

## STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

**Class Title: Family Services Specialist**

**Class Code: 51533**  
**Pay Grade: GI**

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### **A. Purpose:**

Provides direct interventions with children and families when allegations of child maltreatment have been received; intervenes with families to address changes needed to secure children's safety in their homes; recruits and supports foster and relative homes to provide care for maltreated children; and locates permanent homes for children unable to return to their birth families.

### **B. Distinguishing Feature:**

Family Services Specialists are responsible for an assigned case load within Child Protection Services.

Lead Family Services Specialists assist supervisors by providing daily expert advice and training to Family Services Specialists, and they are responsible for assigned case loads of their own.

Family Services Specialist Supervisors supervise Lead Family Services Specialists, Family Services Specialists, and support staff; and are responsible for delivery of multiple child protective services in an assigned geographical area.

### **C. Functions:**

*(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)*

1. Receives and assesses complaints alleging child abuse and neglect to ensure the safety of children in the State of South Dakota.
  - a. Gathers information via telephone, written reports, collateral contacts, and face-to-face contact with clients and communities.
  - b. Responds to critical situations and assesses the validity of allegations and the degree of danger to children.
  - c. Provides information and referrals when protective service needs are not indicated.
2. Provides assessments and services to families whose children have been placed in facilities due to delinquent behavior or have been referred due to risk of possible abuse and neglect.
  - a. Conducts assigned assessments to determine family strengths and needs.
  - b. Makes referrals to appropriate agencies for services and provides direct services to families to build on family strengths and meet family needs.
  - c. Determines the needs of any other children in the home and provides services when necessary.
  - d. Develops case plans for adjudicated delinquent youth.
  - e. Develops case plans with families which outline steps to meet identified family needs.
  - f. Monitors families' compliance with case plans.
3. Investigates alleged sexual, physical, or emotional child abuse or neglect according to state statutes and determines required actions to ensure the safety of children named in allegations.
  - a. Accepts community referrals of child abuse and neglect through regular office intake or emergency 24-hour, on-call referrals and responds to emergency law enforcement requests.

- b. Conducts assigned investigations by interviewing children, family members, alleged perpetrators, and collateral contacts to determine if alleged abuse or neglect has occurred.
  - c. Evaluates risk factors for further abuse or neglect and determines whether children can safely remain in current living arrangements or if alternative arrangements must be made.
  - d. Makes recommendations to law enforcement on removal of children.
  - e. Evaluates children's physical, mental, and emotional needs and determines appropriate types of alternative placements needed for temporary care.
  - f. Prepares court reports, provides testimony, and attends hearings related to abuse and neglect charges which are filed pursuant to investigations.
4. Develops and implements treatment plans with parents of children where abuse and/or neglect has been substantiated or indicated to ensure abuse and/or neglect will not reoccur.
- a. Identifies specific family needs and provides direct services to reduce the risk of future abuse or neglect of children; services may include but are not limited to training on child development and care, alternatives to physical discipline, nutrition, parenting skills, household and financial management, and general health and safety issues.
  - b. Identifies other community resources, e.g., mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, education, employment services, etc., to assist with identified family needs; and refers families for services.
  - c. Develops case plans with families which outline specific steps that will be taken by families and social workers to meet identified needs.
  - d. Monitors families' compliance with case plans and ongoing safety of children through regular family visits, both scheduled and unscheduled.
  - e. Evaluates and assesses families' progress on identified goals to improve overall family-functioning.
  - f. Initiates any additional needed action, including requesting law enforcement intervention or court action, to ensure the safety of children through successful completion of case plans.
  - g. Prepares court reports, provides testimony, and attends hearings related to petitions of abuse and neglect.
5. Arranges alternative care placements for children who are removed from their homes as a result of child abuse and neglect to ensure the children's needs are met.
- a. Evaluates children's physical, mental, and emotional needs and determines appropriate types of alternative placements needed for temporary care.
  - b. Develops and monitors individual case plans for children with alternative care providers.
  - c. Makes legally mandated reasonable efforts to reunite children with their families as soon as possible.
  - d. Develops and implements alternative placement plans for children when reunification efforts with their families are unsuccessful, including legal guardianship or adoption.
6. Recruits, trains, and licenses family foster care and adoptive resources for children who must be removed from their homes to ensure their safety.
- a. Recruits family foster and adoptive placement resources identified in recruitment plans.
  - b. Trains potential foster and adoptive families to assist them in caring for abused and neglected children.
  - c. Evaluates abilities of potential foster and adoptive families to provide safe and effective care for children.
  - d. Interprets and applies casework principles and licensing regulations to make recommendations for approval or denial of licensure.
  - e. Licenses family foster homes that have completed required training.

