CHILD-RIGHTS **CORE COMPETENCIES** GUIDE FOR **SOCIAL SERVICES PERSONNEL**

Promoting child-friendly practices in the social services sector

BUREAU INTERNATIONAL DES DROITS DES ENFANTS | INTERNATIONAL BUREAU FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS | OFICINA INTERNACIONAL DE LOS DERECHOS DEL NIÑO | المكتب الدولي لحقوق الطفل

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The IBCR wishes to thank UNICEF, Terre des hommes Lausanne and Service social international for their collaboration on this joint project. We also wish to extend special thanks to the authorities of Senegal and Benin for hosting workshops in Dakar in 2014 and Cotonou in 2016. In addition, the IBCR would like to thank the various partner institutions that took part in the process, including Mouvement Africain des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs, Environnement et développement du Tiers Monde, Groupe Régional sur la Protection de l'Enfance, and the Economic Community of West African States.

It is also important to highlight the participation of dozens of social workers and representatives from various institutions, ministries, schools, universities, the child protection system and civil society from some 10 countries. They generously contributed to the reflection and document improvement process.

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FOREWORD

Every day, thousands of children come into contact with professional and para-professional social service personnel for a variety of complex reasons. Some of these children are in contact with the law, while others are disabled, separated from their parents, migrants or displaced persons. Sometimes children experience more than one of these situations at the same time.

Social workers are key players in the youth protection system. They provide essential support and interventions and can greatly influence the life trajectory of a child.

In the social work field, the problem is not that professionals are unfamiliar with children's rights. They are familiar with the laws and framework documents on child protection, but they need to know how to apply regulations in their everyday work with girls and boys. Some social workers have trouble putting the theory into practice.

In order safeguard children's rights and best interests, social workers must acquire and master a wide range of skills, knowledge and attributes. This comprehensive approach results in significantly improved services for the children they interact with.

This is why the IBCR initiated a process to reflect on the core competencies that social actors require in order to provide child-friendly assistance. With more than 25 years of experience strengthening youth protection systems around the world, the IBCR has developed recognised expertise in this area.

The core competencies identified by the IBCR and its partners establish a clear objective for all capacity building efforts. These competencies make it possible to measure actual change and identify possible levers for action.

The IBCR is grateful to its partners for their work on the project and hopes that this reference document will be useful and widely adopted by child protection actors around the world.

Guillaume Landry
Director General
International Bureau for Children's Rights

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS?

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Social work is a complex field because it spans a broad range of entities and involves a variety of contexts and population groups.

Children can come into contact with social workers for a number of reasons, including experiences of abuse, violence, exploitation, neglect, family separation, disabilities or homelessness.

Social workers play a crucial role in protecting children. To do so, they follow existing policies, procedures and standards of care and they strive to provide quality services are accessible, relevant and effective for children and their families. They must have the responsibility and authority to make important decisions concerning children. For this reason, social sector professionals need to have a clear and specific job description and understanding of their role, and—more importantly—the practical skills to fulfil their duties.

When children are in contact with social services, their experience is largely influenced by the quality of their interactions with the various actors within the system and by the way in which these professionals apply laws and procedures. It therefore follows that, when selecting, training and supervising social workers, we must pay greater attention to technical competencies so that we can move past assessing a mere familiarity with legislation and procedural documents on child protection, and develop a broader vision that is more sensitive to the rights, needs and special requirements of boys and girls.

Together with its partners, the IBCR initiated a process to define the core competencies that social services personnel need in order to practice in a more child-friendly manner. This initiative is part of the IBCR's broader efforts to improve its methods by structuring, aligning and professionalising professional practices in specific fields.

WHO ARE SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONALS?

People in a variety of occupations are considered social services professionals. For the IBCR, social work personnel are all actors in the social services sector, including social workers, social services assistants and senior technicians, special educators, and workers in cross-sector professions such as criminologists and other community actors[3].

It is evident that some people have duties and responsibilities related strictly to child interventions even though these individuals do not have formal training in this field or any professional training at all. These individuals are generally referred to as «para-professionals» and they are frequently employed private community structures.

The core competencies outlined in this reference document are based on a broad vision of social work and therefore are applicable, to varying degrees, to all types of practitioners in this field. By establishing core competencies that apply across the board, the capacity-building approach removes boundaries within the social services sector. For this reason, the IBCR uses the terms social worker, social services professional, social services personnel and social actors interchangeably. For the purposes of this document, all of these terms are used to designate persons who interact with children in a social services capacity.

Over the past several years, the IBCR has led numerous initiatives to strengthen the capacities of social workers. Today, social work is one of our areas of expertise and we now include it in projects developed to meet the needs of our partners in the field. This development reflects the IBCR's multisectoral approach and underscores the essential role that social workers play in the child protection system.

A BROAD DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK

Social work is a key sector in child protection systems, along with the justice, security and education sectors. In fact, some people would say that the social work sector is the central hub within the system, as it is towards where all interventions converge in order to promote a holistic approach that aims, above all else, to implement measures that protect children's rights and best interests.

Generally speaking, several criteria are used to define social work, which encompasses a broad system of jobs, fields and services to address a wide range of needs. Based on the definition provided by the *International Association of Schools of Social Work* (IASSW)[1] and the principles set out in its institutional policies, the IBCR defines

social work with children as a **professional practice that is based on children's rights and social justice and that involves interventions to assist children, families, groups and communities in order to sustainably improve children's welfare[2] and situations, while strengthening their ability to act individually and collectively.**

In the youth protection system, social workers often provide frontline service in the areas of prevention, detection, reporting and providing assistance to children who are in vulnerable situations or who are victims of violence or abuse. Their role is to protect boys and girls and ensure they are given the right conditions to develop and achieve their full potential.

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1. Available at: https://www.iassw-aiets.org/global-definition-of-social-work-review-of-the-global-definition/

2. In its broadest sense, welfare refers to «the state of doing well especially in respect to good fortune, happiness, well-being, or prosperity.» https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/welfare

3. «Licensed social workers» are persons who work as social workers and who hold an accredited degree in Social Work. «Social services workers» are persons who work in the social services segment of the youth protection system but who do not have an accredited degree in Social Work. «Community actors» are persons who are not employed in the social services field but who nonetheless contribute to the social services segment of the youth protection system through their relationships and «natural» role as a community members. (Translated excerpt from the report on the regional brainstorming workshop on core competencies and human resource development for child protection in Western and Central Africa, page 10).

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN IN CONTACT WITH SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS?

Social services are provided to girls and boys who are facing, to varying degrees, situations that threaten or are likely to threaten their welfare and development. Any child may come in contact with social services, either preventively or after a situation is reported.

Here are examples of situations involving children for which social services are typically called in:

- Child victims of crime, violence (physical, psychological or sexual), mistreatment, abuse, exploitation, trafficking, forced marriage, taboos, etc.
- Children in contact with the law (as victims, witnesses or persons in conflict with the law)
- Disabled children
- Children separated from their parents or orphans
- Children living on the street and/or in gangs
- Children involved in armed conflict
- Displaced or migrant children
- Children living in poverty (economic, social)
- Children with physical and/or mental health problems
- etc.

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The main objective of the IBCR's initiative was to identify the core competencies that social workers need in order to provide child-friendly services and ensure that the rights of children are upheld. A detailed description is provided for the core competencies, including the knowledge, skills and attitudes that relate to each one. Ultimately, these core competencies will be used to create professional training courses, to determine whether these courses result in improved knowledge and, especially, improved practical and interpersonal skills.

A competency-based approach is as important for training as it is for assessing the performance of social workers who interact with children in institutional settings. This report describes the core competencies that were identified for social services personnel, as well as the broader initiative to strengthen the capacities of all actors and professions within youth protection systems.

02

BACKGROUND TO THE IBCR'S COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

02

The IBCR has long had an interest in determining core competencies for professionals who interact directly with children, so that better capacity-building objectives can be set for these professionals. This document was created as part of a broader effort to determine the core competencies of each sector within the youth protection system so that their respective practices can be adjusted to be more child-friendly. Core competencies have already been defined for security forces and justice personnel. (see annex p.27).

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Every child in the world grows up within a protection system made up of girls, boys, women and men, all of whom have a role to play and responsibilities to uphold in that protective environment. As defenders of their own rights, children are at the heart of this system, in which families, communities, the State and the international community all intervene, both formally and informally. Any initiative to strengthen child protection systems must involve assessing these various stakeholders, providing them with the tools they need, and strengthening their capacities so that each actor—shopkeepers, grandparents, sisters, brothers, lawmakers, teachers, neighbours, police officers, lawyers, traditional or religious leaders, and journalists—can effectively fulfil their role in protecting children and promoting their rights. It is important to note that the social services system is an integral part of the protection system, like education, healthcare and community services systems.

The international community, with the international standards, humanitarian and international development organisations, United Nations human rights monitoring bodies, regional and international organisations, etc.

National institutions as the Ministries of Health, Education, The Interior and Social Affairs, NGO coalitions, committees working to combat various types of exploitation, the media, unions, professional orders, the law, the parliament, the office of the head of state, etc.

The community, from school crossing guards to shopkeepers, police officers, social sector workers, teachers, prosecutors, neighbours, bus drivers, nurses, community leaders and organisers, and religious leaders.

Families

Children   **Peers and siblings**

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR SECURITY FORCES[4]

In 2009, as part of a joint initiative to sensitise professionals to children's rights, the International Organisation of La Francophonie, Francopol and the IBCR began collecting information on the gaps in police force training in certain French-speaking African countries. While police officers were familiar with the terminology associated with children's rights, they were less clear on the actual meaning of these terms and how to apply the concepts they represented.

