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DEVELOPING SERVICE PLAN

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DEVELOPING SERVICE PLAN

12.1 Introduction

The active involvement of parents, prior custodians, relatives, resource families, and other significant individuals in developing and implementing service plans with the child or youth, is integral to creating realistic, family and youth-driven plans. When families are fully engaged in these processes, there is increased likelihood that the service and transition plan activities and objectives will be successfully completed.

There shall be a service plan for every child in foster care. Federal and state law require that the safety of the child shall be the paramount concern in service planning ([§ 16.1-281](#)).

To help children achieve permanency, careful service planning is essential. Service workers provide assistance to families in very complex and often emotionally-laden situations, with unique desired outcomes. Intervening appropriately increases the likelihood of the service worker's interventions helping everyone to accomplish their goals and increasing the child's safety and well-being.

Service planning is fundamental to effectively serving children and families. Good service planning requires a comprehensive assessment as the basis for the plan. It also involves carefully thinking through the best course of action to achieve a goal and requires a series of steps that shall be executed in proper order. The following steps should involve the child, family, and other significant individuals as appropriate:

- Define the problem or need to be addressed.
- Gather and consider comprehensive information to be sure the nature and causes of the problem or need are fully understood, and to identify the strengths and resources available to the child and family to address the problem or need.

- Clarify what needs to be achieved and define concrete ends to be achieved (objectives).
- Discuss and consider possible courses of action that could achieve the desired ends and choose the most appropriate actions.
- Identify who will do what, how they will do it, and by when it will be accomplished.
- Regularly assess if the actions are successful and reassess whether the ends, actions, or persons responsible for the actions needs to be changed.

Finally, service plans fulfill court requirements, provide necessary documentation, and help ensure program and fiscal accountability.¹

12.2 Framework

The local department of social services (LDSS) shall use federal and state legal requirements, and should use sound practice principles and desired outcomes to guide decision making in developing the service plan.

12.2.1 Practice principles

Three fundamental principles in Virginia's Children's Services System Practice Model provide the philosophical basis and guide practice for decision making on developing service plans:

First, we believe in family, child, and youth-driven practice.

- Children and families will be treated with dignity and respect. The voices of children, youth, and parents are heard, valued, and considered in the decision making regarding safety, permanency, and well-being, as well as in service and educational planning and in placement decisions.
- Each individual's right to self-determination will be respected within the limits of established community standards and laws.
- Family members are the experts about their own families. It is our responsibility to understand children, youth, and families within the context of their own family rules, traditions, history, and culture.
- We engage families in a deliberate manner. Through collaboration with families, we develop and implement creative, individual solutions that build on

¹ Adapted from: Rycus, J.S. and Hughes, R.C.; "Field Guide to Child Welfare: Case-planning and Family-centered Casework" Vol. II; Child Welfare League of America, 1998

their strengths to meet their needs. Engagement is the primary door through which we help youth and families make positive changes.

Second, we believe in partnering with others to support child and family success in a system that is family-focused, child-centered, and community-based.

- We are committed to working across agencies, stakeholder groups, and communities to improve outcomes for the children, youth, and families we serve.

Third, we believe that how we do our work is as important as the work we do.

- As we work with children, families, and their teams, we clearly share with them our purpose, role, concerns, decisions, and responsibility.

12.2.2 Legal excerpts

The legal framework and specific requirements for developing service plans are delineated in federal and state law. Some key citations are provided below. See the law for complete language by clicking on the citation.

- **Requiring foster care plan**

(§ [16.1-281 A](#)). In any case in which (i) a local board of social services places a child through an agreement with the parents or guardians where legal custody remains with the parents or guardian, or (ii) legal custody of a child is given to a local board of social services or a child welfare agency, the LDSS or child welfare agency shall prepare a foster care plan for such child, as described hereinafter. The individual family service plan developed by the family assessment and planning team pursuant to § [2.2-5208](#) may be accepted by the court as the foster care plan if it meets the requirements of this section.

- **Involving parents in the foster care plan**

(§ [16.1-281 A](#)). ...The representatives of such department or agency shall involve the child's parent(s) in the development of the plan, except when parental rights have been terminated or the LDSS or child welfare agency has made diligent efforts to locate the parent(s) and such parent(s) cannot be located, and any other person or persons standing in loco parentis at the time the board or child welfare agency obtained custody or the board placed the child.

