

INTRODUCTION TO BASIC PRINCIPLES

Corresponding to the mission of the Juvenile Court, the goals outlined are elaborated on as principles below. Participants in the system (social workers, attorneys, court officials, clients, treatment providers, etc.) all play a critically different role and have a different perspective on what should be done to balance these objectives, but the failure to consider each of these in **every** case and process increases the likelihood that intervention (formal or informal) will be unsuccessful. In many ways these principles provide guidance for the participants in the system and illustrate how their conduct and performance contribute to a system which provides an efficient and appropriate response.

Although expressed as separate concepts or objectives, the principles are in reality interdependent. Achievement of long-term change and protection is attained only when a balanced approach is taken to addressing the problems presented.

PROTECTION

Perhaps the most fundamental goal of the Juvenile Justice system is in the protection of children, the protection of the family, and the protection of the public interest. Protecting the safety of children (from adults and other children) is balanced with the need to protect the rights and reinforce the responsibilities of the family in raising their children and with the need to protect the person and property of citizens from the acts of juveniles. Short-term steps may be necessary to meet one of these needs, but realistic long-term protection depends on the careful consideration of all of these interests in conjunction with the principles of accountability and intervention. Protection is maximized when:

- Adequate and timely assessment of the needs of the child/juvenile, family, and public occurs at all stages of involvement
- Resources are arrayed and provided in a manner that promotes intervention as early as possible
- All potential sources of support, supervision, and treatment are considered and engaged as needed
- Delays in providing services or in the movement of a child/family through the legal system are minimized
- Information within the system is shared with others involved in the juvenile/child/family's life (within statutory limitations and respect for the privacy of individuals), and collateral information from other sources is sought out and used appropriately
- Compliance with expectations and/or the participation or progress in a treatment plan is monitored regularly, and problems are addressed and changes are made as needed in a timely manner
- The impact of behavior on victims (and the potential impact of repeated behavior on victims) is considered in the development of a plan for treatment, supervision, and/or safety
- In cases in which children are the victims, the intrusive and disruptive aspects of the court and legal process is minimized as much as possible while still ensuring their safety and the gathering of information necessary to successfully intervene
- All participants in the system perform their duties in an efficient, respectful, and professional manner

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability means that the system holds individuals, with rare exceptions, responsible for their behavior. While recognizing the factors that may contribute to the problem/behavior identified, a true sense of accountability requires that individuals understand the impact of their act on the victim(s) and/or community, that the undesirable/illegal choices they have made are not acceptable, and that some change must occur that restores a proper and responsible relationship between the offender and the victim(s)/community. Accountability, in the individual and in the system, is maximized when:

- The juvenile/adult understands the connection between his/her behavior and the consequences that follow and, to the degree possible, that the consequences imposed are logically connected to the nature of the misbehavior
- Consequences, in whatever form they may take, occur as soon after the behavior as possible
- The juvenile/adult is clearly confronted with the message that his/her undesirable/illegal behavior is not acceptable
- The juvenile/adult gains some insight into the impact of his/her behavior on victims and/or on the community and the juvenile is expected to be an active participant in efforts to compensate the victim or community
- All participants in the system (social workers, attorneys, law enforcement, court officials, etc.) perform their duties in an timely, respectful, confidential, serious, and professional manner and are held accountable for their performance
- Allowing for individual differences and needs, children/families are dealt with as consistently as possible throughout all stages of the juvenile justice process
- Information within the system is available to participants in the system in a way that promotes the sharing of relevant information in an efficient and comprehensive manner and ensures protection of the rights of the child/adult
- The individual(s) responsible for monitoring the juvenile/family's compliance with expectations and treatment do so on a regular and consistent basis
- Non-compliance is confronted and dealt with in a manner consistent with the above principles

COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of providing intervention/treatment is to address the needs of the juvenile/child/family in a way that promotes their competency and minimizes the likelihood that sustained or repeated court or system involvement will be necessary to adequately protect the child or public. In some cases, simply ensuring accountability for the behavior may be sufficient to meet these objectives. In others, however, more extensive and long-term forms of intervention and treatment will be necessary. In any case, the positive impact of intervention and treatment for competency development is maximized when:

- Adequate assessment of the child/juvenile and family's needs and strengths occurs, initially and on an on-going basis and those involved in making recommendations and decisions related to children/families have sufficient understanding and knowledge of principles of child/adolescent development, family dynamics, and treatment approaches as may be relevant to the circumstances of the child/family.
- The juvenile/family understand and accept the need for intervention/treatment, the relationship between the problems identified and the intervention is understood, and the juvenile/parent participate in the services provided
- The intervention/treatment prioritizes the issues to be addressed and focuses on the most important issues first
- Goals of the intervention/treatment are understandable and achievable
- Appropriate intervention/treatment is provided as soon as possible
- All available resources are used to support progress toward competency goals, including what may be considered "non-traditional" resources and/or those that can be developed or provided by others in the community
- The case manager for the child/juvenile/family regularly monitors compliance with expectations and progress toward competency goals and works with the child and family to adjust the intervention/treatment as needed
- Intervention/treatment recognizes and respects the individual and cultural diversity of the child/family
- Intervention/treatment works to provide the child/family with the skills and competencies that will allow them to become independent of the need for court or other system involvement. In some cases there is a recognition that some form of support/intervention may be necessary for a significant period of time but at a minimum attempts to develop the skills of the child/parent to minimize the role that must be played by the system.