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GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT

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Guidance Development

3.1 Process of developing guidance

3.1.1 How laws, regulations, and guidance fit together

Guidance addresses the manner in which the LDSS will meet federal and state laws and regulations:

- *Federal law lays the foundation for all state programs.*
- *The Code of Virginia as enacted by the General Assembly builds on federal law and/or addresses issues unique to Virginia. § 63.2-100 et seq.*
- *The State Board of Social Services promulgates regulations within 22VAC40 for the following programs:*
  - *Permanency, Prevention, Foster Care, Adoption and Independent Living*
  - *Foster and Adoptive Family Home Approval*
  - *Additional Daily Supervision Rate Structure*
  - *Background Checks for Child Welfare Agencies*
  - *Child Protective Services*
  - *Investigation of Child Abuse Negelect in Out of Family Complaints*
- *Best practice may dictate guidance changes.*

3.1.2 How guidance is developed

While most guidance comes from law and regulation, the VDSS continually receives suggestions, solutions, and input from LDSS. *There are three Child Welfare Advisory Committees: Child Protective Services (CPS) Advisory, Permanency Advisory Committee (PAC), and Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC). Each*

committeee is composed of local staff and stakeholders who provide input and recommendations to the VDSS guidance. The VDSS also obtains information from three Citizens Review panels, which include the Child Fatality Review Team, the Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the Court Appointed Special Advocate/Criminal Justice Act (CASA/CJA) Advisory Board.

All regulations are periodically reviewed and amended based on changes to the Code of Virginia as well as public comment.

3.2 Overview of guidance

3.2.1 Organization

The preferred *format and* structure has been implemented to provide consistency across all DFS manual sections and allows for easy navigation within each major section and from one section to another. *The structure of the guidance manual offers a user-friendly format that:*

- Provides uniformity and clarity for all programs.
- Reflects organizational mission, values, and objectives.
- Provides guidance on Virginia's State Practice Model, federal and state laws, required procedures, best practices, tools, and forms.

3.2.1.1 Design of guidance

- *Focuses on strong principled practice and policy, based on and aligned with the practice model.*
- *Provides a guidance continuum across child and family services to improve coordination and integration across programs.*
- *Uses consistent organization that provides overall framework of guiding principles, legal requirements and outcomes for required procedures, best practices, tools and resources for serving children and families.*
- *Utilizes user-friendly format that maximizes on-line capabilities.*
- *Provides timely guidance that is easy to revise and regularly update.*

3.2.1.2 Objectives of guidance document

- *Reflect organizational mission and objectives.*
- *Incorporate state practice model, practice principles and values.*

- *Communicate guidance on law, required procedures, best practices, and tools.*
- *Communicate consistently and in timely manner to all staff.*
- *Orient new staff.*
- *Increase consistent interpretation of policies.*
- *Increase consistent and fair treatment of constituents.*
- *Create standards for decision making.*
- *Support quality management and ongoing improvements.*

3.2.2 Use of manual

Most sections begin with a brief introduction, followed by *information organized in a consistent* framework. The framework provides three fundamental cornerstones to help guide all decision-making and actions: 1) practice principles; 2) key legal requirements; and 3) desired outcomes. The framework is followed by subsections delineating required procedures and effective practices. The last subsection provides resources and tools.

3.2.3 Use of language

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

- *"Shall" includes actions that are required or necessary to demonstrate compliance with legal mandates, such as documentation in OASIS.*
- *"Should" means a practice is required. These practices are consistent with and help achieve the practice principles, legal requirements and desired outcomes. Failure to complete required practices may expose the LDSS to fiscal penalty or loss upon appeal.*
- *"May" means a practice is authorized by law and implementation may depend on circumstances.*

3.2.4 OASIS

The DFS guidance manual incorporates directions as to how information is to be documented. The OASIS (Online Automated Services Information System) provides an online case record, available statewide to authorized LDSS and Home Office users, of information related to family services cases. Currently, OASIS contains

information relating to Child Protective Services, Foster Care, Adoption, Prevention, and Foster and Adoptive Families.

OASIS is a primary tool in the day-to-day business of local agency service workers. It is also a primary source of data for federal, state and the LDSS agencies for reporting and planning. OASIS includes components that can be used for conducting Central Registry searches, tracking Interstate Placement Compact cases, and registering children and families for the Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia.