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## POLICY 1101 – Permanency Planning Committee (PPC)

### A. POLICY

Foster care is a temporary setting. Changing a child’s permanency plan is an important and critical decision.

### B. PROCEDURES

1. All plan changes are reviewed and approved by the Permanency Planning Committee (PPC).
2. The PPC is a multi-disciplinary team designed to consider the best interests of the child and recommend guidance for case direction related to the child’s permanency options. Permanency options include the following:
  - Reunification with parents
  - Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) and Adoption
  - Permanent Guardianship
  - Guardianship
  - Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) with agreement - for children 16 and older. If this option is selected the caseworker must discuss this with the child and foster family prior to recommending a long-term foster care arrangement/agreement. If this option is selected the caseworker must discuss compelling reasons and why other more preferable options have been ruled out.
3. When adoption or permanent guardianship (with subsidy/assistance) is the approved plan, the PPC will also review and approve the specific adoptive or permanent guardianship resource for the child.
4. The permanency option recommended by the PPC is the Division’s recommended plan for the child and will be presented to Family Court for judicial approval. When a permanency plan is recommended (single or concurrent) the motion to change plan petition will be filed with Family Court as soon as possible but no longer than 30 days from the date the PPC recommendation was made.
5. Caseworkers will comply with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process, Safe and Timely Interstate Placement Act, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, and Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (October 2008) for any child placed out of the state of Delaware with a relative or kin or an adoptive family to whom the Compact or Act applies. Caseworkers will also comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

### PPC MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The PPC will be comprised of the following people:
  - a. The Regional Administrator (RA) - chairperson

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- b. The Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA) - vice chairperson
  - c. A Permanency Supervisor in the Region (may not vote on cases in the unit supervised by them)
  - d. One (1) Supervisor not directly involved with the case
  - e. The Program Manager of Adoption Services or designee
  - f. A Deputy Attorney General for the County (non-voting member)
  - g. A Foster Care Supervisor
  - h. The Permanency Coordinator
  - i. Representative from the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
  - j. Representative from the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services.
  - l. The Regional Administrator may appoint other supervisors to be a member of the committee. The RA may also invite professionals representing other disciplines, as appropriate, to join the committee permanently or on an as needed basis. Additional members will not be voting members unless appointed as permanent members to the committee.
2. The Regional Administrator, or designee, is the Chair of the Committee in each Region. The Assistant Regional Administrator is the Vice Chair and acts as the chair in the absence of the Regional Administrator. Permanency supervisors may be designated as the chair of the committee in the region where a permanency unit is located.
  3. The Regional Administrator in collaboration with the designated Chair will establish a monthly meeting date for the Committee. The group may meet more often if the need arises. Staff in the region will be informed of the meeting dates. If the Committee needs to review a pressing case outside of the regular meeting, they may do so in person, email or via teleconference, as long as a quorum exists. Meetings may only be cancelled by the chair or designee if there are no cases to review.
  4. The Committee Chair will be responsible for running the meeting and will follow the rules of order with regard to information presentation, discussion, and voting. The minimum number of voting committee members required for a committee meeting shall be five (5). In the event of a tie in voting, the Regional Administrator will break the tie.
  5. The Permanency Coordinator or designee will write the notes from the meeting to be entered into the FOCUS case within 14 working days of the meeting.
  6. Once the caseworker and supervisor have completed the referral, the committee chairperson or designee will confirm the acceptance of the referral via FOCUS and will notify the worker and supervisor of the review date and time.
  7. The chairperson or designee will distribute PPC referrals and supporting documentation to committee members five working days prior to the committee meeting. The referrals may also be viewed in FOCUS.
  8. The PPC shall discuss the case based on the presented information and decide whether to recommend a change in plan or another possible outcome. In addition, the PPC may defer the decision and outline further steps to be taken in working with the parents, or may recommend another course of action in the case, such as concurrent planning. Concurrent planning typically allows for more than one plan to be pursued at the same time. If policy or statute exists for a particular permanency option (termination of parental rights, adoptive resource, guardianship), the Committee will follow the decision-making guidelines stated in those policies or laws.

