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Camper Council: A Meaningful Involvement Initiative

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Camper Council: Meaningful Involvement Initiative

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March 7, 2008

Camp WeHaKee has given permission for the primary author to use the name of the camp in this paper.

This is why

Written by a Camp WeHaKee camper, age 13

Because not ever girl loves pink.
Because not every girl's favorite hobby is shopping.
Because every girl isn't the same.
This is a place where there are no cookie-cutter girls.
Because this is a place where girls, with all different kinds of personalities and ambitions come together as one community, one family
This is a place where everyone cares.
This is a place where you can be who you really are.
This is a place where you can gain more courage than you ever thought possible.
This is a place to try new things.
This is a place where you can touch the stars.
This is a place where you don't have to be afraid.
This is a place, a community, a family, where you can make the best friends, who teach you most in the shortest amount time
This is to the girls who made my summer
This is to the place that changed my life.
This is to the place I never want to leave
This is Camp WeHaKee.

Abstract

An increase in interest from youth and family practitioners, policy makers and researchers has given positive youth development the spotlight within this past decade. The focus for many of these individuals has been to develop a wide range of approaches to prevent youth problems and promote healthy youth development. Studies have shown success in prevention programs for youth that are focused on increasing community involvement and include four major components; safety, skill building, supportive relationships and meaningful involvement.

Meaningful involvement has been identified as the most difficult component to achieve in programs for youth, specifically in resident and day camps. This paper addresses a program developed to increase meaningful involvement of campers in the camp programming at a resident all-girls camp in northern Wisconsin. The program also sought to observe leadership qualities, decision-making and feelings of belonging in the youth involved with the program.

Camper and staff surveys were collected at the end of the camp sessions to provide feedback and explore how the camper council worked as a tool to empower youth through meaningful involvement. The anonymous surveys consisted of a Likert-Type Scale and a series of open-ended and semi close-ended questions and examined the youth's sense of empowerment and their satisfaction of involvement in the camp programming.

Introduction

Positive youth development has taken the spotlight in the past decade. Organizations are placing more of a focus on creating programs for youth that are focused on prevention and community involvement. Michelle A. Gambone and James P. Connells' *Community Action Framework for Youth Development* (1998) identified highly important components programs need to have in order to increase positive youth development. Meaningful involvement has been identified as the hardest component of the framework to achieve in programs for youth, specifically in resident and day camps. This paper addresses an initiative to increase meaningful involvement of campers in the camp programming at a resident all-girls camp in northern Wisconsin. The program also sought out to observe leadership qualities, decision-making and feelings of belonging in the youth involved with the council.

About Camp WeHaKee

Located at the base of the Chequamegon National Forest in northern Wisconsin is an all-girls residential camp, Camp WeHaKee. Since its foundation in 1923, Camp WeHaKee has "been providing girls and young women with a safe, supportive and invigorating environment where they grow strong and independent while having great fun" (Camp WeHaKee, n.d., para.

1). The camp strives to be a great place for girls and young women to come and be who they are, make new friends, build their self-confidence, explore their faith and try new activities.

During the summer the camp is based on a two-week program schedule with three two-week sessions. There are a wide variety of activities the campers are able to experience, including; archery, horseback riding, waterskiing, canoeing, pottery and arts and crafts. Through these activities, the girls are able to try new things and build on existing skills in a safe environment. Each activity is lead by a skilled staff member who gives the campers the support and encouragement they need. Campfires, special events and cabin activities combined with the daily activities create the two-week summer experience for the girls.

The girls attending camp have the opportunity to build community and live in cabins with eight girls similar in age. This is an opportunity for the campers to make new friends and build relationships in a supportive environment. Campers are also able to build relationships with their cabin counselors, who are older female staff that mentor and live with campers in each cabin. Cabin life is an opportunity for the girls to learn about living in community and the importance of relationships.

Camp WeHaKee's philosophy is that it strives to "help each girl realize her uniqueness as an individual person while understanding and striving to reach her own potential" (Camp WeHaKee, n.d. b., para. 1). The Camp provides an outlet for girls to see their worth and potential as well as the worth and potential of others. Girls are able to gain the skills they need to grow into strong independent women.

Background

Youth development has taken the spotlight in the literature and in programming in the past decade. There has been an increase in interest from youth and family practitioners, policy

makers, and researchers to develop and evaluate a wide range of approaches to prevent youth problems and promote healthy youth development (Small & Memmo, 2004). Credit for the increase in youth development can be given to the “realization that it can be more cost-effective and efficient to prevent problems from occurring initially than to treat them after they are established” (Small & Memmo, 2004, p. 4).

In the past, approaches for intervening with youth have shown “little appreciable success over time” (Gambone & Connell, 2004, p. 17). Lack of success has been linked to the focus of programs on changing outcomes too late in the youth development spectrum. Programs were unsuccessful because the majority of teens were nearing the end, rather than the beginning, of their adolescent developmental process. Barton, Watkins and Jarjoura noted, “interventions aimed at changing youths’ attitudes...have not achieved a sustained reduction” in problem behaviors (Barton, Watkins & Jarjoura, 1997). This led to a new focus on creating prevention programs for younger “at-risk” youth and changing the focus of the community and programs with which youth are involved. This more recent approach emphasizes that simple prevention is not enough. There also needs to be promotion of “conditions that contribute to youth health and well-being” (Small & Memmo, 2004, p. 6).

The Community Action Framework for Youth Development is a framework for positive youth development that was developed in the late 1990’s by Michelle A. Gambone and James P. Connell. The focus of this framework is to promote the healthy developmental milestones young people must achieve to become healthy adults by changing the context around them, rather than the individual (Gambone & Connell, 2004). Gambone and Connell wanted to “transform communities into places where all young people, particularly those young people currently least likely to succeed, can achieve their fullest potential” (Gambone & Connell, 2004, p. 17).

Creating an environment for youth to achieve their fullest potential is the best way to prevent them from experiencing problems (Small & Memmo, 2004). This shift is closely aligned with the social work emphasis on person-in-environment.

The goals of the framework are to help the youth involved improve the long-term life chances of becoming economically self-sufficient, healthy, having a good family life and social relationships, and contributing to their community (Gambone & Connell, 2004). In their review of literature, Gambone and Connell found the likelihood of the goals being achieved increases when youth “accomplish certain things as they move from childhood through adolescence” (Gambone & Connell, 2004, p. 18). Gambone and Connell established four key requirements that need to be present in programs, communities, schools and other systems youth are involved in to achieve the goals of the framework.

Adequate nutrition, health and shelter and physical and emotional safety make up the first component of Gambone and Connell’s framework. Physical and emotional safety is sometimes addressed as a separate component, to make the fifth component of the framework. This component is associated with the bottom of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Youth need to feel physically and emotionally safe. Even if the program or setting is unable to provide these basic needs they must be addressed if young people are expected to grow (Gambone & Connell, 2004).

The second component of the frame work is multiple supportive relationships with adults and peers. Relationships are the source of support in a youth’s life and the presence of supportive relationships has positive impacts on development (Gambone & Connell, 2004). The most effective community organizations have been those that “focus on building relationships among youth, adults and the broader community” (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 13). In his study on youth organizations, McLaughlin found “the sense of unconditional support they find in these

organizations leads to a sense of belonging that fosters trust and confidence [the youth] needed to accept new challenges” (McLaughlin, 2000).

Challenging and engaging activities and learning experiences make up the third component of the framework. Adolescents need to have experiences in which they are able to have an “increasing sense of competence and productivity” (Gambone & Connell, 2004, p. 19). Academic success is important for youth but is not enough; young people need to learn life skills as well. “Those skills and attitudes include a sense of personal worth, positive assessment of the future, and the knowledge of how to plan for it” (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 7). Being challenged and engaged in activities and learning experiences can increase a young person’s development of life skills.

The fourth component of the framework is meaningful opportunities for involvement and membership. This can be one of the most challenging components of the framework to develop in programs for youth. There are certain aspects of meaningful involvement that youth need to experience. Opportunity to try on the adult roles, to have others depend on them, and to experience themselves as individuals who have value are three major aspects of meaningful involvement (Gambone & Connell, 2004). This component places an emphasis on empowering youth to be active participants of their communities. Youth need to feel as if they are engaged partners in their communities and not just members (Small & Memmo, 2004).

