

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

LAST REVISED FEBRUARY 2024



## Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (ministry) gratefully acknowledges it carries out its work on the lands of First Nations Peoples throughout British Columbia.

The ministry would like to thank everyone who supported the development and continued evolution of the Quality Assurance Programs and Services model (QA model). In particular, the ministry is grateful for the youth and young adults, community representatives, **Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFS Agencies)**, First Nations hereditary leadership and ministry employees who were involved in the practice shifts towards **outcomes-based service delivery**.

Quality service is a priority across all ICFS Agencies and ministry programs and services. We recognize the commitment and efforts made by employees across the province of British Columbia, to continually improve service delivery to the children, youth, young adults, families and communities served.



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## Introduction

The ministry provides quality services to support its vision that **Indigenous**<sup>1</sup> and non-Indigenous children and youth in British Columbia live in safe, healthy and nurturing families and are strongly connected to their communities and culture. The direct services the ministry provides can be weaved together and tailored to the individual needs of children, youth, young adults and families.

In British Columbia, the Provincial Director of Child Welfare has accountability for quality assurance activities across all ministry services, including those delivered by our partner agencies in the contracted sector. The QA model relates only to those monitoring and oversight activities conducted by the Quality Assurance Branch (QA) and defines how QA services contribute to lasting reconciliation and influence and guide services and supports to the children, youth, young adults, families and communities served across the following services:



The QA model relies on data collection systems to measure, maintain and improve the quality of service provided to families on an ongoing basis. Placing families at the centre of planning ensures alignment across all ministry and ICFS Agency services. The QA model will evolve over time to continually align with the ministry's overall strategic direction.

<sup>1</sup> Words defined in the glossary are in bold the first time they are used in the document.

