

Welcome to the Annual Meeting
of the



National Association of
State Foster Care Managers

**The Assessment Process in Child
Welfare Practice:
Using Social Histories and Ecomaps**

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Defining Social History

Social histories may include areas of biological, social, psychological, economic, and legal history and the analysis of other aspects of society that show the evolution of social norms, behaviors and more.

Viewed from a social work perspective, social histories are a history of the family obtained through multiple sources, but with the family as central to the process.

Social Workers Use of Ecomaps

The late Carol Meyer, discussed assessment, as follows:

The assessment of the unit of attention is in itself a process, the beginning of intervention. It can be concretized as the making of a true map of a situation, a map that should be drawn with the client himself. As an assurance of the contract, a mutual definition between social worker and client of the situation confronting them, the drawing of a map could elicit a joint understanding of the salient and relevant features of the client's story (p. 177)

Subsequently describing how an ecological/systems approach might change the way a case is handled, Meyer described a mother and daughter "literally drawing the case for themselves" and showed what the map looked like. Meyer (1983) also emphasized the conceptual use of circles rather than lines, favoring a contextual, ecosystemic approach over the linear for clinical assessment.

Family Participation is Crucial

The use of these assessment methods recognizes the family as the most knowledgeable source of information about itself. As the kind of data requested is concrete and not extremely personal, their use encourages an interviewing style that tends to be non-threatening.

Most people will more readily discuss themselves and their backgrounds under these circumstances and share more personal information as rapport is established.

The use of these methods offers the Children's Service Worker an opportunity to observe and engage the family in their environment.

Having the family members sit **beside** the worker and assist in a diagram's completion (rather than across the table in an adversarial position) is a good example of how this method fits in with family-centered approach to providing social services.

It leads the family to open communication and insight into their past and present.

Families Know Their Family Best

Through these methods, the worker and family can learn about:

- Who the family is - their names, ages, relationships, occupations, and religion;
- Roles in the family and who performs them - Are grandparents, older children or others involved in the parenting? Do members identify any unfulfilled tasks? Who is perceived as having the most power in this family?
- Family rules - What are the family rules regarding decision making; child care; discipline; intimacy/distance; expressions of love and anger? What are the rules with respect to relationships between generations?
- The family communication - Are there identifiable channels of communication? Who communicates to whom and how?

Questions to Frame our Discussion on Social History Taking and Assessment

1. Why take a social history?
2. What does a social history consist of?
3. How do you take a social history in a way that engages the family?
4. How you focus on strengths and at the same time address the challenges?

Questions to Frame our Discussion on Social History Taking and Assessment

5. How are you currently taking social histories?
6. Do you use genograms or ecomaps to graphically illustrate members of the family system?
7. What do you put on a family genogram?

Questions to Frame our Discussion on Social History Taking and Assessment con't

8. Talk to us about how you drill down from information gathering to using of information in an assessment process?
9. Can we talk about looking for relatives and fictive kin as a diversion from foster care?
10. How can these tools be used to identify adult relatives, or as source documentation?
11. How are you currently gathering information on relatives, would these tools help to find relatives and therefore keep children/youth out of foster care?

Questions to Frame our Discussion on Social History Taking and Assessment con't

12. Good documentation can be used as evidence for the CFSR, have you ever used the genogram or other social history taking tools as evidence.
13. How can ecomaps, genograms be part of the development of case plan.
14. How can ecomapping with a family, be a strategy of family engagement, or useful as a tool to move families toward family group conferencing, family group decision making models - development of an assessment plan.

Genograms and Ecomaps

Genograms and eco-maps are graphical representations to help process life circumstances. They are useful for describing relationships, characteristics, and seeing interactions from an aerial point of view.

A **Genogram** is a pictorial display of a person's family relationships and social, psychological and medical history.

An **Eco-map** is a graphical representation that shows all of the systems at play in an individual's life. Eco-maps are used in individual and family counseling within the social work profession. They are often a way of portraying Systems Theory in a simplistic way that both the social worker and the client can look at during the session.

Ecological maps, or ecomaps, were developed by Hartman in 1975, Genograms by Mc Goldrick and as a means of depicting the ecological system that encompasses a family or individual.

Ecomap

The ecomap is a way of mapping the family system in its world. It provides the Family and Children's Service Worker with a way of actively gathering data about itself and drawing conclusions about that data.

