

and loving homes that will meet their individual needs, without regard to the child's or the prospective parent's race, color, or national origin.

- The [Adoption and Safe Families Act](#) of 1997. This law was passed to improve the safety of children, to promote adoption and other permanent homes for children who need them, and to support families. This law made changes and clarifications in a wide range of policies established under the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272).
- The [Foster Care Independence Act of 1999](#). This law was enacted to amend part E of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide States with more funding and greater flexibility in carrying out programs designed to help children make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency.
- The [Child and Family Services Improvement Act](#) of 2006. This law amended parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act. It reauthorized the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) program; authorized funds to states to meet requirements for case workers to visit children in foster care monthly; and reauthorized the Court Improvement Program.
- The [Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act](#) of 2006. This bill was enacted to improve protections for children and to hold states accountable for the safe and timely placement of children across state lines.
- The [Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act](#) of 2006. This law was enacted to protect children from sexual exploitation and violent crime; to prevent child abuse and child pornography with an emphasis on comprehensive strategies across federal, state, and local communities to prevent sex offenders' access to children; to promote Internet safety; and to honor the memory of Adam Walsh and other child crime victims.
- The [Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act](#) of 2008. The goal of this law is to amend parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act to connect and support relative caregivers, improve educational and health outcomes for children in foster care, provide for tribal foster care and adoption access and improve incentives for adoption, as well as for other purposes.
- The [National Youth in Transition Database](#) regulations (45 CFR 1356.80 through 1356.86). This regulation requires states to collect and report data to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) on youth who are receiving independent living services and on the outcomes of certain youth who are in foster care or who age out of foster care.

- The [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#) (P.L. 111-148). This law, passed in 2010, is intended to decrease the number of people without health care coverage.
- The [Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act](#) (P.L. 112-34) was signed into law in September 2011. This law amended and expanded parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act. The law expands the requirements of how agencies monitor and treat emotional trauma in addition to other health needs identified through screenings and requires states to establish protocols for the appropriate use and monitoring of psychotropic medications. The law also increases the standard for monthly visits with children by the service worker to at least fifty percent in the residence of the child. The law also requires educational stability at each placement change vs. only when coming into care. It also requires that each youth, 16 and older, in foster care receive a copy of any consumer credit report each year until discharged from foster care. The youth is also to be assisted in interpreting the credit report and resolving any inconsistencies.
- [The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act](#) (P.L. 113-183) was signed into law in September 2014. In addition to protecting children and youth at risk of sex trafficking, it also includes provisions for improving opportunities for children in foster care and supporting permanency. The law requires states to implement a plan to locate and respond to children who run away from foster care, report to law enforcement authorities any instances of sex trafficking, and to collect data regarding children in foster care who have been the victims of sex trafficking. Additionally, states are required to develop a reasonable and prudent parent standard for a foster child's participation in age and developmentally appropriate social, recreational and extracurricular activities. The law also limits the goals of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement and Permanent Foster Care to youth 16 years of age or older and prescribes requirements for approval of the foster care plan. Youth who age out of foster care at age 18 shall be provided with certain documentation and all youth age 14 and older shall be given the opportunity to participate in case planning and choose up to two members of their team.
- [The Family First Prevention Services Act \(Family First\)](#) was enacted by Congress on February 9, 2018 as part of the larger Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA), and represents the most significant re-write of title IV of the Social Security Act since 1981. Family First enables states to use federal funds under parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide enhanced support to children and families and prevent foster care placements by providing the following: i) mental health and treatment *for substance use disorders*, (ii) prevention and treatment services, (iii) in-home parent skill-based programs, and (iv) kinship navigator services. Additionally, Family First provides the tools and resources necessary to allow Virginia's social services system to focus on prevention in order to keep

children safely with their families and not enter foster care so that they have a better chance of growing-up in the least restrictive setting.

The amount of financial participation by the federal government is dependent upon compliance with federal regulations. Requirements are also in state laws pertaining to foster care and the Children's Services Act (Chapter 52 of title 2.2 of the Code of Virginia §§ [2.2-5200](#) through [2.2-5214](#)).

