

Case Management

Permanency and Administrative Staffings, Changes in Legal Case Plan Goal

Section 100

Policy Number 034

Origination Date 12/01/03

Revision Date 5/22/14

Regulation FAC 65C-28.006

Attachments KFF Permanency Staffing Form

Policy It is the policy of Kids First of Florida, Inc. (KFF) to seek and focus on permanence for children in out-of-home care. This means carefully considering and monitoring the conditions for return and legal case plan goal of the child as changes in the child's circumstances and changes in the parents' behavior and case plan compliance warrant, legally changing that goal when it appears to be in the best interest of the child to do so. KFF will create formal opportunities where dialog regarding the conditions for return, legal goal and progress of the parents in working toward that goal/behavior change may occur. KFF will remain in continual contact with Legal Services, in order to properly notify the Court of such changes. To ensure this policy is carried out, the following procedure is in effect.

Procedure Permanency goal –

1. Conditions for return, legal goals and progress toward meeting goals, i.e., behavior change, will be monitored throughout the life of a case.
2. When a decision is made not to return a child home, the case record will contain an explanation and justification for the selection of an alternate method of achieving permanence and evidence of the efforts to meet Conditions for Return/ reunification.
3. Permanency for the child, as required by statute, should be achieved within 12 months of child being sheltered or case initiation.
4. Supervisory dialog will occur regarding permanency at least every 90 days (or more often as indicated) through the completion and approval of a Progress Update and Supervisor Consultation.

Permanency staffings –

1. Regularly scheduled permanency staffings provide a venue for discussing the goal(s) and progress or lack thereof. The first permanency staffing will occur 5 months after shelter or case initiation, with ongoing staffings occurring every three or six months depending on the child's legal status/goal.
2. Staffings are held prior to judicial reviews and permanency hearings so information shared at the staffing can become part of the judicial review/permanency report.
3. The Permanency Staffing form is used during the Permanency Staffing.

4. Permanency staffings will be scheduled by the KFF Program Director or designee and that schedule will be provided to all parties, including but not limited to parents, attorneys, KFF staff, Guardian Ad Litem, etc. It is the responsibility of the Family Services Counselor (FSC) to serve as a back- up to notification, always contacting all parties to remind them of the staffing schedule.
5. At the permanency staffing, progress toward the conditions for return and the legal goal is discussed to determine progress toward achieving a permanent plan.
6. Critical dialog with the parents occurs during staffings which clarify for parents the need for parents to meet the conditions for return and to remain on task with case plan compliance or face the possibility that other permanency options will be considered.
7. Changes to the case plan are recommended in this venue which will more effectively move a child toward permanence within the required statutory time frames.

Goal change –

1. A change of goal may be considered by KFF, in the natural course of working a case, when it appears that such a change will move a child toward permanency in a more effective way. The change may differ from child to child; for example, from reunification to permanent guardianship or from permanent guardianship to adoption or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA).
2. At such time as KFF finds that a change in goal may be appropriate for a particular child or sibling group or a staffing recommends such a change, KFF will make recommendations to the Supervisor. It is likely that discussion will continue for some period of time while all options are weighed and circumstances monitored to ensure that the goal change remains a consistent and appropriate plan.
3. The topic of change of goal may also naturally evolve out of and be endorsed by KFF during Supervisor reviews, when placement and permanency of a child are discussed.
4. With final agreement and support of the KFF Supervisor and/or the staffing, the team will prepare the necessary documentation to present the goal change for consideration at a Permanency Staffing.
5. It is advisable for the team to notify Legal Services of their goal change recommendation prior to the staffing, so Legal Services can consider any legal implications and adequately prepare for the staffing.
6. Legal Services will enter into dialog with KFF and to come to consensus about the change in goal. Legal Services will provide critical information to KFF about whether and when the change in goal can be legally accomplished.
7. The permanency staffing is the venue in which to discuss goal changes with the parents and reinforce their need to remain compliant with the case plan tasks or face the possibility of an alternative permanency plan being recommended to the Court.
8. With consensus for the goal change with Legal Services, KFF will prepare appropriate legal

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documentation for submission to the Court for approval.

9. KFF will adequately prepare for the Court appearance to objectively dialog with the Court regarding the benefits of such goal change and changing plan for permanence.

