

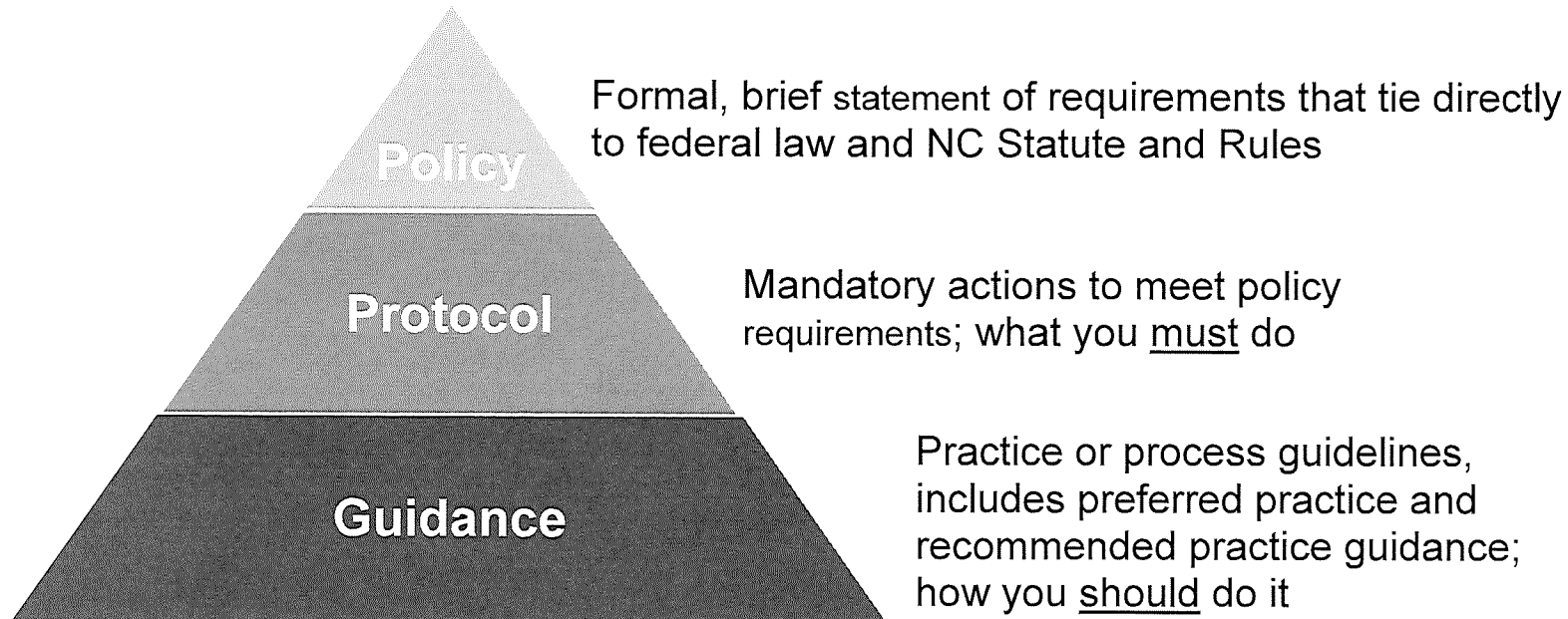
North Carolina Child Welfare Manual for Permanency Planning Review

North Carolina Child Welfare strives to ensure safe, permanent, nurturing families for children. The goal is that every child in North Carolina grows up in a safe, permanent, self-sufficient family where well-being needs of all are met.

Child Protective services are legally mandated, non-voluntary services for families that encompass services for maltreated children (abused, neglected, and/or dependent) and those who are at imminent risk of harm due to the actions of, or lack of protection by, the child's parent or caregiver. Child Protective Services, provided by county child welfare agencies, are designed to protect children from further harm and to support and improve parental/caregiver abilities to assure a safe and nurturing home for each child.

