

# Minnesota Child Welfare

a framework for competent  
child welfare practice



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# Introduction

Child welfare professionals are required to possess a sophisticated set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to provide effective services to children and families. In Minnesota, child welfare practice is guided by a shared framework comprised of outcomes, values, principles and skills necessary to promote child safety, permanency and well-being. This framework-, called the Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Framework, has been developed to include

a robust set of competencies required for quality practice among front-line child welfare professionals and their supervisors. The Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Competencies reflect specific knowledge and skills necessary for culturally-responsive, trauma-informed, and developmentally-based work with children, families, communities, and tribes across Minnesota.

# How to use this compendium for practice

This document contains the overarching framework that guides child welfare practice in Minnesota, applicable across the diversity of county and tribal practice, that directs the work of supervisory and frontline professionals. The competencies in this document, which flow directly from the Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Framework, have been vigorously vetted by interdisciplinary stakeholders across the state and are designed to meet the ever-changing needs of children, families, communities and tribes. As such, the Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Competencies are a living document that will be modified as research, best practice, and community-informed ways of knowing emerge. While competencies hold professionals to a specific standard of practice, they also provide a roadmap for growth and advanced professional development.

The Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Framework provides practitioners with an organizing structure from which they can refine their day to day practice. The competencies operationalize the values,

knowledge and skills required to effectively practice child welfare in Minnesota. Competency statements are not intended to reflect specific practice or policy guidance, but are broadly stated with the recognition that there are numerous activities that can be used to achieve and measure each competency. At the end of each competency statement is the designation of knowledge (K) or skill (S). These designations indicate whether mastery of each competency is rooted in knowledge, skill, or both (see the key below).

- Key:**
- (K) – Knowledge statement** - This competency addresses knowledge and conceptual mastery
  - (S) – Skill Statement** - This competency addresses skills and experiential mastery
  - (K&S) – Knowledge & Skills** - This competency addresses both conceptual and experiential mastery

It is recognized and reflected in this document, that child welfare work with American Indian families, communities, and tribes requires a unique set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Competencies

throughout this document were constructed in partnership with this understanding. Deliberate training to equip workers and supervisors with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to support American Indian families in making change to enhance parenting and maintain safety for children are reflected throughout this compendium.

**Note:** The term *families* is used throughout these competencies and should be regarded as inclusive of biological, kinship, foster, and adoptive family constellations.

## The Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Framework

As Minnesota's child welfare practices evolve, there is continued belief that better results are achieved when children, parents, families, communities and tribes are engaged as partners with the child welfare system in securing the safety, permanency and well-being of their children.

While it is recognized that most parents want to keep their children safe, sometimes circumstances or conditions interfere with their ability to do so. When this occurs, families are best served by interventions that:

- Address immediate safety concerns and ongoing risks of child maltreatment
- Engage their protective capacities
- Recognize and employ family strengths
- Maintain community and cultural connections.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services and its county and tribal partners will support families and communities by engaging in essential partnerships needed to secure positive outcomes for families, children and youth served by the child welfare system. This practice framework provides a common platform to guide this critical work.

## Outcomes

Minnesota's public child welfare system will operate within the Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Framework with a goal of achieving the following outcomes for all families, children and youth who are impacted by this system:

- Children are cared for in safe, permanent, and nurturing families who have the necessary skills and resources to provide for their physical and mental health, behavioral and educational needs.
- Children, youth, and families who encounter Minnesota's child welfare system are supported

to achieve equitable outcomes regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, dis/ability, gender identity, socioeconomic status or tribal status .

- Children are safely maintained in their families, communities, and tribes with connections, culture, and relationships preserved and established.
- Minnesota's public and tribal child welfare staff are supported and given the resources they need to be a diverse, professionally competent workforce.

# Values and Principles

To achieve the outcomes identified above, Minnesota's public child welfare system is committed to, and guided by, the following values and principles:

**Safety:** Child safety is paramount and best achieved through the creation of a safety culture at all levels of the child welfare system. This includes supporting parents, resource families and communities with whom children reside as well as the public and tribal child welfare workers, supervisors and administrators who make up the system.

**Permanency:** Children and youth need and have the right to lifelong nurturing and secure relationships that are provided by families who can meet their specific needs. Efforts to identify and secure permanency for children are continuous and integrated into all stages of involvement with children and families.

**Fostering Connections for Youth:** As youth transition to adulthood, they benefit from services that promote healthy development, academic success and safe living conditions, as well as establish connections to caring adults who will commit to lasting supportive relationships.

**Well-being:** Children's well-being is dependent upon strong families, communities, and the child welfare system meeting their physical, mental, behavioral health, educational and cultural needs.

**Family Focus:** Families are the primary providers for children's needs. The safety and well-being of

children is dependent upon the safety and well-being of all family members.

**Collaboration:** Children, youth and families are best served when public and tribal child welfare staff collaborate with families, communities and tribes through actively listening to them, inviting participation in decision making, understanding and honoring each person or family unique situation, and empowering them to meet their own needs through utilization of family strengths.

**Organizational Improvement:** Minnesota's child welfare system recognizes its responsibilities to children, youth, families and other stakeholders to assess and manage its performance. Public child welfare agencies are committed to continuous learning and improvement through the creation of a safety culture that supports accountability through the opportunity to safely share and learn from successes and failures at all levels of the system. The system also recognizes the need for its practices, service delivery and performance to be easily understood, evaluated, and open to feedback from stakeholders.

**Cultural Responsiveness:** Cultural responsiveness is achieved through understanding and serving children, youth, and families within a context of each unique situation, family and community. This includes, but is not limited to, families' beliefs, values, race, ethnicity, dis/ability, history, tribe, culture, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, and language.

# Skills

The following skills are instrumental in implementation of the practice model at all levels of the child welfare system:

**Engaging:** Effectively joining with families and communities to establish meaningful relationships surrounding child safety, permanency and well-being.

**Assessing:** Gathering information about reported concerns and family needs and evaluating the relevance of that information, as well as identifying family strengths, protective factors and community and tribal resources that may be applied to address those concerns and needs.

**Partnering:** Working in respectful and meaningful collaboration with families and communities to achieve shared goals.

