



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Concurrent Permanency Planning: Reducing time in foster care

*With Concurrent
Permanency
Planning, children
move more quickly
from foster care to
stable, loving and
permanent homes.*

Concurrent Permanency Planning is a practice focusing on children who enter foster care in which caseworkers vigorously pursue family reunification while also developing alternative permanency plans if safe reunification is not achievable within legal timelines. By planning concurrently, early on, rather than sequentially, temporary foster care placements can be shortened, and children and youth can thrive in safe, stable, permanent families. Recent 2012 legislation now requires a six-month permanency progress review for all children in foster care; previously the statute required a six-month review only for children under age 8.

Children need stability

Because all children need stable, loving, permanent families for their healthy growth and development, the number of children requiring out-of-home care, and the number of months children spend in that care are important measures. In 2011, 11,368 children were involved in out-of-home placement. In most cases, the uncertainty and unpredictability inherent in foster care placements do not promote children's healthy growth and development.

Concurrent Permanency Planning requires collaboration

Concurrent Permanency Planning requires that the child welfare agency, community resources, and the court system work together with children's birth parents, extended families and foster parents from the beginning of the foster care placement. In a Concurrent Permanency Plan, everyone involved agrees to work with birth parents toward reunification, while also getting a commitment from foster parents that they are willing to make a permanent commitment to children through adoption or transfer of custody if reunification with the parents is not possible. Together, everyone needs to work toward:

- Achieving safety, timely permanency and well-being goals for children
- Reducing the number of moves for children while in foster care
- Minimizing the negative emotional impact of separation and loss on children
- Supporting continuity in children's family and community relationships.

Timely permanency requires application of best practices

Concurrent Permanency Planning involves using family engagement, relative searches, targeted case practice and legal strategies to achieve timely permanency. Many practices used in Minnesota counties are also endorsed by the National

Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections, including:

- Encouraging frequent parent-child visits from the moment children are placed in foster care
- Providing intensive services for birth parents, focusing on parental ability and willingness to make changes, and giving family reunification every chance to work within clear timelines
- Conducting a review of the factors that may expedite or delay timely reunification of children with their birth parents
- Informing birth parents early on about the importance of their involvement and actions in planning for the return of their children, and disclosure about the legal consequences should they not prepare for children to return to their care in a safe, timely way
- Identifying absent birth parents and extended family members early on and involving them in case planning and visitation with children
- Encouraging all family members and resource foster parents to work as collaborators, not adversaries, as they develop and implement a timely permanency plan
- Convening Family Group Decision Making meetings, which bring family members together, with the support of professionals and community resources, to plan for the safety, permanency and well-being of children
- Recruiting, training and retaining relative and non-relative resource foster families.

For more information, contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services at 651- 431-4660 or visit the DHS website at <http://mn.gov/dhs> and click on “People We Serve,” and then “Children and Families,” then “Services” and then “Foster care.”

This information is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by contacting us at 651-431-4671. TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at 800- 627-3529. For Speech-to-Speech, call 877-627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs, contact your agency’s ADA coordinator.

Children’s Justice Initiative supports permanency planning

The Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Supreme Court are partners in the statewide Children’s Justice Initiative. This project has several important objectives that reinforce Concurrent Permanency Planning, including:

- Providing training and ongoing technical assistance regarding permanency laws and concurrent planning best practices
- Improving the processing of juvenile foster care cases so courts are poised to make timely decisions about permanency
- Developing a pool of judicial experts who understand the value of permanency for children.
- Collecting and analyzing data related to timely permanency for children.