



Guardianship Services for Minors

DEFINITION

Guardianship Services for Minors provide assessment, information, and service planning to birth parents, children, and prospective guardians to determine if legal guardianship is a viable permanency option. Guardianship services also provide the child and their guardian with referrals, support, and other post-placement services to maintain the court-appointed placement.

Research Note: *Guardianship refers to the transfer of legal responsibility for a minor from the state or tribe to a private caregiver or guardian. Guardianship is often appointed by the tribal or state juvenile or probate court and can include responsibility for the child, their estate, or both. Generally, the guardian has custody of the child, but parental rights have not been terminated. There are a variety of cultural, social, and ethical circumstances where guardianship may be the most appropriate option if family reunification has been ruled out including: when terminating parental rights goes against cultural norms; when adolescents do not wish to be adopted; or when a parent's physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities prevent him or her from being a permanent caregiver, but the termination of parental rights is unjustifiable.*

In some states and tribes, guardianship is considered as a way to prevent the need for foster care placement altogether. In these cases, caregivers are granted legal custody without the child ever having been in custody of the state or tribe.

Note: *The term "minor" refers to an individual who has not reached the age of majority. The age of majority will vary from state to state and can range from 18 to 25 years of age depending on identified special needs. "Minor" may be substituted by the term "child" or "youth" throughout the section. The term "birth parents" refers to the child's biological parents. "Prospective guardian" refers to any adult seeking to become the legal, long-term, guardian of the minor, and the term "guardian" refers to an individual who has been granted legal custody of the minor.*

The terms "American Indian and Alaska Native", "Indian", and "Native" are used interchangeably throughout the standards to refer to children or families who are members of federally recognized tribes and protected under the Indian Child Welfare Act as well as to agencies or organizations that belong to or advocate on behalf of tribes.

Note: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, the organization should engage and collaborate with the child's tribe throughout the provision of guardianship services as outlined in the Indian*

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Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



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Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which governs state proceedings involving Indian children. Updates to the federal regulations and guidelines were made in 2016 and went into effect for all child custody proceedings initiated on or after December 12, 2016, irrespective of any previously initiated proceedings. Organizations must have established procedures for identifying and serving American Indian and Alaska Native children and families that articulate their role in the context of tribal-state child welfare agreements, ICWA, and any relevant state laws pertaining specifically to Indian child welfare.

ICWA requires the inclusion of tribal representatives throughout all aspects of service delivery, including, but not limited to, permanency planning, assessment, service planning, and case closing. Additional opportunities for inclusion are identified in the standards. While collaboration with federally recognized tribes is required by ICWA, organizations should reach out to tribal representatives in cases involving federally non-recognized tribes as well, as their involvement in the case will improve access to culturally-relevant resources and help establish permanency through a heightened sense of belonging and connectivity to the child's extended family, clan, or tribe.

While local Indian organizations are not granted the same rights as federally recognized tribes under the Indian Child Welfare Act, there may be circumstances under which their involvement is necessary and appropriate. These organizations can facilitate the child's connection to his or her tribe, inform the family and the organization of services available to the child, act as an advocate for the American Indian or Alaska Native child and his or her family, and provide ongoing support and information. This involvement is particularly important when the child's tribe does not have the infrastructure to participate formally in the case.

Note: Please see [GSM Reference List](#) for a list of resources that informed the development of these standards.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Provide an overview of the different programs being accredited under this section. The overview should describe:
 - a. the program's service philosophy and approach to delivering services;
 - b. eligibility criteria;
 - c. any unique or special services provided to specific populations; and
 - d. major funding streams.

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- If elements of the service (e.g., assessments) are provided by contract with outside programs or through participation in a formal, coordinated service delivery system, provide a list that identifies the providers and the service components for which they are responsible. Do not include services provided by referral.
- Provide any other information you would like the peer review team to know about these programs.
- A demographic profile of persons and families served by the programs being reviewed under this service section with percentages representing the following:
 - a. racial and ethnic characteristics;
 - b. gender/gender identity;
 - c. age;
 - d. major religious groups; and
 - e. major language groups
- As applicable, a list of groups or classes including, for each group or class:
 - a. the type of activity/group;
 - b. whether the activity/group is short-term or ongoing;
 - c. how often the activity/group is offered;
 - d. the average number of participants per session of the activity/group, in the last month; and
 - e. the total number of participants in the activity/group, in the last month
- A list of any programs that were opened, merged with other programs or services, or closed
- A list or description of program outcomes and outputs being measured
- Guardianship Data Sheet

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

No On-Site Activities

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GSM 1: Community Collaboration

The organization collaborates with community providers, relevant systems, and tribal governments as applicable to ensure the availability of necessary services and to support the transfer of information between involved parties.

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or

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4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- A description of community outreach
- Procedures for sharing case information

On-Site Evidence

- Informational material available to the community

On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
- Review case records

GSM 1.01

The organization offers outreach to communities that the service population represents to:

- a. inform providers and community leaders about the needs of children; and
- b. educate communities about guardianship as a permanency option.

GSM 1.02

The organization establishes formal procedures for sharing information with the state or tribal court and internally when the responsibility for the case is assigned to a different worker.

