

# New York City's Child Welfare Community's Commitment to Quality Practice

## Core Values

**Protection.** Children have the right to be safe from abuse and neglect.

**Development.** Children and families need consistent nurturing in a healthy family environment to achieve their developmental potential.

**Permanency.** All children need and are entitled to enduring family relationships that provide a sense of stability and belonging.

**Cultural Responsiveness.** Children and families have the right to be understood and served within the context of their own traditions, history, and culture.

**Family Foundation.** Children can be assured a better chance for healthy personal growth and development in a safe, permanent home with enduring relationships that provide them with family, stability, and belonging.

**Partnerships.** The entire community shares the responsibility to create an environment that helps families raise children to their fullest potential.

**Organizational Competence.** Committed, qualified, trained, and skilled staff-- supported by an effectively structured organization-- help insure positive outcomes for children and families.

**Child Welfare Professionals.** Children and families need a relationship with an accepting, concerned, empathic worker who can confront difficult issues and effectively assist individuals in their process toward positive change.

These foundational principles will lead to the kind of child welfare practice that the citizens of New York City need, deserve, and want. These principles call on every member of our child welfare system to create and maintain strong performance expectations of themselves, of others, of their agency, and of the entire child welfare system.

Though they are necessary to give appropriate direction and to instill significance in the daily tasks of child welfare staff, **practice principles cannot stand alone.** In addition to practice principles, the members of the City's child welfare system recognize the need to expect and even demand that actions flow from the principles. The following actions or practice standards have been derived from national practice standards and have been adapted to the performance expectations of New York's child welfare community. These practice standards must be consistently carried out in order for members of the system to put into action the above practice principles. These standards bring real-life situations to the practice principles.

## Standards of Child Welfare Practice in New York City

1. Children who are neglected or abused will receive immediate and thorough assessments leading to decisive, quick remedies for the immediate circumstances, followed by long-range planning for permanency and well being.
2. Children and families will be actively involved in identifying their strengths and needs and in matching services to identified needs.
3. Service plans and the help they describe will be based on an individualized service plan, using a family team (including the family, where possible, and key support systems and providers), employing a comprehensive assessment of the child's and family's needs, and attending to and utilizing the strengths of the child and his/her family strengths.
4. Individualized plans will include specific steps and services to reinforce identified strengths and meet the needs of the family. Plans will specify steps to be taken by each member of the team, timeframes for accomplishment of goals, and concrete actions for monitoring the progress of the child and family.
5. Service planning and implementation are built on a comprehensive array of services designed to permit children and families to achieve the goals of safety, permanency, and well being.
6. Children and families will receive individualized services matched to their strengths and needs and, where required, services will be built around those needs.
7. Critical decisions about children and families, such as service plan development and modification, removal, placement, and permanency, are to be made by a team including the child and his/her family, the family's informal helping systems, foster parents, and formal agency stakeholders—the Family Team Conference.
8. Services provided to children and families will respect their cultural, ethnic, and religious heritage and be provided by staff who share that respect.
9. Services will be provided in home- and neighborhood-based settings that are most appropriate for the child and family's needs.
10. Services will be provided in the least restrictive, most normalized settings appropriate for the child and family's needs.
11. Siblings will be placed together. When this is not possible or appropriate, siblings will have frequent opportunities for visits.
12. Children will be placed in close proximity to their family and have frequent opportunities for visits.

13. Children in placement will be provided with the support needed to permit them to achieve their educational and vocational potential with the goal of becoming self-sufficient adults.
14. Children will receive adequate and timely medical and mental health care that is responsive to their needs.
15. Services will be provided by competent staff and providers who are adequately trained and who have workloads at a level that permit practice consistent with these principles.

The Practice Model informs front-line staff members of what is expected in their daily work and also provides direction to administration on needed administrative resources. The performance expectations need additional administrative supports, such as adequate funding and staffing, effective training, clear policies, and effective administrative structures to assist staff in reaching the above expectations.

## The End Result

**In adopting this citywide practice model, we commit to pursuing the following five key commitments:**

- 1. No child we come into contact with will be left to struggle alone with abuse or neglect.**
- 2. No family who needs and wants help to keep their children safe will be left without the help it needs.**
- 3. Every child we come into contact with will get the help (s)he needs to be healthy and achieve his/her full educational and developmental potential.**
- 4. No child in our care will leave us without a caring, committed, permanent family.**
- 5. Every team member at Children's Services and each of our partner agencies can expect guidance, respect and emotional support to achieve our goals. Every child, family, community member, and foster parent we come into contact with will be treated with the same concern and respect.**

# NEW YORK CITY ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

## CORE PRINCIPLES

The following core principles have already been adopted by ACS. They focus primarily on the appropriate role ACS plays in the overall NYC Child Welfare system.

- Our overarching mission at ACS is the protection of the City's children from abuse or neglect.
- The primary goal of our work is to see to it that all the children touched by the New York City children services system have strong families that support them and protect them from harm.
- Whenever it can be done safely, children's birth and extended families should be strengthened and supported to provide that family tie for their children.
- A critical partner for strengthening families and protecting children is the network of community supports available to birth families, relative caregivers, foster families, and adoptive families.
- It is not enough for children involved in our system to be safe; they deserve attention to all of their needs—health, developmental, educational, etc.
- We will measure our success by the results we achieve for children, families, and communities.
- We at Children's Services cannot protect children and strengthen families alone. To succeed in our mission we need to build strong partnerships with families, communities, and other agencies.
- The needs of children and families should drive the support and help they get; such services need to be family-centered, flexible, and mobile.
- The special needs of very young children and youth need particular attention from the system.
- Child Care and Head Start are integral members of the children services system in New York City and will be involved in preventive services, foster care, and reunification services.