After these observations were made, several workshops were held to analyse the child-rights training provided to security forces. The discussions at these workshops led to the development of a reference document on core competencies for security forces. This document was subsequently enhanced and verified by security sector professionals, including social services specialists, magistrates, psychologists, members of the security services, United Nations officials, representatives of civil society and political authorities, as well as 60 police and gendarme academy directors.

The reference document was also shared with partners so that core child-rights competency development could be more readily added to security force training programmes in the concerned countries. It would become an international reference document that would inform the work of the IBCR and various other international organisations specialising in promoting children's rights within juvenile justice and child protection systems.

THE IBCR AND SOCIAL WORK CAPACITY BUILDING

In the social services field, the IBCR's actions have been primarily centred on capacity building for social workers in contact with children and on strengthening youth protection systems. To do so, we have conducted studies, assessed training programs, provided support for the development of sector-specific and multi-sectoral operating procedures[5], and aided with the creation of special training kits.

From 2014 to 2016, the IBCR partnered with UNICEF, Terre des hommes and International Social Service to determine the core competencies for social services professionals, much like the past work carried out for security forces. This initiative follows the recommendations of a mapping exercise[6] commissioned by UNICEF and conducted by the CPC Learning Network on social work training programs («Social Service Workforce Training in the West and Central Africa Region»). The findings suggest tremendous variability in the social work training offered throughout the region, as well as a lack of standardisation between programs. In June 2014, an initial discussion workshop was held in Dakar, Senegal, to allow various participating agencies to share their approaches and understandings of the issues surrounding this field of work. Nine schools and universities from seven countries[7] attended the regional orientation workshop, along with representatives from the four main international organisations involved. The workshop allowed participants to review the findings of the study and achieve a common understanding of the role that social services practitioners play in child protection in West Africa. Participants also engaged in preliminary discussions on the core competencies need by social services personnel.

Case studies were then developed on a country-by-country basis to better define the competency development plan

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4. The term "security forces" is used to describe public institutions mandated to protect and ensure the security of the state and its citizens. Depending on a state's administrative model, the term may include police officers, gendarmes, national guards, paramilitary forces, information services and other similar agencies. The term "defence forces" is used to describe armed forces.

5. The term "operating procedures" is used to describe the terms of reference, internal procedures and intersectoral protocols (often referred to as "standard operating procedures"), which formalise work methods within a department, professional body or system, and which specify how to perform tasks effectively and in accordance with international standards.

6. Available here: http://www.cpcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/UNICEF-WCARO-Social-Work-Mapping-FINAL-27-November-2014.pdf

7. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Mauritania.
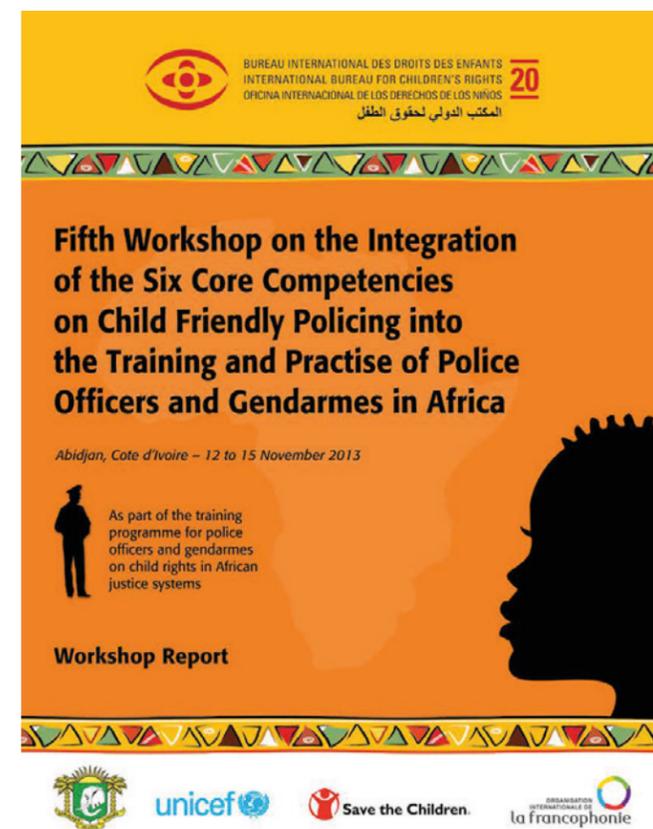
and training programme for social services professionals. In April 2016, a regional workshop was held in Cotonou, Benin, for members of ministries, universities, social work training centres, civil society organisations and partner organisations. At the end of the workshop, a series of core competencies for social services professionals dealing with children was validated by representatives from approximately 10 Western and Central African countries and the four participating organisations. The IBCR has since updated the reference document by adding detailed information about the knowledge, skills and attributes related to each competency. The IBCR is using the reference document in 10 countries that are introducing institutional reforms to enhance the professionalisation of social services professionals.