Research Note: *When cases involving American Indian and Alaska Native children start in the state court and are then moved to the tribal court, service eligibility and continuity can be at risk of disruption if careful planning and communication between the state and the tribe does not occur. It is important that involved parties communicate openly throughout the transition to ensure service continuity and the transfer of all records to the tribe.*

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GSM 2: Service Philosophy

The program is guided by a service philosophy that:

- a. establishes the child, within the family and community context, as the primary focus of guardianship services;
- b. is culturally grounded;
- c. provides a logical approach for how program activities will meet the needs of children, guardians, and families who receive guardianship services; and
- d. is based on program goals and the best available evidence of service effectiveness for the identified service population.

Interpretation: *A program model or logic model can be a useful tool to help staff think systematically about how the program can make a measureable difference by drawing a clear connection between the service population's needs, available resources, program activities and interventions, program outputs, and desired outcomes.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g., A

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Written service philosophy needs improvement or clarification; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- In a few rare instances required consent was not obtained; or
- Monitoring procedures need minor clarification; or
- With few exceptions the policy on prohibited interventions is understood by staff, or the written policy needs minor clarification.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

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- The written service philosophy needs significant improvement; or
- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Documentation is inconsistent or in some instances is missing and no corrective action has not been initiated; or
- Required consent is often not obtained; or
- A few personnel who are employing non-traditional or unconventional interventions have not completed training, as required; or
- There are gaps in monitoring of interventions, as required; or
- Policy on prohibited interventions does not include at least one of the required elements; or
- Service philosophy is not clearly related to expressed mission or programs of the organization; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- There is no written service philosophy; or
- There are no written policy or procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Include service philosophy in the Narrative

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel

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GSM 3: Child and Youth Permanency

When reunification with birth parents has been ruled out, the organization and the family explore all permanency options to determine if guardianship is the best permanency option for the child, birth parent, and prospective guardian.

Interpretation: *Consideration of all permanency options can be demonstrated through the development of a mediated agreement signed by all parties invested in the child's future. Child welfare mediation is conducted with a neutral third-party to improve communication, maximize family participation in decision making, and expedite permanency. Another way to demonstrate consideration of permanency options is through the use of permanency charts that compare and contrast permanency options according to their legal and financial distinctions, and the roles and responsibilities of caregiver and parent.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or

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- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Procedures for exploring permanency options with the family

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Service recipients
- Review case records

GSM 3.01

The organization clearly explains the differences between adoption, guardianship, and long-term foster care to the birth parent; the prospective guardian; and the child, as appropriate to their age, cultural needs, and developmental level, including:

- a. the legal implications of each option;
- b. available support services; and
- c. financial assistance.

Research Note: *The literature suggests that misunderstanding the legal and financial differences between guardianship and adoption contributes to confusion about which option is in the best interests of the child, and in*

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some cases, poor permanency decision making.

GSM 3.02

The child is encouraged to discuss his or her interest in and understanding of guardianship, as appropriate to his or her age, cultural needs, and developmental level.

Interpretation: *State regulations may require obtaining the child's consent when guardianship is pursued. However, when the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, such regulations may also be superceded by the Indian Child Welfare Act, wherein consent is not required.*

GSM 3.03

The organization takes into account, whenever feasible and appropriate, birth parents' expressed desires regarding the child's placement, and when this consideration can delay placement, the organization:

- a. acts in accordance with applicable law, including the Indian Child Welfare Act;
- b. tries to resolve the conflict in the best interest of an expeditious and permanent placement; and
- c. promptly seeks legal counsel regarding resolution of such differences.

Interpretation: *Child welfare mediation with a neutral third-party can be used to resolve conflict among involved parties and expedite permanency.*

Interpretation: *In cases where the birth parent may be unable to participate in the process, such as incarceration or illness, the organization works with the individual to write down their expressed desires regarding the child's placement for consideration by the court.*

Interpretation: *When the organization is working with American Indian and Alaska Native children and families, tribal representatives and service providers must be involved in placement decisions and placement changes in order to ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act, which requires that preference be given to resource families in the following order:*

- a. a member of the child's extended family;
- b. families who are members of the child's tribe; and
- c. other American Indian or Alaska Native families.

Alternative placement preferences established by the child's tribe may

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apply, and the court may also take into consideration the preferences of the child or his/her birth parents. Organizations should work closely with the child's tribe to identify placement options within the tribal community. Families from all tribes to which the child has ties should be considered as placement options, and eligibility criteria should be consistent with the norms of the tribe.

Research Note: *As evidence of compliance with these placement preferences, a record of each placement must be maintained by the state in which the placement was made. These records should be made available upon request of the United States Secretary of Interior or the child's tribe.*

GSM 3.04

The permanency decision is based on what is in the best interests of the child and reasons for the decision are documented in the case record.