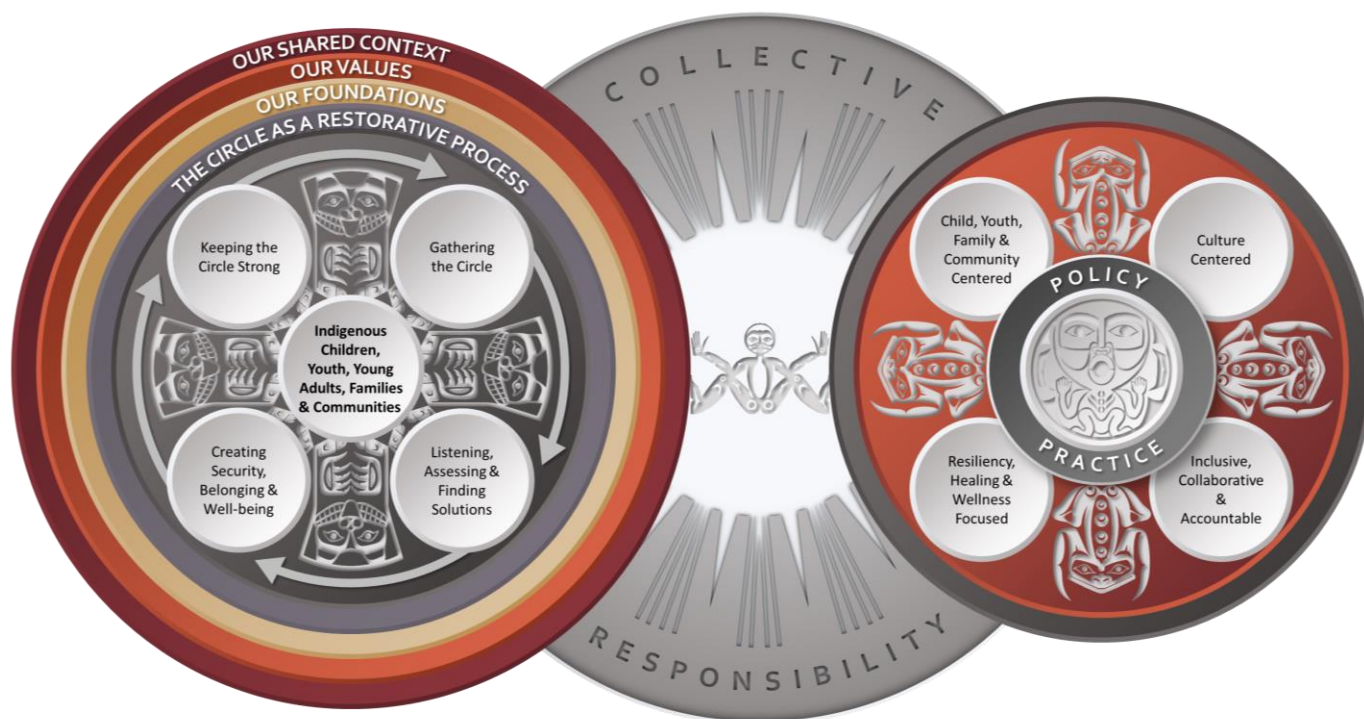


## Commitment to Reconciliation

British Columbia is home to the second largest population of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, with over 180,000 people identifying as First Nations, more than 97,000 as Métis and nearly 1,800 as Inuit<sup>2</sup>. There are over 34 distinct languages spoken in British Columbia, making up 60% of the First Nations languages in Canada.

Colonization has left a profound and lasting impact on Indigenous Peoples, which includes the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in the child welfare system—a direct result of the over-involvement of the system in the lives of Indigenous families, institutional discrimination and racism, and the resulting **intergenerational trauma**.

To address this overrepresentation, the design and delivery of QA services will reflect the province’s commitment to adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) through the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) and collaborate with Indigenous Peoples to address the [Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) (TRC) and [Calls to Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#).



The QA model upholds the rights of Indigenous peoples to:

- Exercise jurisdiction over child and family services
- Self-determination
- Be recognized as distinct peoples
- Be free from discrimination

Lasting reconciliation requires continued commitment and effort to **decolonization** through unlearning colonial ways of thinking and being. The QA model intends to contribute to lasting reconciliation by:

- Honouring and including Indigenous leadership, knowledge holders and people with lived experience.

<sup>2</sup> According to Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population



- Centering Indigenous understandings of success, effectiveness and evidence in the design and delivery of QA services.
- Adopting the principles of cultural continuity and substantive equality in accordance with [An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families](#), as well as the [Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#).
- Building upon and creating collaborative relationships with Indigenous Peoples, families, organizations and communities to develop flexible and **culturally safe** services that are free from stigma and racism.
- Applying the ministry’s [Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework in British Columbia](#) (APPF) to all QA policy and practice involving Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families. The APPF is intended to improve the experiences of Indigenous children, youth, families and communities through restorative policy and practice that is culturally safe and **trauma-informed**. This approach supports and honours Indigenous Peoples’ cultural systems of caring, wellness and resiliency at the community, family and individual level.



The term “Indigenous” is intended to be inclusive of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples.

## Our Values and Principles

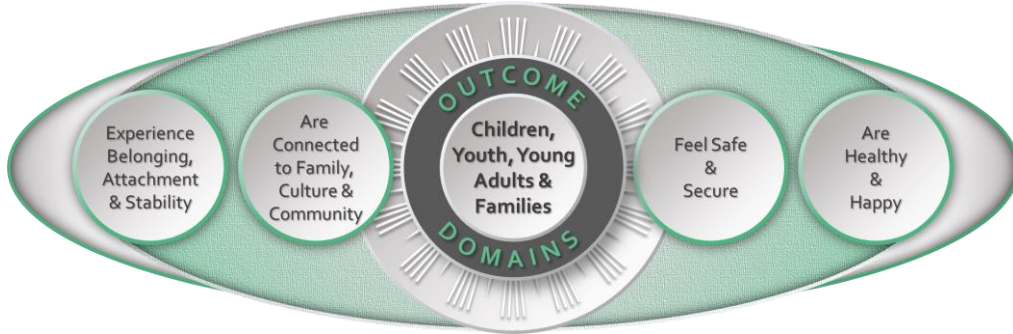
QA values effective, accountable and high-quality services that are child, youth and family centred, trauma-informed and culturally safe. The development and delivery of QA services is further guided by the following key principles and considerations:

- honours and embodies anti-racism and safety for all cultures
- recognizes children and youth have rights that are protected by the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- recognizes Indigenous families and Indigenous communities share responsibility for the upbringing and well-being of Indigenous children, and early identification and involvement of an Indigenous child or youth’s family, community and culture are essential to restorative practices that are culturally safe and relevant
- applies **gender-based analysis plus** (GBA+)
- utilizes a **strengths-based** approach
- relies on partnership and coordination across the system to improve outcomes for children, youth, young adults and families
- provides flexibility and evolves to align with the ministry’s strategic direction
- prioritizes keeping families together
- informed by research, experience and practice, including **Indigenous-wise practice**
- promotes a culture of learning and growth to support **continuous quality improvement**
- adheres to the **Principles of Administrative Fairness**



## Intended Outcomes

QA serves children, youth, young adults and families who received ICFS Agency and/or ministry services by supporting practice and system improvement that is focused on meaningful outcomes. The outcomes vary depending on the service being provided, but are rooted to four outcome domains:



## QA Programs and Services

QA supports the ministry in achieving its intended outcomes by overseeing key elements of ministry services or the delegated services provided by ICFS Agencies. When QA identifies a practice or system improvement opportunity, QA may make recommendations, or develop actions in collaboration with ICFS Agencies or ministry leadership, to achieve this change.

The key success **indicators** for all QA services are developed through an **engagement circle** process and will draw from (or relate to) outcomes across the following services: *Child Safety and Family Services, Guardianship, Adoption Services, Youth Justice, Youth Transitions, Children and Youth with Support Needs, and Child and Youth Mental Health.*

As outcomes and indicators of success are defined, data collection methods and tools are developed. These tools support QA in evaluating whether the ICFS Agencies or ministry are delivering services and achieving outcomes as intended.

QA services are informed through a review of electronic and/or paper records as well as direct communication with service providers and those receiving services. Evaluating performance using outcomes, process measures and the voices and lived experiences of children, youth, young adults and families, provides a holistic picture that helps us understand the effectiveness of the ICFS Agencies or ministry in influencing change at all levels. The data collected across QA services is shared with ICFS Agencies and ministry employees and will inform practice and system changes.



## QA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

QA programs and services evaluate the performance of ministry services and those delegated to ICFS Agencies through qualitative (the voices and lived experiences of those involved in the service being evaluated) and quantitative (compliance to legislation, policy and processes) measures to ensure the intended outcomes for children, youth, young adults and families were achieved.

### ICFS Agency Practice Audits

ICFS Agency Practice Audits differ from Practice Evaluations in that ICFS Agency practice analysts work together on site at the ICFS Agency to collect data and consult with the employees as needed. QA audits every agency across the province separately. The practice audit process for ICFS Agencies is based on the Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) as well as ministry policies when applicable.

### Provincial Practice Evaluations

Provincial Practice Evaluations are initiated by QA and conducted across several ministry services to inform continuous improvements to policy and practice. Provincial Practice Evaluations focus on the outcomes of the services provided and are based on a review of electronic and/or paper records, as well as information gathered through various engagement initiatives. Collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data across all evaluated services allows for greater contextual information to be used by QA when formulating findings of each evaluation. The goal of the evaluation is to present a holistic picture of services provided and their impact on children, youth, young adults and families. Ministry or ICFS Agency leadership can request an evaluation outside the established review cycle, with a focus on a specific service. These are known as a Special Evaluations.

### Self-Report Audit Tool (SRAT)

Quality Assurance Analysts monitor compliance with the standards in the Screening and Assessment of Caregivers and Care Providers in Contracted Care Settings Policy (SA Policy) through the Self-Report Audit Tool (SRAT). The SRAT is an online questionnaire that every contracted service provider must complete and submit to the ministry for everyone they hire or sub-contract as a caregiver for a child or youth.

### Accreditation

Contracted service providers that receive \$500,000 or more in annual funding from MCFD, or MCFD and Community Living BC combined, must be accredited by an approved accrediting body. The accreditation analyst supports contracted service providers with the accreditation process and ensures service providers have the information and support needed to work towards accreditation.





### Child & Family Practice Reviews

Child & Family Practice Reviews are initiated by QA following the death or injury of a child, youth or young adult who were in care or received ICFS Agency or ministry services within the preceding 12 months. These reviews integrate the variety of services provided into one review to measure whether the ICFS Agency or ministry achieved the intended service outcomes. The reports are based on a review of the electronic and/or paper records and, at times, include interviews with involved practitioners.

### Foster Caregiver Reviews

Foster Caregiver Reviews occur at the request of a foster caregiver after the ministry or ICFS Agency completes a Family Care Home Investigation or Quality of Care Review (QOCR) that results in serious restriction to their care home, such as a reduction in beds or closing of the home. These reviews examine whether the ministry or ICFS Agency followed the Principles of Administrative Fairness and the relevant policy in completing the investigation or QOCR.