1.4 Practice principles

The Virginia Children's Services System Practice Model sets forth a vision for the services that are delivered by all child-serving agencies across the Commonwealth, especially the Departments of Social Services, Juvenile Justice, Education, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and the Office of Comprehensive Services. The practice model is central to our decision making; present in all of our meetings; and in every interaction that we have with a child or family. Decisions that are based on the practice model will be supported and championed. Guided by this model, our process to continuously improve services for children and families will be rooted in the best of practices, the most accurate and current data available, and with the safety and well-being of children and families as the fixed center of our work.

These guiding principles for permanency services in Virginia shall be incorporated in all decisions in case planning and service delivery for children in foster care and their families. To achieve permanency for children in foster care, services provision shall be timely and based on the following principles:

We believe that all children and communities deserve to be safe.

- Safety comes first. Every child has the right to live in a safe home, attend a safe school, and live in a safe community. Ensuring safety requires a collaborative effort among family, agency staff, and the community.
- We value family strengths, perspectives, goals, and plans as central to creating and maintaining child safety, and recognize that removal from home is not the only way to ensure child or community safety.
- In our response to safety and risk concerns, we reach factually-supported conclusions in a timely and thorough manner.
- Participation of parents, children, extended family, and community stakeholders is a necessary component in assuring safety.
- We separate caregivers who present a threat to safety from children in need of protection. When court action is necessary to make a child safe, we use our authority with respect and sensitivity.

We believe in family, child, and youth-driven practice.

- Children and families have the right to have a say in what happens to them and will be treated with dignity and respect. The voices of children, youth, and parents are heard, valued, and considered in the decision making regarding safety, permanency, and well-being, as well as in service and educational planning and in placement decisions.
- Each individual's right to self-determination will be respected within the limits of established community standards and laws.
- We recognize that family members are the experts about their own families. It is our responsibility to understand children, youth, and families within the context of their own family rules, traditions, history, and culture.
- Children have a right to connections with their biological family and other caring adults with whom they have developed emotional ties.
- We engage families in a deliberate manner. Through collaboration with families, we develop and implement creative, individual solutions that build on their strengths to meet their needs. Engagement is the primary door through which we help youth and families make positive changes.

We believe that children do best when raised in families.

- Children should be reared by their families whenever possible.
- Keeping children and families together and preventing entry into any type of out- of-home placement is the best possible use of resources.
- Children are best served when we provide their families with the supports necessary to raise them safely. Services to preserve the family unit and prevent family disruption are family-focused, child-centered, and community-based.
- People can and do make positive changes. The past does not necessarily limit their potential.
- When children cannot live safely with their families, the first consideration for placement will be with kinship connections capable of providing a safe and nurturing home. We value the resources within extended family networks and are committed to seeking them out.
- When placement outside the extended family is necessary, we encourage healthy social development by supporting placements that promote family, sibling, and community connections.

- Children's needs are best served in a family that is committed to the child.
- Placements in non-family settings should be temporary, should focus on individual children's needs, and should prepare them for return to family and community life.

We believe that all children and youth need and deserve a permanent family.

- Lifelong family connections are crucial for children and adults. It is our responsibility to promote and preserve kinship, sibling, and community connections for each child. We value past, present, and future relationships that consider the child's hopes and wishes.
- Permanency is best achieved through a legal relationship such as parental custody, adoption, kinship care, or guardianship. Placement stability is not permanency.
- Planning for children is focused on the goal of preserving their family, reunifying their family, or achieving permanency with another family.
- Permanency planning for children begins at the first contact with the children's services system. We proceed with a sense of urgency until permanency is achieved. We support families after permanency to ensure that family connections are stable.

We believe in partnering with others to support child and family success in a system that is family-focused, child-centered, and community-based.

- We are committed to aligning our system with what is best for children, youth, and families.
 - Our organizations, consistent with this practice model, are focused on providing supports to families in raising children. The practice model should guide all of the work that we do. In addition to practice alignment, infrastructure and resources must be aligned with the model. For example, training, policy, technical assistance, and other supports must reinforce the model.
 - We take responsibility for open communication, accountability, and transparency at all levels of our system and across all agencies. We share success stories and best practices to promote learning within and across communities and share challenges and lessons learned to make better decisions.
 - Community support is crucial for families in raising children.

