


FAMILY FIRST

BLUEPRINT FOR IOWA'S FUTURE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

“Family Connections are Always Strengthened and Preserved”

Principles and Commitments

- 1. Family Voice and Choice.** Family and youth/child perspectives are intentionally elicited and prioritized during all phases of involvement. Nothing about the family without the family.
 - A. Case planning and services must be family-centered.
 - B. Children's concerns and identification of caring adults will be specifically solicited and included in case planning.
 - C. Children in foster care deserve normalcy and access to activities and experiences similar to their peers.
- 2. Team Based.** The team consists of individuals agreed upon by the family and are committed to them. The team is family inclusive, but not family exclusive.
 - A. Conferences will be held at multiple key junctions: child safety (pre-removal), case planning, Family/ Youth Team Decision-Making meetings, and risk of changes in placement.
 - B. Intentional in ensuring team members understand their role in advocating for the preservation and support of family connections.
- 3. Natural Supports.** The team actively seeks full participation of team members drawn from family members' networks of natural support. This is particularly true when a child is being placed out of home. This must occur from the first contact with a family and ongoing.
 - A. Parents and natural support caregivers receive support equivalent to, or greater than, what foster parents receive.
 - B. Placement is with a known, caring adult.
- 4. Collaboration.** Team members work cooperatively and share responsibility for developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the family's case plan. The plan reflects a blending of team member perspectives, mandates, and resources. The plan guides and coordinates each team member's work toward meeting the team's goals.
 - A. In-person meetings are necessary to positive engagement, cohesive case planning, and building trust.
 - B. Relationship-based work enhances engagement, trust, services, and outcomes. Consistency of workers is critical to effective work. Fewer workers involved with a family are better.



5. Community-Based. The team implements service and support strategies that take place in accessible and least restrictive settings possible; and that safely promote child and family integration into home and community life.

- A. Use opportunity of involvement with families to enhance well-being and prevent maltreatment, such as addressing safe sleep and connecting families to Early ACCESS.
- B. Services, such as domestic violence, public assistance, mental health and substance abuse, are strategically embedded where family engagement and planning takes place.
- C. Connections to community of origin are important.

6. Culturally Responsive. The team demonstrates respect for, and builds on the values, preferences, beliefs, culture and identity of, the child/youth and family and their community.

- A. Intentional strategies towards recruiting, hiring, and supporting staff who reflect the culture and life experience of the population served.
- B. Family history, culture, life experiences, and ethnic identities are relevant and important to establishing a trusting and productive relationship.

7. Strengths Based. The case plan must identify, build on, and enhance the capabilities, knowledge, skills, and assets of the child and family by utilizing their community and other team members.

- A. All families and communities have inherent strengths and value.
- B. Leadership will identify opportunities to match worker's strengths and skills with specific family needs.

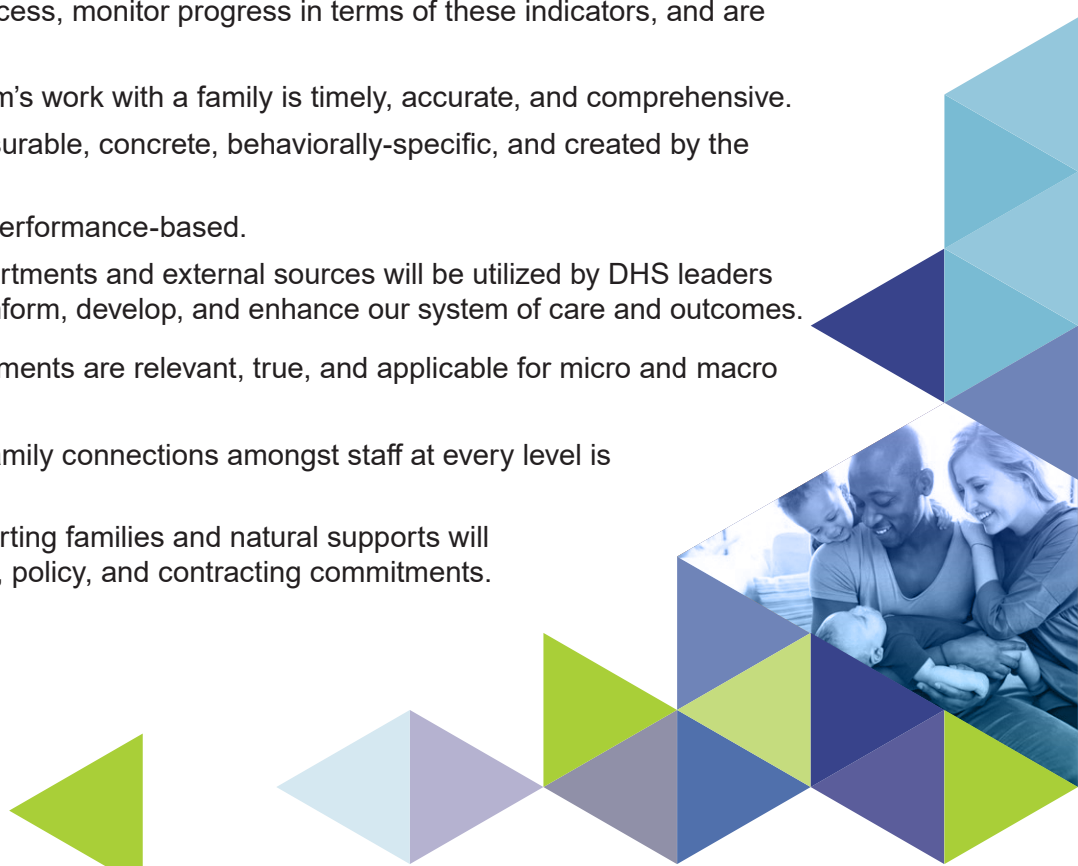
8. Persistence and Creativity. Despite challenges, the team persists in strengthening and preserving family connections by considering possibilities outside the status quo.

- A. Treating every family as though they were our own drives practice.
- B. Have the courage to recognize when something isn't working and commit to pursuing alternative solutions.

9. Outcome Based. Goals and strategies of the system and case planning are observable, have measurable indicators of success, monitor progress in terms of these indicators, and are revised accordingly.

- A. Documentation of the team's work with a family is timely, accurate, and comprehensive.
- B. Case plan goals are measurable, concrete, behaviorally-specific, and created by the team.
- C. Contracted services are performance-based.
- D. Integrated data from Departments and external sources will be utilized by DHS leaders and service providers to inform, develop, and enhance our system of care and outcomes.

10. Universal. Practice commitments are relevant, true, and applicable for micro and macro interactions.

- A. Insisting on the value of family connections amongst staff at every level is critical to success.
 - B. Gaps in the system supporting families and natural supports will be resolved through fiscal, policy, and contracting commitments.
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