McLaughlin noted, “communities and their youth seem to be growing apart just at a time when they need to be pulling together” (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 4). With *The Community Action Framework for Youth Development* Gambone and Connell urged communities and organizations to use the components and “mobilize efforts to create conditions that encourage all share holders to work together” (Gambone & Connell, 2004, p. 20). Research has shown that

youth who are involved with community-based organizations are more likely to report feeling good about themselves; indicate higher levels of self-efficacy, and 15% more likely to agree they are persons of worth (McLaughlin, 2000).

After the publication of the Community Action Framework for Youth Development in 1999, many organizations began to analyze the success of their programs with respect to the framework. The American Camping Association (ACA) is an organization that oversees the operation of day and residential camps across the United States. The ACA was interested in the role of the four domains of Gambone and Connells' framework, which led them to commission the Youth Development Strategies, Inc (YDSI) to implement a "benchmark" study on the how well ACA-credited camps were doing on the four domains of developmental support (American Camping Association, 2002).

The study conducted by the YDSI published significant information on the role of the four critical domains of developmental supports and opportunities in the youth camping world. They determined camps needed to improve on meaningful involvement in camp programming. YDSI found that only 5% of youth, ages 10 through 18, were feeling involved in decision-making and leadership in camp programming (American Camping Association, 2002).

The study provided a lot of feedback for youth camps and discussed where camps could improve. Many camp directors appreciated the opportunity to see areas where they could improve. Maggie Braun, the director of Camp WeHaKee, saw that they needed to improve in the domain of meaningful involvement. The study suggested camps "create meaningful new practices for involving youth in decision making and leadership" (American Camping Association, 2002, p. 7). Braun wanted to focus efforts on creating a program to implement that would help girls feel meaningfully involved in the camp programming.

Preparation

In collaboration and through brainstorming and discussion, we developed the idea of the “camper council” at Camp WeHaKee. Each session, one camper would be “elected” by their cabin group to represent their cabin on the camper council. The council would meet during the session and brainstorm ideas for activities, programming, and changes they would like to see at camp. At some point in the two-week session the council would decide on and implement an activity or program for the whole camp. The goal of the camper council was to get campers involved in the programming and give them a sense of ownership of the camp. We wanted *them* to feel meaningfully involved in what was going on at *their* camp.

Originally, I had been hired as the program director for the summer at Camp WeHaKee. After this discussion of the camper council had taken place, I had decided to use this experience as an internship with regard to group work with youth and evaluation. After reading some materials on youth development and speaking with the camp directors I decided to focus on leadership qualities, decision-making, and feelings of belonging of the girls involved in the camper council.

Implementation

At Camp WeHaKee the summer is divided into three two-week sessions; campers can come for two, four or six weeks. Each session a new camper council was to be formed, meet and implement an activity for the camp. The goal of the camper council was to meaningfully involve campers in programming and at the same time to observe the leadership qualities, decision-making and feelings of belonging among the youth involved with the council. Since this was the first time a camper council was implemented, it was hard to know how the campers would respond.

In the first two days of the session cabin counselors informed their cabin members about the camper council and assigned or elected a new representative for the council which met on the third or fourth day of camp. This part was tricky because we did not want this to become a “popularity” contest. Much thought was given to how cabin groups should select someone to represent their group. At the same time, the purpose of this program was for the campers to feel meaningfully involved and we did not want staff to get too involved in choosing the representative. In the end, the majority of the cabins had only one camper volunteer for the council. If there was a situation where two or more campers were interested the majority of cabins held a secret vote to choose the representative.

After each cabin representative was chosen the first camper council meeting took place. Typically, this meeting took place during the rest hour and the meetings were only 20-30 minutes in length. For the first meeting I [the first author] usually spent about five minutes explaining the camper council and emphasizing that it is all about getting them involved. I wanted to give the campers a sense of ownership so I explained that we wanted their input on ideas for programs, daily activities, activity night and any changes they felt needed to take place at camp.