Regional workshop in Cotonou, Benin, 2016

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS
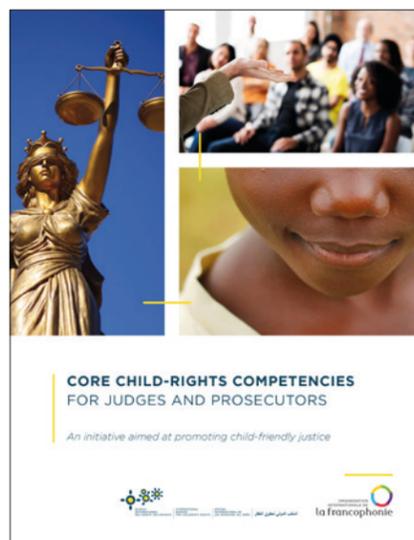
Building on its experience developing the competencies for security forces and social services practitioners, the IBCR began, in 2016, a third work phase to reflect on and formally establish the core competencies for judges and prosecutors.

The IBCR held various workshops aimed at developing, drafting and validating operating procedures and training kits in Burkina Faso, Costa Rica and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as these three countries had already begun updating their child-rights training programmes for judges and prosecutors. This preliminary work involved specialists from the IBCR's head office in Montreal as well as its field personnel. Judges, prosecutors and juvenile justice stakeholders from these countries also contributed to the process, providing insights on their needs and experiences.

As a result of this preliminary work, a draft of the core children's rights competencies for judges and prosecutors was created and reviewed at two subsequent workshops. The final report outlining this process and its findings was published in 2019 (see annex p.27).

03

WHAT ARE CORE COMPETENCIES?

03

The term "competency" is used to describe the knowledge, experiences, skills and behaviours required to perform effectively in a given job, role or situation. They are the various characteristics, attitudes, capabilities, skills, knowledge and behaviours that a person already has or may acquire[9].

There are various types of competencies. **Personal competencies**, which are intrinsic qualities or general aptitudes required for admission into a profession, such as integrity or diplomacy, can be distinguished from **technical or special skills** that enable a professional to perform a specific task or act appropriately in a specific situation, such as understanding the needs of a child or making a decision based on a child's best interests.

Therefore, the term "competency" could be defined as "*the ability to do something thanks to one's knowledge, skills and attitudes.*"

There are three facets to each competency:
- **Knowledge**: what you know
- **Skills**: your ability to apply knowledge and act on it (the term "technical skills" is also used)
- **Attributes**: the various qualities, attitudes and behaviours through which you demonstrate the competency; attributes can be innate or learned through training and experience

When combined, these competencies provide a comprehensive set of abilities required for professionals—in this case, social workers—to fulfil their professional duties effectively, which necessarily involves adopting a child-friendly approach.

The first step in identifying core competencies for a given position is to prepare a list of the professional competencies that an individual needs in order to fulfil their duties effectively. These competencies must then be defined in accordance with a detailed analysis of the circumstances surrounding that individual's work. Special attention must be paid to the way definitions are formulated. The right level of language must be used and the definitions must cover all three aspects of a competency: knowledge, skills and attributes. To prevent the list from getting too long, it is important to focus on the competencies that are essential for the job. While different competencies may be needed in different contexts, this list of core competencies comprises those that are required by all social workers around the world.

Why do we need core competencies?

Having a clear reference document on core competencies can be very useful. For example, it can help hiring authorities determine what qualities candidates should have or help supervisors guide employees in their capacity development in order to be more effective in their jobs. A series of well-defined core competencies can also be used to inform training programmes and measure the changes that are expected to result from the training. Core competencies can also help establish a standard level of service to better protect the public, evaluate services, reform practices and, in this context, ensure that the child's experience is a key consideration when establishing work methods and services. In short, adopting a core competency reference document allows a professional body to structure and standardise interactions with children.

The IBCR believes that the core competencies for social services professionals must reflect our vision of social work. We believe this field must, first and foremost, be centred on upholding children's rights and effectively applying these competencies in practice. That is why our capacity-building initiatives for social workers are based on the development of these core competencies.

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CORE COMPETENCY TRAINING

Core competencies are essential for personnel capacity building and are particularly useful for supporting social services personnel training, including basic training for new recruits and professional development for existing staff.

The social services sector can only be considered effective and legitimate if it is trusted by the society it serves. Trust is only possible if the population perceives social worker behaviour as ethical and professional. This is why it is important to improve training by focusing on developing a professional practice that is based on core competencies and child rights-friendly interventions.