B. The foster care plan shall describe in writing ... (ii) the participation and conduct which will be sought from the child's parents and other prior custodians;

- **Involving the child in the foster care plan**

(§ [16.1-281](#)). The representatives of such department or agency shall involve the child in the development of the plan, if such involvement is consistent with the best interests of the child. In cases where either the parent(s) or child is not involved in the development of the plan, the department or agency shall include in the plan a full description of the reasons therefore.

- **Developing a youth-directed transition plan**

([Social Security Act, Title IV, § 475 \(5\) \(H\) \[42 USC 675\]](#)) ...during the 90-day period immediately prior to the date on which the child will attain 18 years of age...a caseworker on the staff of the State agency, and, as appropriate, other representatives of the child provide the child with assistance and support in developing a transition plan that is personalized at the direction of the child, includes specific options on housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, and work force supports and employment services, and is as detailed as the child may elect.

- **Providing for family and foster parent participation in the family assessment and planning team (FAPT)**

(§ [2.2-5208](#)). Every such team, in accordance with policies developed by the community policy and management team, shall: ...

2. Provide for family participation in all aspects of assessment, planning and implementation of services;

3. Provide for the participation of foster parents in the assessment, planning and implementation of services when a child has a program goal of permanent foster care or is in a long-term foster care placement. The case manager shall notify the foster parents of a troubled youth of the time and place of all assessment and planning meetings related to such youth. Such foster parents shall be given the opportunity to speak at the meeting or submit written testimony if the foster parents are unable to attend. The opinions of the foster parents shall be considered by the family assessment and planning team in its deliberations;

- **Components of the foster care plan**

([Social Security Act, Title IV, § 475 \(1\) \[42 USC 675\]](#)). (1) The term "case plan" means a written document which includes at least the following:

(A) A description of the type of home or institution in which a child is to be placed, including a discussion of the safety and appropriateness of the placement

and how the agency which is responsible for the child plans to carry out the voluntary placement agreement entered into or judicial determination made with respect to the child in accordance with [section 472\(a\)\(1\)](#).

(B) A plan for assuring that the child receives safe and proper care and that services are provided to the parents, child, and foster parents in order to improve the conditions in the parents' home, facilitate return of the child to his own safe home or the permanent placement of the child, and address the needs of the child while in foster care, including a discussion of the appropriateness of the services that have been provided to the child under the plan.

(C) The health and education records of the child, including the most recent information available regarding-

(i) the names and addresses of the child's health and educational providers;

(ii) the child's grade level performance;

(iii) the child's school record;

(iv) a record of the child's immunizations;

(v) the child's medications; and

(vi) any other relevant health and education information concerning the child determined to be appropriate by the State agency.

(D) Where appropriate, for a child age 16 or over, a written description of the programs and services which will help such child prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living.

(E) In the case of a child with respect to whom the permanency plan is adoption or placement in another permanent home, documentation of the steps the agency is taking to find an adoptive family or other permanent living arrangement for the child, to place the child with an adoptive family, a fit and willing relative, a legal guardian, or in another planned permanent living arrangement, and to finalize the adoption or legal guardianship. At a minimum, such documentation shall include child specific recruitment efforts such as the use of State, regional, and national adoption exchanges including electronic exchange systems to facilitate orderly and timely in-State and interstate placements.....

(G) A plan for ensuring the educational stability of the child while in foster care, including—

(i) assurances that the placement of the child in foster care takes into account the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement; and

(ii)(I) an assurance that the State agency has coordinated with appropriate local educational agencies (as defined under section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) to ensure that the child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement; or

(II) if remaining in such school is not in the best interests of the child, assurances by the State agency and the local educational agencies to provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school, with all of the educational records of the child provided to the school.

(§ [16.1-281 B](#)). The foster care plan shall describe in writing (i) the programs, care, services and other support which will be offered to the child and his parents and other prior custodians; (ii) the participation and conduct which will be sought from the child's parents and other prior custodians; (iii) the visitation and other contacts which will be permitted between the child and his parents and other prior custodians, and between the child and his siblings; (iv) the nature of the placement or placements which will be provided for the child; and (v) for children 14 years of age and older, the child's needs and goals in the areas of counseling, education, housing, employment, and money management skills development, along with specific independent living services that will be provided to the child to help him reach these goals. In cases in which a foster care plan approved prior to July 1, 2011, identifies independent living as the goal for the child, and in cases involving children admitted to the United States as refugees or asylees who are 16 years of age or older and for whom the goal is independent living, the plan shall also describe the programs and services which will help the child prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living.

