, Gerard, *The Skilled Helper*

Activity: Using Empathy

Instructions:

Please review the table that follows and do the following:

- 1. Read each staff statement and write down the message that underlies what was said.
- 2. Decide what you think the staff person's feelings or underlying concerns are and write them down.
- 3. Formulate an initial question or tentative statement and write it in the appropriate column.
- 4. Formulate an empathetic response and write that in the appropriate column.

Staff Person's Statement	Underlying Message	Unstated Feelings and/or Underlying Concerns	Initial Inquiry	Empathetic Response
The Situation: A new	w staff person has just of	come back from his firs	st solo appearance in co	ourt.
"That defense attorney on the Jones case knows I'm new on the job and he's out to crucify me. I'd have to stay up all night preparing, to be able to answer his questions."	I don't have enough experience to be able to handle court yet. Please help me!	Fear of failure. Concern that he/she is not getting the training they need to be successful	It sounds like you are telling me that you are overwhelmed by your trip to court.	Court is one of our toughest assignments. It is especially hard for new workers before they get the hang of it.
The Situation: A stat	ff person has just exper	rienced several emerger	ncies in a row on her ca	aseload.
"You expect too much from your staff."				
The Situation: A stat	ff person has had to rer	nove Kevin from sever	al placements in the la	st vear
"This placement with the Jones family will never work for Kevin. He's been hurt too much in the past to risk hurting him again."				
The Situation: Mrs. 0	Conner has refused to f	follow the staff person'	s suggestions and the v	worker feels that Mrs.
		the children in the Con		
"Mrs. Conner is impossible; she acts like she is making all of the decisions even though she's just the foster mother."				
The Situation: The w	The Situation: The worker is frustrated by the Smith's many requests for post adoption services.			
"I knew the Smith's were never going to make it with Mark. They want me to help them find another therapist. What was wrong with the last one?"				

Please refer to the appendix to see more sample responses and answers as well as additional exercises that will help to develop empathy skills.

Activity: Personal Reflection

Instructions:
Take a minute to think about how you typically respond to staff concerns and answer the following question:
1. What did I learn about my ability to be empathetic?
2. How can I apply what I have learned to my role as a supervisor?
3. My plan for improving my empathy skills in the next month is:
5. Why plan for improving my empanty skins in the next month is.

Important points to remember

• Empathy is a very high-level communication skill that most people think they understand, but have a hard time putting into practice. Many supervisors fall into the trap of giving advice or explanations instead of offering empathy.



- Retention focused supervisors who employ empathy are building trusting relationships with staff while teaching them problem solving skills.
- Responding with empathy requires the following steps: listen; think about the underlying message; listen for feeling and concerns; make an initial inquiry; formulate an empathetic response.

4.6 Communicating Encouragement, Recognition and Celebrating

A positive working environment is an important component no matter what line of work an employee is involved in. In child and family service, creating a climate that encourages and nurtures staff is vital given the level of stress associated with the work. Child and family service staff need encouragement to perform at their best. Encouragement that helps to build and maintain staff's self-esteem is a vital component especially when they are working daily with the challenging tasks associated with providing services to troubled children and families. Direct supervisors are often in the best position to provide their staff with the encouragement that they need and desire.

In this unit the following competencies regarding building positive culture are explored:

Culture and Environment: I understand that supervisors are cultural ambassadors for the agency. If asked, staff would say that I...

Place a high priority on staff retention and make it part of everyone's responsibility

Maintain physical and emotional safety in the workplace and have safety policies and plans

Develop and engage a multi-cultural workforce at all levels of the agency

Care deeply about staff and their families and encourage balance between work and personal life and having fun in the workplace

Support and encourage staff for their commitment and work on behalf of families and children and celebrate accomplishments

Give staff appropriate autonomy to work in their own creative ways

Promote a culture of continuous learning and development

Forgetting to Celebrate

Alice is breathing a sigh of relief. The accreditation review that she has been working on for the past month is over and her unit received the fewest non-compliance ratings in the history of the agency! Alice got the news at the weekly management meeting. The program manager made the announcement, but most of the meeting was devoted to working on a plan to correct non-compliances in the other units.

Alice knows that everyone in her unit has worked hard to make sure that the unit was in compliance. At the staff meeting she announces the good news without much fan fare because they have a full agenda and time is short. She hopes that her staff know how much she appreciates their hard work. Later she wonders if she should have done more.

Despite the fact that it is often thought that employees work for good wages and job security, research paints a different picture. Classic studies conducted by Lawrence Lindahl in the late 1940s and repeated with similar results in the 1980s and 1990's, cited the following as what employees most wanted from their jobs:

- Feeling appreciated
- Feeling they are being kept informed or being "in" on things
- Being listened to

These findings dovetail with the results of the study of resilient child and family service staff and supervisors that was undertaken by this project. The study indicates that staff stay in child and family service for many reasons that have little to do with the amount of money they are paid, but rather with the sense of mission that they have for the work and the affiliation they find with others who are also working in the field.

This means that there are many things that supervisors can do to encourage and retain staff that do not entail the use of money. Time, thoughtfulness and creativity can all be used to help create a culture that values and rewards staff. This requires that supervisors are open to expressing their feelings and are open to giving and receiving praise and expressing appreciation. These supervisors are not afraid to say "thank you" or "great job" and really mean it. Giving positive personal feedback requires that supervisors not only know their staff, but get close to them and demonstrate that they care and are truly interested in them as people.

A Word about Celebration

Some child and family service supervisors and managers have the mindset that recognizing individual or group accomplishments in public will lead to jealousy and resentment on the part of those staff that are not being recognized. This can be a real concern in a job setting that relies upon soft skills to accomplish the job at hand. But this need not be a reason to avoid celebrating individual or group successes if supervisors keep the following in mind:

- Be clear about setting goals so that staff know what constitutes achievement
- Inspire staff to reach their goals
- Recognize staff accomplishments as they occur to keep staff wanting to perform
- Take a strengths-based approach to staff performance by looking for opportunities to celebrate staff successes catch staff in the act of achieving their goals
- Keep staff engaged by discovering and developing their talents and abilities

The following tool, *Necessary Elements for the Creation of a Culture for Staff Retention*, provides information about encouraging and sustaining staff.





Provide for Physical and Emotional Safety in the Work Place		
What it means:	How to apply it:	
 Understand agency policy relating to safety Relay safety information to staff	Involve staff in discussions around procedures, protocols and "what if" scenarios designed to detect and prevent potentially hazardous conditions	
Let staff know that the agency desires a culture of safety for staff and families	• Involve staff in any post-mortem process to review hazardous situations and to integrate lessons learned into practice	
Clarify staff's understanding of safety policies		

Give Authority Along with Responsibility		
What it means: How to apply it:		
Set clear standards for staff that include	Give enough control to help individual staff	
the goals, values and principles of the	move forward to accomplish their assigned	
agency and the unit	tasks	
Affirm staff by allowing them to rise to	 Trust staff to carry out the responsibilities of	
the challenge	their positions Resist the urge to micromanage staff	

Keep Staff in the Loop		
What it means:	How to apply it:	
 Provide as much information as possible about how the unit/agency is doing Strengths Challenges Placement numbers Licensing/accreditation 	 Include staff in the decisions that are being made Ask for input Implement mechanisms that encourage staff to give feedback and make suggestions 	
o Upcoming changes	needed and valued	
	Let staff know that their feedback will make it to the upper ranks of management	

Recognize, Praise and Celebrate Staff Successes

What it means:

- Celebrate successes together to help solidify staff bonds and provide opportunities for affiliation
- A celebration is an opportunity to relive an achievement and can happen with one person or all of the staff on the unit or in the agency
- The purpose of using celebrations as a form of encouragement is to let the staff person(s) whose achievement is being celebrated tell someone about his/her accomplishment, including how difficult it was, how hard he/she worked to accomplish it, who helped them and etc.
- The supervisor's job is to help the staff person recount all of the details of the accomplishment, to let him/her know that the accomplishment has been duly noted

How to apply it:

- Make praise personal because no single form of praise is going to work for every staff person, so finding out what will make the recognition meaningful to a particular staff person or group of staff is important
 - As the supervisor, make a brief speech at staff meeting that praises the effort of staff
 - Write a thank you note to the staff person or address it to his/her spouse or child
 - Let the staff person know that a notation has been placed in his/her file detailing the accomplishment
 - Spring for pizza or doughnuts
 - o Provide a mug, t-shirt or cap with a personalized inscription
 - Make silly awards that highlight an accomplishment or skill
- Make recognition earned don't recognize everyone on the team when a specific staff person deserves the credit. Do work at setting up opportunities for all staff to earn positive reinforcements.
- Give praise immediately and directly supervisors who reward desirable behavior when they see it reinforce their staff to perform well
 - o Give praise within the first 24 hours of the accomplishment
 - Give constructive feedback that lets staff know what the supervisor is thinking and what specifically they did well
- Make recognition frequent the more desirable behavior is reinforced with praise, the more likely that behavior will become habitual – reinforcing strengths is more effective than trying to correct problems

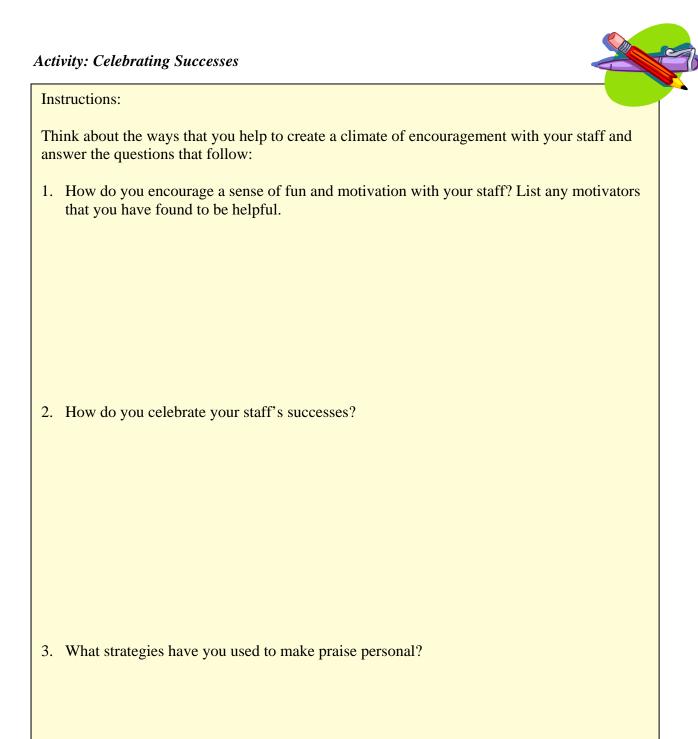
Help Staff to Weather Disappointments		
What it means: How to apply it:		
Offer support to staff when things have not gone well and the work is upsetting and demoralizing	 Provide opportunities for staff to come together to talk about: What went wrong How to do better next time 	
Don't allow staff to face these situations alone which will encourage feelings of sadness and isolation	 Appreciation for the effort that was put forth 	

