



## **Institute for Human Services**

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### **Skill Sets For Child Welfare Caseworkers**

This compilation includes all the skill sets that make up the IHS Universe of Child Welfare Competencies for caseworkers.

A skill set is a cluster or grouping of specific abilities that are used together to perform a job responsibility. The skill sets can help learners identify the specific topics and skill areas in which they need further training and development. Once a skill set has been identified as a learning need, learners should use the listing of individual competencies that make up the skill set to determine the particular areas of knowledge or skill in which they seek further development.

In a competency-based inservice training system, skill sets and competencies are hierarchically organized to allow more effective and efficient use. One organizing framework divides skill sets and competencies into Core, Specialized, and Related Skills categories. *Core* competencies reflect skills that are fundamental and essential to all child welfare caseworkers, regardless of their job setting or scope of responsibility. *Specialized Practice* competencies apply core-level skills to specialized areas of child welfare practice, such as foster care, adoption, child sexual abuse, and casework with adolescents. *Related Skills* competencies incorporate knowledge and skills from other disciplines or fields of practice that are essential to child protection and child welfare work.

Mastery in Core skills is generally a prerequisite for mastery of skills in Specialized Practice and Related Skills categories. Therefore, identification of learning needs in Core competency areas should always precede needs assessment in Specialized Practice or Related Skills categories.

## **CORE SKILL SETS FOR CASEWORKERS**

### ***Topic 111***

#### ***Family-Centered Child Protective Services***

- 111-1 Ability to conduct child welfare practice in a manner consistent with fundamental child welfare values and philosophy
- 111-2 Ability to identify children who have been physically abused, neglected, sexually abused or emotionally maltreated
- 111-3 Ability to approach and relate to families in a culturally respectful and sensitive manner
- 111-4 Ability to work within a community-based system of child protection and family support

### ***Topic 112***

#### ***Engaging Families***

- 112-1 Ability to integrate casework methods with the exercise of protective authority to ensure children's safety
- 112-2 Ability to use a casework relationship to engage and empower families to collaborate with the agency
- 112-3 Ability to engage and communicate with families within their own cultural context
- 112-4 Ability to conduct individual and family group interviews

### ***Topic 113***

#### ***Legal Aspects of Child Protective Services***

- 113-1 Ability to use the juvenile court to protect children from maltreatment and to assure permanence within legally established time frames.
- 113-2 Ability to gather, prepare, and document case information for court
- 113-3 Ability to testify in juvenile court hearings

***Topic 114***  
***Safety, Risk, and Family Assessment***

- 114-01 Ability to determine the level of immediate and future risk of abuse or neglect to children
- 114-02 Ability to conduct comprehensive family assessments for purposes of case planning and service delivery
- 114-03 Ability to design and implement safety plans to protect children in immediate danger of serious harm

***Topic 115***  
***Child Protective Services Investigation***

- 115-01 Ability to screen referrals to determine the level of priority for agency response
- 115-02 Ability to use a family-centered approach when conducting child maltreatment investigations
- 115-03 Ability to plan, coordinate, and conduct investigations in collaboration with community partners

***Topic 116***  
***Case Planning and Family-Centered Casework***

- 116-01 Ability to develop and help families implement case plans that address high priority needs, build on family strengths, and reduce recurrences of maltreatment.
- 116-02 Ability to work collaboratively with families and service providers to plan and coordinate services
- 116-03 Ability to use permanency planning activities, including supplemental planning, to ensure placement stability
- 116-04 Ability to complete case documentation and organize and maintain family case records

### ***Topic 117***

#### ***The Effects of Child Maltreatment on Children's Development***

- 117-01 Ability to identify indicators of age-appropriate development in all domains for children of varying ages
- 117-02 Ability to recognize indicators of developmental delays, disabilities, illness and other conditions that can affect children's development
- 117-03 Ability to help families access community resources to address children's developmental needs
- 117-04 Ability to help parents/caregivers use parenting strategies that meet their children's developmental needs
- 117-05 Ability to promote and sustain healthy attachments between children and their families or caregivers

### ***Topic 118***

#### ***Separation, Placement, and Reunification***

- 118-01 Ability to identify children and families suffering from separation-induced trauma
- 118-02 Ability to plan and implement placements that reduce stress, prevent trauma, and promote placement stability and permanence
- 118-03 Ability to keep parents and other family members involved with their children in placement
- 118-04 Ability to collaborate with and support foster and relative caregivers
- 118-05 Ability to work with families to promote reunification and placement stability
- 118-06 Ability to identify or develop alternative permanent homes for children

## **SPECIALIZED SKILL SETS FOR CASEWORKERS**

### ***Topic 201***

#### ***Adoption and Foster Care***

- 201-1 Ability to recruit resource families (foster, adoption, and respite) for children served by the agency
- 201-2 Ability to determine the suitability of applicants to serve as different types of resource families.
- 201-3 Ability to coordinate and conduct training for resource families
- 201-4 Ability to select appropriate resource families for individual children
- 201-5 Ability to prepare and support resource families to care for children in their homes.
- 201-6 Ability to provide services that meet the developmental, psychological, and permanency needs of children in placement
- 201-7 Ability to provide post-adoption services to families and children to promote placement stability and to prevent disruption.
- 201-8 Ability to sustain collaboration with and provide support to parents whose parental rights are being terminated.
- 201-9 Ability to promote openness in relationships between a child's adoptive and birth families.
- 201-10 Ability to provide services to foster and adoptive families in a culturally competent manner

### ***Topic 202***

#### ***Services to Adolescents***

- 202-1 Ability to provide individualized supportive and treatment services for adolescents and their families
- 202-2 Ability to address the needs and concerns of adolescents placed in out of home care
- 202-3 Ability to assess readiness and prepare youth for emancipation and independent living
- 202-4 Ability to support adolescents who are pregnant or parenting
- 202-5 Ability to serve adolescents who are unruly or delinquent

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***Topic 203***  
***Sexual Abuse***

- 203-1 Ability to identify children who have been sexually abused and act to ensure their safety
- 203-2 Ability to investigate allegations of child sexual abuse
- 203-3 Ability to conduct family assessments and provide services to child victims of sexual abuse and their families
- 203-4 Ability to assess and serve children and adolescents with sexually abusive behaviors
- 203-5 Ability to coordinate out-of-home placement for children who have been sexually abused or have sexually abusive behaviors, and to support their placement families.
- 203-6 Ability to safely reunify children who have been sexually abused or who have sexually abusive behaviors with their families.

***Topic 204***  
***Assessment and Critical Thinking***

- 204-1 Ability to elicit, analyze, and integrate relevant information to support decision making at all phases of case involvement.

***Topic 205***  
***Legal Issues in Child Welfare***

- 205-1 Ability to work with attorneys, prosecutors, court personnel, and other service providers to complete court-related activities.
- 205-2 Ability to prepare children and family members for court hearings
- 205-3 Ability to prepare and deliver testimony in court hearings
- 205-4 Ability to protect a family's rights and prevent litigation against the agency and its staff
- 205-5 Ability to support families and court personnel engaged in mediation activities

***Topic 206***  
***Screening, Intake, and Investigation***

- 206-1 Ability to screen child maltreatment referrals and make recommendations regarding case acceptance and response priority.
- 206-2 Ability to assess and serve families within a differential response system
- 206-3 Ability to plan, conduct, and coordinate child maltreatment investigations and gather evidence for use in court hearings
- 206-4 Ability to interview alleged child victims and siblings in child maltreatment investigations

***Topic 207***  
***Family-Centered and Strengths-Based Services***

- 207-1 Ability to use strengths-based and family-centered models of service delivery with families in their own neighborhoods and communities
- 207-2 Ability to use family team meetings as a case planning and decision-making strategy throughout the life of a case.

***Topic 208***  
***Physical Abuse***

- 208-1 Ability to identify, assess, and treat physically abused children and their families.

***Topic 209***  
***Neglect***

- 209-01 Ability to identify, assess, and treat neglected children and their families.

***Topic 210***  
***Achieving Permanence for Children***

- 210-1 Ability to integrate permanency planning at all stages of case involvement
- 210-2 Ability to locate and engage family members and other adults to become permanency resources for children in care
- 210-2 Ability to create a permanency team for children in need of permanent homes and connections

***Topic 211***  
***Kinship Care***

211-01 Ability to work with kinship caregivers to promote placement stability and permanence for children in care.

***Topic 212***  
***Emotional Maltreatment***

212-01 Ability to identify, assess, and treat emotional maltreatment in children and their families.

***Topic 213***  
***Reunification and Preventing Re-Entry***

213-1 Ability to reunite children in placement with their families and to provide services to prevent placement disruption and re-entry of children into out-of-home care

***Topic 214***  
***Promoting Children's Educational Success***

214-1 Ability to enhance children's educational and social adjustment in school to prevent academic failure or school dropout.



## **RELATED SKILL SETS FOR CASEWORKERS**

### ***Topic 301***

#### ***Interviewing Methods***

- 301-1 Ability to use a variety of interviewing strategies suitable for different purposes and situations.

### ***Topic 302***

#### ***Family Systems Theory and Family Therapy***

- 302-1 Ability to use family systems theory and family therapy techniques in assessing and responding to child maltreatment

### ***Topic 303***

#### ***Casework with Children***

- 303-1 Ability to engage children into a casework relationship
- 303-2 Ability to assess children's level of development, emotional and behavioral problems, and individual needs
- 303-3 Ability to plan and implement developmentally appropriate casework interventions for children

### ***Topic 304***

#### ***Mental Health Problems in Children and Adolescents***

- 304-1 Ability to identify and assess mental health problems in children and adolescents
- 304-2 Ability to provide and monitor treatment for children and youth with mental illness, emotional, or behavioral disorders.

### ***Topic 305***

#### ***Parenting Skills***

- 305-1 Ability to help parents and caregivers develop realistic expectations for their children's behavior.
- 305-2 Ability to help parents and caregivers develop nurturing and disciplinary strategies that meet children's developmental needs.

### ***Topic 306***

#### ***Collaboration, Teamwork and Customer Service***

- 306-1 Ability to enhance collaboration and service coordination among agency units, departments, and community providers that serve children and their families.
- 306-2 Ability to provide effective customer service to families served by the agency.

### ***Topic 307***

#### ***Culture and Diversity***

- 307-1 Ability to serve families of diverse ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds.
- 307-2 Ability to serve refugee and immigrant families.

### ***Topic 308***

#### ***Mental Health Conditions in Adults***

- 308-1 Ability to identify mental illness, emotional disorders, and personality disorders in adults and assess their effects on child safety and parenting.
- 308-2 Ability to provide treatment and supportive services to parents with mental health disorders and assure permanent, safe care for their children.

### ***Topic 309***

#### ***Substance Abuse***

- 309-1 Ability to identify substance abuse in youth and adults, and to assess the associated risks to the health and safety of family members.
- 309-1 Ability to access, coordinate, and monitor treatment of substance abusing individuals.

### ***Topic 310***

#### ***Domestic Violence***

- 310-1 Ability to identify domestic violence in families, assess risks to children, and implement safety and treatment plans for victims and their children.

### ***Topic 311***

#### ***Employment, Financial Assistance, and Self-Sufficiency***

- 311-1 Ability to help families prepare for, locate, and sustain employment and self-sufficiency.

### ***Topic 312***

#### ***Conducting Groups***

- 312-01 Ability to organize, plan, and implement groups for educational, supportive, therapeutic, and planning purposes.

### ***Topic 313***

#### ***Time and Stress Management***

- 313-1 Ability to organize one's workload and effectively manage time and priorities
- 313-2 Ability to recognize and manage personal stress associated with child welfare work

### ***Topic 314***

#### ***Human Sexuality***

- 314-1 Ability to help children and families discuss and address issues and concerns related to sexual development and behavior

### ***Topic 315***

#### ***Written and Oral Communication***

- 315-1 Ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing
- 315-2 Ability to communicate effectively in meetings, supervisory conference, case plan reviews, meetings with client families, and other group settings.

### ***Topic 316***

#### ***Health and Medical Issues***

- 316-1 Ability to help families meet children's health and medical needs.
- 316-2 Ability to help parents who have chronic health or medical conditions safely care for their children.

***Topic 317***  
***Staff Safety***

317-01 Ability to recognize potentially dangerous conditions in the field or the work place and respond to reduce vulnerability and to ensure personal safety.

***Topic 318***  
***Trauma Informed Care and Services***

318-1 Ability to identify, serve, and support children who have experienced trauma

***Topic 319***  
***Client and System Advocacy***

319-1 Ability to advocate on behalf of children and families and to teach self-advocacy strategies to family members

***Topic 320***  
***Problem-Solving and Solution-Focused Casework***

320-1 Ability to use problem-solving and solution-focused strategies to help families resolve problems that contribute to child maltreatment.

***Topic 321***  
***Crisis Intervention***

321-1 Ability to help family members in crisis situations in a manner that promotes safety, stability, and constructive change.

***Topic 322***  
***Behavior Management and Discipline***

322-1 Ability to assess children's misbehaviors and guide parents and caregivers in using constructive, developmentally appropriate discipline strategies.

***Topic 323***  
***Managing Conflict***

324-1 Ability to constructively manage conflicts with families, co-workers, and community professionals.

***Topic 324***  
***Ethics in Child Welfare Practice***

- 325-1 Ability to adhere to the ethical standards of the social work and counseling professions in child welfare practice.

***Topic 325***  
***Developmental Disorders in Children and Adolescents***

- 326-1 Ability to identify indicators of specific developmental disorders in children and adolescents.
- 326-2 Ability to provide case management and supportive services to families of children with developmental disorders.

***Topic 326***  
***Developmental Disorders in Adults***

- 327-1 Ability to identify developmental disorders in parents of maltreated or at-risk children and provide services to ensure the safety and well-being of their children, at home or in alternative care.