

12 PRINCIPLES *of Public Child Protection*

A Commitment for Child Protection Leaders

Public child protection systems carry one of government's most serious responsibilities: **safeguarding children**. These principles outline the core commitments that should guide modern child protection practice:

1 **Child Safety Is the Paramount Responsibility**

The first obligation of public child protection systems is to ensure that children are safe from abuse and neglect.

2 **Timely Action When Risk Is Identified**

Child protection agencies must respond quickly and decisively to credible threats to a child's safety.

3 **Decisions Guided by Evidence and Information**

Child protection decisions should be informed by the best available evidence, historical information, and the most comprehensive data available.

4 **Transparency in Outcomes and Performance**

Agencies should publicly report key child protection outcomes and performance indicators on a regular basis so the public can understand how well children are being protected.

5 **Continuous Quality Review**

Child protection agencies should regularly review active investigations and cases to ensure that policies are followed and children are protected.

6 **Independent Oversight and Public Trust**

Child protection systems should support independent oversight and mechanisms that broaden public understanding of system operations and decision-making.

7**Skilled and Specialized Professionals**

Child protection work requires specialized skills and training, including investigative expertise, risk assessment, and engagement with families.

8**Tools that Support Better Decisions**

Frontline workers and supervisors should have access to modern technology, integrated data systems, and decision-support tools that help them assess risk and prioritize safety.

9**Responsibility for Results and Continuous Learning**

Child protection agencies must create systems of supervision, feedback, and accountability that ensure workers learn from decisions and continuously improve practice.

10**Listening to Families, Youth, and Caregivers**

Agencies should regularly seek feedback from families, youth, kinship caregivers, and foster parents to improve practice and strengthen trust.

11**Fair and Consistent Decision-making**

Policies and standards should be applied consistently so that children and families are treated fairly regardless of geography, race, or circumstance.

12**Collaboration Across Systems**

Protecting children requires coordination across systems—including health care, education, behavioral health, and law enforcement—to ensure children and families receive the support they need.

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