This North Carolina Child Welfare Manual provides the Policy, Protocol and Guidance for county child welfare agencies in the provision of Child Protective Services Intake, Assessments, and In-Home and Child Welfare Permanency Planning.

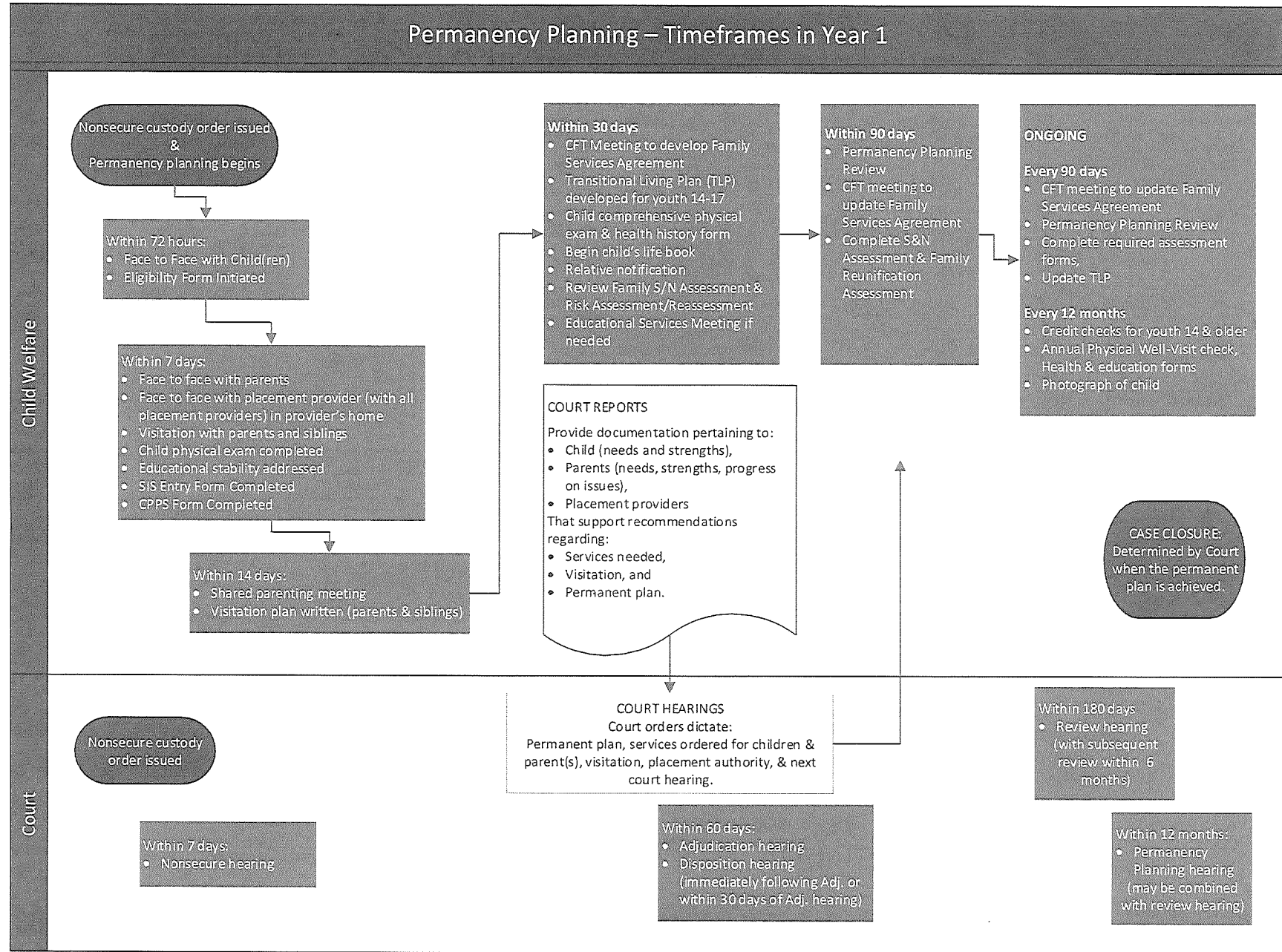
NC CHILD WELFARE MANUAL FRAMEWORK



Permanency Planning Services: Required Timeframes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of Non-Secure Custody Order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanency Planning Services case begins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 3 days after the day of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face visit with child(ren). This contact is (in addition to any contact or interaction with the child(ren) on the day of placement) • Determination of Foster Care Assistance Benefits and/or Medical Benefits Only (DSS-5120) initiated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 7 calendar days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visitation for child(ren) with parent(s) and sibling(s) ○ Complete the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Face-to face contact with parent(s) ○ Face to face contact with the placement provider (all adult caretakers) in the provider's home. NOTE: This face to face contact with the placement provider can occur at the same time as the face to face contact with the child(ren) within 3 days after the placement if all requirements are met. ○ Initial physical examination ○ Child(ren) medical exam occurs (Child Health Status completed) & Educational Stability addressed (Child Educational Status or Best Interest Determination form completed) including BID meeting (within 5 school days) prior to any school change ○ SIS Client Entry Form (DSS-5027) completed ○ Child Placement and Payment System Report (DSS-5094) completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 14 calendar days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Parenting meeting • Family Time and Contact Plan developed jointly with parent(s) • Family Time and Contact Plan developed for siblings to visit each other (if in separate placements)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 30 calendar days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFT meeting to assess the strengths and needs of the family and child(ren) and develop the Family Services Agreement (DSS-5240) • Develop the Transitional Living Plan for any child 14 years old or older • Complete the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relative Notifications ○ Comprehensive physical examination ○ Health History Form (DSS-5207), and provide copies to the placement provider ○ Review and update (if needed) the Child Education Status (DSS-5245) ○ Review of the Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs (DSS-5229) ○ Review of the Risk Assessment (DSS-5230) • Begin the child(ren)'s Life Book
