



TRANSFORMING ENGAGEMENT: KEEPING CHILDREN AT THE CENTER OF OUR WORK

Transforming Engagement: Keeping Children at the Center of Our Work is a training curriculum for child welfare professionals. It consists of 12 one-hour modules designed to increase child welfare workforce preparedness and capacity in the engagement of children and youth. This training focuses on the development of knowledge and attitude competencies to help transform the culture of the child welfare workforce regarding the importance of building relationships with children and youth. It also focuses on engaging and partnering with children and youth in decision-making and empowering them to use their voices to influence decisions about their futures. The training will be available at no cost to all child welfare agencies that wish to incorporate any or all of the modules into their training curriculum.

QIC-EY WORKFORCE TRAINING MODULE DESCRIPTIONS

Art of Engagement

The Art of Engagement is a foundational module that starts to define “authentic engagement.” It involves more than just having children and youth present at the table. It’s about ensuring that they feel heard and that their voices are the focus of our work. We need to focus on changing from being transactional (“checking boxes” for our jobs) to becoming transformational (focusing on their voices, connectedness and futures) in everything we do.

Benefits of Engagement

The Benefits of Engagement is a foundational module that explores the reasons why we need to “engage authentically” with children and youth and the paradigm shift required to ensure that their voices are heard in their own permanency planning. It discusses the powerlessness that they may feel from not being involved in the decisions that affect their lives. It also explores the benefits of authentic engagement for children and youth, child welfare workers and the child welfare system.

Characteristics and Competencies

Characteristics and Competencies Important for Authentic Engagement with Children and Youth is a foundational module that explores the specific attributes and skills necessary to engage authentically with children and youth. Three characteristics and nine competencies (3-9) were identified by the QIC-EY project team through interviews with persons with lived expertise, an extensive literature review and input from experts in the field. This module defines each characteristic and competency and provides examples that demonstrate how to integrate them into your work.

Permanency Planning and Engagement

The Permanency Planning and Engagement module focuses on the role that authentic engagement plays in helping children and youth to participate in their own permanency planning. It explains various approaches to incorporating the voices of children and youth into the process. This module explores in depth the three types of permanency — relational, cultural and legal — and describes the importance of each. It also discusses some of the barriers to involving children and youth in permanency planning as well as strategies for addressing these barriers.

Having Difficult and Sensitive Conversations

The Having Difficult and Sensitive Conversations module focuses on the importance and benefits of having open, honest discussions with children and youth in the child welfare system about difficult and sensitive topics. It explores challenges to keeping children and youth informed and prepared for conversations about issues impacting their lives. It also describes solutions to these challenges and introduces five key principles for conducting these types of conversations: 1) be proactive and prepared, 2) be honest, 3) validate and affirm, 4) consider development and cultural, and 5) provide support.

Inform and Prepare Children and Youth for Transitions

The Inform and Prepare Children and Youth for Transitions module focuses on the types of transitions and the transitional trauma that children and youth experience in the child welfare system. It explores using authentic engagement to minimize trauma and describes strategies for protecting children and youth during transitions. The module reviews 4 things to consider during transitions: culture, child/adolescent development, life experiences and placement history. It reviews the “transition dance” or the process of informing, preparing and making needed adjustments when children and youth experience transitions.

Trauma's Impact on Child-and-Youth Engagement

The Trauma's Impact on Child-and-Youth Engagement module focuses on the traumas that children and youth in the child welfare system experience and how trauma impacts their engagement. This module explores trauma's effects on child-and-youth behavior, viewing “problematic behaviors” from a trauma-informed perspective. It reviews the roles of trusting relationships, knowledge of development and a trauma-informed approach as means of creating safe environments for children and youth. In addition, it reviews addressing your own emotional reactions when working with children and youth.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Affirming Engagement (SOGIE)

The Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Affirming Engagement (SOGIE) module focuses on the importance of affirming engagement with children and youth who identify as LGBTQIA+Two-Spirit (2SLGBTQIA+). This module explores resources and positive outcomes related to affirmation and acceptance. It reviews the perspectives of lived expertise and offers data to illustrate the challenges, biases and rejections that children and youth with diverse SOGIEs face in the child welfare system. It describes five strategies for working with children and youth with diverse SOGIEs.

Respecting, Responding and Maintaining Connection with Cultural Strengths

The Respecting, Responding and Maintaining Connection with Cultural Strengths module focuses on defining culture and emphasizes its importance. The module discusses all aspects of culture and its role in identity development. It reviews the role of child welfare professionals using authentic engagement to keep children and youth connected with their cultures. It also dives into how to have and to initiate conversations about identity and culture. It also explores cultural humility and identifying and addressing any personal biases or assumptions that might impact your work with children and youth.

Interpersonal Communication Skills

The Interpersonal Communication Skills module focuses on the role and the importance of communication skills for child welfare professionals as they strive to engage authentically with children and youth. It explores the impact of verbal and nonverbal types of communication and how they can be affected by factors such as culture, trauma, developmental level and individual experiences. This module introduces and reviews specific communication skills and strategies, including listening authentically, responding with empathy and validation, using empowering language and having respectful conversations.

Shared Decision-Making in Child-and-Youth Partnerships with Adults

The Shared Decision-Making in Child-and-Youth Partnerships with Adults module focuses on identifying and shifting power imbalances between professionals and the children and youths they serve. It explores three guiding principles that promote partnerships and shared decision-making: be receptive to the ideas of children/youth; understand child-and-adolescent development; focus on balancing power. The module describes strategies related to three competencies that support balancing power: inform and prepare; partner with children and youth; use good communication and listening skills.

Supporting Child-and-Youth Voice

The Supporting Child-and-Youth Voice module focuses on strategies for child welfare professionals to apply their knowledge, beliefs, skills and resources to elevate child and youth voice through encouraging self-efficacy (the belief they can succeed), empowering self-advocacy (the ability to advocate for themselves) and supporting a sense of agency (power and control). This module discusses ways to ally with children and youth in efforts to elevate their voice. It also describes potential barriers to supporting child-and-youth voice and provides practical solutions for addressing these barriers.

Access Materials

SCAN the QR code to access the materials of one workforce training module, and other QIC-EY supporting documents.



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