



## Collaborative Change Framework for Public Child Welfare Teams

### Overarching Aim

The aim of this Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) is to cultivate a sustainable workforce within child welfare programs that value justice, equity, and inclusivity.

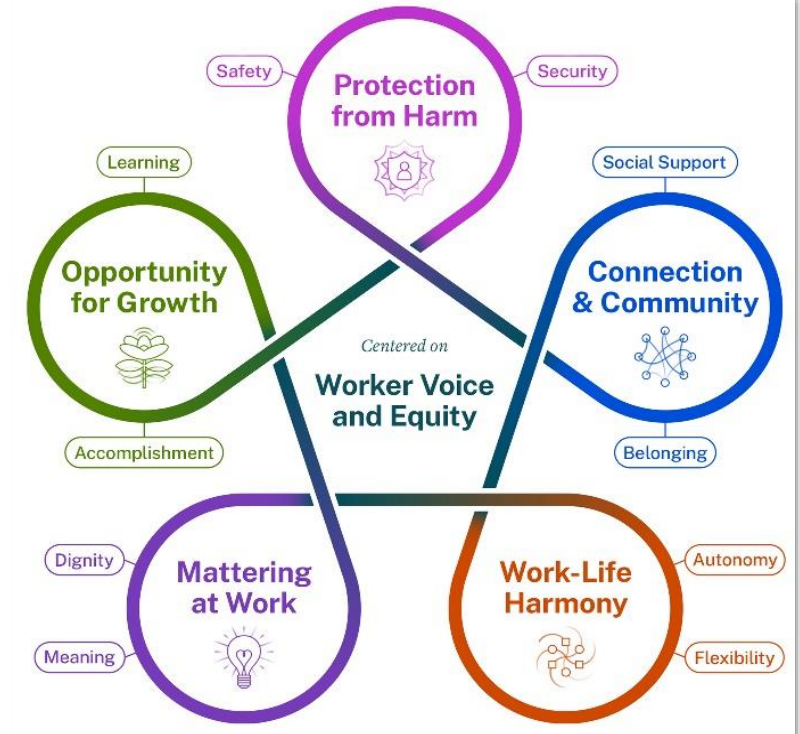
### Foundational Principles

Demonstrated commitment to:

- Building and sustaining antiracist, de-colonized organizations focused on inclusivity and belongingness.
- Implementing trauma-informed practices with organizations and families.
- Honoring the dignity and autonomy of the workforce and the families the organizations serve.

This Collaborative Change Framework (CCF) is based on the [U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being](#) and is centered on worker voice, inclusivity, and equity (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being



<p><b>Domain<sup>1</sup></b> Overarching BSC themes</p>	<p><b>Objectives</b> Specific aims or intentions within the domain</p>	<p><b>Example Change Concepts</b> More specific mechanisms that can be used to achieve domain objectives</p>
<p><b>1. Protection From Harm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Physical Safety</i></li> <li>- <i>Psychological safety</i></li> <li>- <i>Security</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and support a physically safe organizational, work, and service environment.</li> <li>• Create a work environment that fosters resiliency and where staff can thrive and are buffered from burnout.</li> <li>• Create and nurture a psychologically safe environment for the workforce through a trauma-responsive approach, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permission to be candid.</li> <li>- Encouraging interpersonal risk-taking.</li> <li>- Disclosing mistakes or divergent viewpoints.</li> <li>- Feeling connected and belonging at work.</li> <li>- A sense of trust.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify and attend to the safety needs of all staff, including responding to harms, in culturally responsive ways.</li> <li>• Develop communication processes that create transparency and result in knowledge sharing throughout the organization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop policies and protocols that ensure worker safety without taking away the physical/psychological safety of children and families being served.</li> <li>• Provide more safety equipment to caseworkers for home visits, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Car that is safe to manage the terrain.</li> <li>- Radio frequency device if they are out of cell-phone range.</li> <li>- Panic buttons or GPS devices.</li> <li>- Frequent check ins.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop communication strategies to convey to families/clients that the safety measures are for the organization and also for the community, children, etc.</li> <li>• Create equity around who follows safety procedures (i.e., youth walking through security to get to court while child welfare managers walk around).</li> <li>• Ensure job security and protection from arbitrary disciplinary actions.</li> <li>• Create shared accountability and a systems approach to understanding problems – e.g., when families’ needs go unmet, critical incidents.</li> <li>• Create spaces where staff can fail and be forgiven; there is leadership and support to help learn and grow from those failures; there is the opportunity to correct/fix mistakes.</li> <li>• Operationalize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) norms, policies, and programs.</li> <li>• Create safe spaces for workers (e.g., rooms for mindfulness).</li> <li>• Ensure self-care and access to services as norms and expectations to guard against the “hero-culture” in child welfare.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for staff to have conversations with an outside provider to address microaggressions.</li> </ul>