- f. Visits foster and adoptive families to ensure compliance with agency policies and procedures.
  - g. Provides ongoing assistance to licensed foster parents through visits, telephone calls, and home contacts.
  - h. Updates adoption approval status every three years.
7. Coordinates adoptive placements through preadoptive visits and family preparation to ensure children's needs are met.
- a. Reviews children's psycho-social, medical, developmental, and educational histories; and obtains medical and therapeutic services.
  - b. Provides and/or participates in training, consultation, or other services to adoptive or foster parents or other placement providers.
  - c. Provides specialized services to other workers by recommending placement resources.
  - d. Negotiates adoption subsidies with adoptive families.
  - e. Provides information and makes recommendations regarding adoption finalization.
  - f. Provides post-adoptive placement services to help families cope with behavioral and emotional issues to prevent adoptive disruptions.
8. Performs other work as assigned.

**D. Reporting Relationships:**

Reports to a Family Services Specialist Supervisor. Does not supervise.

**E. Challenges and Problems:**

Challenges include assessing crisis situations, which may be high profile and controversial in nature and selecting the most appropriate course of action with limited or no resources. Several alternatives usually exist for approaching situations, which places a correspondingly higher demand upon resourcefulness and concentration. Also challenging is working with hostile clients and severely dysfunctional families.

**F. Decision-making Authority:**

Decisions made by the incumbent require a considerable amount of independent judgement and include assessing risk factors to determine which steps need to be taken to ensure the immediate safety of children. The nature of the situations requires expertise and judgement to deal with problems that are potentially dangerous to the client and the worker. State and federal laws and regulations mandate specific timelines and procedures for dealing with children in substitute care and provide guidelines for conducting abuse and neglect investigations, obtaining court involvement, and filing petitions for termination of parental rights. The incumbent interprets administrative rules and agency policies to ensure compliance with agency standards and determines appropriate actions.

Decisions referred include screening and assignment of referrals, approval of longer term alternate care placements, approval of permanent plans and recommendations to the court, final approval of adoptive placements, final decision as to when an assessment needs to be moved into an investigation, any negative licensing actions, and determination of appropriate funding sources for purchased services.

**G. Contact with Others:**

Daily contact with clients, foster care providers, law enforcement personnel, supervisors, and other department social workers; weekly or more contact with school personnel, health care professionals, attorneys, Juvenile Corrections Agents, group home and residential treatment care providers, psychologists, and counselors.

## **H. Working Conditions:**

Duties are performed in a variety of settings ranging from departmental offices to client homes to courtrooms. An incumbent may encounter high-level stress and emotional situations, strong differences of opinion, and exposure to physical danger and contagious diseases. Incumbents may be required to work a flexible schedule which may include evening, night, holiday, and weekend hours. Crisis or case situations can occur at any time which may require evening and weekend responses. Considerable field travel may be required.

## **I. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:**

Knowledge of:

- theories and concepts related to culture, child development, family connections and family dynamics and their influence on child and parental relationships and behavior;
- needs and potential sources of conflict for children in placement and appropriate placement resources;
- current practices and interventions used in responding to child abuse and neglect and its effect on child safety and in responding to issues caused by children being removed from their homes.

Ability to:

- establish and maintain effective and collaborative working relationships and demonstrate compassion, respect, courtesy, and tact when interacting with others;
- actively pay attention, elicit needed information and communicate information effectively and accurately;
- utilize computerized data system (Microsoft Word preferred but not required);
- prepare clear and concise documentation, reports, and correspondence that reflect relevant facts;
- effectively plan and organize work activities, adjust to multiple demands, and prioritize tasks to complete assignments and meet schedules and deadlines;
- gather and analyze data; reason logically and accurately; and solve problems using common sense, reasoning and resourcefulness;
- assume initiative with minimal supervision;
- observe and correctly assess situations.