Competency List

CORE, Specialized and Related, and Foster Parent

January 2001
Competencies for Child Welfare Staff

*Competencies are statements of attitude, knowledge, and skill*, which are necessary for the performance of job tasks. A competent worker is one who has mastered the knowledge and skills to perform their job.

All competencies required for a particular work group represents the “universe of competencies” for the work group. The “universe of competencies” for Child Welfare includes, **CORE competencies**, which are foundation level skills, which are needed by all Child Welfare Professionals; **specialized competencies**, which are needed by workers whose jobs include working specialized program areas or with special family populations; and **related skill competencies**, which are knowledge and skills designed to enhance and refine Child Welfare practice. This list represents the **CORE competencies** and **Specialized and Related competencies** for Child Welfare.

The goal of in-service training is the acquisition and mastery by each Child Welfare Professional of the specific knowledge and skills necessary for the performance of their job. A training system which uses a process of individual training needs assessment (ITNA) to identify job competencies in which the Child Welfare Professional is deficient, and which then trains each Child Welfare Professional in those individual competencies, is a **competency-based training system**.

### CORE COMPETENCIES

#### Legal

1. **100-1** The Child Welfare Professional can use the state’s legal definitions of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and mental injury to determine the validity of protective complaints.

2. **100-2** The Child Welfare Professional understands the proper role of the juvenile court system in Child Welfare and knows how to use the juvenile court to protect children.

3. **100-3** The Child Welfare Professional understands the caseworker’s role and responsibility in the courtroom and knows what constitutes effective testimony.

4. **100-4** The Child Welfare Professional is able to gather pertinent evidence and prepare a case for filing and presentation in juvenile court.

#### Child Protective Services


2. **101-2** The Child Welfare Professional knows the state’s legal definitions of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, dependency, and endangerment.


4. **101-4** The Child Welfare Professional understands the dual roles of the Child Welfare Caseworker to protect children from maltreatment, and to provide services to enable and empower families.
101-5 The Child Welfare Professional can accurately identify physical, emotional, and behavioral indicators of abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse in child victims and their families.

101-6 The Child Welfare Professional knows how child abuse and neglect are presenting symptoms of family dysfunction, and can assess individual, family, and environmental contributors to abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.

101-7 The Child Welfare Professional knows what data must be gathered from informants, case records, and other sources to thoroughly investigate alleged abuse or neglect, and knows how to use this data to support or refute the allegation.

101-8 The Child Welfare Professional can identify the factors, which must be evaluated when assessing the level of risk for an abused or neglected child in the family.

101-9 The Child Welfare Professional can determine when abuse or neglect are substantiated or indicated; when complaints are unsubstantiated, yet should be referred for community services; and when complaints should be dismissed.

101-10 The Child Welfare Professional knows the responsibilities of the child protection agency and caseworker, including investigating complaints of maltreatment, providing ongoing in-home services, providing temporary substitute care placements, and providing permanent homes for children.

101-11 The Child Welfare Professional knows the proper roles and responsibilities of other community agencies in the child protective service process and can collaborate with these agencies and practitioners to develop case plans and to provide services.

101-12 The Child Welfare Professional understands the concept of cultural competence; knows how one's own culture affects behavior and values; and knows how cultural and ethnic differences may affect the delivery of Child Welfare Services.

101-13 The Child Welfare Professional knows how in-home family services can prevent the removal of children from their homes.

**Casework Process and Case Planning**

102-1 The Child Welfare Professional is able to apply social work values and principles in practice, including respecting the self-determination, dignity, and individuality of the family.

102-2 The Child Welfare Professional understands the importance of effective case assessment and planning as the foundation of casework intervention.

102-3 The Child Welfare Professional knows the proper sequence of steps in the case planning process.

102-4 The Child Welfare Professional can assess families' cognitive, behavioral, and emotional strengths and weaknesses and can use this information to formulate case goals and plans.

102-5 The Child Welfare Professional is able to integrate the use of authority with the use of casework methods to simultaneously protect children and engage families.

102-6 The Child Welfare Professional is able to use casework methods to defuse family hostility and resistance.

102-7 The Child Welfare Professional is able to integrate the use of authority with the use of
Casework methods to simultaneously protect children and engage families.

102-8 The Child Welfare Professional understands the potential effects of cultural and ethnic differences on the development of the casework relationship, and knows strategies to establish relationships with families from cultural backgrounds different from one’s own.

102-9 The Child Welfare Professional is able to develop appropriate, time-limited case goals and objectives and can formulate observable, behavioral measures of these goals and objectives.

102-10 The Child Welfare Professional is able to prioritize case needs and objectives, and can develop action/service plans, which reflect these priorities.

102-11 The Child Welfare Professional can coordinate the delivery of services to meet identified needs through case management, referral to community resources, advocacy, and directly providing supportive or rehabilitative services.

102-12 The Child Welfare Professional is able to conduct effective casework interviews. This includes the ability to communicate the purpose of the interview; to control the process and direction of the interview while encouraging family participation; to use a variety of interview methods, including open and closed-ended questions, clarification, support, summarization, and confrontation; and to help families communicate feelings as well as facts.

102-13 The Child Welfare Professional can use casework methods to promote family preservation and permanence for children by involving parents in case planning; by providing services to maintain children in their own homes; by assuring parents’ involvement with children in placement; and by providing services toward timely reunification.

102-14 The Child Welfare Professional understands the importance of conducting routine and timely case reviews, and can reassess the outcomes of all case plans and service interventions and to make appropriate modifications in the case plan.

102-15 The Child Welfare Professional is able to write concise, summarized case assessment, case plan, and other supporting documentation into the family case record in a timely manner.

