



GPS Practice Model

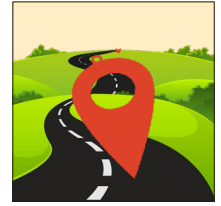
Guiding Principles and Standards

User Guide



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I. Introduction

The [Child Welfare Services Policies and Procedures Manual](#) establishes departmental requirements for the administration of child welfare services. The South Carolina Department of Social Services (Department) expects staff at all levels, especially those who have job responsibilities in the Child Welfare Services Division, to know, understand, and consistently apply these policies and procedures to promote excellence in carrying out the Department's mission. The Department also expects staff to refer to the Child Welfare Services Policies and Procedures Manual often to remain aware of current departmental requirements.

In addition to the Child Welfare Services Policies and Procedures Manual, the Department has adopted a model of casework practice called, [GPS: Guiding Principles and Standards, Better Together: Enhancing Practice and Transforming Lives](#). The development of the GPS casework practice model was a multi-year project that included several working sessions, focus group discussions with Case Managers, Team Leaders, and Managers in each region, extensive research and writing, expert technical assistance, and internal and external stakeholder input.

While the Child Welfare Services Policies and Procedures Manual codifies the Department's rules and standard operating procedures for employees, the GPS casework practice model describes the Department's approach, values, and beliefs in working with children and families.

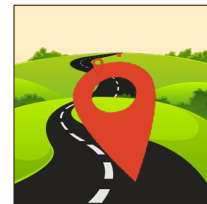
GPS describes the Department's approach to achieving practice excellence in working with children and families in a framework that includes five key areas:

- Mission
- Vision and Values
- Guiding Principles
- Core Practice Skills and
- Practice Model Outcomes

The Department expects Child Welfare Services Managers, Case Managers, and Team Leaders to rely on GPS in all daily interactions and decision-making.

This GPS user guide is a companion to the GPS casework practice model framework. The user guide targets front-line Child Welfare Services Managers, Team Leaders, and Case Managers (Child Welfare Services Staff). It provides an overview of the important terms and concepts that make up the GPS casework practice model framework. The user guide also explains how Child Welfare Services staff should use the GPS Practice Profiles during significant case activities, including, but not limited to, Case Manager Contacts with Parents and Children; Family Visits; Functional Assessments; Case Planning; Child and Family Teaming; Documentation; Placement; and Supervision.

Just as excellence in carrying out the Department's mission requires knowledge, understanding, and consistent application of departmental policies and procedures, it also requires knowledge, understanding, and consistent application of the practice standards described in GPS. Put succinctly, the GPS casework practice model and the Child Welfare Services Policy and Procedures Manual complement and mutually reinforce each other.



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II. Practice Model Framework

To achieve practice excellence, GPS calls upon Child Welfare Services staff to know, understand, and put into action five major areas when working with children and families, and in daily interactions with colleagues.

Mission

The first major area is the Department's Mission. An organization's mission statement provides the reason for the organization's existence. It states the purpose or goal of the organization and emphasizes commitment to meeting the needs of the community. All staff should know and understand the Department's mission.

The Department's mission is to-

Serve South Carolina by promoting safety, permanency and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults, helping individuals achieve stability and strengthening families.

This mission is accomplished through the core principles of competence, courage and compassion.

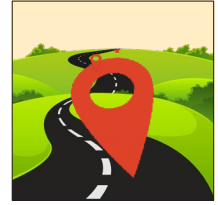
The Department's mission statement guides Child Welfare Services staff toward achieving child safety, permanency, stability, and well-being for children and families. The mission statement also expresses to the community the Department's commitment to serve, help, and strengthen. Carrying out the department's mission with practice excellence means the lives of children and families are improved as a result of our service.

Vision and Values

The second major area of the GPS framework that Child Welfare Services staff must put into action for practice excellence is the Department's Vision and Values. The GPS vision and values describe how Child Welfare Services staff must behave and the qualities they must have to be effective in their work with children and families and in their interactions with colleagues.

