



## **Colorado Child Welfare Practice Model** *DRAFT for Feedback*

The goal of the Colorado Practice Initiative is to involve staff and stakeholders across the state to collaboratively design, implement and evaluate a child welfare practice model. This effort began in November 2009 and is supported by the Mountains and Plains Child Welfare Implementation Center, through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau.

In May 2010, work was begun to create a draft child welfare practice model for statewide input and feedback. Survey responses of 600 county staff informed the work of a diverse group of 31 individuals representing county and state staff, consumer, tribal and stakeholder participants. This group created the attached draft that is now being circulated for review and input. (Please see accompanying documentation or the website below for information regarding workgroup participants, timelines and process).

Opportunities for discussion, reaction and feedback are currently being conducted across the state. Participants in these sessions are invited to provide their feedback via survey by clicking on or pasting the link below into their browser:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MYTTXB9>

You are welcome to learn more about the practice model and Colorado's Practice Initiative by visiting the web page:

[www.cdhs.state.co.us/childwelfare/CPI.htm](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/childwelfare/CPI.htm).

**Colorado Practice Model Design Workgroup-Colorado Practice Model**  
**July 2010 DRAFT FOR FEEDBACK MEETINGS**

**Vision**

Colorado's children and youth thrive in safe, nurturing, stable families and communities

**Mission**

In partnership with families and communities, the Colorado child welfare system will protect children and youth by striving to achieve their safety, permanency, and well being.

This mission will be achieved by consistently and effectively:

- engaging families;
- collaborating with federal, state, local, and tribal entities;
- practicing in a culturally responsive manner;
- providing individualized services that strengthen families and remove barriers and
- developing a professional, responsive and accountable staff.

**Values**

**Safety**

Child and youth safety is paramount. Children and youth are entitled to live in safe, permanent homes.

**Child Centered:**

The child welfare system has the responsibility to make reasonable efforts to assess and meet individual and family needs through child centered practice. Being child centered includes:

- Recognizing that children and youth are entitled to live in a safe, permanent home.
- Promoting positive youth development by recognizing the individual needs of children and youth, engaging the child and youth voice, providing choice, encouraging positive, permanent connections, and allowing children and youth to safely express themselves and participate in decisions.

**Family Focused**

The child welfare system has the responsibility to make reasonable efforts to assess and meet individual and family needs through family focused practice. Being family focused includes:

- Understanding that families have the right and responsibility to raise their own children and youth.
- Assuring that families have a decision-making role in the care of their own children.

### Collaborative partnerships

We will engage effectively with individuals and agencies to achieve shared goals and successful outcomes.

### Organizational Competence

Colorado's child welfare system recognizes its responsibility to demonstrate:

- Leadership in a professional manner through a competent, well-trained workforce.
- Continuous self improvement through ongoing assessment and being informed by data to support decision making.
- Service delivery that is fully defined, explained, and understood.

### Culturally responsive

The child welfare system has a responsibility to understand and respond to children, youth and families within the context of their unique beliefs, values, race, ethnicity, history, culture, religion, language, educational level, sexual orientation and economic status.

### Communication

The child welfare system commits to communicate in a timely, respectful, and appropriate manner. Communication will be mutual; demonstrating a respect for each person's perspective and focused on the best interests of children, youth, and families.

## **Standards of Practice**

### **INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT**

- Effective screening of incoming referrals is achieved by collecting all of the information necessary to properly triage referrals and make appropriate responses.
- Assessment is a dynamic, ongoing process throughout the life of the case. Assessment includes interviewing all relevant parties and gathering and sharing information and detailed descriptions regarding what is currently occurring within the family that is of concern; identifying underlying safety, risk and protective factors, and the strengths of the children, youth and families.

### **SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY**

- Child safety is paramount. Ongoing safety and risk assessment for children, youth, and families drives decision making, service planning and delivery.
- Similar to assessment, service planning is a dynamic ongoing process based on the continuous assessment of the child(ren), youth, and family situation.

- All efforts will be made to include the family in the decision making process including a choice of resources. Resources must be appropriately matched to the needs of the family and their ability to use the resource effectively. Services must be relevant and consistent with evidence about effective practice.
- Setting goals and developing plans will be done with families. The plan should be realistic, clearly articulated and written in the family's language. The plan should include specific goals that contain outcomes of measurable, behavioral change.
- Families and caseworkers will work together to develop family service plans which contain a mix of traditional and non-traditional services for families and youth that result in meaningful change. A comprehensive, coordinated and integrated family service plan across multiple child and family serving agencies will address child and youth well being on all cases.
- Service delivery follows the terms of the plan and is adjusted as indicated by ongoing assessment of the family's needs. When multiple service systems are involved with a family, successful delivery requires linking and coordinating systems, both formal and informal, to meet the family's needs, minimize duplication of activities and support continuous movement toward agreed upon goals.

## PLACEMENT

- Out of home placement is done in the best interest of the child and/or youth with the first consideration to kinship or tribal providers. At the time of placement, the agency has accepted increased responsibility for the safety, permanency and well being of the child and youth and the quality of services. Contact and service supports to children and youth in placement and their families and caregivers are based on individual needs, not limited to the minimum mandated by policy or statute.
- Visitation for children and youth in placement is based on individual needs to maintain connections and promote permanency.
- Concurrent permanency planning begins at the time of placement and includes engaging parents and extended family in planning for the permanency of a child/youth. Concurrent permanency planning is demonstrated when dual permanency goals are pursued simultaneously.

- Effective service delivery includes connecting families to an array of post permanency services to promote success. Services are easily accessible and available to meet their needs to support permanence.

#### ALL CASES THROUGHOUT THE LIFE OF THE CASE (OVERARCHING STANDARDS)

- Documentation is factual, accurate, clear, concise, timely and understandable.
- Family engagement is an overarching theme of practice throughout service assessment, planning, and delivery. Family engagement is demonstrated by staff joining with the family to establish common goals concerning safety, well-being and permanency.
- Through mutual dialogue with children, youth, and families, supportive relationships are identified and promoted.
- Consistent and meaningful contact with children, youth, and families includes continuous assessment of all family members in regard to safety, risk and the family service plan.
- Services are monitored for impact on child safety, permanency and well being, as well as lessons learned through the delivery of the service by the agency and community service providers.
- Case transitions include the relevant/appropriate participants and are transparent, planned, timely, clearly communicated and documented. Case transitions may include stages of a case, case transfers, or changes of services or involved participants.
- Information sharing should occur through an active exchange of information to benefit assessments, case planning, and service delivery while ensuring confidentiality and protecting private information.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL

- State, county, and tribal staff uses data and information collection, along with monitoring efforts, to develop strategic plans and drive service delivery. Service delivery efforts must strive for equitable treatment of all service recipients and good client outcomes. Child welfare agencies use data to drive system improvement efforts. Data collection includes consumer input and feedback through planned surveys and focus groups.

- State, County, and Tribal partners will strive to align strategic support systems such as human resources, training, quality assurance, and information technology to the standards, values, and desired outcomes of the practice model.
- Collectively, state, county and tribal partners recognize that these standards of practice can only be achieved through a well trained, professional workforce with manageable workloads. All efforts will be made to recruit and retain the best possible staff for the children, youth, families, and communities we serve.
- The child welfare system has an overall staff development plan that addresses initial and ongoing staff development. This would include competencies, skill, knowledge, abilities and values needed to carry out duties related to child safety, permanency and well being.
- Key decisions are structured to increase consistency and accuracy, seeking to identify solutions that are child centered and family focused. Staff are provided tools and training necessary to support consistent and accurate decisions at key times in the life of a case.
- The Child Welfare system assesses the strengths and needs of their community and partners with local providers to develop services for the identified needs of at risk children, youth, and families.
- Services provided should be continuously monitored to assure that those services the family receives align with the values and principles put forth in an agency practice model.

### **Practice Model Skills**

Assessing- Continually collecting information about the issues that need to be addressed and evaluating the relevance of the information. This discovery process includes consideration of strengths, capabilities, willingness, and availability of resources for achieving safety, permanence, and well being.

Decision Making- Utilizing knowledge and information to make a credible decision to move a situation along. This may include bringing others in to assist in developing solutions and striving to build consensus.

Communicating- Communicating in a reciprocal manner. Communications should be clear, concise, accurate, timely, culturally sensitive, and understandable in verbal, non-verbal, written, and electronic formats. Communication will be open, non-judgmental, and respectful.

Engaging- Demonstrating respectful and meaningful collaboration including looking at the situation from each person's point of view, ensuring each person a voice, listening to their areas of concern, identifying and acknowledging their strengths, and including them in setting realistic mutually acceptable goals.

Organizing- Managing the demands of the job to achieve desired outcomes by:

- Completing timely, clear, concise documentation
- Managing time, including planning and prioritizing
- Managing information
- Demonstrating flexibility and adaptability
- Managing workload including: organizing and conducting meetings, knowing and ably accessing resources, and organizing information so that it is accessible and understandable.

**Desired Outcomes of the Practice Model:**

As a result of the development, implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement of the Colorado practice model, the following outcomes are expected to occur:

**FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES:**

- Safety, permanence, and well being for children and youth are achieved using family engagement practices.
- Families, including relatives and other kin, are engaged in the actions necessary to assure their children/youth's safety, permanence, and well being.
- Families are strengthened, empowered and have the skills and knowledge to access community resources resulting in positive exits from the child welfare system. In addition, families will see the system as a supportive resource.
- Families will receive high quality, evidence informed services based on their individual needs. Casework practice will reflect values described in the practice model resulting in children, youth, and families being safe in their own home or in temporary out of home care. High quality practice will be administered consistently across the state.
- Services are restorative, resulting in healing for families and empowering children, youth, and families to achieve their goals and dreams.

**FOR CHILD WELFARE STAFF**

- Safety of children and youth is paramount as child welfare staff perform their job functions.

