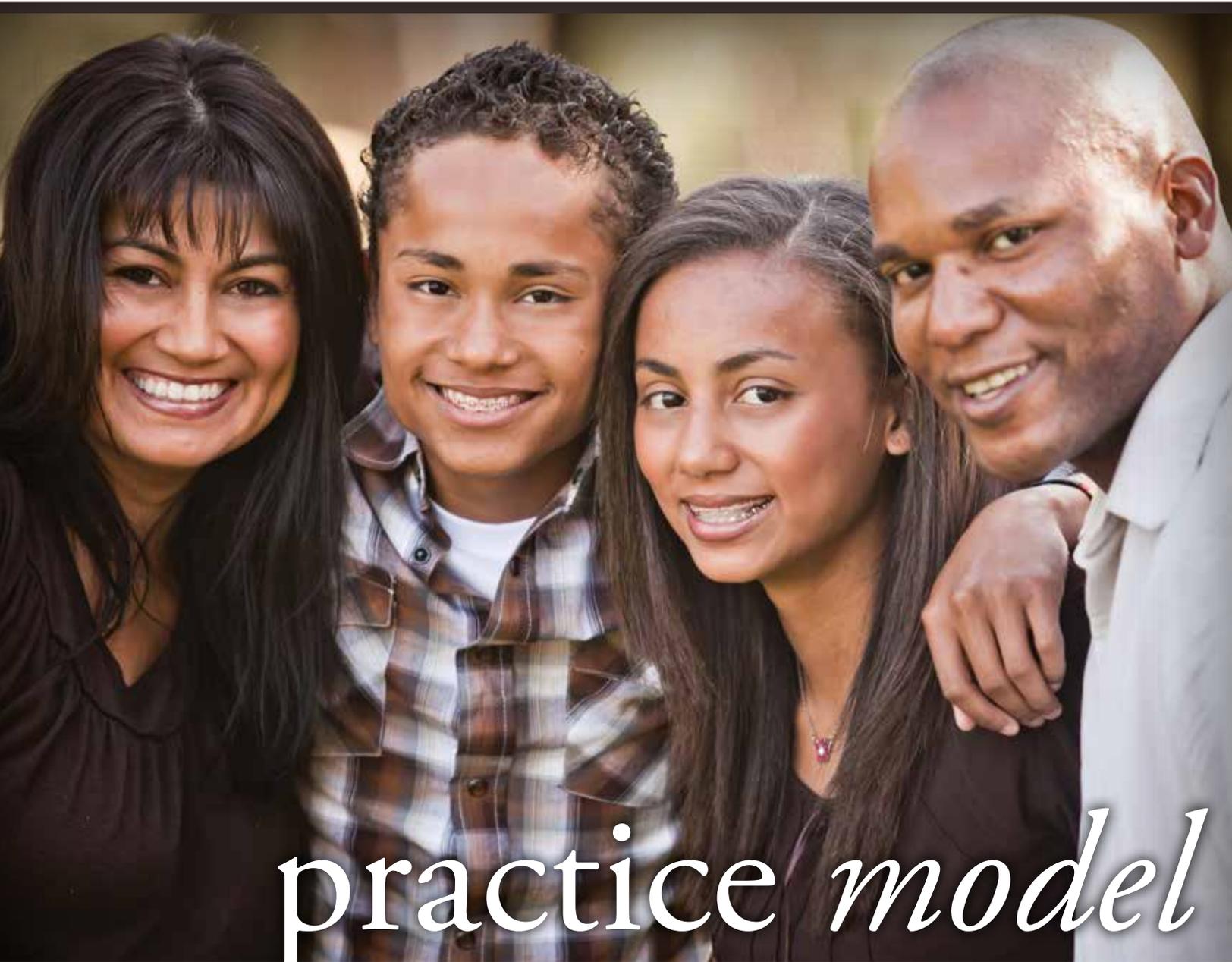


Child and Family Services Practice Model

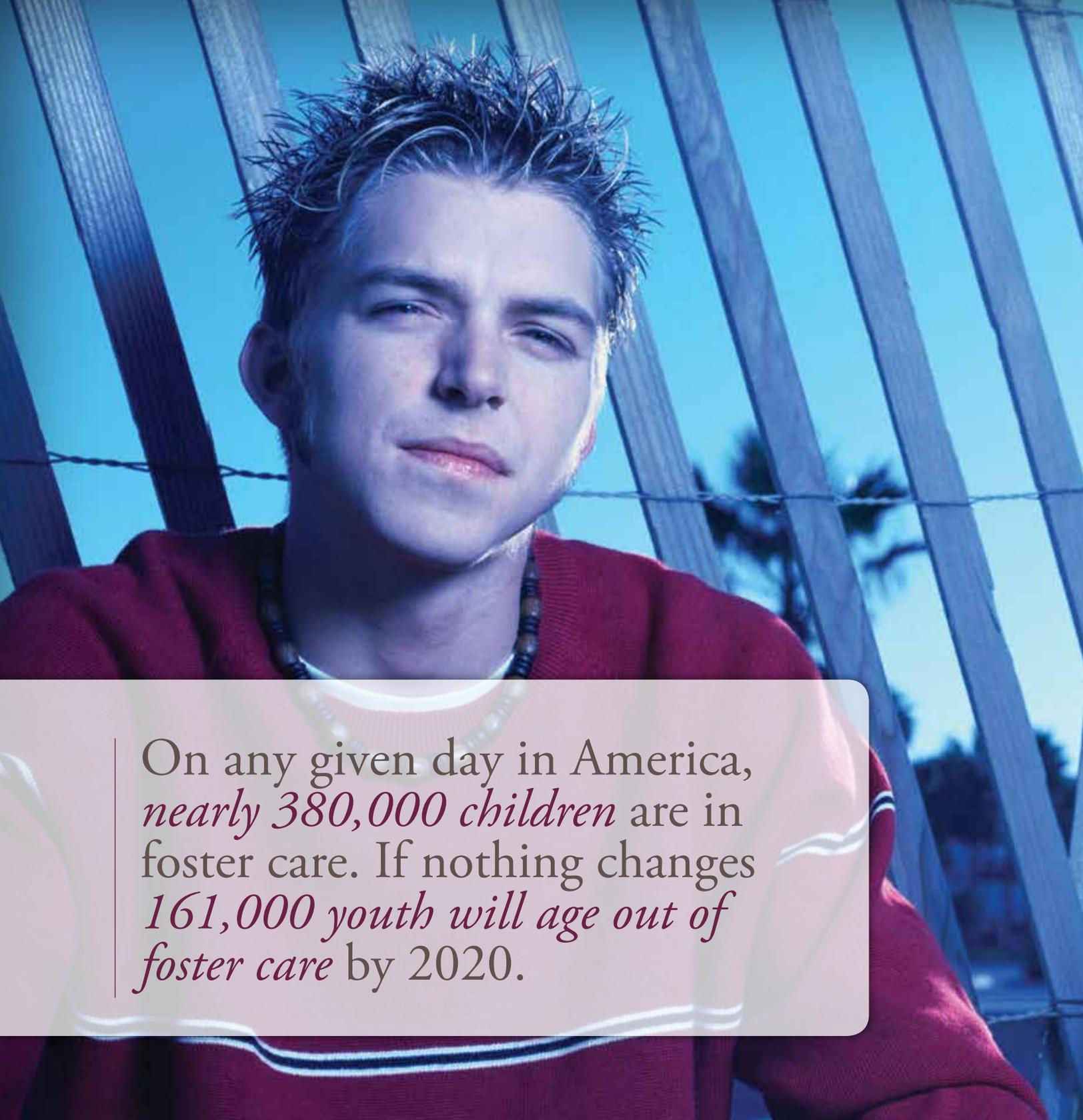
A Safe and Permanent Family *for* Every Youth



practice *model*

casey family programs

OCTOBER 2013



On any given day in America, *nearly 380,000 children* are in foster care. If nothing changes *161,000 youth will age out of foster care* by 2020.

Child and Family Services Practice Model



We want to thank the Children's Research Center for its partnership in the development of this practice model. The Children's Research Center expertise relative to process, practice and organizational supports were invaluable throughout its development and implementation. We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to work so closely with Karen Martin (1969-2014) our friend, colleague, teacher, coach and mentor. She enriched our practice as well as our lives.

