 Department of <b>Children &amp;  Family Services</b> <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i>	<b>Division/Section</b>	Child Welfare
	<b>Chapter No./Name</b>	6 – Foster Care (FC)
	<b>Part No./Name</b>	8 – Case Planning For the Foster Child
	<b>Section No./Name</b>	Case Planning For the Foster Child
	<b>Document No./Name</b>	6-860 Permanent Plan Goal: Alternative Permanent Living Arrangement
	<b>Effective Date</b>	August 15, 2020

## I. STATEMENT OF POLICY

If it is not appropriate or possible to return a youth home, place the youth in adoption, or place the youth in the guardianship of a relative or nonrelative, in accordance with Ch. C. [Article 702](#), then the youth's plan should be an alternative permanent living arrangement. The least restrictive, most family-like placement setting which meets the youth's needs for safety, quality of care and supervision should guide case planning when alternative permanent living arrangement is the permanent plan. [P.L. 113-183](#) and [LA Act 124](#) provides the option of Alternative Permanent Living Arrangement (APLA) for youth who are age 16 and 17 only.


An alternative permanent living arrangement is the last option as a permanency goal for a youth. This option does not provide the youth as much stability as reunification, adoption or guardianship/custody transfer. It also lacks the stability of an ongoing support network for the youth during their transition into adulthood.

## II. PROCEDURES

All reasons for the decision to choose an alternative permanent living arrangement must be clearly documented to show how this permanency plan is in the best interest of the individual youth. Documentation should be on the staffing confirmation form, in the case plan and in all subsequent reports to the court. This includes documenting the compelling reason that each of the following permanent plans were not chosen: reunification, adoption, and guardianship.

At each permanency hearing, the Department:

- must report on efforts made by the Department to return the child home;
- must document in the court report the intensive, ongoing and unsuccessful efforts for family placement with a fit and willing relative, including adult siblings, a legal guardian, or an adoptive parent;
- must include efforts to locate biological family members using search technologies (including social media);
- is required to ask the child prior to the hearing about the child's permanency outcome and ensure the child is prepared to respond to questions from the court regarding their desires;
- request the court at the hearing to make a judicial determination explaining why APLA is still the best permanency plan and why it is not in the child's best interest to be returned home, adopted, placed with a legal guardian, or placed with a fit and willing relative;
- is required to report if the foster **\* caregivers \*\*** are following the reasonable and prudent parent standard; and,
- is required to specify in the court report the steps taken to ensure the child has regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmental appropriate activities.

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The focus of the Department's work when alternative permanent living arrangement becomes the youth's permanency plan is preparing the youth for adulthood. The Department is also responsible for assisting the youth in identifying and locating resources with whom they can have positive, permanent connections.

If possible, arrangements shall be made for the youth to live with the family with whom a permanent connection is established. The connection may be a relative or nonrelative and may be a certified or noncertified foster home. Refer to [6-400](#), Placement of the Child, and [6-430](#), Home Study for Noncertified Caretakers.


The appropriateness of alternative permanent living arrangement as a permanency plan must be based on an individualized assessment of the best interest, needs and circumstances of the youth. Some examples of situations where alternative permanent living arrangement may be appropriate for a youth are as follows:

- An older youth age 16 or 17 who lives in a stable foster family placement whose foster parents are not interested in adoption and remaining in the foster home is in the youth's best interest. The alternative permanent living arrangement would be for the youth to continue reside with the foster parents into adulthood; or
- An older youth age 16 or 17 who has very close ties to his parents who are unable to care for him and the youth does not want to be adopted. The alternative permanent living arrangement would be for the youth to live in the most stable placement possible, preferably a family placement and visit the parents on a regular basis to maintain the relationship.

The TIPS code for alternative permanent living arrangement is FC ALA.

If the youth is in a residential placement, the Department shall continue to search for a family placement. The search shall continue, unless current assessment indicates the youth cannot be maintained in a less restrictive placement due to his behavior or lack of appropriate skills to function satisfactorily in a family and the need for treatment continues. Efforts to locate a family home placement should resume when ongoing assessment indicates a family can safely provide for the youth. Documentation of this assessment shall be included in the case plan. This decision shall be reassessed at every Family Case Planning Meeting.

All youth with a permanent plan of alternative permanent living arrangement, regardless of placement type, shall be provided independent living skills training and guidance from the placement provider to develop life skills. The specific life skills needed by the youth should be assessed and incorporated into the case planning to meet the individual needs of the youth, based on their abilities. Refer to [6-1300](#), Required Services for Youth in Foster Care, and [6-1305](#), Planning with Youth to Prepare for Independence.

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## **A. PERMANENT CONNECTION FOR YOUTH IN RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENTS**

If the youth's needs are such that a residential placement is the most appropriate living arrangement, the Department shall search for a family with whom the youth can visit and have a positive lifetime connection. The permanent connection for the youth can be the child's parent, with a safety plan developed, a relative, or a nonrelative such as a former foster parent or mentor.

Discussions may be initiated with the youth, the youth's parents, all known relatives, former foster parents, residential staff working with the youth, independent living skills providers, the child's CASA worker, school personnel, the child's attorney, members of the youth's church, and other community connections to search for permanent lifetime connections. These parties should also be involved in working with the youth to develop life skills. All discussions and efforts on the part of all involved parties shall be documented in the case record. Every effort should be made to ensure the child leaves foster care with the continued support of a caring adult and sufficient life skills to continue pursuit of life goals.

A family/individual identified as a permanent connection for the youth should be invited to attend the youth's Family Case Planning Meeting and participate in meeting the youth's needs while in foster care. All efforts and discussions with individuals/families to locate and encourage the development of that individual/family as a placement or a permanent connection for the youth shall be documented in the case record.

## **B. WHEN ALTERNATIVE PERMANENT LIVING ARRANGEMENT IS NOT APPROPRIATE**

An alternative permanent living arrangement shall not be chosen as the permanent plan for children under the age of 16. Refer to [P.L. 113-183](#).


An alternative permanent living arrangement shall not be chosen as a goal for an adolescent who is in Department custody because of the parent's refusal to allow the adolescent to return home due to the adolescent's behavior. The Department should continue to work toward the child's return to the parents or placement with relatives if the child will be at a low risk of harm.

An alternative permanent living arrangement is also inappropriate for children solely because the only available permanent plan for another sibling is alternative permanent living arrangement. Refer to [8-225](#), Guidelines for Choosing Permanent Plans Other Than Adoption.

## **III. FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS**

There are no forms associated with this policy.

## **IV. REFERENCES**

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CW [Policy 6-400](#) Placement of the Child

CW [Policy 6-430](#) Home Study for Noncertified Caretakers

CW [Policy 6-1300](#) Required Services for Youth in Foster Care

CW [Policy 6-1305](#) Planning with Youth to Prepare for Independence

CW [Policy 8-225](#) Guidelines for Choosing Permanent Plans Other Than Adoption

[LA Ch. C. Art. 702, Permanency Hearing](#)

[P.L. 113-183, Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act](#)

[LA Act 124](#)