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Developments in training School-Based Family Counselors: The School-Based Family Counseling (SBFC) Graduate Program at California State University, Los Angeles.

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This paper describes the Graduate Program in School-Based Family Counseling in the Charter College of Education at California State University, Los Angeles.

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The School Based Family Counseling (SBFC) Program at California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) is a graduate program within the Division of Administration and Counseling in the Charter College of Education. Prior to the development of the SBFC Program in 1993, students were able to earn a Masters of Science degree with the Option in Marriage, Family and Child Counseling and were allowed to complete another option of the Masters degree in School Counseling, if they so desired. These two options were not integrated, however, and essentially existed as two separate programs. In the early 1990's, Los Angeles Unified School District and the other school districts surrounding CSULA experienced substantial budget cuts and eliminated up to 70% of their School Counselor Positions. Many of these school counselors had no other career options because their degree and credential was limited to School Counseling. As a result of this and other factors, the School Counseling Option began to deteriorate with a significant decrease in the quantity and quality of applicants.

At the same time, the MFCC Option had begun to work more closely with families from local schools through the "Mission Possible" program developed by Brian Gerrard, Marcel Soriano, and Ray Hillis. This program utilized MFCC graduate students to provide family counseling for families referred through local school districts. Perhaps due to the social stigma and frequent devaluing of mental health services in their families or cultures, many families had not followed through with referrals to mental health services in their community. Mission Possible attempted to overcome these obstacles by providing counseling at the school site or nearby non-clinic settings with an emphasis on providing services for families referred for school problems. Many of the children whose parents participated in this program showed substantial

improvement in school while their families were being seen. Unfortunately, there were inadequate funding resources available and these services did not become integrated into the operations of the local school systems. When the California State University system experienced major budget cuts in the early 1990's, the Mission Possible program in Southern California was unable to continue to provide services. The success of the families and children who participated in the program, however, helped to push the CSULA College of Education's MFCC program towards a more school-related direction. This ultimately resulted in the development of the School-Based Family Counseling Option which provided students a graduate program that would enable them to work as school counselors, but with an additional area of expertise that provided additional career options if school counseling jobs declined.

The above experience was quite instructive in learning more about both positive and negative aspects of providing family counseling with school-related problems. Typical of most MFCC interventions at the time, counseling focused primarily upon understanding family dynamics and providing traditional family therapy to improve family functioning. Many families would come initially to address a crisis situation, but once the initial crisis had abated, they seemed to no longer understand the value of continued counseling. While school issues often constituted the presenting problem, assessments did not consistently obtain input from the teacher or other school system personnel and interventions were typically limited to the family system. Children often improved in school, perhaps as a result of the improved family functioning, but it was often difficult to retain the family's involvement in counseling because the direct benefits for the child's educational progress was not readily apparent to the family. Consequently, these families did not experience much second order change and soon experienced another crisis, which resulted in the child experiencing further difficulties in school. Work with some families revealed obstacles such as ineffective teachers, institutional racism, or other problems related to the school system. Because of the limited role of the MFCC related to the school, these obstacles were rarely dealt with and continued to plague the lives of the children and their families and they discontinued family counseling.

These experiences revealed some of the limitations of traditional family counseling approaches in resolving school-related problems. Some professionals in the schools point to these limitations and conclude that family system issues should not be dealt with by school personnel. We feel that this is a simplistic and untenable position, however, because it is clear that children are most affected by the two major systems in their lives: Their family and their school. As children become adolescents, their peer group has a greater impact on their lives, but the school is still the predominant setting for their social interactions and their family situation still has a significant impact on their development. In light of these factors, it seems clear that school support personnel (i.e., school counselors and school psychologists) can be in a unique position to provide support and direction to families and schools in their mutual goal of maximizing the development of children. At many schools, particularly at the elementary level, school counselors might be in the best position to help families because of their daily presence at the school and their institutional role within the school system. A number of obstacles appeared to prevent them from being effective in this regard including time constraints, non-counseling job requirements, and lack of administrative support. A critical problem, however, was that most school counselors lacked the training and experience in the family counseling skills necessary to identify and address these issues effectively. Conversely, while some MFCC's may have had the

necessary training and experience to help families, most were unaware of how to integrate this work into the mission of the school (i.e.; to maximize student's academic achievement). Because of this, most of these mental health professionals lacked the credibility necessary to effectively intervene with the school in addressing school-related problems.

