

Child Welfare (CW) Program Descriptors

Child Welfare Specialists- this refers all types of specialists who work under the Child Welfare Umbrella, regardless of program.

Hotline Specialists – (intake) receive calls regarding Abuse and Neglect and determine whether referrals are accepted or screened out based on a child’s safety, permanency, and well-being.

- Work at one of two call centers to receive and process concerns about child safety from the public.
- Interact with the public over the telephone and enter the data into the KIDS system (child welfare specific database). Make a decision as to if the reported allegations meets the legal definition of abuse or neglect and if so determines a priority response time. *These specialists do not go into the field and do not interact with clients directly.*

Child Protective Service Specialists (CPS) – receive referrals from the hotline specialists if it has been deemed to meet the legal definitions of abuse/neglect.

- Interview alleged victims, family members, other people with knowledge of the alleged abuse/neglect and family functioning, and gather any relevant reports from professionals (police, medical, etc.)
- Utilize gathered information to make a finding and recommendation regarding abuse and neglect based on current law as well as a safety decision regarding each child in a family.
 - This information is provided to the local district attorney’s office for legal disposition.

Family Centered Service Specialists (FCS) – provide preventive services that include appropriate referrals and services for families that focus on the child’s safety and preserve and strengthen protective capacities of the person responsible for the child (PRFC) to keep the child safely in the child’s own home.

- Involved when a child or children are found to be unsafe, but the safety threats can be controlled through safety planning and without court intervention, supports are identified and willing to assist the family, and the PRFC(s) acknowledge and accept the responsibility for the conditions that led to his/her child (ren) being unsafe and is willing to seek services to correct those conditions.
- Engage families through a client-centered approach in a shorter-term (6-9months), through weekly contract with the family to facilitate behavioral change by enhancing and strengthening protective capacities to ensure the child’s safety.
- Refer families to community-based services where professionals can assist the family in correcting the behaviors and conditions that created the safety threats.

Permanency Planning Specialists (PP) – assigned when the court removes a child from the custody of the Person Responsible for Child’s safety, health, and well-being

Ensures the ongoing safety of the child while in the care of the state

Assists in getting the child into a permanent home as quickly and safely as possible.

Most of these cases involve work similar to FCS in an attempt to reunify the child with the PRFC the legal caretaker; other permanency options include adoption and guardianship.

Engages with biological families of the children and foster families at least monthly.

Comprehensive Specialists – these specialists perform investigative and permanency planning duties

- Interact with the same family throughout the life of a case by investigating concerns and working with the family to make changes to ensure the safety of the children, if/ when removed from the custody of the legal caretaker

Foster Care/Adoptions Specialists – these specialists are assigned to work with resource families.

- Resource family may be foster families, adoptive families, or families that are both.
- May work in a variety of specialties, including recruiting potential resource families, ensure the homes are safe and paperwork is completed, visit homes to ensure the needs of the resource family are being met over time, and reassess families periodically.

Types of Adoption Specialists:

Resource Specialists:

- Manages and supports a caseload of Resource Families (traditional foster families, relative kinship families, and non-relative kinship families) to assess and maintain safety and well-being for foster care children placed in the home.

Resource Specialist / Non-Identified:

- Manages and supports a caseload of Adoptive Resources to assess and maintain safety, permanency, and well-being for the children who are placed for adoption in the resource home.
- Works with Permanency and Adoption Transition Unit (ATU) to place children in homes where they can achieve permanency through adoption.
- Maintains a caseload of children placed in trial adoption that are placed in their adoptive homes.

Recruitment and Development Specialist:

- Works within the community to actively recruit traditional foster care and adoptive homes through community events, presentations, media opportunities, and campaigns.
- Maintains a caseload of recruited families to fully assess the safety and viability of the homes while completing the approval process.
- Responsible for building and maintaining community partnerships.
- Assigned “Actively Seeking Kin” (ASK) requests to determine if kinship placement options are available for children in State custody.

Adoption Specialist:

- Manages a caseload of children with the goal of adoption by coordinating with permanency specialists, children and identified resource families to move towards permanency for children.
- Responsible for ensuring the family has all available information regarding the child, completes adoptive placement requirements and carries the adoption case through finalization.

Adoption Transition Specialist (ATU):

- Manages a caseload of children legally free for adoption with no identified placement.

- Work with the child through preparation activities and child assessments to prepare the child for the adoption process.
- Participates with the Permanency Specialist and Resource Specialist/Non-ID in transition of children into an adoptive home when a match is made between a child and a family.
- Helps with the identification of possible adoptive homes for the children on their caseload by case-mining for connections and working with Recruitment and Development on recruiting new adoptive homes

Lead Specialist: (also called a CWS 3 and/or Mentor) – A lead specialist is an experienced specialist in any of the categories listed above.