Provide Free Time and Flexibility		
What it means:	How to apply it:	
 Trust staff with some input and discretion in the use of their time when they are meeting performance goals Make it possible for staff to work flexible schedules 	 Allow staff flextime and time away for family and other obligations: To attend graduate school Coordinate schedules with a spouse Take care of young children or elderly parents 	



Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.

Mother Teresa



Way to go Alice!

Alice has gone into her program manager Vivian's office. "You sound pretty happy today," Vivian comments. "Well I am pretty proud of myself," Alice replies. Vivian says: "Well that's what I like to hear, what did you do?" Alice takes a seat and tells Vivian about how good she feels about the accreditation review in which her unit did so well. She explains how her initial response was to down play her staff's accomplishment.

"Well I got to thinking about that, and I decided just because I downplay my own accomplishments doesn't mean that I have to do that to my staff. We all worked hard and I just decided that we needed to celebrate," Alice tells Vivian. Vivian responded: "Good for you, how did you celebrate?"

Alice takes great pride in recounting the story to Vivian: "Well everyone knows what a movie buff I am, so I decided to hold an "awards show" at our last staff meeting. It was a hoot!" Alice gives Vivian a detailed description of the event including the awards that she designed on the computer and printed out. "I had different categories of awards that I presented to individual staff that highlighted what they contributed to helping us sail through the review. One was: 'Best Overall Documentation in a Foster Care File' another was 'Most Willing to Stay Late the Night before Review.' I made sure that I recognized all the staff for their individual contributions, because frankly they all worked hard to accomplish our goals. They loved it!"

Vivian chuckles, "That's fantastic Alice" and then she says: "You have really grown as a supervisor. I'm proud of you!" Alice stifles the urge to downplay her efforts and says: "Thanks Vivian, I couldn't have done it without you!"

Important points to remember

- What staff want most from their jobs is to feel appreciated, feel they are being kept informed and being listened to.
- There are many things that supervisors can do to encourage and retain staff that do not entail the use of money including: time, thoughtfulness and creativity, all of which can be used to help create a culture that values and rewards staff.
- Celebrating individual and group accomplishments is a wonderful way to create a culture of encouragement when supervisors are clear about setting goals and defining what constitutes achievement.
- Necessary elements for creating a culture of staff retention include: providing for the physical and emotional safety of staff; giving authority with responsibility; keeping staff informed; recognizing, praising and celebrating successes; helping staff with disappointments; providing free time and flexibility.

4.7 Applying Communication Strategies Based on Objectives

The last several units have looked at several communication skills that retention focused supervisors need to be using with staff. But the first step in any communication is to decide what is to be accomplished in any exchange between supervisors and staff. What is the objective of the communication? The second step is for the supervisor to communicate from an understanding of who he/she is in the role of supervisor, his/her understanding of who the staff person is and what the situation calls for.

How and when a supervisor approaches a staff person depends on many factors including the level of development of the staff person, the importance of the situation, the stress level of the staff person and many other factors that the supervisor will want to take into consideration. Thought should be given to all of these factors when choosing what type of communication strategy to use.³

The following tool helps supervisors think about the objective of any communication. What is the supervisor intending to achieve with the communication? All of the objectives are valid and the important concept is to use specific communication strategies flexibly, when they are most appropriate for what the supervisor is trying to accomplish in any given interaction.

It is important to remember that during any interaction, many strategies may be used simultaneously as the objectives in communication evolve and as both parties gain more understanding.

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³ Ingrid Bens, Facilitation at a Glance



Tool: Deciding Which Communication Strategy to Use

Communication Objective	What is it?	When to Use it	Suggested Communication Strategies
Affirm/Encourage	Positive recognition of staff performance and/or ability	As often as is appropriate – work to catch staff doing well and give them positive feedback	Personalize affirmations, both verbally and written
Instruct	Giving information or direction to staff	When staff are asking for information or when they are open to taking in new information – "teachable moments"	Give constructive feedback
Defuse	Reduce the intensity of a situation with staff	When situations escalate to the point that the staff person is not hearing you or other team members	Ask clarifying questions
Support	Helping to sustain and encourage staff	When staff are uncertain of their decisions or when they need backup from others	Use empathetic responses, affirmations etc.
Problem Solve	Assist staff in working through an issue or situation	When staff are wrestling with situations where they need help sorting out or require another perspective	Practice effective listening and ask open questions that seek to clarify
Manage risk	Communication designed to help staff analyze the risk involved in a given situation and ways to manage it	When staff do not have the big picture regarding risk to children and families; themselves and/or the agency	Listen to staff perspectives, ask clarifying questions and give information that considers the factors involved
De-stress	Reducing the exposure or effects of stress on staff	In situations where staff are overwhelmed and not able to take in information or make appropriate decisions	Empathetic listening, ask clarifying and feeling questions
Reframe	Assist staff in seeing an issue or situation in a different light	When staff are stuck or have a tendency to overlook strengths and concentrate on deficits	Ask both feeling and clarifying questions; practice empathetic responses that get at staff's underlying issues and/or concerns
Avoid	Not deal with an issue or situation – can be done overtly or covertly	When it is impossible or inappropriate to deal with the situation at that moment – a stop-gap measure not to be routinely employed	Make an appointment with staff to deal with the issue or situation when there is time to focus

The following case study is designed to give supervisors an opportunity to enhance their communication skills.