**Planning:** Setting goals, developing strategies, and outlining tasks and schedules to accomplish goals derived from the engaging, assessing and partnering processes.

**Implementing:** Identifying and applying the most effective and culturally relevant services, resources, and processes to meet goals established in the planning stage.

**Evaluating:** Monitoring outcomes of service plans and system programs to determine if the desired goals are being achieved, and if not, to use this information to reconsider goals and strategies developed in the planning phase, or services and resources identified in the implementation stage.

**Advocacy:** Recognizing individual or group needs, providing intervention on behalf of a client or client

group, communicating to decision makers, and initiating actions to secure or enhance a needed service, resource or entitlement.

**Communication:** Effectively sending and receiving information within the relevant cultural context. Methods include verbal, non-verbal, electronic and written communication.

**Cultural Responsiveness:** Interacting with families without making assumptions, respecting and learning from the unique characteristics and strengths of families and tribes while acknowledging and honoring the diversity within and across cultures, and applying these skills to the partnership with a family and tribe, and the options available to them.

**Policy:** Understanding policies that affect delivery of child welfare services and the mission, priorities and resource allocation that guide the development and implantation of policy in public and private non-profit social services.

**Supervision and Management:** Recognizing the importance of the supervisory role in achieving desired service and organizational outcomes for children, youth and families and other stakeholders, in assessing and managing performance, and enhancing the ability to achieve positive outcomes through continuous improvement efforts.

**Professionalism:** Demonstrating professional growth and competence in child welfare while providing respectful and relevant services to children and families within the context of a values-based ethical framework.

# Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Competencies

## FRONTLINE WORKER COMPETENCIES

In order to effectively carry out the Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Framework, Child Welfare professionals must be able to demonstrate a depth of understanding and mastery of skills across a number of different practice areas.

The Minnesota Practice Framework is articulated as a series of competencies which are demonstrated through knowledge (K; knowledge and conceptual mastery) and skill (S; skills and experiential mastery). Competencies have been developed for both the foundation and advanced levels in recognition that knowledge and skills are developed throughout a professional's career as they continue to enhance their knowledge and skills. Competencies specific to working with American Indian families and communities have been integrated throughout the

competency document and integrated in child welfare trainings. It is critical that ALL child welfare workers and supervisors possess knowledge and skills working with American Indian families and tribes. A specific set of training objectives will be used to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for deeply engaged and effective child welfare work with American Indian families and communities. The Minnesota Child Welfare Competencies have been written to reflect the complex and often multi-dimensional nature of child welfare practice. Thus, to demonstrate mastery of a particular competency statement, child welfare workers must be able to integrate numerous skills and areas of knowledge. There are multiple ways workers can demonstrate competency.

# Minnesota Child Welfare Worker Competencies

## 1 CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

*Demonstrating a working knowledge of and sensitivity to the dynamics of diversity, respecting and learning from the unique characteristics and strengths of families and tribes, and applying these concepts and skills to enhance individual and family functioning.*

### Foundation

- 1a.** Demonstrates understanding of how culture characterizes and shapes all children's and families' experiences in receiving child welfare services, further understanding that dimensions of culture include age, class, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, tribal political status, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation. (S)
- 1b.** Become familiar with the children's families' beliefs, values, race, ethnicity, history, tribe, culture, religion, world view and language. (S)
- 1c.** Demonstrates understanding of the influence of culture on human behavior and family dynamics. (S)
- 1d.** Examines own beliefs, values, race, ethnicity, ability, history, tribe, culture, religion and language and demonstrates awareness of own implicit biases, aversive racism, and microaggressions and how these impact their assessments and interventions with families. (K & S)
- 1e.** Demonstrates the capacity for reflection and self-awareness and the ability to take the multiple perspectives of the children, families and other partners involved in cases. (S)
- 1f.** Understands that different cultural communities seek alternatives to termination of parental rights as permanency solutions such as customary adoption and transfer of legal guardianship. (K)
- 1g.** Demonstrates an attitude of respecting and learning from the unique characteristics and strengths of families and tribes while honoring diversity within and across cultures. (S)
- 1h.** Demonstrates basic knowledge of legal, socioeconomic and psychosocial issues facing tribes, immigrants, refugees and/or minority groups and can apply that knowledge in devising culturally competent and effective intervention. (K&S)
- 1i.** Understands the influence and value of the families' traditional/culturally based child rearing practices, especially when considering termination of parental rights and placement preferences for ICWA cases, and uses this knowledge in working with families. (K&S)
- 1j.** Demonstrates understanding of the importance of children and families' primary language and supports its use in providing child welfare assessment and intervention services. (K)
- 1k.** Conducts individualized, developmentally and culturally responsive assessment of all children and families, using appreciative inquiry to elicit story/culture, and to develop an effective intervention plan that is tailored to their needs. (S)
- 1l.** Assesses his/her own knowledge and humility about individuals from specific groups they work with and seeks consultation and expertise to fill gaps. (S)



**1m.** Demonstrates knowledge of the rationale for and requirements of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act, the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act and the Indian Child Welfare Act and applies those provisions in working with families and Tribal representatives. (K&S)

**1n.** Demonstrates knowledge about historical trauma, racism and other forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination pertaining to low-income, non-traditional, and culturally diverse families and uses this knowledge to provide equitable and effective child welfare services. (K&S)

### Advanced

**1o.** Inquires openly about families' behaviors and attitudes related to child safety and avoids making untested assumptions about such behaviors and attitudes. (S)

**1p.** Evaluates critically the relevance of commonly used assessment criteria and intervention models in terms of their utility with diverse ethnic and cultural populations. (S)

**1q.** Demonstrates awareness of systemic biases such as racial disproportionality in the child welfare service population, and is familiar with services and programs designed to mitigate those biases. (K)

## 2 ENGAGEMENT

*Respectfully relating to and engaging families from a strengths-based, family-centered perspective to establish common goals concerning child safety, permanency and well-being.*

### Foundation

**2a.** Creates a relationship with children, youth and families by listening and appreciating the families' stories and recognizing and acknowledging their (children/family) expertise about their own family system. (K&S)

**2b.** Understands the critical role of developing trust with children and families engaged in child welfare services. (K)