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 60 calendar days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjudicatory Hearing (within 60 days of the filing of the petition, unless the judge orders it be held at a later date)

Permanency Planning Services: Required Timeframes



CROSS FUNCTION TOPICS: Placement (or Placement Change) Preparation and Follow-Up

Protocol – What you must do	Guidance – How you should do it
<p>When an emergency placement requires a school change prior to holding a BID meeting, the Immediate Enrollment form (<u>DSS-5135</u>) must be provided to the new school. See <u>DSS-5135ins</u>.</p>	<p>EDUCATIONAL STABILITY The BID meeting regarding a school change for a child(ren) should be coordinated with the pre-petition CFT meeting, whenever possible, and appropriate.</p>
<p>SHARED PARENTING The county child welfare agency worker must facilitate an initial shared parenting meeting between the parent(s) and placement provider(s) no later than fourteen days after a child(ren)'s placement out of the home. The county child welfare worker must document if there is a family reason that prevents this meeting from taking place within seven days.</p>	<p>SHARED PARENTING A shared parenting meeting between the parent(s) and placement provider(s) should occur as soon as possible to ensure that the partnership has a strong beginning and is supported by the child welfare agency. When the parent and placement provider meet the day the child(ren) enters county custody, the adults can share information about the child(ren) that will make the transition for the child(ren) must less difficult. The county child welfare worker should coach the parent through this first interaction to maintain focus on the needs of the child(ren). The foster parent and county child welfare worker partner should with the birth parent to maintain the parent's connection to their children while continually focusing on the welfare of the child. This connection can preserve and/or rebuild their relationship leading to long term good outcomes for children and families. Shared parenting emphasizes foster parents as being a support to birth families instead of substitute caretakers.</p>

CROSS FUNCTION TOPICS: Parent Engagement & Needs Assessments

"Physical custody" means the physical care and supervision of a child.

http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_50A/GS_50A-102.html

"Stepparent" means an individual who is the spouse of a parent of a child, but who is not a legal parent of the child.