A Safe and Permanent Family *for* Every Youth

Introduction

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused solely on safely reducing the need for foster care and building hope for vulnerable children and families across America.

As champions for change, we are committed to our goal which we call 2020: Building Communities of Hope. This is a nationwide effort to inspire, influence and inform long-lasting improvements to child welfare by safely reducing the need for foster care; creating opportunities for systems and communities to make smart investments that keep children safe and strengthen families; and supporting effective education, employment and mental health services for children in their communities.

On any given day in America, nearly 380,000 children are in foster care. For some children – those who suffer from abuse or severe neglect – a foster home provides a safe haven. But foster care is not always the best solution for vulnerable children. The act of removing children from their families and homes creates emotional distress and can bring about long-lasting traumatic responses. It should be avoided whenever it is safe and possible to do so. Youth who age out of foster care often have poorer outcomes as adults than those who are a part of a safe, permanent family. Some vulnerable children can be better served by remaining safely at home while their parents receive the community services and support they need to care for them successfully.

Through early intervention efforts, we can concentrate services and supports on preventing children and youth from entering the child welfare system. For those children already in foster care, we must work with families to make their homes safe so that they can be reunited with their parents. If that is not possible, we must work urgently to find them other safe, loving and permanent families.

Across the nation, many child welfare agencies are working to better serve vulnerable children and strengthen families. To effectively address these challenges, we must also address the broader issues faced by families and their communities. We work toward building communities of hope where neighborhoods are safe and supportive, families are strong and, as a result, all children have the opportunity to live their lives to the fullest potential.

If this nation's vulnerable children and families are to succeed and thrive, we must more consistently view children in the context of their families, view families in the context of the communities in which they live, and view any intervention in the context of a family and community support network.

– DR. WILLIAM C. BELL, *President & CEO*, Casey Family Programs

practice *model*

What is Child and Family Services?

Jim Casey founded Casey Family Programs as a direct-service foster care program based on his belief that all children and youth need a safe and stable family. Today, Casey Family Programs includes nine field offices in five states – Arizona, California, Idaho, Texas and Washington – that continue the original work of the foundation. Child and Family Services (CFS) is the arm of the foundation that operates those field offices.

CFS staff work alongside public child welfare systems and the courts in each of the nine jurisdictions. We assist those communities so that more youth can achieve safe and sustainable permanency. We work to advance jurisdictional practice and policy changes that are aligned with strengthening families and safely moving children to permanency. Staff also work to engage the judiciary in court improvement efforts aimed at timely exits to permanency, alternatives to foster care, child well-being and compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

In addition to direct service work, the CFS staff collaborates with Casey's Systems Improvement staff to provide consultation to jurisdictions across the country to help support practice improvement efforts. In this role, CFS staff inform child welfare and other stakeholders about effective practices and facilitate their implementation through technical assistance, training and coaching.

CFS is committed to evaluating our work and sharing evidence-based and promising practices, as well as practice-based evidence, with our public child welfare partners and other child-placing agencies. Our hope is that the knowledge we share and the work that we demonstrate will allow more families to remain intact or, if a child has been removed from their family, to reunify safely and quickly. We envision a system where no youth will age out of foster care.

About this Practice Model

Jim Casey understood and promoted the significance of family and maintaining consistent ties to relatives and communities to support the healthy development and identity formation of children. He held a strong belief that healthy sustained relationships are critical for children, and he applied those values in developing an agency that would stress relational engagement.

Our practice is family-centered – an approach to direct service that recognizes families know their own challenges and needs. We believe in the uniqueness and inherent dignity of each family and individual who makes up that family. Consistent with the family-centered approach is our belief that children are best served in the context of families, and that families are best served in the context of communities.

The Practice Model outlines strategies and interventions that advance our focus on legal and relational permanency for the youth we serve and that improve their safety, well-being, and strengthen their families and communities. It was developed with input from CFS staff, youth, biological parents, resource families and community partners. Our practice is predicated on nearly 50 years of direct service experience with a consistent focus on the needs of older youth and remains aligned with our founder's vision that all youth need a safe and stable family.

