



WHAT DO THE PRINCIPLES LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

HANDOUT 1B

Instructions:

1. Read each vignette below and reflect on how you would respond in your current practice. What would you say? What would you do? Why?
2. Then, read the principles on Handout 1A. Which principles do you feel you can use to think through other options for responding? When applying the lens of the principle(s), what changes or shifts for you? What would you say? What would you do? Why?
3. After you've done steps 1 and 2 on your own, have a conversation with a fellow trainee about the principles you selected and the impact it/they had on what you think or what you do.

WOMAN'S PLACE

(You are a child welfare caseworker or a family support person working in a community-based organization [non-domestic violence]. Pick one role with which you are somewhat familiar.)

Two Black/African-American mothers on your caseload have stopped participating in services at the only local domestic violence (DV) program called Women's Place. One mother told you that she had a bad experience in a peer support group with the white staff person she had also been seeing for individual counseling. The other mom said to you that "that's not a place for me or other Black women to get help."

- What do you say to each of these survivors of DV? What do you do? Why?
- Which Bridges to Better principles stand out to you that might inform your thinking about how you might respond differently? How and why?

ORTIZ FAMILY

(You are the TANF or child welfare worker for this family, or a DV advocate. Pick one role with which you are somewhat familiar.)

Juanita and Miguel Ortiz and their 3 children have lived in a shelter for unhoused families since they were evicted from their apartment after complaining repeatedly about not having heat, and about an infestation of mice and insects. Living in one room as a family at the shelter has been very stressful, and there are years-long waiting lists for Section 8 housing.

Miguel has been angry, yelling, and threatening, and has accused Juanita of being attracted to a staff person at the shelter. He has forbidden her to use the kitchen to prepare food unless he and the children are with her. Recently, he slapped both Juanita and his oldest child on different occasions, and was written up by staff when these incidents were reported by other residents. Staff have told him that if he is reported again for physical violence, they will call the police and have him arrested and thrown out.

- What do you say to Juanita, and to Miguel? What do you do? Why?
- Which Bridges to Better principles stand out to you that might inform your thinking about how you might respond differently? How and why?

MICAH BLUMBERG

(You are the daycare provider, a child welfare caseworker, a parent advocate, or a home visitor. Pick one role with which you are somewhat familiar.)

Micah Blumberg is 4 and a half years old, and he attends a local daycare. Micah's father, David, dropped him off the past two mornings, which is not unusual. Micah is normally very active and smiling. For the past two days, however, he has seemed sad, withdrawn, and somewhat clingy. When asked what's wrong, Micah hides his face and doesn't respond.

This morning, he hit another child repeatedly when the child wouldn't give Micah a beloved stuffed animal. A note was sent to parents through the daycare's app, and Micah's mother, Sherrie, came to pick him up early. She was clearly irritated and on edge.

- What do you say to Micah, Sherry, and/or David? What do you do? Why?
- Which Bridges to Better principles could inform your thinking about how you might respond differently? How and why?

COMMON QUESTIONS/CHALLENGES:

1. What is the right answer? There is no single right answer to any of these situations. The principles encourage you and others to reflect on options for responding **that are aligned with the impact you are trying to have.**

For example, in the Women's Place vignette, you might choose to think about your response through an **Equity** lens, knowing that you want to address the harmful racial dynamics that appear to be at play. Having a conversation with white staff of Women's Place about the feedback you received is one option, but is it the best or first step to take? **Planning with Survivors** would suggest that the perspectives of the two Black women who no longer have access to services should guide your next steps. What role, if any, do they want to play in this effort? Do they have any worries about you taking on the conversation by yourself?

The **Collaboration** principle might remind you to think about the need to develop and sustain a long-term collegial relationship with staff at Women's Place to ensure that all survivors can access services. How might you address racism within the organization in a way that both holds them accountable and sustains a constructive dialogue over time?

2. The principles might help me to think, but they don't tell me what to do - why? Practices - or 'what you do' - should never be chosen without thinking through what you are trying to accomplish and the potential results of alternative courses of action. Will your actions be helpful or harmful? How is what you're planning to do likely to impact safety and well-being of the child and the family, in both the short term and in the longer term? Are there things you could do differently that would accomplish more of what you're trying to get done? The principles provide scaffolding for your thinking and your consideration of alternatives.

In later training modules, you will also learn two practice frameworks, which will help you get more clear about 'what to do' with both survivors and with people who use violence. However, the nature of any child- or family-centered practice is that, as one Principle states, you should be responding to the **unique needs and circumstances of each person and family.** There is no one-size-fits-all practice when dealing with the complexities of domestic violence. Sometimes restraining orders or calling the police make things worse, fleeing into shelter is not an option, and going to a peer support group isn't sufficient. As we learn more about what helps and what hurts survivors of DV, our thinking and our practice must become more nuanced and tailored to meet the needs of the children and families we are paid to serve.

3. The core values of my agency are different from these principles – which should I use?

First, think critically about whether and how the values of your organization are operationalized in practice. In many large systems, such as child welfare, articulated values take a back seat to the day-to-day demands and too-familiar routines of working with multi-stressed families. For example, an organizational value of “family-centered” or “family-driven” may feel miles away from what actually occurs, both to you and to families.

Next, look for areas of alignment between your organization’s stated values and the Principles – there’s sure to be some overlap. Values and the Principles may be stated or described differently, so engage colleagues, your supervisor, and your manager in a conversation about where you see alignment or divergence, and ask for their perspectives. Be sure to discuss the variations you may have noticed between your own organizational values and practices as well.

Around any Principles where it’s difficult to find alignment, expand the conversation to include partners (meaning collaborators outside of your organization with whom you regularly interact) and see what ideas (and possibly a new set of values) they bring to the table. The idea is not to attain perfect alignment across multiple agencies, but instead to think about where you have common interests, struggles, and goals. Chances are that in the course of these conversations, you will attain greater clarity about how you want to work with families, and how you want to work with your partners to get closer and closer to consistently positive outcomes for the families you serve.