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# Introduction

In our society, the care and safety of children are basic responsibilities entrusted first and foremost to the children's parents. Federal, state, and provincial governments further protect the physical and emotional well-being of children by legally mandating that state, provincial, and local public agencies create a system to respond to allegations of harm to children, and to protect children from abuse and neglect at the hands of those responsible for their care. *Keeping children safe from child abuse and neglect is the foundation on which child protective services was established and should always be the first goal of any child protective services response.*

CWLA's *Standards of Excellence for Services for Abused or Neglected Children and Their Families* emphasizes the importance of a community-based approach to protecting children and supporting families. Using such an approach, public and private agencies can collaborate with families and communities to prevent and remedy child maltreatment, and to achieve child safety, child permanency, and child and family well-being.

## Historical Highlights

### Origins of Child Protection

In 1875, the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was established in New York City after the much-publicized case of Mary Ellen Wilson, a young child who was treated brutally by her caregiver. A concerned citizen sought the assistance of Henry Bergh, founder of the American Society for the

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, as the law at the time offered no protection to abused children. As a result of Bergh's efforts and those of other concerned citizens, legislation was enacted to provide for the protection of children from abuse. This, and legislation subsequently enacted by other states and provinces, established a legal basis for intervening when children were abused or neglected by their caregivers.

In 1899, Illinois created the first Juvenile Court, to "regulate the treatment and control of dependent, neglected, and delinquent children." By 1907, 26 states and the District of Columbia had enacted their own juvenile court laws.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the 1900s, voluntary and sectarian organizations played an integral part in child protection by providing direct services to children and families and by advocating for the passage of laws to protect children. In 1909, the first White House Conference on Children was convened, reaffirming society's concern for the welfare of children. As a result of the White House Conference, the U.S. Children's Bureau was created to "investigate and report on all matters relating to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people."<sup>2</sup> Efforts to protect and assist children were further strengthened in 1935 with the enactment of the Social Security Act, which required public agencies to provide child welfare services to protect children who were neglected, dependent, homeless, or in danger of becoming delinquent.

In 1961, Dr. C. Henry Kempe's identification of the "battered child syndrome"<sup>3</sup> raised awareness of the inherent responsibility of communities to protect their children. This awareness led to efforts by medical and social service professionals to improve the identification and protection of abused children and brought a stronger clinical focus to the treatment of abused and neglected children and their families.

### **Child Protection Legislation**

Kempe's landmark publication was followed in the United States by the passage of a number of federal laws; the states passed or revised their child abuse and neglect laws to provide further protection for children. The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA), most recently reauthorized in

1996 (P.L. 104–235), established specific reporting and response protocols for states to incorporate into their child protection statutes. Since its enactment, CAPTA has been amended several times to strike a balance between protecting children and preserving the rights and privacy of families. The most recent amendments (1996) emphasized the need for properly trained staff, service provision at the neighborhood level, establishment of citizen review boards, collaboration among public agencies and the community, and expeditious arrangement of permanency in certain situations. The 1996 changes to CAPTA also narrowed the definition of child abuse to “serious” situations, and provided states with more flexibility when sharing information with community partners and the public. Under CAPTA, states must establish time frames for the expungement of unsubstantiated records, create a process for appealing findings of child maltreatment, create citizen review boards, provide immunity from prosecution for individuals making good-faith reports of child abuse and neglect, and establish provisions for the expedited termination of parental rights.

Other federal legislation, such as the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (P.L. 95–608), the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96–272), the Family Preservation and Support Services Program (P.L. 103–66), and, most recently, the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (P.L. 105–89), emphasizes child safety and well-being and adds some new considerations. These include:

- Requiring greater attention to, and involvement of, the child’s family, community, and culture in decisionmaking;
- Achieving permanency for children who are removed from their families because of maltreatment; and
- Providing support and assistance to families to prevent abuse and neglect.

## The Child Protection Policy Framework

Certain beliefs and practices have influenced the development, scope, and method of current child protection responses. The first is a fundamental commitment to balancing the rights of

individual citizens with the interests of the general public. Within this context, the child protection system is charged with safeguarding children and holding accountable those who abuse and neglect children. In carrying out these mandates, it must use methods that appropriately respect the privacy of families and protect individual rights.

