



**Positioning Public Child Welfare Initiative:**  
Strengthening Families in the 21st Century

### Domains

**Administrative Practices:** The field of public child welfare provides and uses support functions essential for the effective attainment, use, and distribution of resources to children, youth, and families. These functions follow practice standards in the design and delivery of support services which are based on research and industry standards. Support functions include but are not limited to human resources, information technology, finance, contracts management, and legal counsel.

**Budget and Finance:** The field of public child welfare is able to strategize, leverage, and maximize resources to achieve outcomes. It works to break down barriers in funding cycles and processes that limit its ability to work collaboratively and creatively. It is also fiscally responsible and able to assess and develop strategies to mitigate and manage risk.

**Change Management:** The field of public child welfare has the ability to innovate and collaborate, assess its performance, self-correct, manage its performance and enhance its ability to achieve positive outcomes. It builds on the strengths of current practice and is responsive to contemporary and emerging issues.

**Communications:** The field of public child welfare has formalized strategies for communicating both internally and externally. The strategy addresses pro-active and re-active communications; provides for formal and informal interactions; and for developing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders and the children, youth and families we serve.

**Disparities and Disproportionality:** The field of public child welfare recognizes the consequences of disparate treatment and its impact on disproportionality in all areas of its system. In this context, disparity refers to the negative effects of a family's inability to access, use, or receive quality care, resources, services and opportunities to thrive. Disparity means that the observed differences in treatment are unnecessary, avoidable, unfair, or unjust. Since disparities typically result from unjustly allocated or poorly provided resources-insufficient to address the underlying needs-families receiving disparate treatment are at increased risk of experiencing negative child and family outcomes. Families of color have historically endured disparate treatment in this country due to larger societal factors such as institutional racism, poverty and classism.

Disproportionality refers to the occurrence of population cohorts as over-or underrepresented in public child welfare relative to their proportion in the general population. Certain racial groups, such as African American and Native American children, are consistently overrepresented in public child welfare compared to their representation in the general population. And while Latino children are nationally underrepresented in public child welfare compared to their proportion in the generally population, they are overrepresented in certain states and counties.

**Information Management:** The field of public child welfare identifies, acquires, and analyzes formal and informal knowledge within the organization. The field manages and adapts knowledge in a manner that maintains the integrity of the information and makes it accessible and understandable to all relevant parties. The field disseminates knowledge to the right people at the right time to enable performance, encourage innovation, and improve outcomes.

**Leadership:** The field of public child welfare has a leadership philosophy that is outcome focused. Senior leadership establishes a compelling vision that sets direction and goals, plans and manages change, makes strategic decisions, garners resources, and builds political and community will. Leadership at all levels in the organization, including but not limited to the executive and senior management administrators, supervisors, child welfare workers, and support staff effectively communicates, builds trust, makes sound decisions and improves performance capacity and accountability to achieve clearly defined outcomes.

**Practice Model:** The field of public child welfare defines how to effectively deliver services to children, youth, and families. The practice model includes the following elements: desired outcomes, principles, theory of change, evidence informed practice, process and quality of care, and service array.

- *Principles:* The field of public child welfare has an obligation to behaviorally define and model the basic values of performance with regard to the services provided to children, youth, and families. These values should be relevant to all workers regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve.
- *Theory of Change:* The field of public child welfare articulates the underlying beliefs and assumptions that guide the delivery of services to produce change and improvement in the lives of children, youth, and families.
- *Evidence Informed Practice:* The field of public child welfare shall follow best practice standards and make appropriate decisions based on the best available research. When specific research is not available to guide practice, practice standards should be based on the best available information and clearly articulated values that reflect the principles of the practice model. All practice standards should include measurable indicators and be consistently monitored and evaluated.
- *Process and Quality of Care:* The field of public child welfare shall develop and expand the use of “best practices” so each child, youth, and family receives the most effective and efficient delivery of service designed to maximize individual functioning and promote community strength and stability. The developmental life cycle of the child, youth and family must be considered in the delivery of services.
- *Service Array:* The field of public child welfare shall provide a range of available services and access to the services necessary to meet the needs of the target population being served.

**Public Policy:** The field of public child welfare proactively informs, influences, and develops public policy in concert with youth and families, stakeholders and branches of government such as the judicial system. The field also monitors and responds to legislation and administrative actions that may affect its ability to achieve positive outcomes.

**Research:** The field of public child welfare invests in, promotes, and guides research that generates reliable, valid, generalizable, relevant, and usable knowledge to answer questions that emerge from child welfare practice and policy.

**Strategic Partnerships:** The field of public child welfare establishes and maintains strategic working partnerships with children, youth, families and stakeholders to improve outcomes by promoting trust, goodwill, and accountability.

**Strategy:** The field of public child welfare develops a strategy for achieving outcomes for children, youth and families. The most basic strategy identifies the vision, mission, goals, and priorities that direct the work of the entire organization.

**Technology Options:** The field of public child welfare is able to identify, use, and maximize technology, both equipment and software to support service delivery, practice improvement, communications and promote partnerships with stakeholders.

**Workforce:** The field of public child welfare is responsible for the development and implementation of a workforce strategy that recruits, staffs, manages performance, continually educates, retains, rewards, recognizes and adequately compensates a well prepared, supported, and appropriately deployed workforce equipped to provide effective services to children, youth, and families. Public child welfare administrators must be able to understand, anticipate, plan, and act upon current and future workforce needs.