Interpretation: *If guardianship is found to be an inappropriate permanency option for the child, the organization works with the family to determine a more viable permanency option. Other viable permanency options can include adoption or guardianship with another caregiver. Continued stays in foster care should only be considered if no other permanency options are available.*

Interpretation: *The organization documents why the goal is in the best interest of the child and why other permanency options were not appropriate in the case record. If siblings are not placed together, the organization documents the reason in the case record.*

Research Note: *Federal law permits American Indian and Alaska Native families to move forward with a customary adoption, without terminating parental rights. Customary adoptions, approved or adjudicated by the tribal court, are arranged through custom and tradition and allow for the transfer of custody while preserving parental rights.*

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GSM 4: Homestudy

The homestudy process ensures that the prospective guardian is capable of providing a stable environment that promotes healthy child development.

Research Note: *The Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006 (H.R.5403) requires that full faith and credit be given to any homestudy completed by another state or Indian tribe with respect to the placement of a child unless it is determined that placing the child on the basis of the contents of the report would be contrary to the child's well-being.*

Rating Indicators

- 1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.
- 2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,
 - Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
 - Procedures need strengthening; or
 - With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
 - For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
 - Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
 - Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.
- 3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,
 - Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
 - Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
 - Timeframes are often missed; or
 - A number of client records are missing important information or
 - Client participation is inconsistent; or
 - One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.
- 4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards;

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e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Description of homestudy process
- Homestudy tool and/or procedures
- Procedures for background checks

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel

GSM 4.01

The information gathered for homestudies is limited to material pertinent to establishing a guardianship.

GSM 4.02

Homestudy assessments are conducted in a culturally-responsive manner and identify potential strengths and opportunities to promote service participation and success.

Interpretation: *Culturally-responsive assessments can include attention to geographic location, language of choice, political status, tribal affiliation, and religious, racial, ethnic and cultural background. Other important factors that contribute to a responsive assessment include attention to age and sexual orientation.*

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(FP) GSM 4.03

The homestudy is a collaborative process to determine if guardianship is an appropriate goal and includes:

- a. one or more visits to the prospective guardian's home;
- b. reference checks;
- c. criminal background and child abuse and neglect registry checks for all adults living in the home according to applicable federal and state requirements; and
- d. preparation of a homestudy report with a recommendation regarding the prospective guardian's ability to meet the needs of the child.

Interpretation: *Homestudies are conducted in accordance with all applicable federal and state requirements. The worker can consider additional information offered by the prospective guardian after they review the homestudy. The organization should develop criteria for the review of criminal background checks that specifies how the organization evaluates and responds to reports indicating criminal offenses. Prospective guardians should be informed of the organization's policy regarding criminal convictions at the beginning of the process. If guardianship is being established for a child already in placement with the prospective guardian or for a sibling of a child already in placement with the prospective guardian, background checks that were conducted as part of that arrangement may not need to be conducted again.*

GSM 4.04

An assessment is conducted to evaluate the:

- a. relationship between the prospective guardian and the child;
- b. child's relationship to individuals already living in the home;
- c. prospective guardian's cultural sensitivity and willingness to support the child's cultural ties;
- d. history of maltreatment and prior placements; and
- e. prospective guardian's commitment to the child.

Interpretation: *Evidence of a strong commitment to the child can include functioning as the primary caregiver of the child prior to the guardianship arrangement.*

GSM 4.05

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The homestudy explores the guardian's capacity to provide a lifelong home for the child and includes an assessment of:

- a. the prospective guardian's ability to meet the needs of the child;
- b. the family's ability to support the child;
- c. the needs of children already living in the home;
- d. physical and mental health status; and
- e. education, employment, and financial status.

Interpretation: *Elements a) through e) should be considered collectively when assessing the guardian's capacity to provide a lifelong home for the child and a placement determination should never be made based on one single factor.*

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GSM 5: Assessment

The organization conducts an individualized, strengths-based, culturally-responsive assessment to:

- a. identify present and future needs of the child and prospective guardian; and
- b. determine the child's eligibility for available guardianship subsidies.

Research Note: *Subsidized guardianship is the transfer of custody to a private caregiver or guardian who is provided with a monthly subsidy for the care and support of the child. Several states have begun using subsidized guardianship as a tool to expedite permanency for children who are in the child welfare system, and for whom reunification with birth parents or adoption are not viable options. As of December 2006, 39 states and the District of Columbia offer some form of a subsidized guardianship program. Currently, in Montana, state subsidies are available for children in both state and tribal custody. There also can be similar funds available to Indian children through tribal monies; however, the number of tribes offering such subsidy is unknown. Workers should familiarize themselves with subsidies available to the children and families with whom they work.*

Research Note: *Tribal representatives, or individuals with knowledge of the tribe and tribal customs, should be involved in the assessment to improve the quality of the assessment by ensuring that it is culturally grounded and involves the family and tribal community.*

Rating Indicators

- 1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.
- 2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,
 - Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
 - Procedures need strengthening; or
 - With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
 - For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
 - Culturally responsive assessments are the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.05); or
 - Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent; or

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- Diagnostic tests are consistently and appropriately used, but interviews with staff indicate a need for more training (TS 2.08).

