



CULTURALLY RELEVANT SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Active involved community partnerships help the system understand, develop, and make available services and supports that are culturally-responsive, community based, and sensitive to the multiple layers of current and historic trauma that children and families being served are likely to have experienced. A lack of culturally relevant or responsive services and supports is an issue that may lift up from many sources: child welfare practitioners asking for help in addressing a system barrier that is negatively affecting services for a child or family, local system reviews, discussion with community partners, etc. Community partners are essential in helping the child welfare agency create service delivery systems that meet the needs of children and families, honor their history and culture, and empower natural networks of support for children and families.

As partnership meetings and activities develop, they should incorporate an intentional focus on building a culturally responsive and community-based service delivery system. Some jurisdictions implementing the Practice Model have identified key advisors from the community to meet monthly with high-level agency leadership to create strategic priorities for improving service delivery, while others use ongoing meetings with community and system partners and incorporate this work into monthly meeting agendas and activities. In either event, subgroups can be identified to work on bringing information and materials together, developing what is needed, and assisting in follow-through and execution.

Jurisdictions implementing the Practice Model have actively sought out information about resources in the community that promote or provide culturally responsive services and supports for children and families. They held focus groups and connected with cultural brokers and leaders of specific communities to find out about anger management, substance abuse, and domestic violence programs that are sensitive to culture and trauma; parenting programs that hold the values of the community related to parenting and protecting children; churches that support youth and parenting activities in communities; traditional beading and regalia making in specific Tribal communities; traditional healers; and community-based organizations or nonprofits who contract with community people who can teach others to participate in these events and activities.

By learning the community's perspective on what supports and services work for children and families in these communities and then learning about what is available and how it can be accessed, the agency can work to establish pathways to these culturally responsive resources for children and families. This often includes:

- Approaching community leaders to find out who is providing the specific services and how the agency might contract to enhance access and provision of these services to child welfare children and families
- Collaborating with the agency's finance department or fiscal team to identify and/or develop business processes to authorize and fund these services as part of case plan activities
- Communicating with all staff within the organization and with community partners once the business processes are in place, so that children and families who need these resources have access to them.

Because there will be many child welfare and broader system service delivery challenges, child welfare agencies have found it helpful for partners to jointly identify one or two service delivery challenges for their initial work together. Focusing on services and supports that are the most relevant, responsive, and effective for the children and families whose outcomes the jurisdiction is trying to improve, rather than focusing on “low-hanging fruit,” is usually important. As long as there is active agency collaboration and follow-through, these efforts will provide opportunities for problem solving, system transparency, and strengthening partner relationships regardless of the challenges encountered or the results of the effort.

As the agency and community partnership develops and progress is made, additional priority areas for advocacy and attention will emerge. Partners will together identify the “next right steps” in co-creating a culturally relevant and responsive system of supports and services to meet the underlying needs of the children and families being served.