<b>Domain<sup>1</sup></b> Overarching BSC themes	<b>Objectives</b> Specific aims or intentions within the domain	<b>Example Change Concepts</b> More specific mechanisms that can be used to achieve domain objectives
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the experience of moral distress/moral injury among all staff working in a field where Black, Indigenous, and people of color have been institutionally oppressed and create a sense of language and support.</li> <li>• Examine how hiring, promoting, and disciplinary actions are experienced based on diverse identities.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Connection &amp; Community</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Social Support</i></li> <li>– <i>Belonging</i></li> <li>– <i>Interdependence</i></li> <li>– <i>Relationality</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote workplace practices that create and maintain inclusive social connections that foster belonging (consider what that looks like in a post-COVID environment with hybrid work environments).</li> <li>• Cultivate, develop, and support trusting relationships among workers, between workers and supervisors, and between executive leadership and direct service staff.</li> <li>• Identify and address white dominant cultural norms that are barriers to engagement and decolonize the work so that people with lived experience within the agency and being served by the agency can be heard, valued, and respected.</li> <li>• Develop, nurture, and sustain meaningful partnerships with communities, including clients/families, university partners,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide time for workers to connect with one another in meaningful (non-work-related) ways through things like:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Frequent surveys of staff wellness and engagement.</li> <li>– Opportunities for social gatherings like movement, cooking together, lunch breaks, social outings, retreats.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop individualized strategies based on work environment (remote/hybrid/in-office) and characteristics of the workforce (age, tenure, personality, etc.) to foster connection and belonging.</li> <li>• Provide staff trainings on bias, microaggressions, how to navigate a diverse work environment (including generational). Build skills for interacting with people different from yourself.</li> <li>• Improve engagement with community partners and providers, e.g.:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Invite community and university partners to be part of ongoing conversations.</li> <li>– Implement a practice of regular listening sessions with child welfare program and community partners, not just a one and done, where the agency can demonstrate how strategies have been implemented.</li> <li>– Ensure process of follow-up and accountability for action steps.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Domain<sup>1</sup></b> Overarching BSC themes	<b>Objectives</b> Specific aims or intentions within the domain	<b>Example Change Concepts</b> More specific mechanisms that can be used to achieve domain objectives
	other agencies and providers, and universities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that executive leadership is messaging and supporting the importance of relationships and community-building.</li> <li>• Provide 360° assessments for managers and leaders.</li> <li>• Improve public perception of child welfare.</li> <li>• Create mechanisms for upper management to hear from direct service staff.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for acknowledging the harms of COVID and opportunities for healing and restoration.</li> <li>• Build staff capacity for authentic engagement of family and youth voice to inform organizational policies and practices.</li> <li>• Convene meaningful advisory boards of youth, foster-parents, and other caregivers with staff so they share what is working and what is not—hear from the people you are serving and incorporate change:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Avoid tokenism.</li> <li>– Pay stipends.</li> <li>– Make policy changes that enable practice changes.</li> <li>– Ensure geographic representation.</li> <li>– Have youth-led engagement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Incorporate voices of lived experience into case reviews, thinking about reunification and case planning.</li> <li>• Meet regularly with key stakeholder groups, schools, law enforcement, other social service agencies. Community focus groups could fit here as well.</li> <li>• Using coaching, develop and sustain those meaningful partnerships.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Work-Life Harmony</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide options and flexibility for how staff do their work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop policies and support for flexible work.</li> </ul>

<b>Domain<sup>1</sup></b> Overarching BSC themes	<b>Objectives</b> Specific aims or intentions within the domain	<b>Example Change Concepts</b> More specific mechanisms that can be used to achieve domain objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Autonomy</i></li> <li>- <i>Flexibility</i></li> <li>- <i>Balance</i></li> <li>- <i>Self-Sufficiency</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support staff holistic wellness and resilience in ways staff desire and find meaningful.</li> <li>• Safeguard against work intensification (i.e., reduce caseloads/workload).</li> <li>• Create a work environment that is pleasant and can also inspire joy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce caseload burden for staff and monitor workloads and caseloads proactively and consistently.</li> <li>• Shift the culture around workforce well-being.</li> <li>• Define, discuss, and operationalize well-being strategies in an intentional way so that all staff have a shared understanding of expectations around self-care.</li> <li>• Ensure that staff can take time off with concrete case coverage plans that ensure that families are safe, and that staff don't return to more work.</li> <li>• Create wellness programs and supports for staff.</li> <li>• Create staffing positions for wellness and resiliency.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for joy at work and outside of work (fun group activities, yoga, walks, potlucks, decorating offices, contests, case-closing celebrations, sharing interests and hobbies; "Zen" room).</li> <li>• Ensure that staff can work reasonable, expected hours, and establish boundaries so they can have predictive life-after-work schedules.</li> <li>• Establish and follow workload standards.</li> <li>• Ensure that workload and burden are equitable and that Black, Indigenous, and staff of color are not burdened by additional work or emotional labor.</li> <li>• Address secondary trauma and burnout through clinical supervision, training, peer groups, mentoring, and access to mental health services.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Mattering at Work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Dignity</i></li> <li>- <i>Respect</i></li> <li>- <i>Meaningful Work</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure compensation reflects the value of the work being done.</li> <li>• Demonstrate gratitude for and recognition of all staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate in meaningful ways that the organization values all roles at all levels (as defined by each organization).</li> <li>• Engage workers in all roles at all levels in defining how their work is meaningful to them.</li> </ul>

