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OFFICE OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE ADVOCACY
PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy,
in accordance with the
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
believes that
CHILDREN and YOUTH have the right to be heard
and they must be supported in achieving their
full potential as members of society
in the spirit of
RESPECT, DIGNITY, EQUALITY, TOLERANCE,
ASSOCIATION, PARTICIPATION and OPPORTUNITY

PRINCIPLES

- The principle of **empowerment** for children and youth.
- The principle of respect for the **dignity** of children and youth, and to their **right to be heard**.
- The principle of **the family** as the primary source of nurturance, support and advocacy for children and youth.
- The principle of **equality** for all children and youth and the principle of **respect for diversity**.
- The principle of **the least adversarial approach** to finding solutions for children, youth and their families.
- The principle of the **community's collective responsibility** for providing resources and services to children, youth and their families.
- The principle of a system that is **responsive** to the needs of children, youth and their families.
- The principle of **community outreach** as an ongoing process.

■ The principle of empowerment for children and youth.

In practice¹, this means:

- a) Supporting children, youth and their families in advocating for themselves.
- b) Ensuring that all advocacy activities are carried out with respect for the wishes and consent of children, youth and their families.
- c) Informing children, youth and families of their rights and entitlements.

■ The principle of respect for the dignity of children and youth, and to their right to be heard.

In practice, this means:

- a) Listening to the child/youth with dignity, respect and in confidence.
- b) Voicing the child/youth's concerns when they feel no one is listening
- c) Modelling and communicating this principle as a basic right of children and youth and as fundamental to the development of skills that children and youth need in order to make healthy choices as they mature.
- d) Recognizing that children, youth and families, as consumers of service, offer a unique and valuable perspective in defining and solving problems.
- e) Ensuring that procedures and processes are built into the system for addressing concerns and reassuring children and youth that these processes are available to them.

¹

The practice statements listed under each principle are to be understood as examples of how a principle may be operationized and as such are not to be seen as an exhaustive list of practice principles.

■ **The principle of the family as the primary source of nurturance, support and advocacy for children and youth.**

In practice, this means:

- a) Supporting families in advocating for their children.
- b) Involving family members in the advocacy process (to the greatest extent possible).

■ **The principle of equality for all children and youth and the principle of respect for diversity.**

In practice this means:

- a) Embracing respect for the intrinsic worth of all individuals
- b) Maintaining a professional relationship with children, youth and their families based on mutually defined goals, shared responsibility and appropriate self awareness.
- c) Serving children, youth and their families by appreciating the significance of race, ethnicity, language, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, abilities, economic status, political affiliation or national ancestry.

■ **The principle of the least adversarial approach to finding solutions for children, youth and their families.**

In practice, this means:

- a) Beginning with the least intrusive intervention, recognizing that certain cases may require more immediate action.
- b) Respecting the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, i.e. service providers, government ministries, children, youth and their families.
- c) Maintaining open lines of communication with all parties involved.

■ **The principle of the community's collective responsibility for providing resources and services to children, youth and their families.**

In practice, this means

- a) Facilitating access to services and resources for children, youth and their families.
- b) Maintaining an information base on current community resources.
- c) Directing children, youth and families to appropriate resources in their communities.
- d) Facilitating community organization to ensure collaborative and effective case management across service sectors.

■ **The principle of a system that is responsive to the needs of children, youth and their families.**

In practice, this means:

- a) Encouraging agencies, government ministries and service providers to acknowledge and respond to the concerns presented by children, youth and their families.
- b) Ensuring community action as it relates to hard to serve cases.
- c) Establishing and maintaining relationships with appropriate community groups that service or represent specialized interests and/or populations (i.e. ethnocultural/ethnoracial or religious groups)
- d) Committing to organizational change as it relates to the Advocacy Office' practice of conducting system reviews.
- e) Collecting data outlining client concerns, recognize gaps in service and influence policy change through direct contact with ministry staff.

■ **The principle of community outreach as an ongoing process.**

In practice, this means:

- a) Establishing and maintaining ongoing relationships with a variety of natural community advocates.
- b) Providing presentations to agencies and/or community groups with respect to children's rights and the role of the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy.

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