



# Family Services Program Statement

The Family Services Program provides comprehensive services in situations where the initial assessment has determined the child is unsafe or at high risk of being maltreated. Services are intended to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children, enhance the protective capacities of parents, and strengthen the family. It is comprised of two components: 1) In-home Services and 2) Out-of-home Services.

## In-Home Services

In-home services are designed to assist families with safely maintaining their children in the home and prevent out-of-home placement. When the safety assessment is conducted and it is determined the safety threats can be managed while the child is the home, a plan to provide safety for the child is developed.

An in-home safety plan can only be considered if the home environment is manageable and the caregivers are willing to participate in the plan. The safety plan manages safety threats by identifying individuals who may be either family members or natural community supports. These people must understand the impending danger threats and be willing to actively participate in the plan. For example, if extended family members are available, they may provide support by staying in the home. Immediate services, such as substance abuse testing and domestic violence intervention, are employed to address the safety threats. The worker visits



the home on a frequent basis, reassesses the safety of the child, and provides supports and services as needed. The assessment includes informal assessment by the worker and may also include formal assessments through community providers. Areas of need often include substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health and parenting skill development. Children's needs often include general counseling, specialized mental health and developmental services.

The needs identified in the assessment process are incorporated into the case plan. Parents, age appropriate children, tribal members when applicable, and other members of the family's support network are encouraged to participate in the development of the case plan. Services identified in the case planning process are implemented by the worker assisting the family in contacting and engaging in services with a community provider. The worker monitors and ensures the family participates in services, children receive appropriate services, and adequate progress toward case plan objectives is accomplished.

During this service provision period, the safety plan for the family is monitored by the worker and adjustments made as indicated. Children are regularly met with and seen privately for a portion of each visit. This allows for ongoing monitoring of their safety. During this period, the worker visits regularly with the family to engage with them and provide support, encouragement, and feedback on their case plan. Services to the family continue until the case monitoring indicates that the parents have participated in services and behavioral changes have occurred. Safety assessment and analysis continues throughout the life of the case until it is determined that the family has sufficient protective capacities to ensure the safety of their children. When families no longer receive services from the Office of Children's Services, they may continue with tribal and other community service providers for ongoing support.

## Out-of-Home Services

When a child is determined as unable to be maintained safely in their own home, the Office of Children's Services assumes legal custody of the child and arranges for placement of the child in out-of-home



care. Throughout this process the court provides oversight of the case and conducts regular reviews to ensure the needs of the child and family are met. Out-of-home care is provided by relatives of the family or tribal members. When these resources for placement are not available, the child is placed with a licensed foster family. Efforts are made throughout this process to ensure that the child maintains family connections, and continuity of their cultural and community connections.

Services to assist the birth family in making needed changes are provided through a process of assessment of need of each family member including the children and identification of services responsive to those needs. Assessment is accomplished informally by the worker through meetings with the family and soliciting their perspectives on the issues as well as use of formal assessments by community organizations (e.g. substance abuse, domestic violence, anger management, mental health, medical, developmental assessments, educational testing, etc).

Information gained during the assessment phase is incorporated into a formal case plan. Parents are actively engaged by the worker in the development of their case plan. Tribal members are also asked to participate in case planning efforts if a tribe has intervened on a child's behalf. Case plan participants are encouraged to provide input on services they believe will be effective in assisting them to make necessary changes and enhance their protective capacities. Case plans incorporate specific goals with time frames for completion. Children who are age appropriate, generally school age and older, are engaged in identifying case plan activities relevant to their status. These activities include after school activities, continuing contact with friends, and support for overcoming trauma they have experienced.

Services which have been identified in the case planning process are implemented through referral by the worker and by the parents establishing contact and a schedule with the provider. Services to children are arranged by the worker and supported by the out-of-home caregiver who assists in ensuring the child gets to their appointments and provides support throughout the service period. Parents are encouraged to participate in appointments for their child. During this period, the worker visits regularly with the family to engage with them and provide support, encouragement, and feedback on their case plan. The worker also visits regularly with the child to monitor their safety and well-being. The child's caregiver is visited to ensure they are provided support and resources necessary to ensure good quality of care for the child.

While the parents engage in services, efforts are made to maintain the parent-child relationship through regular contact and visitation. An assessment is made of the level of supervision required during these contacts to ensure the safety of the child.

Permanency goals are established for each child. Goals established include reunification, adoption, guardianship, or for some older children a goal of independent living. Throughout the service period, the worker and parents engage in a process of evaluating the parent's progress in making changes that will provide for safety of the child to be returned home.

A regular system of administrative review which includes all parties to the case is conducted. This assists the parents in understanding their progress and adjustments can be made to the case plan as needed. A regular process of ongoing safety assessment is engaged in at regular intervals. When the parents demonstrate through changed behavior and increased protective capacities that they can provide a safe environment, the child is able to return home on a trial home visit. Regular monitoring of the home occurs during the trial home visit period and the family continues to receive supportive services as needed to ensure a successful reunification. After a period of services and sustained safety in the home, the child is able to return to their home permanently with legal custody returned to the parents.

When adequate progress is not being made to ameliorate safety threats, the permanency goal is changed to reflect the case circumstances. This may include establishment of the goal of adoption. When parents are not able to make the changes necessary to allow the child to be safely returned home, the agency seeks termination of the parental rights through the court system freeing the child to establish a permanent parent-child relationship with another caregiver.

When goals are established that plan for permanency of the child outside of their home, an alternative home is identified. Permanent placement is sought with tribal members or other relatives. When these are not available as resources, the foster parent may be identified as the adoptive parent. An assessment is conducted of the pre-adoptive home to determine the family's ability to provide long term care and to meet any special needs of the child. Youth who have the goal of independent living are provided with services to assist them in developing the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare them to successfully live on their own when they reach adulthood.