



SAFETY ENHANCED TOGETHER:

A FRAMEWORK FOR GUIDING CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

*Through Teamwork and Family Engagement:
In San Diego, Our Families Are SET to Live Well*



**SAFETY
ENHANCED
TOGETHER**

County of San Diego Child Welfare Services



VISION

Every child grows up safe and nurtured.

CWS PRIORITIES

CWS has collaboratively designed a practice framework to guide the top three priorities of the agency.

1. Safely stabilize and preserve families;
and if that is not possible...
2. Safely care for children and reunify children to their families of origin;
and if reunification is not possible...
3. Safely support the development of permanency and lifelong
relationships for children and youth.

DEAR CWS TEAM,

Several years ago, Child Welfare Services began a journey to strengthen our program's approach to serving children and families when we implemented Safety-Organized Practice (SOP), which engages families as collaborative partners in making decisions about their children's safety. Through this experience, we created an opportunity to build on that practice by clearly articulating the vision and values that serve as the core of our work. Today, the Safety Enhanced Together (SET) Practice Framework represents the culmination of our collective vision that every child involved with our Agency will grow up safe and nurtured.

The enclosed overview of the SET Practice Framework illustrates how we strive to translate our vision and values into our work with children and families by providing supervisors, managers, and social workers with concrete examples of the practices that best reflect our child welfare culture. In addition, the SET Practice Framework offers a yardstick we can use to recognize our strengths, identify areas to improve, and evolve as a learning organization. I also anticipate that this framework will enhance our ability to provide quality, consistent case work throughout our regions and programs, and ensure that any new child welfare innovations we adopt align with our vision, top priorities, and values.

In the following pages, you will discover that we've grounded the SET Practice Framework in our belief that our relationships are the foundation of all our work. I hope that you'll recognize how you are already demonstrating the SET vision, values, and practices in your daily interactions. I also hope that SET makes it easier to articulate our work.

Most important, I want to thank each of you for contributing to the development of the SET practice framework. Over the last few years, we have gathered feedback from all levels of leadership and staff spanning the Agency's programs and regions, and gained invaluable insight from birth parents, resource families, and former foster youth. Together, your collective commitment to building an organization that prepares children and families to grow and thrive shaped the SET Practice Framework. By clearly articulating what to expect from San Diego Child Welfare Services, we're confident that we can live up to our motto: *Through Teamwork and Family Engagement: In San Diego, Our Families are SET to Live Well.*

Sincerely,

Debra Zanders-Willis

Director, Child Welfare Services



“We value the importance of meaningful relationships with children, youth, and families, and their extended networks.”

VALUE 1

RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES ARE THE FOUNDATION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Recognize that enhancing safety for children and youth in the home is the top priority for everyone involved.
2. Build shared understanding and agreement through family engagement.
3. Maximize family strength and build on their skills, abilities, and connections.
4. Partner with the whole family to create long-term safety, ongoing permanency, and well-being.
5. Honor and incorporate the voices of children and youth.
6. Recognize and appreciate the family's culture.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Hold a clear understanding of the definition of safety
- Engage the family in safety planning by utilizing respectful, honest, and transparent communication
- Understand Safety-Organized Practice (SOP), role model the principles, and utilize the tools
- Ensure the child/youth's voice is gathered/represented at every meeting to inform key decisions and focus on safety, permanency, and well-being
- Partner with families when creating plans that respect the cultural aspects of the family
- Value Family Centered Meetings (FCMs) as a tool for engagement
- Continuously focus on how the abuse/neglect impacts the child/youth
- Acknowledge and respect that the family is the expert about their family
- Continue to build on the family's existing strengths and utilize these strengths to mitigate danger and provide safety
- Develop case plans that reflect specific behavioral detail to achieve the safety goal
- Establish and maintain collaboration with schools, public health, public safety, and other community partners