The SBFC Model

In the mid-1990's, several models were developed that attempted to integrate family counseling in the schools. A specific school-based family counseling (SBFC) model was described in detail over the next few years (Carter & Evans, 1995; Evans & Carter, 1997; Carter & Evans, in press). Consistent with earlier concepts of school-based family counseling, this model essentially focuses efforts on integrating the work of family and school systems in order to address barriers to learning and maximize the social and academic development of children. Specific issues are addressed through prevention and postvention activities with school staff, parents and students. Prevention activities focus on addressing critical issues through large group meetings with teachers, staff, parents and students. Postvention activities usually focus on addressing individual students' problems in development and behavior by first attempting to maximize collaboration between the members of the school and family systems that are most likely to influence the child's development. Developing this sense of collaboration requires the SBFC to help both teachers and parents to understand their shared goals and common strategies in helping children to learn.

This model focused on the process of school-based family counseling and the requisite skills and experience that school support professionals would need to effectively implement the model. Specific aspects of training were described and it was felt that school counselors and school psychologists might be able to implement the model with additional training. However, as the authors gained more experience in implementing the model in public schools, it became more apparent that the model required a professional with a high degree of specific training in school-based family counseling. While previous papers indicated that this professional might currently be a "school counselor", "school psychologist", or "marriage and family therapist", the most recent paper refers to the professional as a School-Based Family Counselor or "SBFC", a role that is hoped will someday be formally recognized as vital to our schools. This person might already serve as one of the professionals mentioned above, but would have to have substantial additional training and the allocation of the time necessary to fulfill the SBFC role. Most programs that train these professionals, however, do not provide the breadth of training necessary to effectively implement the multi-faceted role of the SBFC.

In 1997, Evans and Carter discussed the historical lack of family counseling and practicum curricula in school counseling or school psychology programs which directly inhibited most school counselors and school psychologists from engaging in counseling interactions with families. Several authors advocated additional training for school professionals to address this discrepancy, and there were attempts to include family counseling training in school counseling programs (Hinkle & Wells, 1995; Nicoll, 1992; Palmo, Lowry, Weldon & Scioscia, 1988). Helping school-based professionals adjust to the more active role of a change agent, enhancing competencies in systems theory and family intervention techniques, and providing family counseling internships also were recommended (Cleghorn & Levin, 1973; Goldenburg &

Goldenburg, 1991; Hinkle, 1993; [e.g., see Hinkle & Wells, 1995, for a review of training competencies in family counseling for school counselors]).

Another critical component in operationalizing school-based family counseling, as outlined in the articles by Carter & Evans, is the high level of personal development and complex array of skills that are required of a person who wishes to be a SBFC. For many of the urban school sites in which we and our interns have worked, the implicit focus of school-based family counseling has been on facilitating interactions with families where a high level of conflict and confrontation are often the norm. This requires that SBFCs be keenly aware of their own issues, and have resolved these sufficiently in order to remain objective when working with troubled families. Awareness of one's own personal dynamics is critical to the process of helping families and typically involves a great deal of personal exploration and development.

In light of the above factors, some advocated for greater use of family counselors in the schools. SBFCs, however, also must learn to deal with a wider range of concerns and constituencies in promoting student development than do most family counselors. In addition to the student's personal development, the domains of career development, academic progress, and socialization are often expected to be addressed by the school. Although focusing on student development is primary to the role of the SBFC, attention also must be paid to the needs and concerns of teachers, administrators, and other school personnel. These complex factors of school systems are not typically addressed in traditional MFCC training programs.

It was apparent, then, that most academic and clinical programs geared for the preparation of traditional school or family counselors did not necessarily provide the wide range of knowledge and skills required for school-based family counseling to be effective (O'Callaghan, 1994; Palmo et al., 1988; Stevens-Smith, Hinkle & Stahmann, 1993). Integration of these specialties is critical to preparing professionals who can operate effectively in school and family environments. These circumstances led to the understanding that a new type of professional training program was needed in order to improve the delivery of counseling services to families and schools. The School-Based Family Counseling Program at CSULA is an attempt to prepare professional counselors with the expertise in family therapy and school counseling necessary to implement the school-based family counseling model. In 1993, the School-Based Family Counseling Graduate Program was developed at CSULA and included courses for the study of School Counseling and Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling.

