

Child Welfare Practice Standards

1) We continually Examine our Use (Misuse) of Power, Use of Self and Personal Biases

- We must be aware of and recognize how we use the power of the position.
- Our use of team supports the process of examining personal biases and use of self.
- We believe in the importance of hearing all voices – whether we disagree or not.
- We continually assess our personal biases and styles, ensuring that they do not interfere with our ability to partner with families; at the same time we will regularly enter into discussions/ mentoring with our supervisor (at all levels) about personal biases and the way they are impacting our work.
- We allow ourselves to imagine and feel the experiences of families as we work to assist them in accomplishing their goals.
- It is critical that families see and believe that we are genuine and that we care.

2) We Respect and Honor the Families We Serve

- We separate what parents have done from who they are.
- Address the issues instead of judging.
- Behave as if you are a visitor in the family's home – a visitor with a purpose.
- Learn about their life demands and value their time.
- Be humble, understanding that “any given day” it could be us.
- We hold a belief that people can change – with the right tools and resources.

3) We Listen to the Voice of Children

- We have frequent and meaningful conversations with children about what they need to feel safe, using language and making decisions that respects their love for their family and their need for connection to their culture.
- We ensure that children have accurate information and understand what is happening in their lives.
- We actively find ways for children to contribute and have an influence and a sense of control on the decisions made about their lives; being honest about their options and choices.
- We frequently engage children in conversations about how to improve our system.

4) We Continuously Seek to Learn Who Families Are and What They Need

- We do not make assumptions about families. They are the expert of their own lives and often have solutions to their own problems. We create an environment where families can teach us about who they are and what they need.
- We communicate with families in their primary language in order to understand their experiences, their culture and how they make parenting decisions.
- We are students of the culture, race and ethnicity of the families we serve—and we actively use this information as we join with families in planning and decision making.
- We have an attitude that we can make a difference — there are the informal supports and resources if we look hard enough and partner effectively with the family and community.

5) We Believe in the Value of “Nothing About Us Without Us”

- When we interact with family, we engage in a conversation that builds relationship, we ask strength-focused questions, we listen and the learning allows us to develop effective service plans.
- The family, the specialist and community partners develop common goals— that acknowledges the families perspectives and the child’s need for safety, permanency and well-being.
- We are transparent with one another to ensure clarity regarding what we are thinking, our concerns and why we are focusing on certain areas of safety and permanency.
- We actively find ways for families to contribute and have control over their own lives.
- We actively engage resource families (foster and kin) in the process of teaming, information sharing and decision making.

6) We Maintain a Childs’ Permanent Connection to Kin, Culture, and Community

- Young adults need to be informed about their choices, they need to understand what happens to them, and they need to consistently maintain contact with their specialist.
- Visitation between a child and their family is a child’s right.
- Families belong together and we maintain optimal connection between a child, their family and their culture.
- We seek to place siblings together; and if we cannot we create frequent opportunities for them to see one another.
- As we make decisions about placement, we consider all of the implications for the child...understanding that every time a child is removed, there is emotional harm.
- We maintain a sense of urgency, knowing that every day a child is in out of home care is harmful.

7) We Conduct Our Work with Integrity At All Levels Of the Agency

- There is a standard of excellence and cooperation that permeates the work of the agency.
- We are compassionate with one another and we have the difficult conversations about the pain and complexity of this work.
- We formally provide support, an opportunity for debriefing and stress relief for our workers and supervisors so that they can continue to do the work well.
- We communicate honestly and we do what we say we are going to do.
- We actively educate other systems about the needs of children and families and about best practices in child welfare.
- We hold one another accountable to being respectful and courteous, valuing and supporting each other — letting go of territorial issues and working together to accomplish our collective goals.