9. If the PPC recommends the family service plan and the child's plan change from reunification to another permanency plan, the Permanency Coordinator or designee must document the compelling reasons for the plan change and reasons why other permanency options have been ruled out in the PPC notes.
10. If the PPC recommends the goal of TPR and it is not appropriate to attempt reunification with a parent, the Division's recommendation to not provide reasonable efforts to reunify the child with the family must be submitted to Family Court for approval.
11. If TPR and adoption is the chosen plan, the PPC shall discuss possible adoption options such as kin, fit and willing relatives, foster family, family friends and others who may have expressed interest. The Permanency Coordinator or designee ~~must~~ will document the discussion in the PPC notes.

### **PPC REFERRALS AND CASE PRESENTATION.**

The caseworker and supervisor may refer a case to the PPC at any time to review permanency options or to obtain case permanency guidance. However, if a child has not been reunited with his family within 10 months of entering foster care, or has been in care for a total of 10 out of 15 months, the caseworker shall refer the case to the PPC. If the next scheduled court hearing is a Review Hearing, the caseworker may refer the case to the PPC after that hearing and at least 30 days prior to the permanency hearing for a plan recommendation.

1. The caseworker will use the Early Screening Guide to determine if a case should be referred to PPC for early review. The caseworker and supervisor shall refer a case to the PPC following the Preliminary Protective Hearing to consider No Reasonable Efforts (NRE) if the case meets any of the following factors:
  - The parent(s) indicate that they would like to make a plan for adoption.
  - Either of the parents has been convicted of a felony level offense against a person in which the victim was a child.
  - The child has been subjected to torture, chronic abuse, and/ or life-threatening abuse by a parent.
  - The parent(s) has had a prior involuntary termination of parental rights over a sibling of the child.
  - The child has suffered serious physical injury.
  - The parent's whereabouts are unknown.
2. The Permanency Coordinator will track all foster children needing a PPC review and will keep the regions informed.
3. Once a permanency plan has been decided by the PPC, any further change in the plan requires a new review and decision by the PPC.
4. The Supervisor shall direct the caseworker to refer the case for review by the PPC by the 10th month of foster care or if the child has been in foster care ten (10) out of fifteen (15) months for an agency recommended permanency goal.
5. The caseworker shall complete the PPC Referral Event in FOCUS for all permanency options other than adoptive resource approval and subsidized permanent guardianship. If the caseworker is recommending Permanent Guardianship Assistance/Subsidy, the caseworker shall only complete the Permanent Guardianship Referral Event. The

caseworker and supervisor will assign the Event to the committee chair or designee in the region ten (10) working days before the scheduled PPC meeting.

6. In cases where the parent resides in one county and the child(ren) in another, the caseworker referral shall be sent to the committee chair or designee in the county in which the parent resides for that committee review. If there are siblings residing in different counties, the caseworker shall refer the case to the county where the parent resides or where the family case is open.
7. The caseworker shall complete the Adoption Placement Resource Review Event when the selection of an adoptive resource is being sought.
8. The caseworker shall include the following in the PPC referral:
  - Brief description of when and why the child entered care
  - Summary of case plan elements and parent progress
  - Best interest and wishes of the child
  - Brief description of the child
  - Efforts in exploring relatives for placement and/or support
9. The caseworker shall present a brief case summary to the PPC based on the referral information. The caseworker will bring copies of significant documents (case plans, letters, e-mails, etc.) for PPC members to review if needed.
10. For a child in Purchase of Service/Purchase of Care resource, the caseworker will discuss with the contracted worker the need to present the case to the PPC prior to the referral being made. The Contractor may also initiate this discussion if he/she believes other permanency options need to be explored for the child.
11. The caseworker and supervisor are responsible for ensuring that key participants in the case, i.e. Court Appointed Special Advocate, Child Attorney, contracted agency worker(s) if applicable, foster home coordinator, and foster parent are invited to participate in the review.
12. Once the plan is approved by PPC, the caseworker shall ensure that it is presented in Family Court for judicial approval and subsequently changed on the case plan. The new goal will be used during any agency review of the case.

**SUBSEQUENT REVIEWS:** Once a permanency plan has been decided, any further change in the goal requires a new referral, review and recommendation by the PPC.

**C. FOCUS**

These events are completed in FOCUS:

- a. Permanency referral/Supervisor Approval
- b. Permanency Resource Review (Adoption or Permanent Guardianship)/Supervisor Approval

**D. FORMS** Use the DFS policy website to access any forms:

<https://kids.delaware.gov/policies/dfs-policies>

Early Screening Guide