Activity: Applying Communication Strategies

Instructions:

- 1. Please read the case study.
- 2. Answer the questions that follow.

Case Study: Maggie

Maggie has been on Joel's staff as a residential care manager for just about three months. This is her first "real" job out of college and initally she was very excited about the opportunity to be able to apply what she learned in graduate school to her life's ambition to work with children. Lately she has been having second thoughts about her ability to do the job. She still loves the part of her job that has to do with working one-on-one with the kids, but she now knows that there are other parts to the job that she finds much less rewarding.

Joel is concerned about Maggie's performance. Sure the kids on her caseload like her, but she has managed to alienate house staff and he is wondering how well she is doing with the parents or the kids on her caseload. He has just come from his weekly supervisors meeting where he ran into Jerry, the residential manager for Granger House. Jerry let him know that several staff in the house are upset with Maggie's attempt to usurp their authority when it comes to some of the kids on her caseload. Two of Jerry's staff have expressed concern that Maggie is overstepping her bounds and that she is being manipulated by the kids.

Joel has called Maggie into his office.

Joel: I've just gotten some feedback from Jerry. It seems that staff from the house have been complaining about what they see as you overstepping your bounds and interfering with the way they are running the house. Can you tell me what they are referring to?

Maggie: Well I'm not sure. There was that incident with Gabriella last weekend when she was upset and I went to bat for her.

Joel: I'm wondering what happened between you and the staff that caused them to bring Jerry into the equation.

Maggie: Well, Gabriella was really upset after her visit with her mom. I don't have to tell you how many times Gabby's mom has made promises to her and then didn't follow through. Well she did it again. She isn't planning on taking her home for the holiday and Gabby was really upset. How many times can one kid be disappointed? I guess when she went back to the house she threw something at her roommate and the two of them got into a fight. The staff came down really hard on her and I just stood up for her. I told Casy and Rhonda that they needed to give Gabriella a break. She's basically a good kid who wouldn't be here if her mom wasn't so screwed up.

Joel: It sounds like you are pretty upset about the fact that Gabriella was disappointed by her mom. What do you think that is about?

Maggie: You bet I am! Gabby has been doing so well and then her mom goes and does something like this.

Joel: Maggie, this is the nature of the work. Helping kids and their families work things out while we provide a stable environment to help them cope, is the work we do. Intervening on Gabriella's behalf is not going to teach her how to handle difficult situations when they arise in the future.

Maggie: Yeah, I guess so, but I think Casy and Rhonda were too hard on Gabby. They didn't have to break her down to a level two when she has been working so hard to gain more privileges.

Joel: I noticed that this isn't the first time you have run into difficulty with house staff. Do you understand that they may feel you are interfering with their work and overstepping your bounds?

Maggie: Yeah, I guess so, but who is going to stand up for the kids? Think about all the crap that Gabby has gone through. She is one of the kids that can make it if she can just catch a break!

Joel: This is one of the toughest parts of your job, Maggie. It is especially hard for new workers to understand that running interference with the kids is not the way to support them. Only through working together as a whole treatment team are we going to be able to give Gabriella the skills that she will need to make it on the outside.

Maggie: (Sits back in her chair) Well, I still say the house staff are too hard on the kids sometimes.

Joel: That makes me wonder what might be going on with you, that you want so much to protect the kids.

Maggie: I don't know, I just guess I want to help kids and Gabby is a kid who really needs help.

Joel: Well that is one area that we totally agree on, we all want to help the kids. The point is that the only way to do that is to work together as a team.

Maggie: I guess.

Joel: You are not always going to agree with everyone around here, but it is important to go to the house staff to talk about what is happening. You know Casy and Rhonda are some of our most seasoned staff. We can all learn from each other.

Maggie: OK, I hear you.

Joel: It looks like we still have some work to do together to help you understand and be most effective in your role. Let's set up a time to meet next week.

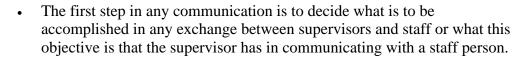
Maggie: (Gets up and starts walking out.) Sure, I can use all the help I can get.

1.	Identify that the objectives that Joel may have had during his conversation with Maggie?
2.	Please list the thoughts and feelings that you think Maggie is experiencing in her conversation with Joel.
3.	What communication strategies did Joel use to accomplish these objectives? Use the following key to mark the strategies that you can identify: L = Listening effective C = Clarifying questions O = Open questions F = Feeling questions CF = Constructive feedback E = Empathy
4.	How did Maggie respond to the strategies Joel employed?
5.	What additional/different strategies could Joel have employed?