KEY SOCIAL WORKER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Use open communication and partner with the child, youth, and family to incorporate their voices?
- Utilize a Safety-Organized Practice (SOP) approach for engagement and assessment?
- Conduct thorough and timely Structured Decision Making (SDM) assessments?
- Convene Family Centered Meetings (FCMs) at key decision points?
- Use the Case Plan Field Tool with the family to create a behaviorally based case plan?
- Identify family support systems using eco-maps, genograms or Circles of Safety and Support?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Utilize SDM in consultation with workers?
- Monitor open cases for safety assessments and risk level?
- Promote/Attend FCMs?
- Utilize eco-maps, genograms, and Circles of Safety and Support in consultations?
- Utilize SOP approach?
- Conduct regular supervision?

KEY MANAGER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Review SDM measures in Safe Measures?
- Utilize the safety/risk matrix?
- Utilize eco-maps, genograms, and Circles of Safe and Support in consultations?
- Identify practice leaders in the region on FCMs?
- Utilize SOP approach?
- Conduct regular supervision?



“We recognize and appreciate the hard work and willing hearts of the kinship and resource families to provide excellent parenting. We strive to create partnerships with these families that are characterized by respect and mutual information sharing.”

VALUE 2

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH KINSHIP AND RESOURCE FAMILIES

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Cutting edge training and supportive services for kinship and resource families.
2. Seeking and creating opportunities for biological families, kinship, and resource families to communicate and work together for the child/youth's best interests.
3. Consistent communication and information sharing.
4. Being accountable and responsive to the cultural values of all families.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Support kinship and resource families to continue to expand their knowledge
- Provide ongoing assessment of needs and services for kinship and resource families
- Exhibit clearly defined, respectful working relationships with kinship and resource families
- Seek caregiver insight and feedback regarding the child/youth and case decisions
- Keep safety, permanency, and well-being of child/youth at the forefront
- Discuss permanency with parents, caregivers, and support networks initially and throughout the life of the case
- Utilize shared decision making with child/youth voice and well-being at the forefront
- Engage both the parent and caregiver to bridge the relationship between the two
- Recognize unique needs of kinship and resource families
- Help kinship and resource families understand social workers' roles and child welfare laws



KEY SOCIAL WORKER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

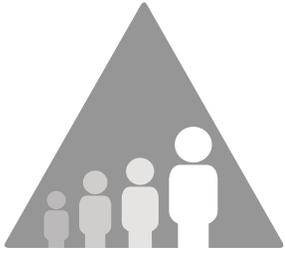
- ✓ Include kinship/resource families in FCMs?
- ✓ Facilitate a relationship between the kinship/resource family, parents, and child/youth's service providers?
- ✓ Connect kinship/resource families to respite resources, support groups, and mentor families?
- ✓ Utilize clearly established communication and confidentiality guidelines?
- ✓ Create detailed tasks/expectations with kinship/resource families to enhance safety, permanency, and well-being?
- ✓ Help kinship/resource families identify support networks and how they will utilize those networks?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- ✓ Provide feedback to leadership team on gaps in service and training needs?
- ✓ Ensure that SWs reach out to kinship/resource families to help link them to supportive services?
- ✓ Include support service and training information in Supervisor Learning Circles and unit meetings?
- ✓ Ensure SWs are aware of resources for kinship/resource families?
- ✓ Respond timely to both kinship/resource family and social workers (SWs) concerns?
- ✓ Guide SWs in understanding the confidentiality guide and policies around communication?

KEY MANAGER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- ✓ Arrange training that includes applicable skills caregivers can use with children/youth?
- ✓ Host events for/with kinship and resource families to share and learn from each other?
- ✓ Acquire full knowledge of new practices to share with workers?
- ✓ Support utilization of the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) partnership plan?
- ✓ Ensure access to enough cultural liaisons?
- ✓ Highlight confidentiality guide and communications policies for staff?



“We are committed to enhancing the well-being of children/youth and helping them to identify and develop meaningful relationships and connections in their communities.”