After communicating to them a sense of ownership of the camp, I would explain the idea of a representative council or task group in an organization because many of these girls did not know what it meant to serve on a council. I explained that it is hard to get everyone's ideas and that they were going to represent the ideas of all the girls in their cabin. Then we discussed how they could lead a meeting in their cabins, record the ideas their cabin mates came up with, and bring those ideas back to our next meeting. To help them, I had prepared a simple meeting agenda to show how the meeting could be facilitated. They left with a sheet that explained the

camper council, their role, and had space for them to write notes. Typically, they held their cabin meetings the next day and the following day we would meet again as a council.

During the next council meeting we would discuss the ideas their cabin had; each representative had time to read their cabin's ideas. As a camper council they were able to select one idea and implement it towards the end of the two-week session. Additionally, I recorded all the ideas they came up with during the session and explained that I would share their ideas with the camp directors even if we couldn't implement them all.

The ideas the campers developed were very impressive. Not only did they come up with themes and activities to use for the session, but they also discussed actual changes they wanted to make to camp. A couple of these were implemented by the staff. Two examples included changing seating in the dining hall a couple times a session so they could meet other girls and adding nutritional snacks, like fruit and granola bars, to the trading post. These changes were in addition to the programming the camper council implemented during the session, which included "Backwards Day" one session, "Happy Un-Birthday Day" another and "Wacky Day" for the third. Along with these "theme days," the campers were in charge of planning activities that would take place and other arrangements that went along with the day. It was enlightening to observe the ownership the campers took with the programs they were planning.

Evaluation

It was important to evaluate the role of the camper council in the camp setting and to analyze what effect the council had on leadership qualities, decision-making and feelings of belonging in the female youth who were involved. I wanted to gain an understanding directly from the campers involved as well as what view their councilors had on these topics.

Campers on the council and their cabin counselors filled out the forms at the end of the two week session (See appendices A and B). Both forms consisted of a series of Likert-type scaled items and a series of open-ended questions.

The camper's evaluation began with eleven statements rated using a five-point Likert-Type scale. The campers chose the level of agreement they had with each statement, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Four open-ended and one semi close-ended questions followed. The open-ended questions gave the campers a chance to express more specific observations and feelings surrounding their experience with the camper council. Specifically, the instrument focused on the campers' experiences, the ideas they had contributed, leadership skills, and the impact the camper council had on camp.

The counselor evaluation also began with a series of items rated with a Likert-type scale. There were seven statements the counselors rated, followed by five open-ended and one semi close-ended questions. The counselor instrument focused on the campers' experience, leadership qualities, the benefit of the camper council, and the views the campers expressed about the camper council. It was important to gain the view and opinion of the counselors because they may have had some observations that might not have been known if only the views of the campers were collected.

Completed evaluations were submitted anonymously by 34 female campers aged 7 to 16, and 18 female counselors aged 18-25 from the three camp sessions. Data on respondent's age, ethnicity, or other demographic information were not collected. The campers who attend this camp were primarily Caucasian American, but there were also a few African American and Asian American campers. The counselors were all Caucasian females. The survey data was

initially collected as part of the camp's regular evaluation process and further analyzed as secondary data by the investigators.

Findings

Campers' Experience

Overall, it was apparent that the campers enjoyed their experience on the camper council. Ninety-one percent of campers either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that being on the camper council was a good experience. Also, 74% of the counselors agreed that their campers enjoyed being on the camper council. In observations of the camper council meetings all of the campers attending were highly involved in the meetings and it was rare for a camper to miss a meeting. When the campers were asked how they felt about being elected on the council, the majority of campers answered they were either excited or happy to represent their cabin.

On the other hand, a high number of campers mentioned they would prefer that the camper council did not meet during rest hour. Also, some campers stated that it was hard to run the meeting with a lot of younger kids. These factors could impact the campers overall experience on the council. Overall, it was apparent the campers had a good experience and 65% of the campers stated they would like to be on the council again.

Campers' Ideas

Generally, it is relevant to say the campers felt their ideas were valued. Ninety-one percent of the campers either strongly agreed or agreed they felt their ideas were valued. One camper stated she was excited to be on the camper council because "I would be able to share my ideas to make camp a better place." The percentage decreased a little when campers were asked if they felt their ideas made camp better, only 73% agreed with the statement. A majority of the ideas the campers came up with were too complex or challenging to implement right away. All

ideas were given to the camp directors but very few of those ideas were implemented in the same time frame as the camper council that generated those ideas. Some of the examples, e.g. three week sessions, bathrooms closer to cabins, new paths on camp, and door bells in cabins, were not so easily changeable. This could have had an impact on the campers' feelings on how their ideas were viewed.