**2c.** Understands the importance of identifying American Indian children for the purposes of ICWA implementation, proper notification and engagement with tribal networks. (K)

**2d.** Understands the importance of engaging and building relationships with all parental figures, including non-custodial parents and foster parents. (K)

**2e.** Understands the community context of children and family and its importance to the engagement process (e.g. tribes). (K)

**2f.** Demonstrates understanding of reasonable and active efforts policies and their role in how county child welfare workers engage and work with families involved in the court system. (K)

**2g.** Demonstrates transparency, develops trust, identifies areas of common ground and shares feasible power in engaging individuals and families around concerns such as safety. (S)

**2h.** Understands how child welfare involvement, including but not limited to attachment, separation and placement, affects a child and family and how these experiences may influence a child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. (K)

**2i.** Demonstrates understanding of the underlying processes, ages and stages of infant, child and youth development, including physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. (K)

<b>2j.</b>	Demonstrates understanding of the primary stages and processes of adult development and family life. (K)
<b>2k.</b>	Recognizes developmental indicators of abuse and neglect, as well as resulting trauma. (K&S)
<b>2l.</b>	Works collaboratively with biological, kinship, foster and adoptive families, and tribal networks involving them in assessment and planning, helping them access services and develop coping strategies. (S)
<b>Advanced</b>	
<b>2m.</b>	Can explore and partner with potential resources and natural networks (extended family, friends, religious communities, etc.) to utilize strengths and enhance safety. (S)
<b>2n.</b>	Understands normal responses to involuntary contact and is able to respond in ways that reduce mistrust and strengthen relationships. (K)
<b>2o.</b>	Can clarify and express legal parameters, as defined in federal law and/or state statute/rule, for risk and danger. (S)

## 3 PARTNERING

*Applying strengths perspective in an environmental context and working in respectful, interdisciplinary, and meaningful collaboration with families, communities, and other professionals to achieve shared goals.*

<b>Foundation</b>	
<b>3a.</b>	Engages the family to identify current and potential resources in the neighborhood, community, and/or tribe, both formal and informal, to assist the family in safety and coping. (S)
<b>3b.</b>	Strives to maintain and enhance community and cultural connections with children, youth, families, and tribes. (S)
<b>3c.</b>	Demonstrates an ability to partner with tribes for the purpose of ICWA implementation (specifically active efforts), placement according to the MIFPA placement preferences, and use of Qualified Expert Witness testimony. (S)
<b>3d.</b>	Demonstrates familiarity with community collaborations such as family group decision making, family safety planning meetings, citizen review panels, DHS ICWA Advisory Council, Children’s Justice Initiative, child protection teams, child mortality reviews and parent leadership teams. (K)
<b>3e.</b>	Understands and respects tribal sovereignty when partnering on cases involving American Indian/Alaska Native children. (K & S)
<b>3f.</b>	Demonstrates an ability to work in multidisciplinary teams, including tribal social workers, and willingness to incorporate different professional and/or cultural perspectives into case plans/practice strategies when appropriate. (S)
<b>3g.</b>	Understands the various roles involved in the legal and court process (including tribes) related to child welfare (protection, custody, adoptions), as well as how to effectively interact with people in those roles. (K&S)
<b>3h.</b>	Partners with foster parents to support continuity of placements and optimal outcomes for children and families, including partnering with biological parents as appropriate. (S)

## 4 ASSESSMENT

*Gathering information about reported concerns and family needs, practicing basic principles and techniques of interviewing children and families, evaluating the relevance of information, as well as identifying family strengths and community and tribal resources, with special attention to problems and concerns related to child protection and family preservation.*

Foundation	
4a.	Identifies major family, health and social risk factors contributing to child abuse and neglect. (K)
4b.	Identifies resilience and other protective factors that act to preserve the family and protect the child. (K)
4c.	Recognizes and accurately identifies the physical and behavioral indicators of abuse, family violence and neglect, and can assess the dynamics underlying these behaviors. (K)
4d.	Integrates knowledge of individual, family and cultural dynamics, and recognizes signs and symptoms of at-risk behaviors including chemical health and domestic violence in children/youth and adults, and assess their impact. (K&S)
4e.	Demonstrates understanding and an ability to integrate into an assessment the strengths perspective, protective factors, and empowerment approaches and understands how they can positively influence growth, development and behavior change. (K&S)
4f.	Gathers, assesses, analyzes and presents pertinent information from interviews, case records, and collateral sources when evaluating an abuse or neglect allegation, making assessments, effective referrals for services or further evaluation. (S)
4g.	Summarizes the features of mandated mental health screenings and other standardized children's mental health assessments, including developmental assessments for children birth to 3; trauma-informed screening and effective evidence-based assessment instruments. (K)
4h.	Demonstrates the ability to perform a preliminary safety assessment and to monitor the safety of the child through ongoing assessment of risk. (S)
4i.	Demonstrates an understanding of basic child development and how developmental level affects a child's perception of events, coping strategies, and physical and psychological responses to stress and trauma. (K)
4j.	Understands the importance of collaboration with tribal social workers to ensure the assessment integrates the prevailing cultural standards of the tribes. (K)
4k.	Identifies a variety of informant sources to be engaged during the assessment process. (S)
4l.	Demonstrates the ability to assess the effects of family transitions and the potential impact of becoming a "client" of the child welfare system. (S)
Advanced	
4m.	Demonstrates understanding and ability to integrate the dynamics and effects of trauma into an assessment. (K&S)
4n.	References the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) as a tool in the assessment process where appropriate. (K&S)
4o.	Reads, critically considers, and applies results from an adult or child mental health assessment. (S)

<b>4p.</b>	Demonstrates the ability to recognize and assess potential for violence, suicide, and complex psychological difficulties. (S)
<b>4q.</b>	Identifies and demonstrates a variety of interviewing techniques used with children, youth and families for assessment, service planning, intervention and forensic purposes. (S)
<b>4r.</b>	Demonstrates the ability to conduct various types of assessments using standardized instruments including: risk, safety, psychosocial, strengths and needs assessment. (S)
<b>4s.</b>	Considers the trauma of removal and its historical context for American Indian families and uses active efforts to prevent out of home placement. (K&S)