### Complaints Resolution Program

At times, disagreements may arise between a person engaged in service delivery and the ministry or ICFS Agency. Employees resolve most issues directly without a formal complaint. When it is not possible to resolve a disagreement, the Complaints Resolution Program provides a mechanism for children, youth, parents or their advocates to raise their concerns. Once QA accepts a complaint, the person making the complaint may choose the Complaints Resolution process to negotiate a remedy to the complaint matters or the Administrative Review process. Both ICFS Agencies and the ministry strive to resolve complaints through the Resolution stream first, but it is the right of the person making the complaint to request to move directly to an Administrative Review at any time.

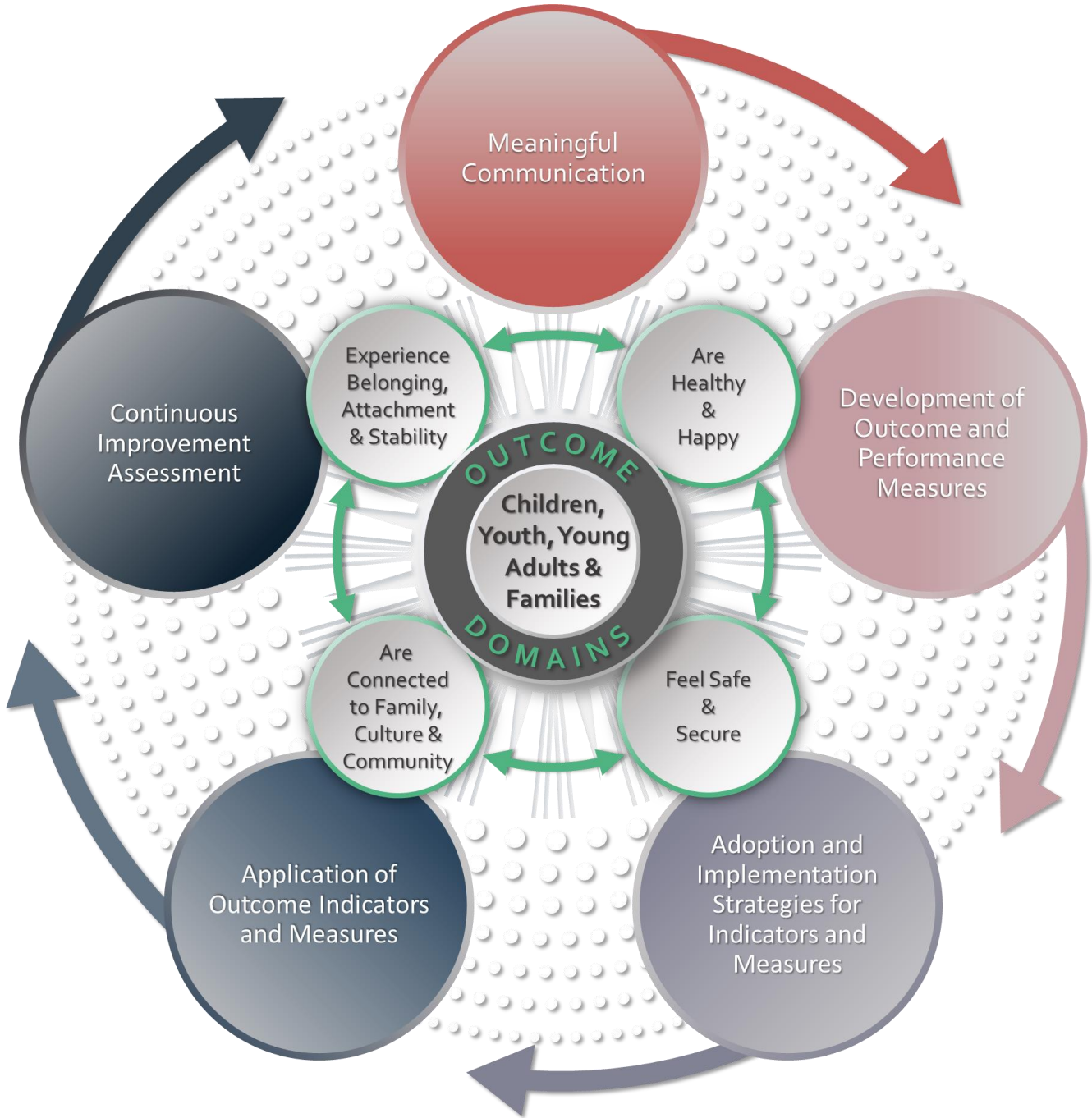
### Administrative Reviews

Administrative Reviews are conducted by an uninvolved review authority who will complete an independent analysis of all complaint related information obtained through a review of file documentation, interviews and review of relevant legislation, policy and standards, to draw conclusions, and if required, may develop recommendations to address issues raised. This administrative process does not provide an opportunity for the involved parties to engage in a resolution process. QA shares a completed Administrative Review report with the person making the complaint and the involved ICFS Agency or ministry office.



