	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	6 – Foster Care (FC)
	Part No./Name	8 – Case Planning for the Foster Child
	Section No./Name	Case Planning for the Foster Child
	Document No./Name	6-802 Case Plan Goal Establishment and Concurrent Planning
	Effective Date	October 15, 2023

I. STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the policy of the Department of Children and Family Services to ensure every child in foster care has a case plan goal to meet their * needs and best interests. All permanency and concurrent permanency goals are established based on achieving the most permanent plan possible for the child. It is further the policy of the Department to secure more timely permanency for children in foster care and reduce the time spent in state custody. Therefore, concurrent planning is vital in achieving this goal. As such, a concurrent case plan goal shall always be implemented in all case plans.


A. CASE PLAN GOAL ESTABLISHMENT

The initial case plan goal for most children entering foster care should be reunification. Exceptions would include Safe Haven relinquished infants, both parents documented as deceased, or a case meeting criteria for immediate termination in accordance with Louisiana [Children's Code Article 1015](#), (Refer to [6-1500, Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights](#)).

Within the population of children entering Foster Care, there will be some whose family situation, significantly diminishes the potential for reunification. Placement with a family willing to provide long-term permanency to the child is priority, should the child be unable to return to their parents. Additionally, except in unusual situations, all children ages six and under should be placed in care settings capable of providing long-term permanency due to the young age and critical developmental needs of the child. This can be achieved when children are placed with relatives or when unrelated families that have a significant relationship with the child are selected based on their willingness and ability to provide safety and permanency. Refer to [6-300, Guidelines for Selecting a Placement/Replacement Resource](#), [6-305, Guidelines For Care Setting Decision Making for Children Under Age Six](#), and [6-400, Placement of the Child](#).

The DCFS permanent plan priorities of placement for a child in need of care are:

1. REUNIFICATION – Return the child to the legal custody of the parents within a specified time period consistent with the child's age and need for a safe and permanent home (Refer to [6-840, Permanent Plan Goal Reunify with Parents or Principal Caregivers](#));
2. ADOPTION – Adoption (Refer to [6-845, Permanent Plan Goal Adoption](#));
3. GUARDIANSHIP – Placement with a legal guardian (Refer to [6-854, Permanent Plan Goal Guardianship](#)); encompassing the duty and authority to make important decisions in matters having a permanent effect on the life and development of the child. Guardianship is also taking ** responsibility for the child's general welfare until he reaches the age of majority, subject to any residual rights possessed by the child's parents.

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4. ALTERNATIVE PERMANENT LIVING ARRANGEMENT (APLA) – Placement in the least restrictive, most family like alternative permanent living arrangement (Refer to [6-860, Permanent Plan Goal Alternative Permanent Living Arrangement](#)).

B. CONCURRENT PLANNING

Concurrent planning is the process of making reasonable efforts with a family to achieve more than one permanency goal for a child simultaneously. The concurrent planning process can be an effective means of securing more timely permanency for a child and reducing the time spent in state custody. A concurrent case plan goal shall always be implemented in case plans with a permanency goal of Reunification, and whenever appropriate * with other permanency goals. Both case plan goals will be ** given equal effort by the Department.

II. PROCEDURES

A. INITIAL CASE PLAN GOAL ESTABLISHMENT


It is critical the child's family is engaged in establishing the permanency goal. To achieve permanency through any case goal for the child, the case worker will practice full disclosure with the parents, child, *** foster caregivers, * and relative caregivers concerning all options for permanency for the child. This should include clarification for all parties about the reason for a concurrent goal and when reunification will cease to be an option for the parents and the child.

The case plan goal of guardianship should not be considered as a goal for children unless reunification and adoption have been thoroughly assessed, determined not to be in the child's best interest and documented in the case record.

Per P.L. 113-183, the case plan goal of APLA shall not be considered for children under the age of 16.

1. IMMEDIATE TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

If it appears there are grounds to terminate the rights of at least one of the parents, the case worker confers with the Child Protection Services (CPS) worker and Bureau of General Counsel (BGC) ** attorney to schedule a staffing to determine if immediate termination of parental rights should be pursued. Grounds for immediate termination of parental rights are listed in [6-1500, Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights](#). The existence of grounds for immediate termination shall not automatically lead to a decision to pursue immediate termination. The decision must be guided by what is in each child's best interest. If there are grounds for immediately terminating a parent's rights and the Department decides not to file a petition for termination of that parent's rights for a child, the reasons for the decision for each child are documented on the staffing confirmation form, the case plan, case notes, and all subsequent reports to the court.

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2. 672.1

There are also situations in which the Department may file a motion for a judicial determination that efforts to reunify a child with a parent are not required. Circumstances in which such a determination may be made are described in Louisiana Children's Code (Ch. C.) Article 672.1. Some examples of when filing this motion is appropriate are:

- Cases in which there are grounds to terminate the parental rights of one parent but not the other, and services will be provided to only one parent. Staff should exercise caution in termination of only one parent's rights as this could lead to future difficulties for the remaining parents in areas such as obtaining child support, Social Security benefits, or death benefits.
- Cases of such a severe nature that the likelihood of achieving a safe reunification appears very small. The determination that efforts to reunify the child with the parent may result in the court granting permission to file a termination of parental rights petition prior to the child being in custody at least one year as described in Louisiana * Children's Code (Ch. C.) [Article 1015](#). Refer to [6-1500, Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights](#).


