

Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement Instructions

Which Cases

The Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement must be completed for:

- All children and youth in the legal custody of a local child welfare agency;
- Children and youth for whom the local child welfare agency has placement responsibility who are placed outside the home;
- Children and youth who are placed with parents or relatives or other court-approved placements, including youth who are living in Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement, when the local child welfare agency has been given or retains legal custody; and
- Families with children/youth who are returned home on a trial visit so long as the local child welfare agency retains custody.

Note: One Family Services Agreement is completed for the entire family **except** for cases:

- Involving domestic violence that require separate plans for the parents; or
- When the child welfare agency has identified a safety issue that requires separate plans for different parties of the case.

The **purpose** of the Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement is to:

- Clarify with the family reasons for county child welfare agency involvement;
- Identify resources within the family that will help the child achieve a safe, permanent home;
- Involve the family in identifying areas that need improvement;
- Clarify expectation for behavioral change with all persons involved; and
- Acknowledge the family's strengths and commitment to their child.

Required Timeframes

The Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement must be:

- Completed within 30 days of removal of the child from the home;
- Reviewed (and updated, if needed) within 60 days of removal of the child from the home;
- Updated every 90 days thereafter (these updates track with required Permanency Planning Reviews); and
- Updated within 30 days of the court's decision to change the child's permanent plan.

Participants

The Family Services Agreement development and updates must be completed jointly by the child welfare worker, the parents/caretakers, the child or youth as appropriate to age or developmental level, and any other person(s) identified by the family. If the child or youth is a member or is eligible to be a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe or is the biological child of a tribal member, a person appointed by and representing the tribe must be involved in the development of the agreement. If the youth is 14 years of age or older he/she must be consulted during the development of the agreement and is allowed, at his/her option, to appoint up to **two** members of the team who are not a foster parent or the youth's social worker.

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Development and Completion of Agreement:

One Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement is completed for the entire family **except** for cases:

- Involving domestic violence that require separate plans for the parents;
- In which the child welfare agency has identified a safety issue that requires separate plans for different parties of the case; or
- In which different permanent plans have been identified for siblings.

To best utilize the meeting time, case demographics can be completed by the agency worker prior to the meeting. The goal on the Family Services Agreement is the permanent plan identified for the child(ren) by the court. The needs are identified on the Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs (when the goal is reunification). The objectives and activities must be developed in partnership with the family and written in the family's terms.

The initial Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement can be developed during a Child and Family Team Meeting or individually with the family during a home visit. The family should drive the manner in which the agreement is developed. Families may choose to develop, review and update their Family Services Agreement in partnership with the members of the Permanency Planning Review Team, in a separate Child and Family Team meeting, or they may choose to review and update their agreement one-on-one with the assigned child welfare worker during a home or office visit. However, the Family Services Agreement is always reviewed as part of the Permanency Planning Review.

NOTE: It is important to identify the reason for child welfare involvement (to ensure the family understands what must be addressed).

➤ Objectives and Activities to Address Identified Needs or Barriers

• Primary and Secondary Plans

- Check the appropriate box to indicate whether the objective applies to the child/youth's primary or secondary permanent plan or both and indicate the primary and/or secondary plan.

• Factor: Need / Barrier

- Identify the three highest priority needs from the Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs using separate pages for each need.
- The greatest need should be addressed first in the Family Services Agreement.
- For permanent plans other than reunification, identify barriers to achieving the identified permanent plan.

NOTE: Barriers are defined as an activity or condition that would prevent achievement of the identified permanent plan.

• Describe Behaviors that are of Concern or Status of Barrier

- Specify the conditions or behaviors identified in the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment and Family Reunification Assessment tools that need to be resolved before reunification can occur or that place the child or youth at risk of future harm.
- For permanent plans other than reunification, describe the status of the barrier identified above.

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- **Objective / Desired Outcome**

- In the family's terms, describe specifically what the desired behavior, condition, expected changes, or overcoming the barrier will look like when the need/barrier is met so the family and the worker are clear about what is expected and when it has to be accomplished.
- The family should be involved in the development of the outcome statements.
- The objective is a statement that clarifies for the family, the agency, and others supporting the plan, how everyone will know when a behavior of concern has been addressed.

- **Activities**

- The activity chart provides spaces to describe the activity, the person responsible for each activity, the target date for starting and/or accomplishing the activity, and activity progress notes (to be completed beginning with the first update of the Family Services Agreement).
- All activities and persons responsible for completing activities in order to achieve the objective should be included in this section.
- The chart includes a section for activities to be completed by the parent/family member and a separate section for activities to be completed by the child welfare agency.
- Be specific about each activity to be conducted.

NOTE: Objectives and Activities to address the identified needs/barriers must be completed regardless of the child/youth's permanent plan (primary and secondary plan).

- **Progress toward Achieving the Objective / Desired Outcome**

- The child welfare worker should note the date of the review of the Family Services Agreement and check the appropriate status.
- There is room on this form for three progress updates toward achieving the objective.
- If the box "no longer appropriate" is selected, please explain why, and explain why this does not negatively affect the child/youth's safety and risk of future harm.
- If some but not all of the objectives are achieved, check "partially achieved" and explain in the space provided.