The SBFC Training Program at California State University, Los Angeles

The SBFC Program at CSULA was designed to provide a diverse curriculum that would prepare counselors to act as a connective force involving families, schools, and communities in education. The CSULA-SBFC program also developed close alliances with the school districts and school sites involved with SBFC intern placements. This provided the opportunity for the SBFC program to improve and adjust the curriculum, training, and supervision of interns to better meet school and community needs. The program focused on helping students to develop the specific counseling skills that facilitate the individual and systemic changes that are crucial to the school-based family counseling model. This coursework and training was primarily applied to school environments with as many school-related examples as possible.

Sequence of Student Experiences throughout SBFC Graduate Program

At its inception, the SBFC program essentially comprised two separate programs with some overlapping course content and competencies. As we learned more about the practice of school-based family counseling, we began to integrate school counseling and family counseling into specific courses, particularly the more clinically-oriented courses such as COUN 505 (Practicum in Counseling), COUN 520 (Introduction to Family Evaluation), COUN 521 (Advanced Marriage and Family Counseling), and COUN 523 (Family Counseling Laboratory). These courses are taken in sequence and provide a continuous learning experience in School-Based Family Counseling. Following is a description of the sequence of training that a student goes through in the CSULA-SBFC program.

Advisement and Application Process before Admission

Before a student comes to CSULA, they can obtain advisement information from a variety of sources. A basic description of the program and requirements and timelines for admission is available from the Division office or on the Internet. In addition, prospective applicants are encouraged to speak directly with the Coordinator of the Program by making an appointment with him.

After the deadline for applications has passed, the Admissions Committee screens all applications to assess the suitability of the candidate to be included in the interview process. Areas assessed include Grade Point Average, previous experience, autobiographical statement and their answers to specific questions regarding the applicants' view of their own strengths and weaknesses. This screening process results in a list of applicants who are best qualified for an interview. Over the past ten years, there have been between 75 and 120 applicants each year for the 24 positions. In the Spring of 2003, there were 125 applicants to the program, of which 83 were interviewed. Historically, applicants with a grade point average of 3.0 or better are selected for interviews, although this depends on the quality of the applicants for each year's cohorts. Those applicants selected receive a 20-30 minute individual interview with at least two faculty members. The purpose of the interview is to assess the applicants' knowledge and experience of the Marriage and Family Therapy and the School Counseling professions, their awareness of their own cultural and historical background and their understanding of other cultural factors, and their ability to demonstrate the interpersonal skills and level of openness and self-reflection necessary to be an effective SBFC. While no specific undergraduate major is required for acceptance, there are four prerequisite courses for the program, which may be satisfied by undergraduate coursework. These include: abnormal psychology, counseling or psychological theories, statistics, and foundations of Special Education. While completion of these courses is not required before acceptance into the SBFC program, applicants are encouraged to complete the courses as soon as possible.

The Cohort Model and Orientation Process

One of the most important aspects of the CSULA-SBFC program is the use of "cohort" groups. Following the completion of interviews, 24 students are selected for "conditional" acceptance and separated into two cohorts of 12 students each. These cohorts go through a specific sequence of classes with at least one cohort class per quarter, usually with the same professor who also serves as their academic advisor. The cohorts are intended to provide a

supportive and safe environment where students have the opportunity to learn more about themselves through close interactions with others. The cohort approach also can provide long-term opportunities to network with others as students and as professionals. This professional networking may be more critical to SBFC's because of the need to create clear and firm boundaries with school staff in order to maintain the objectivity necessary to implement the SBFC model.

