

Concurrent Permanency Planning

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Why Concurrent Planning?

- Timely reunification in cases with poor prognosis for reunification within 12 months
- Reduced length of stay when reunification efforts prove unsuccessful
- Placement stability (avoid moves and relationship disruptions)
- Develop a family network and maintain continuity in family relationships and important connections
- Child well-being!



Legal Basis

The Adoption and Safe Families Act - 1997 (ASFA) requires reasonable efforts to finalize a timely permanency plan.

ASFA and Arizona Statute say that:

“Reasonable efforts to place a child for adoption may be made concurrently with reasonable efforts to reunify the family.”

The federal CFSR recognizes concurrent permanency planning by evaluating the efforts to achieve both goals, holding both permanency goals equal, when a concurrent goal is identified in the case plan.



Concurrent Planning is...

Working intensively toward a permanency goal of **reunification**,

while

simultaneously identifying and working toward **a second permanency goal.**



Concurrent Planning is...

Early implementation of a set of **activities** that lead to a family being ready to care for the child on a permanent basis if reunification cannot occur.



Concurrent Planning is...

Use of practice techniques that **engage** birth parents and extended family members in decision making.

Authentic, focused, supportive services both to promote reunification **and** to support an alternative plan for the child.



DCS Procedures and Timeframes

- Concurrent Planning occurs **only** when:
 - the child's permanency goal is reunification, and
 - reunification is unlikely to occur within 12 months of initial removal.
- A Reunification Prognosis Assessment is completed within 45 days of removal.



DCS Procedures and Timeframes

- If there is poor prognosis, concurrent planning activities are implemented to assist in selecting the final concurrent goal.
- Within **six months** of working both reunification and concurrent activities, a final concurrent permanency goal is established.
- **A concurrent goal should not be identified in the case plan:**
 - when the court has found aggravating circumstances (as defined by ASFA) and ordered that no reunification services are required, or
 - if the child's permanency goal is not reunification for another reason, or
 - the prognosis of reunification within 12 months is good.



Concurrent Planning is **Active**

- **Full disclosure** to the parents and children about the prognosis assessment, ways to achieve permanency, and timeframes – ***Everyone knows what everyone knows***
- Identification and assessment of potential **permanent** caregivers
- **Placement** of the child with suitable permanent caregivers
- Preparation of caregivers to care for the child on a permanent basis if needed
- All while continuing active and authentic work towards reunification



Early Family Engagement is the Key

- Individualized assessment and intensive time-limited work to address safety threats
- Full, honest, and documented disclosure with parents about safety threats and behavioral changes, consequences, timeframes
- Collaboration among people in the child's network, the agency, and the courts to identify and consider all reasonable options for permanency early in the life of the case.



Early Family Engagement is the Key

- Frequent and constructive use of parenting time as part of reunification efforts
- Early identification and use of kinship or foster placement to provide permanency if reunification is not possible
- Involvement of kinship/foster parents in working directly with the birth parents to communicate and address the children's needs



Implementation of Concurrent Planning



Let's talk about what worries us

- Will the parents think the agency/court has already decided against reunification and get discouraged from engaging in services or visits?
- Is it possible that caseworkers/attorneys/judges may view this as a “fast track” to adoption and not authentically pursue reunification?
- If a judge orders, or an attorney doesn't object to, a concurrent permanency goal, will it damage the legal case?



Let's talk about what worries us

- Do Child Safety Specialists feel comfortable talking with parents and other team members about the prognosis for reunification?
- How will we handle it when concurrent planning raises difficult decisions, such as whether to move the child to a permanent home versus keep the child near the parents?
- How can we create consistent practice across the state and across disciplines?



Sources

- Concurrent Planning Series - (DCS Child Welfare Training Institute) In collaboration with Ann E. MacEachron, PhD, ASU
- DCS Policy Manual and Practice Guides