If consistent with the child's health and safety, the plan shall be designed to support reasonable efforts which lead to the return of the child to his parents or other prior custodians within the shortest practicable time which shall be specified in the plan. The child's health and safety shall be the paramount concern of the court and the agency throughout the placement, case planning, service provision and review process.

If the department or child welfare agency concludes that it is not reasonably likely that the child can be returned to his prior family within a practicable time, consistent with the best interests of the child, in a separate section of the plan the department, child welfare agency or team shall (a) include a full description of the reasons for this conclusion; (b) provide information on the opportunities for placing the child with a relative or in an adoptive home; (c) design the plan to lead to the child's successful placement with a relative if a subsequent transfer of custody to the relative is planned, or in an adoptive home within the shortest practicable time, and if neither of such placements is feasible; (d) explain why permanent foster care is the plan for the child or independent living is the plan for the child in cases involving children admitted to the United States as refugees or asylees who are 16 years of age or older and for whom the goal is independent living. "Independent living" as used in this section has the meaning set forth in § [63.2-100](#).

- **Foster care plan sent by court**

(§ [16.1-281 C](#)). A copy of the entire foster care plan shall be sent by the court to the child, if he is 12 years of age or older; the guardian ad litem for the child, the attorney for the child's parents or for any other person standing in loco parentis at the time the board or child welfare agency obtained custody or the board placed the child, to the parents or other person standing in loco parentis, and such other persons as appear to the court to have a proper interest in the plan. However, a copy of the plan shall not be sent to a parent whose parental rights regarding the child have been terminated. A copy of the plan, excluding the section of the plan describing the reasons why the child cannot be returned home and the alternative chosen, shall be sent by the court to the foster parents.

- **Hearing by court to review and approve plan**

(§ [16.1-281 C](#)). A hearing shall be held for the purpose of reviewing and approving the foster care plan. If the judge makes any revision in any part of the foster care plan, a copy of the changes shall be sent by the court to all persons who received a copy of the original of that part of the plan.

12.3 Engaging family and key partners in developing the service plan

The service worker responsible for case management shall involve the parents or prior custodians in developing the foster care service plan. The service worker shall also involve the child in developing the plan, consistent with the best interests of the child (§ [16.1-281](#)).

The service worker shall also involve the resource parents in service planning, as well as family members and other individuals identified by the child or family as significant to them and whose presence in the service planning meetings they desire. The service worker should attempt to involve other service providers and agencies that are involved with the child and family.

Actively engaging the child, family members, and other significant individuals leads to service plans and decisions that are more individualized and relevant to the family, thus increasing the likelihood of implementation and creating more opportunity for lasting change (see [Section 2.6](#)). Family members and other individuals who have significant relationships with the child and family may be able to provide important resources and supports for inclusion in the service plan (see [Section 2.4](#)).

Parents do not have to be included in the service plan when parental rights have been terminated or the LDSS has made diligent efforts to locate the parent(s) and such parent(s) cannot be located ([§ 16.1-281](#)).

The service worker may refer the child and family to the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) for assistance in identifying their strengths, needs, services, and resources. The service worker's decision to refer a case to the FAPT should be guided by local Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT) procedures for referral.

12.4 Foster Care Service Plan format requirements

The LDSS shall complete the Foster Care Service Plan in OASIS. The LDSS may use the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) developed by the FAPT if the plan meets the requirements of the Foster Care Service Plan listed in the following sections and is accepted by the court as a substitute ([§ 16.1-281](#)).

12.5 What shall be included in Foster Care Service Plan

The service plan should describe the complement of services and supports required to achieve the permanency goal for the child. The plan should address the unique needs of the child and family and should build upon their strengths, resources, and natural supports, as identified through the comprehensive child and family assessment process (see [Section 5](#)). Services should be for a planned period of time to meet specific needs.

The service plan shall directly address any needs or conditions that led to the placement of the child as described in the Child Protective Services Safety Assessment and the Foster Care Initial Assessment as needing remediation. It shall also describe appropriate services and supports that will be offered to the child in foster care and his or her family to address these needs. These services and supports shall be documented in the child's Foster Care Service Plan or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

The Code of Virginia (§ [16.1-281](#)) and federal law describe the requirements for the Foster Care Service Plan.

