



# Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth Guiding Principles

## About the Guiding Principles

The Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth Program designed these Guiding Principles to:

- provide guidance for service providers assisting children and youth exposed to violence and their families and caregivers;
- offer a benchmark for conducting community needs assessments, and developing policies, and protocols; and
- help community collaboratives shape, inform, and review services and referrals to address children and youth exposed to violence.

While not exhaustive, these Principles illustrate the fundamental goals for communities working to meet the comprehensive and holistic needs of children and youth exposed to violence.

## Values

We believe the following overarching values inform our work:

- Good communication leads to informed decisions.
- For the best results, both families and practitioners must keep each other informed on a continual basis.
- All efforts must be trauma-informed, and support the healing and growth of children, families, and communities.
- Systems of care and communities will provide holistic services with a life-course perspective.
- Consideration must be given to trauma experienced across lifespans and generations, including historical and structural trauma and racism.
- Our work must avoid re-traumatization, and include eliminating processes and practices that re-traumatize individuals.
- Children, youth, parents, caregivers, teachers, service providers, practitioners, and administrators must be included in the process.
- Our approach is strength-based, focused on resiliency, and empowers youth and their families to make informed decisions about accessing services, support, and community-based programs.

This product was supported by cooperative agreement number 2014-VF-GA-K014, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this product are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

## About the Program

The Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth is a multi-component demonstration project designed to:

- promote healing for victims of crime;
- provide or coordinate prevention and intervention services to youth and families experiencing trauma; and
- build capacity within communities to meet the needs of youth exposed to violence.

## II. Linked Systems of Care

All systems of care are connected and aspire to maximize collective impact through communication, collaboration, and coordination. To guide effective Linked Systems of Care, we must:

1. Clarify roles.
2. Create a common vocabulary related to your goals and outcomes.
3. Share information (while ensuring safety and autonomy for individuals and families) to avoid duplicative screening and re-traumatization.
4. Engage traditional and nontraditional community-based partners, including survivor groups.
5. Leverage your resources.
6. Build community capacity to meet victim needs including:
  - a. seamless and equitable access to appropriate interventions and supports, and
  - b. meaningful referrals.
7. Invest in common screening and assessment tools and principles.
8. Be accountable to one another and the families you serve.
9. Create mutually informed policy agendas.

## III. Informed Decision Making

Linked Systems of Care provide as much information as possible to families and practitioners so that the most targeted, holistic, safe, and effective interventions are available. Further, Linked Systems of Care are committed to continuous quality improvement to improve and target interventions to meet the needs of children and youth.

Decisions are best when informed by circumstances, research, and the needs of children, families, and communities as identified during meaningful engagement processes. Decision makers are best poised when they receive regular ongoing and meaningful training, technical assistance, and resources on the effects of trauma.

# Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth

# Guiding Principles

## Target Audience

Guiding Principles for the Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth Program are designed to guide efforts to develop and better align all of the systems of care that respond to the needs of children, youth, families, and caregivers who have experienced victimization and/or been exposed to violence in their homes, schools and communities.

## Action Items

- Embrace our youngest victims and ensure that every young person who experiences victimization receives timely and meaningful responses and services.
- Proactively identify young victims and work integrally with their families and caregivers to provide for their array of needs.
- Ensure these young victims and their families are set on a path to healing and achieving their full potential in life.

## I. Healing Individuals, Families, and Communities

Linked Systems of Care communities are concerned with the healing of individuals, families, and communities who have experienced or have been exposed to violence. Healing includes safety, justice, the opportunity to make positive social-emotional connections, and self-determination. Opportunities for healing occur at all points of contact; healing interventions are accessible, trauma-informed, strength-based, individualized, and gender- and culturally responsive. Parents, caregivers, and children should be meaningfully engaged in decisionmaking for prevention, intervention, and healing. Parents and caregivers are offered coordinated treatment to address their own trauma histories and their reactions to their child's traumatic experience(s). Organizations and communities understand traumatic impact on providers, and institute policies that minimize vicarious trauma and secondary traumatic stress and increase staff resilience.