

Preamble

ACS seeks to create a Safety Culture that promotes equity and inclusion, encourages open communication and team building, and fosters continuous learning and improvement. Agency-wide culture change is something that takes time and requires attention and support. To that end, staff across different divisions came together to define what Safety Culture at ACS would look like and the accompanying Framework was created.

The purpose of the Framework is to support the consistent use of Safety Culture practices across the agency. The Framework consists of eight core elements. Each element includes a short definition and a description of practices that highlight what that core element may look like in day-to-day interactions.

Many of the Framework's practices start with "All of us at ACS" to signify the aspirational nature of an agency-wide culture shift.

Equity and racial justice language is integrated throughout the Framework to reflect the fusion between Safety Culture and racial justice work; neither exists without the other.

An additional section will be added that will provide practice tips and strategies to support each element of the Framework. ACS is confident that this Framework will serve as a guide to Safety Culture practices and will lead to improved outcomes and equity for our staff, children and families in New York City.





Leadership

All leaders facilitate an open, psychologically safe, and inclusive culture that promotes equity and improved performance.



Practice with Families and Community

All interactions and efforts with children, families, providers, and community partners reflect a Safety Culture that focuses on relationship development, psychological safety, strength-based engagement, and equity.



Relationship Development

Relationship development is central to all aspects of our work to support a Safety Culture and is grounded in building and preserving trust.



Meetings

Meetings are meaningful, productive, respectful of everyone's voice and time, facilitated, organized, and psychologically safe.



Team Building

Team cohesion is the glue to a Safety Culture. Team building raises morale, builds enthusiasm, drives functioning and productivity, increases trust among team members, and as a result, improves decision making and outcomes.



Performance Improvement

When redirection or feedback is provided, it is done in a supportive and constructive way. The focus is on learning and improvement.



Organizational Communication

Formal and informal communication happens regularly between interrelated individuals and teams within the ACS and provider work environment.



Reviews

All reviews are conducted with transparency, an openness to different perspectives, a focus on root causes/systemic factors, and a supportive and reflective demeanor.



Leadership

All leaders facilitate an open, psychologically safe, and inclusive culture that promotes equity and improved performance.

ALL OF US AT ACS:

- Are encouraged to be leaders in the work we do. Leadership is not solely connected to job title.
- Demonstrate support for a Safety Culture and value inquiry, learning, diversity, and equity.
- Communicate the importance of a Safety Culture with external entities, including oversight groups.
- Promote a learning environment that is constructive, open, respectful, and solution-oriented in response to errors.
- Strive to balance system accountability with individual accountability to meet our organizational mission.
- Model Safety Culture behaviors by proactively admitting mistakes, adjusting decisions based on enhanced information and soliciting input in decision-making processes.



Practice with Families and Community

All interactions and efforts with children, families, providers, and community partners reflect a Safety Culture that focuses on relationship development, psychological safety, strength-based engagement, and equity.

ALL OF US AT ACS:

- Commit to understand, undo and repair the impact of historical, structural and institutional racism in child welfare and juvenile justice.
- Infuse equity and inclusion in all interactions with children, families, providers, and community partners.
- Use an equity-centric, strength-based, family-focused, and child-centered approach to continually reassess safety and risk.
- Partner with families to ensure they receive racially attuned and culturally responsive, individualized support based on their unique situations and needs.
- Develop collaborative relationships and open communication with providers and community partners, respecting race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.



Relationship Development

Relationship development is central to all aspects of our work to support a Safety Culture and is grounded in building and preserving trust.

ALL OF US AT ACS:

- Value our colleagues' perspectives respecting race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, and position within the agency.
- Demonstrate genuineness, empathy, inclusion, and respect while listening to others' points of view.
- Manage and address conflicts or challenges with kindness, openness, respect, and fairness.
- Value relationship development across program areas.
- Engage with colleagues to co-design positive changes.
- Advance an awareness of systemic racism and biases related to equity and positional power with both our internal and external ACS partners.
- Demonstrate and uphold ideals and behaviors that promote inclusive and psychologically safe spaces.



Meetings

Meetings are meaningful, productive, respectful of everyone's voice and time, facilitated, organized, and psychologically safe.

ALL OF US AT ACS:

- Incorporate structured communication and facilitation strategies during meetings to encourage and ensure all voices are heard and given merit.
- Understand, and take actions to mitigate, implicit and explicit biases, when facilitating a meeting.
- Promote the inclusion of diverse perspectives regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity and expression, age, or sexual orientation.
- Include active solicitation of all participants' perspectives and thoughts regardless of position within the agency.



Team Building

Team cohesion is the glue to a Safety Culture. Team building raises morale, builds enthusiasm, drives functioning and productivity, increases trust among team members, and as a result, improves decision making and outcomes.

ALL OF US AT ACS:

- Prioritize and value diversity, equity, and inclusion when developing a team.
- Value contributions of all team members.
- Ensure that all voices are heard when developing plans to meet team and division goals.
- Manage conflict with team members through constructive conversations.
- Show appreciation for colleagues within and outside of team meetings.



Performance Improvement

When redirection or feedback is provided, it is done in a supportive and constructive way. The focus is on learning and improvement.

ALL OF US AT ACS:

- Engage in consistent, supportive, equitable, supervision practices that utilize a coaching approach to maintain standards of performance.
- Engage in practice improvement methods focused on continuous learning, including feedback solicitation.
- Promote and abide by policies that prevent position re-assignments based on retribution, disagreements, or biases.

ALL SUPERVISORS AT ACS:

- Ensure supports are in place to promote practices and improvements required for success.
- Provide tangible, concrete feedback that provides staff the opportunity to address behavior in constructive, engaging, and equitable ways.



Organizational Communication

Formal and informal communication happens regularly between interrelated individuals and teams within the ACS and provider work environment.

ALL OF US AT ACS:

- Gather and share feedback, utilizing clear and transparent channels of communication.
- Value and prioritize feedback from direct service staff across all units.
- Communicate challenges, concerns, and mistakes with leadership without fear of retribution.
- Respond with respect, and in constructive and equitable ways, that prioritize learning and improvement when challenges, concerns, or mistakes are communicated.
- Use and strengthen our active listening and communication skills and seek out diverse perspectives and experiences.



Reviews

All reviews are conducted with transparency, an openness to different perspectives, a focus on root causes/systemic factors, and a supportive and reflective demeanor.

ALL OF US AT ACS:

- Use standardized tools and transparent processes when conducting all types of reviews.
- Use processes that identify and address systemic barriers and structural racism when conducting reviews.
- Follow up with any staff who have relevant information when conducting reviews.
- Identify and address individual biases related to race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic status when analyzing information during reviews.
- Seek out diverse perspectives and experiences and include these in reviews to understand cultural and situational contexts.