

CORE Training Competencies and Practice Behaviors

* = Current DHS CW Training competency

(K) Knowledge

(S) Skill

(V) Value

(P) Process

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I. Identifies as a child welfare specialist and understands the roles and responsibilities

Brief description: The purpose of Child Welfare Services is to improve the safety, permanence and well-being of children and families involved in the Child Welfare system through collaboration with the families and their community. Child Welfare Specialists (CWSs) have knowledge of agency goals, policies, work activities, and procedures. They demonstrate commitment to ensuring the well-being of children and their families, making informed and ethical decisions, and understanding the importance of confidentiality. CWSs utilize supervision and other professional development resources to continually practice self-awareness and growth. They are able to competently document activities in the KIDS data management system.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. demonstrate how safety, permanence, and well-being are emphasized through case work strategies. (S)
2. *acknowledge the importance of keeping children connected to positive aspects of their kin, community and culture. (K)
3. identify the broad range of responsibilities of Child Welfare Services and of the Child Welfare Specialist. (K)
4. recognize and articulate the power inherent to the position of the Child Welfare Specialist and how to use it appropriately. (K)
5. demonstrate how to use the Oklahoma Child Welfare Practice Standards and the values and ethics of the social work profession to serve as a guide to ethical decision making. (S)
6. articulate the DHS/Child Welfare Services mission, goals, and organizational structure and their impact on Child Welfare practices. (K)
7. demonstrate a commitment to the values and ethics of the social work profession, emphasizing client empowerment, self-determination, and client confidentiality in Child Welfare cases. (V)
8. articulate an understanding of the CWS role as a representative of DHS and the State of Oklahoma in all professional interactions. (K)

II. Understands the scope of child welfare services in Oklahoma, and how federal law and regulations, Oklahoma Statutes, DHS policy and Instructions to Staff all guide child welfare practice.

Brief description: CWSs understand the basics of child protective services, family centered services, permanency planning, independent living, foster care and adoption. They demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of federal and state legislation relevant to this role. They understand their responsibility for monitoring and moving a case along. They understand the importance of worker safety and the safety of the children and families they support. CWSs understand and can utilize the social work generalist practice model of preparation, engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation in child welfare case situations, including: child protective services, family centered services, permanency planning, foster/kinship placement, and trial adoption case planning.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. communicate a foundational understanding of casework responsibilities (preparation, engagement, assessment, intervention, evaluation) regardless of specific job (K)
2. understand the legal and agency policy definitions of child abuse and neglect. (K)
3. locate DHS Child Welfare policy and Instructions to Staff. (S)
4. understand the basic federal and state legislation that forms the basis of the work Child Welfare Services, including the history and purpose of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). (K)
5. demonstrate a basic understanding of how federal and state legislation and DHS policy impacts child welfare service delivery. (S)

III. Understands the importance of and can employ trauma informed and developmentally sensitive practices.

Brief description: CWSs assess age-appropriate developmental levels in children and educates families regarding age-appropriate expectations. They practice trauma informed care, and understand the effects of oppression and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on the development of the individual, as well as the intergenerational legacy of trauma on parenting methods. They help set expectations for children who have experienced loss, abuse, neglect, or other traumatic experiences. They have a basic understanding of family eligibility for developmental disability services.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. understand the cognitive, emotional, physical and social stages of child development. (K)
2. understand how trauma impacts a child's development to include: cognitive, attachment/relational, and behavioral. (K)
3. recognize the individual and intergenerational effects of trauma. (K)
4. understand the principles of system wide trauma informed practice. (K)
5. apply developmentally sensitive and trauma informed principles to engagement, assessment and intervention with children/youth and families. (S)
6. calculate the impact of trauma across the family system, initiate steps to address it and implement a plan to mitigate future trauma (P)
7. define re-traumatization and identify ways that children and their families can be re-traumatized or triggered by the systems and services designed to help them. (K)
8. recognize the federal standard of no more than two (2) placements for children removed from their homes and the rationale for the standard (K)

