

California Child Welfare Core Practice Model:

The Activation of California's Integrated Core Practice Model in Child Welfare



BACKGROUND



UNDERLYING FRAMEWORK



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LEADERSHIP COMMITMENTS



THE EVOLUTION OF THE CPM



PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS

California Child Welfare Core Practice Model



BACKGROUND

The California Child Welfare Core Practice Model (CPM) framework embodies the evolutionary spirit of child welfare practice and supports ongoing efforts to adapt to the challenging landscape of this constantly changing field. The Core Practice Model supports the transformation of the Child Welfare System at multiple levels and, in partnership with the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM), supports transformation throughout all child- and family-serving systems.



THE CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL

In 2012, California's Public Child Welfare community began efforts to develop a California Child Welfare Core Practice Model to provide a consistent statewide framework for Child Welfare social workers and leaders to sustain and improve practice in all 58 California counties. From the outset, the goal has been to establish a practice model that guides service delivery and decision-making at all levels of Child Welfare, while amplifying and integrating proven and emerging practices already in place across California to improve outcomes for children and families statewide.

Between 2012 and 2016 the basic framework of the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model (CPM) took shape with input from community members, Tribes, social workers, supervisors, managers and directors across the state. Since 2017 efforts have been underway to install and sustain the CPM in all 58 counties using the principles of implementation science to ensure that the conceptual framework of the CPM is visible in the practice of Child Welfare staff at all levels of each organization.



INTEGRATED CORE PRACTICE MODEL

Evolving from the development of the Child Welfare Core Practice Model and complementary efforts, the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) addresses the challenge of establishing the context for collaborative work among multiple agencies. The ICPM is a unifying framework for child and family serving systems across the state that aligns and integrates initiatives such as Continuum of Care Reform, Wraparound, Child and Family Teaming, and System of Care. The ICPM reinforces and expands collaborative and interactive practices that support effective partnership and improved outcomes for children, youth, and families. The ICPM guides AB 2083 Interagency Leadership Teams, Comprehensive Prevention Planning, and other System of Care developments across California. The fundamental elements of the Integrated Core Practice Model are aligned with the Child Welfare Core Practice Model and expanded to encompass cross-agency partnership work. The framework that is described in this document reflects the ICPM elements and represents the specific observable and measurable work that takes place within the Child Welfare System in the behaviors of leaders and those engaged in direct service delivery. The ICPM provides a unifying practice model across child- and family-serving agencies. The CPM represents its activation within California Child Welfare agencies, while partner systems maintain aligned practice approaches grounded in the same principles as well.

RACE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL

The California Child Welfare community recognizes that Black, Indigenous, and pan ethnic communities of Spanish speakers and Latin American descendants continue to be disproportionately represented and experience disparate outcomes in the child welfare system. The CPM revision initiated in 2019 emphasizes equity, justice, and Tribal Sovereignty across its framework, values, leadership commitments, and practice, supporting child welfare agencies to actively implement the model in ways that address the disproportionate involvement of people of color in the child welfare system.

UNDERLYING FRAMEWORK

The underlying framework for the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model draws from cultural wisdom, values, and theories to guide the development of casework components, practice elements, leadership behaviors, and practice behaviors. The underlying framework is composed of the following cultural wisdom, values and theories:

Orienting and Relational Wisdom, Values and Theories

These help us understand:

- Each family member has inherent strength, dignity and worth and must be treated with respect and afforded self-determination whenever possible.
- Current and historical trauma and other stressors set a context for maltreatment and hamper engagement and intervention efforts.
- We have a responsibility to protect and promote attachment bonds as well as family and cultural group connections as we work with families.
- Parenting is challenging, and all parents need help from the larger family group and the broader community with structure, transitions, and milestones.
- Systemic racism is a primary driver for reproducing racial inequality and is manifested in four levels:
 - » Structural
 - » Institutional
 - » Interpersonal
 - » Individual

Using these understandings leads to:

- Practice that is empathetic, compassionate, genuine, authentic, transparent, and centered on the individual as we interact with individuals, families and cultural groups.
- Greater empathy and a shift in emotional reactions to families that enter the system.
- Development and use of strategies for building on strengths and working to enhance motivation for change.
- Commitment to anti-racism, being culturally responsive, challenging systemic racism, and working in partnership with not only the members of the nuclear family but also with the extended family and larger cultural communities.

