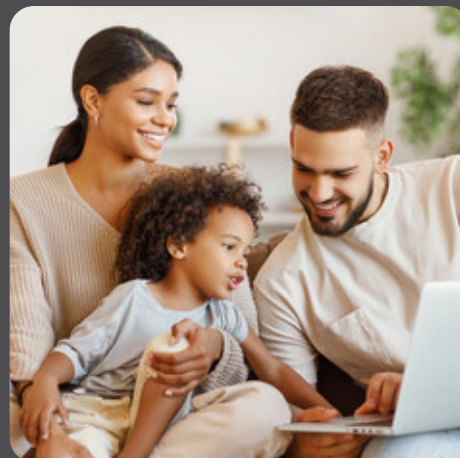


# California Child Welfare Core Practice Model:

## The Activation of California's Integrated Core Practice Model in Child Welfare



-  BACKGROUND
-  UNDERLYING FRAMEWORK
-  VALUES
-  LEADERSHIP COMMITMENTS
-  THE EVOLUTION OF THE CPM
-  PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS

# California Child Welfare Core Practice Model

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## BACKGROUND

This updated version of the Child Welfare Core Practice Model (CPM) framework embodies the evolutionary work of the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model – an effort that will continuously adapt to the challenging landscape of this constantly changing field. The implementation of the Core Practice Model is intended to support the transformation of the child welfare system at multiple levels and, in partnership with the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM), extend that transformation throughout all child-serving systems.

## THE CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL

In 2012, California’s Public Child Welfare community began efforts to develop a California Child Welfare Core Practice Model to provide a consistent statewide framework for our state’s Child Welfare social workers and leaders in their work to sustain and improve practice in all 58 California counties. From the beginning the goal of this work has been to create a practice model that guides service delivery and decision- making at all levels in Child Welfare, and that builds on the great work already taking place by integrating key elements of proven practices that have emerged in California to improve outcomes for children and families in all counties, across the state.



Between 2012 and 2016 the basic framework of the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model (CPM) took shape with input from countless social workers, supervisors, managers and directors across the state, in addition to the contributions of many hundreds of community members and tribal representatives. Since 2017 efforts have been underway to install the CPM in all 58 counties using the principles of implementation science to help ensure that the conceptual framework of the CPM becomes a reality that is visible in the practice of Child Welfare staff at all levels of each organization.



## INTEGRATED CORE PRACTICE MODEL

Evolving from the development of the Child Welfare Core Practice Model and complementary efforts, the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) addresses the challenge of establishing the context for collaborative work across agencies. The ICPM is a unifying framework for child-serving systems across the state. ICPM aligns and integrates initiatives (such as the Continuum of Care Reform, Wraparound, Child and Family Teaming and System of Care) building upon the collaborative, interactive practices that agency staff at all levels and partners provide children, youth and families to improve accountability and outcomes. The ICPM is being used to guide AB 2083 Interagency Leadership Teams, Comprehensive Prevention Planning, and other System of Care developments emerging across California. The Child Welfare Core Practice Model developed many of the fundamental elements of the Integrated Core Practice Model; these elements were expanded to encompass cross-agency partnership work. The framework that is described in this document represents a distillation of the ICPM elements that represents the specific work that takes place within the Child Welfare System, which are observable and measurable in the behaviors of Child Welfare practitioners and leaders. For California Child Welfare agencies, this work represents the activation of the ICPM within Child Welfare agencies, work that takes place in partnership with other family-serving systems, each of which is challenged to maintain its own internal practice model elements.

## RACE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL

While the focus of the CPM was always to improve outcomes for all children and families affected by the Child Welfare System, the California Child Welfare community recognized that Black, Indigenous, and Latinx families continue to be disproportionately represented and experience disparate outcomes in that system. Since 2019, this community has focused its efforts to ensure the CPM clearly and explicitly addresses issues of race, equity, diversity, inclusion (REDI) and Tribal Sovereignty in its foundational framework, values, leadership commitments, practice and leadership behaviors.