- **Parent(s) Well-being Needs / Additional Needs**

The child welfare agency should identify any additional needs of the parent(s) that are not identified as a Factor and describe how those needs will be addressed. An example of a need that might be identified here is transportation or employment. Even though a lack of transportation or employment may not have been associated with the child(ren) coming into county child welfare custody, either of these needs could significantly impact a parent's ability to accomplish activities identified in the Family Services Agreement. Identification of a parent well-being need and activities to address that need may be very important in achieving reunification.

- **Court**

Ensure that court ordered services and/or activities are incorporated into the Family Services Agreement. If not, explain why. Provide the date of the next hearing and identify recommendations regarding the parent(s)/caretaker(s) services or barriers for the next court review. Also provide the date for the last court review.

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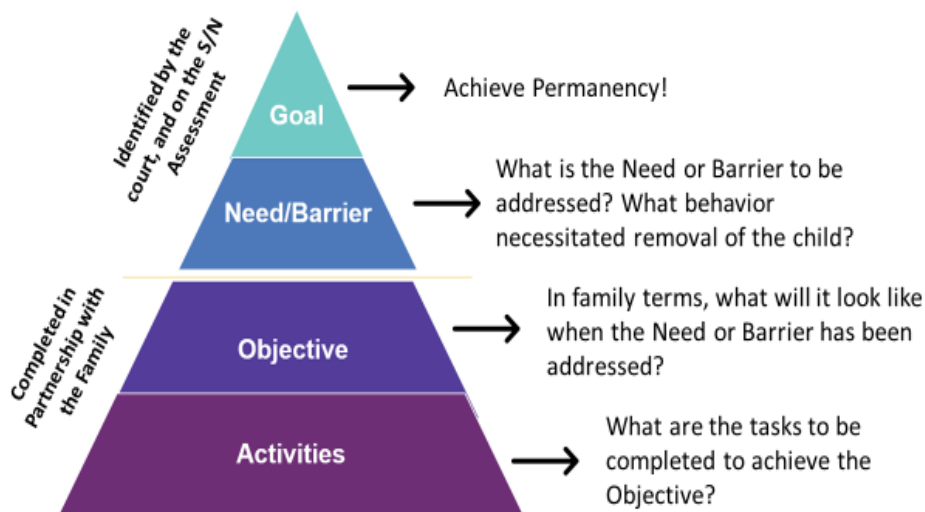
➤ Signatures

The signature page is to be signed by persons who participated in the development of and any updates to the Family Services Agreement, including but not limited to, the parent(s), child(ren)/youth, placement provider, potential adoptive parent or guardian, child welfare worker, child welfare supervisor, Guardian ad Litem, Tribal Representative, or others. By signing the agreement, parties involved with the development and updates of the agreement are acknowledging that they understand their role in the agreement and in meeting the identified needs.

If a parent or caregiver refuses to sign the Family Services Agreement, the worker should try to address the individual's concerns and stress the need for working together to reunify the child or youth with the family. The parent or caregiver may verbally agree to the agreement even if they refuse to sign the agreement. In this case, the social worker should document that the parent or caregiver verbally agreed to the agreement. If a parent or caregiver agrees with the objective but not with the activities, he or she should be given an opportunity to define activities that he or she feels would be appropriate to achieve the objective.

The date of the signature must be documented on the form. A copy of the agreement must be given to all parties involved in the development or updates of the agreement and the date the copy was provided must be recorded on the agreement.

Framework for Developing the Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement



Nonresident/Non-offending Parents

When either the primary or secondary plan is reunification, the activities to find, contact, and/or engage any nonparticipating parent must be identified on the Family Services Agreement. If a parent has not been located, contacted, and/or assessed, the agency will be unable to complete the Strengths and Needs Assessment and unable to identify the parent's needs. For cases with a plan of reunification and no ability to complete the Strengths and Needs Assessment, the agency must still create an objective and activities for locating and engaging the nonparticipating parent. The agency should specify a barrier to reunification as "locate and

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engage parent". Activities entered to address that barrier should include, but are not limited to, what is appropriate from the following:

- Locate the parent;
- Contact the parent;
- Assess parent's strengths, needs, and ability to provide for his or her child; and
- Based on the assessment and the identified needs, engage parent to develop a Family Services Agreement with activities to address those needs.

Indicate how often the agency will make efforts to locate, assess, contact and engage the parent and who will be responsible for those activities.

Review Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs and Reunification Assessment/Risk Reassessment

Attach current assessments to include what is appropriate of:

- Strengths and Needs Assessment
- Reunification Assessment or Risk Reassessment

Review and/or update these forms concurrently with the permanency planning review and/or family services agreement update.

The top 3 Needs from the Strengths and Needs Assessment for the parent(s) should be the Needs identified and addressed on the Family Services Agreement.