Module 2 Identify the Impact of Group Influence

Group Number 1 - This group influenced my thinking in the following ways:

The Court Appointed Special Advocate program influenced my thinking over time, in being dissatisfied with the slow pace at which some cases progress and at times how things move too rapidly when they should move more slowly. Sometimes the desire to dispose of a case jeopardizes the welfare of the child and ultimately the success of the case. There are legal timelines, but they do not always serve the child or parents in a beneficial way.

The following ideas within this group seem incompatible with one another:

One of the first most important requirements of a CASA volunteer is that they see the child they represent at least once a month. When the program changed to the attorney representing the child directly instead of the volunteer representing the child who was then represented by the attorney. A new attitude was that the attorney who now represented the child directly, did not have to see the child. How can a child be represented adequately if their advocate has never even seen them? The information provided by the volunteer was considered adequate for the child’s representation. Previously when it was questioned if more than one CASA could represent children in a case with multiple children it was argued and not allowed, due to the possible disagreements between each of the volunteers, and to complicate things, the attorney’s position about each CASA’s position. One of my arguments was, what if there is disagreement among the volunteer and the attorney who is now representing the child directly? Who prevails? Most often the position of the lawyers and individuals from the various bureaucracies, such as the Division of Family Services, was the one that took precedence and prevailed in the situation.

I would now question the following beliefs I received from this group

I do question the ultimate goal, purposed of this program after watching the egocentric and sociocentric leanings of the individuals involved in the system. How much are the needs and mission of the program at times set aside, to feed the needs of the bureaucratic structure.

In closing, I need to state that I am out of the system but still believe in the volunteers and the mission. Things have changed and have become diluted, but I am hopeful that the pendulum will swing back to the focus on the child, and the mission more than making the individuals with the power look good.

 Group Number 2 – Special Focus Groups - Child Advocacy

A belief that I have after being a part of a special focus group is that within the group there was an insider track and decisions made before the group even had the first initial meeting. Certain roles and tasks were given to certain individuals that the other group members were not even aware of. This to me was the alienation of members that were not a part of the exclusive group of individuals who really knew what was going on. Decisions were made without allowing for any input from the group members. I would deem it a farce that engendered distrust and lack of ability to buy in and be a part of the group.

The following ideas within this group seem incompatible with one another

The sad situation was that this group didn’t even get started to include ideas and input from others. The major direction was already decided before the first meeting. It was such a façade.

I would now question the following beliefs I received from this group

The pathetic effort to make it appear as if certain issues, and problems that were being addressed by the group led to more detachment from the group and more distrust. The lack of respect that occurred was something that may never be regained.

Doing these exercises about groups has shined a glaring light on the negativity of the atmosphere I was working in for a long time. Dealing with child abuse and neglect is in and of itself an awful thing but then to have the system I was working with, at times, fighting against my efforts and the efforts of my volunteers to advocate for the children in our cases. I didn’t think I could gain much more clarity about the negativity of the system I was struggling against but my choice to leave the program for an early retirement feels even more than ever, that it was the right thing to do. I have told a few people, that in good conscience, I could not remain in that position for a numerous reasons, and I stand by that decision.