The second influence on current child protection responses has been the use of a social welfare framework that emphasizes providing resources, supports, and services to protect children, provide for the children's physical and emotional needs, and assist parents in meeting the long-term needs of their children. It requires a dual commitment to child safety and permanency, that is, that efforts be made both to keep children safe and to achieve a permanent family for abused and neglected children.

A third influence on child protection efforts has been the use of a medical model of intervention. This model emphasizes the need for parents to receive treatment for problems that result in a child being abused or neglected.

Finally, emerging community organization and development strategies, which call for the active involvement of communities in the care and protection of children, are influencing child protection responses.

### **Creating a Balanced and Effective Response**

To integrate these and other influences, the child welfare field has periodically shifted its focus. Broadly framed, these shifts represent an effort to balance the need to "investigate" or intervene in specific incidents of maltreatment with the responsibility to be a "helping" agent to the family and to address broad child welfare concerns.

- *Public child protection agencies are being called upon to provide specific criteria for determining when government involvement in family life is warranted to protect children.*

Communities strongly support child protection intervention when child abuse and neglect have occurred or when parental care does not meet a child's basic safety and well-being needs. Circumstances *not* meeting these criteria are not generally viewed as warranting a mandated response. The general public, however, is also concerned with protecting children who may be *at risk* of abuse or neglect. Thus,

in many communities there is an ongoing debate regarding the mandating of a child protection response in at-risk situations and the extent to which child protective services should be responsible for the prevention of child maltreatment and for broader child well-being concerns. The role of child protective services in child and family well-being should be related to child maltreatment and not a broader focus.

- *Public agencies are being called upon to clarify how decisions to intervene with individual families fit the specified criteria.*

Over the last decade or more, child protection agencies have borrowed from law enforcement policies to create child abuse and neglect reporting procedures and statutorily based screening criteria. The child abuse and neglect investigations that have resulted are time-limited and typically focus on specific allegations of maltreatment and fact-finding rather than on broad questions of child well-being, community services, and family support. Related case decisionmaking and case planning protocols help agencies establish a rationale for initiating, maintaining, and ending government intervention with families. In addition, communities have come to expect agencies to keep historical information on families to determine patterns of abuse or neglect.

- *Public agencies are being held more accountable for their decisions and their resource expenditures.*

At a systems level, improvements in accountability are often accomplished through the development of policies by and the formal oversight of legislative committees and legislatively mandated public boards. On a family-specific level, agencies are being held accountable by the courts, by internal administrative review procedures, and by the media. Many agencies have revamped their screening and assessment processes to improve the comprehensiveness and consistency of their decisionmaking.

### **Responding to Legislative, Practice, and Policy Mandates**

In many communities, child welfare agencies are making significant strides in their ability to protect children and assist families:

- Child welfare agencies and the social workers they employ are developing tools to assist staff in determining when child protective services are needed.
- Child protection agencies are helping parents to understand the purpose of child protective services, and the changes the parents must make to meet the needs of their children and to end child protective services involvement.
- Community professionals and service providers are better understanding the role and importance of law enforcement and the courts in the child protection system and are learning to work together to deliver an integrated child protection response.

Efforts to strengthen child protection have also led to numerous child welfare practice innovations. New protocols have been developed to bring greater accuracy to the identification of children in need of protection. Risk-assessment strategies, for example, augment legal criteria for decisionmaking and help social workers identify factors (beyond the reported maltreatment) that may predict the likelihood of future harm and, ultimately, provide a basis for the service response. Agencies are integrating sound social work practice and the legal requirement for minimal intrusiveness into a family's life by establishing a range of interventions, from the least restrictive forms of family involvement to intensive family treatment to out-of-home care services. Agencies also are working with communities to assure timely and accurate reporting of child abuse and neglect and to help communities understand what can be expected from the agency.

At the same time, people are becoming more aware of the problems of child abuse and neglect. In 1972, there were an estimated 60,000 abused or neglected children in the United States. By 1986, with expanded reporting mandates, statewide reporting systems, expanded definitions of abuse and neglect, and increased public awareness, 2.08 million children were reported as abused or neglected.<sup>4</sup> By 1996, the number of children reported to child protection agencies as abused and neglected had grown to 3.1 million, with approximately 30% (969,000) cases substantiated.<sup>5</sup>

## Practice, Program, and Policy Issues in Child Protection

### Practice Issues

Despite the progress made during the 1970s and 1980s, new concerns continue to arise. Important questions remain unanswered regarding the characteristics of the children and families served by child welfare agencies. Why do children living in poverty and children of color make up a significant portion of agency caseloads? What are the effects of changes in family structure and of the growing number of single and teen parent families being served?