Our work builds on the collective wisdom of the children, youth, young adults, families, resource parents, staff and partners that have worked with Casey Family Programs over the years. It incorporates a number of CFS practice frameworks and models that outline the evolution of our direct service practice, such as *Identity Formation in a Society of Multiple Cultures*, *Roots of Permanency* and *No Time to Lose: An Ecological Practice Framework for Youth Permanency*.

This current Practice Model integrates recent promising and evidence-based strategies and other improvements in child welfare and related fields. It is part of an integrated suite of tools that include the Practice Manual, the Universal Practice Standards and the Compliance and Quality Review Guides, all supported by a new electronic Case Management System. The suite enhances the skill level and competency of our practitioners. It strengthens our ability to identify and demonstrate effective practice for accelerated permanency and well-being outcomes for youth.

“ We relentlessly pursue permanency, safety and well-being for youth. ”

– MARVA HAMMONS, *Executive Vice President*, Child and Family Services

CFS Outcome Goals

CFS field offices, both in the provision and demonstration of direct service practice and in work with community partners and stakeholders, operate within this Practice Model to achieve the outcomes described below. These outcomes are interrelated in that the achievement of child and family well-being is inclusive of, ongoing safety and lifelong permanency.

Youth will be safe and feel safe

To be well, youth must not only be safe but must feel that they are safe. A primary focus of our work is strengthening safety for children and youth in their own homes. When a child is safe and their risk of future harm is reduced, we have the opportunity to prevent the need for legal dependency and to achieve more timely reunification. Permanency without safety is not acceptable. Safety at the expense of well-being or permanency is not acceptable. In our efforts to ensure ongoing child safety, we adhere to this holistic approach.

All children and youth will attain legal and relational permanency

It is possible for every child and youth to be safe, stable and raised in a family that is legally their own where they can grow and thrive. Once at adulthood, relational permanency ensures that each has relationships with one or more adults who are, reliable and committed to them throughout their life. We support youth and families to also have consistent connections to their culture and community, including neighborhoods and schools. We diligently work to secure both legal and relational permanency with the highest degree of urgency. This is especially critical for older youth who otherwise would age out of foster care without family to rely on as they establish themselves as young adults. Our goal is that no youth in our direct service practice will age out of foster care.

practice model

Youth and family well-being will be improved

Families are supported in creating a safe, secure and responsive environment that provides for youth to be healthy, learn in school and be able to work in pursuit of their dreams for success. In addition to our focus on safety and permanency, we also understand the need for the youth's physical health, mental health, emotional and social development, life skills and educational and vocational skills. We work to effectively support family well-being through the development of protective capacities, supportive networks and by addressing parental challenges related to economic self-sufficiency and overall emotional well-being.

CFS Practice

CFS provides clinical case management services for youth and families who need help attaining or maintaining permanency and for young adults who are transitioning from foster care. Clinical case management is characterized by the intentional use of self in relationships with youth and families in a values based approach, that supports, guides and facilitates the youth and family through the process of change. Clinical case management allows for, and assumes, individualized practice. As strengths and needs of every youth and family differ, the exact approach and strategy that's taken will also differ.

Our priority population is older youth who tend to experience more barriers to permanency and are at-risk of aging out of the foster care system without the numerous benefits of a safe and permanent family. Initially, all youth and families are referred to us by the local child welfare jurisdiction, Independent Living Program provider or tribe through a written agreement. All nine CFS field offices provide clinical case management services, and six of those offices also provide placement supervision for youth in foster care, which includes resource family recruitment, training and supervision.

Our Practice is Built on Our VALUES

Youth-Focused, Family-Centered and Community-Based

Youth, families and communities are the center of our individualized work. Our services actively address needs and build on strengths and community resources, with a focus on establishing enduring connections. We prioritize keeping siblings together and maintaining youth in their local school and community.

Our work demands -- and is based on -- a strong understanding of identity formation, family systems and valuing the cultural context of the individual and family experience. We maintain a deep multi-cultural awareness and sensitivity to oppression, and actively challenge racism or other institutional barriers.