http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_48/GS_48-1-101.pdf

Protocol	Guidance
<p>PARENT ENGAGEMENT Both parents must be involved in all aspects of child welfare to include, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFTs and PPRs, • Shared parenting meetings, • Family Time and Contact Plans, • Safety Agreements, and • Family Services Agreements. <p>Absent parents must be involved in the CFT meeting unless there is a valid conflict or safety issue, and this must be clearly documented in the case record. See <u>CFT</u> for alternate methods to involve the absent parent in case planning if it is determined that the parent cannot participate in the CFT meeting due to a conflict or safety issue.</p> <p>The county child welfare agency must engage in <u>diligent efforts</u> to locate and contact all parents.</p> <p>INITIAL AND ONGOING DETERMINATION OF FAMILY MEMBER'S STRENGTHS AND NEEDS The determination regarding a family's strengths and needs starts during the CPS Assessment and must be completed through use of SEEMAPS or an equivalent method. See <u>5010 instructions</u> page 1. Ongoing Services must build upon the information identified during the CPS Assessment to ensure that</p>	<p>PARENT ENGAGEMENT Successfully involving parents in case planning may be the most critical component in child welfare practice. When parents are engaged, and have a significant role in case planning, they are more motivated to actively commit to achieving the case plan. Engaged parents are more likely to recognize and agree with the identified needs and problems to be resolved, perceive goals as relevant and attainable, and be satisfied with the planning and decision-making process. Following are reminders regarding the principles and beliefs of NC CW (when manual revisions are complete, these will be links) that support parent engagement.</p> <p>MRS and System of Care (SOC) principles emphasize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every individual has strengths and has the right to be heard without judgments being made, • Families have the most information about themselves and that information is critical for decision-making, and • The importance of the family in meeting the needs of its members. <p>Six Family-Centered Principles of Partnership</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone desires respect. 2. Everyone needs to be heard. 3. Everyone has strengths. 4. Judgments can wait. 5. Partners share power. 6. Partnership is a process. <p>Underlying Beliefs of a Family-Centered Approach to Child Welfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety of the child is the first concern. • Children have the right to their family. • The family is the fundamental resource for the nurturing of children. • Parents should be supported in their efforts to care for their children.

Permanency Planning Services: Shared Parenting

Policy	Legal Basis
<p>Foster parents must engage in shared parenting by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing partnerships with the children and their parents or guardians • helping children maintain and develop relationships that will keep them connected to their pasts; • helping children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural, and racial identity 	<p>North Carolina Administrative Code 70 E .1104 requires that foster parents shall develop partnerships with the children and their parents or guardians, help children maintain and develop relationships that will keep them connected to their pasts, and help children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural, and racial identity.</p>
Protocol – What you must do	Guidance – How you should do it
<p>Within 14 days of a child being placed out of the home by a county child welfare agency, a shared parenting meeting between the parent(s) and the placement provider must occur.</p> <p>County child welfare agencies must require shared parenting in all cases where a child is placed out of the home. This includes placement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed foster homes (therapeutic and family foster care); • Relative and Non-Relative Kinship placements; • Group home placements; and • Any other placement in which the county child welfare agency has legal custody of a child and the child is separated from their parent or caretaker. <p>Foster parents, whether licensed by a private agency or a county child welfare agency, must participate in shared parenting, as this is taught within the Trauma-Informed Partnering for Safety and Permanence Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting- (TIPS-MAPP) training. The 10-week training curriculum is used as a tool in the</p>	<p>The initial shared parenting meeting should be held as soon as possible after the child enters county child welfare agency custody, but no later than 14 days.</p> <p>Shared parenting and shared parenting meetings can be an intimidating process for both foster and birth parents. Much like Child and Family Team meetings, preparation is the key for shared parenting to succeed. This requires advanced planning by county child welfare workers so all parties understand the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the care of the child, not “the case.” The meeting is not to assign blame. It is first and foremost about creating the best possible transition for the child. Sharing parental responsibilities can be enjoyable activities such as working on the child’s life book together, exchanging pictures, reading with the child, et cetera. They can also plan a joint fun activity that is specifically catered to the child.</p> <p>When deciding when and where the shared parenting meeting should be held, the county child welfare worker should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take into consideration the work schedules of the foster and birth parents as well as children’s schedules, especially if there is a need for child care while the adults discuss parenting issues; and