- The lead specialists is assigned more complicated cases and helps the supervisor with mentoring new specialists.
- They go through a Mentor Certification process to prepare to coach new specialists, as they are able- based on available time, and assist supervisors in developing new specialists.

Supervisor (CWS 4) – Supervisors oversee a group of specialists from one or more of the above groups.

- The supervisor assigns cases, approves decisions made by specialists, helps the decision making process through staffing cases, completes reports, ensures specialists are complying with current policy and law, and helps in any other way necessary for specialists to be successful.
- Supervisors go through a certification process as a part of Supervisor Academy.

Program Field Representative (PFR) – Specialists under this job descriptor are experts in a specific area of Oklahoma Child Welfare.

- These specialists provide support to the specialists listed above to help those specialists be able to assist families in successfully protecting their children.
- PFR's facilitate CORE and level trainings as well as others assist with work in state office programs

Key Definitions

Assessment of Child Safety (AOCS) - The assessment of child safety is used to determine safety which is not always the same as legal abuse/neglect. Assessment of safety is a process which continues until our work the family ends. The purpose of the ongoing evaluation of child safety is to assess for safety threats that are barriers to reunification and case progression. The CW specialist consistently evaluates safety, family functioning, and *protective capacities* throughout the life of the case, during every contact with the family, until the child is safe in a permanent setting. An updated AOCS is completed before unsupervised visitation, trial reunification, and case closure. The parent's enhanced protective capacities are documented within the AOCS and the CW specialist clearly articulates the parent's changed behaviors and ability to meet the child's ongoing needs

Caseload - the number of children/families a specialist is assigned in CPS, PP, FCS and Resource

Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) – State CFSRs assess conformance with the 7 outcomes and 7 systemic factors established by the federal Child and Family Services Review. Performance is assessed through records review as well as interviews with case principals (child, family, worker, providers and others with a significant role) and community stakeholders (e.g. foster parents, Child Welfare staff, judges, law enforcement, advocates, etc.).

Child Safety Meeting (CSM) - the collaborative decision-making process CW engages in to address each child's needs related to safety and if the child's condition warrants a safety intervention including, but not limited to, a change in placement, and:

(A) those involved in the collaborative decision-making process include, at a minimum, appropriate Child Welfare staff, the child's parents, and, when the parent requests, an advocate or representative; and

(B) to protect the safety of those involved and to promote efficiency, Child Welfare may limit participants as determined to be in the child's best interests.

Comprehensive Home-Based Services (CHBS) - also called Oklahoma Children's Services (OCS) is a community based contracted service. CW specialist chooses the focus of service that corresponds to the case plan. Comprehensive Home-Based Services (CHBS) include:

- (1) voluntary services to strengthen parental protective capacities to maintain the child safely in the child's own home;
- (2) trial adoptive placement maintenance;
- (3) kinship placement maintenance;
- (4) out-of-home permanent placement maintenance;
- (5) reunification; and
- (6) post-legal adoption maintenance.

Concurrent Planning - when indicated, the implementation of two plans for a child entering out-of-home placement. One plan focuses on reuniting the parent and child; the other seeks to find a permanent out-of-home placement for the child and both plans are pursued simultaneously. Federal law requires CW to make reasonable efforts to find permanency for children who cannot return home to their biological family.

Contacts (also referred to as visits) - CW specialist interactions with children, youth, parents and resource parents to engage, assess and work toward case planning processes.

Drug-Endangered Child - a child who is at risk of suffering physical, psychological, or sexual harm as a result of the use, possession, distribution, manufacture, or cultivation of controlled dangerous substances or the attempt of any of these acts by a PRFC

Emergency Custody - court-ordered custody of a child prior to adjudication of the child

Failure to Protect - failure to take reasonable action to remedy or prevent child abuse or neglect, and includes the conduct of a non-abusing parent or guardian who knows the identity of the abuser or the

person neglecting the child, but lies, conceals, or fails to report the child abuse or neglect, or otherwise take reasonable action to end the abuse or neglect.

Family Functional Assessment (FFA) is an initial in-depth family assessment beginning as soon as possible and is completed within the first 60-calendar days using the earliest date: after the child's removal, the filing of the petition, or the signing of the *family service agreement*. This assessment process identifies and evaluates the family's strengths, resources, protective factors, and underlying causes of behavior that create the unsafe conditions.

(1) The FFA is a tool where all information that is gathered during the in-depth assessment is documented. The FFA incorporates information documented in the initial assessment of child safety, lists all safety threats, identifies any underlying causes of behavior related to those safety threats that led to removal, and integrates the information into a behaviorally-based individualized service plan.

