

The Florida Department of Children and Families

Children's Legal Services



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Child Welfare - Do We All Speak The Same Language? *

**Disclaimer: any resemblance to an actual person or case is purely coincidence. Do not take offense if you identify.*



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Why is this important?



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What Does This Sentence Mean??



"CLS met with OPA and CBC to identify POC for CPT and SAMH regarding FSDMM, OHC and FSFN."

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Differences Effect How We Communicate



“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

by Anthony Robbins

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Differences Effect How We Communicate



- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Experience
- Ethnicity
- Geography
- Personality
- Ego



- Lack of effective communication is at the base of virtually every misunderstanding.
- People make assumptions and generalize.

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Communication is Generational



- **The Silent Generation – ages 71-88**
- **The Baby Boomers – ages 49-70**
- **Generation X – ages 34-48**
- **Generation Y – The Millennials – ages 13-33**
- **What is next? – under age 13**
 - Gen Z or the Global Generation

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The Silent Generation (71-88)

What are You Like to Work With?



■ Communication preferences

- memos and letters

■ Assets

- Dedicated
- Experienced
- Knowledgeable

■ Challenges

- uncomfortable with conflict
- rarely challenge authority



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Baby Boomers (49-70)

What Are You Like to Work With?



■ Communication Preferences

- In person

■ Assets

- Team-oriented
- Dedicated
- Knowledgeable

■ Challenges

- May put process ahead of results
- Not always budget-minded
- Uncomfortable with conflict



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Generation X (*Gen X*) (34-48)

What Are You Like to Work With?



■ Communication Preferences

- Direct, immediate

■ Assets

- Adaptable
- Independent
- Creative
- Challenges the system

■ Challenges

- Skeptical
- Distrusts authority



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Millennials (13-33)

What are You Like to Work With?



■ Communication Preferences

- Email
- Text

■ Assets

- Optimistic
- Multi-tasking
- Technologically savvy
- Collaborative



■ Challenges

- Need for structure and supervision
- Inexperience with difficult interpersonal issues

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Roles in Child Welfare

What is your perspective?



Attorneys

Child Protection Team (CPT)

Judges

Guardian ad litem (GAL)

Case managers

Foster parents

Relatives

Law enforcement

Educators

Who did I forget?

the children!!!

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Roles in Child Welfare

What is your perspective?



*Can we make it any
more complicated?*

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Differences in Child Welfare Standards



- Best Interest
- Statutes
- Case Law
- Safety
- Risk
- Reasonable person

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CLS - Must follow the law – as interpreted by -

Statutes?

Case Law?

Evidence?

Hearsay?

Burden of proof?

Do we always like the answer?

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GAL statutory obligation?

Why is this important to know?

**GAL volunteers – do you know
her/his**

**background
education**

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What about case managers?

**What about CPT?
Procedures
Statutes**

Judges?

Foster parents?

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**Now that we have all this information,
what the heck do we do with it?**

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Adapt to Your Listener



- **Be aware of who your audience is**
 - Avoid the use acronyms unless you are sure they are part of your listener's vocabulary

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It All Comes Down to Communication!!



■ Attitude and body language

- Not just words but body language
- Are your arms crossed
- Are you really paying attention or looking at your cell phone
- What is your tone?

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It All Comes Down to Communication!!



- **Think before you speak**
 - The world does not revolve around you
 - Get rid of the ego
 - You MAY be wrong
 - Open yourself up to suggestions and opinions
 - Think of what is important to that person when conveying your message

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It All Comes Down to Communication!!



- **Try to understand their viewpoint**
 - Clarify their opinion
 - Ask open ended questions
 - Get rid of your ego

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It All Comes Down to Communication!!



■ Your words:

- “Don’t be ridiculous”
- “I hope you are happy!”
- “You have no idea what you are talking about”
- “You have been doing this long enough to know ...”
- “You haven't been doing this long have you?”
- “Really!”

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- **Consider these statements:**
 - “I am not sure I understand what you are saying”
 - “Can you help me understand?”
 - “How did you come to that conclusion?”
 - “Can you consider my idea/solution?”
 - “How wonderful it is that we are so passionate about these children!”

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It All Comes Down to Communication!!



- **Listening**

- Focus fully on the speaker

- **Active listening: repeat back what you heard**

- "I heard you say the child is neglected."

- **Ask questions**

- "When you say the child is neglected, what do you mean by neglect?"

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Differences in Perspective Provide Communication Challenges



- **Medical Neglect:**
 - medical versus legal
- **Emergency:**
 - medical versus legal
- **Dirty house**



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What about the children we serve?



WHEN AN INCONSISTENCY IS NOT.



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NOTE TO TEACHER BY PARENT:

Dear Ms. Davis,

I want to be very clear on my child's illustration. It is NOT of me on a dance pole on a stage in a strip joint. I work at Home Depot and had commented to my daughter how much money we made in the recent snowstorm and how we ran out of shovels. I found one that everyone wanted. This photo is of me selling a shovel.

Mrs. Harrington

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It's about the children: Evaluate "Inconsistencies"



WHEN AN INCONSISTENCY IS NOT.

- Exactly same or different question?
- What were the circumstances of the previous interview?
- Is it a different detail?
- Is the child tired and/or not focused?
- Is the child trying to be a cooperative?
- Is anyone influencing the child?
- Ask the child?

WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON?

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It's about the children



***Don't forget your power in
each child's life.***

***Don't forget the child in the
child's life.***

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Thank you



- I know you have a hard job as a foster parent
- You are appreciated – even though we may not always say it out loud
- Whenever I think of you, I think you are either all angels and maybe just a little crazy for doing this job
- You are caring for our most vulnerable population

■ **Thank You !**

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