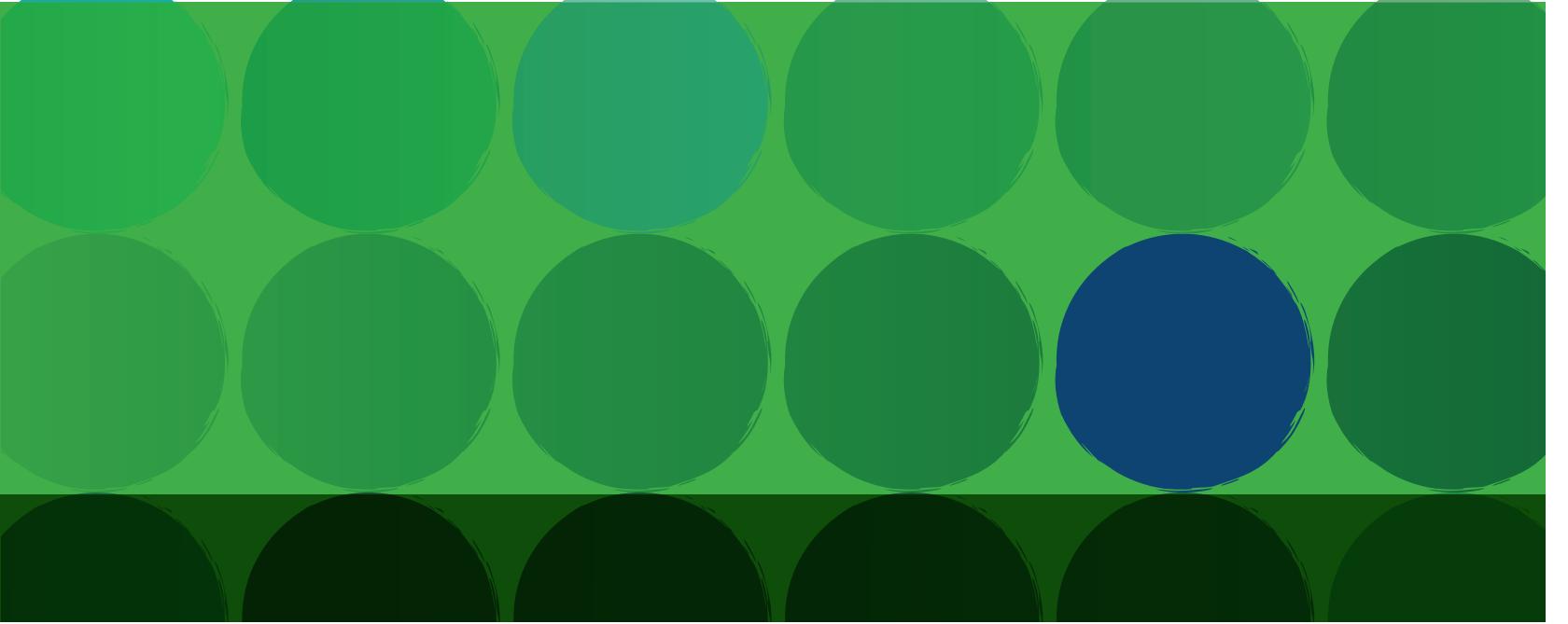




AT ONE TABLE

A FRAMEWORK FOR GUIDING CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

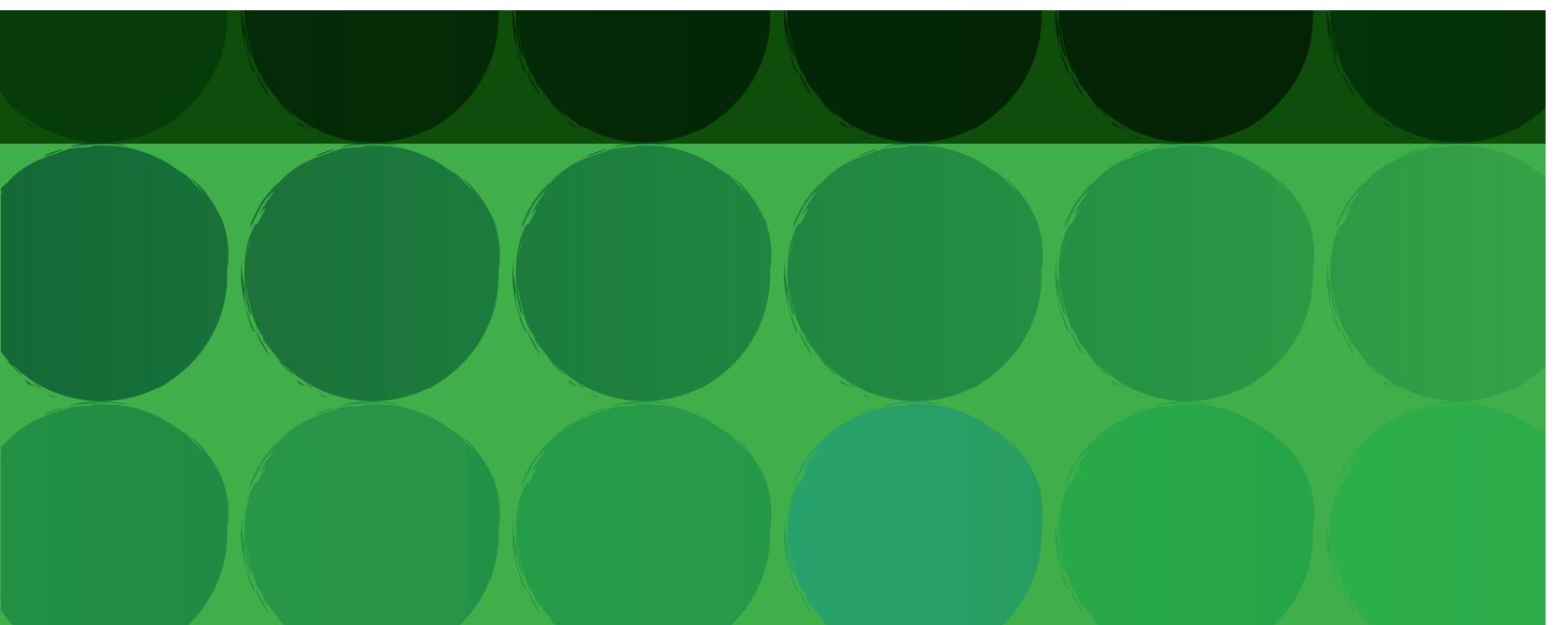


VISION

Every child has a safe and stable family every day.

DCFS PRIORITIES

The Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has collaboratively designed a practice framework to guide the top three priorities of the agency.

1. Safely stabilize and preserve families; and if that is not possible ...
 2. Safely care for children and quickly reunify children to their families of origin. If children must be removed from the home, relative and fictive kin caregivers will be considered immediately and throughout the entire engagement with the family; and if reunification is not possible ...
 3. Safely support child permanency, well-being, and development of culturally safe, lifelong relationships.
- 

FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Several years ago, the Arkansas Division of Children & Family Services (DCFS) began a journey to strengthen the child welfare system's approach to serving children and families by implementing safety organized practice (SOP). Safety organized practice engages families, their networks, and stakeholders as collaborative partners in making decisions about their children's safety. We worked with partners across the child welfare system and created an opportunity to build on that collaboration by clearly articulating the vision and values that serve as the heart of our work. We recognized that DCFS cannot support families alone and collaboration with a family's network and DCFS' community partners are necessary for sustainability. At One Table is Arkansas's practice model representing the culmination of our collective vision that every child deserves a safe, stable, and nurturing family every day.

This overview of the practice model illustrates how we work every day to translate our vision and values into DCFS' practice with children and families by providing supervisors, managers, and field staff with concrete examples of the practices that best reflect our child welfare culture. At One Table offers a metric that can be used to identify what is working well, what needs improvement, and to determine next steps so that we are continuously evolving and improving as an organization. I anticipate this practice model will enhance our ability to provide quality, consistent case work throughout our areas and programs, and ensure that any new child welfare innovations we adopt align with our vision, priorities, and values.