## UNDERLYING FRAMEWORK

The Underlying Framework for the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model draws from both cultural wisdom and values as well as theories to provide the foundation for the practice model and guides the development of values, casework components, and practice elements. The underlying framework is comprised of the following cultural wisdom, values and theories:

### ***Orienting and Relational Wisdom, Values and Theories These Help Us Understand:***

- The structural nature of racism, which is codified in law, embedded in structures, and woven into public policy. It is the systemic nature of racism that bears primary responsibility for reproducing racial inequality. This is manifested in four levels, as follows:
  - » Structural
  - » Institutional
  - » Interpersonal
  - » Individual
- Each family member's inherent strength, dignity and worth and the ability to change who should be treated with respect and afforded self-determination.
- How and why key factors such as current and historical trauma and other stressors set a context for maltreatment and hamper engagement and intervention efforts.
- The importance of protecting and promoting attachment bonds, family connections, and the embeddedness in the cultural group as we work with families.

- That parenting is challenging, and all parents need help from the larger family group and the broader community with structure, transitions, and milestones.

### ***Using These Understandings Leads To:***

- A commitment to anti-racism, a commitment to being culturally responsive, a commitment to challenging systemic racism, and a commitment to working in partnership with not only the youth or nuclear family but the extended family and larger cultural communities.
- Practice that is client centered, empathetic, compassionate, genuine, authentic and transparent as we interact with individuals, families and cultural groups.
- Greater empathy and a shift in emotional reactions to families that enter the system.
- Development and use of strategies for building on strengths and working to enhance motivation for change.

### ***Interventions Based in Cultural Wisdom, Values and Theories Interventions Help Us:***

- Center race equity and social justice to attend to ongoing disproportionality and disparate outcomes for families of color.

- Identify bias in decision-making and take steps to eliminate it.
- Work with families to find and use services that will address the key factors to interrupt unsafe behavioral patterns, life situations, thoughts, emotions, and triggers that contribute to maltreatment.
- Understand the sequence of events that led to concerns about child safety.
- Understand what needs to change and how to change it in order for children to be safe and remain in the immediate or extended family.
- Understand the needs of children and youth in foster care and adoption and help them keep ties to family and community as well as develop new attachments.
- Understand how to help families through transitions and their responses to trauma.

### ***Organizational Theories***

Theories of organizational culture and climate, along with open system theories, focus child welfare practice and leadership on parallel process, trauma-informed systems, system of care approaches and learning organizations.

## VALUES

The following value statements are an expression of our beliefs and explain what we are striving for in our work with families:

- We believe that families can grow and change.
- We believe in prevention and early intervention by partnering with communities and Tribes to support families in keeping children and youth safe and promoting family well-being.
- We believe that focusing on race, equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI) will promote a sense of belonging and social justice that will lead to improved outcomes for children and families.
- We believe the best way to support families is to honor their lived experiences and culture by listening to them and working together to build partnerships based on mutual respect and trust.
- We believe that children, youth, and young adults should have lifelong, loving permanent families and sustained connections to family members, communities, and Tribes.
- We believe that honestly sharing our assessment of strengths and concerns is essential for engaging with family members, communities and Tribes.
- We believe in Tribal sovereignty and that tribes have an inherent interest in promoting the health and well-being of their families and therefore must be a part of all decision-making.



## LEADERSHIP COMMITMENTS

Child Welfare leaders at all levels demonstrate their commitment to the practice model through creating an anti-racist organizational culture and climate that results in equity and justice. Leaders act intentionally to support and sustain everyone's ability to honor the Core Practice Model values. Leaders do this by:

- Growing and developing personally and professionally, in alignment with the Core Practice Model Leadership Behaviors.
- Thinking and acting individually and collectively to support self-reflection, humility and continuous development of the workforce.
- Supporting staff to connect all family members with effective, family-focused, strength-based and culturally-responsive services and supports that help everyone achieve their full potential.
- Creating an organizational culture and climate that supports a professionally trained, confident, engaged and culturally-responsive workforce.
- Recognizing, respecting, developing and supporting the leadership role of each and every staff member within the organization.
- Supporting the health and well-being of the workforce to prepare staff to address the dynamics and demands of the Child Welfare practice environment.
- Offering professional development opportunities, adaptive leadership, reflective supervision and coaching that facilitate a culturally-responsive and supported workforce.
- Considering the makeup of the workforce to ensure that it is reflective and supportive of the linguistic, ethnic and cultural needs of families and communities represented in the Child Welfare system.
- Using intentional communication to build and maintain a learning organization.
- Demonstrating accountability by conducting internal analyses to identify decision-making biases and supporting the workforce in making adjustments in their practice.

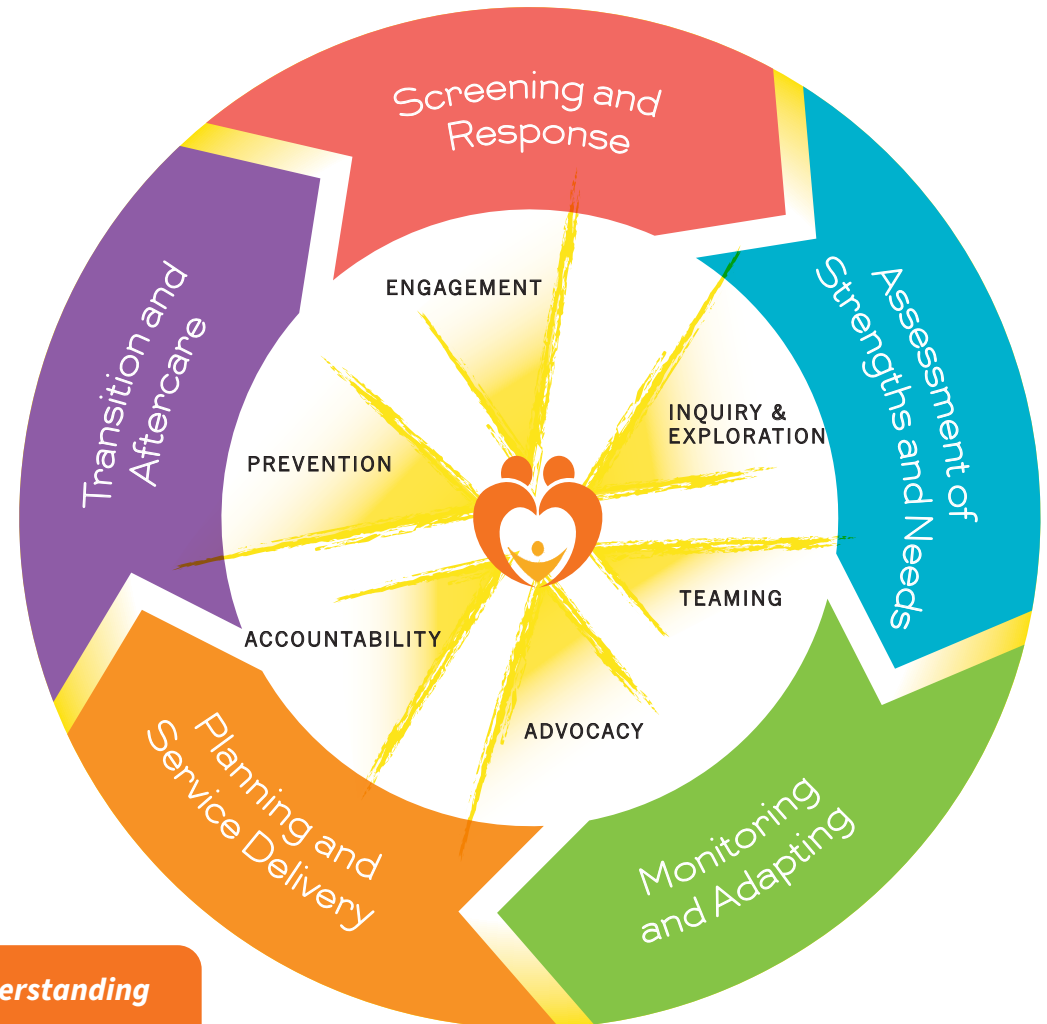
# THE EVOLUTION OF CALIFORNIA'S CORE PRACTICE MODEL

A number of programs and practices have influenced the development of the Child Welfare Core Practice Model, which in turn has resulted in the evolution of California's Child Welfare System. This work has moved forward in partnership with counties, communities and Tribes at local and statewide levels.