The majority of campers felt they were able to share their ideas without getting laughed at. There were still 18% of campers that felt they would get laughed at for ideas shared, while 50% of counselors believed their campers felt their opinions mattered. There were roughly 45% of counselors who were not sure how their campers felt on that topic. Overall, it is apparent that the majority of campers felt their ideas were heard and opinions mattered. There are still areas on this subject that can be improved in the next implementation of the camper council.

Leadership role/ qualities

Eighty-three percent of campers felt they used time well during cabin meetings. Many counselors also stated they saw their campers use time wisely and kept the group on task during the meetings. When asked if they felt like a leader, 48% of the campers agreed while 32% of campers stated they were unsure. For many of the campers, this was their first time in a leadership role. This could somewhat explain how some campers were unsure about what to expect or how to be a leader. This was also reflected in some of the counselors' statements on how they viewed their camper. One counselor stated that "the [camper] struggled to conduct the meeting but once started, she was better able to keep discussion going." Many campers appeared to have good leadership qualities but just needed the experience to practice and recognize those qualities they had.

Other counselors described their campers as leaders who made sure everyone was listening and being heard. This was also reflected in the campers' evaluation. 80% of campers felt they represented the ideas of their cabin in the meetings. One counselor stated her camper "asked each individual girl if they had any ideas." This implied the campers understood the importance of representing their cabins' ideas. Many counselors also stated their campers raised hands, politely turned down outrageous ideas, were friendly, calm and composed. Overall, this experience gave the campers an opportunity to step into the leadership role and attempt to gain an understanding of what it meant to be a leader.

Reflection

Overall, it is apparent that the first camper council at Camp WeHaKee was successful. The evaluations implied the campers were able to step into the leadership role, share their ideas, have others depend on them and complete a task as a team. These are all qualities of the Gambone and Connells meaningful involvement component. It was very rewarding to see the ownership the campers took of their roles in the council. The majority of the campers took this role seriously, represented their cabins voice on what they wanted camp to be and had a positive fun experience.

Looking back, there are some changes that need to be made before implementing the camper council again. Some discussion and thought needs to be taken on the age range of the campers and how best to address that in the council. Some older campers mentioned that it was harder to discuss realistic ideas with the younger campers. Some ideas may include breaking the council up into two age groups. Some ideas or issues the older campers may want to discuss may be too hard for the younger campers to digest. Breaking up the council would give both groups an opportunity to focus on ideas that are more appropriate for their development. Maybe

even the two groups could start of meeting separately but still implement an all camp event together. Also, in regards to ages, after implementing the evaluation I realized that it was not really geared towards the younger campers, especially the 6, 7, and 8 year old campers. It would be important to develop a more age appropriate evaluation to gain a better understanding of the feelings and ideas of the youngest campers.

Although, there are many little adjustments that need to be made overall the camper council was very successful. Campers had a positive experience, felt involved, expressed leadership roles and made a difference on camp. One camper stated, “(I) felt empowered- and like I could really make a difference at camp.” One of the most important aspects of the camper council was to help the campers feel empowered to make changes and believe that their voice mattered. One counselor also observed, “I see they enjoy being part of it and participating with their own ideas makes them feel important and special.”

Conclusion

One of the most enjoyable things about implement the camper council was seeing the excitement in the girls as they would share the ideas they had for camp. The girls really took ownership in their ideas. The majority of the girls took the role of representing their cabin seriously and believed in what they were doing. Empowerment is such an important aspect of a young girl’s life. They need to be empowered and given the support to try new things, make changes and believe in themselves to do those things. Each one of the campers that participated in the council appeared to believe in what she was doing. My biggest hope for those girls was that this experience gave them some sort of realization that they are important and what they

have to say is important. They may have only created a wacky dress day, celebrated a happy-un birthday or made healthy snacks available at the trading post but they saw their ideas come to life and were able to believe. There are so many things in this world that can force a young girl to hide the voice she has. I feel girls need to be told their voice matters and have opportunities where they are able to express themselves, share their ideas and see those ideas come to life. The camper council gave these girls the opportunity to do just that. These girls were able to express themselves, share their ideas and see those ideas come to life and feel meaningfully involved in the programming at Camp WeHaKee.