Interventions based in Cultural Wisdom, Values and Theories help us:

- Center race equity and social justice to attend to ongoing disproportionality and disparate outcomes for families of color.
- Identify bias in decision-making and take steps to eliminate it.
- Work with families to find and use services that will address the key factors to interrupt unsafe behavioral patterns, life situations, thoughts, emotions, and triggers that contribute to maltreatment.

- Understand the sequence of events that led to concerns about child safety.
- Understand what needs to change and how to change it to promote safety and keep children with their immediate or extended family.
- Understand the needs of children and youth in foster care, guardianship, and adoption and help them keep ties to family and community as well as develop new attachments.
- Understand how to help families through transitions and their responses to trauma.

Organizational Theories

Organizational culture and climate theories, along with open system theories, focus Child Welfare practice and leadership on parallel processes, trauma-informed systems, system-of-care approaches and learning organizations. These theories drive our effort to support the Child Welfare workforce through quality recruitment, training, and individual development, and they also promote critical thinking, self-reflection, and humility. We use these theories to help create and maintain organizational health through a culture and climate that supports learning and development.

VALUES

The following value statements are an expression of our beliefs and explain what we are striving for in our work with families:

- We believe that families can grow and change.
- We believe in prevention and early intervention by partnering with communities and Tribes to support families in keeping children and youth safe and promoting family well-being.
- We believe that focusing on race, equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI) will promote a sense of belonging and social justice that will lead to improved outcomes for children and families.
- We believe the best way to support families is to honor their lived experiences and culture by listening to them and working together to build partnerships based on mutual respect and trust.
- We believe that children, youth, and young adults should have lifelong, loving permanent families and sustained connections to family members, communities, and Tribes.
- We believe that honestly sharing our assessment of strengths and concerns is essential for engaging with family members, communities and Tribes.
- We believe in Tribal sovereignty and that Tribes have an inherent interest in promoting the health and well-being of their families and therefore must be a part of all decision-making.



LEADERSHIP COMMITMENTS

Leaders act intentionally to support and sustain everyone's ability to honor the Core Practice Model values. In addition, Child Welfare leaders at all levels demonstrate their commitment to the Core Practice Model through creating an anti-racist organizational culture and climate that promotes equity and justice. Leaders do this by:

- Growing and developing personally and professionally, in alignment with the Core Practice Model Leadership Behaviors.
- Thinking and acting individually and collectively to support self-reflection, humility and continuous development of the workforce.
- Supporting staff to connect all family members with effective, family-focused, strength-based and culturally-responsive services and supports that help everyone achieve their full potential.
- Creating an organizational culture and climate that supports a professionally trained, confident, engaged and culturally responsive workforce.
- Recognizing, respecting, developing and supporting the leadership role of every staff member within the organization.
- Supporting the health and well-being of the workforce to prepare staff to address the dynamics and demands of the Child Welfare practice environment.
- Offering professional development opportunities, adaptive leadership, reflective supervision and coaching that facilitate a culturally responsive and supported workforce.
- Considering the makeup of the workforce to ensure that it is reflective and supportive of the linguistic, ethnic and cultural needs of families and communities represented in the Child Welfare system.
- Using intentional communication to build and maintain a learning organization.
- Demonstrating accountability by conducting internal analyses to identify decision-making biases and supporting the workforce in adjusting their practice.

