Commissioner Guidance Document Transmittal

Date- July 2019

Manual - Child and Family Services Manual, Chapter A, Practice Foundations

Transmittal # - 286

The purpose of this transmittal is to provide new and updated guidance, Chapter A of the Child and Family Services Manual. Chapter A has been renamed and is now titled "Practice Foundations." The new chapter was developed through collaboration between VDSS and a workgroup of dedicated LDSS staff eager to emphasize the importance of these topics and explore best practice family engagement more fully.

The entire chapter has been reformatted and reorganized to provide a more comprehensive and functional guide to the practice model and values upon which Virginia's child welfare practice rests and, the foundational practices of family engagement. Chapter A. of the Child and Family Services Manual is now comprised of three sections: **Section 1.** Overview of Practice Foundations; **Section 2.** Family Engagement; and, **Section 3.** Guidance Development.

The content in Section 1 and Section 3 provides context for guidance published in the chapters which follow Chapter A in the Child and Family Services Manual. They include information about the Practice Model, Practice Profiles, Trauma-Informed Practice and how guidance is developed.

Much of the content in Section 2. Family Engagement was previously found in Chapter A. Additional family engagement content has been moved from the Foster Care and CPS chapters to this Section. Numbering for the content has been changed and, in some cases the content has been reorganized. Over the next year, duplicate content will be removed from the other chapters.

The guidance in the chapter is, unless otherwise noted, already in effect.

This transmittal and manual are available on FUSION at https://fusion.dss.virginia.gov/dfs/DFS-Home/Family-Engagement/Family-Engagement-Guidance

Significant changes to the manual are as follows:

Page(s) Changed *(Subchapter, section, page number(s)*	Significant Changes
Section 1 Overview of Practice Foundations	Adds a section providing an overview of the relationships between VDSS, the Division of Family Services, and LDSS
1.1 Introduction	Adds an introduction to the Child and Family Services Manual. Identifies the new authorities of the Commissioner as established during the

	2019 General Assembly session. Provides a brief description of each program area with corresponding links to their prospective webpages.
1.2 Practice Philosophy	Adds a new subsection that describes the Virginia Children's Services Practice Model's guiding principles with a web-link. Also introduces the Practices Profiles and provides a list of the 11 skill sets and their definitions.
1.3 Trauma and the Child Welfare System	Adds a subsection that provides information pertaining to trauma-informed practice in child welfare and offers a list of web-links for additional resources.
1.4 Federal Child Welfare Laws	Adds a subsection which defines and adds links to the relevant federal child welfare laws.
1.5 Federal Child Welfare Outcomes	Adds a subsection which lists the desired outcomes for the Child and Family Service Review.
Section 2 Family Engagement	Consolidates and expands upon family engagement guidance previously in Chapter A and in other chapters of the Child and Family Services Manual.
2.1 Introduction	Provides new and updated guidance about engaging families, the benefits of family engagement and engagement practices.
2.2 Family Search and Engagement	Adds a section providing guidance for assisting families in locating relatives or other natural supports. It also provides guidelines and tools for identifying, searching and engaging a child's paternal and maternal family members.
2.3 Strategies for Finding Relatives	Adds a subsection providing examples of relative search and identification, as well as options available to relatives whose family member is involved with the child welfare system. Includes best practice for use of the person locator tool and using letters which protect the confidentiality of the parents when using the report generated.
2.4 Engaging Fathers	Adds a new subsection that provides information regarding benefits, barriers and strategies when engaging fathers. This section also provides some historical data

	as it pertains to the involvement of fathers and the importance of connecting and reconnecting fathers through engagement.
2.5 Engaging Extended Family	Adds a new subsection providing information regarding the roles and possible involvement of a child's relatives.
2.6 Special Considerations	Adds a subsection addressing the lack of parent involvement and youth involvement.
2.7 Family Partnership Meetings	Adds additional information pertaining to the FPM process which includes information on how trauma informed practice influences the FPM process.
2.7.1 A family Engagement Tool in Trauma Informed Practice.	Adds a new subsection providing information pertaining to trauma- informed care and its practices and its impact on FPMs.
2.7.5 FPM Participants	Provides additional information relating to FPM participants and their roles during the FPM process.
2.7.6 Widening the family circle	Adds a new subsection pertaining to locating and engaging relatives to participate in FPMs.
2.7.6. Before the meeting	Adds information pertaining to meeting preparation and training requirements for the FPM facilitator, LDSS staff and community partners. Adds additional information relating to the planning and scheduling of FPMs and considerations for safety and domestic violence.
2.7.7 During the meeting	Adds information which lists the specific stages of an FPM and how to implement each stage.
2.7.8 After the meeting	Provides additional information in regards to concluding the FPM. Adds new information pertaining to the follow-up conference and contingency plans.
2.8 Use of FPM for additional case decision points	Adds a new subsection that provides information concerning other benefits of FPMs.
2.9 Child and Family Team Meetings	This section was moved from the Foster

	Care chapter. Provides a description of Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM), provides definition and comparison of an FPM to a CFTM. This section also provides information as to when a CFTM is used.
Section 3 Guidance Development	
3.1 Process of developing guidance	Adds a subsection providing a brief description on how guidance is developed
3.2 Overview of guidance document	Adds a subsection describing the design of the guidance manual.

Questions about this transmittal should be directed to *Em Parente, Assistant Director,* (804) 726-7538, em.parente@dss.virginia.gov.

Nannette Bowler
Deputy Commissioner

032-20-0014-05-eng