Soon after acceptance, all students attend an orientation meeting that provides information about their development as SBFC's and the sequence of graduate coursework. This meeting is begun with introductions that include the student's name, where they received their undergraduate degree and what major, and one thing they like to do for fun. This last element is important because it reminds the students of the need to retain some balance in their lives even as they begin an arduous program of graduate study and training. Promoting this balanced perspective will also be important in their work with families who are often primarily focused on deficits and problems when they come in for counseling. Students are also provided information on how to become members of professional organizations such as the American Counseling Association and the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

At the beginning of the Fall academic quarter, students take two courses that they must demonstrate competence in before they are "officially" admitted to the program. These are Counseling 400A (Human Development Across the Life Span), a lecture course in human development and Counseling 505 (Practicum in Counseling), an introductory course with role-play experience in providing and receiving counseling. If a student fails to demonstrate competence in these courses during the Fall quarter, they may be advised as to what they need to do to establish competence or they may be dismissed from the program, depending on the level of difficulty that they are experiencing with the courses.

SBFC Cohort Sequence

The SBFC students begin their Cohort Sequence in the Fall academic quarter. As mentioned above, the first Cohort class is Counseling 505, Practicum in Counseling. This course teaches the generic clinical skills of counseling through an experiential process that encourages students to use some of their own personal issues in role-plays with their cohort-mates. This course also provides an introduction to the school counseling and family therapy professions and addresses legal and ethical aspects as well as other competencies.

Following Counseling 505, the students take Counseling 506, Individual Counseling Strategies. This course provides an orientation to individual counseling theory, crisis counseling, conflict resolution and other aspects of counseling. Following Counseling 506, students take Counseling 516, Group Counseling along with Counseling 520, Introduction to Family Evaluation and Counseling. Counseling 516 provides orientation and practice in understanding group dynamics and implementation of therapeutic and curriculum group processes for both small and large groups.

SBFC Clinical Training Sequence

Beginning in the Spring quarter of their first year, students take a sequence of clinically-oriented courses that comprise the majority of their clinical training in SBFC. These courses are Counseling 520, Counseling 521 and two quarters of Counseling 523. These courses are taught

by one instructor. The consistency of having the same instructor throughout this sequence appears to be critical to providing an integrated and meaningful clinical training experience. It enables the instructor and student to work together for a prolonged period of time that provides close clinical supervision and mentoring of the student's development as a clinician.

Counseling 520 is an introduction to family evaluation and systems theory and school-based family counseling procedures and practice. The two cohorts are combined into one group for this lecture class. Students are given an introduction into the leadership role of counselors, and an overview of the SBFC role, definition and practice. In Counseling 520, students are taught a generic family evaluation system developed by Karpel and Strauss (1983) that assesses the family in four dimensions: Factual, Individual, Systemic, and Ethical. This also involves clinical training in how to access these dimensions through interviews with the family as a whole and individually. Students are then required to write a family evaluation paper on their own family of origin. The family evaluation paper is a comprehensive, objective study of their own family of origin (i.e., the family consisting of the student, siblings, parents, and grandparents). Students are asked to focus on a time in their family's history when a problem clearly existed and that they clearly remember. They are asked to imagine that their family sought counseling to address this problem and then to act as if they are the family counselor that the family sees. Their task is to write a comprehensive and objective evaluation of the family from the perspective of the family counselor. They must include the following: 1) a genogram of the family including the grandparents, parents' generation and the student's generation; 2) a description of the presenting problem identification of the stage(s) in the developmental life cycle that the family was in when the problem occurred. If the family is in more than one stage, determine which is most important and why; 3) a multidimensional analysis and description of the family's current structure and dynamics (i.e. Factual, Individual, Systemic and Ethical dimensions) with respect to the presenting problem, cultural and historical factors, and any other issues that may have identified; and 4) a description of the most important issues for the family as the therapist sees them, including how the presenting problem fits in (e.g., separation anxiety resulting from Father-Child symbiosis). According to students, this assignment has proven to be one of the most difficult but informative tasks that they experience in the program. More importantly, it is critical to their analysis of counter-transference when they work directly with families later in the program (i.e.; Counseling 523).

During the Counseling 520 course, students are assigned to co-therapy teams that will operate in tandem for the next three academic quarters, which encompasses the majority of their clinical training in SBFC. There is specific discussion of co-therapy relationships and the opportunities and challenges associated with these. In their co-therapy teams, students participate in role-plays of the opening sessions, which provide the structure of the SBFC experience. They are also taught the theories of Minuchin and Bowen, Solution-focused and Narrative family therapies, and the Experiential family therapies of Whitaker and Satir.

