

2009 Permanency Forum

Best Practice Tips for Improving Your
County Permanency Outcomes

Where We Stand

CFSR Exit Report

Reunification – Timeliness and Permanency

Michigan=106.8 National Standard=122.6

Adoption Timeliness

Michigan=95.6 National Standard=106.4

Permanency For Children Long Term

Michigan=118.5 National Standard=121.7

Placement Stability

Michigan=105.4 National Standard=101.5

REUNIFICATION

Measure C1 - 1: Exits to reunification in less than 12 months.

- 75th Percentile = 75.2%
- National median = 69.9%

Michigan:

- Fiscal Year 2006 = **42.5%**
 - Fiscal Year 2007 = **41.5%**
 - Fiscal Year 2008 = **42.7%**
 - 4-1-08 to 3-31-09 = 51.4%
- **Exits to reunification 2008** 51%

Self Assessment and Exit Conference Concerns Related to Reunification

- Quality and Frequency of Parenting time
- Availability of Appropriate Services to the Family
- Engaging children and families in case planning
- Locating and engaging fathers in permanency planning
- Quality and quantity of caseworker visits
- Notification and Involvement of caregivers and youth in the court process
- *Quality of Case Planning and Written Case Plan*

Written Case Plan

- ⦿ Developed jointly with parent – with child when appropriate.
- ⦿ Addresses the *individualized* needs of families and children.
- ⦿ Clearly outlines actions to be taken to ensure safety, well being and permanency of child.
- ⦿ Developed, reviewed and updated within required timelines.
- ⦿ Initial approval and review by the court at each subsequent review hearing.

Case Plan Concerns

- ⦿ Case plan does not clearly define effective and expedient strategy to ensure child safety, well being, and timely permanency with *real time* timelines.
- ⦿ Unclear, imprecise, vague conditions for child's return to parents.
- ⦿ Issues in case plan not reviewed by the court at each hearing.
- ⦿ Cookie cutter plans which do not reflect the course and progress of the case.

Available Technologies to Support Positive Outcomes for Children and Families

◎ *CONCURRENT PLANNING*

◎ *PERMANENCY PLANNING MEDIATION*

1. Placement
2. Visitation
3. Service Plan Development
4. Concurrent Plan

◎ *FRONT LOADING SERVICES*

1. Comprehensive Preliminary Hearings
2. Timely adjudication and disposition
3. Accountability for timely service referrals
4. Frequent/meaningful parenting time early in placement
5. Individualized/Interactive parenting classes/coaching
6. Advocacy for needed resources and services

SCAO Activities

- Hearing Bench Cards
- Training of New Family Court Judges
- Development of Permanency Planning Hearing Guidelines
- Legal Representation For Parents in Child Welfare Proceedings Project
- Review and Development of Policies and Procedures related to non respondent parents

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Policy, PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

Utilize Reports

- Children Awaiting Permanency reports:
 - Temporary court ward (TCW).
 - Termination of parental rights (TPR).
- The Reunification Alert report.
- DHS is developing a new Adoption Alert report.
- Monitor your county's performance on the CFSR Permanency composites and measures.

Locating and Engaging NCPs, particularly fathers

- ⦿ Identify and notify fathers and non-custodial parents early in the life of the case.
 - *The Michigan Absent Parent Protocol*
<http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/resources/standards/APP.pdf>.
- ⦿ Send the DHS-3205 to the Office of Child Support (OCS) to establish paternity and/or child support.
- ⦿ Utilize the OCS Federal Parent Locator Services by sending an email to:
FIA-OCS-CFU-Staff1@michigan.gov

Family Assessment and Engagement

- Conduct thorough and timely assessments of child and family needs and strengths.
- Expedite service referrals – “front-load services”.
- Engage the family in service planning and needs assessment immediately upon case opening, if appropriate.

Caseworker Visits

- ◎ Are critical in the achievement of successful outcomes for children and families. When state child welfare agencies conduct a high percentage of quality caseworker visits, they are:
 - Better positioned to assess children's risk of harm and need for alternative permanency options.
 - Able to identify and provide needed services.
 - Able to engage children and parents in planning for their future.
- ◎ Michigan's CFSR reviews identified delays in permanency resulting from poor quality visits that failed to address case plans and goals.

Relative Searches

- Seek and **notify** maternal and paternal relatives within 30 days of placement and throughout the life of the case.
- Talk with the parents and children about possible relatives or other family friends for possible placement.
- To establish a supportive relationship with an adult(s), talk to older youths about important people within their lives.

Parenting Time

- ◎ Arrange frequent parent-child visits, during which the parent's capacity, competency and willingness to meet the child's needs are assessed.
- ◎ Involve the parents in the child's school, recreational activities, medical care, meal planning during visits, birthday parties, family celebrations and other activities that demonstrate the parent's capacity, competency and willingness to meet the child's needs.

Reunification Policy

- ◎ Follow the permanency planning decision guidelines.
- ◎ There is no need to wait until the permanency planning hearing to change the goal or recommend reunification. According to CFF 722-9, if the parenting time compliance and barrier reduction are:
 - At least "partial" and the Safety Assessment (DHS-149) is at least "Safe with Service," the worker must recommend return home with services.
 - "Poor/refused" and this is the second consecutive one, the worker must change the goal.
 - Any combination of three "poor/refused" or three "unsafe" Safety Assessments, the worker must change the goal.
 - The foster care worker may only use a discretionary override with prior supervisory approval if the permanency planning decision guidelines are not in the child's best interest.

DHS Policy

- Conduct Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings or case conferences to determine the appropriate goal and the action steps for accomplishment.
- Do not delay family reunification because a particular service provider is not available.
- DHS is hiring permanency planning managers who will assist in achieving permanency.
- Concurrent permanency planning (CPP) will be implemented statewide.

New Permanency Goals

- Placement with a fit and willing relative.
- Placement in another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA) – formerly called a permanent foster family agreement.
- APPLA (E) and “permanency teaming” includes establishing a significant connection to an adult(s) willing to be a permanency resource but the youth may not reside with the adult(s).

The Supervisor's Role

- Targeted case reading and service plan approval needs to review for:
 - Reasonable, comprehensive and ongoing parent and relative searches are conducted.
 - Early and comprehensive assessments of the child and family's needs are done on all cases.
 - Frequent parenting time is occurring when appropriate.
 - The child's permanency planning goal is appropriate, and the worker has updated the goal.
 - The caseworker is visiting with the child, the care provider and the parents, if appropriate.
 - The parents and the children are included in the development of the service plan.