

Promoting Effective Engagement

Engage: to obtain or contract for; to obtain and hold the attention of; to pledge or promise; to interlock or cause to mesh (*The American Heritage Dictionary*).

In social work practice, engagement is both a process and an outcome. It requires the effective and balanced use of helping skills and protective authority to produce an ongoing worker/client relationship that results in the pursuit and accomplishment of agreed upon goals. In child welfare practice, those goals include child safety, permanence, well-being and timeliness.

Establishing and maintaining effective engagement involves the use of a variety of skills and presence of certain conditions:

- Tuning-into Self and Others
- Focused listening
- Clarification of role and purpose
- Respect
- Clear and accurate response to client questions
- Honesty
- Dependability
- Identification and support of client strengths
- Seeking to understand the client's point of view
- Culturally sensitive practice
- Connecting agency goals with client goals
- Investment in client success
- Outcomes-oriented practice
- Regular feedback
- Confrontation
- Demand for work
- Appropriate use of protective authority