## 5 CASE PLANNING IN CHILD WELFARE

*Setting goals, developing strategies, and outlining tasks and schedules derived from the engaging, assessing and partnering process in order to develop a flexible plan that will facilitate change with families with the ultimate goal of supporting permanency.*

Foundation	
<b>5a.</b>	Understands and demonstrates the ability to develop a safety plan with the family based upon information gathered during assessment. (K & S)
<b>5b.</b>	Understands and demonstrates the ability to develop a case plan with the family (and tribe), in the family's language, using strengths-based, family-centered, person-in-environment perspectives, and seeks opportunities to include family choices as a means of promoting empowerment while focusing on child safety. (K & S)
<b>5c.</b>	Articulates with the family the effects of maltreatment and historical trauma, and the behaviors or conditions contributing to its risk. (S)
<b>5d.</b>	Develops a case plan (taking into account legal requirements, tribal recommendations and related policies) for effectively serving and making decisions regarding children and parents with special needs and disabilities. (S)
<b>5e.</b>	Understands the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act, Minnesota Indian Family Protection Act, and the Multiethnic Placement Act and applies those provisions in working with tribal representatives, agencies, legal entities and families to create appropriate case plans. (K&S)
<b>5f.</b>	Demonstrates the ability to identify service/treatment plan requirements and to construct behaviorally-based, measurable objectives for successful outcomes with the family so the family knows when the goals are achieved. (K&S)
<b>5g.</b>	Understands the principles of concurrent and permanency planning, as well as placement procedures under the Indian Child Welfare Act, and is able to integrate those principles into a case plan, taking into account the developmental, educational, health, placement preferences under ICWA and MIFPA, and emotional needs of children. (K&S)
<b>5h.</b>	Understands the difference between reasonable versus active efforts, and when to apply each, recognizing that active efforts must be used in cases involving American Indian children (K&S).

## Advanced

- 5i. Applies theories of human development and attachment with the understanding of how trauma interrupts those processes, as well as cultural differences about the meaning of attachment, workers create and manage effective case plans with children and families. (K&S)
- 5j. Demonstrates an understanding of pre-placement preventive services and constructs supportive systems for children and families that may include referral to and collaboration with multiple agencies and disciplines. (K)
- 5k. Demonstrates knowledge of after-care services and skill in developing a transition and independent living plan with a foster youth that addresses educational, housing, health care, transportation, money management, social and recreational issues, and establishing connections with the child's family, tribe and community. (K&S)

## 6 IMPLEMENTING CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

*Identifying and applying the most effective, ethical and culturally appropriate services, resources, and processes to meet the goals established in the planning stage appropriate to the family.*

### Foundation

- 6a. Utilizes engagement and assessment skills to maintain and develop an ongoing, productive and respectful relationship with children, youth, families, tribes, and the identified safety network. (S)
- 6b. Demonstrates understanding of processes for identifying resources, making appropriate service referrals, and constructing measurable recommendations for behavioral change in order to implement a case plan. (K)
- 6c. Demonstrates an ability to understand and present permanency preferences for children and youth, including, when appropriate, kinship care and adoption services with careful transition planning. (S)
- 6d. Demonstrates the ability to monitor implemented strategies and to follow legal standards for case reviews appropriate to the practice setting in order to achieve case plan goals and make adjustments as necessary. (S)
- 6e. Demonstrates the ability to develop and/or maintain informal and formal community and social supports, including tribal networks. (K&S)
- 6f. Understands the importance of maintaining connections with biological and extended family and supporting the foster, kinship and/or adoptive family to facilitate this as deemed in the child's best interest. (K)
- 6g. Demonstrates an understanding of the complexity of a child's ties with foster, adoptive, biological and extended families as well as tribal community, and interaction with his/her community. (K&S)
- 6h. Demonstrates how to plan for and initiate closing of professional relationships with children and families, prioritizing developmentally appropriate transitions with adequate resources to optimize outcomes. (S)
- 6i. Understands the importance of actively pursuing and maintaining sibling bonds (with siblings in placement and/or at home), the relational worldview and connection to extended family and tribe, and demonstrates the ability to do so. (K&S)
- 6j. Demonstrates the ability to recognize abuse occurring in out-of-home placements and to take corrective action and follow through with reports and licensing issues in order to protect children. (S)

## Advanced

- 6k.** Uses understanding of the dynamics and effects of trauma to continuously evaluate and adjust intervention strategies and case plan goals. (K&S)
- 6l.** Applies understanding of the structure of the child welfare system (child protection, foster care, kinship, adoption, family assessment, tribal sovereignty) to guide children and families to the most appropriate resources for achieving their goals. (S)
- 6m.** Demonstrates the ability to work with adolescents in out-of-home placements and to advocate for permanency options and to guide them through the transition to adult life in the community. (S)
- 6n.** Supports children and adolescents to identify and develop the skills to relate to their family of origin around the issues that led to removal from the home using developmentally appropriate strategies and resources. (S)
- 6o.** Demonstrates advanced skills in problem solving and issues analysis in areas such as: maltreatment reporting and assessment, service delivery, conflicts in placements, CHIPS and TPR proceedings, orders for protection and cases involving ICWA. (S)
- 6p.** Understands the basic principles of county, tribal and community agency contracting for the purchase of child welfare services and how to appropriately utilize these contracts for the benefit of children and families. (K)
- 6q.** Demonstrates the ability to negotiate and advocate for the development of resources (including tribal resources and tribal agencies) that children and families need to meet personal goals and that child welfare and tribal agencies need to meet programmatic goals. (S)
- 6r.** Understands the basic principles of mediation, tribally based practices and restorative justice practices, and how they can be implemented in a case plan to assist families in achieving their goals. (K)
- 6s.** Understands the importance of assessing the needs of adoptive parents/families and connecting them with appropriate aftercare services, including tribal services. (K)
- 6t.** Assesses and supports the ongoing and unique service needs for foster parents and kinship providers, including tribal services. (S)

## 7 COMMUNICATION

*Effectively sending and receiving verbal, electronic and written communication within the appropriate cultural context.*

