

# ENGAGING FAMILIES IN FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

## COMPETENCIES

### **Skill Set #1: Ability to integrate casework methods with the exercise of protective authority when necessary to ensure children's safety**

1. Knows characteristics, strengths and limitations of a collaborative casework and protective-authority approach to child protection
2. Understands dilemmas posed by the worker's conflicting responsibilities as an empowering child and family advocate (enabler) and an intrusive protective authority (enforcer)
3. Understands the importance and benefits of using the least intrusive level of authority needed to protect children
4. Knows strategies to engage and empower families during the investigation of a protective complaint
5. Knows how family members can be engaged to protect children and provide them with permanent homes
6. Can clearly communicate the agency's expectations to assure children's safety while simultaneously engaging family members to collaborate in service planning and implementation
7. Can flexibly integrate engagement and enforcement strategies in a manner most appropriate for each family's unique circumstances

### **Skill Set #2: Ability to use casework methods to engage and empower families to become invested in a collaborative worker/family relationship**

1. Knows how social work values and principles apply to the casework relationship including respecting each family's dignity, culture, individuality, and right to self-determination
2. Knows the essential role and unique qualities of the casework relationship in a family-centered model of child protection

3. Knows attitudes and behaviors that promote the development of trust and confidence in the worker by family members
4. Knows barriers in child welfare settings that can interfere with developing relationships with family members
5. Understands the concept of client empowerment and how a trusting and collaborative casework relationship can motivate and sustain productive change in a family
6. Understands how fear, uncertainty, and other feelings may be exhibited as hostility, aggressive behavior, withdrawal, denial of problems, and other forms of resistance
7. Knows a variety of casework strategies that can strengthen casework relationships and help reduce family members' resistance
8. Can use a variety of strategies to engage families in a collaborative relationship with the worker
9. Can work with families to identify and resolve sources of resistance and strengthen the casework relationship

**Skill Set #3: Ability to approach and relate to families in a culturally respectful and competent manner**

1. Understands how cultural factors, including verbal and non-verbal communication, can impact the development of a casework relationship and create misunderstandings
2. Understands difficulties in communicating with families whose understanding of English is limited
3. Understands the importance of obtaining interpreters for people who have difficulty understanding English or who have a hearing loss and knows how to secure interpreters to assist with non-English speaking families
4. Knows how to identify cultural barriers to relationship development in each family and can apply strategies to overcome them

**Skill Set #4: Ability to conduct individual and family group interviews**

1. Recognizes the interview as a dialogue between the worker and family members and the principal means of implementing the helping process
2. Knows the importance of establishing a clear purpose for each interview, communicating this purpose to family members, and selecting the best interview strategies to achieve this purpose
3. Knows definitions and characteristics of "content" and "process" in casework and the importance of eliciting and discussing process-level issues to assure a thorough and accurate assessment
4. Knows appropriate standards and limits for disclosing personal information to family members during an interview
5. Knows strategies to defuse family members' hostility and anger and build collaboration during the initial family assessment or investigation
6. Understands how cultural differences in communication styles may promote miscommunication and misunderstanding during interviews
7. Understands challenges of conducting interviews with families who cannot fully express themselves in English or who do not fully understand what they are being told
8. Understands how a trusting casework relationship can enhance the effectiveness of the interview and increase the accuracy of the communication
9. Knows interviewing strategies to help family members comfortably express and discuss their opinions and feelings
10. Knows interviewing strategies to deal with conflict, respond to hostile or accusatory statements, or confront family members who are reluctant to deal with critical issues
11. Can identify a purpose prior to beginning each interview and can clearly explain this purpose to the family

12. Can observe family members' behavior and interaction and can attend to non-verbal cues, including tone of voice, facial expressions, and other body language
13. Can encourage and empower family members to actively participate in interviews, express their ideas and feelings, and confront difficult topics and issues
14. Can formulate appropriate interview questions and responses to guide the direction of the interview to achieve its stated purpose
15. Can flexibly select or modify interviewing strategies in response to family members' reactions and contributions
16. Can talk with families to elicit and explore important information, promote and guide discussion, and summarize thoughts and conclusions