

Balancing the Needs of Both the Parent and Child in Mental Health Treatment



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- Graduate degree: MSW from Indiana Univ.
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker since 2002
- Specialized in Child and Adolescent therapy
- Mental Health Consultant
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**Goals for this session:**

- 1) Identify the needs, rights of the child in regards to clinical social work/MH treatment
- 2) Identify the needs, rights of the parent/guardian in regards to clinical social work
- 3) Identify duty of social worker to meet these needs
- 4) Establish understanding/practical strategies for the social worker

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### Family Systems Mindedness

- Value of interconnectedness of families
- One person's health or dysfunction impacts entire family system
- Health or dysfunction of the entire family impacts each person
- How can a clinical social worker serve children/teens keeping family systems mentality at the forefront?*

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Clinical Realities...

Items we cannot ignore

<b>Child needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consent for Treatment</li><li>Payment for services</li><li>Transportation</li><li>Ongoing support outside of sessions</li><li>Protection</li><li>Advocacy</li></ul>	<b>Parent needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improvement in family stress</li><li>Improvement in own competency as a parent</li><li>Ongoing support in sessions</li></ul>
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### Early Needs in MH Treatment

- Determine who is the primary client
  - The child?
  - The parent?
  - The family?

The client is NOT simply the oldest or most assertive person in the room!



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### Defining the client role

- Sources:
  - Referral information
  - Primary contact/request for services
  - First appointment (intake assessment)
  - Logistics (the where and when)
- Importance:
  - Determines who has client rights/privileges
  - Determines who has primary responsibility for change

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### Dignity and Worth

- Code of Ethics Preamble
  - Identifies six core values of social work
  - Dignity and worth of an individual
    - Regardless of background, ability, age
- Social workers are obligated to demonstrate dignity and worth to child/teen clients



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*"People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'"*

Mark 10: 13-14 NIV

Christian social workers also have a **spiritual obligation** to show dignity and worth to child/teen clients.

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Beginning the Professional Relationship

- 1.03 Informed Consent
  - Social workers should use clear and understandable language to inform clients of the purpose of the services, risks related to the services
  - Social worker informs identified client in understandable terms
    - Purpose of services
    - Confidentiality rights and limitations

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Establishing a clear understanding

- 1.07e Privacy and Confidentiality
  - Social workers should discuss with clients and other interested parties the nature of confidentiality and limitations of clients' right to confidentiality. Social workers should review with clients circumstances where confidential information may be requested and where disclosure of confidential information may be legally required. This discussion should occur as soon as possible in the social worker-client relationship and as needed throughout the course of the relationship.

Child = client  
Parent = other interested party

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Clear understanding...

- Upon intake, both the parent(s) and child need to know expectations for confidentiality
- After intake, both parent(s) and child need to know expectations for confidentiality



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Child/Teen as the Client

### Beginning your work: Strategies for clear understanding

- Greet primary client first and most.
- Empower primary client to provide intake information by:
  - Explaining [purpose of MH services](#) in understandable terms (2 word pictures)
  - Explaining [confidentiality rights and limits](#) to child/teen either
    - 1) In presence of parent
    - 2) Separately

**WARNING:**  
MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING NEEDED

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Ongoing work: Strategies for clear understanding

- Establish normal course of treatment routines **BEFORE** they start happening
  - Over-explain the process
- Constant communication with parent and child
  - Parent time at beginning of every session
    - Discussion of goal progression
    - Parent time to inform clinician
    - "Sneaking" my influence into the family

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Goal setting with clients

- **1.02 Self-Determination**
- Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and [assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals](#). Social workers may limit clients' right to self-determination when, in the social workers' professional judgment, clients' actions or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable, and imminent risk to themselves or others.
- Social worker and [identified client](#) set the goals
  - Ask client why parent wants them in treatment
  - Decide who will tell the parent about goals
  - Explain parent will know goal progression

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**Biblical application:**

- o I Timothy 4:12
  - o Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.
- o Joshua 24:15
  - o But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.

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Child/Teen as the Client

**Privacy Considerations**

- o 1.07c Privacy and Confidentiality
- o Social workers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional service, except for compelling professional reasons. The general expectation that social workers will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. In all instances, social workers should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose; only information that is directly relevant to the purpose for which the disclosure is made should be revealed.

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Child/Teen as the Client

**Protection and Informing**

- o Protect the "confidentiality of all information..."
  - > Communicate goals not session recap
  - > Therapist's perspective not client quotes
- o "...except for compelling professional reasons..."
  - > Assurance of an eye for safety
- o "...disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary..."
  - > Agreement of necessity for therapeutic trust

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Strategies for protection and informing of confidential info:

- Mutual agreement on goals between child and parent
  - Confirm wording with child/teen before sharing with parent
  - Engage both parties in sharing responsibility
  - Keeps rapport with both as you move forward

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Privacy Considerations

- 1.07d Privacy and Confidentiality
- Social workers should inform clients, to the extent possible, about the disclosure of confidential information and the potential consequences, when feasible before the disclosure is made. This applies whether social workers disclose confidential information on the basis of a legal requirement or client consent.

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Disclosing Information

*...informing client when possible before a disclosure is made*

Application to child/teen clients:

- Reporting abuse/neglect
- Reporting self-harm, substance use and/or suicidal ideation/plans
- Court documentation or testimony
- Non-custodial parent access to clinician and/or records



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Child/Teen as the Client

### Anticipating conflicts

**o1.06 Conflict of Interest**

- o (d) Social workers who anticipate a conflict of interest among the individuals receiving services or who anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles (for example, when a social worker is asked to testify in a child custody dispute or divorce proceedings involving clients) should clarify their role with the parties involved and take appropriate action to minimize any conflict of interest.

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Strategies for disclosing information and anticipating conflicts:

- o Prepare written reports in conjunction with client whenever possible
- o Explain to child/teen the anticipated areas of conflict (disclosure)
- o Help client determine any action on their part
  - o Communication with court (verbal or written)
  - o Communication with parents before court
- o Determine need to inform parent
  - o Done by client or clinician or both?



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Child/Teen as the Client

### Stop and go treatment

**o1.15 Interruption of Services**

- o Social workers should make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, relocation, illness, disability, or death.

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Child/Teen as the Client

### What's a social worker to do?

- Application
  - Divorce, death, abandonment = sudden single parent
  - Relocation to another home (foster family, juvenile detention center, etc.)
- Strategies
  - Problem solve with parent/guardian
  - Be a bridge for the client until transition is complete
  - Out of office visits (school or other)
  - Written contact to reinstate treatment
  - Personal referral

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Child/Teen as the Client

### Termination that serves both the child and his parent

- 1.16 Termination of Services
  - (a) Social workers should terminate services to clients and professional relationships with them when such services and relationships are no longer required or no longer serve the clients' needs or interests.

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The Social Worker...  
...The Terminator

Child/Teen as the Client

### Application & Strategies:

- Application
  - Clingy, needy & insecure parents
  - Disengaged children/teens in the process
- Strategies
  - Prepare for termination early and regularly
  - Build a plan with both the parent and child
  - Stick to the plan as per your professional opinion
  - Prove your termination with re-cap of successful achievement of goals
  - Discuss future areas of work for client and family

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**Remember...**

- Duty to serve clients regardless of background, ability or age
- Don't allow children's rights to get trampled in effort to appease parents.
- Parents enjoy when someone dotes on their child. They will likely accept this.
- Establish expectations clearly for all involved.
- Honor your child client.

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**Q & A:**  
**What are your questions?**

National Association of Social Workers. (1999). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Washington, DC. NASW Press.



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