

The Cultural Equity Alliance: A Statewide Child Welfare System Steering Committee

Mission Statement

“The Cultural Equity Alliance pursues equity by identifying and implementing institutional policy and practice changes that lead to the reduction of disparities and disproportionality in Iowa’s child welfare system.”

Guiding Principles

The Cultural Equity Alliance believes that the following principles and practices are essential to reducing disparities in the child welfare system. They represent culturally and linguistically appropriate service standards that can help promote equity for families within the system. No one standard is more important than another, and they are cited below in no particular order. All are equally essential to operating a child welfare system that is truly culturally responsive. The principles cited below are based closely upon National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Service (CLAS) Standards, Office of Minority Health, 2001.

Standard 1: *The child welfare system strives to provide effective, understandable, and respectful services in a culturally appropriate manner for families, with special emphasis on preventive education and community outreach on child welfare and safety.*

Standard 2: *The child welfare system strives to develop participatory, collaborative, and meaningful partnerships with cultural communities in the state, and utilize formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate family and client involvement in designing, implementing, and evaluating culturally responsive services.*

Standard 3: *The child welfare system strives to implement strategies to recruit, retain, and promote at all levels of the organization a diverse staff and leadership that are representative of the demographic characteristics of the service area.*

Standard 4: *The child welfare system strives to ensure that staff at all levels and across all disciplines receives ongoing education, training, and technical assistance in providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services to families.*

Standard 5: *The child welfare system strives to offer and provide language assistance services, including bilingual staff and interpreter services, to each family with limited English proficiency at all points of contact, in a timely manner during all hours of operation.*

Standard 6: *The child welfare system strives to assure the competence of language assistance provided to limited English proficient clients by interpreters and bilingual staff. Family and friends should not be used to interpret, except upon family request.*

Standard 7: *The child welfare system strives to develop, implement, and promote a written strategic plan that outlines clear goals, policies, operational plans, management accountability, and oversight mechanisms to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services that help reduce disproportionality and disparities.*

Standard 8: *The child welfare system strives to conduct initial and ongoing organizational self-assessments of cultural responsiveness activities, and integrate these measures into their internal audits, performance improvement programs, family assessments, and outcomes-based evaluations.*

Standard 9: *The child welfare system strives to undertake regular reviews of relevant policies, protocols, forms, assessments, regulations, and other measures to assure their cultural relevance and minimize bias that can lead to disproportionality.*

Standard 10: *The child welfare system strives to implement joint efforts to reduce silos between the various sectors of the child welfare system and develop strong regional collaborations and partnerships that promote equity.*

Standard 11: *The child welfare system strives to ensure that data on the client's race, ethnicity, spoken/written languages, and related factors be collected in all records at all stages, integrated into the organization's management information systems, and periodically updated and monitored for disparities and disproportionality.*

Standard 12: *The child welfare system strives to maintain a current demographic and cultural profile of the communities it serves, and conduct ongoing needs assessments to accurately plan for and implement services that respond proactively to the cultural and linguistic characteristics of service areas.*

Standard 13: *The child welfare system strives to ensure that conflict and grievance resolution processes are culturally and linguistically sensitive and capable of identifying, preventing, and resolving cross-cultural conflicts or complaints, particularly those that can lead to disproportionality.*

Standard 14: *The child welfare system strives to serve as subject matter experts and agents of change by advocating for state and federal policies, laws, and regulations that reduce disproportionality among families from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds.*

Standard 15: *The child welfare system strives to make information available to the public on its progress in implementing these culturally and linguistically appropriate service standards and provide public notice in communities about the availability of this information.*