

California Child Welfare Core Practice Model

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California Child Welfare Core Practice Model



CORE PRACTICE MODEL

A Guiding Framework for Child Welfare Practice

BACKGROUND

California's child welfare community has a long and respected history of creating and implementing successful approaches to serving children and families. Our state supervised and county-implemented system has provided numerous opportunities at both the state and local levels for the development of innovative practices and initiatives aimed at improving outcomes. However, multiple emerging and established initiatives and practices have impacted our ability to have a consistent statewide approach for child welfare practice.

Efforts are currently underway to develop a Child Welfare Core Practice Model for California that is intended as a framework to support child welfare practice and allow child welfare professionals to be more effective in their roles. The goal is to create a practice model that guides practice, service delivery and decision-making, and builds on the great work already taking place by integrating key elements of existing initiatives and proven practices such as the California Partners for Permanency (CAPP), the Katie A. Core Practice Model, and Safety Organized Practice (SOP). The model will give meaning to the work currently in practice and improve outcomes for children and families.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theoretical Framework for the CA Child Welfare Core Practice Model provides the foundation for the practice model and guides the development of values, casework components, and practice elements. The framework is comprised of the following theories:

Orienting Theories and Bio-developmental Theories

These theories help us understand:

- How and why key factors such as current and historical trauma and other stressors lead to maltreatment and hamper intervention efforts.
- The importance of protecting and promoting attachment bonds, family connections, and the cultural group as we work with families.
- That parenting is challenging and all parents need help with structure, transitions, and milestones.

Using these theories leads to:

- Greater empathy and a shift in emotional reactions to families that enter the system.
- Development and use of strategies for building on strengths and working to enhance motivation for change.

Intervention Theories

Intervention theories help us:

- Work with families to find and use services that will address the key factors to interrupt unsafe patterns: life situations, thinking patterns, emotions, and triggers that contribute to maltreatment.
- Understand the sequence of events so we can help individual adults and entire families understand what needs to change and how to change it in order for children to be safe and remain in the immediate or extended family.
- Understand the needs of children and youth in foster care and adoption and help them keep ties to family and community and develop new attachments.
- Understand how to help families, children, and youth through transitions and delayed reactions to prevent placement disruptions.

Organizational Theories

These theories help us understand how our system will support and sustain the practice model.

VALUES

The Practice Model values reflect the theoretical framework and form a path from theory to practice, guiding the development of the core components, elements, and practice behaviors.

The following value statements are an expression of our beliefs and explain what we are striving for in our work with families:

- We believe in using prevention and early intervention to help keep children and youth safe from abuse and neglect.
- We believe the best way to support families is to honor their experiences and work together to build partnerships based on mutual respect and trust.
- We believe children, youth, and young adults need lifelong, loving permanent families and connections to family members, communities, and tribes.
- We believe children, youth, and young adults should have access to effective services that support their overall well-being and help them achieve their full potential.
- We believe that honestly sharing our assessment of strengths and concerns is essential for engaging with families and building connections.
- We believe in listening to families to learn about their culture and community.
- We believe that families can grow and change.
- We believe in helping families connect with effective, family-focused, strength-based services and supports.
- We believe in creating a competent and professional workforce through quality recruitment, training, and support.
- We believe in individual development, critical thinking, self-reflection, and humility.
- We believe in creating an organizational culture and climate that supports learning and development.