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Assessment and reassessment timeframes are often missed; or
- Assessments are sometimes not sufficiently individualized;
- Culturally responsive assessments are not the norm and this is not being addressed in supervision or training; or
- Staff are not competent to administer diagnostic tests, or tests are not being used when clinically indicated; or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- Assessments are done by referral source and no documentation and/or summary of required information present in case record; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- There are no written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Procedures for conducting assessments
- Assessment tools and/or criteria included in assessment
- Procedures for identification and collaboration in ICWA cases

On-Site Evidence

- Indian Child Welfare Act information provided to families
- Copies of tribal state agreements, when applicable
- Information available to workers regarding available guardianship subsidies

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On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Service recipients
- Review case records

GSM 5.01

The information gathered for assessments is limited to material pertinent to meeting service requests and objectives.

GSM 5.02

Assessments are conducted in a strengths-based, culturally-responsive manner to identify resources that can increase service participation and support the achievement of agreed upon goals.

Interpretation: *Culturally-responsive assessments can include attention to geographic location, language, political status, tribal affiliation, and religious, ethnic, and cultural background. Other important factors that contribute to a responsive assessment include attention to age, sexual orientation, and developmental level.*

Research Note: *When working with undocumented children it is particularly important that the guardianship worker assess the child for their potential eligibility for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). Minors under 21 years-of-age who are involved in guardianship proceedings through the probate court may be eligible for SIJS if (1) they cannot be reunified with either parent because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, and (2) it isn't in the child's best interest to be returned to their home country. SIJS allows the child to remain in the United States and eventually obtain lawful permanent residency. It also provides an employment authorization document allowing the child to work and serving as a government-issued identification card.*

(FP) GSM 5.03

The organization identifies American Indian and Alaska Native children and collaborates with the tribe or Indian organization to:

- a. determine the applicability of, and ensure compliance with, the Indian

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Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



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- Child Welfare Act;
- b. determine jurisdiction;
 - c. assess the child's needs;
 - d. provide the family with information regarding their rights under the Indian Child Welfare Act;
 - e. determine the most appropriate plan for the child; and
 - f. maintain connections between the child, his or her extended family, and the tribe.

Interpretation: *The organization should have established procedures for identifying American Indian and Alaska Native children to determine if the child or his/her biological parent(s) are members of a federally recognized tribe, or if the child is eligible for membership in a federally recognized tribe. Physical appearance, blood quantum, and perceived presence or absence of cultural cues within the family are not appropriate determinants of ICWA applicability. The organization should document efforts to identify and contact the children's tribes, and if tribes are unknown the organization should contact the regional office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to identify, locate, and notify the child's tribe.*

Research Note: *The Indian Child Welfare Act authorizes states and federally recognized tribes to enter into agreements governing the care and custody of Indian children and jurisdiction over child custody proceedings. Organizations should refer to tribal-state agreements and the Indian Child Welfare Act to determine what role each party should play in cases involving Indian children, and to ensure compliance with relevant legal requirements.*

Research Note: *Early identification of American Indian and Alaska Native children is critical to ensuring that the requirements of ICWA are followed from the beginning of the case and preventing harmful placement delays or disruptions later in the proceedings. To facilitate accurate determinations of tribal membership, organizations should provide tribes with: parents' genograms or family ancestry charts; parents' maiden, married, and other known former names or aliases; parents' current and former addresses; and parents' places of birth and birthdates.*

Note: *Evidence of tribal participation should be documented in the case record.*

GSM 5.04

To ensure the receipt of necessary services, the child, prospective guardian, birth parent, and extended family as appropriate, participate in a

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comprehensive assessment to determine the:

- a. risk of present or future behavioral, health, mental health, or substance use conditions;
- b. availability of formal and informal supports; and
- c. necessary level of agency involvement and post-permanency services.

Interpretation: *Personnel conducting assessments should be qualified through education, training, and experience to identify risk factors associated with behavioral, health, mental health, and substance use conditions. A comprehensive psychosocial assessment to identify the presence of such conditions must be conducted in a culturally competent manner by a licensed professional qualified to make the diagnosis.*

When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, the licensed professional conducting the assessment should be identified or approved by the tribal community. If an approved, licensed professional is not available, the tribal community may identify a non-licensed professional to conduct the assessment to ensure that it is culturally appropriate and involves the family and tribal community.

Research Note: *In several states, the services that will be paid for throughout the life of the guardianship arrangement depend heavily on the initial assessment and service plan. Therefore, it is essential that any risk of future behavioral, health, mental health, or substance use conditions be identified early to establish that guardianship is the best option given available resources and to make services more accessible in the future.*

GSM 5.05

Information is collected to determine the child's eligibility to receive state-funded guardianship subsidies.

Research Note: In states with no subsidized guardianship programs, or subsidy programs where the rate is lower than foster care, there is a disincentive to move to permanency given the perceived loss of financial resources to care for the child. States where the guardianship subsidy is equal to what the family received in foster care can more effectively achieve permanency through guardianship.

NA *The state does not have a subsidized guardianship program.*

GSM 5.06

Assessments are completed in timeframes established by the organization.

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

GSM 6: Service Planning

Birth parents, the child, and prospective guardian participate in the development and ongoing review of service plans that are the basis for delivery of services and support.