In the following pages, you'll discover we've grounded the practice model in our belief that our relationships are the foundation of all our work. I hope you'll recognize how you are already demonstrating the vision, values, and practices of At One Table in your daily interactions. I also hope the practice model makes it easier to articulate our work.

I want to thank each of you for contributing to the development of At One Table. We have gathered feedback from all levels of leadership and staff spanning the division's programs and areas, and gained invaluable insight from families, youth, stakeholders, and community partners. Together, your collective commitment to building a system that prepares children and families to grow and thrive shaped this practice model. By clearly articulating what to expect from DCFS and our partners, we're confident that we can help families become safer and stronger together.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Wright

Director, Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services



We value the importance of meaningful relationships with children, youth, and families, and their extended networks.

VALUE 1

RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES ARE THE FOUNDATION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Recognize that enhancing safety for children and youth in the home is the top priority for everyone involved.
2. Recognize and appreciate the family's culture.
3. Build shared understanding and agreement through family engagement.
4. Maximize family strengths and build on their skills, abilities, and connections.
5. Partner with the whole family, including relatives and fictive kin, to create long-term safety, ongoing permanency, and well-being.
6. Honor and incorporate the voices of children and youth.
7. Recognize that behavior change and process of achieving change are part of our daily work.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Hold a clear understanding of the definition of safety.
- Engage the family and their network in safety planning to avoid removal of the child from caregivers by using respectful, honest, and transparent communication.
- When removal is necessary, prioritize placement with related or other familiar adults.
- Understand safety-organized practice (SOP), model the principles, and use the tools.
- Ensure that the child/youth's voice is gathered/represented at every meeting to inform key decisions and focus on safety, permanency, and well-being.
- Partner with families to create plans that respect their culture.
- Value family-centered meetings as an engagement tool.
- Continuously focus on how the abuse/neglect impacts the child or youth.
- Acknowledge and respect that the family is the expert about their family and partner with them at every step of the investigative and casework processes.
- Continue to build on the family's existing strengths and use them to mitigate safety threats and provide safety.
- Develop family case plans that reflect behavior-specific details to achieve the safety goal.



KEY WORKER ACTIONS: DO I...

- Use open communication and partner with the child, youth, and family to incorporate their voices?
- Use an SOP approach for engagement and assessment?
- Conduct thorough and timely Structured Decision Making® (SDM) assessments?
- Convene family-centered meetings including children/youth at key decision points?
- Identify family support systems using ecomaps, genograms, or Circles of Safety and Support?
- Use the case plan tool with the family to create a behavior-based family case plan?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: DO I...

- Use SDM® assessments in consultation with workers?
- Monitor open cases for safety assessments and risk level?
- Promote/attend family-centered meetings?
- Use ecomaps, genograms, and Circles of Safety and Support in consultations?
- Use the SOP approach?
- Conduct individual and group supervision, as well as coaching?

KEY AREA LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Review SDM system measures in SafeMeasures®?
- Use the safety/risk matrix?
- Use ecomaps, genograms, and Circles of Safety and Support in consultations?
- Identify practice leadership in the region that focuses on family-centered meetings?
- Use the SOP approach?
- Encourage workers to lift up when families' needs fall outside of policy and procedures to find a solution?
- Conduct individual and group supervision, and coaching?

KEY STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Stay informed on any legislative updates or changes that impact children, youth, and families?
- Keep the field and stakeholders informed and updated on legislative advocacy and updates?
- Create opportunities for families and community partners to share their experience, ideas, and recommendations for changes?
- Maintain transparency in how decisions are made in any implementation process?
- Ensure families have equitable avenues to share their complaints and pursue their grievances, be open to feedback from families on process improvement opportunities, and support local team-level decision making?
- Promote and model SOP strategies (Appreciative Inquiry or solution-focused questions), in my engagement with staff?



We recognize and appreciate the hard work and willing hearts of the resource families to provide excellent parenting. We strive to create partnerships with these families that are characterized by respect and mutual information sharing.