In our pursuit to attain legal permanency for youth, our first priority is to reunify youth with birth family. If that is not possible, our next priority is to place youth permanently with kin. If no kin or fictive kin can be found, we find another permanent family and actively pursue guardianship, adoption, or customary adoption wherein custody is permanently transferred. We rigorously use family finding

strategies to identify the maternal and paternal birth family and other adult relationships significant to the youth or family. Our goal is to help youth understand and come to terms with their birth family relationships, whatever they may be.

Developing foster homes locally is essential for youth to maintain a continuity of schools, providers and participation in their community. As we recruit, train and support our resource families, we emphasize their role as partners in our goal to attain legal and relational permanency. We encourage them to respect and facilitate birth family connections and relationships as well as to participate in co-parenting arrangements, when appropriate. When biological families are unable to assume their role as primary caregivers, we work with foster parents to consider adoption or another form of permanency.

In addition to our foster care services, we provide prevention and post-permanency supports to children and families at risk of entering or re-entering the child welfare system. We also support young adults who have aged out of foster care to develop and maintain permanent connections and to make a successful transition into adulthood. In all of these efforts we are mindful of honoring the perspective of the youth and family as the primary drivers of the work.

Relationship-Based with Teamwork

CFS social workers develop relationships with families that are built on transparency and developing a shared understanding of strengths, needs and desired outcomes. We recognize that effective teamwork is essential to success. This includes both the individual child and family teaming, and teaming with local community partners to ensure adequacy of resources and effective coalitions. Effective partnerships with the local jurisdiction or tribe are a hallmark of our work and pivotal to the achievement of outcomes and broader system improvement efforts.

It is our responsibility to build and strengthen the relationships between youth, birth families, extended family, treatment providers, public agency workers and resource families. In addition, we build relationships with other professionals in the lives of youth and within the communities in which they live and we pursue quality clinical consultation on an ongoing basis. The voice of youth and families is central to planning and permanency decisions and so they must be fully engaged to assist in solving the issues that may undermine healthy functioning. We recognize that teamwork is a discipline that requires skill, intent and time.

“They [CFS] are very receptive. We [Casey and CPS] pretty much manage cases together. From a child protective services perspective, I feel that I am learning a lot more things from them, and they learn from me, too. So it’s a good way to exchange information.”

– Child Protective Services Social Worker

practice *model*

Strength-Based, Participatory and Empowering

We, together with the youth and family, carefully plan the best course of action to end the need for child welfare intervention. We make the environment safe so that youth and families can share their stories of struggle, challenge and hope. We use tools and strategies to help identify and build on their strengths, clarify their understanding of their involvement with the child welfare system and create their vision of what can successfully end that intervention. We build on their responses to help motivate the changes needed and evoke a shared vision of success and the steps necessary to achieve it. We help them build networks and identify resources they can continue to access after our services have ended.

Culturally Responsive

We honor the unique culture of each youth and family, including racial and ethnic identity, sexual identity, and religious or spiritual beliefs. Positive cultural identity is an essential component of permanency planning with youth. We maximize the opportunity to serve American Indian/Alaska Native youth and families and consistently fulfill the obligations under the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act.

American Indian and African American children enter foster care *at a higher rate* than the general population.



Stewardship of Foundation and Public Funds

We make strategic and fiscally responsible decisions for sustainable and lasting contributions at all levels of our work. We use our resources judiciously and strive to highlight return on investment so that the broader impact of improving youth and family outcomes can be demonstrated.

We APPROACH Practice As If Each Child or Family Was Our Own

Urgent

We have no time to lose to secure the benefits of a safe, loving and nurturing family for every youth. Monthly permanency reviews evaluate the status of each youth or family and their progress toward permanency to ensure that barriers to a permanent family are being addressed promptly and new strategies are tried, if needed. Urgency to permanency does not supersede the need for safety and well-being. We pursue all three of these goals for children, youth and families knowing that the loss of time results in poorer outcomes.

Relentless

We pursue each step toward permanency, safety and well-being with tenacity. CFS primarily serves youth with difficult and/or multiple challenges to achieving permanency. The work we do demands innovative and persistent “barrier busting,” often including courageous and diplomatic challenging of assumptions, authority and policy.