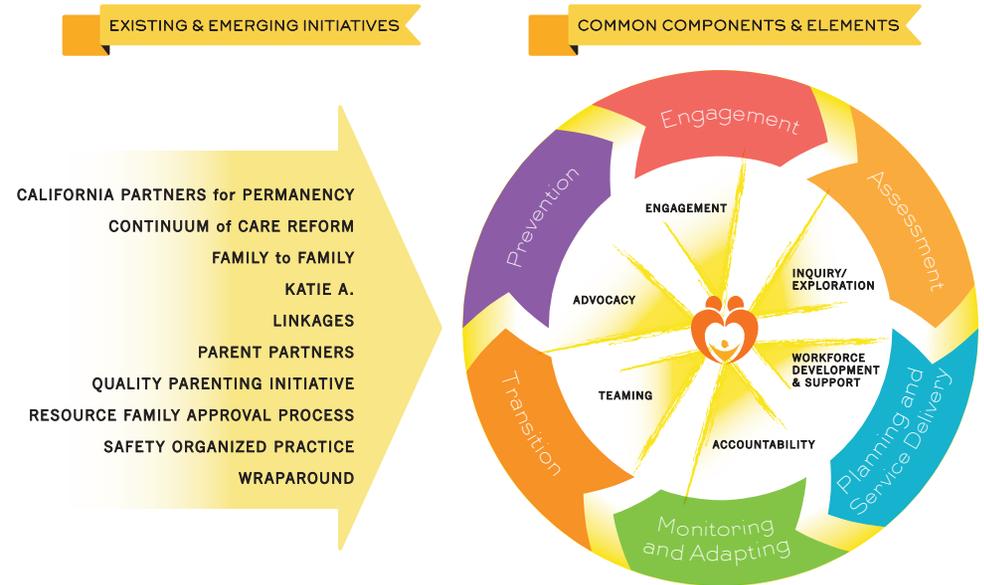


CASEWORK COMPONENTS – WHAT WE DO

The model has six key practice components. The practice components are the basic activities of collaborative work with children, youth, and families involved with child welfare. They are:

- **PREVENTION** – Child welfare prevention efforts focus on reducing risk factors and strengthening or increasing protective factors in families through a variety of programs and initiatives including differential response and home visiting.
- **ENGAGEMENT** – Family engagement is a family-centered and strengths-based approach to partnering with families in making decisions, setting goals, and achieving desired outcomes. It is founded on the principle of respect—communicating openly and honestly with families in a way that supports disclosure of preferences, family dynamics and culture, and individual experiences, so that the individual needs of every family and child can be met.
- **ASSESSMENT** – Assessment is a continuous process of discovery with families that leads to better understanding of the events and behaviors that brought the children and families into services, helps families identify the underlying needs that affect the safety, permanency, and well-being of the family, children, and youth.
- **PLANNING AND SERVICE DELIVERY** – Service planning involves working with the family and their team to create and tailor plans to build on the strengths and protective capacities of the youth and family members, in order to meet the individual needs for each child and family.
- **MONITORING AND ADAPTING** – Monitoring and adapting are part of the practice of continually monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the plan while assessing current circumstances and resources. It is the part of the planning cycle where the plan is reworked as needed.
- **TRANSITION** – Transition is the process of moving from formal supports and services to informal supports, when intervention by the formal systems is no longer needed.

¹ This definition of casework components was informed by the Katie A. Core Practice Model <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/res/pdf/CorePracticeModelGuide.pdf>. The Casework Components developed for the model are informed by and consistent with CAPP, Katie A., and SOP.



The programs and practices that have informed the development of the Casework Components and Practice Elements have had extensive community and tribal participation in their development and/or implementation at local and statewide levels.

- The elements that are included in the Practice Model are reflective of the elements that have been developed and supported by both state and local partners.
- Key programs include: Katie A., California Partners for Permanency, Safety Organized Practice, Family to Family, among others.
- County, community, and tribal members have participated in the development or implementation of these practices, or both.

PRACTICE ELEMENTS – HOW WE DO IT

The practice elements identified in the model link the values and principles to the core aspects of practice that are essential to the model's success. They are the broad actions essential to promoting safety, permanency, and well-being for all children and youth. Each element is further defined and operationalized in practice behaviors that guide social workers in their practice with families, children, youth, young adults, caregivers, and communities.²

The practice elements in the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model are the broad actions we take to promote safety, permanency and well-being for all children and youth. We address safety, permanency, health, education, spiritual, and other family and youth needs through engagement, inquiry and exploration, and ongoing partnerships with families, youth, and their supportive communities and tribes.



Engagement

We continuously engage with families, their communities and tribes:

- We listen to families, tribes, caregivers, and communities and respect and value their roles, perspectives, abilities, and solutions in all teaming and casework practice.
- We encourage and support families and youth speaking out about their own experiences and taking a leadership role in assessing, finding solutions, planning, and making decisions.
- We affirm the family's experiences and create achievable goals in collaboration with the family.
- We use solution-focused, trauma-informed engagement practices and approach all interactions with openness, respect, and honesty. We use understandable language. We describe our concerns clearly.
- We connect with families, children, youth, communities, tribes, and service providers to help build networks of formal and informal supports and support connections.



Inquiry/Exploration

We explore well-being, family relationships, natural supports, and safety concerns:

- We use inquiry and mutual exploration with the family to find, locate, and learn about other family members and supportive relationships children, youth, young adults, and families have within their communities and tribes.
- We explore with children, youth, and young adults their worries, wishes, where they feel safe, and consider their input about permanency and where they want to live.
- We work with the family throughout our involvement to identify family members and other supports for the family, children, youth, and young adults.
- We conduct early and ongoing screening and comprehensive assessments to inform our efforts to address safety, permanency, and well-being.

Advocacy

We advocate for services, interventions, and supports that meet the needs of families, children, youth, and young adults:

- We promote use of effective, available, evidence-informed, and culturally relevant services, interventions, and supports.
- We speak out for children, youth, young adults, and families in order to support them in strengthening their family, meeting their needs, finding their voice, and developing the ability to advocate for themselves.
- We advocate with youth to promote permanency and permanent connections.

