

**DIVISION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
ADMINISTRATIVE MEMO #12-2012**

To: All Children and Family Services Staff

From: Christine M. Hanus, Child Welfare Administrator 
Division of Children and Family Services

Signed by: Thomas D. Pristow, Director 
Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services

Date: April 24, 2012

RE: Concurrent Planning Tool

Effective: Immediately

Contact: Margaret Bitz, Children and Family Services, Policy Section
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Purpose: The purpose of this memo is to provide a tool to assist in effective use of concurrent planning.

Background: Concurrent planning is a process of working toward one permanency objective while at the same time establishing and working toward an alternative permanency objective. It is described as "a process which involves concurrent rather than sequential permanency planning efforts." Its implementation is demonstrated to contribute to stability and timely permanency for children. Children and Family Services policy requires its use at certain junctures in a case and encourages its use at others. For additional information, please refer to the "Case Management for Child Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency Guidebook," at http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Guidebooks/Case%20management%20for%20Child%20Abuse,%20Neglect%20and%20Dependency%20Guidebook.pdf

Despite the existence of policy and evidence of the effectiveness of concurrent planning, there is agreement that it is not being used to its fullest. This lack was noted in the NE Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in 2008. The resulting Program Improvement Plan (PIP) included "Creation of a process that ensures consistent use of concurrent planning" as one of the goals, as a strategy to "Achieve timely permanency for children and families by engaging the courts, court participants, the Division and other community partners."

Several activities have occurred since the 2008 CFSR, including consultation from the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections and a state self-assessment that included a group of stakeholders, which provided input for development of the attached checklist. In addition, the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative (TECI) has included sessions on concurrent planning in its 2012 Spring Lecture Series. Following those sessions in April, 2012, training materials will be posted on the TECI web site.

CONCURRENT PLANNING CHECKLIST

Concurrent planning is the process of developing and implementing a plan to reach one permanency objective while simultaneously developing and implementing a plan to reach an alternative permanency objective, avoiding the pitfall of needing to 'start over' with a new plan when efforts are unsuccessful. Concurrent planning can occur at any time in a case, including at the time a child enters care. Consideration must be given to concurrent planning at each of the following points in the case:

- Initial assessment;
- During the ongoing assessment;
- Each time the case plan is reviewed; and
- Whenever it is likely that the permanency objective stated in the case plan will not be obtained within a reasonable length of time.

The checklist is a guide, intended for use at a high-level to trigger further exploration and consideration, based on the individual circumstances of each child and family.

IF ONE OF THE FOLLOWING IS CHECKED, CONCURRENT PLANNING IS RECOMMENDED:

- Parent is making minimal progress toward reunification.
- Parent who exhibits little motivation for change has established a pattern of chronic abuse or neglect.
- Parent repeatedly expresses serious doubts about wanting to parent the child.
- Parent has a documented dangerous lifestyle, e.g., a pattern of documented domestic violence of one year or longer, and the parent refuses to separate from the abusing person.
- Parental rights to another child have been terminated following a period of services delivery, and no significant change has occurred in the interim.
- Parent has killed or seriously harmed another child through abuse or neglect and no significant change has occurred in the interim.
- Parent has repeatedly and with premeditation harmed this child.
- Parent has abandoned the child for 6 months or more.

ACTIONS SUGGESTED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CONCURRENT PLANNING:

- Ongoing assessment is being done regarding risk, safety, and family strengths and needs.
- Father has been identified, located, and involved in planning.
- Other relatives (including paternal) and persons important to the child and parent have been located, notified of the situation, and appropriately involved.
- Full disclosure has occurred with the parent(s), including clarification of his/her rights and responsibilities, timelines, alternative forms of permanency, and the potential results of lack of progress.
- Child has been placed with a resource family that is appropriate and willing to work toward reunification, and to provide permanency and meet the child's needs long-term should reunification not occur. (Assumes full disclosure of special needs has occurred).
- An alliance has been built between the foster family and the parent when appropriate.
- Child has been placed with siblings, or, if such placement is contrary to the welfare of one of them, there is regular and frequent contact between them, unless it is contrary to the welfare of one of them.
- If ICWA is applicable, required notification has been made to the tribe(s), and the child is placed in a home meeting ICWA requirements.
- Reasonable efforts are being made to provide services to enable reunification.
- Permanency options have been fully explored with the parent, including relinquishment and open adoption.
- Meaningful, regular contact is being maintained between the parent and child.
- Medical and social history of the child has been obtained.
- Child's special needs have been identified.
- If the child is not a citizen or documented alien, efforts are being made to gain citizenship or permanent legal status.
- Other: