

## 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:**