

Gender Sensitive Intervention to Improve Work with Fathers in Child Welfare Services

Abstract

Although the importance of including fathers in child welfare services has been increasingly recognized, social workers' engagement with fathers is still limited and sometimes fraught with negative bias. This paper attempts to lay some needed foundation to meet the challenge of working with fathers. It presents in succinct form the existing knowledge on how fathers experience and manifest their distress and on how they view the social services and social workers. It discusses in some detail three main issues – power relations, mutual fear, and communication differences -- in the interactions between female social workers and the fathers in the social welfare services. And it emphasizes the need for social workers to be aware of how their experiences with their own fathers may affect their interventions with men. It ends with observations and recommendations for developing the gender awareness that is necessary for effective practice with fathers.

Keywords: fathers; social workers; child welfare services; gender sensitive intervention