## QA Logic Model

This logic model serves as QA's road map. It outlines the intended results of services and the activities that QA will take in evaluating whether these intended outcomes were achieved.



## Glossary

**Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI):** A systematic and coordinated approach to thinking about quality and involves collaborative efforts to continuously enhance the quality of services to support better outcomes.

**Culturally Safe:** A style of practice that recognizes transformation of relationships where the needs and voice of the child, youth and family take a predominant role, and includes an analysis of power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and colonial relationships as they apply to social policy and practice. Cultural safety involves actively exploring and challenging complex power relationships including the way that bias, stereotyping, discrimination and racism can impact the way services are delivered and its recipients.

**Decolonization:** Involves acknowledging historical injustices to Indigenous Peoples, dismantling the colonial structures used to assert and establish domination and control over Indigenous Peoples land and people, and rebalancing power. It is the unlearning of thinking and being.

**Engagement Circle:** A collective planning and cocreation process rooted in Indigenous community practices. It emphasizes strengthening relationships through sharing, collaboration and consensus in decision-making. In this sacred space, diverse perspectives are respected, healing can occur and unity embraces our diversity.

**Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+):** An analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The “plus” in GBA+ is not just about differences between biological (sexes) and socio-cultural (genders). We all have multiple characteristics that intersect and contribute to who we are. GBA+ considers other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, education, gender identity, sex, class, income, and age, and how the interaction between these factors influences the way we might experience government policies and initiatives. Indigenous GBA+, or culturally relevant GBA+, takes this one step further and encourages people to also consider a person’s cultural identity, their location and the impact of colonization.

**Indicators:** Indicators provide a way to measure progress toward achieving outcomes and incorporate a range of administrative, social, physical, health and economic indicators at a qualitative and quantitative level.

**Indigenous:** First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada. The term Indigenous does not identify the uniqueness and diverse cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and is often viewed as a “pan-Indigenous” approach.

**Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies:** An Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency is an organization that provides culturally appropriate and holistic services to Indigenous children, youth, young adults and their families. These agencies operate under formal delegation agreement with the Provincial Director of Child Welfare and have specific responsibilities related to child safety, family support and community development.

**Indigenous-Wise Practice:** A way of approaching Indigenous community practice and knowledge exchange, which uses the knowledge base of Indigenous Peoples and acknowledges the relevant and dynamic contextual nature of Indigenous Peoples’ and communities’ experiences and contemporary approaches. Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia have unique



world views, distinct cultures, values and ways of life, and a range of traditions and practices that are fundamental to supporting the well-being of their children and families. Research, evidence and learning show that when Indigenous cultures, values and world views inform and shape culturally safe child, youth and family practice, outcomes are improved.

**Intergenerational Trauma:** refers to the transmission of the effects of trauma from one generation to the next. It occurs when traumatic experiences impact not only the individuals who directly experienced them but also their descendants. Intergenerational trauma reflects the enduring impact of historical trauma on Indigenous families and communities, affecting mental health, resilience and cultural continuity.

**Outcomes-based Service Delivery:** An evidence-based, integrated approach that focuses on achieving specific desired outcomes for individuals. It shifts the focus away from outputs and processes and towards emphasizing results, effectiveness and impact by actively measuring and achieving intended outcomes.

**Principles of Administrative Fairness:** A set of principles that guide public sector organizations in their interactions with the public to ensure transparency, equity and procedural integrity. The principles uphold the rights of individuals and contribute to a more just and accountable public administration.

**Reconciliation:** In Canada, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in this country. Reconciliation involves addressing the legacy of colonization, promoting healing and creating a more equitable and just society for Indigenous Peoples.

**Strengths-based Approach:** Focuses on identifying and leveraging an individual's existing strengths, capacities and resources in recognition everyone has unique abilities and resilience.

**Trauma-informed Practice/Approach:** Trauma-informed practice means integrating an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma into all aspects of service delivery. The goal of trauma-informed systems is to avoid re-traumatizing individuals and support safety, choice, and control to promote healing. Trauma-informed practice is about applying principles: awareness, safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, being strengths-based and skills-building.