(2) The assessment process is ongoing as information is gathered, obtained, and added to the assessment document

Family Team Meeting (FTM) – a meeting utilized to plan and make decisions for a child by involving and engaging the family of the child in custody.

Family Service Agreement - documents the parent or legal guardian's acceptance of CW services and intervention to assist the family to safely care for the child.

First Placement-Best Placement - an attempt to ensure a child placed into custody achieves optimal placement the first time based on his/her unique needs until he/she obtains permanency as a means to avoid further moves. Placement preference is in kinship and family-like settings

Hotline - statewide Oklahoma Abuse and Neglect Hotline, toll free phone number, maintained by DHS for the purpose of receiving reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children and vulnerable adults. The Hotline operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Impending Danger – presence of a threatening family condition that is specific, severe, observable, occurring now or likely to occur in the next few days, out of control and applicable to a vulnerable child; includes specific threats that are harmful, but are not immediate, obvious, or active at the onset of CPS intervention; are identified and understood after evaluating individual and family conditions and functioning; result in severe harm if safety intervention does not occur and is not sustained; and require the development of a safety plan implemented through services to the family or court intervention monitored by CPS until the impending danger is under control.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) - federal and state laws that govern the removal and out-of-home placement of American Indian children.

Individual Service Plan (ISP) - an individualized service plan created to change unsafe behaviors based upon the assessment. The ISP is based upon a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of the child and family and is developed with the participation of the child, when appropriate, and the child's

parent, legal guardian, legal custodian, attorney, guardian ad litem, and tribe, when applicable. The health and safety of the child is the paramount concern in the ISP development. The family must understand the ISP to understand behaviors, which must change in order to keep children safe. The action steps only directly impact unsafe behaviors and does not include well-being issues such as gaining employment etc.

Investigation - regarding a:

(A) child, per Oklahoma statute title 10 (10A O.S. § 1-1-105), a response to an allegation of abuse or neglect that involves a serious and immediate threat to the safety of a child, making it necessary to determine:

- (i) the current safety of the child and the risk of subsequent abuse or neglect; and
- (ii) if abuse or neglect of the child occurred; or

(B) vulnerable adult, a response to an allegation of abuse, neglect, verbal abuse, financial neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult, making it necessary to determine if maltreatment of the vulnerable adult occurred.

Joint Response - a field response with law enforcement in which law enforcement takes a child into protective custody due to abuse or neglect allegations. When possible, CW specialist responds to the scene where protective custody of the child has been assumed.

(1) CW specialist conducts a safety evaluation at the scene to determine whether the child faces a safety threat and, if so, whether the child can be protected through placement with relatives or others instead of in a DHS foster care placement.

(2) When a determination is made at the scene that the child cannot safely remain in the home, law enforcement and CW specialist coordinate transportation of the child to the home of a relative, kinship care home, an emergency foster care home, a shelter, or other location where DHS believes the child can be protected. DHS utilizes a shelter when other placement options are unavailable or inappropriate.

(3) When CW is unable to respond to the scene where a child has been placed in protective custody, the child is taken by law enforcement to a designated county-specific reception center that may be a shelter or other place pursuant to the county-specific joint response protocol. The child may remain in the reception center for up to 23 hours while DHS conducts a safety evaluation to determine whether the child faces an imminent safety threat, and if so, whether the child can be protected through placement with relatives or others, instead of placement in DHS foster care.

- A child taken into protective custody by law enforcement is not, by virtue of a standing order, considered to be in DHS emergency custody upon the child's admission to a shelter. A child cannot be placed in DHS emergency custody until:
 - (A) CW specialist has completed a safety evaluation and concluded the child faces an imminent safety threat; and
 - (B) the court has issued a child-specific emergency custody order.

KIDS - The Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) known as **KIDS** is a comprehensive electronic record utilized by specialist for documentation.

Kinship Care - full-time care of a child by a kinship relation.

Maltreatment in Care (MIC) - a child in which abuse or neglect is indicated or substantiated by a traditional foster care home, kinship homes (relative or non-relative), therapeutic foster care home, group homes, shelter, residential care or by biological parents on a visit or during trial reunification.

Medically fragile child - a child who exhibits either an acute life-threatening or chronic progressive health condition that puts the child at high risk for poor health or death. Rapid health deterioration occurs without continuous care and treatment. This includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) HIV/AIDS;
- (2) Type 1 diabetes;
- (3) kidney dialysis; or
- (4) incurable advanced stage/end of life diseases

Office of Client Advocacy (OCA) – additional entity responsible for child abuse or neglect investigations.