- This method of diagramming depicts the family in their dynamic ecological system.
- Other important systems that influence the family are included in the ecomap.

The mapping procedure:

- Portrays an overview of the family in their ecological situation;
- Pictures the important nurturant or conflict-laden connections between the family and the world;
- Demonstrates the flow of resources, or lacks and deprivations; and
- Highlights the nature of the interfaces and points of conflicts to be mediated, bridges to be built, and resources to be sought and mobilized.

Using Ecomaps with Families

By using the various methods of diagramming, the Children's Service Worker and family may learn something about the relationships within the family, the location of the family's boundaries, and the variety and quality of the family's connections to outside systems.

In addition to assessment, the use of these diagramming methods may be useful as:

- Interviewing tools that can be used with individuals, couples, or the entire family;
- A way to facilitate participation by providing a clear structure and can assist people who might have difficulty entering into discussion;
- Helpful additions to the case recording, since they give a clear quick view of the family; and
- Tools for organizing information to assist in the case planning and preparation for services.

Families Know Their Family Best

Through these methods, the worker and family can learn about:

- *The relationship system(s) - How do members of this family feel about the other members? Who is close to whom in this family? Are there identifiable alliances? What are the major conflicts within the family from the point of view of each member?*
- *The family through time - What is the significant history about the development of the family (marriage, children, etc.)? What are the significant themes, patterns, events in the family history, major losses, changes, and how has the family handled them?*
- *The family network - What persons or systems are important to the family? Outside the immediate family, where does the family turn for support?*
- *How does the family "fit" in relation to larger society? Are there problems with other organizations, schools, work, church, etc.?*

Instructions for Ecomapping:

Draw a large circle in the middle of the map. This represents the members of household.

Inside the large circle, draw a genogram that describes the makeup of the household. It is often useful to add names and ages.

Inquire into what outside systems influence the family unit and its members.

Examples of these outside systems may include work, extended family, church, school, health care, social welfare, recreation, and friends. Draw smaller circles around the large household circle and label them to represent the outside systems.

The next step is to begin to draw the connections of the family unit and its individuals to the various systems in their environment. These connections are indicated by drawing lines between the family and the circles representing the outside systems. Some of the connections may be drawn to the family unit as a whole or to the individual members. This differentiation demonstrates the way the various family members are connected to the environment.

Instructions for Ecomapping:

The nature of the connection is described by the type of line that is drawn:

A solid or thick line represents a strong connection;

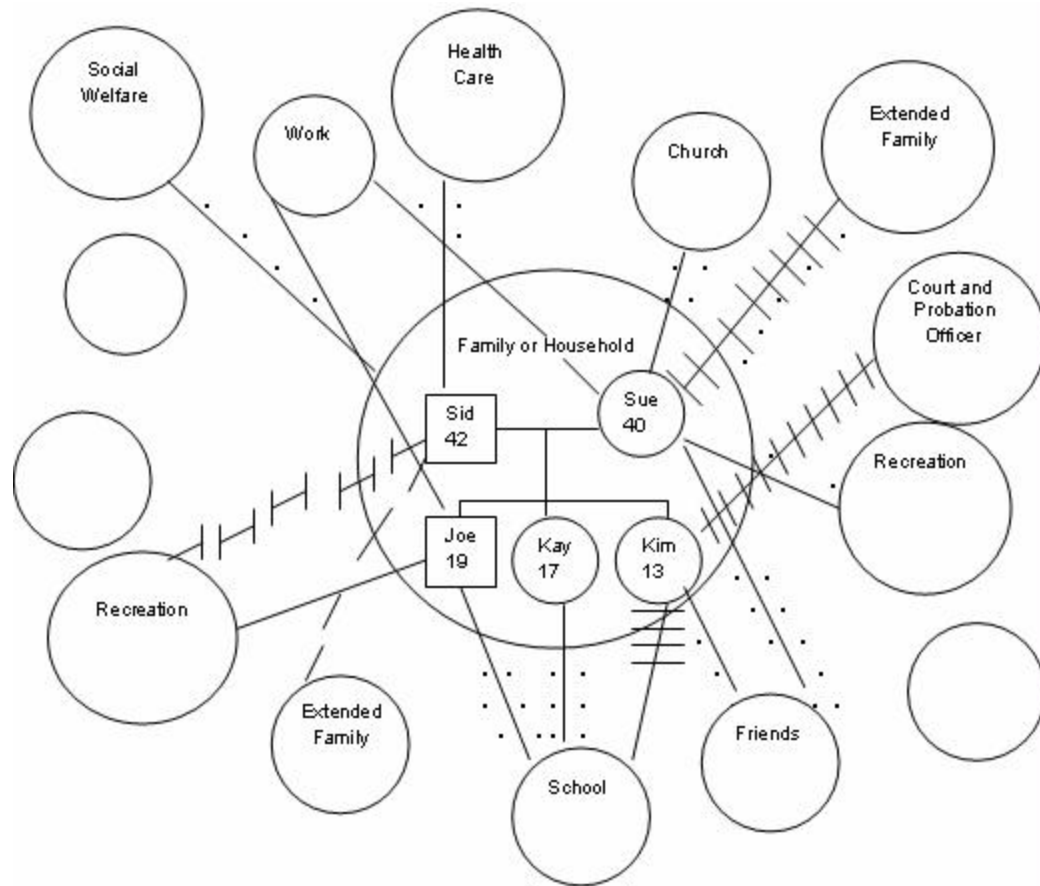
Three solid lines indicates the strong connection is an intense relationship;

