

Practice Guide for Caseworkers

Engagement

MITEAM COMPETENCY

Engagement is a series of intentional interventions that work together in an integrated way to successfully establish a relationship with children, parents and other individuals. Caseworkers will engage with the child, mother, father, extended family, primary caregiver, professionals working with the family and other team members for the purpose of building an authentic and collaborative working relationship.

FIDELITY MEASURES

Observation:

- Treats individual(s) with respect.
- Treats individual(s) with empathy.
- Uses verbal responses that are consistent with body language.
- Acknowledges his/her authority and the disproportionate amount of power in the relationship.
- Helps the individual(s) identify people who are supportive.
- Addresses reasons for reluctance to including specific team members.
- Assists the family with navigating agency systems and processes.
- Discusses with the family the success of the child(ren)/youth beyond case closure.
- Provides trauma education to the individual(s).
- Provides feedback to the individual(s).
- Asks for feedback from the individual(s).

Documentation:

- A team that provides support to the child(ren)/youth and family has been formed.

Interview:

- The individual(s) was able to identify helpful activities of the worker.
- The individual(s) feels understood by the worker.
- The individual(s) feels respected by the worker.
- The individual(s) reports the worker acknowledged the unique culture of the family/household.

In Supervision:

- The worker was able to identify:
 - What is most important to the individual/family.
 - How frame of reference is managed.
 - Positive supports for the individual(s).
- The worker identifies own team members that support their professional development.
- The worker exchanges feedback with the supervisor.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS

- Interview all family members separately in cases involving domestic violence or if suspected. For more complete domestic violence practice guidance, see the Domestic Violence Practice Guide.
- Whenever possible ensure children/youth and parents have a voice in decisions that affect them.
- Treat families with dignity and respect.
- Actively partner with family teams to identify needs and plan interventions to protect children and support families.
- Identify and provide notice that a child is in foster care (within 30 calendar days of removal) to all adult relatives including, but not limited to, maternal and paternal grandparents, maternal and paternal aunts, maternal and paternal uncles, adult siblings of the child and any other relative identified by the parent or child.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek, identify and notify family members that a relation is in foster care until a child has achieved legal permanency. 	
<p>HOW TO USE YOUR SUPERVISOR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule regular case conference time with your supervisor to discuss your cases each month. • Report to the scheduled conference on time with appropriate case files. • Identify ahead of time areas of concern and questions regarding specific cases to be discussed during supervisory meetings. • Seek supervisor’s assistance in real time as needed. Ask your supervisor to model and/or observe areas of practice where you need assistance and provide feedback on your performance. • Examine the quality and intensity of engagement efforts and how they affect specific case results. • Explore opportunities and strategies for improving interaction with the parent, child, providers and extended family members. • Evaluate engagement efforts and potential next steps to further promote engagement. • Discuss specific barriers to engagement and explore alternative engagement strategies. • Identify examples of your use of genuineness, empathy and respect and discuss their impact on developing productive working relationships. • Identify how the relationships with family members may be triggering secondary traumatic stress reactions between children and parents. • Discuss examples of demonstrated cultural sensitivity and awareness and their impact on engagement efforts. • Review documentation of engagement efforts and identify ways to improve documentation to better reflect actual practice. • Discuss possible safety issues that may arise and plan for how best to engage families without compromising family safety and/or worker safety. 	
<p>KEY CASEWORKER ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>WHERE IN THE LIFE OF THE CASE</p>	<p>PRACTICE GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES</p>
<p>KCA 1 ENGAGEMENT</p> <p><i>Create an environment of empathy, genuineness and empowerment that supports a family entering into a helping relationship and actively working toward change.</i></p>	<p>From the point of initial contact with the family to permanency and / or case closure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an environment of empathy, genuineness, respect and competency to engage children and the families. See DPG caseworker core conditions empathy. • Thoughtfully plan and prepare for engaging with children, parents, and providers. Set behavioral goals for each interaction and then reflect on your ability to engage in the way you wanted to after each encounter. Note areas needing improvement. • Plan for sufficient time to meet with children and parents. Make them feel that they are your priority and important. • Be aware of family work schedules, transportation availability, child’s school/extra-curricular schedule and other commitments when scheduling appointments. • Recognize children and parents as the expert on their own history, needs and strengths. • Set clear expectations for children and parents about the child welfare process, your role and authority, and specifically how you plan on helping them achieve safety, permanency and well-being. • Set and reinforce clear expectations and define non-negotiables with children and parents. See DPG non negotiables.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and acknowledge your authority and the disproportionate amount of power you have in the relationship. • Use full disclosure to discuss sensitive topics with families. See DPG use full disclosure. • Listen to what children and parents are saying and reflect your understanding in an empathic manner. • Take time to obtain the family’s “back story” in addition to its “front story” (the information in the referral). • Ask parents, caregivers and children privately about past traumatic experiences. • Use clear, common language. Using jargon is a form of disrespect. • Check to make sure children and parents understand what is happening. Take responsibility if they do not understand and find additional ways to explain and support their understanding. • Use every contact with children and parents as engagement opportunities. See DPG use interviews. • Identify factors (tribal/cultural/racial/ethnic/generational/educational) that may inform your approach to engagement and the family’s response to engagement efforts. Get advice from knowledgeable sources on how to adjust your strategy to be most effective. • When developing your engagement strategy, determine how the presence of domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, within the family should impact your approach. • Do what you say you are going to do when you say you are going to do it. Be available and dependable. • Use effective age-appropriate techniques to engage children and youth in case planning and decisions. • Be open to new information and ideas about families and their ability to change. Do not let pre-conceived ideas impact your judgment and decision-making.
<p>KCA 2 ENGAGEMENT</p> <p><i>Search for and engage parents, family members and other persons from the child or youth’s community in the family team process.</i></p>	<p>From the point of initial contact with the family to permanency and/or case closure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct diligent searches for family supports early and often throughout the life of a case. See DPG diligent searches. • Involve the parents and children in identifying family, friends and other members of their formal and informal support network who might be able to provide assistance to the family. • Assess any potential safety threat related to locating and contacting a parent who is not currently actively involved in the family. • Discuss the range of roles and forms of assistance that the family’s connections may be able to provide. Explain the range of ways in which they can help this family; such as supervising visits, inviting the child or youth and his or her parents to events together, spending time with the child or youth, providing transportation or emotional/spiritual support. • Explain to children, family members and other identified supports the purpose of their involvement and how it will help the family. • Ask identified family and friends how they would feel comfortable helping the family. Prepare family resources for their involvement. Agree upon what, how and why they will be providing support and what to do if they are challenged to fulfill their role. Clarify boundaries by explaining what each resource can and cannot do. Ensure that each family resource understands its roles, expectations and responsibilities.