From a training perspective, this involves developing modules, curricula, workshops and courses that, from the outset, target the objectives set out in the reference document. Therefore, competency-based training for social workers should meet certain criteria, such as:
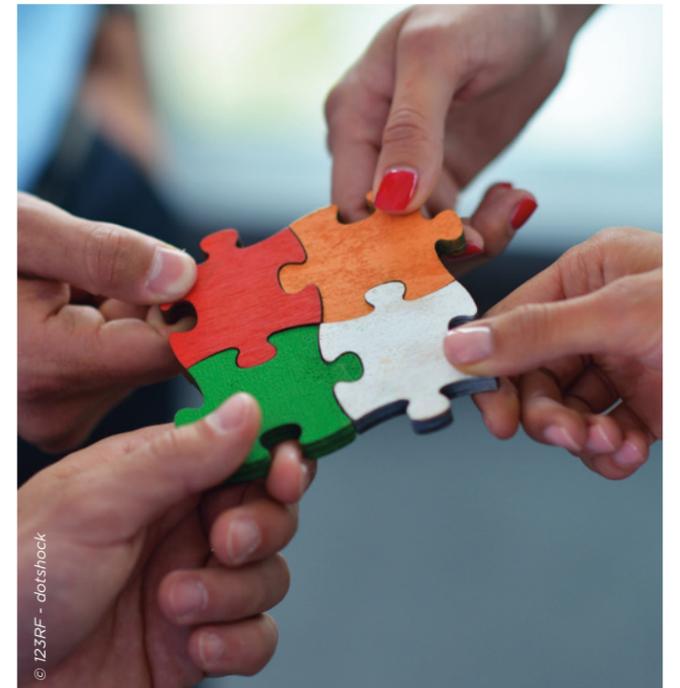
- Establish clear training objectives with specific reference to the required knowledge, skills and attributes

- Determine, during the training exercise, how to assess whether the knowledge, skills and attributes have been developed

- Include, in the key messages, a reminder that participants should strive to be equally proficient with the various the knowledge, skills and attributes presented during the training activity

- Ensure that equal training time and energy is dedicated to each core competency so that participants are able to make all aspects of their practice more child-friendly

- Ensure that assessment activities focus on measuring change, in order to determine whether workers have developed the required skills and attributes (and not just acquired the knowledge)

EXAMPLES OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

Competency – Child-friendly communication in the social services sector
- **Knowledge:** Being familiar with effective communication techniques «Understand child-friendly interviewing techniques and communication strategies»
- **Skill:** Having the ability to use these techniques effectively «Adopt behaviours and attitudes that are suited to the child's characteristics»
- **Attribute:** Possessing qualities that foster good communication «Is empathetic, a good listener, respectful, patient»

Competency – Making effective and appropriate use of work documents
- **Knowledge:** Being familiar with applicable work tools «Knows the protocol for managing and archiving information about children receiving assistance»
- **Skill:** Having the ability to use these work documents effectively «Is able to make appropriate use of standardised documents on child protection and children's rights»
- **Attribute:** Possessing qualities that enable the effective and appropriate use of work documents «Maintains confidentiality and is thorough and observant»

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04

CORE CHILD-RIGHTS COMPETENCIES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

IMPROVING THE SELECTION AND ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONALS

When assessing whether a professional possesses a given competency, it is important to have a predetermined assessment grid used to evaluate the individual's professional performance and behaviour.

This can be done in a number of ways:
- List the behaviours expected from personnel (this approach is used in the United Nations Competencies for the Future[10]).
- Create three tiers of behaviours—Basic, Intermediary and Advanced— and specify which one is required for each professional level[11].

- Rate behaviours as satisfactory or needing improvement for each competency[12].
- Break down each competency into three components: knowledge, skills and attributes[13].

Using a competency grid, like the one proposed by the IBCR in this document, is possible regardless of which technique is chosen. Competency grids can be helpful for supporting recruitment and performance-appraisal processes, and for developing and implementing basic training and professional development programmes.

10. For more information about the United Nations Competencies for the Future, see: https://careers.un.org/lbw/attachments/competencies_booklet_en.pdf

11. This approach is used in the Child Protection in Emergencies Competency Framework developed by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. See: https://alliancecpha.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/alliance_competencyframework_1dic_1.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=41566

12. This approach is used in the Humanitarian Coordination Competencies and the Alaskan Core Competencies for Direct Care Workers in Health and Human Services. The full text is available here: https://annapoliscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/1_alaskan-core-competencies-jan-2010.pdf

13. This approach is used in the Patrol Officer Training Programme at Collège Maisonneuve. See: http://www.enpq.qc.ca/en/police-officer-candidate/program/experiential-approach

04

When establishing core competencies, a constructive approach is needed so that stakeholders can share their perspectives and experiences. This will ensure that the reflection process progresses over time and make it possible to develop a comprehensive competency grid that is relevant to all actors. The grid included below is the result of a collective effort and it is therefore intended to be universally applicable. In many countries, one of the main challenges not the absence of texts, but rather a lack of a specific framework explaining how to apply the texts in practical terms. Providing social services professionals with a common reference document will enable them to adapt their professional practice and consistently provide child-friendly service. Since each country has its own practices and structures, this competency grid is flexible and can be adjusted as needed to ensure that procedures remain centred on the rights of children.