Interpretation: *Service goals should be identified for birth parents, the child, and the prospective guardian. Generally, separate plans are developed for each involved party, but in some circumstances it may be appropriate to add the child's goals to one of the other service plans.*

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child and family, the tribe or local Indian organization must be included in the service planning process and culturally relevant resources available through or recommended the tribe or local Indian organizations should be considered and prioritized when developing the service plan.*

The organization should recognize the value of incorporating culturally-grounded interventions into the service plan, and include traditional practices or customs of the child's culture, tribe, or faith-based community to the greatest extent possible and appropriate. Organizations should also be mindful that interventions adopted for the broader population, including evidence-based practices, may be ineffective or harmful to American Indian and Alaska Native children and families, and should instead identify culturally appropriate interventions that have been demonstrated to be effective for the population served.

Rating Indicators

- 1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.
- 2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,
 - Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
 - Procedures need strengthening; or
 - With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
 - For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
 - Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

- In a few instances client or staff signatures are missing and/or not dated; or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- In a number of instances client or staff signatures are missing and/or not dated (RPM 7.04); or
- Quarterly reviews are not being done consistently; or
- Level of care for some clients is inappropriate; or
- Service planning is often done without full client participation; or
- Appropriate family involvement is not documented; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Assessments are done by referral source and no documentation and/or summary of required information present in case record; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Service planning and monitoring procedures
- Permanency planning procedures

On-Site Evidence

- Documentation of case review

On-Site Activities

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Service recipients
- Review case records

GSM 6.01

A strengths-based service plan is developed, within an appropriate timeframe, with the full participation of the child, prospective guardian, and birth parent.

Interpretation: *Service planning is to be conducted so that service recipients retain as much personal responsibility and self-determination as possible and desired. Generally, children age 6 and older are to be included in service planning, unless there are clinical justifications for not doing so.*

Research Note: *Research suggests that insufficient involvement of the prospective guardian and the birth parent in service planning may lead to low achievement rates of permanency. Attention to continuous parent involvement in service needs should be given until the guardianship becomes legal.*

GSM 6.02

Extended family members and significant others, as appropriate and with the consent of the service recipients, are advised of ongoing progress and participate in service planning.

Interpretation: *The organization facilitates participation by, for example, helping arrange transportation or including family in scheduling decisions.*

Research Note: *While the efficacy of involving people who can play an effective, informal support role has not been established formally, an approach known as family group conferencing, or family team decision-making, is sometimes used to positive effect in child welfare programs.*

GSM 6.03

During service planning the organization and the service recipients explore:

- a. available options;
- b. how the organization can support the achievement of desired outcomes;

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

and

- c. benefits and cultural relevance of planned services.

GSM 6.04

The service plan is based on the assessment, takes into account any identified special needs, and includes:

- a. agreed upon goals, desired outcomes, and timeframes for achieving them;
- b. services, education, and supports to be provided, and by whom; and
- c. the service recipient's signature.

Interpretation: *The organization should recognize the value of incorporating culturally-grounded interventions into the service plan, and include traditional practices or customs of the child's culture, tribe, or faith-based community to the greatest extent possible and appropriate.*

Research Note: *In many state-subsidized guardianship programs, special needs such as mental health risks, learning disabilities, or behavioral concerns must be identified in the service plan to ensure future service needs will be paid for by the subsidy program.*

Research Note: *Caregivers who are unable to afford or find appropriate mental health care are often ill-advised to voluntarily relinquish custody so their child will be more likely to receive necessary services. Every year, thousands of children are unnecessarily institutionalized in this way. When children enter the system with identified mental health needs, special attention needs to be given to connecting youth to appropriate services in a way that does not necessitate the relinquishment of custody by their caregiver.*

GSM 6.05

When special needs have been identified, the organization:

- a. advises the family of mechanisms in their state, or by their tribe, to extend guardianship beyond age 18; and
- b. includes in the service plan connections to community resources and necessary systems that the young adult will need when they are no longer considered a minor.

Interpretation: *Connections to necessary systems can include, for example, referring young adults with special needs to the mental health*

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

system to be assessed for continuing support needs or an ongoing guardianship arrangement.

GSM 6.06

The worker and a supervisor, or a service or peer team, regularly review each case to assess:

- a. service plan implementation;
- b. progress toward achieving service goals and desired outcomes; and
- c. the continuing appropriateness of agreed upon service goals.

Interpretation: *The review should occur:*

- a. monthly for children awaiting transfer of custody; and
- b. at least quarterly for prospective guardians and birth parents.

Interpretation: *Experienced workers may conduct reviews of their own cases. In such cases, the worker's supervisor reviews a sample of the worker's evaluations as per the requirements of the standard.*

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, the tribe or a local Indian organization must receive timely notification of case reviews to ensure their involvement, particularly when any changes made to the service plan plan. Phone and video conferencing can be used to facilitate tribal participation. The case review should include an assessment for compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.*

GSM 6.07

The worker regularly reviews progress toward achievement of goals with birth parents, the prospective guardian, the child, and extended family to the extent possible and revisions to the goals and plans are signed.

GSM 6.08

The organization participates in or facilitates the development of a permanency plan for the minor that identifies:

- a. guardianship as the permanency goal;
- b. activities that support the achievement of guardianship; and
- c. a timeframe for completing the guardianship process.