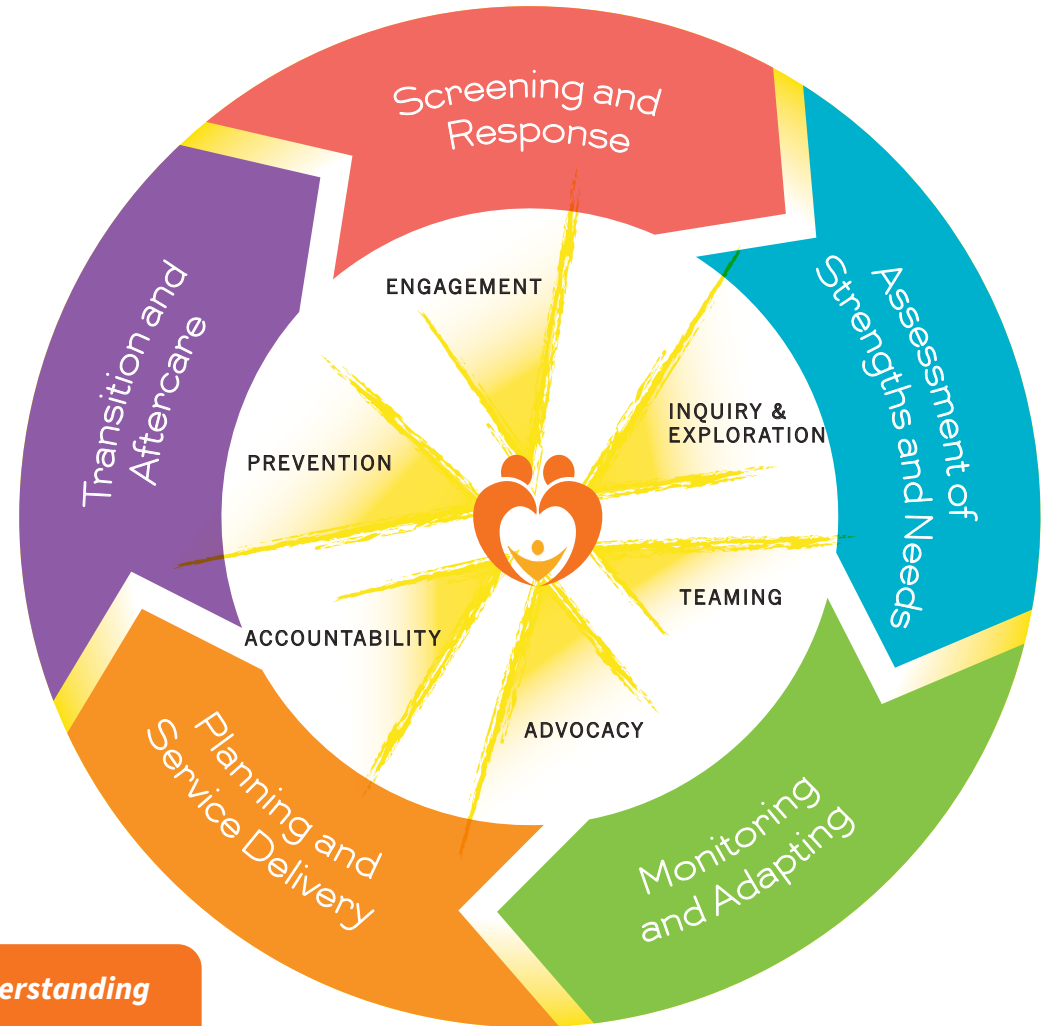
THE EVOLUTION OF CALIFORNIA'S CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL

Several programs and practices have influenced the development of the Child Welfare Core Practice Model, which in turn has resulted in the evolution of California's Child Welfare system. This work has moved forward in partnership with counties, communities and Tribes at local and statewide levels.

PAST, PRESENT, AND EMERGING INITIATIVES

COMPONENTS & ELEMENTS

CALIFORNIA PARTNERS for PERMANENCY
 CONTINUUM of CARE REFORM
 FAMILY to FAMILY
 KATIE A.
 LINKAGES
 PARENT PARTNERS
 QUALITY PARENTING INITIATIVE
 RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL PROCESS
 SAFETY ORGANIZED PRACTICE
 WRAPAROUND
 COMPREHENSIVE PREVENTION PLANNING



As illustrated by this graphic, there are two aspects to understanding child welfare practice - WHAT we do and HOW we do it.