The vision and values of the GPS casework practice model are Respect, Excellence, Community Invested, and Accountability. GPS provides affirmative statements of what Child Welfare Services staff believe, how they behave, and the qualities exhibited when working with children, families, and in relation to colleagues. Though this is not an exhaustive list, the following are examples of affirmative statements of the Department's beliefs:

Respect- We treat all individuals with dignity, educate them of their rights and responsibilities, and honor their values and culture. We believe professional demeanor, behavior, appearance, and communication are demonstrations of respect.



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“Excellence- Our service delivery system and practice are based on our desire to achieve high performance, meet outcomes, and ensure accountability. We believe accurate, thorough, and timely assessment and documentation are essential to quality work.”

“Community Invested- DSS relies on formal and informal supports throughout each community to promote the prevention of child abuse and neglect and promote child and family well-being and lifelong connections. We believe the community within the child welfare system is made up of families, case managers, team leaders, managers, state, federal, and local stakeholders (i.e., churches, medical professionals, schools, etc.) who together protect, strengthen, and care for children and families. We believe children should be placed in their own neighborhoods and communities whenever possible.”

“Accountability- When our decisions and actions are transparent, and data is utilized to improve our practice, positive outcomes for children and families are achieved. We believe South Carolina deserves a public child welfare program with qualified and committed staff who engage families and communities to promote well-being, protect children, and prevent child abuse and neglect.”

Child Welfare Services staff must refer to the GPS vision and values often, may consider adding statements of belief, and must use the GPS vision and values to assess their own behavior, making sure behaviors are demonstrative of respect, excellence, community investment, and accountability. For additional information and a more thorough understanding of how each value is operationalized, please refer to the [Practice Model Framework](#).

Guiding Principles

The third major area of the GPS framework for practice excellence is the Guiding Principles. Four guiding principles form the foundation of excellent case practice, inform interactions, and guide the daily behaviors and interactions of Child Welfare Services staff. GPS guiding principles are Family-Centered, Trauma-Informed, Individualized, Strengths-Based, and Culturally Responsive.

1) Family-Centered Practice in Action

- Child Welfare Services staff are being family-centered in practice when they acknowledge each family’s strengths and capacity to make informed decisions and drive change; when they engage, encourage, honor, and support families in all areas; and, when they treat families, children, and youth as essential partners and experts regarding their needs.
- GPS guides Child Welfare Services staff on how to engage with families and their support network to make informed, family-centered decisions while maintaining child safety as the priority.
- GPS reminds Child Welfare Services staff of the importance of nurturing and supporting their colleague’s families as well.



2) Trauma-Informed Practice in Action

- Child Welfare Services staff are being Trauma-Informed in practice when they create a helping environment that identifies trauma, recognizes underlying causes, incorporates history to provide insight into current functioning, positively manages symptoms, promotes resiliency, prevents further trauma, and encourages health. By conducting a trauma-informed assessment we are better positioned to pursue the best trauma-informed intervention.
- GPS encourages Child Welfare Services staff to educate providers and colleagues on Trauma-Informed Practice and how they can support families and one another in building the capacity to understand trauma, recognize the signs, and respond in a way that supports children, families, and one another.
- GPS allows Child Welfare Services staff to create an environment that nurtures and supports one another, encourages self-care, and utilizes the support of trained clinicians when needed.

3) Individualized and Strengths-Based Practice in Action

- Child Welfare Services staff operationalize the Guiding Principle of Individualized and Strengths-Based practice by assessing and identifying the unique, individual strengths of children and families and nurturing them during case planning. Case planning and all critical decision-making points incorporate the perspectives of parents, children, and youth to the greatest extent possible. Individualized and Strengths-Based practice means we celebrate accomplishments and build upon protective capacities within families and their network of support.
- GPS guides Child Welfare Services staff to recognize and nurture the strengths of their colleagues in daily interactions.

4) Culturally Responsive Practice in Action

- Child Welfare Services staff demonstrate cultural responsiveness in their daily interactions by working to eliminate biases and disparities. GPS calls upon staff to be aware of their cultural biases and to demonstrate a commitment to respond to individuals of any race, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender expression, and faith, with full recognition of their equality, worth, and rights.
- GPS guides Child Welfare Services staff in how to behave in a culturally responsive manner with children, families, and colleagues.



