Case Management Caseworker Competency Framework

INTRODUCTION

This competency framework outlines the competencies required to be a child protection caseworker in a humanitarian context. Each competency has corresponding indicators, which detail the expected knowledge, attitudes and skills required to demonstrate that competency.

This competency framework has been developed as part of the Inter-Agency Child Protection Case Management Training Package and it has been informed by a desk review of relevant competency frameworks and tools.[1] It is designed to draw from the Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework, complimenting it to cater for the specific professional competencies required by caseworkers.

This framework has been developed as part of the Inter-Agency Child Protection Case Management Training Package, but it may also be used to inform staff recruitment, learning and professional development, performance management, and planning.

Competencies	Indicators
1. Personal Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills	
Diversity and inclusion	- Acknowledges and values other people's perspectives and differences. - Treats all children and caregivers with respect, fairness and dignity regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability or other status. - Challenges own/others' prejudices, biases, preferences, styles and intolerance and is aware of how these can affect professional practice. - Adapts case management support to the individual child's needs, including their developmental stage and abilities. - Understands barriers children and families face to accessing services and supports them to overcome these barriers.

---

[1] These include: The Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework (The Alliance, 2020), The possible CM Competencies presented to the CMTF as part of an EQUIP presentation (2022), The Case Worker Capacity Assessment Tool (The Alliance, Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package, 2018), lists of skills per case management step compiled through consultations with the Case Management Task Force Members (The Case Management Task Force, 2022), The Case Worker Competency and Skill Framework (The CPWG, The Inter-Agency Child Protection Case Management Guidelines, 2014).

Accountability and integrity	• Acts with integrity e.g., decisions are based on the best interests of the child and are not influenced by pressure or personal views. • Demonstrates the case management principles in their behavior with children, families and the community, does not abuse own power or position, acts without consideration of personal gain. • Takes responsibility for decisions and actions, honoring commitments and acting in compliance with child safeguarding and protection policies, codes of conduct and the UN standards on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
Self-awareness and self-management	• Reflects upon practice and performance and identifies and addresses personal strengths, weaknesses, limits, and needs. • Uses supervision and support systems; and is open to giving, eliciting, and receiving feedback. Gives feedback that is specific and useful, in a considered and timely way. • Understands and respects the limits of caseworkers' role and professional boundaries. • Recognizes personal feelings and reactions, including stress; finds ways to manage emotions and cope; knows when to ask for and accept support. • Strives to continually develop and adapt own practice based on contextual developments and identified best practices and ways of working. • Follows safety and security policies and procedures, and takes personal safety of and the safety of others into consideration accordingly.
Analysis, critical and creative thinking and problem-solving	• Analyzes the situation and examines difficult issues from different perspectives. • Involves the child, and where appropriate caregiver(s) or trusted adult(s), in problem solving e.g., by considering pros and cons and prioritizing different options. • Is a strong advocate and persistent in ensuring children's safety and protection. • Gathers relevant information before making a decision; checks assumptions against facts. • Finds creative ways to respond to complex issues, and if necessary to change course of action to ensure decisions are in the child's best interests.
Coordination and collaboration	• Recognizes the importance of collaboration and coordination and understands how relevant mechanisms for case management coordination function, e.g. case review, case conference, best interests procedures. • Involves relevant agencies and community-level child protection mechanisms in case management as appropriate. • Knows what services are available, required and how to access the services. Oversees follow up of referrals and understands whether services are meeting quality standards. • Strives to establish, strengthen or improve relationships with relevant stakeholders to collectively achieve results for children. • Works with colleagues to contribute to team development; respect others' opinions; promote their skills with joint action. • Reports complex cases and challenges to supervisor for additional support, and highlights identified child protection trends or emerging risk factors that are affecting children in the coverage area.