Small Group Activity - Applying Communication Strategies

Instructions: 1. Select two participants to role-play the situation between Tim and Janet. 2. Have the person role-playing Tim use open and feeling questions identified to enhance his/her role. 3. Have the remaining group members serve as observers to the role-play. Following the role-play, answer the following questions: 1. What techniques did "Tim" utilize? 2. How did "Janet" respond?

Important points to remember





- The second step is for the supervisor to communicate from an understanding of who he/she is in the role of supervisor, his/her understanding of who the staff person is and what the situation calls for.
- How and when a supervisor approaches a staff person depends on many factors including the level of development of the staff person, the importance of the situation, the stress level of the staff person and many other factors that the supervisor will want to take into consideration.
- During any given interaction, as the objectives in communication evolve, many communication strategies will be used.

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Tool: Listening Skills Quiz



- T F 16. When staff talk to me, I pretend to listen even if I become distracted or my thoughts drift.
- T F 17. When I know what the staff person is going to say, I answer right away, before he/she has finished talking.
- T F 18. I find myself interrupting my staff to interject a thought or a question.
- T F 19. I have a hard time encouraging staff to talk about their feelings when discussing a case.
- T F 20. When trying to explain something, I don't think to ask my staff if they understand what I am saying.
- T F 21. When I am unsure of what a staff person is trying to say to me, I find it hard to ask for clarification.
- T F | 22. I find it difficult to see things from my staff's point of view.
- T F 23. I routinely use sarcasm or jokes when communicating with staff.
- T F 24. I get so caught up in thinking about how I am going to respond to the staff person talking that I forget to listen to what is being said.
- T F 25. When a staff person talks to me about a problem, my first response is to offer a solution to the problem.
- T F 26. I find myself coming to a conclusion even before I have heard all of the information.
- T F 27. I respond to suggestions or opinions of the staff person with "yes, but..."
- T F 28. I find it difficult to put off responding to a staff person even when I need time to think about what I am going to say.
- T F 29. I make assumptions about the thoughts and/or feelings of the staff person who is talking.
- T F 30. When I don't have time to give a staff person my full attention, I have a hard time telling him/her that we will need to schedule a time later in the day to talk.

Tool: Executing Effective Listening

Listen carefully

- □ Make a conscious effort to allow time to listen
- □ Focus your complete attention to the task of listening.
- ☐ Minimize distractions, both internally and externally.
- □ Work to maintain body language that encourages communication: lean in toward the staff person, keep arms uncrossed, nod
- ☐ Maintain eye contact as culturally appropriate
- ☐ Refrain from thinking of a response

Pay attention to non-verbal behaviors

- □ Look for eye contact from the staff person as is culturally appropriate
- ☐ Make note of the staff person's posture: sitting up straight, slouching, arms crossed or uncrossed
- ☐ Make note of the staff person's facial expression
 - What does the look on the staff person's face tell you about his/her feelings?
- ☐ Make note of the staff person's breathing
 - What does the staff person's breathing tell you about his/her feelings?

Paraphrase and summarize what you hear

- ☐ Focus on the staff person's message avoid forming responses prematurely
- □ Check to see if you understood what is being said by restating the essence of what was shared
- ☐ Ask questions to check out whether or not your perceptions are correct

Draw out additional information

- □ Ask questions that require additional details and understanding
- ☐ Check to make sure you have accurately heard what is said ask clarifying questions
- □ Focus on the staff person's perceptions rather than the "facts"

Work with feelings

- □ Ask the staff person to talk about his/her feelings rather than simply the facts
- □ Identify the feelings that you hear
- ☐ Ask if you are labeling these feelings correctly
- □ Learn to be comfortable with lapses in the conversations or periods of silence

Sample Activity: Closed vs. Open Questions

Instructions:



- 1. Look at the examples of closed vs. open questions in the chart below.
- 2. Change the closed questions listed to open questions.

Closed Question	Open Question
Do you need help preparing for court?	What would be most helpful to you as you get ready for the next court hearing?
Did you have a problem with Mrs. Smith yesterday?	I am wondering what happened between you and Johnny's mother yesterday when she left the visiting room angry?
Is there a problem between you and Sue?	If you had a better working relationship with Sue, what would be different?
Did you talk to the mother about using time out before she uses corporal punishment?	I am curious about your discussion with the mother about the use of corporal punishment. Could you share the highlights with me?
Did you have a question about your performance review?	What aspects of your performance review would you like to discuss with me?
Has the foster mother come to terms with Dean's placement plan?	I am wondering what happened when you talked to the foster mother about the plan for Dean's placement?

Sample Activity: Formulating Feeling Questions

Instructions:

- 1. Look at the examples of situations and corresponding feeling questions in the chart below.
- 2. Fill in feeling question for the situations listed.

Situation	Feeling Question
Staff person is frustrated about a foster parents' indecision about adopting the child in her care.	How are you handling things? I know the last time we talked you were pretty frustrated over the Smith's indecisiveness about adopting Shawn.
New CPS worker after a frustrating day in court.	I know that the defense attorney on the Jones case came on pretty strong when you were on the stand. How did that feel for you?
Foster care worker who has had an unpleasant phone conversation with an angry foster parent.	It sounds like the foster mother is pretty angry about the decision to reunite August with her birth family. How are you dealing with that?
Residential care worker caseworker who is having difficulty engaging the family of one of the children on her case load.	It looks like you and the Brown family are not quite connecting. What is that experience like for you?
Adoption worker who just had a disruption with a family she has been intensely working with.	I have seen how hard you have worked on this case. How are you handling all of this?