Supports for families in such areas as child care, housing, and health care continue to be insufficient, creating additional stresses for families with children. The problems confronting children and families—economic instability, substance abuse, domestic violence, and juvenile crime—have become increasingly prevalent, complicating the ability of agencies to protect children and support families.

#### *Poverty and Unemployment*

Child protection agencies know that economic well-being is an important factor in child safety. Since 1970, childhood poverty has increased by nearly 36%. In 1996, nearly 15 million children were living in poverty, accounting for 40% of the 36.5 million poor Americans.<sup>6</sup> The Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect uncovered significant differences in the incidence of maltreatment relative to family income, finding that 47% of children with demonstrable harm from abuse or neglect and 95.9% of endangered children came from families whose income was less than \$15,000 per year.<sup>7</sup>

The stress created by living in poverty may play an important role in child abuse and neglect.<sup>8</sup> Parents who experience prolonged frustration in trying to meet their family's basic needs may be less able to cope with even normal childhood behavior problems. Those parents who lack social support in times of financial hardship may be particularly vulnerable.<sup>9</sup> Parents who are experiencing problems with employment are frequently rated by child protective services staff as being at moderate to high risk of child maltreatment.<sup>10</sup>

*Family Structure*

Related to the issue of poverty are changes in family structure. In 1970, about 12% of children in the United States lived in a single-parent family (usually with their mother). By 1996, only 71.6% of all American children—and only 38.7% percent of African American children—were living with two parents.<sup>11</sup> The primary reasons for single parenthood are divorce, separation, and an increase in out-of-wedlock births (many involving teenage parents). Often, the vulnerability of single parent families is compounded by a lack of financial support, inadequate access to affordable health care and child care, and unsupportive or conflictual relationships between custodial and noncustodial parents.

Substance abuse, incarceration of custodial parents, and other factors are affecting the ability of young families to care for their children. Increasingly, grandparents and other kin are stepping in to provide ongoing care, and approximately 30% of children in out-of-home care are living with relatives.<sup>12</sup> The huge growth in kinship care in some jurisdictions has challenged practitioners to rethink and reshape service delivery approaches so they can better address the needs of children and families in kinship care situations.

Finally, the increased mobility of families has created social isolation, leaving parents without familial, emotional, or physical supports to sustain and support them through periods of crisis.

Although the social and economic factors that have contributed to changes in family structure are complex, their effect on the welfare of children is clear—more children are living in poverty and more parents are without the social supports they need to raise their children adequately.

*Children and Families of Color*

Although data are limited, research indicates that children of color may be more likely to be reported to child protection authorities than other children—even those in otherwise comparable circumstances.<sup>13</sup> The Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect<sup>14</sup> found no significant or marginal race differences in the incidence of maltreatment, yet children of color are overrepresented in the child welfare system. Children of color are the subject of about 30% of substantiated child abuse and neglect reports and comprise about 44% of the out-of-home

care population, significantly higher than their representation of 15% in the general population.<sup>15</sup> Child protection leaders are recognizing that understanding and addressing the concerns of children and families of color are essential to providing effective child protective services.

#### *Substance Abuse*

Alcohol and other drug abuse in families has had a devastating impact on children. Although parental substance abuse has been a factor in child abuse and neglect cases for some time, the spread of crack cocaine, amphetamines, and other illegal drugs, in combination with the abuse of alcohol, is compelling agencies to look at child welfare practice and policy in new ways.

Identifying families who are chemically involved and assessing their drug involvement and its impact on parenting are critical steps in determining the risk of maltreatment for children. To that end, many states are redefining their reporting criteria, and prescribing procedures for investigating and substantiating substance abuse cases. These changes stir controversy, and professionals, policymakers, and communities are struggling to integrate practice and legal frameworks for children in chemically involved families. Accessible and affordable treatment options for families are often in short supply, and even when available, time frames for effective treatment may be inconsistent with the permanency needs of children. Collaboration among professionals from a variety of disciplines is needed to establish appropriate assessment, treatment, and legal strategies for families affected by substance abuse.