2. Communication and Psychosocial Support Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills

Building a relationship of trust	• Uses relationship-building techniques, e.g., small talk, informal conversations, or doing activities together with the child. • Observes and interprets verbal and nonverbal communication to understand how children and caregivers are thinking and feeling. • Prepares for meetings and home visits, ensuring a safe space which is child friendly, accessible, inclusive and that the appropriate people are present. • Ensures consistency in case management support, manages expectations appropriately, and does not make false promises. • Builds and maintains positive relationships with parents, caregivers and/ or trusted adults.
Responding with empathy, warmth and genuineness	• Strives to understand other people's point of view, listens to their needs and works to understand the feelings, reactions, motivations and needs of others. • Manages difficult conversations appropriately, including on sensitive and challenging topics, taking into account the age and developmental stage of the child. • Is responsive to children's' needs, gives emotionally supportive responses and uses supportive statements. • Validates the child's experience from their point of view in a clear, confident manner. • Remains non-judgmental.
Verbal communication	• Communicates clearly and is able to adapt communication to the age, developmental stage and ability of the child, taking into account cultural considerations. • Uses techniques to ensure and communicate understanding, e.g., paraphrasing, open-ended questions, reflection.
Non-verbal communication	• Uses comforting nonverbal communication. • Maintains an open posture, appropriate eye contact and friendly tone of voice. • Shows expressions of engagement and enthusiasm, e.g., smiling, nodding, utterances (uh uh).

3. Technical Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills

Knows the theoretical framework for working with children and families	• Understands legal, policy and procedural frameworks linked to child protection. • Understands how a child's environment impacts their well-being and safety and how to identify risk and protective factors within it, based on the levels of the socio-ecological model. • Understands and applies strengths-based approaches to strengthen family and caregiving environments and to promote family unity. • Understands and demonstrates the case management principles, including Do No Harm and the Best Interests of the Child.

Safe identification of child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation, including self-harm	• Recognizes protection concerns for children and can identify child protection risks, vulnerabilities and protective factors. • Recognizes signs of abuse and self-harm. • Knows the case management criteria and risk levels. • Identifies child protection concerns in a safe, child-friendly, and appropriate manner. • Recognizes when it is necessary to escalate imminent risk of harm and acts decisively. • Understands how to identify and provide appropriate support to unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), as well how case management can help to prevent family separation.
Understands and implements case management processes and tools	• Understands the case management steps and what each one involves. • Aware of and confident to use the range of necessary case management tools including all forms for case management, case management criteria, case prioritization, service mapping and referral forms. • Understands and is confident in using information management systems for case management e.g., how information necessary for case management is collected, stored, processed/analyzed and shared. • Obtains *informed consent* from caregivers or older children and/or *informed assent* from younger children at the start of case management services and prior to conducting referrals. • Understands and implements the criteria and process for case closure.
Planning and managing a caseload	• Recognizes the importance of planning and good time management, knows when to seek help to manage workload and is able to prioritize and escalate high risk cases responsively. • Keeps an overview of the caseload and systematically tracks progress. • Implements case planning meetings and develops case plans with clear goals and actions. • Systematically plans actions and provides follow-up as per the case plans, including home visits. • Regularly reviews case plans in a timely manner, with the involvement of children, families, and other key stakeholders, as appropriate.
Understands and respects confidentiality and information sharing guidelines	• Maintains confidentiality and understands it's limits, in accordance with children's' best interests and mandatory reporting obligations. • Understands and applies personal data protection principles. • Understands and complies with Data Protection and Information Sharing Protocols.

Empowers children and families through a participatory and strengths-based approach	- Creates a safe and enabling environment for meaningful children's participation in case management. - Facilitates and supports engagement of the child taking into account the age/developmental stage and ability of each child and cultural considerations. - Enables children to be involved in decision-making about case management support, including giving them choices about having a caregiver or trusted adult present, choosing where to meet and when to meet, and the choice to have a male or female caseworker. - Incorporates the perspective of the child and key individuals in the child's life throughout the case management process, including assessments, 'best interests' decisions, and case planning. - Identifies and focuses on the strengths and resources available to the child / family and builds on these in case management. - Uses negotiation and conflict resolution skills to support positive outcomes for the child. - Challenges harmful norms and practices and presents or proposes alternative ways of doing things in order to achieve shared goals.