



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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The mission of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency is to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and to support families.

Guiding Principles

4-25-2011

Under the umbrella of the agency's mission, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency operates within twelve guiding principles. These principles are consistent with our goals of safety, permanency, and well-being and are our prevailing philosophy as we serve children and families.

1. The health and safety of each child is paramount. Put safety first. Children must not remain in homes that are unsafe nor return home without safety measures in place.
2. Safety, permanency, and well-being are considered simultaneously throughout a child's involvement in the child welfare system. Case assessment and planning identify the services needed to achieve safety, permanency, and well being, regardless of whether a child is living at home or in an out-of-home placement.
3. Services are individualized. The case assessment, case plan, and services must be customized to the individual needs of the child and family. Assessment must drive decision-making to ensure appropriate and effective service delivery.
4. Services focus on strengths of the family and empower families. Families possess certain inherent strengths and opportunities which, under favorable conditions, they can draw upon when problems emerge. The knowledge and experiences of family members are valuable in assessing, planning, decision-making, and delivering services. Families who feel valued and respected are empowered to care for themselves and make changes in their own lives.

5. Services are culturally competent. Assessing, planning, decision-making, and delivering services must occur within the cultural context of the family. The child welfare service system must operate in a way that is compatible with the customs, behaviors, and beliefs of members of distinct groups. It must respect diversity in culture, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, affectional orientation, and economic status. It is the practice of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency to create welcoming and inclusive environments for all youth. CP&P prohibits discrimination based on an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The CP&P practice of inclusion extends to service delivery. Therefore, heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and inter-sexed youth are provided with equal access to all available services, including placement, care, and treatment.
6. Decisions are timely and consider the child's sense of time. A consistent, nurturing parent-child relationship is critical to a child's identity, self-esteem, and ability to trust and form relationships with others. A child's sense of time is different from an adult's sense of time. Case practice decisions, particularly related to placement, must be timely and take a child's sense of time into consideration.
7. The birth family is important to the child. Children remain emotionally connected to their birth families, even when they are living apart or parental rights have been terminated. The child welfare service system must respect the child's positive sense of his/her birth family, regardless of the family history or the long-term case plan for the child.
8. Collaboration is key to effective services. The child welfare agency, on its own, cannot meet the challenges to prevent maltreatment and provide children with a safe and permanent living situation. Broad-based, multi-disciplinary collaboration is essential to ensure effective assessment, planning, and services for children and their families.
9. Children, birth families, relatives, and foster/adoptive families are respected. The child welfare service delivery system must respect the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. Children and families have a right to be offered help with their problems or situations in a non-judgmental and respectful manner.
10. Accountability is outcome-based. Client and system outcomes, rather than process information, provide better measures of performance. Establishing benchmarks for success helps to measure whether change is occurring.
11. Resources are redirected based on outcomes and changing needs. Assessment of strengths and needs must be ongoing, not "one-time only."

The child welfare service delivery system requires the flexibility to re-design services in response to measured outcomes, and to meet the changing needs of the children and families served.

12. Staff competency is critical to effective services. The child welfare service delivery system must ensure that staff is adequately trained and receives appropriate supports to enable the effective use of case practice knowledge and skills. Each staff member must continually evaluate his/her ability to deliver effective child welfare services. A supervisor is available to provide guidance in this continuing effort.

**Guiding Principles When Domestic Violence and Child Abuse/Neglect Co-Occur
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When domestic violence co-occurs with child abuse or neglect, see [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100](#), Domestic Violence.