During the quarter following Counseling 520, students take two related courses: Counseling 521 and Counseling 523. The cohorts are again combined into Counseling 521, which is a lecture course in advanced marriage and family counseling that coincides with Counseling 523, which is the family counseling laboratory course. Students are separated into different sections of Counseling 523, but all have the same instructor as they have in Counseling 521. Counseling 521 provides students with additional knowledge of marriage and family

theories, but also emphasizes the application of these to role of the SBFC and the specific procedures that encompass this role. These theories are more easily understood through writing case-studies that apply different family therapy theories to vignettes and by applying concepts to the specific family that the students are working with in Counseling 523. Students are also required to develop and present the results of an SBFC Evaluation with a family that they are working with in Counseling 523. This evaluation also assesses aspects of the school system and leads to the development of strategies to address these issues.

Counseling 523 is "Family Counseling Laboratory", and students take the course for two consecutive quarters, which enables them to work with families on a weekly basis for almost 6 months. These courses provide the opportunity for students to work in the CSULA Counseling and Assessment Clinic with families from the community who are referred for school-related problems in children such as behavioral or social problems or other difficulties involving the family. Students work in co-therapy teams under the direct supervision of licensed faculty members who are able to directly observe their work through live cameras and videotape. The students receive clinical supervision before and after seeing two families, and the supervisor at times may model appropriate techniques through direct interaction with the families. During the first quarter of Counseling 523 in the Fall quarter, students complete a family evaluation, contact the school to complete the SBFC Interview, and complete an assessment of school related issues. They then develop a specific SBFC Treatment plan that leads to initial implementation of SBFC strategies.

During the second quarter of Counseling 523 in the Winter quarter, students continue to work with the same families to evaluate and monitor the progress of the family and school in addressing the presenting problem. This provides the opportunity to more fully explore and address deeper issues related to the family and schools' functioning that may affect the child's development. These may include marital conflict, communication problems within the family or school system or more other issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse or gang involvement. Students learn about the process of termination and referral for additional interventions and how to help the family to follow through with recommendations through the use of a report that is presented and given to the family at the final session. Some families are able to continue counseling at the Clinic and the student-clinicians of these families learn how to transfer these cases to other professionals. The COUN 523 courses are the cornerstone of our clinical training in school-based family counseling.

During the Fall and Winter quarters of the second year, students also undergo preparation to begin their fieldwork experiences. This includes discussion of the requirements of fieldwork, appropriate placements, how to be proactive in the supervision process, and the need for malpractice insurance. These and additional components of fieldwork are contained in the Fieldwork Manuals for School Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy. These manuals contain all of the competencies that students must learn to demonstrate and forms for evaluation and documentation.

Upon completion of all coursework, students typically take the Comprehensive Examinations for the Masters of Science degree. Students are allowed to complete a thesis in place of these exams, but they are strongly encouraged to begin this process in their first year and only if they feel confident in their writing skills and level of self-motivation. The Comprehensive Examinations consist of a Core Exam and the SBFC Option Exam. The Core Exam is multiple-

choice in format and covers all of the Required Core classes. The SBFC Option Exam is a case study format that assesses their ability to demonstrate their understanding and application of school counseling and family counseling theories and diagnosis of individual pathology through the use of the DSM-IV.

Content Areas in the CSULA-SBFC Program

In addition to the courses described above, the CSULA-SBFC graduate program focuses on developing the following content areas:

