

PERMANENCY PLANNING: IDENTITY AND LONG TERM STABILITY

The *Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework* is used to make timely decisions about the likelihood of reunification for a child who is taken into temporary care.

The Department has determined that the child is in need of protection and action is required to safeguard or promote the child's wellbeing (child is taken into care). This may be informed by previous *Signs of Safety (SofS)* mappings with the family – Form 254/255.

Note: If the child is Aboriginal, consultation must occur immediately with an Aboriginal practice leader (or another Aboriginal officer) to inform case planning.

The parallel process

Assessment and planning about the likelihood of reunification must commence from the time the child is taken into care.

Decisions about whether reunification is likely and in the child's best interests must be made within:

- 12 months for children who enter provisional protection and care aged less than 3 years, and
- two years for all other children.

Note: the reunification process can occur anytime within the first 12 months if it is assessed as safe and supported.

Primary permanency plan

is reunification with one or both parents - commence 5 stages of reunification.

Secondary permanency plan

is to consider permanent out-of-home care (OOHC) options.

Stage 1 – Planning for likelihood of reunification

Internal SofS mapping must occur within **seven working days** (using Form 515) to identify the Department's expectations of the family, which includes:

- danger statement/s and safety goal/s
- identify possible safety network
- a draft safety plan including contact arrangements.

***Note: a provisional care plan must be prepared within seven working days.**

SofS meeting with the parents (persons with parental responsibility) and the safety network must occur within **30 working days** (using Form 515) to:

- explain the harm statement (actual harm) and/or danger statement
- discuss the family's strengths and Department's safety goal/s
- identify the family's views and goals, and discuss secondary permanency plan including timeframes
- develop a safety plan including contact arrangements
- judgement: safety scale.

Will also inform the child's provisional care plan – i.e. care arrangement and contact arrangements, and any other known information about the child's needs

Stage 2 – Assessment of likelihood of reunification

SofS review meetings must occur at least **monthly** with the family and safety network to review progress on the primary and secondary permanency plans including:

- identify what action or inaction has occurred by the parents in relation to the safety plan (use multiple sources of information including direct observations of contact)
- services and supports required or provided
- progress of Words and Pictures safety explanation for the child
- judgment: safety scale.

Informs the s.143 proposal for court – Form 641 Written Proposal

Stage 3 – Decision whether to proceed with reunification (within 12 months/2 years)

- SofS internal mapping to determine what is in the child's best interests
- SofS meeting with the family and safety network to get the family's views of the Department's decision and any additional information that was considered
- Permanency planning decision must be endorsed by the district director.

YES

Stage 4 – Transition to reunification

Case plan considers issues such as:

- Planning and managing the transition
- Preparing the child
- Support for the carer
- Contact between the child and carer post reunification.

Stage 5 – Post reunification support and review

Case plan considers issues such as:

- Services and supports to prevent reunification breakdown and re-entry to care
- If an order is required.

NO

Stage 3 – Decision is made that reunification is unlikely and is not in the child's best interests.

Continue to Stage 4 – Permanency plan is for permanent OOHC.

*** There is no longer a parallel plan.**

Stage 1 – Planning Permanent OOHC

- Review the genogram and ecomap with family to explore if any members of the safety network are possible care arrangement options.
- **If the child is Aboriginal, consultation must occur with an Aboriginal practice leader (or other Aboriginal officer).**
- Get the family's ideas about permanent OOHC options.
- Discuss timeframes for decision making.

Stage 2 – Assessment of Permanent OOHC options

- Identify and assess care arrangement options (family, significant other or general foster care) to determine what is in the child's best interests.
- **Any care arrangement for an Aboriginal child must be, so far as consistent with the child's best interests and otherwise practical, in the order of priority as outlined in s.12 of the Act.**

Stage 3 – Decision: No reunification.

Stage 4 – Permanency Plan is for Permanent OOHC

- Consider if a protection order (until 18) or protection order (special guardianship) is appropriate to secure permanent OOHC, and make application to the Court.
- **Cultural considerations and care arrangement taken into account for Aboriginal children.**

Court grants protection order (time-limited)

Court grants protection order (until 18)

Court grants no order or protection order (supervision)

Court grants protection order (special guardianship)

Stage 5 – Post Permanent OOHC Support and Review

- Contact plan will reflect the permanent OOHC decision – emphasis is on maintaining relationships where it is in the child's best interests.
- Case plan (Form 515) must be reviewed at least every **three months** where no permanent care arrangement is identified and every **12 months** where a permanent care arrangement has been secured (*the case plan will inform the child's care plan*).

Child goes home – support may be provided or no further role for the Department.

Court may order contact – emphasis is on maintaining relationships where it is in the child's best interests **and to promote identity and cultural connections.**

Child to remain on a protection order (until 18).

Decision made to apply for a protection order (special guardianship). See CPM Chapter 12.

Decision made to support an application for a FCWA parenting order. See CPM Chapter 4.

Decision made to apply for a carer adoption. See CPM Chapter 10.

Case plan (Form 515) is reviewed yearly or as required.

Protection order (time-limited) remains in place - Approval required from DG to extend.

Revoke the order – Support may be provided or no further role for the Department.

Revoke protection order (time-limited) and replace with protection order (supervision).

Staff should refer to the Casework Practice Manual (CPM) entry for full details - Chapter 10

Note: red arrows indicate further decision making points where direction may change