## PAST, PRESENT, AND EMERGING INITIATIVES

## COMPONENTS & ELEMENTS

CALIFORNIA PARTNERS for PERMANENCY  
 CONTINUUM of CARE REFORM  
 FAMILY to FAMILY  
 KATIE A.  
 LINKAGES  
 PARENT PARTNERS  
 QUALITY PARENTING INITIATIVE  
 RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL PROCESS  
 SAFETY ORGANIZED PRACTICE  
 WRAPAROUND  
 COMPREHENSIVE PREVENTION PLANNING



*As illustrated by this graphic, there are two aspects to understanding child welfare practice - WHAT we do and HOW we do it.*



## WHAT WE DO – CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE COMPONENTS

Child Welfare Services practice has traditionally consisted of phases that define the basic activities of collaborative work with family members involved with child welfare. These Practice Components are:

- Screening and Response
- Assessment of Strengths and Needs
- Planning and Service Delivery
- Monitoring and Adapting
- Transition and Aftercare

## HOW WE DO IT – CORE PRACTICE MODEL PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP ELEMENTS

Each of the following elements is further defined and operationalized in identifiable behaviors (which are fully described in the next section) that guide Child Welfare professionals in their practice and leadership with family members, caregivers, communities, Tribes and partner agencies. These Practice Elements are:

- Prevention
- Engagement
- Inquiry and Exploration
- Teaming
- Advocacy
- Accountability

The Core Practice Model has focused on identifying, unpacking and describing the “how we do it” through the identification of practice and leadership behaviors.

# CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

Certain considerations provide an important foundation for understanding the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model Behaviors:



## INTERVENTION ON TWO LEVELS

CPM is an intervention that occurs on two levels – at the direct practice level through the Practice Behaviors and at the system level through the Leadership Behaviors. The CPM practice behaviors inform day to day practice at the family level. In parallel, leadership behaviors guide relationship building with partners and staff; they also create healthy organizational conditions needed for the CPM to thrive despite ever-evolving challenges.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles are grounded in the CPM values and guide all Child Welfare practice and leadership behaviors:

- Being open, honest, clear and respectful in one’s communications.
- Practicing transparency, authenticity, and partnership when engaging with partners and those we serve.
- Holding ourselves accountable in our practice and leadership behaviors.
- Listening to understand how one’s words, actions, and personal biases may offend, hurt, and even harm others.
- Using a race equity and inclusion approach in our engagement with families, communities and Tribes.
- Centering the family in the context of their culture and practicing cultural humility in practice and leadership situations.
- Honoring and valuing various community norms and practices.



## CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Implicit within the leadership and practice behaviors is the collective impact that critical partnerships and relationships bring to true implementation of the CPM. Those partnerships are connections with a variety of communities and individuals that include but are not limited to: Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC); those with lived experience; people with different physical abilities including neurodiversity; those with diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity expression; and immigrant populations, whether documented or not. CPM in action aims to counteract the long-standing disproportionate representation and disparity of outcomes for BIPOC families and promotes fairness and equity for all.

## TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

It is essential to recognize that Tribes are sovereign nations with independent governments, laws, and regulations equal to those of the state and federal government. Tribal nations are responsible for the care of their children and families; therefore, Tribes must be actively engaged and included in the day-to-day practice and decision making and the development of relationships, partnerships, and collaboration at all leadership levels. Tribes, however, must not be thought of as “just” an entity or an agency. The Tribe/child relationship should be understood in a framework of belonging. The child belongs to the Tribe and it is important to recognize that there is a familial connection between the child and the Tribe. CPM leadership and practice behaviors are congruent with tribal ways of being and demonstrate understanding and respect for the sovereignty of Tribal nations.

## PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP INTERDEPENDENCE

Critical to the CPM is the principle that all six core elements of practice guide behavior at the family-level (Practice Behaviors) and the leadership-level (Leadership Behaviors). These six categories (Prevention, Engagement, Inquiry and Exploration, Teaming, Advocacy, and Accountability) define behaviors that are interrelated and interdependent, and when carried out consistently within all levels of the child welfare system, promote positive outcomes for families, communities, and Tribes. Having been co-created by stakeholders across California, including those with lived expertise, we embrace these six elements of practice and leadership as key drivers of system transformation, with cultural humility, equity, diversity, and inclusion in center focus.

# CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

CPM	PRACTICE BEHAVIORS	LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: #e67e22;">PREVENTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with family and their team to balance concerns of safety and family integrity to prevent children and families from coming into the child welfare system and keeping families together whenever possible.</li> <li>• Join with the family and their team to create a shared understanding for pursuing safety and well-being.</li> <li>• Utilize teaming to engage and actively partner with families, communities and Tribes and links all family members to opportunities and resources that can strengthen prevention planning and supports individual and family well-being.</li> <li>• Work with the family to build and sustain protective factors (parental resilience, social connections, positive family relationships, concrete supports, cultural and community networks, etc.) that can build protective capacity and mitigate potential harm.</li> <li>• Work with key partners (early childhood, health, behavioral health, education, justice systems, etc.) to coordinate and align efforts to support the well-being of families and communities.</li> <li>• Develop knowledge of, and broker, resources and supports available in communities and Tribes to ensure families have access.</li> <li>• Advocate for resources and supports that are not readily available or accessible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-create with families, communities and Tribes strength-based prevention strategies and solutions that keep parent voice, community context and tribal context at the center of all services and supports.</li> <li>• Actively partner with the leaders of Tribes, communities and those with lived experience to develop a community response approach that promotes racial equity and builds awareness of cultural strengths and differences.</li> <li>• Meaningfully participate and invest in partnerships with families, Tribes, partners and communities (including those with lived experience) in establishing, ensuring access to, and sustaining culturally responsive resources and supports within the community that increase protective factors, resiliency and family well-being.</li> <li>• Work with leadership in early childhood, child welfare, health, mental health, education and other key partners to coordinate and align system efforts to support the well-being of families and communities.</li> <li>• Advocate for services and supports to meet the concrete needs of families within their communities, so they have housing and financial resources, strategies and supports to build strength, resiliency and stability in their lives.</li> </ul>

# CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

CPM	PRACTICE BEHAVIORS	LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">ENGAGEMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively listen to family with cultural humility as they communicate what is meaningful and important to them.</li> <li>• Demonstrate an interest in connecting with the family and helping them identify and meet their goals.</li> <li>• Identify and engage family members, natural supports and others who are important to the family.</li> <li>• Acknowledge, support and facilitate the family’s capacity to advocate for themselves.</li> <li>• Use language, including body language, that demonstrates an accepting and affirming approach to understanding the family, their experiences and their culture.</li> <li>• Show respect for Tribal sovereignty and show deference to Tribal leadership and their titles at all times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show that you care by listening to staff at all levels, families, partners, Tribes and community members (including those with lived experience) and responding to their successes, concerns/worries, and ideas for working together to both celebrate successes and overcome barriers.</li> <li>• Establish and communicate the agency’s vision in collaboration with staff at all levels, partners, Tribes and community members (including those with lived experience).</li> <li>• Establish, model and maintain regular and frequent communication to encourage an active partnership that engages staff at all levels, partners, Tribes and community members (including those with lived experience) in implementation and system improvement activities.</li> <li>• Respect positions of leadership across Tribes, cultures, and communities by ensuring that Tribal and community elders and leaders are engaged by senior child welfare leaders, and that relationships are cultivated and maintained at this level.</li> </ul>

# CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

CPM	PRACTICE BEHAVIORS	LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">INQUIRY &amp; EXPLORATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquire about a family’s culture, values and beliefs and incorporate them throughout your work with the family.</li> <li>• Work continuously to find, locate, and learn about family members, Tribes and supportive relationships.</li> <li>• Ask people how they prefer to be addressed, and address individuals by the name or title and pronouns they request in person and in writing.</li> <li>• Ask family members what method of communication they prefer, use age-appropriate language that everyone can understand, and confirm with family members that your communication meets their language and literacy needs.</li> <li>• Explore the child, youth, young adult, and families expressed and underlying needs by engaging them in communicating their experiences and identifying their strengths, needs, safety concerns and solutions.</li> <li>• Encourage children, youth, and young adults to express their worries, wishes, where they feel safe, where they want to live, and their ideas about permanency, and incorporate their perspectives in all practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek and utilize input, diverse perspectives and other data to identify barriers, challenges and successes and co-create solutions with staff at all levels, partners, Tribes and community members.</li> <li>• Take time to use and foster critical thinking and reflection, even in times of crisis.</li> <li>• Explore and promote culturally responsive, mutually reflective, supportive leadership, supervision and practices at all levels.</li> <li>• Learn about and be respectful of various customs, leadership, and communication styles that are unique to different populations and cultures.</li> <li>• Create opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, try new things, and promote a learning organization, where mistakes are opportunities to learn and grow.</li> </ul>

# CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

CPM	PRACTICE BEHAVIORS	LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS
TEAMING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the family to build their supportive team that engages and centers family, cultural, community and Tribal connections as early as possible.</li> <li>• Promote the capacity of family members, Tribes, and their teams to identify culturally-responsive services, supports, visitation activities, and meeting locations that honor family members’ traditions and needs.</li> <li>• Facilitate culturally-responsive team processes, utilizing available and relevant assessments to make decisions in partnership with the family and their team.</li> <li>• Collaborate with the family and their team to recognize and respond to evolving family needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and nurture partnerships with effective Tribes and community-based service providers with cultural connections to families receiving services.</li> <li>• Actively partner with the leadership of Tribes and communities to develop and implement culturally responsive practices, services, policies, and solution-focused supports for the well-being of families.</li> <li>• Model inclusive decision-making with staff at all levels and with partners and Tribes, using teaming structures and approaches that support families and their networks.</li> <li>• Support the implementation and growth of the CPM throughout the organization, at the leadership and practice levels, using culturally responsive teaming structures and approaches so that all of the CPM behaviors can flourish.</li> </ul>
ADVOCACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing information about available programs, providers, resources, and supports.</li> <li>• Help family members access the services and supports that meet their diverse needs.</li> <li>• Identify existing gaps in culturally-responsive services and supports for families and advocate with the agency to develop services and supports that meet the diverse needs of families.</li> <li>• Speak out for families, communities and Tribes in lifting their voices and developing their ability to advocate for themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize and address the assessment and decision-making bias that leads to disproportionality and disparate outcomes for families, communities and Tribes.</li> <li>• Cultivate frequent and regular opportunities for Tribes, communities, agency partners, staff, youth, families, and caregivers to share their voice and to influence the agency’s priorities and direction.</li> <li>• Co-create with families, communities and Tribes regular processes for sharing and analyzing meaningful data as the foundation for planning, decision-making and resource allocation.</li> <li>• Identify systemic barriers and advocate for the resources needed to provide culturally responsive services for families, communities and Tribes.</li> <li>• Advocate for the resources needed to support quality workforce development, health and well-being.</li> </ul>

# CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS

CPM	PRACTICE BEHAVIORS	LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">ACCOUNTABILITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open and honest about the safety threats and circumstances that brought the family to the attention of the agency, what information can be shared among team members, and what information will be included in court reports. Be transparent about the role of the court and the child welfare agency.</li> <li>• Model accountability and trust by doing what you say you're going to do, be responsive (including returning calls, texts, and emails within 24 business hours), be on time (including timely documentation of casework activities, submitting reports on time and being on time for appointments) and follow ICWA and other federal and state laws.</li> <li>• Communicate awareness of individual and institutional biases and work diligently to mitigate potential harm and hurt they cause.</li> <li>• Be aware of and communicate responsibility for your own actions, missteps, and mistakes, admit when you are wrong, and remediate when possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate responsibility and clearly convey to staff, stakeholders, families and Tribes that leaders at each level are accountable for the experience and outcomes of children and families served by the organization.</li> <li>• Listen to staff, stakeholders, families and Tribes to establish a shared expectation for continuous feedback and follow-up.</li> <li>• Engage staff, stakeholders, families and Tribes in data collection and evaluation that informs organizational performance, culture and policy.</li> <li>• Monitor CPM fidelity and effectiveness and co-create strategies that leverage strengths and cultivate learning and continuous improvement.</li> <li>• Establish and communicate a transparent process to track staffing shortages and resource gaps and implement responsive actions.</li> </ul>