

**Los Angeles County Shared Foundations of Practice**  
***Departments of Children and Family Service, Mental Health and Probation***

**Shared Core Practice Model: Framework and Vision**

The Departments of Children and Family Services, Mental Health and Probation developed a shared model of practice to better integrate services and supports for children, youth, families and communities. Our purpose is to provide responsive, efficient, and high-quality services that promote safety, permanence, well-being and self-sufficiency. Our approach and commitment are grounded in the crucial elements of community partnership, teamwork, cultural competence, respect, accountability, continuous quality improvement and best practice.

**Our Values and Guiding Principles**

**Value: Child Protection & Safety**

**Guiding Principle:** All children and youth have the right to live in a safe environment, free from abuse, and neglect. We work to achieve this without an over-reliance on out-of-home care and while ensuring the safety of children and youth temporarily residing in these settings.

**Value: Permanence: Lifelong, Loving, Families**

**Guiding Principle:** Children and youth need and are entitled to a safe, nurturing and permanent family environment ideally in their own home. When temporary out-of-home placement is necessary, it is time-limited, child needs-specific, the least restrictive, most family-like environment, with appropriate cultural and community supports, and focused on permanence and/or rehabilitation.

**Value: Strengthening Child & Family Well-Being and Self Sufficiency**

**Guiding Principle:** Identifying the unique strengths of children, youth and families allows services and supports to be individualized and tailored. All interactions and interventions with children, youth and families must be responsive to the trauma and loss they may have experienced.

**Value: Child Focused Practice**

**Guiding Principle:** Integrated assessments that focus on the child's individualized, underlying needs and strengths, provide the best guide to effective intervention and lasting change.

**Value: Family-Centered Practice**

**Guiding Principle:** All families have unique strengths. They deserve a voice and choice in decisions about how to best meet their children's needs. This approach helps us develop and implement strategies that create long-lasting change and promotes self-sufficiency.

**Value: Community-Based Partnerships**

**Guiding Principle:** Services and interventions for children, youth and family are delivered collaboratively by agencies, providers, community and informal supports (extended family, faith-based organizations, cultural and community groups and others) in order to meet each family's needs.

**Value: Cultural Competency**

**Guiding Principle:** We maintain an attitude of cultural humility; recognizing that the cultural, ethnic and spiritual roots of the child, youth and family are a valuable part of their identity. We actively seek to reduce racial disproportionality and to eliminate disparities within the many systems that touch the lives of the families we serve. Our service delivery approach seeks to honor and respect the beliefs and values of all families.

**Value: Promising Practice and Continuous Learning**

**Guiding Principle:** We commit to developing an environment of continuous listening and learning and to ensuring that policy and practice decisions are based on reliable data as well as evidence, research and feedback.

**The Practice Wheel: Our Shared Core Practice Model in Action** - Our values and guiding principles are applied through a set of practice activities, best depicted by the Practice Wheel.



**Engaging** is the practice of creating trustful working relationships with the child and their family by increasing their participation, validating their unique cultural perspective, and hearing their voice and choice. This foundation facilitates early and on-going discovery of all parents, siblings, extended family, tribal, cultural and community connections that can help and leads to honest, supportive, inquiry and planning to address concerns and needs in the areas of safety, permanence well-being and self-sufficiency. The central focus is ensuring the child and family are active participants in identifying the child's needs and in finding solutions to their issues and concerns with child safety, juvenile delinquency, educational achievement, permanence, well-being and self-sufficiency.

**Operational Principles:**

- Children and families are more likely to enter into a helping relationship when individuals involved have developed trusting relationships.
- The quality of these relationships is the most important foundation for engaging the child and family in a process of change.
- Children and families are more likely to pursue and sustain a plan or course of action that they have voice and choice in designing.

**Teaming** is the practice of building and strengthening the child and family's support system, whose members meet, communicate, plan together, and coordinate their efforts in a unified fashion to address critical issues/needs. Effective teaming continues the process of engaging the family and generating support for family members and older children to discuss and build on strengths and address needs.

**Operational Principles:**

- Decisions about interventions are more effective when made by the family team.
- Coordination of the activities of everyone involved is essential and is most effective and efficient when it occurs in regular face-to-face meetings of the family team.
- Children and youth are most successful in achieving independence when they have established relationships with caring adults who will support them over time.

**Assessing** is the practice of collaborating with a family's team to obtain information about the significant events impacting children and families and the underlying needs that are bringing about their situation. It is an ongoing process that includes the identification of underlying needs (including child and family trauma needs), and helps determine the availability and capability of resources needed to make progress.

**Operational Principles:**

- When children and families see that their strengths are recognized, respected, and affirmed, they are more likely to rely on them as a foundation for change.
- Assessments that focus on underlying needs provide the best guide for intervention.
- Youth and family must be included in planning and, as much as possible, should make choices about services and interventions.
- Planning for safety, stability, and permanency should fully include educational plans and services for children and youth.

**Planning** is the practice and process of tailoring plans to build on strengths and protective capacities in order to meet individual needs with each child and family. **Intervening** is the implementation of planned activities and practices that decrease risk, provide for safety, heal trauma, enhance normative behaviors, and promote permanence, well-being and self-sufficiency. Plans evolve and must be flexible to respond to a family's emerging issues and needs.

**Operational Principles:**

- Children do best when they live safely with their family or kin or, if neither is possible, with a foster family. Siblings should be placed together.
- Group or residential care should never be long-term and should lead to permanence and/or community reentry.
- Children receive care when they need it, not when they qualify for it.
- A menu of seamless (non-categorical) services and resources should be provided and the family's informal helping system is central to supporting sustaining progress.
- Safe reunification occurs more rapidly and permanently when visiting between parents and children takes place in the most normalized environment possible.

**Tracking, adapting and transitioning** is the practice of evaluating the effectiveness of the plan, assessing circumstances and resources, reworking the plan, celebrating successes, adapting to challenges and organizing after-care supports with children and families.

**Operational Principles:**

- Services should be flexible enough to adapt to the unique strengths and needs of each child and family and should be delivered where the child and family reside.
- Successful transition from formal agency involvement occurs when services and supports are in place to ensure long-term stability (including post permanency supports for children and families).
- Meeting the needs of children and youth to promote emotional well-being and self-sufficiency requires collaboration and shared accountability especially to ensure youth and families are supported no matter their point of entry - be it child welfare, juvenile delinquency or the mental health system.