Tool: Utilizing Clarifying Questions Based on Objective

	If the Objective is:	Example of a Clarifying Question:
1.	To obtain information	What happened when
2.	To look at relationships or causes	How does respond towhen What happened when you
3.	To develop new ideas	How else could you
4.	To test new ideas	What would happen if you did
5.	To focus the discussion	Can we go back to
6.	To advance the discussion	What are the next steps
7.	To broaden the discussion	What else do we need to think about
8.	To bring out opinions and attitudes	How would you feel if What do you think about
9.	To suggest an idea, action or decision	What do you think would happen if you were to
10.	To come to agreement or a conclusion	Can we say thatrepresents our thinking

Sample Activity: Strategies for Giving Constructive Feedback

Instructions:

- 1. The left hand column of the table gives some tips for giving constructive feedback.
- 2. The middle column gives examples of how not to give feedback.
- 3. Fill in the way that you think would be best to give constructive feedback for each of the tips given.

What the Supervisor Said or Did	Feedback Tips	What the Supervisor could have Said or Done		
The Situation: This staff person	The Situation: This staff person is late for supervision.			
"You are always late for supervision. You know that we have a standard meeting time and yet you consistently disregard it."	Focus on staff actions and not attitude: Address those things that you can see with your own eyes. This allows you to be clear and descriptive in your feedback to staff and helps staff not to feel personally attacked.	"I noticed that this is the third time this month that you are late for our supervisory meeting. When you are late it impinges on my time with other staff. Is there something I can do to help you get to our meetings on time?"		
The Situation: A complaint abo	ut the worker is received by the sup	pervisor.		
"Mrs. Jones called to say that you didn't show up for your meeting with her. This is no way to build trust with our foster parents."	Phrase your feedback as a question: This softens the feedback and offers staff an opportunity to discover for themselves what they are doing that is problematic or needs work.	"Mrs. Jones called today to say that you missed a meeting with her. Did something happen to keep you from your appointment with her?"		
The Situation : Supervisor approaches the staff person with a criticism.				
"You have an attitude problem."	Avoid Phrasing your comment so that a negative follows "you": This usually leads to staff becoming defensive, cutting you off and generally not hearing what you have to say.	"It seems that the way I am approaching you is not working well. I am wondering if there is another way to help make our interactions more productive."		

What the Supervisor Feedback Tips What the Supervisor could have Said or Done Said or Did **The Situation:** The staff person has just turned in his third late report on the Jones sibs. "Your reports are always Delete the us of "always" "Your report on the Jones sibs late! You never make your and "never" in your is a week late. I need to have deadlines." it on my desk before you feedback: leave today. I am concerned Remember that being specific that this is just one example of is the key to constructive the fact that you seem to be feedback. having trouble meeting **The Situation:** The supervisor confronts the staff person in the lunch room. Looked for and found the staff **Never give constructive** Ask staff to come into your person in the lunch room and feedback to a person in office. "You need to get your said: "How many times have I front of others: Your goal is paperwork finished before I to leave staff feeling told you to talk with me before can approve your comp time." you schedule comp time. You confident and motivated to are too far behind on your improve. When you criticize in front of others you will paperwork to leave early only make staff angry and today." defensive. **The Situation:** Realized that the worker was not on a home visit as her sign out sheet indicated. Gave feedback when she was Use a supportive, calm tone Waited to give feedback until she had given some thought to frustrated and/or angry about when you give feedback the situation. When what you are saying is what she wanted to say and sincere, is not blaming and is what outcome she hoped to aimed to help staff you do not achieve by talking to the staff come across as sounding person. angry, stern or hesitant.

The Situation: The supervisor has just been informed by her program manager that her staff person left a mandatory training without informing the supervisor.

Left the meeting with the program manager and went directly to the staff person's office: "I can't believe you would blow off a mandatory training! What were you thinking?

Think before you give constructive feedback: Make sure you understand the situation before you say anything. If this means waiting to get more information before giving feedback, do it! When you do comment, try doing so by making suggestions and offering observations rather than rushing to tell staff how to improve their behavior.

Gathered information about the situation by observing and listening. Waited for a time to give feedback when the staff person could listen. "Let's talk about what happened at the training yesterday. I heard you left early."