WHAT WE DO – CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE COMPONENTS

Child Welfare practice has traditionally consisted of phases that define the basic activities of collaborative work with family members involved with Child Welfare. These Practice Components are:

- Screening and Response
- Assessment of Strengths and Needs
- Planning and Service Delivery
- Monitoring and Adapting
- Transition and Aftercare

HOW WE DO IT – CORE PRACTICE MODEL PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP ELEMENTS

Practice Elements define how we carry out the Practice Components and provide the framework for further operationalization in identifiable behaviors (which are fully described in the next section). The Practice Elements guide Child Welfare professionals in their practice and leadership with family members, caregivers, communities, Tribes and partner agencies. These Practice Elements are:

- Prevention
- Engagement
- Inquiry and Exploration
- Teaming
- Advocacy
- Accountability

The Core Practice Model has focused on identifying, unpacking and describing the “how we do it” through the identification of practice and leadership behaviors.

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

The considerations described below provide an important foundation for understanding the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model Behaviors:



INTERVENTION ON TWO LEVELS

The CPM is an intervention that occurs on two levels – at the direct practice level through the Practice Behaviors and at the system level through the Leadership Behaviors. The CPM practice behaviors inform day to day practice at the family level. In parallel, leadership behaviors guide relationship building with partners and staff; they also create healthy organizational conditions needed for the CPM to thrive in a dynamic practice environment.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles are grounded in the CPM values and guide all Child Welfare practice and leadership behaviors:

1. Be open, honest, clear, and respectful.
2. Practice transparency, authenticity, and partnership when engaging with families, community members, Tribes, and colleagues.

3. Center the family in the context of their culture and practicing cultural humility.
4. Honor and value diverse community norms and practices.
5. Use a race equity and inclusion approach in our engagement with families, communities, Tribes, and colleagues.
6. Listen to understand how words, actions, and personal biases may offend, hurt, and even harm others.
7. Recognize and address the systemic and personal biases that contribute to disproportionate representation and disparate outcomes for families, communities, and Tribes.
8. Hold ourselves accountable in our practice and leadership behaviors.
9. Support the implementation and growth of the CPM throughout the organization, at the leadership and practice levels, using culturally responsive approaches so that all of the CPM behaviors can flourish.

CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Implicit within the leadership and practice behaviors is the collective impact that critical partnerships and relationships bring to true implementation of the CPM. Those partnerships are connections with a variety of communities and individuals that include but are not limited to: Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC); those with lived experience; people with different physical abilities including neurodiversity; those with diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity expression; and immigrant populations, whether documented or not. The CPM seeks to counteract the long-standing disproportionate representation and disparity of outcomes for BIPOC families and promotes fairness and equity for all.

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

It is essential to recognize that Tribes are sovereign nations with independent governments, laws and regulations equal to those of the state and federal government. Tribal nations are responsible for the care of Tribal children and families; therefore, Tribes must be actively engaged and included in the day-to-day practice and decision-making and the development of relationships, partnerships, and collaboration at all leadership levels. Tribes must not be thought of as “just” an entity or an agency. The Tribe/child relationship should be understood in a framework of belonging. The child belongs to the Tribe and it is important to recognize that there is a familial connection between the child and the Tribe. CPM leadership and practice behaviors respect Tribal ways of being and demonstrate understanding and respect for the sovereignty of Tribal nations.

PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP INTERDEPENDENCE

Critical to the CPM is the principle that all six Practice Elements guide behavior at the family-level (Practice Behaviors) and the leadership-level (Leadership Behaviors). These six categories (Prevention, Engagement, Inquiry and Exploration, Teaming, Advocacy, and Accountability) define behaviors that are interrelated and interdependent, and when carried out consistently within all levels of the Child Welfare system, promote positive outcomes for families, communities, and Tribes. Having been developed by stakeholders across California, including those with lived expertise, we embrace these six Practice Elements as key drivers of system transformation, with cultural humility, equity, diversity, and inclusion in center focus.

