**Section 304.3 Introduction to Child Welfare Services**

a) Purposes of Child Welfare Services

 Child welfare services provided by Department staff or purchased by the Department from purchase of services providers are directed toward the following purposes:

1) *protecting and promoting the welfare of all children, including handicapped, homeless, dependent or neglected children;*

2) *preventing or remedying, or assisting in the solution of problems which may result in, the neglect, abuse, exploitation, or delinquency of children;*

3) *preventing the unnecessary separation of children from their families by identifying family problems, assisting families in resolving their problems, and preventing breakup of the family where the prevention of child removal is desirable and possible;*

4) *providing services to children and families so that children, who have been removed, may be restored to their families;*

5) *placing children in suitable adoptive homes, in cases where restoration to the biological family is not possible or appropriate;*

6) *assuring adequate care of children away from their homes, in cases where the child cannot be returned home or cannot be placed for adoption; and*

7) *providing supportive services and living maintenance such as residential maternity homes and counseling which contributes to the physical, emotional and social well-being of children who are pregnant and unmarried.*

b) Essential Criteria for Child Welfare Services

The mere determination that parental or caretaker conduct, the home conditions, or the child care arrangements differ from the norm shall not be justification for providing child welfare services. Instead, the Department shall focus on the available alternatives and whether or not Department intervention is less detrimental to the child and family than no Department intervention using the following criteria:

1) Does the parent or caretaker fall below the minimum parenting standards a defined in Section 304.2?

2) Is there clear evidence that the home conditions or the parental or caretaker conduct are likely to be detrimental to the child?

3) What is the specific harm to the child if left in the home without the support of child welfare services?

4) Is there clear evidence that the family needs child welfare services to keep the family together or to help them through a crisis which threatens family stability?

5) Is it probable that the provision of Department services will alleviate the conditions or change the conduct which has led to harm or threatened harm to the child?

(Source: Amended at 8 Ill. Reg. 12118, effective July 9, 1984)