

Series	600: Permanency Legal Issues
Policy Name	Permanency & Administrative Staffing, Changes in Legal Case Plan Goal
Policy Number	603
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References	Florida Statute Ch. 39 (F.S.), Florida. Administrative Code 65C (F.A.C.), and Children and Families Operating Procedure 170 (CFOP).

Policy

It is the policy of Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) to seek and focus on permanence for children in care through regular reviews of progress toward achievement of case plan goals with birth parents, substitute caregivers, prospective adoptive families, and youth as appropriate to the child's age, cultural needs, and developmental level. 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. PSF will create formal opportunities where dialog regarding the legal goal and progress of the parents in working toward that goal may occur. PSF will remain in continual contact with Children's Legal Services (CLS), to properly notify the Court of such changes. It is also the policy of PSF to maintain and utilize procedures to implement this policy. PSF embraces a collaborative, strategic approach to risk management, which includes identifying and addressing threats and opportunities the organization faces at every level. This policy is written in accordance with PSF's Risk Management Plan.

Procedure

A. General Information

1. Legal goals and progress toward meeting that goal, i.e., compliance with case plan goals, will be monitored throughout the life of a case.
2. When a decision is made not to return a child home, the case record will contain an explanation and justification for the selection of an alternate method of achieving permanence and evidence of the efforts toward/for family reunification.
3. A Case Plan with a Permanency Goal must be filed with the Court no greater than 60 days

- post shelter, as required by Statute.
4. Permanency for the child, as required by Statute, should be achieved within 12 months of child being sheltered or case initiation.
 5. Supervisory dialog regarding permanency will occur at least quarterly (every 90 days) and be documented in the supervisory review note in the Child Welfare Information System.
 6. The child welfare professional shall assess for Conditions for Return at every staffing and hearing and on an on-going basis throughout the life of the case.
- B. Birth Certificate Verification
1. A copy of a birth certificate or birth verification shall be obtained for each child under Court ordered in-home supervision within 15 days after the case transfer conference, as outlined in PSF Policy and Procedure 902 Birth Certificates, Obtaining.
 2. A copy of a birth certificate or birth verification shall be obtained for each child entering out-of-home care within 15 days of initial placement, as outlined in PSF Policy and Procedure 902 Birth Certificates, Obtaining.
 3. For children born out-of-state or out-of-country, verification of the child's birth shall be requested within 15 days from initial placement and documented in the case file. Refer to subsection 65C-30.007(12), F.A.C., regarding the necessary actions when it is determined that a child was born in another country and has not established legal alien status, as outlined in PSF Policy and Procedure 902 Birth Certificates, Obtaining.
- C. Judicial Review
1. Judicial Review of case progress and permanency goal must be conducted a minimum of every 6 months and a permanency hearing held a minimum of every 12 months to determine the need for an alternative goal.
 2. To justify a request to the court for an extension of the case plan beyond 12 months, PSF will be able to provide documentation from the case record that the child's circumstances are so extraordinary that an extension is warranted and in the best interest of the child.
 3. The request for extension, if applicable, will be made at the 12-month judicial review or permanency hearing. Specific and factually supported justifications shall be included in the Judicial Review Social Study Report and must be presented to the Court for inclusion as findings in the Permanency Review Recommendations and/or Order. When the child has been in out of home care for 15 of 22 months, a legally exempted permanency decision is made and/or proceedings should be initiated for the termination of parental rights.
 4. Judicial Review Social Study Reports and Progress Updates shall document all pertinent details relating to the child as outlined in s. 39.701(2)(a), F.S. and CFOP 170-09, 6-3(d).
- D. Permanency Staffings
1. Permanency staffings provide a venue for discussing the goal(s) and progress or lack thereof and are held prior to permanency hearings so information shared, and decisions made at the staffing can become part of the Judicial Review Social Study Report. Additionally, a quarterly permanency staffing, or other similarly focused staffing, should be conducted for all children under the supervision of the Department who are in out of home care. Adoption Case Activity Report (ACAR) Staffings may substitute for the permanency staffing for children committed