### Foundation

- 7a.** Demonstrates the ability to employ active and reflective listening skills to promote clear communication and develop trust with children and families. (K&S)
- 7b.** Demonstrates an ability to employ clear, concise, ethical and factual writing skills with attention to structure, grammar and spelling, including the ability to accurately, concisely, ethically and objectively document a variety of assessment content, case notes, and court narratives. (S)
- 7c.** Understands the importance of and is able to modify written forms of communication based upon a child or caregiver's cognitive ability, literacy level, and use of their primary language and understanding of the English language. (K&S)

<b>7d.</b>	Understands and is able to apply data privacy laws and policies to the handling of sensitive data on children and families in the child welfare system. (K&S)
<b>7e.</b>	Demonstrates the ability to communicate effectively with tribes, recognizing tribal sovereignty and governance. (K&S)
<b>7f.</b>	Understands the unique communication styles and issues that impact effective work with tribes and tribal families. (K)
<b>Advanced</b>	
<b>7g.</b>	Demonstrates the ability to use different methods of documentation to communicate assessment information. (S)
<b>7h.</b>	Understands the basic premise of working with a translator as a means of primary communication with a child and family. (K)
<b>7i.</b>	Understands the impact of the media on the field of child welfare as well as on those professionals working within the field. (K)

## 8 EVALUATION

*Continuously monitoring outcomes of service plans and system programs to determine if the desired goals are being achieved and, if not, to use this information to reconsider goals and strategies developed in the planning phase, or services and resources identified in the implementation stage.*

<b>Foundation</b>	
<b>8a.</b>	Demonstrates a commitment to evaluating his/her own social work/child welfare practice, including practices related to ICWA awwnd MIFPA. (S)
<b>8b.</b>	Understands the purpose of outcome measurement and is able to seek family, organization, tribal, and community feedback for purposes of monitoring practice, service refinement and outcome evaluation. (K&S)
<b>8c.</b>	Communicates the underlying principles and effectiveness of her/his practice to families, colleagues, employers, etc. (S)
<b>8d.</b>	Understands the role of external review and accrediting bodies including the federal government/Children’s Bureau, Council on Accreditation, citizen review panels and the child mortality reviews. (K)
<b>8e.</b>	Understands the criteria used to evaluate state and county child welfare agency performance in federal reviews as it relates to child, family and program outcomes. (K)
<b>8f.</b>	Understands the importance of evaluating his/her own professional education and training needs. (K)
<b>Advanced</b>	
<b>8g.</b>	Re-evaluates progress outcomes and considers potential contributing factors when goals are not being achieved without sole focus placed upon the youth or family. (S)
<b>8h.</b>	Understands practice accountability and the variety of ways in which agency and individual practice can be evaluated, including trauma-informed practice and cultural responsiveness. (K)
<b>8i.</b>	Understands how to use information, technology, and evidence-based research to advocate, evaluate and improve policy, practice and program effectiveness. (K)

## 9 ADVOCACY

*Recognizing individual or group needs, providing intervention on behalf of children and families, communicating to decision makers, and initiating actions to secure or enhance a needed service, resource or entitlement that children and families need to meet personal and administrative goals.*

### Foundation

- 9a. Identifies agency and legislative policies and procedures that may negatively affect child well-being and the success of permanency and family reunification. (K)
- 9b. Advocates for active efforts to reunite families and return children whenever possible. (S)
- 9c. Understands negotiation and advocacy for the development and retention of resources that children, youth, and families need to meet personal goals and agencies need to meet administrative goals. (K)
- 9d. Identifies the strengths and limitations of an organization, including its cultural competence and commitment to human diversity, and can assess the effects of these factors on services for children, youth, and families. (K&S)
- 9e. Communicates clearly, concisely and objectively to decision-makers the recognized and documented needs of individuals and groups. (S)
- 9f. Identifies individual or group needs and provides the appropriate intervention on behalf of a child, youth, caregiver or family system. (K)

### Advanced

- 9g. Demonstrates the ability to apply coalition-building strategies across diverse communities and providers in order to identify and achieve enhanced and culturally competent services, resources or entitlements for children and families. (S)

## 10 POLICY

*Understanding policies that affect delivery of child welfare services and the missions, priorities and resource allocations that guide the development and implementation of policy in public, tribal and private non-profit social services.*

### Foundation

- 10a. Demonstrates basic knowledge of the philosophy, purpose, requirements, and application of the major federal, state, and local social policies affecting children, youth, and families in the child welfare system, including ICWA, MEPA, Title IV-B, Title IV-E, CAPTA, CFSR, MIFPA, BIA regulations, ASFA, PSSF, TANF, WIA, Chafee, and Fostering Connections. (K)
- 10b. Demonstrates an understanding of the legal framework for child welfare practice, including the Juvenile Court process and other court proceedings related to child welfare practice, including tribal courts. (K)
- 10c. Identifies resources for policy information, interpretation and analysis and demonstrates a willingness to seek clarification when uncertain on policy guidance and/or legal requirements. (K&S)

### Advanced

- 10d. Demonstrates knowledge of the philosophy, purpose, requirements, and application of the major federal, state, and local disability policies affecting children, youth and families in the child welfare system, including ADA, Title II and IDEA. (K)
- 10e. Demonstrates basic knowledge of various federal, state, and local child welfare funding sources and their influence on agency policy, objectives and service delivery. (K)



<b>10f.</b>	Understands how political activities and regulatory, legislative, and judicial processes at local, state, and national levels influence agency policies, procedures and programs. (K)
<b>10g.</b>	Analyzes and evaluates agency and legislative child welfare policies procedures, describes the interrelationship of practice and policy and identifies the impact of specific policies on children and families. (S)
<b>10h.</b>	Recognizes tribal sovereignty in implementing policies that affect American Indian children, and the importance of ongoing meaningful tribal consultation. (K)
<b>10i.</b>	Understands substantive legal issues affecting social workers and the families they work with in the child welfare system and demonstrates the necessary skills for effective participation in the legal system. (K&S)

## 11 USE OF SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT

*Recognizes the importance of the supervisory role in achieving desired service and organizational outcomes for children, youth and families and other stakeholders, in assessing and managing performance, and enhancing the ability to achieve positive outcomes through continuous improvement efforts.*