#### *Domestic Violence*

Several states have begun documenting the presence of domestic violence in child welfare-involved families. Their findings support researchers' estimates that in at least half of families where there is child abuse, there is also domestic violence.<sup>16</sup> Further, two states have documented domestic abuse in 41% to 43% of cases involving child abuse-related deaths or serious life-threatening injuries.<sup>17</sup> Not only is the presence of domestic violence a significant factor in parental functioning, it also may be correlated with the likelihood of child maltreatment and seriously affect the emotional well-being of the child.

Child welfare agencies have begun to consider the need for new and more effective approaches to child safety when a parent is also a victim of violence in the home. New models that suc-

cessfully focus on interventions that protect children by helping the mother to protect herself *and* her children have dramatically changed the way child protective services workers deal with family violence. Replication of these models and the development of other approaches require that child protection agencies collaborate with domestic violence programs to develop policies and training on screening, assessment, confidentiality, intervention, and referral for families involved in domestic violence. In addition, direct service staff will need specialized training to competently identify domestic violence and to intervene once domestic violence is identified.

#### *Juvenile Delinquency*

Although the majority of victims of childhood maltreatment become healthy and productive adults, a sizable number do not. In 1992, the National Institute of Justice concluded that experiencing childhood abuse and neglect increased the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 53%, of arrest as an adult by 38%, and of committing a violent crime by 38%. Studies in several local communities confirm these findings,<sup>18</sup> suggesting the need to examine more closely the long-term impact of all forms of maltreatment on children.

Improving long-term outcomes for children will require stepped-up efforts by child protective services and community partners to identify high-risk youths, provide treatment services to them and to their parents, and strengthen links between child abuse prevention and treatment and juvenile delinquency prevention. These efforts must be undertaken despite rising public sentiment that appears to favor a "tougher" stance on juvenile delinquency.

#### **Program Issues**

In addition to the practice issues identified above, child protection agencies face programmatic challenges in their attempts to assist families and protect children. These include:

- *The cumulative effects of ongoing child abuse or neglect.* Agencies are struggling with addressing chronic neglect in the context of legal and service systems that more readily respond to imminent risk and with achieving lasting improvements in functioning for parents and children.

- *The need to work with families who are homeless and/or transient.* Many families move from state to state, complicating the sharing of information and continuity of services.
- *The increase in legal actions against agencies.* Lawsuits filed against agencies have resulted in court orders or consent decrees affecting service delivery and resource allocation.
- *The difficulty of assessing reports made in the context of divorce/custody disputes.* Although most child custody cases do not require a child protective services response, many families could benefit from services during such difficult family transitions.
- *The privatization of child protection and behavioral health care services.* Child protection agencies will need to assure that there are sufficient trained and competent staff to monitor the quality and array of services delivered and assure that the individual needs of children and families are met.

## Policy Issues

### *Welfare Reform*

In 1996, the federal government passed sweeping welfare reform legislation, replacing the federal guarantee of cash assistance to certain families living below the poverty line (Aid to Families with Dependent Children or AFDC) with block grants to the states (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families or TANF). Although many states had already been making changes to their public assistance programs, this legislation forced states to implement a variety of new eligibility requirements, including limits on lifetime eligibility and teen-parent benefits, and new mandates for work and job training. Under the new welfare program, the Supplemental Security Income program for children with disabilities has also become more restrictive.

The states have been given a large number of policy options to choose from in implementing welfare reform. Until these changes actually take place and are analyzed, however, it will be difficult to determine the impact of welfare reform on children and families. Whatever the eventual impact, child protection agencies will need to document how children and families are affected and to advocate for the resources necessary to meet their needs.

### *Family Preservation and Child Safety*

Public debate often centers around the goals of family preservation and child safety, questioning whether child welfare agencies, in their efforts to prevent placement and reunify children with their families, are ignoring or minimizing the safety needs of the children. In part, the difficulty stems from broader systemic problems, including workers who have not been properly trained and supervised to make such decisions, large caseloads, inadequate funding, and insufficient services to address complex family problems such as substance abuse and domestic violence.