VALUE 2

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH RESOURCE FAMILIES

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Ensure cutting-edge training and supportive services for resource families.
2. Seek and create opportunities for biological families and resource families to communicate and work together for the child/youth's best interests.
3. Provide consistent communication and information sharing.
4. Be accountable and responsive to the cultural values of all families.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Recognize unique needs of resource families.
- Support resource families to continue to expand their knowledge by tailoring training and learning opportunities to their unique needs.
- Provide ongoing assessment of needs and services for resource families.
- Exhibit clearly defined, respectful working relationships with resource families.
- Seek caregiver insight and feedback regarding the child/youth and case decisions.
- Keep child/youth safety, permanency, and well-being at the forefront.
- Discuss permanency with caregivers, resource family, and support networks initially and throughout involvement.
- Use shared decision making, with child/youth voice and well-being at the forefront.
- Engage the caregiver and resource family to bridge the relationship between the two.
- Help resource families understand workers' roles, child welfare laws, and agency policies.



KEY WORKER ACTIONS: DO I...

- Include resource families in family-centered meetings?
- Facilitate a relationship between the resource family, caregivers, and child/ youth's service providers?
- Connect resource families to respite resources, support groups, and mentor families?
- Connect resource families with proper information and education to provide the best health care?
- Use clearly established communication and confidentiality guidelines?
- Create detailed tasks and expectations with resource families to enhance safety, permanency, and well-being?
- Help resource families identify support networks and how they will use those networks?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: DO I...

- Provide feedback to the leadership team on gaps in service and training needs?
- Ensure that workers reach out to resource families to help link them to supportive services?
- Include training information in group supervision and unit meetings?
- Ensure workers are aware of resources for resource families?
- Respond timely to both resource family and worker concerns?
- Guide workers in understanding the confidentiality guide and communication policies?

KEY AREA LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Arrange training that includes applicable skills caregivers can use with children/youth?
- Host events for/with resource families to share and learn from each other?
- Acquire full knowledge of new practices to share with workers?
- Support use of partnerships?
- Ensure access to enough cultural coaching?
- Highlight the confidentiality guide and communication policies for staff?

KEY STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Develop and support community partnerships?
- Seek input from resource families on policy and program development?
- Regularly review and update policies related to resource family needs?
- Provide regular communication and trainings to resource families on new policies, initiatives, and programs?
- Ensure resource families have equitable avenues to share their complaints, pursue their grievances, and be open to feedback on opportunities for process improvement, while also supporting local team-level decision making?



We are committed to enhancing the well-being of children/youth and helping them to identify and develop meaningful relationships and connections in their communities.

VALUE 3

HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND DEVELOP LIFELONG RELATIONSHIPS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Recognize that the optimal place for children is safely in their own homes.
2. If children have to leave the home actively strive to preserve their connections to:
 - Siblings;
 - Family and familiar people;
 - School and community of origin;
 - Culture, religion, and tribal affiliations.
3. Identify living situations that support children and their relationships as soon as work with the family begins.
4. Move toward child permanency every day.
5. Continually focus on children's safety and well-being while they are in their own homes or in our care.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Maintain a holistic view of the child/youth.
- Include and build on a family's strengths and resiliencies in order to maintain children/youth in their own home.
- Continuously assess safety throughout our involvement with children and families.
- Identify ways to lessen trauma to children/youth by using a trauma-informed perspective to promote healing.
- Maintain connections to important people, activities, and cultural traditions in the child/youth's life.
- Value placements with connections to the child/youth and family.
- Consider family culture when assessing permanency.
- Ensure the voice of the child/youth is heard.
- Value the most permanent option for the child/youth, including reunification, adoption, and guardianship.
- Understand and value concurrent planning from day one.
- Establish legal permanency for children/youth, while having other support and lifelong connections in place.
- Value the need to have ongoing holistic needs assessments including developmental, behavioral, educational, dental, medical, psychological, etc.



KEY WORKER ACTIONS: DO I...