12.5.1 Part A of the Foster Care Service Plan

Part A shall include:

- The reason the child came into care and why placement is needed.
- The services offered to prevent removal of the child from the home of the birth parents/prior custodian.
- The child's situation at the time of placement in relation to the child's family. *If the child has been placed in a foster family home or child-care institution a substantial distance from the home of the parent(s), or in a different State, the service plan shall explain the reasons why such a placement is in the best interests of the child;*
 - o Assurances that if the child has been placed in foster care in a State outside the state in which the his parent(s) are located (usually this will be Virginia), an agency caseworker on the staff of the Virginia LDSS, or the State in which the child has been placed, or of a private agency under contract with Virginia, visits the child and submits a report on the visit to the State where the home of the child's parent(s) is located;
- *The appropriateness of all services provided to the child, family and foster parents as they relate to the reasons the child entered care and the services provided to enhance the child's safety and well-being while in care.*
- The most recent information available regarding the child's educational status, including:
 - o The child's State Testing Identification (STI) Number for the child of compulsory age for school attendance, meaning the child was age five (5) on or before September 30 of the school year through his or her 18th birthday (§ [22.1-254 A](#)). The sole purpose of documenting the STI number is to allow VDSS to obtain educational outcome information on children in foster care from the Virginia Department of Education.
 - o If an STI number cannot be entered despite reasonable efforts to obtain the number, document the reasons on the service plan. Younger children or older youth may have an STI number which shall be entered.
 - The STI number is confidential by law and shall be protected by LDSS as all confidential child information is maintained (§ [63.2-104](#)). The STI number shall only be entered into OASIS. The STI

number will only appear on the OASIS screen; it does not appear on the previewed or printed service plan. Do not write the number on the printed service plan or include it in the body of the service plan.

- o How to get the number:
 - The STI number is located on the student's SOL Report or the LDSS may contact the person responsible for student records at the child's school to obtain the number.
 - For the child who entered foster care through a non-custodial foster care agreement, the LDSS shall request the child's parent who has legal custody of the child to obtain the child's STI number from the school.
- o A summary of activities demonstrating that during initial and subsequent placements of a child, the LDSS:
 - Took into account the appropriateness of the child's current educational setting and the distance from potential placements to the school in which the child was enrolled (e.g., talked with representative from current school, the conclusions reached on the appropriateness of the educational setting, and the distance from potential placements).
 - Made the placement decisions and immediately coordinated with the child's school to ensure the child remained enrolled in the same school in which he or she was enrolled prior to the placement change, unless contrary to the child's best interests (e.g., met with key partners to determine child's best interest, the determination made at the meeting, the best interest determination form placed in the child's case record).
 - Immediately and appropriately enrolled the child in his or her new school when it was in the child's best interest to change schools (e.g., child was presented to school with all required documents; immediate enrollment form placed in the child's case record).
- o Statement that the child is either:
 - Enrolled as a full-time elementary or secondary school student;
 - Has completed secondary school; or
 - Is incapable of participating in school full-time due to a documented and regularly updated medical condition.

This includes children in school, home school, and independent study programs.

- o List of information available in the child's case record, including:
 - The names and addresses of the child's educational providers.
 - The child's school record, including attendance, and Individualized Education Plans (IEP), 504 plans, or gifted status, as appropriate.
 - The child's performance in school, including age for grade level, report card, and standards of learning tests results.
- o Any other relevant educational information concerning the child.
- The most recent information available regarding the child's health, including:
 - o The child's health status, including any allergies and health conditions;
 - o List of information available in the child's case record, including:
 - The names and addresses of the child's primary care, medical, specialty, dental, mental health, and substance abuse providers, as appropriate.
 - A record of the child's immunizations.
 - The child's medications, including psychotropic drugs.
 - o Any other relevant health information concerning the child.
- The nature of the placement or placements that will be provided the child. This shall include a description of the type of home or facility in which the child is to be placed.
- A discussion of the appropriateness of the placement *and how the placement will provide a safe environment for the child*. This should also include decisions made during the Family Partnership Meeting, efforts made to place the child with extended family members, efforts made to place the child in the least restrictive (most family like) setting available that *is in the best interest of the child* and can meet any special needs of the child, and the efforts made to place the child in close proximity to the parent's home.
- A discussion of how any court orders in respect to this child were carried out.