Tool: Checklist for Confronting Issues



Strategies to confront:

- □ Check assumptions
 - find out about the staff person's perceptions
 - look into your perceptions
- □ Work to build rapport
 - find out how the staff person sees the problem
- □ Discuss and define the problem
 - discuss experiences with the problem
 - clearly define the situation
- □ Ask for behavior change
 - discuss the benefits of change
 - work to get staff buy-in
- □ Jointly prepare a plan to put the change into action
 - develop specific steps
 - set time frames to implement the change

Fine Tuning Confrontation Strategies:

- □ Set a time that is conducive to talking about the issue
 - refrain from insisting on immediately discussing an/or resolving the issue
 - make sure the staff person is in a "place" that he/she can attend to the problem
- □ Use 'I' statements such as:
 - 'I think that you are angry with the Jones family because they seem to be needing some extra help'
- □ Refrain from using "You" statements such as:
 - 'You have a problem with the Jones family that is interfering with your objectivity'.
- □ Stay focused on the issue at hand
 - stick to one issue at a time
 - refrain from bringing others issues into the discussion
- □ Keep the situation from escalating
 - pay attention to non-verbal behavior
 - take a break if the situation becomes heated
- □ Resist threats and ultimatums
 - describe the consequences attached to the behavior should it occur in the future
- □ Revisit the issue to review whether or not the problem has been resolved

Sample Activity - Using Empathy



Instructions:

- 1. Please review the table that follows
- 2. Read each staff statement and write down the message that underlies what was said.
- 3. Decide what you think the staff person's feelings or underlying concerns are and write them down.
- 4. Formulate an initial question or tentative statement and write it in the appropriate column.
- 5. Formulate an empathetic response and write that in the appropriate column.

Staff Person's Statement	Underlying Message	Unstated Feelings and/or Underlying Concerns	Initial Inquiry	Empathetic Response
The Situation: The s	staff person has just con	me back from his first s	solo appearance in cour	rt.
"That defense attorney on the Jones case knows I'm new on the job and he's out to crucify me. I'd have to stay up preparing all night to be able to answer her questions."	I don't have enough experience to be able to handle court yet. Please help me!	Fear of failure. Concern that he/she is not getting the training he/she needs to be successful	It sounds like you are telling me that you are overwhelmed by your trip to court.	Court is one of our toughest assignments. It is especially hard for new workers before they get the hang of it.
The Situation: The s	staff person has just exp	perienced several emerg	gencies in a row on her	caseload.
"You expect too much from your staff."	I'm feeling overwhelmed. I'm not sure if I have the skills to accomplish what you are asking me to do. I don't know where the boundaries are.	Fear of failure. Frustration that he/she does not have the skills needed to do the job. Concern that work life will overtake time for personal life.	What I am hearing you say is that you are concerned that you might not be able to meet my expectations. Could that be the case?	I do expect a lot from my workers, because I know they are capable of a high level of performance. I'm getting the feeling that you might be worried about the increased caseloads that we are moving to.

Staff Person's Statement	Underlying Message	Unstated Feelings and/or Underlying Concerns	Initial Inquiry	Empathetic Response	
The Situation : The staff person has had to remove Kevin from several placements in the last year.					
"This placement with the Jones family will never work for Kevin. He's been hurt too much in the past to risk hurting him again."	I'm afraid to take a risk. I'm overwhelmed by feelings of loss and grief that I see in Kevin.	Fearful of being responsible for Kevin getting hurt again.	Is it possible that you are concerned that you may be responsible for Kevin being hurt if the placement fails?	You have worked so hard with Kevin and I can hear that you are very concerned about him.	
	Conner has refused to a long her relationship with	_		worker feels that Mrs.	
Mrs. Conner is impossible; she acts like she is making all of the decisions even though she's just the foster mother.	I'm feeling out of control. I feel intimidated when my decisions are questioned.	Frustration at the lack of control possible in child and family service work.	I'm guessing that you must be frustrated by her lack of responsiveness.	Is it possible that she isn't letting you in because you are the third worker she has had in six months?	
The Situation: The v	The Situation: The worker is frustrated by the Smith's many requests for post adoption services.				
I knew the Smith's were never going to make it with Mark. They want me to help them find another therapist. What was wrong with the last one?	I'm afraid that the placement isn't going well and that I might not be able to help the family.	Feeling inadequate and frustrated with my inability to make things better for the family.	I'm picking up that you are concerned that you might not be able to help this family. Am I on the right track?	It can be scary to watch a new family find their way together.	

Tool: Necessary Elements for the Creation of a Culture for Staff Retention



Provide for Physical and Emotional Safety in the Work Place		
What it means:	How to apply it:	
 Understand agency policy relating to safety Relay safety information to staff 	Involve staff in discussions around procedures, protocols and "what if" scenarios designed to detect and prevent potentially hazardous conditions	
 Let staff know that the agency desires a culture of safety for staff and families Clarify staff's understanding of safety policies 	Involve staff in any post-mortem process to review hazardous situations and to integrate lessons learned into practice	

Give Authority Along with Responsibility			
What it means:	How to apply it:		
Set clear standards for staff that include the goals, values and principles of the agency and the unit	Give enough control to help individual staff move forward to accomplish their assigned tasks		
Affirm staff by allowing them to rise to the challenge	 Trust staff to carry out the responsibilities of their positions Resist the urge to micromanage staff 		

Keep Staff in the Loop			
What it means:	How to apply it:		
Provide as much information as possible about how the unit/agency is doing	 Include staff in the decisions that are being made Ask for input Implement mechanisms that encourage staff to give feedback and make suggestions Reinforce the concept that their ideas are needed and valued 		
	Let staff know that their feedback will make it to the upper ranks of management		