A broken line indicates a tenuous relationship;

A zig-zagged line shows a stressful or conflictual relationship;

Finally, write a word or two beside the connecting lines or smaller circles to further describe, clarify or highlight information drawn on the ecomap.

Example of an Ecomap

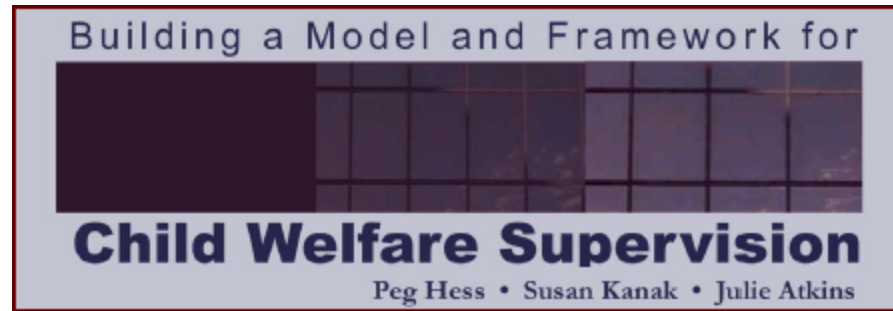




National Resource Center for
Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:
A WEB-BASED PRACTICE TOOLKIT

This toolkit is intended as an online tool for programs, states and tribes where promising practices, programs and resources are made available. It can provide an opportunity to connect with colleagues and share program successes and challenges. For this toolkit, we have chosen a few examples and recognize that they are by no means the only programs using some of these principles and practices. Our goal is to continuously update this toolkit to reflect current practices and resources in the field and recognize programs and practices. *Download a copy at: www.nrcfcppp.org/fewpt*



The NRCFCPPP and the NRCOI examines the responsibilities and needs of supervisory staff and develop an organizational framework to support effective child welfare supervision. This resulting document is intended to serve as a roadmap for agency leaders as they think through ways to build and sustain effective child welfare supervision in their agencies.

It is a state of the art compendium of an emerging model of supervision in child welfare and ideas and practices that, if implemented by agency leadership, can radically improve the ability of supervisors and the agencies that employ them to serve the needs of children and families in their cities, states and tribes.

Download a copy from the front page of our website www.nrcfcppp.org or pick up a copy here at the meeting

SIX STEPS TO FIND A FAMILY:

SIX STEPS

Setting the Stage

Discovery

Engagement

Exploration and Planning

Decision Making and Evaluation

Sustaining the Relationship(s)

This toolkit is intended as an online tool to facilitate family search and engagement. For this toolkit, we have chosen a few examples and recognize that they are by no means the only programs using some of these principles and practices. Our goal is to continuously update this toolkit to reflect current practices and resources in the field and recognize programs and practices. *Download a copy at: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/SixSteps.pdf>*

Missouri Child Welfare Manual

- http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/cwmanual/section7/ch1_33/sec7ch25.htm
- Title:
Section 7:
Chapter 25:
Effective Date:
- Child Welfare Manual
Glossary/Reference
Diagramming Families For Assessment

www.nasfcm.org

www.nrcfcppp.org



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