



Policy: Staffing and Case Reviews

ChildNet Number: CN 007.024

Original Approved Date: June 17, 2003

Policy Revised Date(s): May 17, 2006, June 22, 2010, September 16, 2010, November 19, 2010, August 22, 2014

Policy Sunset Date:

COA Standard(s): FKC 5.01, 5.02, 5.04, 5.06, 19.04 ASE 6.04

Statement of Policy:

Time is of the essence in achieving permanency for children in the dependency system. Therefore, permanency planning is critical to effectively reduce the length of stay for children in out of home care, while keeping in mind the child's best interest. Established during the early stages of a case, the plan for permanency is not fixed and/or unchangeable, and thus must be reviewed regularly to monitor the progress made (or not made) in regards to the legally approved case plan. All cases under ChildNet's supervision will be carefully monitored and reviewed to assess the level of commitment to the child's right to live as a member of a family and achieving permanency for all youth in care. Circumstances, case plan compliance by parents and/or relevant family members can change, legally warranting changes in the case plan goal when it appears to be in the best interest of the child to do so. Therefore, ChildNet will create both formal and informal opportunities for families where dialogue can take place regarding their legal case plan goal, and how to bring about permanency for their child (or children). For this purpose, ChildNet will remain in continual contact with the Children's Legal Services Office in order to help families and children achieve safety, permanency and wellbeing; and recommend needed case plan goal changes to the court when deemed necessary and/or appropriate.

Board Chair's Signature:

Date:

8/22/14



Procedure: Staffing and Case Reviews

ChildNet Number: CN 007.024

Original Approved Date: June 17, 2003

Procedure Revised Date(s): May 17, 2006, June 22, 2010; September 16, 2010; November 19, 2010; December 8, 2011, August 22, 2014

Procedure Sunset Date:

COA Standard(s):

FKC 5.01, 5.02, 5.04, 5.06, 19.04 ASE 6.04

Definitions (If any):

Statement of Procedure:

This procedure establishes guidelines for case reviews and formal staffings of all cases under the supervision of ChildNet. Formal staffings and/or case reviews will be held periodically following intake, and as required by law, or more frequently as needed. In the event a staffing involves a perpetrator of domestic violence, physical abuse, or sexual abuse, additional steps are taken to ensure all interactions between the perpetrator and the victim are monitored and managed to ensure psychological and physical safety. Reunification staffing can be requested at any junction of the case, as Reunification will be continuously assessed. Please see CN 007.022 Reunification. Directors and Assistant Directors, Child Advocate Supervisors, Child Advocates, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Advocates, Adoption Advocates, and Independent Living Advocates are to follow these procedures to assist in facilitating the required legal process and ensure that all children achieve permanency expeditiously upon entering out-of-home care.

A. Assignment and Initial Case Review:

1. Upon receipt of a file from the Intake and Placement Unit, the Managers/Directors will complete a preliminary review of the file to determine, whether or not all pertinent documents are in the file and document any immediate follow-up needs to be completed. All completed efforts or pending tasks are documented in Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) by the Manager/Director within one working day. Please see CN 003.005 regarding Case Chronological Documentation. The Manager/Director (or designee) will maintain a record of the case name, date received and removal date to ensure all subsequent staffings are scheduled timely. Manager/Director will assign the case in accordance with CN 003.001 Case Assignments. In Palm Beach County, cases are assigned by the subcontracted provider.
2. The Child Advocate Supervisor will review the file and assign it to the appropriate Child Advocate for immediate/continual case management tasks. At this initial case review the Child Advocate will be assigned specific tasks to be completed as outlined, by specified due dates. The Child Advocate Supervisor is responsible for entering a chronological note in SACWIS within one working day.



3. The Child Advocate will schedule to meet the child, substitute caregivers and/or legal custodians within 2 days (48 hours). Further, the CA will meet with the legal parents within 5 days in order to develop an initial permanency plan identifying:
 - a. The permanency goal,
 - b. A timeframe for achieving permanency; and
 - c. Activities that support permanency

B. Quarterly Case Reviews

The Child Advocate Supervisor is responsible for reviewing each case in their unit with the assigned Child Advocate on a quarterly basis. See CN 003.069 regarding Supervisory Reviews.