Tool: Deciding Which Communication Strategy to Use

Communication	What is it?	When to Use it	Suggested
Objective	What is it.	When to ose it	Communication Strategies
Affirm	Positive recognition of staff performance and/or ability	As often as is appropriate – work to catch staff doing well and give them positive feedback	Personalize affirmations, both verbally and written
Instruct	Giving information or direction to staff	When staff are asking for information or when they are open to taking in new information – "teachable moments"	Give constructive feedback
Defuse	Reduce the intensity of a situation with staff	When situations escalates to the point that the staff person is not hearing you or other team members	Ask clarifying questions
Support	Helping to sustain and encourage staff	When staff are uncertain of their decisions or when they need backup from others	Use empathetic responses, affirmations etc.
Problem Solve	Assist staff in working through an issue or situation	When staff are wrestling with situations that they need help sorting out or require another perspective	Practice effective listening and ask open questions that seek to clarify
Manage risk	Communication designed to help staff analyze the risk involved in a given situation and ways to manage it	When staff do not have the big picture regarding risk to children and families; themselves and/or the agency	Listen to staff perspectives, ask clarifying questions and give information that looks at all of the factors involved
De-stress	Reducing the exposure or effects of stress on staff	In situations where staff are overwhelmed and not able to take in information or make appropriate decisions	Empathetic listening
Reframe	Assist staff in seeing an issue or situation in a different light	When staff are stuck or have a tendency to overlook strengths and concentrate on deficits	Ask both feeling and clarifying questions. Practice empathetic responses that get at staff's underlying issues and/or concerns
Avoid	Not deal with an issue or situation – can be done overtly or covertly	When it is impossible to deal with the situation at that moment – a stop gap measure not to be routinely employed	Make an appointment with staff to deal with the issue or situation when there is time to focus

About the Authors

John and Judith McKenzie, along with their colleague, Rosemary Jackson, are the principal authors, organizational consultants and trainers for the Michigan State University Workbook Series on *Staff Retention in Child and Family Services*. Their results-oriented work ethic, combined expertise, and successful work histories are ideally suited to assisting child and family service agencies in developing a culture for staff satisfaction and retention.

Judith was the CEO and President of Spaulding for Children for 22 years. Under her leadership, Spaulding grew from a small special needs adoption program to a renowned multi-service agency that has been the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption continuously since 1985. In addition, she has several years experience administering public child and family service programs, including public assistance, protective services, foster care and adoption and child welfare agency licensing. Judith has provided training, keynote addresses, and has written extensively on child and family services, public and non-profit agency management and strategic planning. Judith received her MSW from the University of Michigan.

John has been a "hands on" manager and organizational consultant in business and industry for over 25 years. He has led a number of change initiatives and implemented many new projects throughout his career, winning six executive level awards for his contributions to General Motors, TRW and Unisys. John has experience and proven expertise in strategic planning, change management, teambuilding, project management, and implementation of workforce and quality processes. He has adapted these proven methods and materials from business to provide assistance to state child welfare programs and non-profit agencies. John received his BS in Industrial Engineering from the University of Maryland.

John and Judith have provided consultation and training in strategic planning and change management for over fifteen states' child welfare programs. In addition, they have written a series of five, *Answering the Call*, publications for AdoptUsKids on recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents, which have been published and distributed to over 60,000 individuals and agencies nationwide.

Rosemary Jackson is an accomplished trainer, consultant, program developer and clinician. Rosemary has developed curriculum for clinicians and parents to address the post placement needs of foster and adoptive families and she currently offers post adoption services to adult adoptees and families who have adopted internationally. She has also developed training materials on a variety of topics including grief and loss; workplace stress and burnout; secondary trauma and others that are germane to staff offering services to children and families. Her years combining service delivery and product development make her uniquely qualified to offer training and consultation services in child and family services.

Project Services

With a flexible design, agency leaders, supervisors and front-line staff will be able to benefit from using the curriculum in many ways. However, it is important for users to understand that the curriculum, at its best, is intended to facilitate cultural change within agencies to support staff retention and job satisfaction and improve agency outcomes. Therefore, states and agencies that make a commitment to obtain professional services to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum will experience better and more lasting results. The various ways the curriculum can be accessed and used are described below.

Self-study - Specific workbooks target the needs and interests of agency leaders, supervisors and front-line workers. Workbooks include learning activities, case studies and tools to enhance individual learning.

Workshops - Trainers and advisors are available to conduct workshops for leaders, program managers and/or supervisors. These workshops are tailored to the specific audience and (when available) will include use of media to present learning principles, engage participants in small group learning activities and demonstrate how the program can be used in the work setting.

Training of facilitators - Project staff will provide facilitator training for individuals or agency teams. Sessions will equip teams to facilitate learning groups in an agency and to use the curriculum in a combination of self-study and small group activities.

Multiple agency user group(s) - Project staff will provide ongoing training and support to a regular group of selected and trained agency facilitator teams, who will form a User's Group. The advantage to this model is that teams will be supported and encouraged to share their promising practices.

Single agency model - An experienced project faculty team will facilitate an agency's development plan over a mutually agreed upon period of time. Services will involve highlevel administrative commitment and involvement. Agency assessments will be conducted and an agency-specific plan developed. Internal leadership team(s) will determine and facilitate changes. Staff will be involved at all levels of the agency.

Project staff will work with interested states and agencies to explore options for delivering services tailored to agency needs and available resources. Fees will be established based on scope of work, staff time, travel and material costs to deliver the services requested.

If you are interested in learning more about the availability of training and consultation services, contact:

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