

The Cultural Equity Alliance: A Statewide Child Welfare System Steering Committee

Mission Statement

“The Cultural Equity Alliance pursues equity by identifying and implementing institutional policy and practice changes that lead to the reduction of disparities and disproportionality in Iowa’s child welfare system.”

Child Welfare System Definition

The child welfare system is made up of individuals, families, organizations, and community-based programs that work together to improve the safety, health, permanency, and well-being of children. The responsibility to keep children safe from abuse and neglect is shared by families, community, tribes, helping agencies, educational systems, faith-based groups, law enforcement, courts, the Department of Human Services (DHS), and others. The adopted standards below are a guide as we work together to improve our culturally responsive approach with children and families from the local community level to the state level.

Guiding Principles

The Cultural Equity Alliance believes that the following principles and practices are essential to reducing disparities in the child welfare system. They represent culturally and linguistically appropriate service standards that can help promote equity for families within the system. No one standard is more important than another, and they are cited below in no particular order. All are equally essential to operating a child welfare system that is truly culturally responsive. The principles cited below are based closely upon National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Service (CLAS) Standards, Office of Minority Health, 2001.

1) Provide effective, equitable, understandable and respectful quality supports and services that are responsive to diverse cultural beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy and other communication needs.

Governance, Leadership and Workforce

2) Advance and sustain organizational governance and leadership that promotes standards and equity through policy, practices and allocated resources.

3) Recruit, promote and support a culturally and linguistically diverse governance, leadership and workforce that are responsive to the population in the service area.

4) Educate and train governance, leadership and workforce in culturally and linguistically appropriate policies and practices on an ongoing basis.

Communication and Language Assistance

5) Offer language assistance to individuals who have limited English proficiency and/or other communication needs, at no cost to them, to facilitate timely access to all supports and services.

6) Inform all individuals of the availability of language assistance services clearly and in their preferred language, verbally and in writing.

7) Ensure the competence of individuals providing language assistance, recognizing that the use of untrained individuals and/or minors as interpreters should be avoided.

8) Provide easy-to-understand print and multimedia materials and signage in the languages commonly used by the populations in the service area.

Engagement, Continuous Improvement and Accountability

9) Establish culturally and linguistically appropriate goals, policies and management accountability, and infuse them throughout the organizations' planning and operations.

10) Conduct ongoing assessments of the organization's standard related activities and integrate related measures into assessment measurement and continuous quality improvement activities.

11) Collect and maintain accurate and reliable demographic data to monitor and evaluate the impact of standards on equity and outcomes and to inform service delivery.

12) Conduct regular assessments of community assets and needs and use the results to plan and implement services that respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity of populations in the service area.

13) Partner with the community to design, implement and evaluate policies, practices and services to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness.

14) Create conflict- and grievance-resolution processes that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to identify, prevent and resolve conflicts or complaints.

15) Communicate the organization's progress in implementing and sustaining standards to all stakeholders, constituents and the general public.