- Child welfare staff will demonstrate an understanding of protocol and practices gained through training and professional supervision and have the resources, tools, and workload to perform effectively.
- Supervisors will have a model of practice to support them as they develop staff and oversee work.
- Caseworkers feel empowered, supported, and valued as they perform their jobs

#### FOR THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM AND THE COMMUNITIES IT SERVES

- The child welfare system will self assess, self correct, have effective communication, demonstrating a state-county partnership and unified system with singular message. Good practice occurring in counties will be replicated in other parts of the state.
- Practice and system change are data informed and quality assurance driven and there is sufficient support for each county resulting in consistency and maximum effectiveness for each county. Counties will have the ability to emphasize prevention work in order to achieve the vision.
- The public view of the child welfare system is improved and the public is informed as to the good work that happens. The roles and responsibilities of the child welfare system are clear to the public, partners, and stakeholders.

## Glossary of Terms for the Colorado Practice Model

**Term defined specifically by the Practice Model Workgroup for the purposes of their work:**

### Consistency in practice

- For the purpose of the practice model design workgroup, it was agreed that consistency across the state would result from practices based in a shared set of vision, mission, values and principles, standards, and desired outcomes.

### Child welfare system

- **The internal system-** County and state staff whose behaviors and actions we are trying to impact, including field staff at the state and county level, and administrators/managers at the state and county level. Additional individuals who are considered part of the “internal system,” include those involved in strategic support functions that directly impacts the internal work of the organization; these include human resources, information technology, quality assurance, and training
- **The child welfare system as a whole** is a broad and all inclusive list of partners and stakeholders that impact outcomes for children, youth, and families in our community. It is hoped that this practice model will inspire holistic practice that includes improved partnerships with all of these system members.

### Culturally competent or responsive

- Understanding and responding to children, youth, and families within the context of their unique culture.

### Data informed

- Data is defined as individual facts, statistics or items of information. For the purposes of the practice model workgroup, data is broadly defined and could include but is not limited to data from automated reporting systems, statistics and reports, direct observations, interviews, self-reports, research, surveys and case or record reviews. It is recommended that data will be the foundation for decision making and planning.

### Restorative

- Activities, services, or interventions that are healing or recuperative, with the goal of strengthening and returning an individual to an original positive state of being.

## **General terms**

### Evidence informed

- Evidence-based practice Involves identifying, assessing, and implementing strategies that are supported by scientific research as being effective in improving outcomes for children and families. In child welfare practice, evidence-based practices are those that have strong research design, evidence of significant positive effects, sustained effects, and capacity for replication. (ACF Information Gateway)

### Implementation

- A specified set of activities designed to put into practice a policy, activity, or program of known dimensions. Implementation processes are purposeful and defined in sufficient detail such that independent observers can detect the presence and strength of these “specified activities.” (National Implementation Research Network)

### Permanency

- A legally permanent, nurturing family for every child and youth. As defined in the Child and Family Services Reviews, a child in foster care is determined to have achieved permanency when any of the following occurs: (1) The child is discharged from foster care to reunification with his or her family, either a parent or other relative; (2) the child is discharged from foster care to a legally finalized adoption; or (3) the child is discharged from foster care to the care of a legal guardian. (ACF Information Gateway)

### Quality assurance driven

- The processes and measures an organization uses to determine that its products or services measure up to the standards established for them. In child welfare agencies, quality assurance programs may contain one or more of the following components: a client information/data system, a peer review system, and a case record review system. All State child welfare agencies are required to develop and implement standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children. They are also required to operate an identifiable quality assurance system that evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates implemented program improvement measures. (ACF Information Gateway)

## Stakeholders

- Any party interested in public child welfare. Includes the following but is not limited to: advocates, community, courts (national/state/local), federal government, general public, juvenile justice, legislature, media, mental health providers, national associations, national organizations, non-profit providers, other public agencies and systems (e.g. education, TANF, food stamps), police/law enforcement, private providers, substance abuse providers, tribes, universities. The definition of stakeholders does not include children, youth, families, kin, caregivers or staff. (Positioning Public Child Welfare Guidance, APHSA)

### Colorado State Department of Human Services (CDHS):

- The CDHS consists of numerous divisions that administer a broad range of child serving programs. Divisions include: Developmental Disabilities, Youth Corrections, Behavioral Health and Child Welfare. CDHS also has the responsibility for additional children, youth and family services and programs including: aging and adult, veterans, child care licensing, and public assistance programs (with the exception of Medicaid) for the state of Colorado. (Adapted from CDHS 2009 Statewide Assessment).

### Colorado Division of Child Welfare Services:

- The Colorado Division of Child Welfare Services maintains responsibility for all services delivered by county departments intended to protect children from harm and to assist families in caring for and protecting their children. The delivery of child welfare services in Colorado is through a state-supervised, county administered system. State supervision includes planning, program and policy development, training and monitoring the system. Direct supervision of state and administration of child welfare services is the responsibility of counties. (CDHS 2009 Statewide Assessment)

### County Departments of Human/Social Services:

- Colorado operates a state-supervised, county-administered social services system. 64 county departments of human/social services administer all protective services through child and family services divisions/departments. There are 10 large counties, 23 mid-sized counties and 31 small counties. (Adapted from CDHS 2009 Child and Family Services Plan)