

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PRACTICE MODEL*

Child and Family Services joins with families and the community to promote long-term safety, well-being, and permanent families for children. This practice model guides our work with children and their families.

CHILD SAFETY, FIRST AND FOREMOST

- Making children and families safe is a collaborative effort. We create a team for each family, consisting of family, staff, and community members to find safe solutions for children.
- In response to child safety concerns, we reach factually supported conclusions in a timely and thorough manner. Input from parents, children, extended family, and community stakeholders is a necessary component in assuring safety.
- We engage families with honesty and open minds. By exploring and listening, we help families use their strengths to meet safety needs of children
- We value family perspectives, goals, and plans as critical to creating and maintaining child safety.
- We separate dangerous caregivers from children in need of protection. When court action is necessary to make a child safe, we will use our authority and sensitivity and respect.
- When children are placed in foster care, we ensure ongoing safety through frequent, meaningful contact with children and their caregivers. We welcome foster parents as a vital part of the family team.
- In our work to place children in adoption, safety is the first priority.

PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO RAISE THEIR OWN CHILDREN

- We recognize that family members know the most about their own families. It is our responsibility to understand children and families within the context of their own family rules, traditions, history, and culture.
- Parents' voices are valued and considered in decisions regarding the safety, permanency, and well-being of their children and family.
- We believe that people can change. Their past does not necessarily define their potential.
- Family teams develop and implement creative, individualized solutions that build on the strengths of families to meet their needs.

CHILDREN ARE ENTITLED TO LIVE IN A SAFE AND NURTURING FAMILY

- As family team leaders, we share responsibility with the family and community to help families protect and nurture their children.
- We support caregivers in protecting children in their own homes whenever possible.
- When children cannot live safely with their families, the first consideration for placement will be with kinship connections capable of providing a safe and nurturing home.
- We believe that children's needs are best served in a family that is committed to the child. We support placements that promote family, sibling and community connections, and encourage healthy social development.
- We listen to children. Their voices are heard, valued, and considered in decisions regarding their safety, well-being, and permanence.

ALL CHILDREN DESERVE A PERMANENT FAMILY

- Permanency planning for children begins at first contact with Child and Family Services. We proceed with a sense of urgency until permanency is achieved.
- All planning for children focuses on the goal of preserving their family, reunifying their family, or achieving permanent placement in another family.
- Permanency is best achieved through a legal relationship such as parental custody, guardianship, or adoption. "Stability" is not permanency.
- Life-long family connections are critical for children. It is our responsibility to promote and preserve kinship, sibling, and community connections for each child. We value past, present, and future relationships that consider the child's hopes and wishes.

HOW WE DO OUR WORK IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE WORK WE DO

- Our organization is focused on providing high quality, timely, efficient, and effective services.

- As with families, we look for strengths in our organization. We are responsible for creating and maintaining a supportive working and learning environment for open communication and accountability at all levels.
- As we work with children, families, and their teams, we clearly share our purpose, role, concerns, decisions, and responsibility.
- Relationships and communication among staff, children, families, foster parents, and community providers are conducted with genuineness, empathy, and respect.
- Our staff is our most important asset. Children and families deserve trained, skillful staff to engage and assist families.

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