- The needs that should be met to achieve the goal for the child. Needs should be identified for the child, the birth parents/prior custodians, and foster parents.
- A plan for visitation between the child and parent/prior custodians. If siblings are separated, a plan for visitation and communication with siblings shall also be included. The visitation or communication plan should take into account the wishes of the child. *The service plan should include specific objectives for parents including frequency and location of visits and expected observations that would demonstrate adequate parenting* and state any restrictions or limitations to the visits or communications. The communications may include, but are not limited to, face-to-face visits, telephone calls, and email correspondence.
- The permanency goal selected for the child and family including the rationale as to why this goal is selected.
- If a concurrent permanency plan is developed, the service plan shall identify the concurrent goal selected for the child and the needs and services related to achieving the concurrent goal.
- The program, care, services, and support which will be offered and a discussion of how these services will meet the specific needs of the child, parents/prior custodian, and foster parents. For teens 14 or over, the specific independent living services to meet the needs of the youth to assist the youth, family, and foster family or care provider in the youth's transition to independence.
- Prior to and within the 90 days prior to the older youth turning age 18 or discontinuing foster care services, the LDSS, and other individuals as appropriate, will offer assistance to the youth to update his foster care service plan, or independent living services and transition plan that is attached to the service plan, focusing specifically on the independent living services, skills, and resources the youth will need to transition from foster care and become self-sufficient and interdependent. The LDSS shall allow and assist the youth in directing the development of the updated plan and shall include all the information deemed necessary by the youth and consistent with the youth's need for safety and well-being.
- Target dates for completion of the services provided to the child, the parents/prior custodians, and foster parents.
- Responsibilities, including conduct and support, which will be sought from the parents or prior custodians, including target dates for completion.

- Responsibilities assigned to the child, foster parents, adoptive parents, or other provider with target dates for completion.
- The projected date for goal achievement.
- Description of how the child, parents or prior custodians, foster parents or other providers, and any additional individuals who are part of the child's or family's social support network were involved in the planning process. If the child and parents/prior custodians were not involved, the reasons shall be explained.

12.5.2 Part B of the Foster Care Service Plan

A separate section of the Foster Care Service Plan or the IFSP shall be completed when the child cannot be returned to the parents or prior custodians within a practicable time ([§ 16.1-281](#)). Complete Part B of the Foster Care Service Plan form, based on the goal for the child.

- Describe fully the reasons the child cannot return home within a practicable time, consistent with the child's best interests.
- Describe the opportunities and plans for achieving the following goals and the reasons these goals are or are not feasible:
 - o Achieving Adoption within the shortest practicable time.
 - o Achieving Placement with Relatives if a subsequent transfer of custody is planned.

If the goals of Return Home, Adoption, or Placement with Relatives with a subsequent custody transfer are not feasible, and the reasons have been described:

- Explain why Permanent Foster Care is the plan for the child, describing the significant relationship with the foster parent(s) and how the child's needs will be met on a long-term basis; or
- Explain why Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement is the plan for the child, describing the child's severe, chronic, and disabling condition that is emotional, physical, or neurological in nature and that requires long-term residential treatment of six (6) months or longer. Explain why all other goals have been ruled out.

12.6 Completion of Foster Care Service Plan and submission to court

A full service plan on all children shall be completed in OASIS and, if the IFSP is used, it shall be filed in the case record. The service plan shall be completed within:

- Sixty days of custody/placement (whichever comes first) of a child through court commitment, non-custodial foster care agreement, or a permanent entrustment agreement; or
- **Within 30 days** of signing a temporary entrustment for a placement of 90 days or more; the plan is the basis for requesting court approval of the entrustment.

The completed service plan shall be submitted to court within 60 days of custody or placement, unless the child:

- Is living in his own home.
- Is in an adoptive placement.
- Has had a plan previously filed with the court as a result of the agency's seeking court approval of a temporary entrustment or non-custodial foster care placement.

The judge may extend the time for submitting the service plan to the court an additional 60 days. The LDSS shall still have a completed service plan in the record within the 60 days of placement to comply with federal regulations.

For a temporary entrustment of 90 days or more, the plan shall be submitted to the court **within 30 days** of signing the agreement.