Trauma-Informed

Trauma is often inherent in the circumstances that involve youth and families in the child welfare system. In some instances trauma related to abuse, neglect or loss is severe and has gone unaddressed for significant periods of time. Participation in the system itself can also create additional trauma. Our practice assumes that trauma impacts our clients and that we must avoid re-traumatization. We also accept that trauma is cumulative over time, and can be transferred between generations, thus posing a unique challenge for communities at risk for ongoing traumatic events. We therefore seek to understand and help heal the effects of trauma, engaging caregivers, partners and communities in creating trauma-informed services and supports. We also support staff in understanding and addressing the impact of secondary trauma.

Innovative and Evidence-Informed

We practice according to the most recent available information and research and contribute to the development of new information and research about what works. We provide training for staff on those practices that have demonstrated promise and effectiveness. We diligently monitor the progress of youth and families during service delivery, including obtaining client feedback on our services and those services provided through our referrals.

In some instances, practice decisions are not clearly guided by research. In these situations, we rely on our values and principles, fundamentals of social work practice, practice-based evidence, teamwork and supervision for guidance. In addition, we adhere to Council on Accreditation Standards and the NASW Code of Ethics.

Integrated

We encourage and equip our staff to use a variety of appropriate and effective strategies and tools throughout the time we serve a youth and family. These strategies and tools range from those that staff use because they know them to be effective, to those evidence-informed and evidence-based strategies required in CFS practice. For those evidence-based strategies that require fidelity to a model, we ensure that the standards for practice and training are developer-approved. We strive to weave all of our work together in ways that create a consistent and coherent practice tailored to the needs of each client.

Our PROCESS For Case Management and Service Delivery is Individualized

Accurate Ongoing Assessment

We believe assessment begins at the first point of contact with the youth and family and continues until our work with them has ended. Our assessment is strength-based, developmentally sensitive, culturally-responsive and trauma-informed to identify the underlying needs and strengths used

practice *model*

to inform individualized service planning. We use the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS), an evidenced-based, comprehensive functional assessment process based on a communication framework. CANS allows for the integration of information from various sources and is finalized with input from all members of the multidisciplinary team. Youth and caregivers are key informants as are others who have relevant evidence to inform the assessment. This approach is grounded in youth and family centered practice that encourages transparency, collaboration and communication. While this provides a basic structure for assessment, it also encourages collaboration and supports the relationship between the client (youth, young adult or family heads of household) and the CFS social worker which is critical to valid, ongoing assessment and informed planning.

Effective Planning

Service planning follows from the assessment of strengths and needs and is always a participatory process that takes into account youth development as well as the culture and values of the family. Service plans are individualized and behaviorally specific, with clearly identified measurable and time-limited goals, objectives and action steps. The finalized service plan is approved by the client, the CFS social worker and supervisor, and the child welfare system jurisdiction worker. Service plans are reviewed and modified as needed through regular meetings.

Efficient Service Delivery

Services are delivered in a team-based approach characterized by coordination, collaboration and shared decision-making. Services are regularly reviewed and updated through formal reviews and frequent contact with the client, service providers, jurisdiction worker and others important to the family. Services are tracked in the CFS case management system to assist the social worker as well as the larger organization to monitor where a given youth or family is on their path to permanency, safety and well-being.

Equal to our emphasis on ensuring that every youth attains permanency is our emphasis on making sure that each youth and family are prepared to be successful without further child welfare intervention. Post-permanency planning is ongoing throughout our work with every family. Based on individual circumstances, post-permanency support may also be provided.

Organizational Support

We believe that to be successful in our work, our organizational culture must mirror the values and practice strategies that guide the work we do with youth and families and community partners. Important components of our organizational support, which we consistently strive to attain, are outlined below.

Our measure of success... will be the degree to which you build up others to work with you. While building up others you will have built up yourself.

– Jim Casey



An increasing number
of children in care
are placed with relatives.

