

Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP)

FETAL ALCOHOL & DRUG UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON ALCOHOL AND DRUG
ABUSE INSTITUTE SEATTLE, WASHINGTON (206) 543-7155
<http://depts.washington.edu/pcapuw/>

Weekly Staff Meetings

Weekly group staffing meetings are brainstorming, problem-solving sessions intended to leave participants in a positive frame of mind for the challenges they face during the week.

"I look forward to the staff meetings, particularly when I'm stuck on a particular client. I need a lot of positive reinforcement and I get a lot of that at the staff meetings." —PCAP Case Manager

As the clinical supervisor discusses the status of cases in individual supervision with case managers throughout the week, she listens for common themes, problems, or service barriers that should be addressed in a group discussion, and she may ask case managers to staff specific clients or situations at the next group meeting.

"We each staff a client each week, so that gives us a chance to know about other people's clients, how they're doing, to get feedback from the other case managers and from the supervisor about problems that I might be having with a client that I need some fresh views on. Very, very helpful. It's just essential. If we didn't do it once a week I think we'd fall apart." —PCAP Case Manager

Case managers may present particularly problematic or unique scenarios to get feedback from colleagues, or they may describe successful strategies and situations resolved. As case managers listen they learn from each other, provide ideas and support, and reflect on experiences with their own clients. At subsequent staff meetings they give updates on client status and how suggestions have worked. A continuing challenge supervisors face is maintaining a balance between spontaneity (keeping meetings flexible and interesting) and structure (required to limit the meetings to two hours, yet cover project business and hear from each case manager).

Case managers sometimes voice frustrations or grief during this time together, and supervisors use these strong expressions as springboards for developing responses that can sustain staff. For example, at a staff meeting at her home one supervisor asked her staff to write their frustrations and regrets on small cards, which they ceremoniously burned. They then wrote their aspirations on bright balloons and released them. In the ensuing discussion about common goals, they identified the importance of self-care, and subsequently have been better able to role model self care for their clients.

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Staff meetings are held once a week for two hours. This is the staff's only time during the week to bring up matters they would like to discuss as a group.

It is critical that everyone be present during this 2 hour session together, and that staff members arrive on time as a gesture of respect to each other.

Staff meetings are an opportunity for lively interaction and the exchange of ideas. They are brainstorming, problem-solving sessions that are intended to leave participants in a positive frame of mind for the challenges they face during the week. Case managers may need this time to vent frustrations, but frustrations expressed can become springboards for positive, creative solutions.

The supervisor keeps an agenda throughout the week as business items and items for discussion arise. Case managers may contribute thoughts, resources, observations, ideas or do spontaneous staffings without being on the agenda ahead of time.

At individual supervision during the week, the supervisor may assign a case manager to staff a specific client for feedback at the next group meeting. Supervisor and case manager should concur on the need to do the staffing, and the purpose.

Within two or three weeks after staffing a client for feedback, a case manager should staff for update on the status of the client so that case managers know how the situation has evolved and how their suggestions have worked.

Case managers who have not been requested by the supervisor to staff a client, or who do not want to staff a client, are not required to staff at a the group meeting and may "pass".

Weekly staff meetings should be limited to two hours. During meetings phones are not answered and phone calls are not made. Pages are turned to vibrate. Paperwork is not done during staff meetings.

Periodically staff meetings should be held outside the office for a change of scene.