- to the Department for the purpose of adoption.
2. The FCC is to invite the following participants to participate in the Permanency Staffing: the child if the child is of age, maturity level, and ability to participate in the staffing, the child's parents (if rights intact), the child's current caregiver, Guardian ad Litem, School Board Liaison, Attorney ad Litem, and Educational Surrogate, if applicable, and other services providers as appropriate.
 3. When establishing a concurrent goal, all permanency options, including expectations, available supports and required timelines must be shared.
 4. A staffing must be held with the PSF Permanency Specialist, CLS attorney, Family Care Counselor (FCC), and Supervisor to approve a goal change to or from adoption. Additionally, a Legal Action Request for Goal Change to Adoption Form and Incarcerated Parent Checklist, if applicable, must be provided to the CLS attorney prior to the staffing when recommending a goal change to adoption.
 5. The staffing facilitator will document the permanency staffing, participants, and meeting outcome in the Child Welfare Information System meeting page following the guidelines outlined in CFOP 170-01, 12-4.

E. Permanency Goal and Goal Changes

1. When establishing a concurrent goal, all permanency options, including expectations, available supports and required timelines must be shared.
2. Within 10 business days of starting a Progress Update to reunify, the FCC must update local criminal history checks, including required fingerprint submission for any household members 18 years of age or older.
3. When a goal other than reunification is considered, the parents must be provided information about alternative permanency options.
4. A goal change may be considered by an FCC in the natural course of working a case when it appears that such a change will move a child toward permanence in a more effective way. Whenever an FCC feels a change in goal may be appropriate for a particular child or sibling group, the FCC will discuss the option with their Supervisor and/or Program Director.
5. The topic of change of goal may also naturally evolve out of a family team meeting or internal staffing in which a review of the current case plan's effectiveness is conducted as outlined in CFOP 170-09, 7-2.
6. Upon reaching a consensus for the goal change with CLS, the FCC will prepare a Progress Update and Judicial Review Social Study Report recommending the change in goal. If the case already has the goal as a concurrent goal, no additional case plan is needed. If the current case plan either has no concurrent goal or contains a different concurrent goal than the staffing team decided to pursue, a proposed case plan will be prepared and filed with the Court for approval. Revisions to case plan goals and outcomes/tasks are developed with parents, caregivers, children as appropriate in age, cultural needs, and developmental level and signed by participants and parties.
7. Within 30 days of the TPR Petition being filed, FCC will ensure that the child's birth records are requested and obtained within 90 days.
8. Within 30 days of the TPR Petition being filed, the FCC will ensure that all health history records, school records, mental health records, hospitalization records, and residential setting



records are requested and obtained within 90 days.

9. Within 30 days of the TPR Petition being filed, the FCC will ensure that the following documents are in the Child Welfare Information System:
 - a. Shelter Petition and Shelter Order
 - b. Dependency Petition and Dependency Order
 - c. Modification Petition and Modification Order if applicable
 - d. Original Predisposition Report (Ongoing Family Functioning Assessment)
 - e. Case Plans that address the child's needs
 - f. Protective investigations identifying the child as a victim
 - g. Guardian ad Litem report filed with the court concerning the child
 - h. Psychological Evaluations and Comprehensive Assessments
 - i. Names of providers who provided services to child while in foster care
10. Caregivers are informed about and assisted in pursuing permanency options such as adoption or guardianship as appropriate. The FCC shall have on going communication with the caregivers regarding services and benefits available to children and families with the goal of permanent guardianship.

F. Adoption Program Assignment

1. When the permanency staffing determines the goal of adoption will be recommended to the Court at the next hearing, the FCC and/or Supervisor will notify their local Adoption Program Supervisor or Director of the recommendation and date of the next Court hearing. An Adoption Case Manager (ACM) will be assigned secondary to a child's case at the time a child's goal is changed to adoption toward provision of the adoption services prerequisite to adoption for the child and family as outlined in PSF Policy and Procedure 310 Adoption Principles and Criteria.