VALUE 3

HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND DEVELOP LIFELONG RELATIONSHIPS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Recognizing that the optimal place for children is safely in their own homes.
2. If children have to leave the home to maintain safety, actively strive to preserve their connections to:
 - Siblings;
 - Family and familiar people;
 - School and community of origin;
 - Culture, religion, and tribal affiliations.
3. Identifying living situations that support children and their relationships should be done as quickly as possible.
4. Holding a sense of urgency when seeking permanency for children.
5. Continual focus on children's well-being while they are in our care.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Maintain a holistic view of the child/youth
- Include and build on a family's strengths and resiliencies in order to maintain children/youth in their own home
- Continuously assess safety throughout the life of the case
- Identify ways to mitigate trauma to children/youth by using a trauma-informed perspective
- Maintain connections to important people, activities, and cultural traditions in the child/youth's life
- Value placements with connections to the child/youth and family first
- Consider family culture when assessing permanency
- Ensure the voice of the child/youth is heard
- Value the most permanent option for the child/youth including reunification, adoption, and guardianship
- Understand and value concurrent planning
- Establish both legal and relational permanence for children/youth
- Value the need to have ongoing needs assessments including developmental, behavioral, educational, dental, medical, etc.



KEY SOCIAL WORKER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- ✔ Create safety goals, case plans, and safety networks with the family?
- ✔ Explain concurrent planning throughout my interactions with the family?
- ✔ Immediately establish consistent, planned, and purposeful visitation with parents and siblings?
- ✔ Hold a Team Decision-Making (TDM) meeting immediately when a placement is needed?
- ✔ Conduct ongoing assessment of the child/youth's placement for safety, permanency, and well-being including cultural preservation?
- ✔ Advocate for child/youth's educational stability and success?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- ✔ Inquire about family and safety network participation in FCMs?
- ✔ Model a solution-focused approach?
- ✔ Assess for least restrictive level of placement, most natural environment for visits, and concurrent planning?
- ✔ Ensure SWs are capturing family history and culture in case documentation?
- ✔ Attend TDM meetings?
- ✔ Explore the need for interagency placement committee (IPC) and permanency roundtables?

KEY MANAGER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- ✔ Emphasize the importance and value of family participation?
- ✔ Advocate for needed services?
- ✔ Model a solution-focused approach?
- ✔ Encourage and foster concepts of preserving connections throughout the life of the case?
- ✔ Facilitate relationships between units and regions?
- ✔ Elevate systemic challenges and barriers to leadership team?



“We value the importance of building and maintaining trusting relationships with partners to support the priorities and values of this framework.”

VALUE 4

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Shared responsibility with the community to ensure community resources are accountable, responsive, and culturally sensitive.
2. Identifying and strengthening informal and formal resources in every community.
3. Services are evidence-informed and continuously evaluated.
4. Recognizing that families are a resource for one another and the community.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Staff and community partners have a shared vision for safety, permanency, and well-being
- Incorporate the family's voice in identifying formal and informal resources
- Look for innovative ways of utilizing existing resources in the community
- Assess family's strengths and needs and refer to appropriate evidence-informed programs
- Recognize that families have extended family, kinship support, and informal supports in their communities
- Continuously share best and emerging practices, techniques, policies, and tools that impact families with community partners
- Recognize the family as their own expert and encourage and support the family in working together with their community
- Maintain open communication and transparency with families and community partners
- Initiate and cultivate ongoing relationships with community partners



KEY SOCIAL WORKER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Solicit the expertise of community partners on how best to support families in their communities?
- Include community partners in FCMs?
- Ensure support networks and aftercare plans are working before the family's case is closed?
- Have open and ongoing communication with community partners?
- Use eco-maps, genograms, or Circles of Safety and Support in FCMs to highlight connections?
- Make every effort to maintain familial connections?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Invite community partners to participate on workgroups?
- Monitor and inquire about the delivery of culturally competent services?
- Ensure that safety networks have been tested and are working?
- Encourage SWs to seek out participation of community partners in FCMs?
- Attend trainings in order to be knowledgeable about resources and to keep them current?
- Value the family as a resource for creating safety?

