



PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

The Child and Family Practice Model is based on the belief that partnerships with diverse families, communities, and Tribes are essential in the journey to improving services and outcomes for children and families. Development and implementation of the Practice Model is anchored in partnering with community in real time – all the time – at both practice and system levels to keep children safe and to meet the needs of families. This requires a humble approach by the child welfare agency and its leaders that acknowledges the history of trauma caused by the system and seeks to address the resulting individual and collective distrust of the system and its representatives.

Initial meetings with community and Tribal partners often began as listening sessions for the child welfare agency to learn about and begin to address historical trauma and the community's mistrust of the agency.

Agency, community, and Tribal partners explored their perspectives, language, and values in key areas, such as safety and permanency.

Through meaningful dialogue in partnership meetings and system review processes that included interviews, observations, and case reviews, agency, community, and Tribal partners studied local system barriers and worked together on solutions.

As a result of these efforts, the Practice Model was co-created with community and Tribal partners to address the key practice and system barriers that emerged:

- *Weak and insufficient engagement practices*
- *Lack of accurate understanding of family strengths and needs*
- *Lack of relevant, timely, well-coordinated Services*
- *Lack of family voice and of urgent and sustained permanency focus*

This was part of many early outreach and engagement efforts that demonstrated each jurisdiction's commitment to support quality practice and to partner with local communities and Tribes to improve outcomes for the children and families being served. Community partners assisted in defining the practices in the model not by what social workers and families are mandated to do, but by what children and families need to experience to help them attend to their safety, permanency, and well-being needs. The reaction of many social workers in implementing jurisdictions was that the Practice Model was the kind of approach that they went into social work and helping professions to do.

Inviting community and Tribal partners to have a larger voice and role in local child welfare practice change and system transformation is a bold and necessary step in improving outcomes. Their honest, generous, and forthright contributions bring critical insights, energy, and momentum to child welfare practice and system improvement work, strengthening accountability and opening our eyes to new ways of doing business. A commitment to traveling a path of *true partnership* with families, communities, and Tribes is critical in creating readiness and supporting implementation of the Child and Family Practice Model.