

Wellness Lenses for the Child & Family Workforce



When you consider human nature, why do you believe people think, feel, behave, and interact the way they do? **Do all humans share common responses, or are we unique in how we operate in the world?** We often have our own explanations based on our individual experiences, circumstances, and cultural contexts. Some refer to the tools we use to come to an understanding of the world around us as “**lenses.**” **Different perspectives of the same situation can be produced depending on what “lens” we use,** be it reading glasses, binoculars, or a kaleidoscope. Many fields of practice have well-defined lenses that provide a common language to make sense of what we see and experience and help practitioners organize and efficiently apply their skills and tools.

The child and family workforce has many working tools available to help them see and understand a family’s situation clearly: empathy, genuineness, respect, cultural humility, values, etc. **A lens is meant to magnify or correct vision, giving us a clear, accurate picture.** In family strengthening practice, it matters what kind of lens you look through.

The Social Policy Institute at San Diego State University utilizes four best practice lenses, seen to the right, throughout our work to better support the effectiveness of the child and family workforce. We apply these lenses across our curriculum and service pathways to increase worker effectiveness in the field. We support the child and family workforce to expand their understanding of the work by examining common scenarios through a series of lenses often used in human services. **By considering the same situation in many different ways, participants are better prepared to respond effectively to meet the complex needs of families in an individual way.**

Four of the best practice lenses for the child and family workforce include:



Trauma-Informed Care

This lens focuses on addressing all types of trauma. Practitioners help families develop healthy responses to the traumatic events they have experienced. ([National University, 2024](#))



Cultural Proficiency

This lens requires practitioners to go beyond knowledge and understanding of other cultures, to reflect on their practice and service and make any needed changes to improve and include culturally-tailored services. ([Spinner, 2019](#))



Strengths-Based Approach

This approach is a holistic, person-centered perspective, focusing on a family’s existing strengths. Practitioners must establish collaborative relationships with families to develop their resilience and strengths to help them face life’s challenges. ([Nash, 2022](#))






Equity

An equity lens takes into consideration any influence that a child or family’s race and ethnicity may be impacting the performance of services. The goal of this lens is to ensure that practitioners are treating children and families impartially. ([Chapin Hall, n.d.](#))

For the child and family workforce and other human services workers, it is important to recognize one's tendency to view others in a particular way and how that might affect one's work. Though the above lenses provide guidance, many other factors may converge to influence our worldview, and building one's awareness is an essential step towards supporting children and families as effectively as possible.

Take Action

-  Reflect on the common beliefs you hold and use when working with children and families as well as where these beliefs come from. Consider how these beliefs impact your work with children and families.
-  Examine your organization and what lenses guide its policies and practices. If none is used, work with others in your agency to determine if applying a lens, such as trauma-informed care, might improve your effectiveness.
-  Contact the [Social Policy Institute](#) for help if you would like consulting support to incorporate these lenses into your workforce.

Resources

[Building a 21st Century Child and Family Well-Being System Based on Protective Factors and Strengthening Families](#)

[Expanding the Perspectives and Research Foundation for the Strengthening Families & Youth Thrive Frameworks](#)

References

Chapin Hall. (n.d.). New study to apply race equity lens to federal child welfare data: Testing if state-level performance is associated with reducing racial disparities. <https://www.chapinhall.org/project/new-study-to-apply-race-equity-lens-to-federal-child-welfare-data/#:~:text=Three%20rounds%20of%20these%20%E2%80%9CChild%20and%20Family,funded%20by%20the%20federal%20government%2C%20Chapin%20Hall>

Nash,, J. (2022). Strength-based approach in social work; 6 examples & tools. Positive Psychology. <https://positivepsychology.com/social-work-strength-based-approach/>

National University. (2024). A guide to trauma informed care principles. <https://www.nu.edu/blog/trauma-informed-care-principles/>

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