In addition, there is confusion regarding what is meant by family preservation and how it can best be pursued on an individual family basis. The term *family preservation* is used interchangeably to describe either a philosophy, a policy, or a program—or all three collectively. Taken out of context or misinterpreted, family preservation may be seen as dichotomous to child safety. The challenge for the child welfare field is to help workers, other professionals, and the broader public understand that by working with families, we are most likely to achieve safe and permanent outcomes for children—either with their families, with kin, or as part of another permanent family established through adoption or guardianship.

## Current Challenges to Child Protection

Although reports of child maltreatment are becoming increasingly common and serious, response capacity in most jurisdictions has failed to keep pace. As a result, few agencies meet recommended national standards for staff and caseload ratios. One agency, for example, reported a 58% increase in the number of children reported between 1991 and 1995; its social work staff, however, increased by only 14%.<sup>19</sup>

Pressure to manage the overwhelming demand for services while ensuring child safety has led to new methods and new problems. By adapting triaging methodologies from other emergency response systems, some agencies have established criteria for prioritizing their responses to new reports of abuse and neglect. Under these policies, children who are believed to be in immi-

nent danger and those at greatest risk of further harm receive an immediate response. Reports that are judged to be less serious may receive a delayed response, or in some states, no response. Use of these protocols, however, may have unintended consequences.

As the number of child abuse and neglect reports increases, and children's circumstances worsen, legitimate triaging methods have sometimes become a vehicle for controlling the influx of new cases. These triaging practices contribute to a growing sense that even children in serious situations are not receiving the assistance they need. In some instances, this impression may be born out when reports that were first believed to be low risk are found to be quite serious once a more thorough assessment is completed. Even in situations where imminent risk of harm is low, current intake methodologies may not adequately recognize and respond to the harm that can accumulate from multiple incidents of neglect, which, if only viewed as isolated events, do not appear to impact the safety of children.

The impact of caseload growth and limited resources on children is also evident once assessments are completed. For example, a significant number of reports do not result in a finding of abuse or neglect. Nonetheless, many reported families have risk and well-being issues that need to be addressed. Child protective services systems are being challenged to put in place a range of community services and supports to which they can refer families so that future harm can be prevented.

Among children for whom abuse and neglect is substantiated, as many as 30% do not routinely receive services following the initial assessment.<sup>20</sup> Although this may be the result of underfunded programs, high rates of re-abuse of children already known to child protective services have raised significant doubts about the adequacy of services provided to these children and their families. Consequently, some have come to believe that the child protection system is not adequately protecting children<sup>21</sup> and some jurisdictions are considering policies that would place the investigation of child abuse in the hands of law enforcement. Others believe that too many families have been the subject of unwarranted government intrusion.<sup>22</sup> Child protection agencies are being asked once again to redefine the framework for mandated intervention, to establish

practices that lead to sound case decisionmaking within this framework, and to find better ways of being accountable for their decisions.

## A New Framework for Child Protection

States and provinces must look beyond the formal child protective services institutions and engage communities and neighborhoods in protecting children. In 1993, the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect called for a neighborhood-based child protection strategy in which:

- Primary strategies would be focused at the level of urban and suburban neighborhoods and rural communities;
- Social and economic supports for troubled families and children would be developed at the neighborhood level, with *neighborhoods* defined by geographic boundaries; and
- Both formal and informal services that are based on the principle of voluntary help by one citizen for another would be widely available, regardless of whether access to such services is determined by place of residence.<sup>23</sup>

### Improving Child Protection

The public interest in the protection of children means that agencies must continuously examine the successes and failures of their current methods and devise new and more effective approaches. Typically, this has meant making renewed efforts to implement best practices proven to protect children and strengthen families. With the unchecked growth in the number of reports and substantiated cases of maltreatment of children, consideration of more fundamental changes in the overall approach to protecting children is warranted.

Nationwide, community leaders, child protection professionals, and other citizens are coming together to reexamine both the central purposes of child protective services and the assumptions that are inherent in the child protection system's design and methods. At federal, state, provincial, and local levels, they are reconsidering:

- Federal and state statutes guiding the protection of children;

- Definitions of safety in the context of child abuse and neglect and the need to clearly articulate safety factors within the family as well as within society;
- The range and purpose of intervention strategies employed by mandated child protection agencies and by the community as a whole;
- How services to protect children can best be organized; and
- The fiscal and administrative supports needed to ensure that efforts to help children reflect best practice principles and lead to intended child and family outcomes.