² This definition of practice elements is informed by the CAPP Practice Model http://cfpic.org/pdfs/capp/CAPP_Practice_Model_LEAN_IN_3_13.pdf. The Practice Elements developed for the model are informed by and consistent with CAPP, Katie A., and SOP.

Teaming

We work in partnership with families, communities, tribes, and other professionals and service providers working with the family:

- We rely on the strength and support that a family's community, cultural, tribal and other natural relationships can provide to help the family meet their underlying needs.
- We facilitate partnerships with formal and informal networks to help the family build an ongoing circle of support.
- We build teams by demonstrating respect, following through, and talking about and agreeing on team roles and team dynamics.
- We facilitate dialogue with families and their teams to ensure that we understand their point of view.
- We collaborate with youth, young adults, families, and their teams in assessment, decision-making, and planning.
- We ensure that every assessment and decision is the product of the work of both the social worker and the family, and in many cases inclusive of the collaborative work within the child and family team.
- We work with youth, young adults, families, and their teams to develop and adapt service plans to help youth, young adults, and families overcome barriers and find services and supports that meet their needs.

Accountability

We work to achieve positive outcomes for children, youth, young adults, and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being:

- We measure our practice against identified system goals and seek continuous growth and improvement.
- We help families, children, youth, and young adults achieve what is important to them.
- We provide culturally relevant/promising practices/innovative practices and ensure service linkage/accountability in service provision.

Workforce Development and Support

We provide support to the workforce:

- We offer professional development opportunities, leadership, supervision, coaching, and workload supports that facilitate a healthy and positive workforce.
- We use intentional communication to build and maintain our system as a learning organization.
- We partner with families and stakeholders to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, for the purpose of evaluating service delivery and how well front line practice aligns with the practice model.

³ This definition of practice behaviors is informed by the CAPP Practice Model <http://co-invest.org/files/CAPP-Practice-Model-Packet-Q1.pdf>. The draft practice behaviors are informed by and consistent with CAPP, Katie A., and SOP.



CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

Practice behaviors are the action oriented aspect of the practice model that defines expected social work practice. They bring the model's theoretical framework, values, and elements to life by clearly describing the interactions between social workers and families, children, youth, young adults, communities, and tribes. Practice behaviors provide guidance to social workers about how they will practice social work using the practice model, ensuring staff and agency behavior are consistent with the practice model's theoretical framework, values, and elements.³

I. Foundational Behaviors

- Be open, honest, clear, and respectful in your communication.
- Be accountable.

II. Engagement Behaviors

- Listen to the child, youth, young adult, and family, and demonstrate that you care about their thoughts and experiences.
- Demonstrate an interest in connecting with the child, youth, young adult, and family and helping them identify and meet their goals.
- Identify and engage family members and others who are important to the child, youth, young adult, and family.
- Support and facilitate the family's capacity to advocate for themselves.

III. Assessment Behaviors

- From the beginning and throughout all work with the child, youth, young adult, family, and their team to engage in initial and on-going safety and risk assessment and permanency planning.

IV. Teaming Behaviors

- Work with the family to build a supportive team.
- Facilitate the team process and engage the team in planning and decision-making with and in support of the child, youth, young adult, and family.
- Work with the team to address the evolving needs of the child, youth, young adult, and family.
- Work collaboratively with community partners to create better ways for children, youth, young adults, and families to access services.

V. Service Planning and Delivery Behaviors

- Work with the family and their team to build a plan that will focus on changing behaviors that led to the circumstances that brought the family to the attention of the child welfare agency and assist the child, youth, young adult, and family with safety, trauma, healing, and permanency.

VI. Transition Behaviors

- Work with the family to prepare for change in advance and provide tools for managing placement changes, social worker changes, and other significant transitions.



NEXT STEPS

The California Child Welfare Core Practice Model has been built by integrating existing initiatives and proven practices with extensive feedback from county representatives, tribal partners, youth, young adults, caregivers, parent partners, service providers, and other stakeholders from across the state. Staff, community, and tribal partners insisted that the successful implementation of the Practice Model will require that we pay attention to a wide range of organizational factors. The statewide Practice Model Design Team that guided the development of the Practice Model is currently committed to identifying and describing organizational factors in categories such as:

- Leadership,
- Organizational Culture, Climate, and Structure,
- Workforce Development, and
- Evaluation

Further work on identifying the resources that will fully support the implementation of the Practice Model, including the identified organizational factors, will enable California to move forward in making the Child Welfare Core Practice Model a reality across California.