

Spotlight On: Child Welfare Leadership – transcript

Presenters: Joe Bock, Acting Associate Commissioner, Children’s Bureau, Washington, DC; Jane Morgan, Director, Capacity Building Division, Children’s Bureau, Washington, DC

Joe Bock: [00:00:13:20] The most rewarding aspect of working in the Bureau are the people who work here. The people that I get to work with every day. They are some of the most intelligent, thoughtful, talented people I've ever met. The most impressive quality is the absolute respect and regard that they show for the children and families we serve and our grantees and the people who work in this program at the local level on a day-to-day basis. People here have the expertise, they've done the day-to-day work. But at the same time, they're not bound by tradition or yesterday's notions of what practice should look like. I've been impressed with how people in this office look at, you know, what we learn from the people we serve. That teaches us how to serve them better. That helps us understand what the people on the ground need on a day-to-day basis in order to improve the lives of kids and families, because it's clear to us that that's what they're about.

Facilitating the best that people can produce in the field, to me, is the best kind of leadership that you can show. And I think people here are very committed to that and very successful at doing that.

Jane Morgan: [00:01:36:22] We've learned over the last few years the critical importance of leadership in child welfare. We've seen that when leaders come and go, it really impacts the outcomes for children and families and impacts the State's ability to implement change and to improve outcomes. We found that that was really an important factor, so we funded a National Child Welfare Workforce Institute that really focuses on leadership at both the middle manager and at the supervisor level to help build those capacities and to support the workforce in child welfare around the leadership issues.

Being a child welfare worker is a very important job, and I think it's really critical that we figure out how to support workers, how to support their supervisors, how to support their managers, and to make sure they've got the resources--not just financial, but that they've got the programs that work, they understand the evidence behind those programs, that they're supported and have the educational opportunities.

The Children's Bureau works with universities across the country in developing their social work curricula so it really reflects the needs of the child welfare workforce, especially in the area of leadership.

We have an opportunity to support innovation, to fund grants that are moving the field, to initiate national initiatives that support not just one State but States across the country in improving their outcomes. And that's exciting, it's rewarding, it's challenging, but at the end of the day, you really feel you've made an impact. You've helped children. You've helped families through your work with States, with Tribes.

[end audio]