<b>Foundation</b>	
<b>11a.</b>	Understands how organizational structure, climate, and culture affect service effectiveness, worker productivity and morale. (K)
<b>11b.</b>	Understands the important role of and use of supervision in social work in providing support, knowledge, and growth as well as monitoring and appraisal of work, workloads, standards and performance, and in case consultation. (K)
<b>11c.</b>	Understands and can utilize educational, supportive, reflective and administrative techniques of supervision. (K&S)
<b>11d.</b>	Understands the dynamics of staff groups and the supervisor's role in group process and the support of competent practice. (K)
<b>11e.</b>	Understands and can address issues of difference and the effects of culture, religion, race, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender in the supervisory process. (K)
<b>Advanced</b>	
<b>11f.</b>	Understands the ethical and legal obligations of social work supervision. (K)
<b>11g.</b>	Understands and can use the principles of adult learning and the parallel process in supervision and consultation activities. (K&S)
<b>11h.</b>	Understands the use of self in supervision, including the nature and use of power and authority, self-management of time, stress and role/boundary issues. (K)
<b>11i.</b>	Understands and demonstrates ways to use data to inform supervision and guide efforts across practice in areas including but not limited to disproportionalities and disparities. (K)
<b>11j.</b>	Understands the principles of risk management as well as the use of appreciative inquiry to establish and communicate successful policies and practices. (K)
<b>11k.</b>	Understands the roles/responsibilities of a leader/manager to plan and develop systems that enhance staff diversity and alleviate racial and ethnic disproportionality in the child welfare service population. (K)
<b>11l.</b>	Understands how leaders/managers use the collaborative process for the purpose of planning, formulating policy and implementing services. (K)

## 12 PROFESSIONALISM

*Demonstrating professional growth and competence in child welfare while providing respectful and culturally relevant services to children within the context of a values-based ethical framework.*

### Foundation

- 12a.** Understands the importance of the use of supervision and consultation in child welfare practice and actively seeks feedback and consultation from supervisors and experienced colleagues. (K&S)
- 12b.** Demonstrates an ability to establish appropriate boundaries with children, families and colleagues, taking cultural norms into consideration. (S)
- 12c.** Demonstrates the ability to work with colleagues from a wide array of personal and professional backgrounds in a respectful and productive manner. (S)
- 12d.** Understands how professional social work values, the NASW's Code of Ethics, and Minnesota Board of Social Work's Standards of Practice and Ethical Conduct influence decision making and planning in public child welfare practice. (K)
- 12e.** Uses critical thinking skills to problem solve throughout all areas of practice (engagement, assessment, planning, communicating, etc.). (S)
- 12f.** Identifies and analyzes ethical issues that arise in the course of practice in social work. (K&S)
- 12g.** Understands and distinguishes among personal and professional values and ethics and considers possible courses of action to pursue when they conflict. (K & S)
- 12h.** Understands mandated reporting laws and his/her role as a mandated reporter of child abuse and/or neglect. (K)
- 12i.** Understands and is able to apply data privacy laws and policies to the handling of sensitive data on children and families in the child welfare system. (K&S)
- 12j.** Understands the concepts of vicarious and secondary trauma as well as personal and cultural traumas and their potential impact on personal health and professional practice, and has developed healthy coping methods and self-care strategies to address these issues. (K&S)
- 12k.** Identifies potential risks to worker safety and can create a plan to increase individual safety in the field. (S)

### Advanced

- 12l.** Demonstrates the ability to present, both orally and in writing, a logical, ethically sound, culturally relevant argument for the resolution of ethical dilemmas or issues relevant to social work practice in the child welfare system. (S)
- 12m.** Identifies areas of professional growth, develops a professional development plan to increase knowledge and skill in areas of interest and needed growth, and advocates for the resources to reach professional development goals. (K & S)

# Supervisor Competencies

Effective supervisors are an essential component in the successful outcomes of children and families involved in the child welfare system. Therefore, the training, education and demonstrated knowledge and skill of those supervisors are critical. The competencies which guide the practice of supervisors bring consistency and set high expectations for leadership in the field to support staff in their complex work with children and families.

As is the case in the Frontline Worker Competencies, the Supervisor Competencies are articulated as a series of competencies demonstrated through knowledge (K; knowledge and conceptual mastery) and skill (S; skills and experiential mastery). The Supervisor Competencies have been written to reflect the complex and often multi-dimensional nature of supervision in child welfare practice. Thus, to demonstrate mastery of a particular competency statement, supervisors must be able to integrate numerous skills and areas of knowledge. There are multiple ways supervisors can demonstrate competency.

## 1 SUPERVISION

*Supports the workforce in the development of the knowledge, skills, and abilities/attitudes required to successfully meet the expectations of the job.*

### Educative Supervision

- 1a.** Understands and can model and teach necessary elements of assessment, decision making, case planning, and case process to staff. (K&S)
- 1b.** Understands and values diversity and different styles of perceiving, learning, communicating, and operating. (K)
- 1c.** Understands factors that motivate performance and can use this information to assist staff performance improvement. (K&S)
- 1d.** Demonstrates an understanding of the principles of adult learning. (K)
- 1e.** Creates a learning climate in which the development and maintenance of competencies, professional judgment and sound decision making in supervisees takes place through clear, sympathetic supervisory direction and assists staff to transfer knowledge and skills learned through in-service training to their jobs. (S)
- 1f.** Keeps abreast of research data, including disparities and disproportionality, and ICWA practice data and informs staff of ongoing changes in best practices child welfare. (K&S)
- 1g.** Knows and can apply relevant federal and state statutes, including MEPA, IEPA, MIFPA, ICWA and BIA Guidelines, rules, policies, procedures and current practice standards related to casework. (K&S)
- 1h.** Demonstrates familiarity with, and is able to access, or advocate for access to, childhood trauma treatment-specific resources. (K&S)
- 1i.** Demonstrates the capacity to communicate a plan to agency caseworkers for screening children for trauma, including historical trauma. (K&S)
- 1j.** Understands the vision of the Minnesota practice model itself, why it was developed, and how statewide leadership envisions the practice model as a tool to support practice and improve performance and outcomes. (K)

*Understands and addresses issues related to personal, organizational, and systemic stressors that impact job performance, organizational climate, workforce stability, and child and family outcomes.*