KEY MANAGER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Facilitate relationships that foster co-location of staff?
- Ensure that proper, consistent, and ongoing training occurs?
- Monitor reunification and re-entry data, and advocate for the development of support networks?
- Support informal and formal partnerships and promote new partnerships?
- Advocate for the utilization of technology for the delivery and evaluation of services?
- Monitor and inquire about the delivery of culturally competent services?



VALUE 5

A STRONG WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LEGAL SYSTEM

“We value respectful working relationships with courts, attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and law enforcement agencies.”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Always maintaining primary focus on children's best interests.
2. Ensuring that all parties have mutual understanding of, and respect for, one another's roles, the law, and the rights due to children, youth, and families.
3. Seeking collaborative decisions and case plans whenever possible.
4. Regularly working toward efforts to improve court processes to ensure that they are supportive of mutual goals.
5. Collaborating with law enforcement to ensure safety and effective coordination of services.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Collaborate with partners in the legal system to minimize multiple interviews
- Partake in cross-agency education regarding practice, policy, and child abuse laws
- Advocate for the least restrictive care necessary to provide safety and meet the child/youth's needs
- Continually assess that a child/youth's legal and personal rights are being met
- Seek input and value legal partner perspectives
- Include County Counsel in communication with other legal partners
- Value teamwork and coordination of CWS investigations throughout the life of the case
- Understand confidentiality with regard to legal partners
- Advocate for the least restrictive and most liberal visitation with parents, family, and siblings



KEY SOCIAL WORKER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

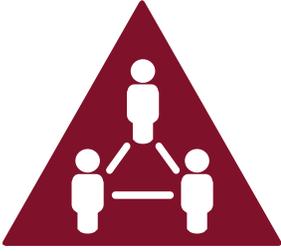
- Collaborate for a planned operation with our legal partners to minimize trauma?
- Consult with County Counsel at critical case decision points?
- Document open and clear communication with our legal partners throughout the life of the case?
- Follow policies and protocols regarding placement and case plan goal changes?
- Use Penal Codes to support investigation decisions?
- Submit timely court reports following court timelines and policy?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Discuss details of planned operation between CWS and legal partners?
- Model clear and responsive communication?
- Attend cross-training with legal partners?
- Help SWs to determine whether a multi-disciplinary team or case consultation is most appropriate?
- Discuss Penal Codes with workers?
- Monitor timely submission of court reports?

KEY MANAGER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Support relationship building with legal partners and staff?
- Ensure all regions have access to trauma-informed training opportunities?
- Keep updated on policies?
- Ensure law enforcement liaisons are available in all regions?
- Attend legal partners meetings?
- Build relationships with legal partners?



“We are a learning organization that values the well-being of staff at all levels. We value authentic, strength-based leadership that builds engagement and shared accountability.”

VALUE 6

A WORKPLACE CULTURE CHARACTERIZED BY REFLECTION, APPRECIATION, AND ONGOING LEARNING

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. A proactive workplace culture of reflection, responsiveness, and shared responsibility.
2. Ongoing learning and professional development that include respectful mentoring and coaching relationships.
3. Recognition and appreciation of differences.
4. A manageable and equitable workload and up-to-date technology to allow for quality work.
5. Use of real-time data by all staff to guide organization-wide decisions in support of continuous quality improvement (CQI).
6. A work culture guided by the practice framework values.
7. A system that recognizes and addresses secondary traumatic stress and provides opportunities for staff to build resiliency and maintain a work/life balance.