- We are committed to working across agencies, stakeholder groups, and communities to improve outcomes for the children, youth, and families we serve.
 - Services to families must be delivered as part of a total system with cooperation, coordination, and collaboration occurring among families, service providers, and community stakeholders.
 - All stakeholders share responsibility for child safety, permanence, and well-being. As a system, we will identify and engage stakeholders and community members around our practice model to help children and families achieve success in life, safety, life in the community, family-based placements, and lifelong family connections.
 - We will communicate clearly and often with stakeholders and community members. Our communication must reinforce the belief that children and youth belong in family and community settings and that system resources must be allocated in a manner consistent with that belief.
- We are committed to working collaboratively to ensure that children with disabilities receive the supports necessary to enable them to receive their special education services within the public schools. We will collaboratively plan for children with disabilities who are struggling in public school settings to identify services that may prevent the need for private school placements, recognizing that the provision of such services will maximize the potential for these children to remain with their families and within their communities.

We believe that how we do our work is as important as the work we do.

- The people who do this work are our most important asset. Children and families deserve trained, skillful professionals to engage and assist them. We strive to build a workforce that works in alignment with our practice model. These professionals are supported in this effort through open dialogue, clear policy, excellent training and supervision, formal and informal performance evaluation, and appropriate resource allocation.
- As with families, we look for strengths in our organization. We are responsible for creating and maintaining a supportive working and learning environment and for open, respectful communication, collaboration, and accountability at all levels.
- Our organizations are focused on providing high quality, timely, efficient, and effective services.
- Relationships and communication among staff, children, families, and community providers are conducted with genuineness, empathy, and respect.

- The practice of collecting and sharing data and information is a non-negotiable part of how we continually learn and improve. We will use data to inform management, improve practice, measure effectiveness, and guide policy decisions. We must strive to align our laws so that collaboration and sharing of data can be achieved to better support our children and families.
- As we work with children, families, and their teams, we clearly share with them our purpose, role, concerns, decisions, and responsibility.

1.5 Organization of manual

The manual is organized to reflect the sequential order of practice in the field. It also includes information about funding for a particular service in the section where that service is described and directions for documentation of activities in OASIS. Most sections begin with a brief introduction, followed by an overall framework. The framework provides three fundamental cornerstones to help guide all decision-making and actions: 1) practice principles; 2) key legal citations; and 3) desired outcomes. The framework is followed by subsections delineating required procedures and effective practices. The last subsection provides resources and tools.

The following verbs are used to denote the type of action required:

- “Shall” means mandate or requirement by federal and/or state law or regulation or by State Board policy. It includes necessary actions that demonstrate or that are required to be in compliance with legal mandates, such as documentation in the OASIS.
- “Should” means effective practices that are consistent with and help achieve the practice principles, legal requirements and desired outcomes. These practices are strongly encouraged and expected, but are not mandated by law.
- “May” means an option is authorized by law or implementation may depend on circumstances.
- “Must” means a practice is mandated or required by federal and/or state laws or regulations, by State Board policy, or by VDSS guidance. “Must” includes actions that are required or necessary to demonstrate compliance with legal mandates, such as documentation in OASIS. These practices are consistent with and help achieve the practice principles, legal requirements and desired outcomes. Failure to complete required practices could expose LDSS to fiscal penalty or loss upon appeal. New requirements will use this language beginning July 1, 2020 with a full revision of existing requirements over the next year.

Extensive links are used to ease navigation across the manual.

- To access sources external to the section (e.g., federal and state laws, forms, websites, and other sections of the manual), rest the cursor on the blue underlined link until a small hand appears. Click on the link to go directly to the external site. Scroll down or link to access the information. To return to the previous place in the manual, go to the left corner of the Internet toolbar and click the back arrow pointing left in the green circle.
- To access another section in the same section of the Foster Care Manual (e.g., table of contents; “See Section 2.3” when in Section 2.6), rest the cursor on the blue link (not underlined) until a small hand appears. Click on the link to go directly to that section. To return to the previous place in the same section, go to the middle of the Adobe tool bar and click on the blue circle with an arrow pointing left that says “click to return to the previous page view” when you rest the cursor over it.

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