

Core Principles of Family Development

Family development is based on the following core principles

1. All people and all families have strengths.
2. All families need and deserve support. How much and what kind of support varies throughout life.
3. Most successful families are not dependent on long-term public support. They maintain a healthy interdependence with extended family, friends, other people, spiritual organizations, cultural and community groups, schools and agencies, and the natural environment.
4. Diversity (race, ethnicity, gender, class, family form, religion, physical and mental ability, age, sexual orientation) is an important reality in our society, and is valuable. Family workers need to understand oppression in order to learn to work skillfully with families from all cultures.
5. The deficit approach, which requires families to show what is wrong in order to receive services, is counterproductive to helping families move toward self-reliance.
6. Changing from the deficit model to the family development approach requires a whole new way of thinking, not simply more new programs. Individual workers cannot make this shift without corresponding policy changes at agency, state, and federal levels.
7. Families need coordinated services in which all the agencies they work with use a similar approach. Collaboration at the local, state, and federal levels is crucial to effective family development.
8. Families and family development workers are equally important partners in this process, with each contributing important knowledge. Workers learn as much as the families from the process.
9. Families must choose their own goals and methods of achieving them. Family development workers' roles include helping families set reachable goals for their own self-reliance, providing access to services needed to reach these goals, and offering encouragement.
10. Services are provided so families can reach their goals, and are not themselves a measure of success. New methods of evaluating agency effectiveness are needed to measure family and community outcomes, not just the number of services provided.
11. For families to move out of dependency, helping systems must shift from a "power over" to a "shared power" paradigm. Human service workers have power (which they may not recognize) because they decide who gets valued resources. Workers can use that power to work with families rather than use power over them.