AGENCY PRACTICE

- Be knowledgeable of SET mission, vision, and values
- Utilize SET practice behaviors to guide your practice with families and partners
- Value Continuous Quality Improvement
- Understand that learning and development happen throughout your career
- Suspend assumptions and hold a spirit of curiosity
- Willingly share accomplishments
- Appreciate teamwork and a multi-disciplinary approach to practice
- Strive for transparency in the workplace
- Value the use of data to guide improvements for children, youth, and families
- Value yourself as a professional and a role model
- Utilize opportunities to build resiliency, practice self-care, and maintain a work/life balance
- Promote *Live Well San Diego* activities



KEY SOCIAL WORKER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Actively participate in ongoing learning and coaching in SOP?
- Engage in ongoing self-evaluation and assessment?
- Participate in all required training and learning circles?
- Utilize strength-based leadership?
- Share my strengths/talents and professional development goals with my supervisor?
- Conduct a warm hand-off at case transfer to help the family and next worker continue to be successful?

KEY SUPERVISOR ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Promote an open door policy?
- Demonstrate commitment to ongoing learning and professional development?
- Actively participate in ongoing learning and coaching in SOP?
- Use Appreciative Inquiry and recognize staff strengths?
- Share updates to policies, practice, resources, findings from CQI projects and cutting edge research?
- Utilize strength-based leadership?

KEY MANAGER ACTIONS: *DO I...*

- Highlight times when warm hand-offs worked well and strategies for conducting warm hand-offs?
- Actively participate in ongoing learning and coaching in SOP?
- Support and model the practice framework?
- Utilize strength-based leadership?
- Highlight what's working well in the unit and region/program?
- Model *Live Well San Diego* activities?



**Child/Youth
Voice**

**Family
Partnerships**

**Kinship
and Resource
Family Teaming**

**Cultural
Responsiveness**

**Safety-Organized
Practice**

**Support
Systems/Safety
Networks**

**Aftercare
Plans**

**KEY
EXPECTATIONS**

**Comprehensive
Assessments
Enhanced by
Agency
Tools**

**Community
Partner
Collaboration**

**Connection
Preservation**

**Behaviorally
Descriptive
Case Plans**

**Open
and Clear
Communication**



CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

San Diego County Child Welfare Services (CWS) began shifting from Quality Assurance (QA) to Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) in 2012. Implementation of Safety-Organized Practice, development of the Safety Enhanced Together (SET) practice framework along with national and statewide momentum made it clear that we needed a qualitative review process that was not just about looking back but making sure the work we had already done was our best.

CQI supports the practice of Appreciative Inquiry by helping us focus on the areas where we are doing well; CQI can help identify when staff are doing well and help us spread and grow those practices throughout our system. CQI relies on shared responsibility for data and outcomes at all levels of staff. Workers, supervisors, and managers all have the responsibility to input quality data and to know about data and outcomes. CQI also helps us have more transparency by partnering with families, youth, and other key stakeholders to take a look at how we improve our system and using their feedback as another means to evaluate our work.

A CQI approach focuses on identifying the root causes of problems or contributing factors to strengths, developing interventions to reduce or eliminate these causes or further improve upon strengths, and taking action to correct the processes with a continuous feedback loop to make and maintain positive changes in policy and case practice. Ownership for continuous improvement is essential at all levels of staff and it is necessary for the entire Child Welfare system to place a high value on teamwork, collaboration, and communication.

CQI will help us identify the depth to which worker practice aligns with SET and will be evaluated using the following scale:

NOVICE - There is evidence that the worker has "tried out" or begun to use the tool but may not have implemented it properly.

EMERGING - There is evidence that the worker is using the tool or practice but lacks accuracy and/or consistency.

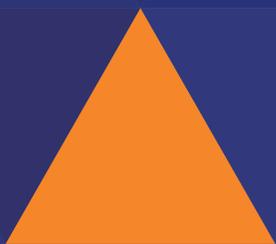
ACCOMPLISHED - There is evidence that the worker uses the tools and practices them consistently and accurately.

DISTINGUISHED - There is evidence that the tools and practices are integrated into the worker's practice as a way of doing business.

MASTER - There is evidence that in addition to practicing integrated work the worker is creative with the tools in difficult or problematic situations or takes the "next steps" of follow-up and evaluation.







MARCH 2015