- 1) Experiences that enable the counselors to learn more about their own cultural and historical backgrounds to identify biases that they may have in their own worldview and how these might affect their interactions with others. In order to be effective in today's urban schools, counselors must be open to utilizing information from a number of sources without prejudice in order to forge relevant and workable solutions. While this aspect of counselor development is infused within most courses in the program, courses that specifically address this area are Counseling 503, Counseling 505, and Counseling 520.
--Counseling 503 is a course in Sociological and Cultural Factors in Counseling that has a primary emphasis on helping students to become more aware of their own cultural identity and bias as well as learning more about other cultures.
- 2) Training in the skills of facilitation and mediation that would allow the SBFC to conduct large group meetings to address issues critical to the school and community. Students are required to make a number of presentations within their courses, but specific training in these areas occurs in Counseling 516, Counseling 520, and Counseling 521.
--Counseling 516 is the Group Counseling course that includes facilitation and mediation in groups and also requires the students to present to the large group.
- 3) The study of systems, with specific training of those skills necessary for interacting effectively with families, educational institutions, and community and government agencies. This would include understanding the structure and processes of families and other systems, how to facilitate organizational change within systems, and how to improve collaboration among systems. These areas are primarily addressed with the Counseling 520, Counseling 521 and Counseling 581.
--Counseling 581 is the Seminar in Pupil Personnel Services course that addresses issues related to the school system.
- 4) Training in the process of improving the school-family-community connection. This involves providing counseling and educational services to the family at the school site, fostering a team approach within the school to maximize student success, and networking with community-based organizations. While these areas are initially addressed in Counseling 520 and Counseling 521, the majority of this training occurs during students' fieldwork experiences in school counseling and marriage and family therapy (Counseling 586S and Counseling 589).
- 5) Specific instruction in the range of family dynamics that affect a child's cognitive, emotional and social development. This would include identification of high-risk behaviors, prevention strategies, and effective interventions. Theoretical concepts are applied to school-related situations in order to maximize their relevance to counseling in the schools. For example, discussion of family counseling techniques could revolve

around presenting problems that impact child success in the classroom. This specific focus on school-related content also would provide a more extensive knowledge base of specific family factors and their relation to school problems. These areas are primarily addressed in Counseling 520, Counseling 521, and Counseling 523, with additional training as part of the students' fieldwork experiences in school counseling and marriage and family therapy (Counseling 586S and Counseling 589).

Additional training components are also included to help fulfill the multifaceted role of the SBFC. These include the development and implementation of classroom-focused prevention and intervention strategies; crisis counseling; support for student and staff transitions; the identification of community resources and the appropriate use of referrals in school settings; and ethical, legal, and “turf” issues related to school-based family counseling.

Accreditation of the SBFC Graduate Program

In 1997, the School-Based Family Counseling Graduate Program was accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and other Related Program (CACREP) for both School Counseling and Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling. This Masters degree satisfies the academic requirement for the California State Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) License, which also requires 3000 hours of supervised experience, at least 1700 of which must be completed after earning the Masters degree. Imbedded in this Masters degree is all the coursework necessary to earn the California State Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credential in School Counseling with the Advanced Authorization in Child Welfare and Attendance (CWA). The PPS credential provides the qualifications necessary to work as a school counselor in grades K-12 in the public schools. The CWA authorization is necessary in many school districts in order to work in the Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) divisions.

The SBFC program is clearly a work in progress and has undergone many modifications in order to be consistent with the changing requirements of state agencies who regulate school counseling and marriage and family therapy. In California, the Marriage and Family Therapy License is administrated by the California State Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS), which requires that the Masters degree address specific content areas.

In addition to the above requirements, the SBFC program must also meet all of the requirements for the California State Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credential in School Counseling with Advanced Authorization in Child Welfare and Attendance. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) administrates this credential. The CTC recently made major and extensive revisions in these requirements.

Employment of SBFC Graduates

Upon completion of the SBFC program, most graduates obtain jobs as School Counselors or Marriage and Family Therapy Interns without any formal assistance from the CSULA program. We are in the process of compiling data regarding our graduates and the evaluations of their competence by employers, but anecdotal information is uniformly positive. Despite severe funding shortages in most of Los Angeles' school districts, almost all of our recent graduates who have applied for counseling positions have been hired. In addition, many of our students are

offered jobs while they are still in the process of completing their degree, usually as a result of their fieldwork experiences.

Discussions with administrators at these schools indicate their appreciation of our students' clinical skill and creativity in meeting the needs of the students and the school staff. While most school counselors deal primarily with administrative functions and paperwork, our students seem to be chosen to deal with the major crises and conflicts that occur at their school. We believe that this is because of their clinical experience in working with families during the COUN 523 courses. The cases that our students deal with often include intense issues of crisis and conflict including domestic violence, chronic substance abuse, severe marital and familial conflict and gang involvement and violence. Students report that the experience of working with these families in a relatively safe learning environment with the support of a co-therapist and direct supervision provides them with a great deal of confidence when they work in the schools or other settings.

