

## Worksheet | **Articulating Practice Model Principles**

This worksheet can help States determine what principles will guide their frontline practice. Compiled from a review of practice model principles published by approximately 10 States and several other resources, these principles are applicable across the core intervention components and are grouped by beliefs important to family-centered practice.

The principles are examples and can be used to generate discussion. Whether an agency selects the principles listed in the worksheet or others, it is important to involve multiple stakeholders (internal, external, including families and youth) in that selection and focus on what the agency and community believe should guide the work. These beliefs and principles become the agency's value base and help prioritize agency goals. The beliefs and principles also become the value base for frontline practice and impact supervision, management, and the agency's interactions with the community at large.

### Articulating Principles

#### *Define Beliefs About*

- families
- how the casework process should work
- where children should live
- working in teams
- the importance of culture in a family's life
- partnerships and collaboration

### 1. What do we believe about families?

We believe that:

#### **Beliefs to consider:**

- Children are safer when their families are engaged and committed to making changes, thus full engagement with families is necessary.
- Families are the experts regarding their own needs, are motivated to recognize their needs and resources, and should have a lead role in working toward change.
- Strengthening parental capacity enhances their ability to protect and provide for their children.
- Relationships with families should be based on respect and trust; communication should be open and honest.
- Child welfare respects family bonds and responsibilities.
- Extended family, non-custodial fathers, natural support systems, and resource families play significant roles in a child's life.
- It is important to maintain family relationships through frequent family visitation (for children in placement).
- Intervention addresses the needs of the whole family, as well as individual children.
- Family and youth are full partners, and youth have a unique perspective—this means family and youth voice will be heard in all aspects of practice and system improvement.

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## 2. What do we believe about how the casework process should work?

**We believe that:**

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### **Beliefs to consider:**

- Practice is strengths-based—assessment and service planning build on the strengths of children, youth, families and communities, rather than emphasizing problems and pathology.
- Practice is individualized - assessments, services and supports are designed to address the unique needs of each child, youth and family.
- Social workers listen to each person's voice and concerns.
- Assessment and service planning are continuous, ongoing processes, not one-time events.
- A comprehensive approach is preferred:
  - the focus is on the “big picture,” addressing the broader needs of the family, rather than only a set of symptoms which led to involvement with child welfare;
  - underlying conditions are addressed; and
  - service plans incorporate a broad array of services.
- Consistent contact and visits by the social worker assist families in achieving their goals.
- Focusing on child social and emotional well-being will help improve outcomes.
- Intervention services should not be constrained by the availability of services. When needed services are not available, child welfare works collaboratively with families and other systems to create them.
- Child welfare staff and providers are adequately trained and supported and have workloads that allow them to practice in a way that is consistent with these principles.

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## 3. What do we believe about where children should live?

**We believe that:**

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### **Beliefs to consider:**

- Keeping children safely at home, with their families, and in their communities is preferred.
- Services are provided in the least restrictive, most normalized setting appropriate for the child and family needs.
- When children must be placed in out-of-home care:
  - they are placed whenever possible with relatives or kin;
  - they are placed in close proximity to their family;
  - siblings are placed together, unless the safety or well-being of a child is put in jeopardy by the placement; and
  - caregivers are adequately trained, supported and informed about the children they care for.
- Children should be reared in family settings.
- Children and youth need and deserve a permanent family.
- Services are provided to meet a child's placement goals as soon as possible.

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#### 4. What do we believe about working in teams?

We believe that:

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**Beliefs to consider:**

- The team process values multiple perspectives and purports that a team is often more capable of creative and high quality decision-making than an individual.
- Assessments, completed in partnership with children, youth and families, include suggestions and contributions from the full family team.
- Child and family teams are a valuable strategy for identifying resources, developing steps to protect the child and support parents, and reviewing progress on the service plan.

#### 5. What do we believe about the importance of a family's culture?

We believe that:

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**Beliefs to consider:**

- Children and families have the right to be understood within the context of their own family rules, traditions, history, and culture.
- Interventions respect cultural diversity and are adapted to fit the culture of the child, youth and family being served.
- Organizations have a responsibility to convey information in a manner that is understood by diverse audiences, including persons of limited English proficiency, those with low literacy skills or who are not literate, and individuals with disabilities.

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## 6. What do we believe about partnerships and collaboration?

We believe that:

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### Beliefs to consider:

- Child welfare supports a collaborative approach to working with families, providers, other child-serving systems and community stakeholders.
- Collaboration is important at the individual child/family level to coordinate care and at the management level to strengthen the array of services and supports available to meet child/family needs.
- Child welfare shares resources and responsibility with the broader community.

### REFERENCES

In addition to the published resources listed below, this worksheet was developed through a review of the practice model principles of approximately 15 States and with internal resources supplied by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement.

American Public Human Services Association. Positioning public child welfare guidance: *Practice Model Guidance*, 2010, p. 11. <http://www.ppcwg.org/images/files/Practice%20Model%20Chapter%203-23-10.pdf>

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National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development. Definition of linguistic competence. <http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/foundations/frameworks.html#ccdefinition>

National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care. *An Individualized, Strengths-Based Approach in Public Child Welfare Driven Systems of Care*, 2008. <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/acloserlook/strengthsbased/strengthsbased1.cfm>

The Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group. *Adopting a Child Welfare Practice Framework*, n.d., <http://www.childwelfaregroup.org/documents/CWGPPracticeFramework.pdf>

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