

Steps for Creating An Individual Permanency Plan



- Preparation
- The Meeting
- Writing the Plan
- Investigating Resources
- Follow up

NOTE: These steps are depicted as DANCE steps, not linear steps or steps up a ladder. As in any dance, you will at times go forward, backwards and sideways and you will often repeat steps, sometimes again and again before the “dance” is completed and permanency is achieved.

PREPARATION

- **Visioning – develop and prioritize a set of goals with the child**
 - What will family life look like for this child?
 - What about the future – 5, 10, 15 years from now?
- **Identify the child’s talents, strengths, needs**
 - Use social work tools such as Lifebook, Eco-map
- **Identify the youth’s network**
 - Who should be included in the meeting and in creating and implementing the permanency plan?
 - Who *really knows* this young person?
 - Who are the important people from the child’s *past*?
 - Where does the child *spend time*?
 - Where can you find people who *do not fear* the child’s special needs or challenging behaviors?
 - Where is the community of people who *share the child’s interests*, hobbies or talents?
 - Who does the *youth identify* as the people he or she cares most about?
- **Collect Input from people who cannot attend meetings**
 - Try to schedule meetings at times and places to encourage maximum participation
 - If someone still cannot attend, talk to them ahead of time to gather their input
- **Help meeting participants think through goals in advance**
 - You are not asking participants to make a lifetime commitment
 - You are asking them to attend one meeting to help think about the future of this particular child

- Make it clear why each person is being invited – “We think you will be a valuable resource at this meeting because you have known this child for 5 years and you know her strengths” or “you understand many of the challenges we face” or “you have seen this child in settings the rest of us never see”, etc.
 - Prepare the youth in advance – help him set his own goals for the meeting, be sure he has at least one support person of his own choosing in attendance, role-play questions he can ask, help him create an outline for keeping notes and raising issues of importance to him
- **Anticipate special challenges that might arise – discuss with your supervisor**

PERMANENCY PLANNING MEETINGS

- Gather people together, make introductions, set a comfortable atmosphere and tone
- Develop and refer to group agreements (ground rules) as needed
- Be clear about roles and responsibilities
- Don’t be afraid of uncomfortable topics or emotional outbursts, but work to transition to constructive communication
- Don’t expect all needs or questions to be addressed in one meeting, but be clear that you will follow up

WRITING A PERMANENCY PLAN

- **Start Broad - brainstorm, before you *get specific***
 - No idea is too wacky
 - Ask the “Five questions” – repeatedly!
 - Get everyone in the room involved
- **Empower the youth to take the lead**
 - If the young person is fading out, draw him back in with questions, choices, task assignments
- **Address a range of issues concurrently**
- **Ensure that plan is individually tailored to *this child***
- **Build in flexibility**
- **Be specific and concrete –**
 - Break each idea down into the smallest component
 - Assign someone on the team to follow up on each item
 - **WHO will do WHAT by WHEN**
 - **Plan the next meeting**
- **Make a copy of the plan for all participants before the end of the meeting**

INVESTIGATE RESOURCES

- **Identify both formal and informal resources**
 - Use resources child is familiar with as starting point
 - These resources form the basis for the “aftercare” or “post permanency” plan

- **Formal resources – agencies, institutions, public and private providers**
 - Be aware of Applications, enrollment, waiting period
 - Eligibility, fees, alternatives
- **Informal resources**
 - Is the current foster family a resource
 - Resources provided by extended family
 - Peers, social network of the youth
 - Community of faith

FOLLOW UP

- Identify one person to “manage the plan” and make periodic phone calls or emails to other members of the team – in some cases this could be the youth himself!

NOTES: