


1.21, Coordination, Cooperation with Communities, Governmental and Non-Governmental Agencies and Organizations	
Application: All Department of Children's Services Employees	
Authority: TCA 37-5-106: ACF: PI 18.01, Section 422 Social Security Administration Act	Standards: COA: PA-AM 4, PA-CR 3 and PA-PQI 5; CFSR Item 31-32, CFR 1357.16
Commissioner: 	Date: 03/30/2026
Original Effective Date: 08/01/1998 Current Effective Date: 04/29/2026	Supersedes: 10/29/2018 Last Review Date: 12/15/2025
Glossary: ○ None	

Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services (DCS) shall provide access to services in coordination and cooperation with communities, contract providers, institutions of higher learning and other agencies, organizations, and branches of government that promote child welfare and Juvenile Justice programs. DCS shall actively seek participation, involvement, resources, and referrals from ethnic and community-based providers for cultural and linguistic services, in a coordinated effort to improve programs, services, activities, and operations provided to children and families within the State of Tennessee.

Purpose:

Coordination and cooperation with community partners and other entities in the delivery of services to clients and families contributes to meeting the service needs, reduces barriers to service use within the service delivery system, and promotes positive outcomes for children and families.

Procedures:

A. Cooperation with Communities

All DCS staff will complete the activities listed below to ensure positive engagement and cooperation within communities.

1. Actively seek the involvement of community organizations and diverse community representatives concerning service delivery design and execution, including planning, policymaking, operations, evaluation, training, and service provisions.
2. Efficiently utilize resources to improve the quality of life and service delivery to the children/families that DCS serves by interacting with the local communities.
3. Participate in cooperative ventures with community agencies/organizations including joint planning and program development, technical assistance, work projects, research projects, internships, Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), Title IV-E and Child and Family Service Plans (CFSP), and other projects and programs of mutual benefit.
4. Coordinate activities to avoid overlap and duplication of services and to enhance the quality of services of both community agencies and organizations.
5. Utilize community advisory committees, volunteer advisory boards, or citizen involvement councils in coordination efforts.
6. Utilize community-based providers and resources for cultural and linguistic services.
7. Work through all program areas and contract service providers to develop a seamless system of care that is flexible, diverse, and responsive to the needs of children and families.

B. Cooperation with Institutions of Higher Learning

Collaboration with local colleges, universities, and technology centers may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) Program evaluations of region/field/facility operations.
- b) Internships and practicums by qualified students.
- c) Research by university and college students and faculty.
- d) Specialized consultation, training and technical assistance to the region/field/facility by college and university personnel.

- e) Teaching and other activities by DCS region/field/facility personnel at colleges and universities.
- f) Joint program and policy planning and development.
- g) Efforts to recruit and retain career DCS employees through educational programs designed to enhance the skills and capabilities of such employees.

C. Collaboration with Governmental and Institutional Partners

DCS will collaborate with governmental and community stakeholders to develop strategies for improving cross-system components and overall functioning of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as improving outcomes for children and families.

D. Research Initiatives

1. DCS will adhere to all state and federal rules and laws that protect the confidentiality of clients and client records when fulfilling requests for data, research, survey information, and results. DCS will support and cooperatively engage in research and data requests that contribute to public policy, best practice, and improved service delivery.
2. Research projects must be approved and conducted in accordance to DCS policy [1.33, Data, Research, and Survey Requests](#).

E. Public Awareness, Review, and Inspection

1. DCS will strive to increase public awareness of its guiding principles and professional practice standards in order to promote the general welfare of children and their families and to encourage collaboration within the communities.
2. DCS will make plans and plan amendments for Title IV-E and Child and Family Service Plans (CFSP) available for public review and inspection.
3. DCS will make all statewide assessments, reports of findings, and program improvement plans, developed as a result of a full or partial CFSR, available for public review and inspection.

Forms:

None

Collateral Documents:

[*1.33. Data, Research, and Survey Requests*](#)