

## *~ Guiding Principles for Child Welfare ~*

### **Principle #1:**

Child welfare policies and services must reflect an understanding and appreciation of factors that positively or negatively affect child development and family systems. Abuse of alcohol and other drugs affects child development and family systems. Thus, child welfare policies and programs must:

- Respond to the unique needs of children who are affected either by prenatal alcohol or drug exposure or by a host of other detrimental experiences related to their parents' chemical involvement or dependency.
- Respond to the needs of all children entering the system who are themselves chemically involved or at risk of alcohol or drug problems, and prevent children already in the system from becoming chemically involved.

### **Principle #2:**

Child welfare policies and services related to serving all children and families must be guided by research and empirical data. Research suggests that chemical involvement affects children and families differently.

- Therefore, child welfare professionals must recognize that children and families who are chemically involved are not all alike. The process of assessment, planning, and service delivery must be tailored to match individual needs with appropriate resources.

### **Principle #3:**

P.L. 105-89, the Adoption and Safe Families Act, mandates that child safety, child well-being and permanence in a timely manner be the cornerstones of our work with children and families. It establishes timelines under which permanency must be achieved for children whether that be reunification, adoption or some other court-approved permanent living arrangement.

- Therefore, parental chemical dependency does not alter the requirements of state and federal laws. Recommendations for improved services to chemically involved children and families must be addressed within existing legal frameworks.

### **Principle #4:**

Families are important to the development of children. All children need a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging is usually best promoted in the biological family and within a community that supports a positive cultural and ethnic identity. This principle is no less true in the case of children of chemically dependent families.

- Therefore, the complex needs of the chemically dependent family must be considered in planning for the child. Family involvement is essential and must be supported, beginning with the delivery of preventive services, through treatment and intervention, permanency planning, and final implementation of the permanency plan.

## Guiding Principles for Child Welfare (continued)

### Principle #5:

All parents coming to the attention of the child welfare system must receive services and supports to prevent their unnecessary separation from their children. They must also receive services that support ongoing safe, healthy relationships with their children and facilitate family reunification, when necessary.

- Therefore, efforts to support children within their chemically dependent families must attempt to address chemical dependency in the family while meeting the developmental and safety needs of the children. Specific services and activities to strengthen and support families will vary with the individual circumstances of the child and family.

### Principle #6:

Many families have multiple problems that require coordinated services and effective case management.

- Therefore, child welfare services for chemically involved families should be comprehensive, community based, culturally/ethnically competent, and coordinated through an active case manager who provides linkage with a range of alcohol and drug prevention, treatment, and aftercare services.

### Principle #7:

Effective delivery of services to all children and families is dependent on a well-trained and well-compensated work force and adequate funding to support an array of services and cross-system approaches.

- Therefore, quality services for children and families who are chemically involved must be delivered by staff, caregivers, and/or volunteers who are representative of the clients served, trained in alcohol and other drug issues as they affect families, able to deliver culturally competent services, and professionally supported to manage the cases they are assigned.

### Principle #8:

Child welfare services must be based on a respect for and sensitivity to the racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity represented in our society. Furthermore, child welfare agencies must identify and help to remedy economic conditions that place the well-being of children and families at risk.

- Therefore, child welfare agencies must examine and address racial, cultural, and economic barriers in their policies and/or practices that have a negative impact on people of color or low-income families. Child welfare professionals must be aware of racial, cultural, and ethnic strengths and traditions that may be drawn upon as resources to promote recovery and prevent relapse.