PROVIDING BETTER ASSISTANCE TO CHILDREN IN CONTACT WITH THE SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

Use the child's point of view as a starting point

Since a child's trajectory depends on his or her profile, there is no "one-size-fits-all" procedure. In social service delivery, processes tend to be taxing and safeguarding children's rights is often a serious challenge. When determining how to proceed, it is crucial to take into account the best interests of the child and to ensure meaningful and effective child participation throughout the process. Adopting the child's point of view is essential for adapting and simplifying procedures and for finding appropriate solutions as fast as possible. To ensure that core competencies truly support child-friendly interventions, they must be established and communicated, and they must reflect the needs of children throughout the procedure. For this reason, these core competencies were defined on the basis of the guiding principles and the rights of the child.

All of the competencies promote the best interests of the child, child participation and other principles.

If personnel are successful in gaining and applying these competencies, children receiving social services should notice and experience concrete changes.

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN

Here are the seven core competencies that social services professionals need in order to provide child-friendly service. In the table below, each of the competencies is broken down into three facets: knowledge, skills and attributes.

Competency 1
Promoting and applying children's rights

Competency 2
Acting ethically and according to professional conduct rules

Competency 3
Interacting and communicating effectively with children

Competency 4
Adapting work methods to each child's needs and personal circumstances

Competency 5
Collaborating with other actors (including those in the social services sector) and effectively coordinating interventions

Competency 6
Making effective and appropriate use of work tools specific to the social services sector

Competency 7
Communicating and working with families, groups and communities

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KNOWLEDGE

COMPETENCY 1 *Promoting and applying children's rights*	• Understand the practical implications of the CRC's four guiding principles • Understand the concepts of child rights and advocacy, and the juvenile protection system • Understand the international legal framework (laws and standards) on child rights and advocacy (including legislation on justice for minors) • Be familiar with the legal and institutional frameworks for child rights and advocacy in effect at the local level • For social workers, understand your professional development needs • Know where to get information and take professional development courses
COMPETENCY 2 *Acting ethically and according to professional conduct rules*	• Be familiar with the ethical standards and professional conduct rules applicable to social workers who deal with children • Be familiar with national and international standards applicable to social workers who deal with children • Be familiar with the code of ethics or code of conduct applicable to social workers, if any • Understand the concepts of dignity, integrity, equality, security, transparency, confidentiality and accountability • Be familiar with internal standards and codes applicable to the assignment structure
COMPETENCY 3 *Interacting and communicating effectively with children*	• Understand child-friendly interviewing techniques and communication strategies • Understand the rules applicable to child testimonials and related procedures • Understand the sociocultural and family circumstances affecting children • Be familiar with the accommodation measures available for children in specific situations
COMPETENCY 4 *Adapting work methods to each child's needs and personal circumstances*	• Understand the main characteristics and needs associated with key child development phases • Understand the various aspects of child development • Understand the factors that can positively or negatively impact child development • Understand the factors that underpin mental health and psychosocial well-being according to a holistic and systemic approach • Understand the various factors of discrimination and measures to help prevent it • Understand the profiles of children in vulnerable situations and their main characteristics (victims, witnesses, in conflict with the law, living in situations that put their development at risk) • Be aware of the various types of abuse and violence committed against children (including gender-based violence) • Know what factors to consider when determining the best interests of the child • Be familiar with individual conflict-resolution and mediation methods • Be familiar with extra-judiciary measures and alternatives to detention • Be familiar with group facilitation and family discussion techniques • Know the steps of the rehabilitation process and their parameters • Be familiar with information gathering techniques • Be familiar with social survey parameters and intervention plan components

COMPETENCY 5 *Collaborating with other actors (including those in the social services sector) and effectively coordinating interventions*	• Be familiar with the various sectors in the juvenile protection system and the services they offer, including social services, the community network and decentralised services • Be familiar with and understand the roles and limitations of these sectors, as well as intersec-toral commonalities and overlap • Be familiar with extra-judiciary measures and when they should be applied • Know the key people working in the various sectors • Be familiar with standard operating procedures and tools outlining the terms and procedures for assist-ing and referring children • Be familiar with the holistic approach used to assist children, including the specific considerations it entails and the added value it provides
COMPETENCY 6 *Making effective and appropriate use of work tools specific to the social services sector*	• Understand the legal and normative framework, as well as national policies on child protection and juvenile justice • Be familiar with the special tools for cases involving children (statistical tools, intervention plans, follow-up reports, assessment reports, etc.) • Be familiar with the data management systems used for multi-sectoral information about child protection • Be familiar with the protocol for managing and archiving information about children receiving assistance
COMPETENCY 7 *Communicating and working with families, groups and communities*	• Be familiar with group facilitation and communication techniques and strategies • Be familiar with the socio-cultural context, formal and informal resources, and community leaders • Be familiar with community data collection, assessment and diagnostic tools • Be familiar with group conflict-resolution and mediation methods • Know preventive actions and techniques • Know advocacy and awareness-building actions and techniques • Know training techniques • Know the indicators of vulnerability within the family and the community • Be familiar with the key structures of civil society and community leaders