IV. Exhibits a basic understanding of the juvenile court system and how it works.

Brief description: CWSs have knowledge of state statutes in child welfare practice and implement the philosophy, purpose, and requirements of state welfare policy and legislation. They understand the role of the CWS, district attorney, and others in juvenile court proceedings in order to appropriately prepare for and participate in the legal proceedings. They prepare court reports and understand their role in the process, which also includes: testimony and presenting information/recommendations to the court.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. demonstrate familiarity with legal responsibilities of the CWS within the court proceedings and throughout the court process (K)
2. demonstrate effective court knowledge (K), which includes: testimony skills, court etiquette, vocabulary (i.e. judicial determinations and adjudications) dress and demeanor, types of hearings and the roles of the professionals in the court room (i.e. DA, Judge, Child Welfare Specialist, CASA, Public Defender, Child's Attorney, etc.) (S)
3. understands the court process in such a way that the CWS can: present appropriate information to the court to make informed decisions, navigate the court system, and advocate respectfully within the court system to ensure the safety, well-being, and permanency of the child/youth. (P)

V. Demonstrates knowledge in the identification and causes of child abuse and neglect.

Brief description: Child Welfare Specialists assess the safety of a child, recognize safety threats, protective capacities and determine if child maltreatment is substantiated, in both in and out-of-home care. CWSs can determine the proper and safe course of action. They recognize when a child and the family can be served through family centered services in-home or out-of-home or if court involvement is required. They demonstrate knowledge and skill in the design, implementation, and communication of the safety threshold, safety assessments and on-going safety plans.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. understand all types of neglect and abuse, their definitions and potential effects. (K) (1-3 are CA/N)
2. understand and identify various child, family, and community factors that may contribute to abuse and neglect. (K)
3. understand and identify the various child, family and community protective factors that reduce abuse and neglect (K).
4. identify types of parental behaviors and resulting conditions in children that are considered neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation (K)
5. identify emotional, behavioral and developmental indicators of abuse and /or neglect in children of different ages (S)
6. communicate the results of findings about safety to community partners and families through written & verbal means (S) (CA/N)

VI. Demonstrates the ability to assess safety throughout the life of the case, make safety determinations, and develop and implement appropriate safety plans with families when warranted.

Brief description: CWSs recognize the signs of abuse and neglect, including the effects of substance abuse, domestic violence, and care-giver mental health issues on children. They identify injuries consistent with various types of abuse and are knowledgeable in the emergency removal process. CWSs recognize their own responsibility to assess child safety in each interaction with the child and family and also recognize that safety is continually assessed in all out of home placements, as well as when planning for reunification.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. articulate the responsibility of every CWS who is assigned to a case to assess child safety during each interaction with the child/youth and family throughout the life of the case, from referral to case closure in all in and out of home placements. (K)
2. demonstrate the ability to engage children/youth and families in order to distinguish between a child/youth who is safe and a child/youth who is unsafe using the Assessment of Child Safety. (S)
3. demonstrate the ability to locate child protective services investigation or assessment information in KIDS. (S)
4. differentiate behaviors and conditions that represent neglect and/or abuse from those that represent problematic parenting. (S)
5. recognize children/youth who cross the safety threshold of serious harm as a result of abuse or neglect and how to intervene to protect them. (S)

VII. Demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and self-awareness to engage and assess all family types in a manner that is positive, strengths-based, and solution focused.

Brief description: CWSs exhibit respect, honesty, and empathy with all family types and individuals. They recognize the effects of trauma and multiple ACEs on the parents and other family members. CWSs demonstrate skillful engagement, interviewing, and assessment techniques that empower families to engage in a solution-focused partnership with the agency. They utilize a strengths-based perspective to support change and well-being within the family.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. understand engagement as an initial and continuous outcome. (K)
2. establish working relationships based upon partnership, acceptance, compassion, and validation of client voice. (S)
3. use open questions, affirmations, reflections, and summarizations to establish and maintain engagement throughout the working relationship. (S)
4. help clients focus on and accept guidance toward needed change. (S)

5. *demonstrate an understanding of the importance of engagement and listening skills and how each play a role in assessing pertinent areas of a family's life and in determining the overall well-being and safety of the children in the home (P)
6. understand sources of resistance to change (K) and employ skills to address them (S).

VIII. Demonstrates knowledge, skill, and self-awareness to engage, assess, and provide effective service to adults, children, and families from diverse cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

Brief Description: CWSs exhibit respect, honesty, and empathy with all family types and individuals. They understand the fundamental concept of culture and its impact, and how their own implicit biases can affect the work they do with families. CWSs demonstrate engagement, interviewing, and assessment techniques that reflect cultural humility.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. identify how his/her own background and personal identity informs beliefs, feelings, actions and relationships with others and understands how cultural knowledge can influence a Child Welfare Specialist's judgement and decisions (V)
2. demonstrate beginning capacity and willingness to engage in self-assessment activities that enhance cultural humility, work relationships, and professional knowledge and skills (V)
3. understand that cultural and linguistic competence requires ongoing self-assessment, self-awareness, and enhancement of skills and knowledge. (V)
4. understand the impact of institutional bias, discrimination, oppression and culturally insensitive practices on services to families and children. (K)
5. know the importance of serving families from diverse backgrounds in the context of his/her own values, beliefs, traditions, and communities. (K, V)

IX. Understands the urgency, the underlying philosophy, and the importance of stability, permanence, and well-being for children/youth.

Brief description:

CWSs understand that the concept of permanency begins at the first safety assessment and is the responsibility of every CWS who is assigned to the case. CWSs know that safety is an integral part of permanence and recognizes the importance of family involvement in developing effective in and out-of-home safety plans. They understand the Bridge concept and can articulate its role in permanency planning. CWSs will understand the importance of supporting caregivers (Relative, Kin, Foster/Adoptive, etc.) as a critical role in the stability of children. They know why diligent search and focus on sibling connections is the responsibility of all and is essential from the initial contact with the family, if out of home placement is considered or required. CWSs recognize the negative impact of inconsistent living arrangements on children and the necessity of all staff to make reasonable efforts to prevent placement disruptions throughout the life of the case.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. demonstrate an understanding of the CWS role, to make reasonable efforts to finalize a permanency plan for each child/youth in out of home care, regardless of program responsibility. (K)
2. identify the importance of maintaining connections, including with kin (relative and non-relative), siblings, culture, and community, and understand the guiding policies for diligent search, contact, and efforts to place siblings together when separated. (K)
3. demonstrate respect for family engagement and understand guiding policies for intentional visitation and family team meetings. (K)
4. explain the importance placement selection and stability has on a child's safety, well-being, and permanency. (K, V)
5. demonstrate awareness of specific populations with specialized service needs. (K, P)

X. Exhibits awareness of potential stress factors associated with child welfare practice in one's self, in the agency and in workplace activities, and is able to develop self-care and other strategies to prevent emotional distress and burnout.

CWSs understand how secondary trauma and compassion fatigue impact one's ability to perform one's job and develop and implement strategies to mitigate burn out. CWSs will utilize knowledge learned specific to self-care and will work with supervisors to identify potential and definitive stressors in an effort to be pro-active.

The Child Welfare Specialist is able to:

1. recognize indicators of potential danger (especially substance abuse and drug manufacturing) and can identify strategies to reduce personal risk when making home visits. (P)
2. identify and assess secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout. (S)
3. identify strategies for self-care to reduce secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout (K, S, P)
4. develop and implement a self-care plan. (S)
5. utilize supervision to enhance professional development and well-being. (P)