12.7 Distribution of Foster Care Service Plan

The worker submits the foster care service plan transmittal with the names and addresses of the following individuals along with a copy of the entire Foster Care Service Plan to the court. The court is responsible for forwarding the service plan to:

- The attorney (GAL) for the child.
- The child's parent(s) or any other person standing in loco parentis, unless they have been permanently relieved of the care and custody of the child.
- Other persons the court deems appropriate, such as the court appointed special advocate.

A copy of the service plan, excluding the section describing why a child cannot be returned home (Part B of the Foster Care Service Plan as described in [Section 12.5.2](#)) is sent by the court to the foster, adoptive, or resource parent. The LDSS shall send a copy of the service plan to the new placement provider, when a placement changes.

12.8 Dispositional hearing to review Foster Care Service Plan

The court will review and approve the plan at the dispositional hearing occurring within 75 days of when the child entered foster care. If a child is entrusted, the court will approve the plan at the hearing when the entrustment agreement is approved. This hearing is considered to be the first opportunity for the foster care plan to be heard in court and, therefore, it is the first time that the status of the case is reviewed in court.

The court and the LDSS shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that parents and foster/resource parents receive notice of the dispositional hearing. In addition, the transmittal submitted to the court with the service plan shall include the names and addresses of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers who are to receive notification by the court of the date of the hearing and of their right to be heard. The status of each foster care case shall be reviewed no less than once every six (6) months by a court or an administrative review ([Social Security Act, Title IV, § 475 \(5\) \(b\) \[42 USC 675\]](#)). These periodic reviews shall occur on a time frame that begins on the date the child is determined to have entered foster care (see [Section 3.2](#)).

This same section of federal law also requires that “notice and an opportunity to be heard shall be given to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers.” *The service worker should provide and discuss with these individuals a copy of the brochure [Adoption and Safe Families Act: Applying the Notice and Right to Be Heard Provision in Virginia's Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts](#). This brochure explains the requirements of timely notice and opportunity to be heard in six month review hearings and permanency hearings held with respect to the child in their care. It explains they do not have the right to standing as a party to the case.*

The LDSS shall complete the Foster Care Transmittal Form (DC-552) and shall include the name and contact information of the foster, adoptive, or resource parent on the form where indicated. The foster, resource, or adoptive family may be present in court for the review of the service plan. However, they will be excluded from the courtroom for that part of the hearing regarding the allegations of abuse and neglect.

At this hearing, the foster care review hearing date is set to occur within six (6) months and appropriate individuals including foster, adoptive, and resource parents are provided notice to attend the hearing.

Because of the requirement to hold a permanency planning hearing 14 months after placement, parents should be informed no later than the dispositional hearing of:

- What the LDSS expects of them.
- The importance of assisting in developing and cooperating with the service plan requirements.

- The existence of a concurrent permanency plan goal and rationale for such a goal should the child not be able to return home.
- The length of time they have to make changes necessary for the return of their child(ren).

12.9 When new service plan is required

After the initial service plan is developed, a new plan is required:

- As a result of a change in goal (this plan shall be submitted to the court).
- For the permanency planning hearing.
- When a child returns from a commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice.

A Family Partnership Meeting should be convened prior to the development of the new service plan in each of these situations.

12.10 Developing the plan when goal is changed to Adoption

At the permanency planning hearing, or at any other hearing that results in the decision to change the child's goal to adoption, the LDSS shall file a petition with the court 30 days prior to the hearing to terminate parental rights, along with the foster care service plan.

12.10.1 Information needed

When the goal of Adoption is selected, consultation between the foster care and adoption staff shall occur. Additional information may need to be gathered. This information is critical, as it will serve as a basis for identifying adoption services, will be used in the selection of an appropriate adoptive home, and will be the only information available to the child after adoption about the child's birth family and background. If any of this information is missing from the foster care record, one of the services that shall be identified on the new plan will be to obtain the missing information. The additional information that may need to be gathered includes:

- Detailed information about birth, medical, and developmental history of the child and family, including genetic information.
- Current information on health, developmental, and educational functioning of the child, and recommendations for any necessary follow-up treatment or further check-ups with specialists. If medicals have not been done in the last 12 months, the adoptive placement plan shall reflect that these will be obtained once termination of parental rights has been achieved.