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Regulation

Attachments

Policy

It is the policy of Kids First of Florida, Inc. (KFF), based on ethical, professional and legal responsibility, to implement a family centered approach to case planning. The system is constructed in such a manner that it involves integrity in decision-making and freedom of choice for families that moves a child toward permanence with the most expeditious path, considering safety and best interest of the child. This system is designed to not only meet the ongoing identified needs of the child, but also provides for critically needed care for periods of time when funding or a service is not immediately available. To ensure this policy is carried out, the following procedure is in effect.

Procedure

General Principles and Services –

1. All judicial case plans will comply with standard Florida Safe Family Networks (FSFN) format, as required by statute and guided by Legal Services. Case plans for FAST cases will conform to an abbreviated format, as appropriate.
2. All case plans will describe the family situation and danger threats to the child(ren), determine the permanency goal, identify desired outcomes including parental protective capacities which need to be enhanced, identify tasks and activities, determine time frames and consequences, and identify supports and services.
3. Outcome statements will be written in behavioral, measurable terms. Tasks for all parties will be clearly identified with outcomes and time frames.
4. All case plans will be created with input from the family and child (when appropriate) at a Case Planning Meeting (CPM). Case planning also includes professionals and others involved in the case, services to meet the child's individualized and special needs and for implementation of the plan. CPMs should occur within 14 days of the case transfer staffing.
5. KFF will create and monitor individualized case plans, shall supervise the care of the child, and shall coordinate the planning and services to the child and family as stated in the case plan.
6. The service is provided through a team approach which includes KFF staff, parent(s) and foster parent(s), GAL's as well as others appropriate to the child's needs.

7. Should the parents or child require services not offered by KFF, a referral shall be made to the appropriate community provider. If the service need is critical, KFF shall ensure that the service is provided in a timely manner.

8. Mechanisms to ensure that any gaps in critically needed services are identified and filled include management review and direction, consultation with appropriate parties, case review staffings and requests for the purchase of child/client services.

9. Arrangements shall be made by KFF to maintain two-way communication with the service provider. Progress and/or lack of progress made as a result of the alternate services shall be documented in FSFN. When multiple agencies share responsibility for services, the case plan will clearly define responsibility and timelines to insure that service gaps do not occur as a result of shared planning.

10. KFF shall make provisions for any available specialized health care services which are needed. Each child in out-of-home placement shall have a dental examination once every 6 months (age 3 and up) and a physical examination annually. Psychological, psychiatric evaluation and counseling shall be provided as needed.

11. KFF shall provide assistance to foster parents, including counseling and services if needed, in order to support the placement.

12. When the case plan for the child is to return to the parents, KFF shall meet with the parent(s) and the child at least every 30 days to assess progress in the following areas:

- a) Resolution of the problems which precipitated placement
- b) Any difficulties in the relationship between parent(s) and child
- c) The family's adjustment to separation
- d) Achievement of any case plan goals.

Contact with the Family –

1. KFF shall see each child and family as often as necessary to manage the safety plan and carry out the case plan, with minimum contact according to the KFF standard and safety plan. KFF is responsible for working with both child and family, unless otherwise directed by the Court.

2. The KFF standard for face-to-face contact is once every 30 days in the home; however, KFF strives to provide multiple contacts with each child per month. All contacts must be documented in FSFN within 48 hours of the contact.

3. If the child is in out-of-home placement, contact must continue with both parents and substitute care families at least every 30 days and is based on the safety plan. All contacts must be documented in FSFN within 48 hours of contact.

4. In certain situations, such as a pandemic, KFF may be permitted by the Department of Children and Families to complete visits virtually. Virtual visits will only be completed using KFF issued devices. Documentation of virtual visits will be entered in FSFN within 48 hours. Virtual visits will be completed at the same frequency as described above. The FSC/FSCS completing the virtual visit will be mindful of confidentiality and complete the visit in an area in which client confidentiality can be maintained.

5. KFF is also responsible for maintaining contact with other individuals who support or interact with the family according to the case plan and service plan, i.e., school and day care, extended family, service/treatment providers, etc. These contacts must be documented in FSFN.

Concurrent Case Planning –

1. KFF supports and adopts a concurrent case planning system, a process of working toward family reunification while, at the same time, developing an alternative permanent plan for the child.

2. Standard elements of sound concurrent case planning are a family assessment, differential diagnosis indicating low potential for successful reunification, immediate diligent search, education for the parents (about Plan A and Plan B) and full disclosure, a legally sufficient case plan, intensive early case work, use of foster/adoptive homes where there is low potential for reunification, scrupulous documentation, and implementation of Plan B when necessary.

Case Planning, Placement Services –

1. Within 60 days of initial shelter placement (out-of-home) or petition (in-home) or 15 business days from FAST referral, a written plan (case plan) to provide a permanent home for the child within 9 months or sooner is formulated in conjunction with parents, Family Services Counselor, and with the participation of the children, where feasible.

2. Case planning activities will include reasonable efforts to prepare the child's parent or parents to resume their parental roles and responsibilities unless this is contraindicated by the case plan.

3. KFF shall help the family gain access to the services necessary to preserve and strengthen the family and accomplish the goals of the case plan.

4. KFF shall assist the family to assess the problems which brought about a need for placement (when appropriate).

5. The contents of the case plan shall include, but not be limited to:
a) The responsibilities of KFF staff and parent for carrying out the steps to meet the goals of the case plan.

- b) The financial arrangements between KFF and the parents for the support of the child while in care.
 - c) The arrangement for visitation between the child and his parents, as indicated on the FSFN visitation plan and attached to the case plan.
 - d) KFF shall select the most appropriate service for the child and parent, consistent with their needs.
6. If foster care or residential care is the plan of choice, KFF shall arrange or assist in the arrangement for any specialized services the child or his family may need in order to remedy the problems which brought them to the attention of the agency.
7. KFF shall make a reasonable effort to select a placement for the child that is as home-like as possible and which is as close as possible to the home of the child's parent so that visitation between the child and his parents is possible. Consideration should also be given to placements that preserve the child in their school of origin.
8. KFF, when selecting care, shall take into consideration a child's racial, cultural, ethnic, religious heritage and sibling relationships and shall preserve them to the extent possible without jeopardizing the child's right to care or to a permanent placement.
9. KFF shall select the placement which will most effectively achieve the goals of the case plan.
10. Parents shall be involved in the placement selection, when appropriate, and the service plan consistent with the best interests of the child.
11. When the case plan for a child is foster care, KFF shall only place the child in a licensed foster home.

Case Plan Conference –

- 1. A case plan conference, facilitated by the KFF FTC Coordinator or the FSC, will be held to develop an initial case plan to be presented at Court.
- 2. The conference is normally scheduled at the initial contact with the family.
- 3. The conference is attended by the parents and parents' attorney(s) (when available), Children's Legal Services (CLS), the FSC, substitute care parents (if appropriate), and other support systems identified by the parents who have information relevant to the development of a comprehensive case plan.
- 4. Final approval for items in the case plan to be presented in Court rests with the KFF FSC, FSCS and CLS.

5. Provisions in the case plan may be negotiated in Court as necessary if there is disagreement among the parties attending the conference.
6. The Family Team Conference Worksheet and/or Case Plan Conference Signature List, used at the discretion of KFF, may assist the KFF FSC in recording participants in the conference, development of the case plan, changes to the case plan, etc. These forms are to follow the case plan and are filed in the case plan referral section of the case file.
7. Although the Case Plan is Court ordered by the Judge in the presence of attending attorneys and others attending the Hearing, KFF strives to obtain case plan signatures of all parties. It is particularly important to encourage parents, caregivers, and children (when appropriate) to sign the case plan, noting disagreement if indicated. If the parent(s) refuses to sign the plan, their refusal to do so shall be documented on the case plan document. If a parent's whereabouts are unknown, this should also be documented on the case plan.

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Regulation N/A

Attachments None

Policy It is the policy of Kids First of Florida, Inc. (KFF) to interweave a data system with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and for staff members to handle all data service interruptions in a structured and expeditious manner. To ensure this policy is carried out, the following procedures are in effect.

Procedure Management of Electronic Data Collection

1. When an investigation begins at the DCF (investigations) level, DCF enters initial client data into the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) and maintains the data until acceptance of the case by KFF.
2. After acceptance of the case by KFF, data in FSFN will be maintained by KFF.
3. FSFN will serve as the family's record of services and the Family Services Counselor (FSC), and other KFF staff with access to FSFN, will enter case information and update client information in FSFN any time a change occurs, i.e., legal status, goal, adoption finalization, etc.
4. Placement changes will be reported to the Placement Coordinator by the FSC no later than 24 hours after the change occurs.
5. Information Technology (IT), in coordination with DCF, will assist in maintaining data integrity in FSFN, as well as KFF's internal data systems.

Data Interruptions

This procedure applies to all production systems and services managed by the KFF IT Department. In the event that there is a service interruption involving production systems and services managed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the KFF staff impacted will contact the DCF Statewide Help Desk at (850) 487-9400 or Toll Free at (855) 283-5137. In the event of a declared disaster, the KFF Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Plan will supersede this procedure.

1. When a KFF production system or service is disrupted or down, or a staff member does not have access to their applications due to system or network problems, the staff member will contact the IT Department.

2. The IT Manager is responsible for coordinating the overall response to determine and implement the best solution. The IT Manager is also responsible for facilitating the response and tracking the process.
3. If the disruption is expected to last for an extended period of time, the IT Manager will notify Senior Management about the problem and will provide updates as they occur, including corrective actions taken and when the system or service is restored.
4. During the disruption, staff may access computer applications such as the Department of Children and Families' Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), through a secure connection on an alternative device.
5. Other alternative devices that should be utilized to communicate with other staff, clients and stakeholders during a disruption, include landline and cell phones and in person communication.

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Regulation FAC 65C-16

Attachments None

Policy It is the policy of Kids First of Florida to provide comprehensive foster, adoption and protective services to at-risk children and their families. With regard to adoption, it is essential to prepare a comprehensive home study to ensure a) the safety of placed children and b) an adequate and appropriate environment for the child. To ensure that this policy is carried out, the following procedure is in effect.

Procedure

1. The assigned FSC will verify that all information to complete the requirements for the child-specific section of the unified home study is contained in the Florida Safe Families Network within 90 days of a petition for the termination of parental rights being filed so that an adoption home study can be completed timely.
2. An adoption home study will be initiated when one of the following occurs:
 - i. Foster parents or a relative or non-relative caregivers who already have a child placed in their care, will inform the Family Services Counselor (FSC) who is assigned to the child that they are interested in adopting the child.
 - ii. Prospective adoptive parents who do not have a child already placed with them will make an initial inquiry to the organization either in writing or verbally. They will receive a written or verbal response within seven (7) working days.
3. Prospective adoptive parents who indicate an interest in adopting will complete the approved adoptive parenting training program except licensed foster parents and relative and non-relative caregivers who previously attended the training within the last five (5) years or have the child currently placed in their home for six (6) months or longer and been determined to understand the challenges and parenting skills needed to successfully parent the children available for adoption from foster care. The Adoption FSC conducting the home study must clearly document in the adoptive parent home study the reasons why the relative or non-relative caregiver will not be required to complete adoptive parent training.
4. During the adoptive parenting training program, prospective adoptive parents are informed of the adoption process, the effect of abuse, neglect and abandonment on children, the child welfare court process and the requirements for an adoption home study.
5. After the prospective adoptive parents have completed the approved adoptive parenting training program, an adoption FSC will complete an adoption home study. A minimum of two home visits are required for the process, with one visit to include all family members being present at the time of the visit.
6. If the prospective adoptive parent resides out of state or out of county, the adoption FSC will request an adoption home study through the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children or courtesy supervision.
7. The adoption home study will include assessment of: Type of study previously completed on family; Family composition; Motivation to adopt;

Adoptive Father's history, racial, ethnic and cultural background; Adoptive Mother's history, racial, ethnic and cultural background; Strengths and needs of each family member; Assessment of the applicants ability to provide for the physical & emotional needs of the child(ren); Adjustment of any birth children/previously adopted children and assessment of their ability to accept an adopted child into the family; Income; Housing; Discussion of School/Daycare; Discussion of Family's Religious orientation; Applicant's attitude towards the birth parents and contact with siblings if applicable; Applicant's parenting experience; Applicant's plan to discuss adoption with the child; Applicant's plan in the event they are no longer able to care for the child(ren) Child's feelings about adoption (if child is placed in the adoptive home); Screenings: references (5), fingerprints (FBI), FDLE, local police & child abuse checks according to applicable federal and state requirements; and Summary and Recommendation regarding the family's ability to meet the needs of an adopted child.

8. If after completion of the adoption home study it is determined that the adoption home study was not approved, a referral to an Adoption Review Committee (ARC) will be made. The family will be provided written notification of the decision of the ARC within ten (10) working days of the decision and it will include the reason for the denial and will advise the applicant of their judicial options.