ATTRIBUTES

QUALITIES AND APTITUDES	Motivated • Self-assured (Assertive) • Available • Thorough • Pragmatic • Open-minded • Respectful of others • Demonstrates integrity and transparency • Dedicated • Introspective • Impartial • Flexible • Creative • Curious • Professional • Discreet • Humble • Perceptive
ABILITIES	Discerning • Decisive • Adaptable • Analytical • Empathetic • Strong listening skills • Diplomatic • Patient • Interpersonal and communication skills • Observant • Shows initiative • Teamwork

SKILLS

COMPETENCY 1 *Promoting and applying children's rights*	• Explain and put into practice the four guiding principles of the CRC and children's rights • Explain and communicate on the implications of upholding children's rights • Explain and apply the provisions of international, regional and national legislation on child rights and juvenile justice • Participate in professional development and refresher courses on children's rights
COMPETENCY 2 *Acting ethically and according to professional conduct rules*	• Explain the ethical standards and professional conduct rules applicable to social workers who deal with children • Explain the concepts of dignity, integrity, equality, security, transparency, confidentiality and accountability • Understand and adopt behaviours and attitudes that comply with ethical standards and professional conduct rules, particularly with regard to protecting the dignity, integrity and equality of all children • Understand why certain actions are taken with children and report on these actions
COMPETENCY 3 *Interacting and communicating effectively with children*	• Make effective use of child-friendly interview-ing techniques and communication strategies • Take into account a child's family and socio-cultural back-ground when com-municating • Create trust-based relationships with children and provide a safe space for them • Adopt behaviours and attitudes that are suited to the child's character-istics • Identify and use ac-commodation measures, as needed, based on the child's specific needs
COMPETENCY 4 *Adapting work methods to each child's needs and personal circumstances*	• Effectively apply the concepts and knowledge gained on the various types of child profiles and child development • Identify and effectively apply techniques and strategies that are child-centred, in the child's best interest and suitable for the child's developmental stage, needs, situation and gender-specific concerns • Create a child-friendly environment • Make effective use of individual conflict-resolution and mediation methods • Effectively apply extra-judiciary measures and alternatives to detention • Make effective use of group facilitation techniques • Understand the characteristics of each step in the rehabilitation process and take these steps into account when developing intervention plans • Understand the content and conclusions of social surveys • Conduct social surveys that are relevant and respectful of children's rights • Develop and implement relevant assistance plans • Work effectively with the child's family, whenever this is possible and in the best interest of the child

COMPETENCY 5 *Collaborating with other actors (including those in the social services sector) and effectively coordinating interventions*	• Take into account, in your practice, the respective roles, services and limitations of each sector in the child protection system • Make use of an updated directory of contact persons and services at the local, regional and national levels • Plan, develop and make effective use of a mapping of the various actors in the protection system, key persons and services • Work in collaboration with key persons from the various sectors and departments • Explain, apply and promote the standard operating procedures and tools outlining the terms and procedures for assisting and referring children • Promote the role that social workers play in the protection system • Understand the added value and make use of an integrated approach when assisting children • Make effective use of data management systems used for multi-sectoral information about child protection
COMPETENCY 6 *Making effective and appropriate use of work tools specific to the social services sector*	• Create case management tools as needed • Make effective use of the special tools for cases involving children (statis-tical tools, intervention plans, follow-up reports, assessment reports, etc.) • Manage information and archive files for cases involving children in a manner that is respectful of children's rights • Use tools and equipment in an appropriate and child-rights-friendly manner when dealing with children • Make appropriate use of standardised documents on child protection and children's rights
COMPETENCY 7 *Communicating and working with families, groups and communities*	• Apply group facilitation and communication techniques and strategies • Adapt your approach to the child's socio-cultural background • Influence and work effectively with community leaders • Make effective use of community data collection, assessment and diagnostic tools • Make effective use of group conflict-resolution and mediation methods • Identify and implement relevant and effective prevention activities and techniques • Identify and implement relevant and effective advocacy and awareness-building acti-vities and techniques • Make effective use of training techniques • Detect situations of vulnerability within families and communities that affect or could affect children • Propose and implement effective protection strategies involving families and commu-nities • Liaise and work effectively with groups and communities to support the welfare and protection of children