The Effects of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development

103-1 The Child Welfare Professional has a thorough knowledge of the stages, processes, and milestones of normal physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of children from birth through adolescence.

103-2 The Child Welfare Professional knows the potential negative effects of child abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse on a child’s development, and can identify indicators of developmental delay or problems in abused and neglected children.

103-3 The Child Welfare Professional is able to develop case plans, which address developmental problems and is able to make appropriate referrals for developmental assessment and services.

103-4 The Child Welfare Professional knows how children’s behavior problems may be symptoms of underlying developmental delays or emotional disturbance.

103-5 The Child Welfare Professional is able to advise parents and foster parents on age-appropriate expectations for children, and can help set realistic expectations for children who demonstrate developmental problems as a result of abuse and neglect.
Separation and Placement

104-1 The Child Welfare Professional understands the process and dynamics of normal attachment of children to their parents and to significant caretakers.

104-2 The Child Welfare Professional understands the potentially traumatic outcomes of the separation and placement experience for children and their families, including precipitation of psychological crisis, serious disruption of family relationships, and disturbances in the child’s cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development.

104-3 The Child Welfare Professional can define “reunification” and “permanency planning,” and knows the negative effects on children of changing and inconsistent living arrangements.

104-4 The Child Welfare Professional can weigh the risk to the child of remaining at home against the potential trauma of separation when deciding whether to place the child into substitute care.

104-5 The Child Welfare Professional can recognize the physical, emotional, and behavioral indicators of placement-induced stress in children of varying ages.

104-6 The Child Welfare Professional can recognize the physical, emotional, and behavioral indicators of placement-induced stress in the families of children being placed.

104-7 The Child Welfare Professional understands how properly structuring a placement can help prevent crisis and its consequences; and can conduct placement activities, including pre-placement preparation and visits, that minimize stress and provide emotional support to the child and family.

104-8 The Child Welfare Professional knows how to prepare foster parents, relatives, and other substitute caregivers to receive children in placement to reduce the child’s stress and to facilitate the child’s adjustment.

104-9 The Child Welfare Professional can work collaboratively with foster caregivers to assess a child’s need for special developmental, medical, educational, social, psychological, and other services; to identify resources; and to obtain needed services.

104-10 The Child Welfare Professional can identify ways that poor agency foster care policies and practices can contribute to placement disruption.

104-11 The Child Welfare Professional can implement strategies to identify, strengthen, and maintain the least restrictive (i.e. kinship care) and/or most appropriate placement to meet a child’s special needs.

104-12 The Child Welfare Professional provides services to assist families in meeting case goals and objectives by involving them in all phases of placement planning and implementation. Those services include the supporting and empowering of parents and the understanding of multicultural norms, values, traditions, and child rearing practices of ethnic and cultural groups.

104-13 The Child Welfare Professional knows the necessity of regular and frequent visit to maintain the parents’ relationship with the placed child; and can use casework strategies that enable parents to participate in planning and attending visits.

104-14 The Child Welfare Professional knows the appropriate use of permanent court custody and can initiate adoption planning when return of a child to her family or to relatives can no longer be considered.

104-15 The Child Welfare Professional knows their personal psychological stresses associated with
child placement casework and can identify strategies to prevent emotional distress and burn-out.

104-16 The Child Welfare Professional understands the role of kinship care in the continuum of child welfare services and understands the concepts of reunification and other permanency planning alternatives is regards to kinship care placement.

Adoption

105-1 The Child Welfare Professional understands the role of adoption in the continuum of child welfare services.

105-2 The Child Welfare Professional understands the values that underlie adoption practice, including permanence for children; cultural continuity; preservation of identity; minimizing placement disruption; developing, strengthening, and supporting families for all children in need of homes; and the “adoptability” of all children.

105-3 The Child Welfare Professional knows the nature and function of the components of a comprehensive adoption services program, including: at risk placements, supportive services, foster/adopt placement, kinship or relative adoption, post finalization rights, and adoptive planning for the child.

105-4 The Child Welfare Professional understands the concepts of family preservation efforts and knows the type of family situation that would warrant termination of parental rights and adoptive planning for the child.

105-5 The Child Welfare Professional is aware of the appropriate legal action from goal change through termination of parental rights to finalization of the adoption.

105-6 The Child Welfare Professional is aware, from point of intake, of the need to gather and document information for the family and child assessment.

CORE 106 Risk Assessment

106-1 The Child Welfare Professional knows the personal, interpersonal, family, and environmental factors, which increase the risk of maltreatment of children.

106-2 The Child Welfare Professional knows investigation and interviewing strategies to assess and determine the degree of risk to a child remaining in the home.

106-3 The Child Welfare Professional knows how to use the risk assessment tool.

106-4 The Child Welfare Professional is able to gather pertinent information from the family, the child and from collateral sources; can make an initial assessment of risk to the child and of the family’s problems, needs, and strengths; and can make the appropriate case disposition.

106-5 The Child Welfare Professional understands the ways in which cultural variables can confound as assessment of child maltreatment, and can conduct investigation activities that are congruent with a family’s cultural background.

Family Preservation

107-1 The Child Welfare Professional understands the historical and philosophical basis of family preservation and family-centered Child Welfare practice, including family systems theory; worker can apply his/her understanding to case planning and service delivery.
107-2 The Child Welfare Professional understands the seven values of Pennsylvania’s Family Preservation program; and knows how family preservation fits in the continuum of Child Welfare services.

Valuing Diversity

108-1 The Child Welfare Professional understands the concept of cultural competence; knows how one’s own culture affects behavior and values; and knows how cultural and ethnic differences may affect the delivery of Child Welfare Services.