<b>1k.</b>	Understands how to apply the values and principles within the practice model to actual casework efforts and challenges and use the materials to support improved practices through supervision. (K&S)
<b>1l.</b>	Understands how the skills listed within the practice model support positive outcomes for children, youth, and families and is capable of assessing their staff in terms of these skills. (K&S)
<b>Supportive Supervision</b>	
<b>1m.</b>	Understands the value of supporting expression, and can recognize emotion-laden issues or situations and handle them with sensitivity. (S)
<b>1n.</b>	Uses listening and observation to anticipate and prepare for others' reactions. (K&S)
<b>1o.</b>	Understands how staff members' attitudes, needs, behaviors, personal preferences, work style, beliefs, gender, and cultural backgrounds may influence perceptions and performance. (K)
<b>1p.</b>	Recognizes when a worker's emotional responses and/or judgment interfere with the casework process and can empower the worker to identify and examine these reactions. (K&S)
<b>1q.</b>	Demonstrates understanding of childhood trauma research findings, emotional and behavioral symptomology and treatment options using a cross cultural lens. (K)
<b>1r.</b>	Advocates reduced organizational barriers to staff performance including: assessing needed resources, changes to unit or regional policies/procedures, modifying unrealistic job expectations, and collaborating with upper-level management for changes in problematic organizational issues. (K&S)
<b>1s.</b>	Demonstrates the capacity to recognize and respond to secondary trauma in agency caseworkers. (K)
<b>1t.</b>	Understands the skill set needed and can provide support (including referral for services) to staff experiencing secondary trauma and promote agency-wide understanding of the effects of secondary trauma. (K&S)
<b>1u.</b>	Finds creative and effective ways to advocate for clients and staff. (K&S)
<b>1v.</b>	Understands how to conduct trauma screenings with children served through the county social services agency. (K)
<b>1w.</b>	Discerns the strengths, needs, challenges, and feelings of others and offers appropriate support to colleagues/supervisees. (K&S)

*Builds effective practice for families served through an orientation to policy, the short and long-term goals of the agency, workload, budget, and additional operational realities.*

<b>Administrative Supervision</b>	
<b>1x.</b>	Understands and clarifies roles and responsibilities of participants in the child welfare system, including tribal agencies. (K&S)
<b>1y.</b>	Applies SSIS Charting and Analysis to assess their agency's performance on federal child safety and permanency measures. (K&S)
<b>1z.</b>	Demonstrates ability to effectively manage case assignments, case coverage and service delivery to clients via direct caseworker supervision. (S)
<b>1aa.</b>	Plans, schedules, and directs the work of self and others. (S)
<b>1bb.</b>	Demonstrates ability to structure supervisory conferences (individual and group) to review and document casework activities and caseworker performance. (S)
<b>1cc.</b>	Organizes material or activities to accomplish tasks efficiently. (S)
<b>1dd.</b>	Understands how to use SSIS data in individual and/or group supervision to identify child safety and permanency priorities. (K&S)
<b>1ee.</b>	Demonstrates knowledge regarding organization and management development theory; the role of power and authority; the operation of effective organizations and the dynamics of organization change. (K)
<b>1ff.</b>	Understands how to use SSIS reports to evaluate staff, unit and agency performance. (S)
<b>1gg.</b>	Understands how to access SSIS General Child Safety and Permanency reports. (K&S)

## **2 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

*Understands and adheres to the procedures, regulations, and laws related to hiring, disciplining and terminating staff; performance appraisal.*

<b>2a.</b>	Identifies and understands available resources, and builds and maintains effective working relationships with a network of systems, including tribes. (K&S)
<b>2b.</b>	Understands and appreciates the different views, expertise and experience of others; understands the perspectives and limitations of other individuals and systems. (K)
<b>2c.</b>	Participates constructively on inter- and intra-agency work groups and activities to clarify and improve system and program functioning and service delivery. (S)
<b>2d.</b>	Balances task requirements and individual abilities (matching people and assignments). (S)
<b>2e.</b>	Demonstrates the ability to organize materials or activities in order to accomplish tasks efficiently. (S)
<b>2f.</b>	Sets challenging yet achievable goals for self and others. (S)
<b>2g.</b>	Sets work schedules and caseload/workload standards that promote the effective and efficient use of staff and delivery of service. (S)
<b>2h.</b>	Demonstrates knowledge of, and can access personnel laws, rules, regulations and the union contract. (K&S)

<b>2i.</b>	Demonstrates knowledge of, and can access Affirmative Action guidelines and Civil Service requirements. (K&S)
<b>2j.</b>	Shows the ability to manage, as appropriate, the hiring, selection, and termination process. (K&S)
<b>2k.</b>	Shows the ability to manage the employee appraisal process, to use competencies in performance planning, and to assess employee performance. (K&S)
<b>2l.</b>	Demonstrates the ability to identify employee performance problems and apply principles of progressive discipline. (S)

### 3 PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

*Demonstrates an understanding of relevant history, theory, values, emerging issues, ethics, managerial principles, and organizational structure to advance the mission/vision of the agency.*

<b>3a.</b>	Relates effectively with all levels of administration inside and outside the organization. (S)
<b>3b.</b>	Demonstrates knowledge of ways to develop effective collaborations both inside and outside the organization. (S)
<b>3c.</b>	Demonstrates understanding of current issues that affect the organization, and consequent practice with families including disproportionality. (K)
<b>3d.</b>	Understands relevant agency history and historical trauma implications for practice, theory appropriate to human services, values and ethical considerations. (K)
<b>3e.</b>	Demonstrates general knowledge of the concepts of strategic, operational and long-range planning. (K&S)
<b>3f.</b>	Demonstrates knowledge of the mission of the agency and its role in the child and family service system. (K)
<b>3g.</b>	Demonstrates a general understanding of budgeting techniques and procedure for operating within a planned budget. (K&S)

### 4 TEAM LEADERSHIP

*Communicates and utilizes agency mission/vision to support effective practice with children and families in a changing context.*

