

Minnesota Children’s Justice Initiative-Alcohol and Other Drug Project

STATEMENT OF SHARED VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Introduction

Alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems undermine family stability and negatively affect child safety, well-being, psychological and emotional development. AOD problems must be addressed in the context of other issues, including parenting skills, mental health, physical health, nutrition, housing, education, employment, domestic violence and criminal justice involvement. It is imperative to keep the best interests of the child at the forefront of all intervention on behalf of Children in Need of Protection and Services. For most children, that requires that all reasonable efforts be made to reunify parent(s) and child/ren. Therefore, it is important that parents be given an adequate chance to recover from AOD problems through immediate and effective service delivery. When service delivery systems fail to work together effectively in a timely manner, they fail children and parents.

The purpose of this Statement is to guide the collaborative efforts of the undersigned parties as they work together to improve the effective delivery of services by local agencies and the courts, on behalf of children and families involved in the child protection system due to alcohol and other drug problems. The undersigned parties will cooperate to provide leadership and guidance to the courts, child welfare agencies and AOD service providers.

This Statement reflects the consensus of the undersigned parties on the principles which the Minnesota State Court Administrator’s Office, the Child Safety and Permanency and Chemical Health Divisions of the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Children’s Justice Initiative-Alcohol and Other Drug State Advisory Committee agree form the basis for implementing change in policies and practice in order to improve services and outcome for children and families. Collaborative solutions will be sought for identified problems in the delivery of AOD services by combining the resources of the participating organizations, professional and parent partners.

Values and Guiding Principles

Fundamental Principles

- The safety and well-being of the child must be the first priority and must guide all policies and services. Therefore, the goal of all efforts must be to balance the needs of the child with accurate and reliable assessments of the parent's ability to recover and parent their child;
- The neglect and abuse of children is frequently associated with the parental/caregiver AOD problem. The safety and well-being of children is contingent on the well-being of their caregivers;
- No single agency contains the resources and expertise needed to comprehensively respond to the needs of the caregiver, the child, or the family as a whole;
- A significant number of individuals and families in Minnesota are being mutually served by various organizations and professionals participating in this project;
- Professionals and caregivers at both the state and community level need to develop common knowledge and shared values about child protection and AOD concerns in order to assist children and families with AOD problems to achieve positive outcomes;
- Prevention efforts combined with treatment services are ultimately seen as having a greater impact on the community than treatment alone.

Accountability

- Balance: Planning of the CJI-AOD Committee will balance federal and state mandates, interests and resources of participating agencies and government branches, using a consensus model for decision-making;
- Work Together: Agencies will cooperate and collaborate in order to establish the best possible foundation for successful outcomes to be commonly achieved;
- Well-Being: The primary goal for children and families goes beyond safety to encompass well-being.¹
- Timely Sanctions and Incentives: The court will promote timely sanctions and incentives in response to a parent's progress, which should not result in unintended punishment of children;
- Right to Privacy: Families have a right to privacy, and individual privacy will be respected in all case-related communication, as permitted by law;

¹ Well-being could be defined as families having enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs and children receiving adequate services to meet their physical and dental health need.

Partnerships With Parents

- Connected: The interests of the parent and the children are directly connected;
- Keeping Children Safe: Most parents want to keep their children safe, but sometimes circumstances or conditions interfere with their ability to do so;
- Parents are the Most Knowledgeable: about their family and their circumstances;
- Active Involvement: Parents are actively involved in decision-making and need to have a voice throughout the process as well as be supported and encouraged to use their voice;
- Support: The parent-child relationship will be supported throughout case planning and monitoring within each service delivery system;
- Engaged: Participating agencies will engage community members in identifying solutions and assessing the community's readiness for change;

Service Delivery

- Access: Every individual and family deserves access to effective assessment and treatment services that are timely, continuous, affordable, appropriate, culturally competent, and individualized;
- Intervention: Early and effective intervention for AOD problems and related issues, among families involved with Child Protective Services (CPS), contributes to better outcomes;
- Full Continuum: A full continuum of prevention, intervention, and continuing care services that are neighborhood-based, timely and responsive to the needs of all family members can reduce risk and help achieve self-sufficiency;
- Responsive: Policies, programs and practices should be responsive to family members' strengths and needs, culture, ethnic and gender identities, and address inter-generational abuse and neglect;
- Integrated Holistically: Services will be integrated holistically to address the unique needs of families.
- Evidence-based: Practice and program development will incorporate evidence-based methods.
- Privacy and Confidentiality Rights: A common understanding of privacy and confidentiality rights is essential to ensuring that a family's privacy is appropriately protected

These Collaborative Values and Guiding Principles will be evidenced in the undersigned parties' commitment to:

- Multi-system Policies, Procedures and Practices: Address and develop multi-system policies, procedures and practices concerning AOD in child protection cases in compliance with the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA);
- In-service Training: Develop joint/collaborative in-service training for the respective staff members and stakeholders to address information sharing, the coordination of programs and services, and to enhance working relationships;
- Promising Practice: Facilitate promising practices across disciplines;

- Service Delivery: Coordinate and collaborate on service delivery issues and needs for mutual client populations;
- Problem Resolution: Facilitate ongoing communication and collaborative problem resolution for the concerns and issues raised;
- Mutual Data Needs: Identify mutual data needs in order to improve timely access to information across systems;
- Work Together: Define how the agencies and the courts will work together on issues such as training, communication and information sharing;
- Collaborate: Promote and facilitate inter-branch, inter-departmental and inter-agency collaboration in a community-based and state-supported system;
- Meet Regularly: Share information, update policies/procedures, and enhance working relationships among the agencies involved through regular meetings; and
- Dedicate Resources: Allocate staff time and related administrative supports, training resources, technical assistance, outreach and support to the county teams for this effort.

System Resources

The Child Safety and Permanency and Chemical Health Divisions of the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota State Court Administrator’s Office have each agreed to:

- Assure fair and equitable contribution of funding resources to support project management;
- Share the necessary training resources to ensure that staff from each entity which serves children and parents with AOD problems will have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to help achieve positive outcomes; and
- Provide technical assistance, outreach and support as resources allow to assist in the implementation of recommended practices at the local level.

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