STANDARD: PLACEMENT SELECTION COMMITTEE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard is to provide direction and guidance to the Child and Family Services (CFS) programs regarding the process of permanent family placement selection for children in foster care. CFS standards are intended to achieve statewide consistency in the development and application of CFS core services and will be implemented in the context of all applicable laws, rules, and policies. Standards will also provide a measurement for program accountability.

INTRODUCTION

CFS places a high priority on moving children safely to permanency as quickly as possible. To accomplish this, efforts to identify an alternate permanent home for a child should begin as early as possible in each case. Identifying a concurrent planning family provides the child, child's parents, care providers, relatives and social workers with the knowledge of where a child will be if reunification cannot occur.

In the event a permanent family placement has not been identified for a child prior to the termination of parental rights, intensive and exhaustive efforts shall be made to locate a permanent family. In all adoption and guardianship cases, permanent placement decisions are required to be considered by a Placement Selection Committee.

DEFINITIONS

Best Interests – eight factors which, when combined, identify the current and potential individual needs of each child. The factors are the child's: emotional/behavioral needs; medical/physical needs; educational/developmental needs; cultural/religious needs; trauma history and past experiences; relationships with parents, relatives, siblings and current caretakers; child's interests and community connections; and child and family placement preference. No one best interest factor is considered more or less important than the others. The weight placed on any one factor over others is highly dependent on the identified needs of a particular child or sibling group.

Concurrent Planning – planning which addresses a child's need for a permanent family by working toward family reunification and, at the same time, developing an alternate plan that will provide permanency options for the child through adoption, guardianship, placement with a relative, or another permanency option.

Concurrent Planning Family – a family who is willing and able to provide on-going care for a child on a permanent basis if the child is not able to reunify with their parent from whom they were removed. An alternative permanent family could be a relative, non relative or fictive kin.

Dual Assessment – another name for the Resource Family Foster/Adoptive Home Study used to evaluate a prospective family who has applied to become licensed to provide foster care and/or adoption.

Extended Placement Selection Committee (EPSC) – a Division level committee which continues the initial permanent placement selection process in specific circumstances when a family considered but not selected for placement disagrees with the Hub placement decision.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) – a process for families, relatives and friends to develop a plan which ensures safety and permanency for their children.

Fictive Kin or Kin – non-relatives who have a significant, family-like relationship with a child which existed prior to the child entering foster care. Fictive kin or kin may include godparents, close family friends, clergy, teachers or members of a child's Indian tribe.

Permanency Goal – the overall goal of the case which is intended to provide the child with a lifetime connection to a family.

Primary Permanency Goal – the option identified as the most appropriate and preferred permanency option for the child, given the circumstances of the case.

Relative - a person related to a child by blood, marriage, or adoption (i.e. grandparent, great-grandparent, aunt, great aunt, uncle, great uncle, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, first cousin, sibling and half-sibling).

Secondary Permanency Goal – the option identified as another permanency option for the child if the primary permanency goal is unable to be achieved. Although the primary permanency goal is the emphasis of the case, both goals are worked simultaneously.

Social History – a compilation of all the facts of a child's life including maternal and paternal history, medical information, education information, developmental history and placement history, which should be shared with prospective permanent resource providers for the child.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

(1) The child's best interest is the primary consideration in the selection of a concurrent planning, adoptive or guardianship placement. Placement decisions should be based on the individual child's identified needs including those for life-long safety, well-being and permanency, and the prospective families' understanding of and potential capacity for meeting those needs.

(2) A key component of a child's well-being is their continued connection to relatives. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, Idaho Code and IDAPA Rules all support the engagement of and priority placement with relatives. Siblings are relatives; and joint sibling placements are relative placements. Children often understand why they must be separated from their parents, but separation from siblings is not understandable. Adult adoptees and foster care alumni both describe the loss of sibling contact as the most devastating loss they experienced.

(3) Absent the presence of compelling circumstances, a fit and willing relative must be given priority over non-relatives (including fictive kin and foster parents) when it comes to deciding where to place a child in the legal custody or guardianship of the Department. Compelling

circumstances exist if relative placement is contrary to the child's best interests. Examples of compelling circumstances include (but are not limited to):

- A relative who does not recognize and/or is unwilling or unable to provide for a child's special needs, despite the Department's attempts to educate them about those needs.
- Relative placement would separate a child from a placement with a sibling.
- Safety issues.
- The relative has failed to follow-through with visitation, contact or relationship-building activities with the child, despite the Department's repeated efforts to engage them in these activities.