APPENDICES

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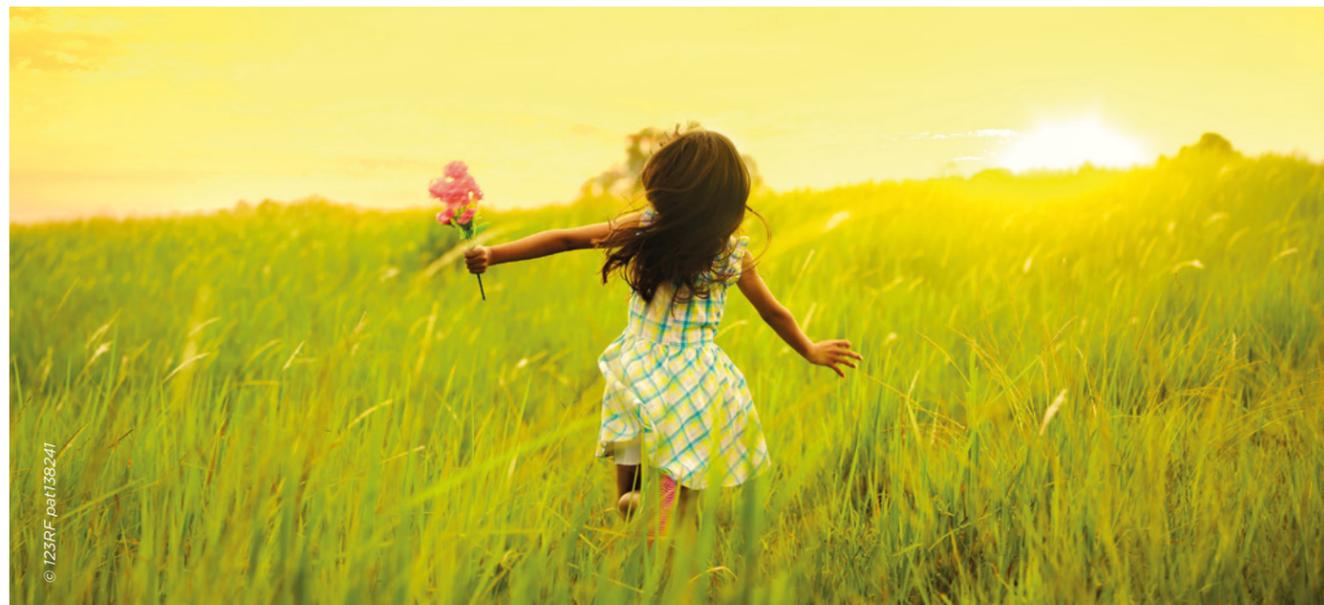
ABOUT THE IBCR

Founded in 1994, the International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR) is a Montreal-based international non-governmental organisation. Its mission is to protect and promote children's rights in a manner consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols. The IBCR and its dedicated team of specialists have developed technical expertise on juvenile justice, child exploitation, violence against children and children in emergency situations.

The organisation has also implemented numerous international, regional and national projects addressing these issues in some 40 countries. To date, the IBCR has carried out projects in six different languages and obtained lasting results by working with public policymakers.

Through these projects, the IBCR offers support on child-friendly techniques and gender issues to specialised training institutions (judiciary schools, police and military academies, social work schools, etc.). Through its advocacy work, the IBCR strives to promote the inclusion of permanent, mandatory and evaluated training on children's rights in national training programmes. It also promotes applied research to produce mapping reports on child protection systems. The IBCR also seeks to strengthen collaboration between the various sectors involved in protecting children's rights and in fighting sexual or gender-based violence by creating multisectoral working groups and developing, through a participatory process, standard operating procedures to govern interactions between these sectors.

The IBCR firmly believes in the need for inclusive and systemic child protection systems. It champions the cause by equipping stakeholders with the competencies and tools they need in order to fulfil their roles in promoting and protecting the rights of children. In addition, the IBCR considers child participate as key to the success of its programmes. Children are considered valued contributors to its programme, providing input at all stages of the oversight and implementation processes. The IBCR's approach is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child's four guiding principles, including child participation. The IBCR values the right of girls and boys to express their views freely and to be actors in their own development, while taking into account their developmental capabilities, well-being and best interest.

Since 2015, the IBCR has implemented various multisectoral and multi-year projects, with the opening of satellite offices and the deployment of field staff in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica and Honduras. In each of these four countries, projects spanning three to five years have been implemented to provide in-depth capacity building to security forces, social services professionals and justice system professionals. These projects are being led in partnership with local governments and with financial support from Global Affairs Canada and UNICEF.

IBCR PUBLICATIONS

Children and Armed Conflict: A Guide to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law (2010)	🔗 FR 🔗 EN
Expert training workshop on children's rights training for security forces (Dakar, Senegal, 2011)	🔗 FR
Justice for Children in the Middle East and North Africa Region (Amman, Jordan, 2013)	🔗 FR 🔗 EN
Fifth Workshop on the Integration of the Six Core Competencies on Child-Friendly Policing into the Training and Practice of Police Officers and Gendarmes in Africa (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 2013)	🔗 FR 🔗 EN
Reference Guide to International and Regional Laws and Standards Relevant to Policing Practice (2014)	🔗 FR 🔗 EN 🔗 AR
Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude and Behavioural Change among Security and Defence Forces (2014)	🔗 FR 🔗 EN
Core Child-Rights Competencies for Judges and Prosecutors – An initiative aimed at promoting child-friendly justice (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 2018)	🔗 FR 🔗 EN
Core Child-Rights Competencies - An initiative to adapt practices in the areas of justice, security forces and social work (2021)	🔗 FR 🔗 EN 🔗 ESP

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