Interpretation: *The permanency planning process for American Indian and*

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

Alaska Native children and families must always involve tribal representatives and service providers to ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act's placement preferences and support culturally responsive planning that recognizes and incorporates tribal definitions of permanency and tribal perspectives on the best interests of the child into the permanency plan

Research Note: *Tribal definitions of permanency can vary by tribe but generally focus on the concept of belonging through the identification and enhancement of the child's support networks including their extended family, clan, and tribe. Thus, permanency is the result of continuity and a sustained sense of belonging.*

GSM 6.09

The child receives information about progress toward achieving permanency as appropriate to his or her age, cultural needs, and developmental level.

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

GSM 7: Pre-Guardianship Services

Pre-guardianship services prepare the child, prospective guardian, and birth parents for transfer of custody.

Interpretation: *Extended family members may be included in pre-guardianship services if their involvement is appropriate.*

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, resources offered by the tribe or local Indian organizations should be considered and prioritized.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- A description of Pre-Guardianship Services

On-Site Evidence

- Informational materials provided to birth parents
- Orientation and informational materials provided to prospective guardians

On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Service recipients
- Review case records

GSM 7.01

Age appropriate services that prepare the child for transfer of custody include:

- a. counseling to understand and cope with separation and family loyalty issues; and
- b. support to cope with changing roles and relationships.

(FP) GSM 7.02

Birth parents are prepared for transfer of custody through services that include:

- a. education about their legal rights, including visitation;
- b. education about the importance of permanency and a stable home for the child;

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

- c. planning for participation in the legal process when it is appropriate and desired;
- d. discussion about a visitation plan that is in the best interests of the child; and
- e. discussion of changing roles and relationships.

(FP) GSM 7.03

Prospective guardians participate in an orientation that includes the following:

- a. the importance of permanency and a stable home for the child;
- b. the impact of guardianship on birth parent rights;
- c. the process for completing the transfer of custody;
- d. their responsibility to maintain a visitation plan and supervise birth parent visitation, as necessary;
- e. circumstances under which guardianship can be terminated or modified, including their right to petition the court; and
- f. the availability of guardianship subsidies and the impact they could have on receipt of federal, state, or tribal benefits.

Interpretation: *A guardianship subsidy can be considered income and could impact the child's eligibility for other benefits such as Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, or subsidized child care. Organizations should be aware of the regulations in their state and with local tribes.*

Interpretation: *The orientation should explore the caregiver's capacity to provide permanency over time for the child. This material can cover the need for additional support; circumstances that may adversely impact the caregiver's ability to care for the child, for example, age or presenting medical issues; and plans for the child if the caregiver is unable to provide care, such as the establishment of a successor guardian. See GSM 8.05 for more information on the establishment of a successor guardian.*

Interpretation: *The prospective guardian should be fully informed of their right to petition the court to adopt the child at a later time and the impact this will have on birth parent rights. Guardians of American Indian and Alaska Native children should be informed of alternatives to adoption such as tribal customary adoption, which must be approved or adjudicated by the tribal court.*

GSM 7.04

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

Prospective guardians are prepared for the transfer of custody through education, training, information, and support that address the following, as appropriate:

- a. attachment and bonding;
- b. possible impacts of guardianship on the family;
- c. changing roles and relationships, including sibling relationships;
- d. the importance of maintaining connections with the child's family, community or tribe, as appropriate;
- e. child development and parenting techniques including special considerations for a child's transition into adolescence;
- f. raising a child of a different race, ethnicity, culture, or religion;
- g. caring for a child with special needs;
- h. helping a child cope with separation and loss;
- i. a history of maltreatment;
- j. financial impact on the family;
- k. issues of independent living; and
- l. available support services.

Interpretation: *Information about available support services should include an overview of any services that will be lost once the guardianship arrangement is finalized, as well as the availability of services in other states, tribes, or Indian organizations if the family plans on moving out of state in the future.*

Interpretation: *Pre-guardianship services should be tailored to the age range, cultural background, and needs of the child and adjusted accordingly when the child is already living with the prospective guardian.*

With regards to elements (d) and (f), training must include educating prospective guardians on the Indian Child Welfare Act, its impact on placement and permanency for American Indian and Alaska Native children, and the guardians' responsibilities for supporting the child's cultural identity and facilitating connections to their tribe.

Research Note: *A preliminary study suggests that the organization consider the readiness of each prospective guardian, rather than relying only on the completion of training or other tasks.*

Research Note: *Contact with tribal relatives is commonly practiced among tribal communities and is believed to support the child's cultural identity and an improved sense of belonging.*

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

GSM 8: Support Services

The organization helps to arrange ongoing, individualized support services to promote the stability and success of the guardianship arrangement.

Interpretation: *If an organization does not provide post-placement services directly, it documents attempts to make an appropriate referral.*

Interpretation: *The child's extended family and other community members should be considered as valuable resources when arranging post-placement services, unless contraindicated.*

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, a representative from the tribe or a local Indian organization should be included in post-placement service planning. Support services and resources offered by the tribe or a local Indian organization should be considered and prioritized.*

Research Note: *In most states, support services provided through foster care are no longer provided once the guardianship has been finalized. Research suggests that this is a significant disincentive for caregivers who would otherwise consider a more permanent placement such as adoption or guardianship. For low-income families in particular, the loss of agency services can make guardianship financially impossible.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards;

e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- A description of support services

On-Site Evidence

- Community resource and referral list

On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Guardians
 - d. Children
- Review case records

GSM 8.01

When the need for post-placement services is identified, the organization and service recipient explore available community-based services and jointly develop a plan that specifies steps for obtaining these services.