Qualified Workforce

We actively recruit and hire staff who reflect the diverse cultures of those we serve, are culturally responsive, and open to opportunities to examine and improve their skills in this area. The administrative acumen, educational background and especially the clinical skills of our supervisors are critical to guide and support line practice and set the stage for their success as leaders in the work. Staff roles are well-defined and work assignments, caseloads and supervisory ratios are manageable and in accordance with Council on Accreditation standards.

CFS social workers are supported by training and supervision that focus on applying family-centered principles, critical thinking skills and trauma-informed practices. We ensure both initial and ongoing training and coaching for all staff. Staff training curricula are designed to teach a comprehensive and integrated approach to practice. We also encourage shared training with relevant partners and stakeholders.

Data-Driven Accountability and Continuous Quality Improvement

All CFS staff are accountable for our outcomes and continuously striving to improve them. We employ a number of data-driven strategies to ensure that all CFS staff have timely information to participate constructively in a continuous improvement process.

Required data entry into our electronic data collection system allows us to monitor the progress and permanency status of an individual client. In addition, it allows us to aggregate that information for reports that are relevant for a worker, a supervisor or a field office, as well as the organization as a whole. Special reports can also be generated to look more closely at a particular population or the effectiveness of a particular service, or for program evaluation. Comparable jurisdiction information is made available as well.

We use regular ChildStat meetings to engage with both field office managers and direct service staff to look in depth at a particular element or population in our practice. In our review of data we identify barriers and successes to learn where and how we can improve. We are committed to bringing our practice values together with the actual data to drive improvements. The Deep Data Dives (3D), which are held in each field office, bring the ChildStat conversation to a more intimate setting allowing each staff member to see their role in influencing and contributing to the outcomes we seek.

practice *model*

We focus on Continuous Quality Improvement and conduct regular reviews for each of our field offices to ensure that our work is done with fidelity to our Practice Model, in accordance with Council on Accreditation and jurisdiction standards, and to ensure we are achieving the intended outcomes. Peer reviewers as well as headquarters staff participate in these reviews.

Leadership

The function of those in designated CFS leadership and headquarters support positions is to ensure that practice expectations are clearly defined, and to support and facilitate practice that improves outcomes for the youth and families we serve. This includes:

- Establishing a vision for practice in field offices.
- Aligning resources to promote and support our practice.
- Reducing barriers so that social workers and other direct service staff can practice according to our model.
- Providing ongoing, constructive feedback on progress.
- Making improvements based on data and evidence.

Leadership is everyone's responsibility at CFS. The success of our practice is dependent on every worker, supervisor, manager and administrative support person taking collective ownership of the work and the outcomes we are striving to achieve. Our work is driven by our commitment to collaboration and innovation and to our unwavering commitment to the children, youth, young adults and families we serve.

CFS has a commitment to really address the hard things – the systematic problems, such as disproportionality. You hear the 2020 strategy, and you think, ‘Oh yeah, that’s cool.’ But they really take on this work. They put programs in place that actually address this disparity. They don’t ignore that African American children are over-represented in all systems. They move the needle in all systems.

– Community Partner

Conclusion

Jim Casey is recognized as being a great humanitarian. In our day-to-day work, we strive and hope to emulate his drive, passion and dedication to the children, youth, young adults and families we serve. Jim Casey also is recognized as a person who got things done. As we implement this Practice Model, we also heed his words: “Inspiration and enthusiasm are of little value unless they move us to action and accomplishment.”

Organizational Support

Practice

Youth *and* Family *in* Community

outcomes

Youth feel safe
and are safe

All youth
attain legal
and relational
permanency

Youth and family
well-being is
improved

Values

- Family Centered
- Relationship-based
- Participatory
- Culturally responsive
- Stewardship

Approach

- Urgent
- Relentless
- Trauma-informed
- Innovative and
Evidence Informed
- Integrated

Process

- Individualized
- Accurate, ongoing
assessment
- Effective planning
- Efficient service
delivery

Qualified
workforce

Data-driven
accountability and
continuous quality
improvement

Leadership



Appropriate supports could prevent the need for foster care for many of the 3 million children annually involved in maltreatment investigations.

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families across America. Founded in 1966, we work in 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to influence long-lasting improvements to the safety and success of children, families and the communities where they live.

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