- Create goal statements, family case plans, and networks with the family?
- Explain concurrent planning throughout my interactions with the family?
- Immediately establish consistent, planned, and purposeful visits with caregivers and siblings?
- Hold a Team Decision Making™ (TDM) meeting where applicable (or discuss with supervisor/designee) immediately when separation is being considered?
- Conduct ongoing assessment of the child/youth's placement for safety, permanency, and well-being, including cultural identity and preservation?
- Advocate for child/youth's educational stability and success?
- Actively value and support locating family/fictive kin first for placement?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: DO I...

- Inquire about family and safety network participation in family-centered meetings?
- Model a solution-focused approach?
- Assess for least restrictive level of placement, most natural environment for family time, and concurrent planning?
- Ensure workers are capturing family history and culture in case documentation?
- Attend TDM™ meetings where applicable?
- Ensure that a permanency safety consult was held and action items were completed?
- Explore the need for interdivisional staffing?

KEY AREA LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Emphasize the importance and value of family participation?
- Advocate for needed services?
- Model a solution-focused approach?
- Encourage and foster concepts of preserving connections throughout the life of our work with the family?
- Facilitate relationships between units and areas?
- Ensure that permanency safety consults are held appropriately and on a timely basis?
- Elevate systemic challenges and barriers to the statewide steering/implementation team?

KEY STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Create opportunities for all to be heard in maintaining meaningful connections for those we serve?
- Creating learning or coaching opportunities on the importance of lifelong connections?
- Creating and ensuring guidelines, policies and procedures, and programs are in place to support the development and maintenance of lifelong connections?
- Educate stakeholders and community providers on the importance of lifelong connections for children/youth?
- Advocate for necessary changes in regard to systemic barriers, (legislation, court system, sister agencies)?



VALUE 4

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Share responsibility with the community to ensure community resources are accountable, accessible, responsive, and culturally sensitive.
2. Identify and strengthen informal and formal resources in every community.
3. Ensure services are evidence-informed and continuously evaluated.
4. Recognize that families are a resource for one another and the community.

We value the importance of building and maintaining trusting relationships with partners to support the priorities and values of this framework.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Establish and maintain collaboration with schools, public health, public safety, and other community partners.
- Hold a shared vision for safety, permanency, and well-being among staff and community partners.
- Incorporate the family's voice in identifying formal and informal resources.
- Look for innovative ways to use existing community resources.
- Assess family's unique strengths and needs and refer to appropriate evidence-informed programs.
- Recognize that families have extended family and informal supports (friends, fictive kin) in their communities.
- Continuously share best and emerging practices, techniques, policies, and tools that impact families with community partners.
- Recognize the family as their own expert and encourage and support the family in working together with their community.
- Maintain open communication and transparency with families and community partners.
- Initiate and cultivate ongoing relationships with community partners.



KEY WORKER ACTIONS: DO I...

- Solicit the expertise of community partners on how best to support families in their communities?
- Consider culture and identity when referring to services?
- Include community partners in family-centered meetings?
- Ensure support networks and aftercare plans are working before the family's case is closed?
- Have open and ongoing communication with community partners?
- Use ecomaps, genograms, or Circles of Safety and Support in family-centered meetings to highlight connections?
- Make every effort to maintain familial connections?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: DO I...

- Regularly meet with community partners to build on strengths and address barriers?
- Monitor and inquire about the delivery of culturally responsive services?
- Ensure that safety networks have been tested and are working?
- Encourage workers to seek out participation of community partners in family-centered meetings?
- Attend trainings in order to be knowledgeable about resources and to keep them current?
- Value the family and informal supports as a resource for creating safety?

KEY AREA LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Facilitate relationships that foster communication between agency and provider staff?
- Ensure that proper, consistent, and ongoing training occurs?
- Monitor reunification and reentry data and advocate for support network development?
- Support informal and formal partnerships and promote new partnerships?
- Advocate for the use of technology in service delivery and evaluation?
- Monitor and inquire about the delivery of culturally responsive services?

