

# CHILD WELFARE TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE SUGGESTED PRINCIPLES

*(As revised September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009)*

*At the June 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, Secretary Dreyfus requested the committee's suggestions for principles to guide the Department in converting to performance-based contracts. Based upon the committee discussion that followed, the staff prepared a draft of suggested principles for review. This document reflects the discussion of that draft by the Committee at the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.*

## **Guiding Principles**

*The Committee members believe the principles listed below should help to guide the transformation process:*

1. The community's aspirations for child welfare can only be achieved through partnership among state and tribal government agencies, nonprofit service providers, families, foster parents, foster children, law enforcement officials, the courts, and the broader community.
2. The ideas of all groups of stakeholders, including parents, foster parents, and youth who have experienced foster care, should be sought and valued in the effort to transform the system. This will require a significant investment in community outreach and engagement.
3. The transformation process should be transparent to stakeholders and the public through open meetings and the posting of information on the committee Web site.
4. The measures taken to transform the child welfare system should be driven by evidence--based research and best practices should be incorporated in performance-based contracts.
5. The Transformation Plan to be adopted by the Committee must incorporate the following values. It must:
  - Reflect a holistic perspective of the needs of children and families.
  - Recognize the diverse factors (such as family poverty and homelessness) that affect "safety, permanency and well-being."
  - Reduce the harm done to children by emphasizing prevention at primary, secondary and tertiary stages of intervention.
  - Reinforce a sense of community ownership of the system.

- Identify and address the causes of disproportionately and disparities in outcomes among ethnic communities and socioeconomic groups.
- Invest scarce public resources in a thoughtful and strategic way.
- Build the capacity of communities so that core services can be delivered in a timely and consistent manner throughout the state.
- Ensure that parents and children receive sufficient attention and communication so they can comprehend the process and effectively communicate in their cases.
- Ensure that children in care who do not become re-unified or adopted are prepared by their care-givers to be healthy, independent adults.

6. In keeping with those values, the Committee will seek to craft a Transition Plan that builds upon assets that have already been created in our state. We will:

- Recognize the value of the experience and expertise provided by current state employees, tribal leaders, community-based service providers, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders. Develop strategies to address the challenges—and opportunities—created by the geographic, ethnic, and cultural diversity of our state.
- Incorporate the views of young people who have experience in the Child Welfare system in developing its recommendations.
- Incorporate the good work that has been done by stakeholders on the needs of children of incarcerated parents.

7. The Committee will seek to build a clear community consensus around a manageable set of system goals and outcomes. We will seek to:

- Provide accountability to the public through performance measures that mark progress toward the desired outcomes.
- Reduce the extent to which multiple and constantly changing layers of expectations impede progress
- Hold public staff, contractors, parents, and other stakeholders accountable for timeliness, consistency and communication.

8. The Committee will seek to develop a strategy to implement the transformation in a way that will:

- Provide for a smooth transition.
- Reduce the potential for “unintended consequences.”
- Reinvest resources that are saved through system improvements and/or tertiary prevention to enhance the system and improve primary and secondary levels of prevention.