(4) Using a committee or team process to make placement decisions minimizes the impact of individual biases and increases the diversity of perspectives. It is important to be mindful of the possibility of group bias as well.

(5) Family Centered Practice principles should be followed during Placement Selection Committee meetings. The Six Principles of Partnership (everyone desires respect, everyone wants to be heard, everyone has strengths, judgments can wait, partners share power and partnership is a process) work to make the team approach supportive to social workers, current caregivers, prospective families and Committee members. It is incumbent upon Hub Program Managers, Lead Chiefs of Social Work, Chiefs of Social Work and supervisors to model the Six Principles of Partnership during the placement selection process. There may be occasions when missed opportunities or other problems with the case are identified. It is important to remember the purpose of the Placement Selection Committee is not case review, but selection of a permanent placement. If an issue arises which impacts the placement decision, the Committee meeting can be rescheduled while the issue is resolved. Otherwise, the issue should be addressed outside of the Committee process.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The permanent placement decision making process is guided by federal and state statutes.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) – ASFA supports permanency for children by reducing timeframes for courts and child welfare agencies in working toward permanency outcomes for children in foster care. ASFA prohibits denial or delay of adoptive placement of a child based on the geographic location of the family.

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 – Federal legislation which requires the Department to identify and notify all adult relatives when a child is taken into state custody to ensure the relatives have an opportunity to provide support through contact and/or becoming a foster parent, guardian or adoptive parent for their relative child. Within 30 days after removal of a child from their home, Department social workers must make efforts to identify and notice all of the child's adult relatives.

Fostering Connections also requires reasonable efforts to place siblings in the same adoptive or guardianship placement. If siblings cannot be placed together, reasonable efforts must be made to facilitate frequent visitation or ongoing interaction. In cases where siblings cannot be placed together and/or cannot have frequent visitation, reasons why it is contrary to the safety or well-being of the siblings to be placed together or have frequent visitation must be documented.

Idaho Code 16-1629(11) –The Child Protective Act requires the Department to consider, consistent with a child's best interests and special needs, placement priority of a child in the following order:

1. A fit and willing relative;
2. A fit and willing non-relative with a significant relationship with the child;
3. Foster parents and other persons licensed to provide care.

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) – The ICWA regulates the placement of American Indian and Alaska Native children. Under the ICWA, in any adoptive placement of an Indian child, a preference shall be given, in the absence of good cause to the contrary, to a placement with:

1. A member of the child's extended family;
2. Other members of the Indian child's tribe; or
3. Other Indian families.

Multiethnic Placement Act as amended by the Interethnic Placement Provision of the Small Business Job Protection Act (MEPA/IEP) – MEPA/IEP mandates the following:

- An agency or individual cannot delay or deny a child's placement for foster care or adoption on the base of race, color or national origin;
- An agency or individual cannot deny a person the opportunity to foster or adopt solely on the basis of race, color or national origin; and
- An agency must diligently recruit potential foster and adoptive parents who reflect the diversity of children in care.

STANDARD

Placement Selection Committee meetings must be facilitated by the Hub Program Manager, Child Welfare Lead Chief of Social Work, Child Welfare Chief of Social Work or a Hub Program Manager designee.

When and Why

Cases should be staffed with the Placement Selection Committee as early as best practice dictates in each case. It is important to ensure diligent search and notification of relatives has occurred and that prospective relative placements have been identified and assessed prior to a Placement Selection Committee staffing. Placement Selection Committee meetings should be scheduled in the following situations:

- To determine the need to recruit for a single concurrent planning family when siblings remain in separate placements three months after placement in foster care.

- To identify a concurrent planning family once a child has been in foster care for six months. Identification prior to six months should be considered in those situations where poor prognosis indicators are present and relatives have been notified and assessed.

- To identify a permanent placement for a child with a permanent plan of adoption or guardianship when a concurrent planning family was not previously identified. This

should occur as soon as possible following recruitment efforts which may include contacts with the child's connections, use of media-based recruitment such as Wednesday's Child or other child-specific recruitment efforts.

Model

The Placement Selection Process is a four-step model which incorporates various processes depending on specific case circumstances. Steps occur one at a time and should not take place simultaneously during the same staffing. Not all steps apply to each case; those which do not apply may be skipped. The steps do not need to happen within a close period of time. For example, an office may complete Step 2 to determine the need for joint sibling placement at three months into the case, proceed with identifying potential permanent families based upon the sibling placement recommendation, and then continue with Step 3 or 4 once those families have been identified, perhaps several months later.

Step 1: Identification of the child's needs.

Unlike the other steps, Step 1 does not include a "meeting". Identification of the child's current and potential needs is an ongoing process throughout the life of the case. The needs of each child should be assessed individually and are not dependent on a particular care provider.

Prior to permanent placement selection, it is important to have sufficient understanding of the child's needs that they may be clearly articulated through an informal oral social history and/or written Social History/Assessment for Permanency. A written Social History/Assessment for Permanency is required for Track B selection meetings.

An assessment of each child's eight best interest factors must be part of their oral or written Social History/Assessment for Permanency:

- Emotional/behavioral needs
- Medical/physical needs
- Educational/developmental needs
- Cultural/religious needs
- Trauma history and past experiences
- Relationships with parents, relatives, siblings and current caretakers
- Child's interests and community connections
- Child and family placement preference

Step 2: Sibling placement determination.

This step applies only to cases where the child has siblings with whom he or she may be placed. These siblings may or may not be in foster care. The purpose is to consider the children's needs as individuals and as a sibling group as well as their sibling bond and connection to determine whether the siblings should be placed together. A Track B committee meeting is used to make this determination. The "Sibling Decision Making Matrix" is used at the Track B meeting to facilitate discussion to inform the assessment and decision regarding the need for joint sibling placement. This decision needs to be made prior to considering specific families for placement.

Step 3: Relative placement determination.

Step 3 applies to any case where a relative with an approved home study is interested in providing permanent care for the child or sibling group. A Track A or Track B meeting is held to determine if the relative(s) are able to meet the best interests of the child or sibling group as defined during Steps 1 and 2. The "Best Interest Discussion Guide" must be used to facilitate the conversation and assess each prospective relative caregiver's ability to meet the child or sibling group's needs. This is done using information known about the prospective relative caregiver through their home study and other sources. Consideration should be given to the education, visitation and support provided to the relatives to assist them in being able to provide care to the child. If the relatives are determined to be unable to provide for the needs of the child, would the relative be able to do so if additional Department support was provided?

When placement with relatives is determined to be contrary to the best interests of the child or sibling group, after being provided opportunities to demonstrate and/or improve their abilities, the relatives should be ruled-out as a permanent placement option.

Step 4: Non-relative placement determination.

If relatives with approved home studies are ruled-out as permanent placement options, the selection process moves to Step 4. A Track A or Track B meeting is held to recommend a non-relative permanent placement for the child or sibling group. Current caregivers, fictive kin and other prospective non-relative caregivers are considered during Step 4. The "Best Interest Discussion Guide" must be used to facilitate the conversation and assess each prospective caregiver's ability to meet the child or sibling group's needs. This is done using information known about the prospective caregiver through their home study and other sources.

Documentation

Documentation for sibling placement determination meetings (Step 2) is completed using the "Sibling Placement Documentation" template. Information should include a summary of the discussion held based on the "Sibling Decision Making Matrix" including the degree of the connection between siblings, the duration of their relationship, the quality of their relationship, the intensity of their relationship, identify any safety risks to joint placement and possibilities for managing these risks, benefits versus potential attachment damage of joint sibling placement and the children's placement preference with regards to their siblings.

Relative (Step 3) and non-relative (Step 4) placement determination meeting documentation is completed using the "Permanent Placement Documentation" template. Notes should include only information about families considered at that specific meeting. Documentation must identify all families considered for placement at that meeting, include a summary of the discussion held based on the "Best Interest Discussion Guide" for each family, the final recommendation and reasons for the placement decision. Documentation should be as detailed as possible about each family's strengths, areas of concern and capacities and how they apply to the family's ability to meet the child's identified needs.