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Core Practice Skills

GPS identifies six core practice skills that are essential to case practice excellence. Those practice skills are:

Engagement

Listening to families, recognizing strengths and needs, not being judgmental, facilitating a child and family team, including children, youth, and families in case planning

Teaming

Making families the core team members, coordinating the case planning team, meeting regularly, collaborating with formal and informal supports and community services for children and families

Functional Assessment

Continuous identification (both formal and informal) of family functioning, strengths, needs, challenges, protective capacities

Planning

Continuous assessment (informal and formal) and identifying family strengths and needs for resources, including the family in decision-making, celebrating successes, helping families understand the importance of achieving permanency and stability with a sense of urgency, making concurrent plans

Intervening

Individualized provision of services, connecting families to community resources, identifying formal and informal supports, addressing needs identified in the functional assessment and case planning, and building safety networks

Tracking and Adapting

Continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions and the family's progress in meeting the objectives of the case plan, identifying and addressing barriers and challenges, promptly responding to any need to alter the case plan, monitoring for improvements in family functioning and changes in behavior that signify parental ability to meet the child's needs

GPS guides Child Welfare Services staff to apply these core practice skills in daily work with children and families in a manner that is individualized and case specific.

Practice Model Outcomes

The fifth area of the GPS framework for practice excellence is the Practice Model Outcomes. When Child Welfare Services staff know, understand, and apply the framework consistently in their daily work with children and families, and in their interactions with colleagues, the Department realizes the essential mission of all child welfare services.

- Children are **Safe**, free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Caregivers provide attention, actions, and supports, and possess the skills and knowledge necessary to foster feelings of security and to protect the child from known potential threats.



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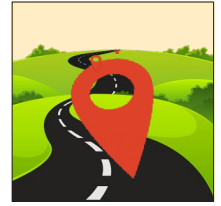
- Children have **Permanency** in their lives, living with parents or other caregivers who will provide lifelong legal and relational connections. Permanency efforts ensure that the child will experience enduring relationships that provide a sense of family, stability, and belonging.
- Children have **Well-Being** in that their developmental status is consistent with age expectations. Children are achieving and maintaining their optimal physical health, mental health, educational outcomes, and social and emotional outcomes.
- Children have **Stability**. Their daily living arrangements are familiar, stable, and free from risk of disruption.

III. Practice Profiles and Practice Goals

GPS identifies eight significant case activities and establishes best practice standards for each case activity. Using these case activities, Child Welfare Services staff will apply GPS values, guiding principles, and core practice skills in their everyday work promoting safety, permanency, stability, and well-being of children and families.

The eight significant case activities and their related goals are as follows:

- **Case Manager Visits (Contacts) with Youth and Family**
Goals
 - Increasing frequency and quality of case manager safety visits
 - Increasing the frequency and quality of in-person Case Manager visits with parents working towards the permanency goal of reunification
- **Functional Assessments**
Goals
 - Increasing timely safety and risk assessment
 - Increasing use of assessments of strengths and needs for case planning and intervention
 - Increasing timely initiation of services
- **Case Planning**
Goals
 - Increasing the development of individualized safety plans and interventions
 - Increasing linkage to care coordination matched to the child's needs, including primary care providers, timely screening, assessment, and follow-up
 - Increasing timely access to quality health, behavioral health, and dental services



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- **Child And Family Teaming**

Goals

- Increasing the youth and family participation in Child and Family Team Meetings
- Increasing the youth and family role and voices in service planning development
- Increasing family-centered, trauma-responsive, strengths-based, and individualized service plans

- **Documentation**

Goals

- Increasing the quality of documentation of safety visits
- Increasing the ability to track screening and treatment services for individual children
- Increasing the follow-up tracking of high-need, immediate-need or other special populations

- **Initial Placement and Placement Change (Traditional and Kinship)**

Goals

- Increasing the use of kinship foster care placements when placing children and youth at removal, and any subsequent placement change thereafter
- Increasing the participation of kin in case planning process
- Increasing placement stability for children in foster care

- **Parent/Child Visitation and Sibling Visitation**

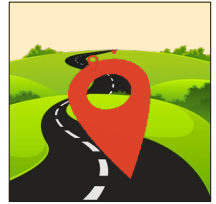
Goals

- Increasing the percentage of monthly sibling visits for children not living together
- Increasing the frequency and quality of parent/child visitation for children with the goal of reunification

- **Supervision**

Goals

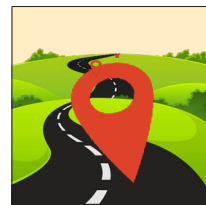
- Increasing the frequency and quality of supervision
- Increasing supervisory oversight and coaching surrounding safety assessment, planning, and intervention
- Increasing clarity of role and function of Team Leaders



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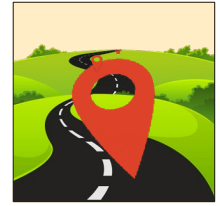
This is not an exhaustive list of case activities and goals in child welfare services. However, the list does represent the most significant and common case activities and goals across all service areas, whether it be investigations, family preservation, foster care, or adoptions.

Case Managers and Team Leaders should review the applicable practice profile in preparation for carrying out any of these case activities to deepen their understanding of the case activity, its purpose, and to be intentional in the approach to daily work. Regularly reviewing these practice profiles reinforces consistent application of the GPS Vision and Values, Guiding Principles, and Core Practice Skills.



IV. Glossary

1. **Vision and Values** – values are the behaviors and qualities we look for in those we hire and expect to be demonstrated in all interactions.
2. **Respect** – means treating all individuals with dignity, educating them of their rights and responsibilities, and honoring their values and culture.
3. **Excellence** – means our service delivery system and practice is based on our desires to achieve high performance, meet outcomes, and ensure accountability.
4. **Community Invested** – means relying on formal and informal supports throughout each community to promote the prevention of child abuse and neglect and promote child and family well-being and life-long connections. The “community” is family, Case Managers, Team Leaders, and state, local, and federal stakeholders. This includes church- es, schools, and medical professionals.
5. **Accountability** – means our decisions and actions are transparent and data is utilized to improve practice and we have positive outcomes for children and families.
6. **Guiding Principles** – means the fundamental truths that are the foundation that guide our everyday behaviors and relationships/interactions with one another and our clients. These principles are Family-Centered, Trauma-Informed, Individualized and Strengths-Based, and Culturally Responsive.
7. **Family-Centered** – means our approach to working with families demonstrates the belief that families have the strength and capacity to make informed decisions and drive change. Families are experts regarding the needs of their family, and we must respect and encourage families to offer solutions and goals toward child safety.
8. **Trauma-Informed** – means we assess and identify trauma reactions and respond with trauma-responsive interventions. A trauma-informed approach to working with families means identifying trauma by looking at history to provide insight to current behaviors, identifying current functioning, and then positively managing the symptoms.
9. **Individualized and Strengths-Based** – means incorporating each client’s strengths and needs into their own individual needs-based case plan. This is accomplished through honoring family and youth and celebrating their successes and building on their strengths.



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10. Culturally Responsive – means being able to acknowledge one’s own cultural bias and working to eliminate bias and disparities. This includes bias toward race, ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and immigration status.

11. Core Practice Skills – means the individualized and integrated activities that drive all phases of our work and collaboration with children, youth, and families. These skills are Engagement, Teaming, Functional Assessment, Planning, Intervening, and Tracking and Adapting.

12. Engagement – means developing a successful working relationship through honesty, respect, empathy, and active listening.

13. Teaming – means the creation of a team to include the family, their support system, and professionals. The team shares a common goal and demonstrates effectiveness in problem solving while working toward safe closure.

14. Functional Assessment – means the formal and informal process of assessing families’ strengths and needs to enhance family functioning and promote safety, permanency, and well-being.

15. Planning – means the use of functional assessments to create an individualized plan that will enhance and promote family functioning and promote safety, permanency, and well-being.

16. Intervening – means actively participating with families, children, and youth to develop a plan and create a service array. It means making referrals to community partners and resources, identifying formal and informal supports, and helping to create a safety network that can support the family.

17. Tracking and Adapting – means continually monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the permanency plan, the family’s progress and needs, and the services being provided. Being willing to make changes as needed and doing so in a timely manner.

**Note: Use the definitions found in this glossary whenever these terms are used in the Child Welfare Services Policy and Procedures Manual.*

