

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 6: Court	Effective Date: July 1, 2019
	Section 10: Permanency Plan	Version: 7

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will identify and recommend to the court a Permanency Plan for every child/youth adjudicated as a Child in Need of Services (CHINS). A second Permanency Plan will be identified if concurrent planning is appropriate (see policy, [5.15 Concurrent Planning](#)). All decisions made by DCS shall be made in consideration of the best interests of the child.

The Permanency Plan will be identified in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) no later than 45 days after the date the child/youth is removed from the home or date of disposition, whichever comes first.

DCS will make reasonable efforts to reunify the child/youth with his or her family unless the court finds that reasonable efforts to reunify are not required.

Note: If the court determines no reasonable efforts are required, a Permanency Hearing must be held within 30 days of the finding.

When reunification is not appropriate or possible, DCS will make and recommend to the court a second Permanency Plan in a timely manner. DCS will seek court approval of all Permanency Plans and subsequent changes.

Note: The Permanency Plan of another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is **only** available to youth 16 and older.

DCS will inform the child/youth and document the child/youth's views in the Permanency portion of the [Progress Report-Permanency](#). DCS will ensure all youth age 14 and older have the opportunity to participate in the development of Permanency Plans and to participate in court hearings. The youth's child representatives may participate in the development of the Permanency Plan.

Note: A summary of all significant changes that may have been addressed during a Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting is sufficient as opposed to attaching the entire CFT Notes document for the court. Youth age 14 years and older should have a [Youth Report to the Court](#) completed and submitted to the court by the youth if the youth is unable to attend the court hearing.

Code References

1. [IC 31-10-2-2: Consideration of the best interests of the child](#)
2. [IC 31-34-21-5.6: Exceptions to requirement to make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families](#)
3. [IC 31-34-21-5.7: Permanency plan; requirement; approval; reports and orders not required](#)

4. [IC 31-34-21-7: Permanency hearing](#)
5. [IC 31-34-21-7.5: Permanency plans prohibited if household contains certain individuals; exceptions](#)
6. [IC 31-34-21-7.7: Permanency plan; guardianship](#)
7. [45 CFR 1356.21: Application of the permanency hearing requirements](#)
8. [IC 31-34-21-5.8: Certain reasonable efforts required if preservation and reunification inconsistent with permanency plan; progress reports, case reviews, and postdispositional hearings not required](#)
9. [IC 31-9-2-22.1: "Concurrent planning"](#)

PROCEDURE

As part of the case planning process, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Discuss with the Child and Family Team (CFT), including youth age 14 years and older (See [exceptions](#) under [Practice Guidance](#)) and his or her child representatives, the potential Permanency and second Permanency Plan, if concurrent planning, or any changes to existing plans, which are no longer in the child/youth's best interest during the CFT Meeting (see policy, [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#));

Note: If a CFT Meeting is not convened or the CFT does not include the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and the resource parent, a Case Conference must be held. See policies, [5.8 Developing the Case Plan](#) and [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#).

2. Make reasonable efforts to implement the Permanency Plan;
3. Seek court approval of the Permanency Plan or any changes to existing Permanency Plan. See policy, [6.11 Permanency Hearing](#);
4. Have the Regional Permanency Team approve all decisions to change the Permanency Plan to APPLA. A Permanency Plan of APPLA must be approved by the Regional Manager and be referred for a Permanency Round Table (see policy, [8.47 Permanency Roundtables](#)).

Note: APPLA is only available as a permanency option for youth ages 16 and older.

5. Document for the court the reasonable efforts that have been made to implement the plan (see [Related Information](#));
6. Ensure that within nine (9) months from the child/youth's removal from the home or from the date of the original Disposition Decree, a finding of reasonable efforts to finalize the Permanency Plan is obtained in a court order; and
7. Enter the court findings of Reasonable Efforts in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will ensure that the Permanency Plan is documented in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) and that all above steps are completed by the FCM. The FCM Supervisor will also provide support to the FCM, as needed, in completing the steps.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Child Representatives

Beginning at 14 years of age, youth may select up to two (2) child representatives. The child representatives must be at least 18 years of age, members of the CFT, and may not be a foster

parent or FCM. The youth may select one (1) of the child representatives to also be his or her adviser, and if necessary, advocate for age appropriate activity. Child representatives are subject to the approval of DCS, and they may be rejected if there is cause to believe that they would not act in the best interest of the child.

Child and Family Team

The CFT members (including formal and informal supports, youth age 14 years and older and their child representatives) should participate in development of the child/youth's Permanency Plan. If the membership of the CFT does not include the resource parent or CASA/GAL, who are mandatory parties for the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#), a Case Plan Conference must be held in addition to the CFT Meeting to develop the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#). See policies, [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#) and [5.08 Developing the Case Plan](#) for additional information.

Exceptions to Youth (Age 14 years and older) Participation in the Permanency Plan

If DCS determines that the youth is unable to participate effectively in the development of the Permanency Plan due to a physical, mental, emotional or intellectual disability, DCS may excuse the youth from the planning process by documenting in the plan the reason for the youth's inability to participate. If the youth refuses to participate in the development of the Permanency Plan, DCS must record the refusal and document the efforts made to obtain the youth's input or participation in the development of the plan.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#)- Available in the case management system
2. [Progress Report-Permanency](#)- Available in the case management system
3. [Youth Report to the Court](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Concurrent Planning

Concurrent planning requires the identification of two (2) permanency plan goals and simultaneous reasonable efforts toward both goals with all participants. The intent of Concurrent Planning is that both plans will be pursued simultaneously and aggressively. Concurrent Planning will be considered for all CHINS cases. See policy, [5.15 Concurrent Planning](#) for more information on when to use Concurrent Planning.

Permanency Plan

The Permanency Plan is the intended permanent or long-term arrangement for care and custody of the child/youth. The Permanency Plan may include any of the following goals that the court considers most appropriate and consistent with the best interest of the child/youth:

1. (Reunification) Return to or continuation of existing custodial care within the home of the child's parents, guardian, or custodian or placement of the child with the child's noncustodial parent:
2. Placement of the child for adoption:
3. Placement of the child with a fit and willing relative who is able and willing to act as the child's permanent custodian and carry out the responsibilities required by the permanency plan:
4. Appointment of a legal guardian: and

- Supervised independent living arrangement or foster care, for a child with a permanency plan of Another Planned, Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). However, a child less than 16 years of age may not have APPLA as the child's permanency plan.

Reasonable Efforts to Preserve and Reunify Families

In determining the extent to which reasonable efforts to reunify or preserve a family are appropriate, the child/youth's health and safety are of paramount concern. DCS will exercise due diligence to identify all adult relatives of the child and adult siblings and document all due diligence efforts taken to identify the child's adult relatives.

DCS will make Reasonable Efforts to preserve and reunify families as follows:

- If a child/youth has not been removed from the child/youth's home, efforts to prevent or eliminate the need for removing the child/youth from the child/youth's home;
- If a child/youth has been removed from the child/youth's home, efforts to make it possible for the child/youth to return safely to the child/youth's home as soon as possible; or
- If a Permanency Plan has been approved, Reasonable Efforts to finalize the Permanency Plan are required. The court must issue a finding that DCS has made Reasonable Efforts to Finalize the Permanency Plan every nine (9) months. Reasonable Efforts to finalize a Permanency Plan are required to assure that a child/youth continues to be eligible for federal funding to reimburse the costs of out-of-home care and DCS's administrative expenditures.

Note: The FCM should work to complete the Permanency Plan prior to the Permanency Hearing. However, the Permanency Plan may not always be complete prior to the hearing.

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