Permanency Planning Services: Shared Parenting

<p>mutual assessment of prospective foster and adoptive parents in their ability to successfully provide trauma-informed care for children in <i>county child welfare agency custody</i>.</p> <p>Before the shared parenting meeting, the county child welfare worker must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware that they do not impose their own biases about a birth parent’s previous decisions; • Model positive communication about the birth parent to the foster parent and about the foster parent to the birth parent; • Brief the foster parents about any birth parent fears or needs and help the foster parents understand these needs; • Be prepared to discuss how the needs and interests of the child will be recognized during the shared parenting meeting; • Plan for if the birth parent may be visiting with the child; • Make visitation arrangements when the child is visiting with the birth parent before or after the meeting; and • Encourage the foster parents to engage the birth parents about a positive attribute they see in the child. <p>The county child welfare worker must prepare the foster parents and birth parents to exchange information essential to shared parental responsibilities between foster and birth parents including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medical information; • school progress; • sleeping habits; • eating habits; • response to discipline; and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the foster and birth parents where they would like to meet. A meeting site that is a neutral location and allows for privacy is important. The following can be options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A neighborhood recreation center or social center; ○ The library; or ○ A child’s therapist office are good options instead of the agency office. <p>County child welfare workers should initially focus on items that might seem simple but can be very important such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asking for a picture of the family to have for the child; and • discussing the child’s favorite foods, toys, clothes, activities, likes, and dislikes. <p>Both the birth parents and foster parents should be encouraged to talk openly. County child welfare workers should assist foster and birth parents in managing conflict by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognizing the fears of all parties; • focusing on the strengths; • looking beyond behaviors to identify needs; and • developing interventions to meet needs. <p>County child welfare workers should also assist foster and birth parents in understanding cultural or family differences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultivating a mutual understanding and appreciation of religious beliefs and practices; • openly discussing differences in family rituals such as meal times or where they eat; • appearance preferences like haircuts, earrings, make up, et cetera; and • other family experiences. <p>It is important to convey the benefits of aligning around parenting and discipline practices to ensure consistency for the child. For example, the foster and birth parents might discuss what discipline practices have</p>
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Permanency Planning Services: Shared Parenting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any of the children's strengths and needs. <p>County child welfare agencies must explore opportunities to (as long as the court ordered visitation/contact plan allows):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage the placement provider to host sibling visits; allow the birth parent to call the placement provider's home; and allow the placement provider to participate in the parent/child visitation. <p>INVOLVING ABSENT/NON-RESIDENTIAL PARENTS Both parents must be engaged and have the right to be involved in shared parenting and the shared parenting meeting. The county child welfare worker must engage both parents in the planning process for the child.</p> <p>INVOLVING RELATIVES County child welfare agencies must decide whether to include relatives in shared parenting meetings by considering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay close attention to the dynamics between the birth parent and their relative. What is their relationship like and is it healthy toward the development of the partnership between the birth parent and foster parent? Consider whether the information the relative would provide is critical to the daily care of the 	<p>been effective and can be continued or the foster parent may recommend a practice that has been effective with other youth. The child receives consistent structure during visits, when transitioning from one home to the other, and the foster and birth parents are supported in their combined efforts.</p> <p>If allowable, placement providers should be encouraged to invite birth parents to attend school and medical appointments. If the birth parent is unable to attend an appointment, the placement provider should provide progress reports to the birth parent on how their child is performing in school, home, updates on any medical information, and other activities.</p> <p>The exchange of information not only helps the placement provider, it helps the birth parent remain connected to the routine of the child's care.</p> <p>The placement provider can be a wonderful resource for the birth parent as they can model what others might assume parents know how to do such as play with the child, encourage positive responses in their child, or how to care for their physical and medical needs.</p> <p>Clear boundaries and ground rules for the contact should be discussed and set with input from the birth family, the foster family, and the county child welfare agency. As it is developed, the <u>Family Time and Contact Plan</u> can be utilized to help with this discussion/plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> address personal and emotional safety issues for the child, birth family, and foster family; and discuss ground rules regarding phone calls, visitation, and transportation. <p>After there is an approved Family Time and Contact Plan that is flexible in allowing the placement provider to convene visits/contacts, at times, the county child welfare agency worker should be involved with observing contact between the birth parent and child. The county child welfare worker is able to personally provide positive feedback on how their relationship is developing.</p>
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Permanency Planning Services: Shared Parenting