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

Interpretation: *The decision to develop a post-placement service plan is based on the wishes of the child and his or her guardian.*

GSM 8.02

Post-placement service plans must:

- a. be responsive to the needs identified in the assessment;
- b. offer a range of community-based services and resources;
- c. outline plans for ongoing communication, visitation and shared activities with siblings that are not placed together;
- d. be flexible to the changing needs of the child and guardian; and
- e. explore the continued availability of services in the adult system.

GSM 8.03

The child and his or her guardian have access to needed post-placement services that are culturally relevant and include:

- a. assessments;
- b. information and referral;
- c. educational services;
- d. counseling, mental health, and crisis intervention services;
- e. family preservation and stabilization services;
- f. peer support;
- g. respite services and out-of-home care;
- h. child care; and
- i. transportation.

Interpretation: *In some situations it may be appropriate to include the birth parent in ongoing support services, unless contraindicated.*

Research Note: *Post-placement services help maintain the stability of guardianship placements. Increased levels of financial support and available support services are correlated with decreased rates of disruption.*

GSM 8.04

Guardians of children with special needs receive information and/or referrals for the following post-placement support:

- a. early childhood intervention services;
- b. opportunities within the local school district;

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

- c. specialized services for health, mental health, and substance use conditions;
- d. education and vocational training;
- e. advocacy training; and
- f. personal advocates or legal counsel.

Research Note: *Youth enrolled in special education programs within the public school system often maintain their eligibility for services beyond age 18. Through continuing education services, youth can receive assistance with vocational programming and other skill building support services.*

GSM 8.05

The organization works with the child and their guardian to identify and locate family members who might reestablish relationships with the child.

Interpretation: *The identification of family members should include possible successor guardians who could care for the child should the guardian be unable to care for the child in the future.*

Research Note: *The literature suggests that the identification of a successor guardian and a well thought out plan for removal leads to a smoother transition for youth. This is particularly important when the caregiver is an older adult.*

GSM 8.06

Youth who plan to transition to independence receive information on:

- a. educational opportunities;
- b. training and vocational services;
- c. safe housing options;
- d. affordable community-based healthcare and counseling;
- e. public or tribal benefits for which they may be eligible;
- f. available resources to facilitate integration into their community; and
- g. maintaining an ongoing relationship with their tribe or tribal community.

Interpretation: *Housing options may include a full range from supported living to a fully independent living environment. When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, the organization should work with the tribe and the youth in transition to explore the risks and benefits of housing options within Indian country and prepare youth for this potential transition.*

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

Research Note: *Organizations should explore the definition of independence with youth to ensure that youth are transitioning into a living arrangement that meets their needs and honors their belief system and cultural values. Establishing strong interdependent relationships with a committed caregiver, extended family, and supportive community members can smooth the transition into adulthood and independence.*

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

GSM 9: Case Closing

Case closing is a planned, orderly process.

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- In a few instances the organization terminated services inappropriately; or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent; or
- A formal case closing summary and assessment is not consistently provided to the public authority per the requirements of the standard.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Services are routinely terminated inappropriately; or
- A formal case closing summary and assessment is seldom provided to the public authority per the requirements of the standard.; or
- A number of client records are missing important information; or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

used; or

- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Case closing procedures

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Service Recipients
- Review case records

GSM 9.01

Planning for case closing:

- a. is clearly defined and includes assignment of staff responsibility;
- b. begins at intake; and
- c. involves the child, guardian, and others, as appropriate.

GSM 9.02

Upon case closing, the organization notifies any collaborating service providers, including the courts and tribal governments, as appropriate.

GSM 9.03

The organization informs the guardian of any ongoing reviews that will be conducted by the guardianship subsidy unit or the court.

Interpretation: *When a case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, the tribe or a local Indian organization must be informed of*

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

ongoing reviews to ensure their involvement.

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

GSM 10: Personnel

Personnel are qualified and receive support to facilitate the development of a permanent caring relationship between the child and his or her guardian.

Note: *When the organization is unable to fully implement one or more of the practice standards, intensive efforts should be made to fully implement the other standards. For example, if the organization is unable to recruit workers with specific qualifications, it can ensure that appropriate supervision and workload standards are implemented.*

Rating Indicators

- 1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.
- 2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,
 - With some exceptions, staff (direct service providers, supervisors, and program managers) possess the required qualifications, including: education, experience, training, skills, temperament, etc., but the integrity of the service is not compromised.
 - Supervisors provide additional support and oversight, as needed, to staff without the listed qualifications.
 - Most staff who do not meet educational requirements are seeking to obtain them.
 - With some exceptions staff have received required training, including applicable specialized training.
 - Training curricula are not fully developed or lack depth.
 - A few personnel have not yet received required training.
 - Training documentation is consistently maintained and kept up-to-date with some exceptions.
 - A substantial number of supervisors meet the requirements of the standard, and the organization provides training and/or consultation to improve competencies.
 - Supervisors provide structure and support in relation to service outcomes, organizational culture and staff retention.
 - With a few exceptions caseload sizes are consistently maintained as required by the standards.
 - Workloads are such that staff can effectively accomplish their assigned tasks and provide quality services, and are adjusted as necessary in accord with established workload procedures.
 - Procedures need strengthening.

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used.
 - With a few exceptions specialized staff are retained as required and possess the required qualifications.
 - Specialized services are obtained as required by the standards.
- 3)** Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Â Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.
 - A significant number of staff, e.g., direct service providers, supervisors, and program managers, do not possess the required qualifications, including: education, experience, training, skills, temperament, etc.; and as a result the integrity of the service may be compromised.
 - Job descriptions typically do not reflect the requirements of the standards, and/or hiring practices do not document efforts to hire staff with required qualifications when vacancies occur.
 - Supervisors do not typically provide additional support and oversight to staff without the listed qualifications.
 - A significant number of staff have not received required training, including applicable specialized training.
 - Training documentation is poorly maintained.
 - A significant number of supervisors do not meet the requirements of the standard, and the organization makes little effort to provide training and/or consultation to improve competencies.
 - There are numerous instances where caseload sizes exceed the standards' requirements.
 - Workloads are excessive and the integrity of the service may be compromised.Â
 - Procedures need significant strengthening; or
 - Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
 - Specialized staff are typically not retained as required and/or many do not possess the required qualifications; or
 - Specialized services are infrequently obtained as required by the standards.
- 4)** Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

?For example:

- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Purpose

Guardianship Services for Minors support the establishment of a court-appointed, long-term, living arrangement with a committed caregiver that ensures safety and increases stability and child well-being.



Guardianship Services for Minors

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Program staffing chart that includes lines of supervision
- List of program personnel that includes:
 - a. name;
 - b. title;
 - c. degree held and/or other credentials;
 - d. FTE or volunteer;
 - e. length of service at the organization;
 - f. time in current position
- Chart that specifies caseload size, per worker, for the past six months
- Procedures or criteria used for assigning and evaluating workload

On-Site Evidence

- Job descriptions
- Documentation of training
- Training curricula
- Data describing staff turnover

On-Site Activities

- Interview:
 - a. Supervisors
 - b. Personnel
- Review personnel files

GSM 10.01

Guardianship workers are qualified by:

- a. an advanced degree in social work or a comparable human service field;
or
- b. a bachelor's degree in social work or a comparable human service field with two years of related experience.

GSM 10.02

Supervisors are qualified by an advanced degree in social work or a comparable human service field and two years of experience working with children and families, preferably in adoption or guardianship.

Purpose

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Guardianship Services for Minors

GSM 10.03

Guardianship workers must be knowledgeable of child welfare practices in their state and have the competencies to:

- a. counsel families on all available permanency options;
- b. work effectively with kinship families, including Indian families;
- c. conduct assessments and identify children with special needs;
- d. collaborate with several systems including the mental health, judicial, health, and educational systems;
- e. provide effective case management;
- f. guide families through the guardianship process;
- g. help families obtain available benefits, including guardianship subsidies, as appropriate;
- h. address interstate issues; and
- i. provide families with the information they need to find necessary support services and the skills they need to obtain them.

Interpretation: *Competency can be demonstrated through a combination of education, training, and experience.*

Research Note: *The increased attention to guardianship is a direct result of the increasing number of children being placed in the homes of relatives, and the unique dynamics of kinship families.*

(FP) GSM 10.04

Guardianship workers and supervisors, depending on job responsibilities, are knowledgeable about relevant provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), including:

- a. the importance of ICWA and special considerations for working with American Indian and Alaska Native children;
- b. the identification of American Indian and Alaska Native children;
- c. determining jurisdiction;
- d. appropriate notice and collaboration with the child's tribe;
- e. placement preferences that support the child's connection to their native culture and heritage; and
- f. court procedures.

Interpretation: *All guardianship personnel should be trained in the basic requirements of ICWA with additional specialized training for staff in specialized service units, such as assessment or permanency planning. All screening personnel must be trained on how to identify children with American Indian or Alaska Native heritage. Workers should also be*

Purpose

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Guardianship Services for Minors

informed of the cultural norms and historical trauma associated with Indian tribes.

Research Note: *Training resources on the Indian Child Welfare Act are available from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, and the California Social Work Education Center.*

GSM 10.05

Guardianship workers maintain a manageable workload, and cases are assigned according to a system that takes into consideration:

- a. the qualifications and competencies of the worker and the supervisor;
- b. the complexity and status of the case;
- c. services provided by other professionals or team members; and
- d. other organizational responsibilities.

Interpretation: *Case complexity can take into account intensity of child and family needs and size of the family. Generally, caseloads do not exceed 12-25 families.*

Research Note: *Staff retention literature indicates that high caseloads and time-consuming paperwork are primary factors in child welfare workforce turnover.*

One example of a caseload weighting formula suggests that a useful system is developed with input from staff, time and case study data, uses readily available information, and is not too complex.

GSM 10.06

Supervisors or experienced workers provide additional support when personnel are new or are still developing competencies.

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