- The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS), OCA, per [Section 1-9-112 of Title 10A of the Oklahoma Statutes](#) (10A O.S. § 1-9-112), is responsible for:
 - investigating allegations of abuse or neglect of the child placed in an OKDHS facility, or in a public or private residential facility including, but not limited to, jails or detention centers, hospitals, psychiatric facilities and treatment programs, day treatment programs, and licensed or unlicensed residential child care facilities; and
 - (ii) the investigation of alleged child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation by a community services worker

Ongoing Assessment of Child Safety - Evaluating child safety is a primary function of all child welfare specialists during the investigative process and ongoing casework. Safety is assessed by the CW specialist during every contact with the family. The safety evaluation is a continuous process that occurs throughout the life of the case. The ongoing evaluation determines if the behaviors and conditions that led to the child's removal continue to rise to the level of a safety threat and assesses for additional safety threats and for safety as the case progresses and in reunification. This process is documented on the Assessment of Child Safety form.

Permanency Safety Consultations (PSC) - occur monthly for children with a case plan goal of returning home. PSCs help children achieve their permanency goal through CW specialists focusing specifically on timely reunification. CW specialists continually assess the safety of the parent's home and implement the use of safety plans or services so the child may return home as soon as possible

PFRC (Person responsible for the child's health, safety, or welfare) - an agent or employee of:

- (A) a public or private residential home, institution, or facility above the level of foster family care;
- (B) a day treatment program per
- (C) an owner, operator, or employee of a child care program, or
- (D) any other adult residing in the home of the child.

Practice Standards - the 7 standards in which we think about how we work with families etc.

Present danger - an immediate, significant, and clearly observable family condition presently occurring and currently endangering or threatening to endanger a child

Protective Capacities - individual and family strengths that are related to the ability to protect a child from harm separate from family strengths. The family's capacities are assessed to fully understand how the family functions.

Protective Custody - custody of a child taken by law enforcement or designated employee of the court, without a court order

Quality Standards – are the practices, procedures and mindset we implement to achieve quality service as an employee of DHS; the Quality Standards consist of: Safety, Integrity, Professionalism and Compassion

Reasonable efforts - the reasonable exercise of diligence and care, with regard to a child who is in out-of-home placement or who is at imminent risk of harm, to:

- (A) refer to, arrange for, or develop reasonable supportive and rehabilitative services for the child's family that are required both to prevent unnecessary placement of the child outside of the home and to foster, whenever appropriate, the safe reunification of the child with the child's own family; or
- (B) place a child who cannot return home into a permanent placement in accord with the child's permanency plan

Resource Family (or **Resource Home**) - a family (*foster home or Therapeutic Foster Home*) who may be asked to:

- (A) provide temporary care, love, and nurturing to the child and serve as a mentor actively helping the parent improve his or her ability to safely care for his or her child while staying connected to the child and assisting in the child's transition to reunification, legal guardianship, or adoption to another family; and/or
- (B) serve as the legal guardian for the child while maintaining the child's connection to kin, culture, and community; and/or
- (C) adopt the child while maintaining the child's connection to kin, culture, and community

Risk - the likelihood that an incident of child abuse or neglect will occur in the future

Safety threat - the threat of serious harm due to child abuse or neglect occurring in the present or in the very near future and without the intervention of another person, a child would likely or in all probability sustain severe or permanent disability or injury, illness, or death

Safety Threshold - The assessment of child safety is used to determine safety, which is not always the same as legal abuse/neglect. The threshold is compromised when family behaviors, conditions, or situations manifest in such a way that child safety is threatened.

- The safety threshold encompasses only those family conditions that are out of the control of a parent, caregiver, or others within the family.
- This includes situations where the parent, caregiver, or others are able to control conditions, behaviors, or situations, but are unwilling or refuse to exert control.

Six key questions - As a part of the AOCS process, the information compiled for each of the six key questions indicates how the family functions and assists with making child safety determinations. The six key questions explain all previous safety threats and underlying causes, any progress to correct or manage those threats, any safety plans in place, and any new safety threats that affect the child. The six questions are completed and communicate the entire family story as it relates to the safety of the child and involvement in the CW system.

Specialized foster care - foster care provided to a child or adult in a developmental disability services (DDS) certified and monitored specialized foster or agency-contracted home.

Substantiation Protocol - Specific guidelines in conjunction with the definitions (abandonment, abuse, neglect, deprived, failure to protect, lack of supervision) in substantiating child abuse or neglect allegations.

Termination of Parental Right (TPR) - terminating the parent - child relationship legally i.e. custody, visitation etc.

Vulnerable child - the child who is unable to protect himself or herself due to his or her age, physical or emotional development, mobility, size, dependence, or inability to communicate needs.

- (1) The child 5 years of age or younger is considered to have a high level of vulnerability as is the child with issues, such as disabilities, past victimization, or hazardous surroundings.
- (2) The vulnerable child is susceptible to, and within access of, a threatening parent or caregiver