C. Permanency Staffings

Cases will be formally staffed for permanency as required by law, or more frequently as needed. The purpose of this staffing is to determine if the case plan goal is appropriate or if a change of goal should be recommended to the court as well as discuss relevant factors or barriers to achieving permanency. This is also the appropriate time for recommending concurrent case planning. If concurrent planning is being used, the permanency goal of reunification with the parent or legal custodian, in addition to any other appropriate permanency goal, will be addressed. All reasonable efforts that are being made to achieve both goals will be discussed and documented at these permanency staffings (See F.S. 39.6011 Case plan development (2) (c)).

1. The Unit Staff Assistant or designee/Permanency Specialist is responsible for sending the permanency staffing schedule 14 working days in advance to the Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager, Child Advocate Supervisor/Dependency Case Manager Supervisor, Children's Legal Services, Guardian Ad Litem Program and ChildNet designated staff.
2. The Child Advocate/ Dependency Case Manager will be responsible for sending the staffing notification form to the following persons, at a minimum, in writing, at least ten (10) working days in advance of the scheduled date (to be documented in the case file), of the permanency staffing: Children's Legal Services attorney, child's out-of-home caregiver, Guardian Ad Litem (if one has been appointed); Attorney Ad Litem (if one has been appointed); child's education surrogate (if one has been appointed), the school foster care liaison or other appropriate school representative; the service providers, child's legal parents; and child, (depending on his/her age, and developmental level).
3. The Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager will follow-up and confirm the attendance of every individual invited. In the event any of the above individuals are not able to attend, the CA will request their recommendations, concerns and/or questions in writing, prior to the staffing; these will be made known and discussed at the staffing. In addition, the staffing shall review and discuss: case plan progress and



relevant safety considerations or concerns; relevant factors or barriers to achieving permanency; (e.g. parents or child's mental health issues including psychotropic medications, parents' substance abuse treatment issues, etc.); medical issues; the appropriateness of the child's school placement, academic progress, and all educational needs or concerns; and any new information available that could affect the case plan goal(s) identified earlier.

4. Further, in the event a parent, his or her attorney, or the child does not attend the permanency staffing, the Child Advocate shall hold other conferences, meetings or staffings where these parties shall be provided an opportunity to participate in the case planning process. Efforts that validate this provision shall be annotated in the case documentation section of SACWIS.
5. In preparation for the staffing, the Child Advocate will complete the Permanency Staffing Form and submit to their supervisor at least four working days prior to the scheduled staffing date for review and approval. The Child Advocate Supervisor is to submit the Permanency Staffing Form electronically to the Manager/Director/Permanency Specialist via e-mail at least 2 business days prior to the scheduled staffing date.
6. The Manager/Director/Permanency Specialist will assist by ensuring reasonable efforts on the part of the Child Advocate have been made to reach the case plan goal. This determination will take into account and include any efforts made regarding any concurrent goal as well. If reasonable efforts have not been made towards achieving the case plan goal(s) an immediate plan is put in place to ensure compliance. This plan will continue to be reviewed by the CA and his/her Supervisor during quarterly case reviews.
7. The committee will consider whether or not a concurrent case plan goal is appropriate; whether or not diligent searches have been initiated and updated when necessary, and whether or not all required documents are in the file, such as the dependency petition and dispositional order. The committee must also verify that both parents are properly addressed in all orders. If referrals for services have not already been made, they must be documented and sent immediately after the staffing
8. Concurrent planning is undertaken when appropriate and includes: early assessment of the potential for reunification; full disclosure of options, expectations, and timeliness; early identification of potential family resources; early placement with permanent family resources; and counseling parents about relinquishment and permanency options when reunification seems unlikely.
9. The appropriateness of the case plan goal will also be discussed. A change in the case plan goal can be recommended at this time based on the efforts made as documented in the case file. This recommendation will be included in the Judicial Review and Social Studies Report (JRSSR) which will be submitted to the court for approval at the 6 month Judicial Review hearing.