### **Core Values, Principles, and Elements of an Effective Response to Child Protection**

Government agencies are formally charged with protecting abused or neglected children from further harm, but individual citizens and community entities are an essential part of successful efforts to care for and protect children.

#### *Values*

The following values are central to establishing a successful community response to child protection:

- Every child has a right to adequate care and supervision and to be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Every child should have a safe, permanent family.
- Parents have the primary responsibility for, and are the primary resource for, their children.
- Every child's family, however family is defined, is unique and has value, worth, integrity, and dignity.
- The most desirable place for children to grow up is in their own caring families, when those families are able to provide safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime.
- Most parents want to and can be adequate parents.
- Most parents who experience difficulty in parenting can be helped to be adequate parents. Appropriate services must be available to assist them in accomplishing needed changes.
- When parents cannot or will not fulfill their protective responsibilities, the community has the right and obligation to intervene directly on the child's behalf.

*Principles*

Principles guiding the establishment of a community response to child protection include:

- The first goal of child welfare intervention by state and community agencies must be to assure the welfare and safety of children.
- It is in the best interest of communities to make available to parents the necessary services, resources, and supports that will strengthen their capacity to carry out their parental obligations to their children.
- Communities and child welfare agencies have a responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect by educating the public about their effect and by allocating the necessary resources to child abuse prevention efforts.
- The child protection system must be able to correctly identify those children and families in need of protection, and tailor a response to meet their safety and service needs.
- Services and supports must be respectful of and responsive to cultural differences, and must build on the strengths and protective factors within families and communities.
- Families served through the child protective services system should clearly understand what familial outcomes are expected of them and whether their acceptance of service is voluntary or is court ordered to protect the child.
- An aggressive and comprehensive public response is needed when there is harm to a child caused by physical abuse, sexual abuse, or chronic neglect.
- Public officials, business and community leaders, and citizens must be informed so that they understand the needs of abused and neglected children, participate in their community's child protection system, form new partnerships, and influence the public policy agenda related to child protection.
- Agencies must have competent staff who are skilled in working with children and families and in forming strong working relationships with professionals and others in the community who can be a resource for families.

- Action taken and services provided by child protection agencies should be based on expected outcomes. Data must be collected and analyzed to determine if these outcomes are being achieved.

### *Elements*

A community response that incorporates the above values and principles should include the following core activities:

- Defining the community (i.e., Who makes up the community? What are its boundaries? Who are its leaders?);
- Developing a comprehensive community strategy for child protection, including public and private action strategies (these strategies should be adopted by all the partners);
- Identifying and engaging partners who traditionally have not been involved (or have not been seen as involved) in child protection;
- Developing a relationship with the community and working with natural community leaders;
- Clarifying the scope of child protective services and the roles played by the child protection agency and community partners;
- Building an understanding that child protection is a community responsibility and not solely the responsibility of the public child protection agency;
- Making services and supports—both formal and informal—available, so that at-risk families can be identified early and diverted from formal child protection intervention; and
- Establishing a leadership role for the public child protection agency, facilitating the development of needed services and supports, and helping to create a community capacity to respond to abuse and neglect reports and meet the individual needs of children and families.

## Scope of These Standards

Consistent with the purpose of CWLA's standard-setting function, these *Standards of Excellence for Services for Abused or*

*Neglected Children and Their Families* set forth goals for practice that are intended to guide the continual improvement of child protective services. As such, the standards put forth those practices that are considered optimal in achieving child protection goals, based on the expertise of leaders in the field and on the current literature and research.

Because child protection is not a single service but a complex array of casework, legal, and related interventions, the CWLA standards also outline the broad characteristics of an effective system of service delivery. Further, they are consistent with and supportive of those practices that are intended to ameliorate the conditions that contribute to abuse and neglect, and those practices that minimize the physical, emotional, and developmental impact of abuse and neglect on the children who are its victims.

Despite this broad and inclusive framework, these standards are primarily aimed at the mandated child protection agency, both in its role as a provider of services and in its role as a leader in the development of an effective community-based system of child protection. If the designated child protection agency contracts with or delegates its responsibilities to private or other public agencies, however, then those organizations should also adopt these standards.

## Notes

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