KEY STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Cultivate relationships with community partners and other stakeholders to address systemic barriers?
- Ensure that contracted services are culturally responsive, evidence-informed, equitable, of quality, and aligned with the DCFS practice model?
- Provide opportunities for meaningful engagement and feedback loops with staff, community partners, and people with lived experience?
- Provide and create opportunities for staff to participate in trainings and build their knowledge on best practices and community resources?
- Share data with community partners to develop shared understanding of strengths and needs to improve outcomes?
- Keep community partnerships informed of legislative changes?



VALUE 5

A STRONG WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LEGAL SYSTEM

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Always maintain primary focus on children's best interests.
2. Ensure that all parties have mutual understanding of, and respect for, one another's roles, the law, and the rights due to children, youth, and families.
3. Seek collaborative decisions and family case planning.
4. Regularly work toward efforts to improve court processes to ensure they are supportive of mutual goals.
5. Collaborate with law enforcement to ensure safety and effective service coordination.

We value
respectful working
relationships
with courts,
attorneys, Court
Appointed Special
Advocates, and
law enforcement
agencies.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Collaborate with partners in the legal system to minimize multiple interviews.
- Partake in cross-agency education regarding practice, policy, and child abuse laws.
- Advocate for the least restrictive care necessary to provide safety and meet the child/youth's needs.
- Continually assess that a child/youth's legal and personal rights are being met.
- Seek input and value legal partner perspectives.
- Include Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) in communication with other legal partners.
- Value teamwork and coordination of investigations throughout the life of the case.



KEY WORKER ACTIONS: DO I...

- Include legal partners in planning to minimize trauma?
- Follow policies and protocols regarding permanency efforts, placement, and family case plan goal changes?
- Consult with OCC at key case decision points?
- Use Pub 357 to support investigation determinations?
- Document open and clear communication with our legal partners throughout the life of the case?
- Submit timely court reports that follow court timelines and policy, and prepare for court proceedings?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: DO I...

- Support relationship building with legal partners and staff?
- Help workers to prepare for a multidisciplinary team, TDM™ meeting, or case consultation using the Collaborative Assessment and Planning (CAP) Framework?
- Model clear and responsive communication?
- Discuss agency policies and procedures with workers?
- Attend cross-training with legal partners?
- Monitor timely and accurate completion and submission of court reports?

KEY AREA LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Support relationship building with legal partners and staff?
- Ensure law enforcement liaisons are available in all counties?
- Ensure all counties have access to trauma-informed training opportunities?
- Ensure all counties participate in cross-training with legal partners?
- Attend legal partners' meetings?
- Keep up-to-date on policies?
- Build relationships with legal partners?

KEY STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Participate in statewide legal conferences?
- Ensure child welfare is discussed in legal conferences?
- Work with a court improvement program coordinator to improve collaborative efforts?
- Promote better collaboration for dual system-involved youth?
- Pursue necessary legislative changes?
- Promote and train on legislative updates for child welfare professionals and stakeholders?



VALUE 6

A WORKPLACE CULTURE CHARACTERIZED BY REFLECTION, APPRECIATION, AND ONGOING LEARNING

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Foster a proactive workplace culture of reflection, responsiveness, and shared responsibility.
2. Recognize that how we do the work is as important as the work we do.
3. Pursue ongoing learning and professional development that include respectful mentoring and coaching relationships.
4. Recognize and appreciate differences.
5. Ensure a manageable and equitable workload and up-to-date technology to allow for quality work.
6. Use real-time data across all levels of staff to guide organization-wide decisions in support of continuous quality improvement (CQI).
7. Use practice model values to shape work culture.
8. Recognize and address secondary traumatic stress and provides opportunities for staff to build resiliency and maintain a work/life balance.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Be knowledgeable of practice model mission, vision, and values.
- Use practice behaviors to guide your practice with families and partners.
- Value CQI.
- Understand that learning and development happen throughout your career.
- Suspend assumptions and hold a spirit of curiosity.
- Willingly share accomplishments.
- Appreciate teamwork and a multidisciplinary approach to practice.
- Strive for transparency in the workplace.
- Value the use of data to guide improvements for children, youth, and families.
- Value yourself as a professional and a role model.
- Use opportunities to build resiliency, practice self-care, and maintain a work/life balance.
- Promote worker support and healing activities when critical incidents occur.