child and whether the information is needed to meet the needs of the child and/or provide support to the biological parents.

- Consider the long-term goal of developing a partnership between the foster and birth parents. Would consistently involving the relative in each shared parenting meeting deter from building a partnership between the foster and birth parents or is the relative an excellent mentor and support that would help develop a continued partnership beyond reunification?
- Is the relative able to provide needed information for the care of the child in another way other than being involved in the shared parenting meeting?
- Consider a discussion with the family that may give the relative other opportunities to be a part of the child's life/planning such as involvement in child and family team meetings.
- Be careful not to alienate the birth parent or relative. Make sure all feel heard.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is recognized that placement providers have a need to know medical conditions that a child may have in order to best care for them. Re-disclosure of the information is prohibited without consent of the child, parent or guardian.

County child welfare workers must:

- Avoid sharing information about the birth parents to the placement providers or about placement providers to the birth parents if it is not information that is pertinent to the child's care.
- Inform birth parents and placement providers of the expectation that information that is shared within a shared parenting meeting remains confidential. Eventually, birth parents and

A parent that has been referred to as absent or non-residential may have more information than the county child welfare agency may have thought they were able to share in regards to the child's development. Working to develop an early partnership that includes the absent parent may provide an excellent foundation for them to not only become more involved in their child's life, but also may be a permanent placement option, and/or a long-term support.

The county child welfare worker should:

- Ask the question: How can the county child welfare agency obtain the absent parent's involvement?
- If the birth mother and father have a tenuous relationship, consider facilitating separate meetings between each birth parent with the placement provider.
- If one birth parent is unable to travel a long distance for a meeting, consider facilitating a phone conference call or web meeting in order to begin developing a relationship between the birth parent and placement provider.

Though custody of a child may have been removed from the biological parents, the parents may have had tremendous support from other relatives in raising their child. For example, a grandmother that has been the primary caretaker for the child the past 6 months may have some information that is essential for the care of the child. The biological parents may want the relative provider to be a part of a shared parenting meeting.

SAFETY

The safety of the participants should always be considered when planning to begin shared parenting meetings. The county child welfare worker should be aware if there has been a history of domestic violence between birth parents as well as if a birth parent has any history of violence towards others. It would not be appropriate to facilitate or encourage any shared parenting meetings together if there are any court orders including those imposed by probation and parole that do not allow contact between the birth parents. However, it is possible that separate meetings could take place with the placement providers and each individual birth parent at separate times. Document any safety

Permanency Planning Services: Shared Parenting

<p>placement providers may come to build a good relationship and choose to share personal information with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss any questions with your supervisor as well as seek out agency policy around specific situations for the sharing of information.	<p>concerns. Consider what special arrangements can be made to help everyone feel safe and comfortable such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose a safe location;• Create specific ground rules and expectations ahead of time together with all participants that are catered to the specific needs;• If the meeting cannot be held safely, do not hold the meeting; and• Choose other avenues such as a phone conference call to facilitate the meeting.
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