

Executive Summary

Strengths Based Practice – Concurrent Planning

Moving Into Consistent Practice

Concurrent planning is the process by which an agency and social worker/probation officer plans for a child in foster care to reunite with his or her family while simultaneously considering and preparing to implement an alternative permanency plan; such as adoption, by way of exploring a wide range of best possible permanency options for a child. *Concurrent planning is an alternative to sequential planning; a process in which an alternative permanency option is considered only after exhausting the possibility of reunification or in exploring alternative homes one home at a time.*

Concurrent Planning in practice has been difficult to consistently implement. It involves working with multi-complex layers of social worker, parents and caregivers beliefs about permanency for children. It involves consistent training, understanding and transfer of learning of social workers, supervisors, managers, directors, caregivers, relative caregivers and parents particularly when we get “stuck” in our view points. It involves on-going coaching, mentoring and skill building of staff.

In addition research has shown that understanding and embracing of the concept of “shared parenting;” where out of home care and/or adoptive parents and biological parents share the care of the child to the extent possible supports effective concurrent planning.

Concurrent planning can also involve fully embracing non-traditional family structures, such as single parent, lesbian/gay families and transracial parents. Not to mention addressing the systemic biases around fully embracing alternative culturally accepted forms of family structures such as a native American holistic view and an African American inclusive “community” view. For these reasons, concurrent planning has been sporadically implemented in child welfare organizations and often is characterized just by the activities of concurrent planning as opposed to the aligned, consistent processes and strategic permanency goals of the agency.

Concurrent Planning – Moving into consistent Practice

This class will go beyond basic understanding of the foundational concepts of concurrent planning. It will explore the difficulties in talking with caregivers, birth parents, and other stakeholders about alternative plans to reunification and practice advanced ways to discuss concurrent planning in all of its nuances and complexities.

The class will explore systemic barriers to practices and strategize ways to help workers navigate systems to support the explorations and development of a number of permanency options that best meets a child’s needs.

The class will explore ways to work with other parts of the departments, Court, supervisors, caregivers and placement agencies to promote timely permanency for children.

This workshop is designed for public child welfare workers who practice concurrent planning to provide timely permanency for children and youth. As a result of this Training Participants will:

- Understand the complexities and nuances of talking with caregivers, birth parents and others throughout the life of a case about alternative plans for permanency for children and youth

- Develop skills for discussing on-going excellent permanency options for children
- Understand the concept of “Shared Parenting” and how to support it between caregivers, birthparents and others
- Explore systemic barriers to concurrent planning and problem solve strategies to practice effective concurrent planning to provide timely permanency for children and youth.
- Learn team building strategies with inter and intra-agencies to support the best possible permanency options for children and youth.

Ways that Supervisors can support the Transfer of Learning from the classroom to the job...

BEFORE the training

1. Supervisors should ask the trainee to bring questions that they have about what gets in the way in their practice to practicing concurrent planning and timely permanency for children and youth.
2. Supervisors should ask the trainee to come prepared with an open mind for trying new ways of practice.
3. Supervisors should communicate their expectations for workers regarding learning and how it might be integrated into their practice after the training.

AFTER the training

1. Supervisors should ask the trainee to identify the skills learned in class.
2. Supervisors should ask the trainee to practice a skill within 24 hours of training to support transfer of skill and learning.