

## STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

**Class Title: Lead Family Services Specialist**

**Class Code: 51761**  
**Pay Grade: GJ**

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### **A. Purpose:**

Serves as a lead worker and expert resource in an assigned unit by providing training, daily advice and guidance, and assistance with case development to Family Services Specialists; and manages a case load of more difficult and sensitive cases by investigating alleged sexual, physical, or emotional child abuse or neglect; providing family assessments and follow-up services; developing and implementing treatment plans; arranging alternative care placements; coordinating adoptive placements; and recruiting, training, and licensing family foster care and adoptive resources.

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

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

Family Services Specialist Supervisors supervise Lead Family Services Specialists, Family Services Specialists, and support staff; and are responsible for delivery of multiple program 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. Provides daily work direction, expert advice, and training to Family Services Specialists to ensure timely and effective delivery of services.
  - a. Interprets multiple programs' requirements to answer team members' questions and assist them with case development.
  - b. Explains procedures for collecting, compiling, and analyzing information sufficient to determine the appropriate application of protective services.
  - c. Assists others to apply what they have read and learned in real life situations.
  - d. Apprises the unit supervisor of employees' work progress and challenges that may require attention.
2. 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 makes initial assessment of the validity of allegations and the degree of danger to which children are exposed.
  - c. Provides alternative information and referrals when protective service needs are not indicated.
3. Investigates alleged sexual, physical, or emotional child abuse or neglect according to state law 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 requests from law enforcement officers.
  - 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 officers on the removal of children.
  - e. Evaluates children's physical, mental, and emotional needs and determines the 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 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, e.g., providing 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 counseling, drug and alcohol treatment, educational resources, employment services, etc., to assist with identified family needs; and refers families for services.
    - c. Develops case plans with families which outline specific steps to be taken by families and Family Services Specialists to meet identified family needs.
    - d. Monitors families' compliance with case plans and the 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 such as law enforcement intervention or court action to ensure 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 of children.
    - b. Develops and monitors individual case plans for each child 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 such as legal guardianship or adoption for children for whom reunification efforts with their families are unsuccessful.
  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 the recruitment plan.
    - 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 and makes 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 and telephone 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 participates in training, consultations, or other services to adoptive and foster parents and 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 and prevent adoptive disruptions.
8. Performs other work as assigned.

**D. Reporting Relationships:**

Reports to a Family Services Specialist Supervisor. Does not supervise but provides daily work direction to Family Services Specialists.

**E. Challenges and Problems:**

Challenged to provide technical assistance and daily work direction to team members who are providing protective services to children. This is difficult because incumbents must understand the many critical variables involved and convey to others how each must be accomplished within the confines of the appropriate laws; incumbents support and reinforce staff who are routinely working in intense circumstances; interpretations and advice must be adapted to skill levels; and incumbents are the daily resource for the supervisors in resolving employee issues. Further challenged to assess crisis situations, which may be high profile and controversial, and select the most appropriate course of action with limited or no resources; to apply resourcefulness and concentration and choose the most applicable alternatives for approaching situations; and to work with hostile clients and severely dysfunctional families.

**F. Decision-making Authority:**

Decisions include how to most effectively assist team members and whether to refer them to higher authority; recommendations for staff training; whether or not case files are complete; which steps need to be taken to ensure immediate safety of children; how to deal with problems that are potentially dangerous, both to clients and themselves; and how to manage each assigned case to ensure that specific timelines and procedures are met, that guidelines are followed for conducting investigations, that the courts are involved at the right times, and that petitions are filed in a timely manner.

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 assessments need to be moved into investigations, 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 specialists; regular (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 flexible schedules 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 systems (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;
- provide training and work direction to others.