Standard 02

Diversity, Equity, and Access

The Children’s Advocacy Center provides culturally responsive services for all CAC clients throughout the duration of the case.
02. Diversity, Equity, and Access

**Rationale**

Cultural responsiveness is the ability to understand and consider different cultural backgrounds of the clients to whom you offer services. It also demonstrates the capacity to learn from and relate respectfully with people from both similar and different cultural backgrounds, requiring the ability to appreciate, understand and interact with members of diverse populations within the local community. Cultural responsiveness is a fundamental component of the CAC philosophy and is as central to operations as developmentally appropriate, child-focused, and trauma-informed practice. Like developmental considerations, cultural norms influence nearly every aspect of working with children and families, such as welcoming a child and family to the child advocacy center, employing effective forensic interviewing techniques, assessing the likelihood of abuse, selecting appropriate mental health providers, and securing services that are relevant and accessible to a child and family. To effectively meet clients' needs, the CAC and MDT must be willing and able to understand the clients' worldviews, adapt practices as needed, and offer assistance in a manner in which it can be utilized. Striving toward culturally responsive services is an important and ongoing endeavor and an integral part of a CAC's operations and service delivery.

Proactive, culturally relevant planning and outreach should focus on culture, experience of acculturation, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, gender, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation. These factors contribute to a client's lived experiences and perspectives, and they must be considered and accommodated throughout the investigation, intervention, and case management processes. Addressing these factors in a culturally sensitive environment helps children and families of all backgrounds and experiences feel welcomed, valued, and respected by staff, MDT members and volunteers.

The CAC and its partners develop policies, procedures and practices that are designed to reduce disparities in access to services and outcomes from services provided. The CAC and MDT actively express values and understanding of equity and inclusion and those values are evident in practice.

**Essential Component A**

The CAC in partnership with the MDT, conducts a community assessment at a minimum of every three years, which includes:

1. Community demographics
2. CAC client demographics
3. Analysis of disparities between these populations
4. Methods the CAC utilizes to identify and address gaps, disparities and/or inequities in services
5. Strategies for outreach to unserved or underserved communities, in alignment with identified disparities
6. A method to monitor the effectiveness of outreach and intervention strategies

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

In order to serve a community in a culturally responsive manner, a CAC, in partnership
with its MDT, must complete a comprehensive assessment of the entire community and jurisdiction they serve. The assessment should focus on a range of issues, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disabilities, income, geography, religion, and culture. The assessment should inform the development of goals and strategies that ensure the CAC delivers high-quality, relevant, and accessible services to all children and families in need.

**Essential Component B**

The CAC must ensure that provisions are made for non-English-speaking and deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their family members throughout the investigation, intervention, and case management processes.

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

The ability to effectively communicate is critical in creating an environment in which children and families feel comfortable and safe and are respected and supported. Language barriers may hinder the ability for children and families to understand the CAC and MDT process/roles, and to communicate their concerns and decisions regarding the investigation and intervention services. Language barriers may also compound children and families’ feelings of fear, anxiety, and confusion. Language can significantly impact the CAC and/or MDT’s abilities to both share with, and obtain accurate information from, the child and family. The CAC must explore a variety of resources or solutions to ensure adequate provisions are made to overcome language and communication barriers. In order to protect the integrity of the investigation and services, care should be taken to ensure appropriate interpreters are utilized. CACs must not utilize children or client family members to interpret for MDT members.

**Essential Component C**

CAC services are accessible and tailored to meet the various individualized and unique needs of children and families throughout the investigation, intervention, and case management process.

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

It is the responsibility of the CAC and MDT members to understand and tailor services to the diverse backgrounds and unique needs of the children and families being served. Ascertaining the client’s background from the client allows CAC/MDT members to better understand child and family perceptions of past and present abuse and trauma, attributions of responsibility, and experience of acculturation and comprehension of laws. In addition, it allows the CAC/MDT to address any religious or cultural beliefs that may affect disclosure, needed services and access to them, and to recognize the impact of prior experience with police and government authorities both in this country and in their countries of origin. Furthermore, the CAC’s investigation and case management services must be accessible and responsive to children with physical disabilities, cognitive delays, and medical and mental health disorders. With knowledge, preparation and necessary skills, the MDT can obtain as complete and accurate information as possible and more effectively understand and respond to the child and family’s needs.

**Essential Component D**

The CAC demonstrates ongoing efforts through formal policies, procedures and practices to recruit, hire, and retain staff, volunteers, and board members who reflect the demographics of the community.

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

Actively seeking to recruit, hire, and retain staff, volunteers, and board members who reflect the demographics of the community.
and the clientele served is critical to achieving an overall response to children and families that is inclusive, relevant, and effective.

**Essential Component E**

The CAC values Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and requires CAC staff to participate in DEI training a minimum of eight hours every two years.

Examples of training topics could include:
- Implicit bias
- Microaggressions
- Organizational learning
- Building a culture of inclusion
- Reducing disparities in services

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**
Understanding and integrating issues of diversity, equity and inclusion are not accomplished in a single training. Valuing DEI in all CAC activities requires an intentional, ongoing, and evolving exploration of its personal and professional meaning and implications for how staff interact with, and provide services and support to, clients and communities with diverse backgrounds and needs. Participating in this minimum number of hours of training every two years demonstrates a baseline commitment to ensuring that these critical issues become part of the CAC staff’s individual and collective responses to the children, families, and communities they serve.

**Essential Component F**

The CAC values Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and annually provides MDT members access to DEI training and information. The CAC documents training opportunities (whether provided directly or through access to other organizations) and MDT participation.

Examples of training topics could include:
- Implicit bias
- Microaggressions
- Organizational learning
- Building a culture of inclusion

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**
Understanding and integrating issues of diversity, equity and inclusion into professional practice are not accomplished in a single training. Valuing DEI in all activities of MDT members, both individually and collectively, requires an intentional, ongoing, and evolving exploration of the personal and professional meaning of DEI and how it impacts the accessibility of services and support to their clients. Participating as a team in DEI training helps demonstrate a baseline commitment to these critical issues that enhance the individual and collective responses to the children, families, and communities that all MDT members serve. Quality DEI training and resources are offered through many organizations. Many available online trainings and other resources are available free of charge. A good place to start is to ask your State Chapter and/or Regional Children’s Advocacy Center about available resources.