In these situations, the case worker confers with the CPS worker to schedule a staffing to determine if the CPS worker should request the filing of a motion for a judicial determination that efforts to reunify the child with the parent are not required and if a petition for termination of parental rights should be filed. Refer to [4-730, Immediate Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights](#).

B. CONCURRENT PLANNING

A concurrent case plan goal should always be implemented in case plans with a permanency goal of Reunification, and whenever appropriate **with** other permanency goals, both case plan goals are given equal effort by the Department.

Concurrent case planning is essential, especially when there are more severe safety threats and fewer protective **factors**. ** Examples of situations which indicate the reasons a concurrent goal should be pursued from the beginning are:

- A non-verbal child with severe injuries and parents refusing to identify the perpetrator;
or
- A youth who has been sexually abused by one parent and the other parent remains supportive of the spouse rather than the child.

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By the point of initial SDM Reunification Risk Reassessment (90 days after the child's entry into foster care), if the risk remains high or very high in the family, the case worker must continue discussing concurrent planning with the family.

- At the next scheduled, in-person visit with the parents, the case worker must openly discuss the continued risk to the child, the lack of progress and the need to continue planning for an alternative permanency outcome for the child, should lack of compliance continue. The family should be reassured the Department will continue to work toward reunification as the primary priority.
- The family should be engaged to understand the Department requires their assistance to achieve any permanency goal for their child. The parents' input is critical to identify the best way to make progress toward reunification and any concurrent case plan goal.
- The case worker should explain any concurrent case plan goal will be presented to the court no later than the six-month case review hearing.


To establish the appropriate concurrent case plan goal and to achieve permanency timely for children, it is essential *** that **** case workers follow up on and document all information about relatives, siblings, family friends, and unidentified or absent parents. Efforts to identify and contact these individuals must be immediate and ongoing, creative and diligent throughout the life of the case.

If the concurrent goal is adoption, the case worker should begin this work by collaboratively identifying an adoptive resource for the child, establishing commitment with the resource and assessing for subsidy eligibility. Foster Care staff may consult with the regional Adoption Unit for assistance in assessing subsidy eligibility.

Staff shall remain aware of the importance of pursuing adoption and then, if adoption is not possible, then guardianship, even for much older youth. When adoption or guardianship is not being achieved successfully with an already established, certified, relative caregiver, Alternate Permanent Living Arrangement (APLA) may be considered as a concurrent case plan goal, along with adoption, for youth age 16 and older. In such situations, diligent work to identify a non-relative adoptive resource and/or to pursue an adoption or guardianship with the current caregiver or restoration of parental rights (Refer to [6-835, Judicial Hearings for Case Review, Permanency, and Restoration of Parental Rights](#)) shall continue until permanency is achieved.

C. CHANGING THE CASE PLAN GOAL

If ******* it is determined the child's parents are not making significant progress *** by the time the nine month permanency planning staffing is held** and adoption will be the recommended plan, the case worker should attempt to engage the parents in a voluntary surrender. **The case worker should engage the parents **** without providing legal advice, and referring the parent to their legal counsel/public defender when/if such questions arise. If voluntary surrender is not

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possible, then the case worker should recommends changing the permanency goal for the child to adoption. Once the judge determines the Department has made reasonable efforts to achieve reunification with the family and approves the goal change at the 12-month permanency hearing, the Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) packet is completed and forwarded to the regional BGC attorney within 30 days of the receipt of the legal judgement granting the goal change. * Once the packet has been submitted, it will then be appropriate to pursue termination of parental rights. The case worker should periodically readdress voluntary surrender with the parents while the department pursues involuntary termination through the court. Refer to [6-1500, Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights](#).

Guardianship can be considered for recommendation as a case goal by the Department. These are examples to assist in determining when to choose guardianship. **

- ***
- * The judge is unwilling to terminate parental rights, the parents continue to be unable to care for their child, and it is in the child's best interest to remain with the relative or unrelated certified foster caregiver. **
- The Department has made diligent consistent efforts to identify an adoptive resource for the child without any success, and it has been determined that adoption is not in the child's best interest. ***
- The youth has expressed a disinterest in being adopted; however, verbalizes a desire to permanently remain in the home of the current foster caregiver.

Guardianship can be considered for all children, of any age, only after the above recommendations have been met. Parental consent is not required when determining the case plan goal of guardianship; however, the parents should be consulted prior to * the ** recommendation.

All activities with the family, child, *** foster caregiver, * or relative caregiver ** to assess, plan, establish and achieve case plan goals should be clearly documented in the case notes to support Department efforts to move the child to permanency and stability as quickly as possible.

III. FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

There are no forms associated with this policy

IV. REFERENCES

[6-803, Connections for Permanency](#)

[LA Ch. C. Art 702](#)

[LA Ch. C. Art. 1015](#)

[P.L. 110-351, Fostering Connection to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008](#)

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