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

CPM	PRACTICE BEHAVIORS	LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">A. PREVENTION</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partner with the family and follow their lead to strengthen their team and reinforce natural supports to prevent child welfare system involvement. 2. Actively partner with families, communities, and Tribes to link all family members to culturally relevant community resources that support individual and family well-being. 3. Work with the family to build and sustain protective factors (parental resilience, social connections, positive family relationships, concrete supports, cultural and community networks, etc.) that can build protective capacity and mitigate potential harm. 4. Maintain knowledge about resources and supports available in communities and Tribes and help families access them. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate and align efforts to support the well-being of families and communities with key partners (Tribes, Early Childhood, Health, Behavioral Health, K-12 Education, Probation, etc.). 2. Actively partner with the leaders of Tribes, communities, and those with lived experience to develop and sustain a community response approach that promotes racial equity and builds awareness of cultural strengths and differences. 3. Join with youth, young adults, families, communities, and Tribes to develop and sustain strength-based prevention services that center family voice, community, and Tribe. 4. Meaningfully participate and invest in partnerships with families, Tribes, communities, and people with lived experience to establish, ensure access to, and sustain culturally responsive resources and supports within the community that increase protective factors, resiliency, and family well-being. 5. Advocate for, develop, and sustain services and supports to meet the concrete needs of families within their communities, so they have housing and financial resources, strategies and supports to build strength, resiliency and stability in their lives. 6. Share information and strategize with Tribes, community providers, and system partners to build awareness of the availability of prevention services to address racial equity and decrease disproportionality.

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">B. ENGAGEMENT</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate an interest in connecting with the family and helping them identify and meet their goals by actively listening and acknowledging what is important to them. 2. Reflect what you heard and use language and concepts the family has used to show that you understood. 3. Identify and engage family members, natural supports, and others who are important to the family, making a special effort to engage fathers and paternal relatives. 4. Show cultural humility and use language and body language that demonstrate an accepting and affirming approach to understanding the family, their experiences, and their culture. 5. Show respect for Tribal sovereignty and deference to Tribal leaders and their titles. 6. Ask people how they prefer to be addressed, and address individuals by the name and/or title and pronouns they request in person and in writing. 7. Ask family members what method of communication they prefer, use age-appropriate language that everyone can understand, and confirm with family members that your communication meets their language and literacy needs. 8. Help family members access the services and supports in their language that meet their individual needs and ask for feedback about their experience with the services and supports they receive. 9. Sustain and renew engagement efforts by reaching out regularly, sharing information, and responding to evolving family needs with culturally relevant services and supports. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to staff at all levels, families, partners, Tribes, and community members (including those with lived experience) and collaborate with them to overcome barriers and celebrate successes. 2. Establish and communicate the agency's vision in collaboration with staff at all levels, families, Tribes, those with lived experience, community members, and partners. 3. Establish, model, and maintain regular and frequent communication to encourage an active partnership that engages staff at all levels, partners, Tribes and community members (including those with lived experience) in implementation and system improvement activities. 4. Respect timelines, diverse practices, and positions of leadership across Tribes, cultures, and communities by ensuring that senior Child Welfare leaders are responsive to Tribal and community elders and that relationships are cultivated and maintained at this level.

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">C. INQUIRY & EXPLORATION</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inquire about a family’s culture, values and beliefs and incorporate them throughout your work with the family. 2. Work continuously to find, locate, and learn about family members, Tribal connections, and supportive relationships. 3. Ask about and acknowledge the trauma experienced by the family including the traumatic impact of involvement in the Child Welfare system. 4. Explore the expressed and underlying needs of the family by asking about their experiences and identifying their strengths, needs, safety concerns, and solutions. 5. Ask family members about their ideas about safety and permanency and incorporate their perspectives in all practice. 6. Ask children, youth, and young adults about their worries, wishes, where they feel safe and where they want to stay and incorporate their perspectives in practice. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use an inquiry-based decision-making process that seeks and utilizes input, diverse perspectives and other data to identify barriers, challenges and successes and develop and implement solutions with staff at all levels, partners, Tribes, and community members. 2. Take time to gather information and use organizational processes that foster critical thinking and reflection, even in times of crisis. 3. Explore and promote culturally responsive, mutually reflective, supportive leadership, supervision, and practices at all levels. 4. Learn about and be respectful of various customs, leadership, and communication styles that are unique to different populations, cultures, and communities. 5. Create opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, try new things, and promote a learning organization, where mistakes are opportunities to learn and grow.

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

CPM	PRACTICE BEHAVIORS	LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS
D. TEAMING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with the family to build and sustain a team of natural and professional supports that engages and centers the family and their cultural, community and Tribal connections as early as possible. Facilitate development of a mutually supportive relationship between the parents and caregivers. Promote the capacity of family members, Tribes, and their teams to identify culturally responsive services, supports, visitation activities, and meeting locations that honor family members' traditions and needs. Facilitate culturally responsive team processes, utilizing available and relevant assessments to make decisions in partnership with the family and their team. Be transparent about the role of the Court and the Child Welfare agency and constraints that may limit shared decision-making. Collaborate with the family and their team to recognize and respond to evolving family needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and nurture partnerships with Tribes and community-based service providers with cultural connections to families receiving services. Actively partner with Tribal and community leaders to develop and implement culturally responsive practices, services, policies, and solution-focused supports for the well-being of families. Model inclusive decision-making with staff at all levels and with partners and Tribes, using teaming structures and approaches that support families and their networks.
E. ADVOCACY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing gaps in culturally responsive services and supports for families and advocate within the Child Welfare agency to find or develop services and supports that meet diverse needs. Acknowledge, support, and facilitate the family's capacity to advocate for themselves. Listen to families, youth, communities, and Tribes and amplify their voices when they advocate for what they need. Advocate with service providers to make sure family needs are met. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate frequent and regular opportunities for Tribes, communities, agency partners, staff, youth, families, and caregivers to share their voice and to influence the agency's priorities and direction. Recognize and honor innovation and risk-taking in identifying services and supports that meet the individual and cultural needs of families. Engage families, youth, communities, Tribes, and staff in regular processes for sharing and analyzing meaningful data as the foundation for planning, decision-making, and resource allocation. Identify systemic barriers and advocate for the resources needed to engage families, communities, and Tribes in culturally responsive services. Advocate for the resources needed to support staff health and well-being, including quality workforce development.

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">F. ACCOUNTABILITY</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be open and honest about the safety threats and circumstances that brought the family to the attention of the agency, safety plan requirements, what information can be shared among team members, and what information will be included in court reports. 2. Model accountability and trust by doing what you say you're going to do, being responsive (including returning calls, texts, and emails within 24 business hours), being on time (including timely documentation of casework activities, submitting reports on time and being on time for appointments) and following ICWA and other federal and state laws. 3. Acknowledge and work to eliminate individual and institutional bias by addressing bias without judgment when you see it and offering information about potential harm and hurt it may cause. 4. Take responsibility for your own actions, missteps, and mistakes, admit when you are wrong, and remediate when possible. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognize and address the assessment and decision-making bias that leads to disproportionate representation and disparate outcomes for families, communities, and Tribes. 2. Demonstrate responsibility and clearly convey to staff, families, Tribes, and community members that leaders at each level are accountable for the experience and outcomes of children and families served by the organization. 3. Listen to staff, families, Tribes, and community members to establish a shared expectation for continuous feedback, data collection, evaluation and follow-up that inform organizational performance, culture, and policy. 4. Monitor CPM fidelity and effectiveness and implement strategies that leverage strengths and cultivate learning and continuous improvement. 5. Establish and communicate a transparent process to track staff turnover and resource gaps and implement responsive actions. 6. Model accountability and trust by doing what you say you're going to do, being responsive (including returning calls, texts, and emails within 24 business hours) and maintaining feedback loops.