

January 2012

ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY PRACTICE STANDARDS REDESIGN

STEERING COMMITTEE PROJECT UPDATE #2

In our first Practice Standards Redesign Project Update, we presented information about the Conceptual Framework and the Overarching Principles that underpin the Practice Framework and Standards.

In Update #2, we talk about the Practice Framework, since it is this model for practice, in conjunction with the legislation (i.e., the BC Child, Family and Community Service Act), that provides the basis for the new Practice Standards.

Practice Framework

Whereas AOPSI was organized according to British Columbia’s existing service delivery model - i.e. Voluntary, Guardianship, and Child Protection - the Aboriginal Child and Family Services Practice Standards reflect a value and principle-based, integrated and wholistic approach to practice.

Consistent with the message voiced by Aboriginal practitioners and community members, i.e., that the standards must pay attention to

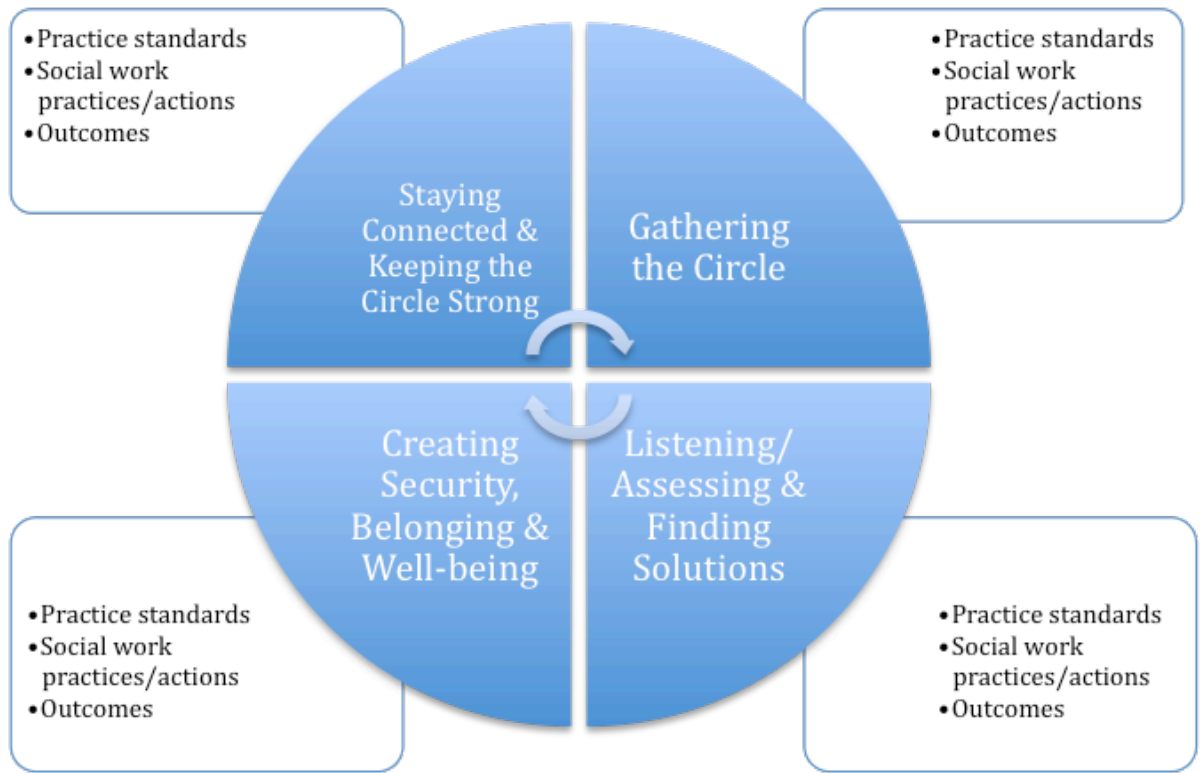
community values, and that the safety of children is inextricably linked to the well-being of families and communities (one cannot be strong without the other), the framework for practice is based on an understanding that children are nested within families who in turn are nested within communities, which are nested within cultural values, ways of knowing, and traditions, and the land.

The Practice Framework honors the rebuilding of traditional systems into

modern practice by connecting and/or rebuilding connections between children, families/ extended families, and community.

The Practice Framework - shown on the next page - is a Circle of Care that is made up of four quadrants:

- Gathering the Circle; Listening,**
- Assessing & Finding Solutions;**
- Creating Security, Belonging & Wellbeing;** and
- Staying Connected & Keeping the Circle Strong.**



The Circle

Central to the Practice Framework is the Circle, which refers both to a group and to a process whereby a number of people, identified by the family and the child in conjunction with the Delegated Agency’s social worker, come together to collectively plan, make decisions, and commit to action that will ensure the safety, support and well-being of the child, parents and family.

Key principles underpinning the Circle include **interconnectedness, equality** and **continuity**, as well as being **wholistic and relationship-based** (i.e., paying

attention to the person’s spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental well being; working in ways that foster and honour relationships), being **strengths-based**; and honouring the traditional **shared responsibility of extended family, Elders, and community members to nurture and care for children**, and, when families need help, to step in as extended family or community members to care for the child.

Linking Practice Standards to Outcomes for Children, Families, Communities

The community discussions that gave rise to the new Practice Framework also revealed people’s vision of positive outcomes for children, families and communities when practice is grounded in a principle-based framework. Positive outcomes may also be thought of as evidence of success, i.e., what positive difference has been made as a result of practices associated with the Circle-based Practice Framework.

Including outcomes as a component of the overall Conceptual Framework is extremely important; discussion of outcomes helps to ensure that practice stays “on track” and is always connected to achieving the safety and wellness goals of children, families and communities.

Tracking the achievement of outcomes can and ought to happen with families – and from families’ perspective - as a regular part of the Circle process. Discussion of outcomes can also be the core of ongoing practice discussions at a team or Agency level, and can be part of quality assurance processes within the Delegated Agency.



Outcomes associated with the Practice Standards

A sample of the outcomes identified and included within the Practice Standards document include:

For child/youth:

- Child is safe (emotionally, physically, culturally)
- Child knows who is in his/her family and who is part of his/her circle of care
- Child feels connected to family, siblings, community, culture, nation, land
- Child's developmental needs are addressed (e.g. school, friends, community involvement)
- Child has a safe, stable long-term home
- Siblings remain connected and/or together

For family:

- Family's needs and strengths are identified
- People whom the family trusts are identified and engaged in helping the family
- Family feel supported while they address their needs
- Family feels connected to extended family, community, place/land
- Family remains involved with their children

For community:

- Social worker learns with whom the family feels safe and trusts
- Caregivers feel supported
- Extended family is involved in supporting family members
- Family and caregivers respect and understand one another
- Health, social, and other resource agencies are talking to each other to ensure that the family has access to appropriate services in the community

The first quadrant of the Practice Framework, Gathering a Circle, and the practice standards connected to this section, will be discussed in Update #3.

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