<p>Domain<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Overarching BSC themes</p>	<p>Objectives</p> <p>Specific aims or intentions within the domain</p>	<p>Example Change Concepts</p> <p>More specific mechanisms that can be used to achieve domain objectives</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Recognition</i></li> <li>– <i>Contribution</i></li> <li>– <i>Importance</i></li> <li>– <i>Transparency</i></li> <li>– <i>Distributive Leadership</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure individual work is consistent with organizational values and mission.</li> <li>• Ensure equity, fairness, and transparency in hiring, promotions, decision-making, pay, and benefits that elevate the importance of lived experience.</li> <li>• Create ways for staff from all levels to inform and influence the work and the work environment.</li> <li>• Ensure staff have the resources they need to do their jobs effectively.</li> <li>• Support distributive leadership strategies where leaders share power and control with staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a livable wage to all staff.</li> <li>• Support staff so they feel a sense of belonging at work.</li> <li>• Engage staff so that they know where the organization started, where it's going, what is happening along the way.</li> <li>• Create a consensus-based organization where most of the decisions are made by committees.</li> <li>• Create ways for staff to inform leadership and make decisions.</li> <li>• Implement a “personal choice” work model where each employee determines with their supervisor when they work in the office.</li> <li>• Create human resources processes and practices that are explicit and transparent in recognizing and prioritizing the importance of lived experience in the hiring process.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for brave conversations and expectations and cultural norms around having these conversations on a regular basis (vulnerability).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Domain<sup>1</sup></b> Overarching BSC themes</p>	<p><b>Objectives</b> Specific aims or intentions within the domain</p>	<p><b>Example Change Concepts</b> More specific mechanisms that can be used to achieve domain objectives</p>
<p><b>5. Opportunity for Growth</b> – <i>Learning</i> – <i>Accomplishment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire and nurture a skilled and diverse workforce, including those with lived experience.</li> <li>• Create an environment that honors the contributions of a diverse workforce.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for all staff to continuously develop their skills and knowledge.</li> <li>• Build organizational knowledge and skills around equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.</li> <li>• Provide professional and leadership development for all staff.</li> <li>• Develop career mobility/advancement pathways and opportunities for all staff, especially Black, Indigenous, and staff of color.</li> <li>• Engage and sustain partnerships with universities and colleges for future workforce development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for continuous skill and knowledge development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Practice skills, including engagement</li> <li>– Leadership development.</li> <li>– Managing conflict.</li> <li>– Diversity, equity, inclusivity, and bias; building antiracist organizations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cultivate a learning organization where training is valued and expected and time for training is protected.</li> <li>• Hire expert trainers and build training skills within the workforce.</li> <li>• Deliver high-quality training that uses a variety of methods, attends to adult learning styles, and is experiential and evidence informed.</li> <li>• Recruit, develop, and support staff with lived experience (remove policy barriers, ensure that voices are heard, and all staff feel engaged).</li> <li>• Use diversity, equity, inclusivity, and justice external consultants and trainers.</li> <li>• Consider educational/degree requirements for child welfare staff positions.</li> <li>• Build in layers of accountability to practice diversity, equity, and inclusion during hiring – use data to show that the staffing represents the community</li> <li>• Develop and implement equitable pathways to mobility where everyone has an equal opportunity to grow to the next level, as well as opportunities for lateral moves.</li> <li>• Implement “performance enablement” structures that support staff moving to the next level and have conversations with staff about development of the whole person</li> </ul>

<p>Domain<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Overarching BSC themes</p>	<p>Objectives</p> <p>Specific aims or intentions within the domain</p>	<p>Example Change Concepts</p> <p>More specific mechanisms that can be used to achieve domain objectives</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer mentoring and leadership pathways for Black, Indigenous, and staff of color.</li> <li>• Utilize diverse hiring committees and structured, equitable hiring processes.</li> <li>• Create coaching and mentorship opportunities for staff based on their voice and choice.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrate coaching in supervision and as a part of professional development.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop performance measures that are culturally responsive and antiracist.</li> <li>• Develop and leverage university partnerships to support workforce development, continuing education/stipends, certificate programs.</li> <li>• Create models for consistent supervision and leadership across the agency.</li> <li>• Empower greater autonomy in their decision-making.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Domains are based on the U.S. Surgeon General’s Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being  
<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/workplace-well-being/index.html>