<b>4a.</b>	Communicates a clear vision, motivation and commitment to the safety and well-being of children. (S)
<b>4b.</b>	Engages with others in team process to solve problems. (S)
<b>4c.</b>	Works with others to find a win/win resolution of differences whenever possible. (S)
<b>4d.</b>	Shows awareness of how management style impacts staff productivity and development. (K)
<b>4e.</b>	Modifies leadership style to meet situational requirements. (K&S)
<b>4f.</b>	Manages multiple or ambiguous directives while staying focused on major goals. (S)
<b>4g.</b>	Uses knowledge of the system to identify long-term problems and opportunities. (K&S)

- 4h. Solicits data, information, ideas, and opinions from relevant sources for specific decisions and plans. (S)
- 4i. Remains informed and up-to-date about activities, sharing all relevant or useful information that affects the group. (K&S)
- 4j. Demonstrates the group process skills needed for diverse groups to work together effectively to achieve a common goal. (K&S)
- 4k. Recognizes the complexities inherent in conflict, including aspects of direct child welfare practice, and proactively engages others in conflict resolution. (K&S)
- 4l. Understands the concepts of team development, facilitation of effective meetings, and conflict management. (K)

## 5 ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

*Builds and maintains effective working relationships within a network of systems to support the needs of clients and staff.*

- 5a. Recognizes and values alternative viewpoints. (K&S)
- 5b. Adjusts communication, behavior and approach to a situation or to the agency's larger objective. (S)
- 5c. Utilizes theoretical frameworks and incorporates past experience to guide analysis and practice. (K&S)
- 5d. Applies experience to interpret events, seeing crucial similarities and differences in present and past situations. (K&S)

## 6 CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

*Demonstrates a working knowledge of, and sensitivity to:*  
*-the role the supervisor plays within a broader social context that includes historical and current inequalities across societal systems, including disparities and disproportionalities, and historical trauma; and*  
*-the dynamics of diversity, respecting and learning from the unique characteristics and strengths of families and tribes, and applying these concepts and skills to enhance workforce ability to support individual and family function.*

- 6a.** Understands the impact of disparities, disproportionalities and historical trauma on African-American families. (K)
- 6b.** Understands the impact of disparities, disproportionalities and historical trauma on American Indian families. (K)
- 6c.** Understands the tools and assessments which can be used within their agency to identify disparities and disproportionalities regarding African-American and American Indian families. (K&S)
- 6d.** Understands how to discuss disparities and disproportionalities regarding African-American and American-Indian families with their unit staff. (K&S)
- 6e.** Collaborates with community partners, including tribes, on ways to address disparities and disproportionalities. (K&S)
- 6f.** Identifies and implements methods to increase effective intercultural understanding. (K&S)
- 6g.** Understands how ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and lack of cultural knowledge support bias, discrimination, and racism. (K)
- 6h.** Understands the concept of multiculturalism and how a pluralistic society benefits from the contributions of its diverse members. (K)
- 6i.** Understands the effects of racism, ageism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination on personal development and emotional health. (K)
- 6j.** Demonstrates how to use culturally relevant information in ways that avoid stereotyping. (K&S)
- 6k.** Knows how to locate accurate cultural information, use cultural consultants, and access educational resources to strengthen one's own cultural humility. (K&S)
- 6l.** Recognizes, through self-reflection, how to continually examine their own lack of cultural knowledge and areas of personal bias. (K)
- 6m.** Engages in relationships with peers, supervisees, and families from a variety of diverse cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds. (K&S)
- 6n.** Understands how a family's history of oppression and trauma in their home country, historical trauma, dislocation, and emigration may affect their coping capacity, parenting behaviors, and emotional health. (K&S)
- 6o.** Understands how a family's adherence to community values, beliefs and traditions can serve as a source of strength to be utilized in family assessments, case planning, and service delivery. (K)
- 6p.** Knows how to identify and involve qualified interpreters to enable more accurate and open communication and effective practice with families who do not speak fluent English. (K&S)
- 6q.** Works with agency administrators, including tribes, to develop formal partnerships with culturally-based community networks and service providers on behalf of families and children. (S)



## 7 PROFESSIONALISM

*Assesses own performance, recognizing strengths and challenges; takes responsibility and learns from mistakes and shortcomings; continually strives to clarify personal values and develop ethical practice professionally.*

- 7a.** Describes and evaluates own performance in terms that reflect recognition of personal strengths and challenges. (K&S)
- 7b.** Assumes responsibility for own performance and outcomes, and learns from mistakes. (K&S)
- 7c.** Clarifies personal values and executes plans for professional development to meet client and agency needs, while adhering to the NASW code of ethics. (S)
- 7d.** Presents a positive image to other service providers and to the community at large through use of the media, personal interactions and presentations. (S)
- 7e.** Demonstrates ability to deliver presentations at internal/external meetings, conferences and workshops. (S)
- 7f.** Understands the value and demonstrates the use of self-assessment and associated improvement relative to the child welfare practice model. (K&S)
- 7g.** Communicates key elements of trauma dynamics, research findings and treatment options to county agency leaders, child welfare caseworkers and community partners. (S)
- 7h.** Respects and adheres to ethical data protection principles and confidentiality regarding any information obtained in the course of their duties. (K&S)
- 7i.** Engages with superiors, supervisees and mentors in an appropriate fashion. (S)

## 8 DECISION MAKING

*Reaches sound conclusions and makes decisive, timely decisions with the consideration of information, available data, flexibility, and short and long-term goals; gives clear directions and communicates them effectively in a timely manner.*

- 8a.** Anticipates significant information necessary for decision making. (K)
- 8b.** Recognizes when a decision is required and makes timely decisions based on available data. (K&S)
- 8c.** Maintains and/or explains positions when under pressure from others, confronting resistance if necessary. (K&S)
- 8d.** Shifts positions if new information indicates. (K&S)
- 8e.** Gives directions or orders based on professional authority, rules, and procedures when a situation requires. (S)
- 8f.** Reaches sound conclusions and makes reasonable decisions based on available information. (K&S)
- 8g.** Balances short- and long-term considerations. (K&S)
- 8h.** Sets priorities for tasks in order of importance. (S)
- 8i.** Maintains objectivity in handling difficult issues, events, and decisions. (S)
- 8j.** Identifies and confronts bias as it relates to decision making. (K&S)



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