



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Health and Human Services | Community Based Care Division

Permanency & Changes in Legal Case Plan Goal

Effective Date: 12/27/2017	Aligns with: CFOP 170, Ch 39, FAC 65C, and The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997	Operating Guideline: OP-OG03
Supersedes: N/A	Applicable to: FIP Staff/Providers	Pages: 1 of 3

PURPOSE

Family Integrity Program (FIP) is dedicated to the focus on permanence for children in care. This means carefully considering and monitoring the legal case plan goal of the child as changes in the child's circumstances and the parents' case plan compliance warrant, legally changing that goal when it appears to be in the best interest of the child to do so. Permanency and Changes in Legal Case Plan Goal are dictated in Ch 39, FAC 65C, and The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.

Definitions

Staffing refers to any formal/informal meeting in which the case plan goal, case plan compliance and/or child/family circumstances are discussed.

Children Legal Services (CLS) refers to any entity providing legal services for FIP.

PROCEDURE

- a. Legal goals and progress toward meeting that goal, i.e., compliance with case plan goals, will be monitored throughout the life of a case.
- b. The case plan must be signed by all parties, except that the signature of a child may be waived if the child is not of an age or capacity to participate in the case-planning process.
- c. When a decision is made not to return a child home, the case record contains an explanation and justification for the selection of an alternate method of achieving permanence and evidence of the efforts at family reunification.
- d. Permanence for the child, as required by statute, should be achieved in as short a period as possible for accomplishing its provisions, and no later than 12 months after the child(ren) being sheltered or case plan acceptance whichever occurs sooner.
 - Pursuant to FAC 65C-30.012 and Ch 39.8055, If a request to the court for an extension of the case plan beyond 12 months is made, the Case Management Team working closely with CLS, must be able to provide documentation from the case record that it is a). Reasonable to expect that the goal of reunification

will be achieved within 12 months of initial removal or b). that there is a compelling reason for not filing a petition for Termination of Parental Rights.

- e. The first permanency staffing must occur 4 months after shelter or case initiation, with ongoing staffings occurring at 7 months and again at 11 months depending until permanence has been achieved.
- f. Permanency staffings shall occur prior to permanency hearings so information shared at the staffing can become part of the Judicial Review Social Studies Report.
- g. Permanency staffings will be scheduled by the FIP Program Manager or designee and that schedule will be published for all parties, including but not limited to parents, attorneys, the Case Management Providers, Guardian Ad Litem, Foster Parents, Caregivers, etc. It is the responsibility of the Case Manager to notify all parties of the date/time of the staffing at least 7 days in advance of the staffing. Upon notification the Case Manager will provide all parties with a feedback form for completion if unable to attend.
- h. At the permanency staffing, progress toward the legal goal is discussed to determine progress toward achieving a permanent plan and whether services described in the plan are being provided.
- i. Critical dialog with the parents occurs during staffings which clarify for parents the need for parents to remain on task with case plan compliance or face the possibility that other permanency options will be considered.
- j. Changes to the case plan are recommended in this venue which will more effectively move a child toward permanency within the required statutory time frames. Follow up actions from the staffing shall be documented and placed in the child's file.
- k. A change of goal may be considered in the natural course of working a case when it appears that such a change will move a child toward permanency in a more effective way.
- l. CLs will enter into dialog with Case Management and to come to consensus about the change in goal. CLS will provide critical information to Case Management about whether the change in goal can be legally accomplished and when.
- m. Finding consensus for the goal change with CLS, Case Management will prepare appropriate legal documentation for submission to the court for approval.
- n. As required by the Adoption and Safe Families Act, an individual child review for child(ren) in care 12 months or more will be held as scheduled by CLS, to support filing for Termination of Parental Rights.

Conflict Resolution -

If disagreements arise, any conflict resolution should start at the line level of staff. If no resolution can be obtained at that level, the next level of management would become involved. Continued conflict would work its way up the chain of command. In the event an agreement cannot be reached, the issue will be brought before a standing resolution board comprised of representatives from FIP leadership, Child Legal Services, and the Department of Children and Families as appropriate.