

# Supports

**Early Years Services:** providing parent education & resources while connecting children & families with community service providers

150 Wood St., Kamloops, BC V2B 0G6

Phone: (250) 376-4771

[www.kamloopsy.org/eyccorr.htm](http://www.kamloopsy.org/eyccorr.htm)

**Secwepemec Families:** providing specialized intervention & prevention services for Aboriginal children 0-6 years of age & their families (voluntary & family-centered)

300 Chilcotin Rd., Kamloops, BC V2H 1G3

Phone: (250) 314-9669

[www.secwepemcfamilies.org/early-years-services/](http://www.secwepemcfamilies.org/early-years-services/)

**Kamloops Family Resources Society:** providing family support such as healthy food, clothing and baby equipment, programs for mother's struggling with substance use issues, parenting workshops & more

657 Seymour St., Kamloops, BC V2C 2H2

Phone: (250) 377-6890

[www.kfrs.ca](http://www.kfrs.ca)

**Interior Community Services:** providing services to children & families such as Adoption Permanency Program, Baby's Head Start, Caring Dads, Families First, First Steps & more

396 Tranquille Rd., Kamloops, BC V2B 3G7

Phone: (250) 554-3134

[www.interiorcommunityservices.bc.ca](http://www.interiorcommunityservices.bc.ca)

**Kids Help Phone:** providing 24/7 free confidential professional online and telephone counselling

1-800-668-6868

# References

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**Working  
With  
Children  
Under 12 years**

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## Facts: Children as Clients

- First & foremost, the child's safety and needs are at the center of the entire decision making process. Put simply, needs are requirements necessary for human wellbeing.
- Children's right to protection entails more than physical safety: it encompasses their emotional & psychological safety and overall wellbeing.
- Measuring & defining the needs of a child is an ongoing challenge: various approaches are used in different ways and **can mean** different things.
- Evaluating needs should use both objective & subjective measures.
- Children are not a heterogeneous group: each child and her or his context should be considered individually.
- Cases involving children aged 6 to 10 are dismissed to a lesser degree than cases related to both younger & older children in Child Protection Services (CPS).
- Studies have linked social worker bias to race, gender, personality type, and different stereotypical perceptions of children & families in need.
- There are substantial differences between various agencies & organizations with respect to factors that determine decision making in child protection investigations.
- The relationship between children, young people & their social workers is more important than communication itself.

## Approaches & Perspectives

- Transactional Model: seeing children not only as simply reacting to their environment, but also as attempting to structure it (parent & child mutually influence each other on a continuous basis).
- The Common Language Approach: evaluates the risk & protective factors in a child's life to assess needs across a range of developmental dimensions-with need being comprised of both problems & solutions.
- Strength-based Child Welfare Assessments focus on the complex interplay of risks & strengths.
- Developmental Perspective: examines individuals & families interacting with each other and their environments over a period of time.
- Permanency Planning Orientation: priority is to provide services that safely maintain children in their own homes or, if necessary, place them permanently with extended family or with a permanent family.
- Collaboration Approach: relies on community resources to keep children safe in their families- with community services such as mental health, public health, addiction services and education to support families & improve care of children.

## Communicating with Children

- Communication involves a range of methods & techniques to engage & communicate with children: touch, play, signing, body language, direct talk, listening, writing, drawing, activities, facial expressions, using symbols and other specialist tools specific to the child's individual needs.
- Children do not all communicate in the same way: work is likely to involve children who have disabilities that affect communication, children whose first language is not English & who have a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds with specific communication practices.
- Listening is not just about the spoken word: also take into account messages children convey to us through other means such as play, drawings or behaviour.
- Offer a nurturing experience (some may be experiencing neglect): having a snack to offer or moving closer to heater if you notice the child is cold.
- Building trust: prove that you are consistent & reliable, such as remembering to bring the "good pens" to the next visit by keeping backup supplies in your office or vehicle & do not make promises that you cannot keep.
- Appropriate language: meet the child at their stage. For young children, ask the caregivers what words are used in the home eg. mama or mom, nana or granny

## Anti-Oppressive Social Work in Child Welfare

- Listening to children's views & striving to understand their lived experiences: key to fully realizing their right to protection, support, and participation.
- Cultural sensitivity & competence.
- Treat children as service users with rights by providing them with complete and understandable information & participation in decision-making processes: this can decrease the child's stress and improve self-esteem.
- Remember to focus on children's 'being needs' such as love and belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization, in addition to fulfilling their 'basic needs' i.e. food, shelter, safety, etc.
- Timely follow up & follow through with children and their families.
- Interventions must be tailored to the child's needs.
- Meet children at their stage, not age.

## Working with children

### HOW DO THEY FEEL?

- Children have a range of understandings about their encounters with social workers: some (often taking the lead from a parent) appear to experience their social worker negatively -as a stranger, a threat, an intruder, 'the enemy'. Others accept their social workers more positively -as a visitor, a friend and/or a source of support.
- Children experience emotional & psychological stress at the start of their contact, especially of being removed from the home. For example, even if children understood that their parents did not treat them well, they still loved them and wanted to take care of them (anxiety, confusion and concern for family).
- Children report they are not being listened to, not being asked for their opinion, and that the adult's perspective is given priority over theirs. They also feared that social workers would not keep their information confidential.
- Children report generally not feeling safe enough to disclose abuse & lacking the self-esteem to report it. (The most important factor for children when disclosing abuse was to have space to express themselves, feeling genuinely listened to and having time to develop trust with the social worker.)
- Children feel a stigma attached to being involved in the system & that can negatively affect their self-perception & self-esteem.
- Children appreciate social workers who care for them, listen to them (linked to social workers' subsequent actions), are playful/fun, and act motivated to work with them.

### OBSTACLES

- The lack of time with children also relates to social workers' confidence & skills in communicating, engaging, playing and being close to children.
- Heavy caseloads, high levels of staff turnover & dealing with bureaucratic, administrative & technical aspects that are associated with the social work role can feel overwhelming at times.
- Working with children and families can be emotionally taxing.

### TIPS

- Consider how social work offices can become 'child friendly' places.
- Think about your appearance: try to wear something that might attract a child's interest or imagination & gives the message that you are child friendly such as wearing a colourful watch or shoes.
- Timing is important (try not to interrupt the routine too much): not during family mealtimes, not when the child's favorite program is on TV, after lunch or recess, etc. & if meeting with them for a longer time, ideally meet the same day to give the child predictability & routine.
- Always be aware of the power imbalance in your relationship. For example, meeting in a bedroom might not be the best- it is a place where children should feel relaxed & safe (if you do, maybe sit on the floor).
- It is good to know about child development spanning through childhood as well as cultural & religious influences.
- Remember to seek clarification & guidance from supervisors and colleagues.