10. If the child has lived with a relative or non-relative for a total of six months and the staffing committee agrees that the family is no longer in need of supervision, the Child Advocate / Dependency Case Manager can request that the court change the goal to permanent guardianship if not already the primary goal.
11. At the permanency staffing [pursuant to CLS attachment B in ChildNet's contract with the State of Florida] the Children's Legal Services Attorney will determine if there is legal sufficiency for termination of parental rights (TPR). This shall include determining whether or not TPR is in the child's best interest and determining if extraordinary circumstances exist. The committee will provide recommendations and factual evidence in making this determination. The committee shall review the factors listed on the Permanency Staffing Form in accordance with FS 39.806 Ground for Termination of Parental Rights to determine whether or not to file a petition to terminate parental rights. In addition, if the court orders a TPR staffing or court orders a TPR petition to be filed. (Note: a petition for TPR or Motion for Relief of Order must be filed 90 days from the date the court orders TPR).
12. The Child Advocate / Dependency Case Manager will bring the case file and the previous staffing review form (which includes information/recommendation from last staffing, attendees at the last staffing and any reports that were submitted) for review during the staffing. The Manager/Director/Permanency Specialist will have the Permanency Staffing Form in electronic form to facilitate the discussion and documentation of recommendation for the staffing. The permanency staffing form will be printed, signed by all parties and provided to pertinent parties at the conclusion of the staffing.
13. The parents must be invited (preferably by mail) and ask to come accompanied by their attorney(s) if legal counsel has been assigned or retained. Following a review of the case plan tasks and progress, the parents will be given an opportunity to present any additional information that is pertinent, as well as service providers to assist in determining what goal will be most appropriate in moving forward. At this portion of the meeting, the staffing participants may break and excuse the parents, their attorneys and Guardian Ad Litem, if necessary, to conclude the staffing.
14. Once the court accepts the recommendation of the staffing committee, the Child Advocate Supervisor scans a copy of the order and emails it to adoptiongoalchange@childnet.us to be assigned a secondary adoption advocate. Adoption efforts will be initiated at that time.

D. Ongoing Permanency Staffings

1. In the event a child has been in out-of-home care beyond 12 months and meets the criteria for exemption, the case must be staffed for permanency every six (6) months until permanency has been achieved or until case closure. This staffing will be chaired by the Manager/Director.



2. If it is recommended that a goal of Permanent Guardianship with a relative or non-relative is in the child's best interest, then the committee will consider recommending the case for closure if the family is stable and no longer in need of services from the Child Advocate. This recommendation will be made to the court in a Termination of Supervision report. See CN 003.062. This determination can be made at any time once a child has been in the home for a minimum of 6 months.
3. In Broward, prior to the staffing committee recommending a goal change to Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) the case must be referred for a Permanency Roundtable Staffing (PRT) and the APPLA checklist must be completed. If after the PRT staffing it is determined that a goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is in the child's best interest and they meet the criteria outlined in Chapter 39, then a permanency staffing will be held and the Child Advocate would request the approval of the recommend goal from court. If at any time during the child's time in care, the assigned Child Advocate / Dependency Case Manager determines that reunification is in the child's best interest, then a reunification staffing will be held following the guidelines of the ChildNet operating procedure CN 007.022. All appropriate supervisory staff must review and sign off on the packet of information prior to the Child Advocate / Dependency Case Manager making a recommendation to the court.
4. If it is determined that the goal of Adoption is no longer appropriate; or if it is determined that the case is unable to go forward with TPR at this time, the case will be staffed for a change of goal. The recommendations from this staffing will require review from the Children's Legal Services Office.
5. The case is reviewed by the court at a minimum every 6 months to assess the following:
 - a. the safety and appropriateness of continued placement
 - b. parent, child and sibling visitation
 - c. efforts to reunify the family and progress toward permanency
 - d. possible placement resources and best options;
 - e. appropriateness of services (e.g. mental health or substance abuse treatment services)
6. If at any time the Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager and or the Child Advocate Supervisor/Dependency Case Manager Supervisor determine a need to go court due to safety and/or compliance issues, a meeting can be held with the Children's Legal Services Attorney assigned to the case to discuss the matter at hand, in conjunction with a written request for legal assistance. A determination will be made regarding whether or not a hearing or a report to the court informing the Judge of the status of the case, are necessary.
7. If at any time any parties feel that the child would benefit from a PRT staffing a referral will be made to the Assistant Director of Permanency/PRT Manager or designee.



E. Tracking

The Child Advocate Supervisor and Manager/Director will have a dual responsibility to ensure all cases are staffed appropriately. Specifically, all newly received and reopened cases will be tracked for appropriate scheduling by the Director/Manager (or designee). The Unit Supervisors will be responsible for ensuring all cases, as well as those cases where the goals were subsequently changed by the Court or deemed necessary as a result a supervisory case review are appropriately staffed at specified timeframes.

F. Scheduling

The schedule for all staffings will be determined by the Manager/Director. In the event that additional staffings are mandated, the Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager and Child Advocate Supervisor/Dependency Case Manager Supervisor will make a concerted effort to ensure compliance and request a staffing be held accordingly. All relevant individuals associated with the case will be invited by the Child Advocate as well as notified of the date, time, and location verbally, and/or in writing if time permits.

President's Signature: _____

Date: 08-22-14