We are a learning organization that values the well-being of staff at all levels. We value authentic, strength-based leadership that builds engagement and shared accountability.



KEY WORKER ACTIONS: DO I...

- Actively participate in ongoing SOP learning and coaching?
- Engage in ongoing self-evaluation and assessment?
- Conduct a warm hand-off at case transfer to help the family and next worker continue to be successful?
- Share my strengths/talents and professional development goals with my supervisor?
- Participate in training and coaching activities?
- Use strength-based leadership?
- Use SafeMeasures to guide practice?
- Practice self-care and set boundaries to create a healthy work/life balance?
- Engage in practices that demonstrate a recognition and appreciation of differences?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: DO I...

- Promote an open door policy?
- Use Appreciative Inquiry and recognize staff strengths?
- Demonstrate commitment to ongoing learning and professional development for myself and staff?
- Share updates to policies, practice, resources, findings from CQI projects, and cutting-edge research?
- Use SafeMeasures as a resource for coaching staff?
- Participate in training and coaching activities?
- Actively participate in ongoing learning and coaching in SOP?
- Use strengths-based, facilitative leadership?
- Support a culture of self-care and setting boundaries for a healthy work/life balance?
- Promote continued awareness and appreciation of diversity?
- Provide culturally responsive supervision and coaching activities?

KEY AREA LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Highlight times when warm hand-offs worked well and strategies for conducting warm hand-offs?
- Use strengths-based leadership?
- Actively participate in ongoing SOP learning and coaching?
- Highlight what is working well in the unit, county, area by filming and sharing Stories From the Field?
- Allow the opportunity to receive feedback from staff on training needs?
- Demonstrate commitment to ongoing learning and professional development for myself and staff?
- Support and model the practice framework?
- Models behaviors in Practice Model?
- Demonstrate leadership in using SafeMeasures to guide practice?
- Share updates to policies, practice, resources, findings from CQI projects, and cutting-edge research?
- Promote continued awareness and appreciation of diversity?
- Model culturally responsive training and coaching strategies?
- Support a culture of self-care and setting boundaries for a healthy work/life balance?

KEY STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIONS: DO I...

- Demonstrate commitment to ongoing learning and professional development for myself and staff?
- Actively participate in ongoing learning and coaching in SOP?
- Use strengths-based leadership?
- Share updates to policies, practice, resources, findings from CQI projects, and cutting-edge research?
- Use SafeMeasures to identify opportunities for staff professional development?
- Use Appreciative Inquiry and recognize staff strengths?
- Advocate for legislation that supports staff professional development?
- Ensure support for the local county offices when critical incidents occur?
- Promote a culture of transparency in decision making?
- Support a culture of self-care and setting boundaries for a healthy work/life balance?



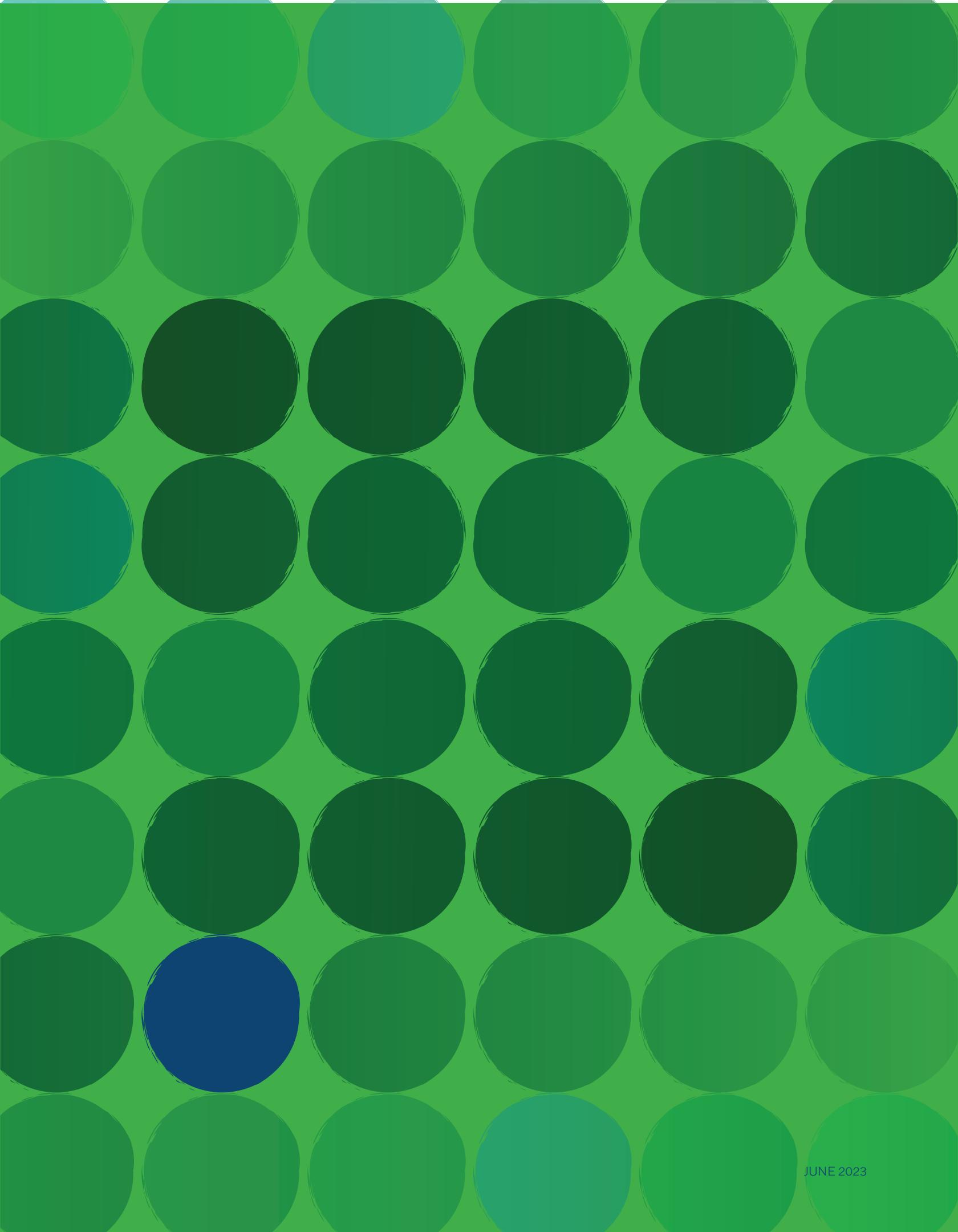
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

CQI supports the practice of Appreciative Inquiry by putting focus on the areas where we are doing well. CQI can help identify when staff are doing well and help us extend those practices throughout our system. CQI relies on shared responsibility for data and outcomes at all staff levels. Workers, supervisors, and managers all have the responsibility to input quality data and to know about data and outcomes. CQI also helps us have more transparency by partnering with families, children, youth, and other key stakeholders on how to improve our system, using their feedback as another means to evaluate our work.

A CQI approach focuses on identifying the root causes of concerns or contributing factors to strengths, developing interventions to reduce or eliminate these causes or improve upon strengths, and taking action to correct the processes with a continuous feedback loop to make and maintain positive changes in policy and case practice. CQI ownership is essential at all levels of an organization and it is necessary for the entire child welfare system to place a high value on teamwork, collaboration, and communication.

CQI will help us identify the extent to which worker practice aligns with the practice model and will be evaluated using the following scale.

- **NOVICE** – There is evidence that the worker has “tried out” or begun to use the tool but may not have implemented it properly.
- **EMERGING** – There is evidence that the worker is using the tool or practice but lacks accuracy or consistency.
- **ACCOMPLISHED** – There is evidence that the worker uses the tools and practices them consistently and accurately.
- **DISTINGUISHED** – There is evidence that the worker has integrated the tools and practices into their practice as a way of doing business.
- **MASTER** – There is evidence that in addition to practicing integrated work, the worker is creative with the tools in difficult or problematic situations or takes the “next steps” of follow-up and evaluation.



JUNE 2023