This is to the place that changed my life.
This is to the place I never want to leave
This is Camp WeHaKee.

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APPENDIX A

Camper Council Camper Survey

Directions: Read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by circling the appropriate letter to the right.

Key: **SA**= Strongly Agree **A**= Agree **NS**= Not Sure **D**= Disagree **SD**= Strongly Disagree

1. Being on the camper council was a good experience.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
2. I felt my ideas were valued on the camper council.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
3. I would not like to be on the camper council again.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
4. The ideas the camper council came up with actually changed camp.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
5. I felt our ideas made camp better.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
6. When I am with my cabin I do not feel like a leader.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
7. My cabin mates listen to me more.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
8. I used my time well during cabin meetings.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
9. I did not represent my cabins ideas/feelings.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
10. Other campers on the council will laugh at the ideas I share.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
11. The camper council is important to camp.	SA	A	NS	D	SD

Please answer the following questions:

- 1) How did you feel when you were elected into the Camper Council? Where you nervous, scared, happy, excited...ect?
- 2) How were you chosen to be on the camper council?
- 3) Are there any changes you would like to make to the camper council?
- 4) What was your best memory from the camper council?
- 5) What did you like least about the camper council?

APPENDIX B

Camper Council Counselor Survey

Directions: Read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by circling the appropriate letter to the right.

Key: **SA**= Strongly Agree **A**= Agree **NS**= Not Sure **D**= Disagree **SD**= Strongly Disagree

1. My camper enjoyed being on the camper council.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
2. I believe the camper council did not benefit camp.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
3. The camper council caused problems in my cabin.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
4. The ideas the camper council came up with actually changed camp.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
5. My campers did not understand the role of the camper council.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
6. My campers felt their opinions were valued.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
7. All of my campers were fully involved with the discussions.	SA	A	NS	D	SD

Please answer the following questions:

- 1) How did your campers react to the idea of the camper council?

- 2) How were representatives chosen for the camper council?

- 3) Are there any changes you would like to make to the camper council?

- 4) Did you see changes because of the camper council?

- 5) Were there any challenges in the cabin discussions?

- 6) Did you see your camper representative use specific leadership skills in your cabin? Please list examples.

Author's biography:

Amanda S. Penning, BSSW

Amanda Penning has just recently graduated from Minnesota State University, Mankato with her Bachelors of Science in Social Work. During her undergraduate education she held strong interests in child poverty and female youth empowerment. In her sophomore year, Ms. Penning spent a semester studying abroad in Helsinki, Finland. During that semester she carried out an independent research project that consisted of a comparative analysis of child poverty in the United States and Finland. Ms. Penning has also spent the past five summers working as a camp counselor and program director for an all-girls resident camp in northern Wisconsin. As the program director she provided support and leadership to counseling staff and youth attending. Ms. Penning has been accepted to the University of Wisconsin, Madison School of Social Work and plans on enrolling in the fall of 2008 to complete her Masters of Social Work degree.

Faculty mentor's biography:

Annelies K. Hagemester, PhD, MSW, LISW

Annelies Hagemester has been Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work at Minnesota State University, Mankato since 2003. Prior to this, she worked as a project coordinator for the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse (MINCAVA), an instructor in social work and family social science at the University of Minnesota, and as a therapist at the Domestic Abuse Project in Minneapolis. As project coordinator with the Collaborating for Women and Child Safety Project she provided technical assistance, curriculum development, and training for professionals serving families impacted by domestic violence. She facilitates trainings, gives presentations, and teaches courses in the areas of domestic violence and social work research and is a licensed independent social worker. Dr. Hagemester has also worked in areas of child abuse prevention and crisis intervention. She has conducted research and published in the areas of violence against women, poverty, gender in Hmong families, and parental grief.

Education

- **2002, PhD**, Family Social Science, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- **2000, MSW**, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- **1996, Certificate**, Child Abuse Prevention Studies, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- **1994, MA**, Family Social Science, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- **1987, BA**, Major: Psychology, Minor: Anthropology, Macalester College, St. Paul, MN