Development of SBFC Positions

One of the most frequent questions we are asked is about the existence of School-Based Family Counselor positions in the schools. As discussed previously, there is no formal classification such as this, although we look forward to the day when this is a reality. There are, however, many school counselors who are doing this work on either a part-time or full-time basis. For the past 10 years, we have tried to develop SBFC positions through two major pathways: through direct interactions with school district boards and administrators and through continued clinical training and support in SBFC practice for graduates after they are hired as school counselors. For the past 10 years, we have actively promoted the SBFC concept as a part of several school reform initiatives in the hopes of creating more SBFC positions in the schools. We have not been very successful in this regard for several reasons, but most often because of the low priority that most California districts place on school counseling. Some of this may be related to the common perception that school counselors do not make a significant impact on the lives of most students and teachers. We believe that this perception is often inaccurate, particularly when the counselor has received extensive clinical training in working with systems. The success of our recent graduates in the schools seems to support our view and we have seen more and more administrators and school boards who seem to be interested in the SBFC concept.

The most effective means of implementing the SBFC concept has been through the work of our graduates when they are hired as school counselors. For the past 10 years, we have provided some graduates with ongoing training and consultation in the SBFC model through weekly group meetings with SBFC faculty. In order to receive this training, the graduates must obtain written administrator approval to be included in this supervision group.

When these graduates begin their employment, we usually advise them to assess the school climate and the willingness of the administrators to change the way they provide school counseling services. Some graduates have directly presented the SBFC concept to their administrators as a alternative to the traditional approach and have obtained permission to implement the SBFC model, although typically at a somewhat reduced level. This reduction is usually caused by other duties of school counselors such as scheduling of classes, or monitoring of playground interactions. Most of our graduates, however, enter jobs whose duties are already rigidly proscribed by the school staff or administrators. We encourage these graduates to work

within this existing paradigm until they have earned the familiarity and respect of the school staff. This is frequently the most critical aspect of the process of altering the status quo of the school system. Once the student has been accepted, they can then offer alternative strategies to replace those that may be ineffective. This requires an evaluation of the success of current procedures and explanation of the alternative SBFC model to school staff and parents.

For example, one graduate entered a job where the principal gave her a list of the 30-40 groups with students that she was expected to run each week. She initially accepted this challenge, but also began to take data on the effectiveness of these group interventions, particularly in terms of the rate of recidivism for behavior problems and subsequent re-referral for services for these students. After six months, she presented this data to the principal with an explanation of possible causes and strategies to address these. Because she had already established her credibility as a team player and as a counselor who was clinically capable and willing to address the most difficult crises and conflicts with the school, she was allowed to pilot a new approach. This graduate now spends about 70 % of her time involved in SBFC activities.

Another graduate began working as a School Psychologist (she had earned this credential prior to her enrollment in the SBFC program). She was allowed one day a week to provide counseling to the Special Education students and soon began to integrate SBFC procedures into her work. She did not receive much support from administrators, however, until she was able to show data indicating that there was a significant reduction in student problems and fewer fair hearing cases against the district for those families that she worked with. The district ended up hiring her as their District Counselor with a primary emphasis on working with members of high-risk families.

Conclusion

The CSULA SBFC training program has made a great deal of progress over the past 10 years in learning how to train counselors to become effective agents of change in families and school. There also have been many obstacles along the way. These include bureaucratic challenges in schools and universities, fear of schools in dealing directly with families who are experiencing difficulty, and some reticence on the part of many school counselors and administrators to change the way they operate. We believe, however, that confronting these obstacles in an open and cooperative manner often provides an opportunity to gain consensus on the need to reach out to children and their families to improve the quality of their lives and the sense of accomplishment of our hard-working school staffs. We feel that most of our graduates can be highly effective agents of change who can directly address many of the barriers to student achievement while also improving the quality of the home-school partnership. We are still in our infancy, but look forward to continued improvement in our ability to train clinically adept SBFC's who can improve our schools if given the opportunity.

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