- Information from foster parents about the child's attitudes, habits, and daily routines, their methods of discipline, and pertinent observations as to the child's reactions and relationships in their home, likes and dislikes, nicknames, and favorite toys.
- Information regarding whether the siblings are presently together in foster care, and the relationships of the siblings to each other.
- Information about the child's relationship with the birth family, including extended relatives and an assessment of the impact of termination of parental rights on the child and family.
- Information about the child's relationship with his or her birth family and the child's desire to maintain contact with his parent(s) should be used to consider the possibility of developing a PACCA for the child and, if applicable, should be used in discussing the possibility of a PACCA with the prospective adoptive parents.
- Information about the child's relationship with the foster parents to assess the level of bonding to determine whether the foster parents should be considered as an adoptive resource for the child.

12.10.2 Submitting materials to court when goal is changed to Adoption

When submitting a new foster care plan, the LDSS shall submit the following documents to the court **30 days prior** to the scheduled Foster Care Review Hearing: requesting a change to the goal of Adoption

- A petition for a Foster Care Review Hearing.
- A Foster Care Service Plan Review Form which shall include any updates to the initial Foster Care Service Plan.
- A Foster Care Service Plan Transmittal listing individuals who should receive a copy of the petition and/or be notified of the hearing. These individuals include the child, if age 12 or over, the parents, guardian, or prior custodian, the Guardian Ad Litem, the foster parents, the LDSS, and any other interested parties identified by the LDSS or those the court directs.

The court will review progress toward meeting the foster care goal, approve changes to the plan, enter any appropriate orders, and determine whether reasonable efforts have been made to return the child home, if that is the goal, or to finalize another permanent placement.

The service plan shall include:

- A statement and documentation that the goal of Adoption is in the best interest of the child; this is put in Part B or a separate section of the Foster Care Service Plan.
- The reasons for selecting the goal of Adoption; this is put in Part B or a separate section of the Foster Care Service Plan (Part A).
- Ongoing services that will be provided to the child, birth parents, and the foster parents.
- The responsibilities of the parents or prior custodian included in the prior assessment and service plan and whether they have or have not met them; this is put in Part B or a separate section of the Foster Care Service Plan. These responsibilities shall correspond with the responsibilities identified in the initial or any updated Foster Care Service Plan.
- The specific action planned to identify and select an adoptive family and the specific services to be provided to prepare the child for an adoptive family. This includes services to:
 - o Build trust with the worker who will make the placement.
 - o Gather all medical, psychological, social, and family background information for the child's permanent adoption record.
 - o Help the child deal with the past and be committed to an adoptive placement.
 - o Discuss with the child, adoptive parents, and biological parents regarding their desires for post-adoption contact and the availability of a PACCA.
 - o Pre-placement services and activities with adoptive parents.
 - o Services to meet the child's needs while in foster care waiting for adoptive placement.
 - o Registration with AREVA or other adoption exchanges as well as other recruitment efforts (see [section 9.9](#) for information about AREVA).
 - o Assessment of the child's special needs for purposes of subsidy.

- o Services for the birth parents including, but not limited to:
 - Services to help them separate from the child and support an adoptive placement.
 - Services to help parents deal with their loss, guilt, and other feelings related to the child.
- o Services for the foster parent including, but not limited to:
 - Services to gather pertinent information on the child's development and behavior.
 - Assessment of the foster parents as a primary adoptive resource for the child or services to help the child move to an adoptive placement.
 - Services that will assist the foster parents in meeting the needs of the child including their willingness and desire to consider a PACCA if they are to be the adoptive parents.

The specific services to be provided to the child and adoptive family after adoptive placement are not provided until after termination of parental rights has occurred. Upon submission of the plan and registration with AREVA, the services should be identified in the plan and offered.

12.11 When child returns to foster care

When a child's legal custody has been returned to his parents or prior custodians from the LDSS and the child subsequently returns to the custody of the LDSS, this is a new foster care episode. A new service plan shall be completed and all requirements for Foster Care Service Plans met.

A child is considered to be on a trial home visit when he or she returns home to his parents or prior custodians but remains in the custody of the LDSS. When a child is removed from a trial home visit and returned to a foster care placement and the trial home visit exceeded six (6) months without a court order specifically extending the trial home visit, then the child is considered to be in a new foster care episode. A new Foster Care Service Plan shall be completed and the timeline for court hearings and panel reviews begins from the date this new episode begins.

Children on trial home visits for six (6) months or less who are removed from the trial home visit continue with the existing foster care episode and the service planning and court timelines already in place.