



CENTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
CHILD WELFARE PERMANENCY REFORMS

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Promising Practices in Concurrent Planning:

Collaborative Case Reviews Early in Case History and Ongoing

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This series of brief publications, *Promising Practices in Concurrent Planning*, provides descriptions of select practices identified through preliminary analysis of data from the study: Child Welfare Permanency Reforms. This study examines the implementation of concurrent planning in 6 California counties through focus groups and interviews with a variety of stakeholders in concurrent planning cases (i.e., social workers, supervisors, and child welfare managers; attorneys and judges; and foster parents and birth parents). Promising Practices from several non-study counties and agencies with well-developed concurrent planning approaches have also been examined. The practice approach described below represents work conducted in one or more of the following county child welfare agencies: Contra Costa, Mendocino, Monterey, Placer, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Mateo, and Yolo counties, as well as the Foster Family Agency, Sierra Adoptions. Although none of these Promising Practices have been empirically examined in terms of their impact on child and family outcomes, each of those highlighted appears to reflect and support efforts to implement concurrent planning.

Promising Practice: *Regular collaborative case reviews encourage thoughtful discussion of concurrent planning alternatives, and provide collegial and supervisory support for workers making difficult decisions in limited time frames. Reviews begin early in case involvement to identify children needing a permanent plan and ensure participants retain a sense of urgency regarding the need to consider concurrent plans (e.g., prior to the Jurisdictional/Dispositional Hearing; every 3 months for children under 3 years, every 6 months for children over 3; and reviews every 6 months for all children past termination of reunification services).*

Concurrent planning decisions are difficult to make, particularly within short time frames. In order to promote the timely consideration of concurrent plans early in case histories, case reviews are implemented that are both systematic and supportive toward workers making case decisions. The highlights of several counties' approaches are presented here. The goals of these agency review meetings are to (1) assure that concurrent plans are developed for every child entering the child welfare system; (2) monitor concurrent plans and address changes in status or need; and (3) encourage thoughtful discussion of concurrent planning alternatives, and assist workers with decision-making by providing collegial and supervisory support.

Initial CCP Assessment/Development

For all children with Family Reunification case plans, an initial, mandatory meeting to assess and develop a concurrent plan is held. This meeting occurs between the Detention Hearing and the Juris/Dispo Hearing. Present at the meeting include the Emergency Response/Court worker, an Adoption Worker/Supervisor and a Family Reunification Worker/Supervisor. Together, they develop a concurrent plan after careful review of the child and the birth family's circumstances, the reunification plan and the reunification prognosis. The concurrent plan, or the steps being taken to develop the concurrent plan, are documented in the case record and in the Juris/Dispo court report.

CCP Evaluation

This committee meets to review all cases in which a child has been removed from the parents and remains in emergency foster care (or any other non-concurrent planning home) for more than 45 days. A core group of child welfare employees sits on the review team, including supervisors from units specializing in adoption, foster care licensing, group home placements and foster family agency care. If deemed appropriate, the child's foster parent or FFA representative will be included in the meeting.

At the meeting the committee assesses the case and, if appropriate, develops a plan geared towards locating and placing the child in a potentially permanent home. The discussion allows for consideration of alternative viewpoints and is designed to promote both thorough and efficient decision-making. At this meeting an adoption worker may be secondarily assigned to the case in order to provide assistance to the case-carrying worker, and/or to provide support and services to the concurrent planning home. If, at this meeting, it appears likely that the child will reunify the committee will assist the social worker in deciding upon the most appropriate non-concurrent planning placement, and the worker will bring the case back for review if circumstances change.

On-Going CCP Review

The next point of assessment for concurrent planning occurs 60 days prior to all review hearings. At this juncture the social worker is required to refer all cases to a review committee for re-evaluation for concurrent planning. If reunification with the birth parents appears unlikely, and the child is not already in a concurrent home, the review team may recommend that the social worker search for and facilitate such a placement. In addition, an adoption worker may be assigned secondarily to the case.

This on-going review serves as a trigger to re-focus the case-carrying social worker on the need for permanence for the child (if not with the birth parent, then with a concurrent family). Workers are offered assistance from colleagues in the process of thoughtfully considering various permanency alternatives for the child.

The review meetings described here offer collaborative opportunities to consider concurrent planning, to involve workers or units specializing in adoption and/or placement so that reunification workers need not carry the burden of decision-making alone, and to make other social workers aware of the child and his/her needs.

