



Improving Permanency for Children in the Child Welfare System

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Goals of the Wisconsin Child Welfare System



- Children are cared for in safe, permanent, and nurturing families who have the necessary skills and resources to provide for their physical and mental health, behavioral and educational needs.
- Through effective intervention, parents, caregivers, and families improve their ability to develop and maintain a safe, stable environment for their children.
- Children are safely maintained in their own home, families and communities with connections, culture, and relationships preserved and established. When it is necessary to place children in out-of-home care, ensure it is a safe, short and stable experience.

Current Key Permanency Initiatives

- 2011 Wisconsin Act 181: Best Outcomes for Children
- Ongoing Services Standards Revision
- Permanency Roundtables
- Statewide Subsidized Guardianship
- Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare Redesign

2011 Wisconsin Act 181: Best Outcomes for Children



- Adopts nationally-recognized best practices in three key areas:
 - Trial Reunification
 - Concurrent Planning
 - Use of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA)
- New provisions will improve the timeliness of transitioning children from out-of-home care into permanent, safe and nurturing homes with birth parents, adoptive parents, or relatives.
- Provisions are effective November 2012.

2011 Wisconsin Act 181: Best Outcomes for Children

Trial Reunification: Enables a child in out-of-home care to be placed in the home of the parents or other relative caregiver for a specified period of time for the purpose of determining the appropriateness of reunification.

Concurrent Planning: Clarifies that child welfare agencies when appropriate must work towards multiple permanency goals instead of focusing on one goal at a time and clarifies court process and role in concurrent planning.

Use of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA): OPPLA applies to teens who age out of foster care without achieving permanency. New provisions require that the child welfare agency must have a concurrent plan for a permanency goal other than OPPLA, in cases where OPPLA is identified as a goal.

Ongoing Services Standards Revision

- In collaboration with counties and other stakeholders, the Department is revising the Ongoing Services Standards that apply to county child welfare agencies and the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare.
- Revised standards:
 - Implement new provisions in 2011 Act 181.
 - Establish minimum requirements for concurrent planning.
 - Provide criteria and process for achieving permanence for each goal.
 - Provide guidance in choosing permanency goals.
 - Provide requirements when transitioning a child to permanence.
- Target date for implementation of revised standards: October 2012.

Permanency Roundtables

- Permanency Roundtables (PRTs) are a structured case consultation approach designed to expedite permanency for complex out-of-home cases through creative problem-solving, application of best practice and removal of systemic barriers.
- Permanence Roundtables are a best practice used in many other states.
- Wisconsin launched Permanency Roundtables on a pilot basis in June 2010 and is expanding them statewide.
- The statewide Permanency Roundtable rollout plan, issued in March 2012, brings specific regions on-line each quarter, with the final region implementing PRTs in May 2013.
- As of June 2012, Permanency Roundtables have been implemented in 26 counties.

Statewide Subsidized Guardianship

- Subsidized Guardianship (SG) is a permanent placement option for children in out-of-home care. Unlike adoption, Subsidized Guardianship transfers legal authority to a relative without terminating parental rights.
- Implemented on a pilot basis in 2005 in Milwaukee through a federal waiver.
- 2011 Act 32 established Subsidized Guardianship on an ongoing basis throughout the state, effective August 2011.
- Subsidized Guardianship may be particularly well-suited to certain cultures and age groups.
- As of March 2012, 207 children are under Subsidized Guardianship.

BMCW Redesign



Child welfare services in Milwaukee County are directly administered by the Department through the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW).

- State staff in BMCW carry out the access and initial assessment functions.
- BMCW contracts for case management and other services.

Effective January 2012, BMCW redesigned its contract structure in order to:

- Reduce fragmentation of services
- Strengthen contractor accountability

BMCW Redesign

New contracts include a number of features to improve permanency:

- **Family finding:** Use of a national family find software program at outset of each child welfare case to identify all known relatives.
 - Search results in an extensive list of relatives within minutes.
 - Relatives are potential placement options or sources of support for the child.
- **Post-reunification services:** Case management agencies are required to provide 12 months of post-reunification services.
 - This may include case management, in-home services, and linkage to community services.
- **Re-entry:** Case management agencies are required to serve cases that re-enter the child welfare system within 12 months without additional reimbursement.
- **Outcome-based accountability:** Beginning in 2013, new cases will be assigned to the case management agency that has the strongest performance on a specified set of outcomes measures.

Improving Permanency



The Department of Children & Families is committed to continually strengthening permanency for children in the child welfare system.

Comments and questions are welcomed.

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