Documentation of Placement Selection Committee meetings are maintained in the child's file and uploaded onto the child's person profile in iCare. Copies of all dual assessments or home studies considered by the Placement Selection Committee shall be maintained for thirty days.

After that period of time, a copy of the selected family's Dual Assessment or Home Study will be maintained in the family's licensing file and uploaded onto the family's Resource Family profile in iCare. For children who are placed for adoption, copies of the selected family's Dual Assessment or Home Study and Placement Selection Committee documentation will be transferred to the child's permanent adoption file.

Placement Selection Meetings

Placement selection meetings may be held in one of two formats:

Track A: Used in Step 3 (relative placement determination) or Step 4 (non-relative placement determination) when a relative OR current foster parent is the only family interested in permanent placement of the child. Relatives with positive home studies cannot be ruled out using a Track A meeting.

Track B: Must be used in Step 2 for sibling placement determination meetings. Must be used in Step 3 for relative placement determination when multiple relatives are being considered for placement. Must be used in Step 4 when multiple non-relative families are being considered. Track B should also be used in situations where only one placement is being considered, however the social worker has identified significant concerns about this placement. Relatives with positive home studies may be ruled out using a Track B meeting.

Hubs have the option of staffing a Track A case as a Track B; however, may not staff a Track B case as a Track A.

Child and Prospective Family Involvement

The purpose of a Placement Selection Committee meeting is to select a family for the child; thus the child is the most important person in the process. Under Idaho law, a child must consent to his or her adoption beginning at age 12. Input of the child being considered for placement is required for all placement selection decisions beginning at age 12. Involving the child necessitates advanced preparation of the child by the social worker. This does not mean the child should have access to the confidential home studies of prospective families but should have information regarding the families' characteristics, demographics, personalities, interests, etc. The child may participate in person or telephonically during the meeting or share his/her opinions via letter, their social worker, or GAL. Youth should be encouraged to attend to the extent of their developmental and comfort level.

All families being considered by the Committee for placement of the child in a Track B meeting are required to be invited to provide additional information. This input may be given in-person or via phone. Families may also choose to provide a letter, DVD, photo book, etc. Their participation allows the team to learn more about the prospective family than what is written in the dual assessment to ensure their strengths, interests, desires and needs are understood accurately. The team process encourages discussion of any issues or concerns identified by the family or the team. It allows families to demonstrate their ability to work with the placement and transition process.

Families are anxious about their participation and should not be expected to make presentations. Instead, families should address any questions asked by the Committee such as information about their family and their parenting plan for the child. Involvement of prospective families in the placement committee meeting is limited to their participation during their interview. They do not have access to information, home studies or other documentation related to other prospective families.

Participants

Placement Selection Committee participants provide information and input regarding the child's placement. Attendance may be in-person or via phone. Participants who are not Department employees must agree to maintain confidentiality and sign a "Statement of Volunteer Service Requirements" at the beginning of the meeting.

In situations where there is more than one social worker currently assigned to the case (i.e. a social worker for the child and an adoption social worker/consultant), their applicable roles and responsibilities can be negotiated between them.

Hub Program Managers are responsible for making each permanent placement decision, giving consideration to the recommendations of the Placement Selection Committee. It is not necessary for Hub Program Managers to attend all Placement Selection Committee meetings. When they do attend, they function as a facilitator or general participant, offering input to the process.

Each track has a list of required, or "Core," participants. Below is a description of these participants and their assigned roles and responsibilities.

TRACK A CORE PARTICIPANTS
(Only one placement being considered; relatives not being ruled out)

Track A Placement Selection Committee meetings are intended to be abbreviated and the number of participants is minimized. A copy of the child's written Social History/Assessment for Permanency is not required, however the child's social worker should be prepared to provide a verbal history of the child and child's family. As only one placement is being considered, more time is spent on discussion of how to support the family in their new role as a concurrent planning or permanent placement, as opposed to identifying a family for placement.

The following participants are required in all Placement Selection Committee meetings (all tracks):

- Child's Social Worker: the role of the child's social worker is to summarize relevant information regarding the child's history as well as the child's feelings and wishes regarding permanent placement. The social worker reminds team members permanency is a service for the child, ensures the child's needs are represented and advocates for the child's best interests. They provide information regarding their conversations and interactions with the prospective families. If case management is provided through the Casey Family Program or other agency, the assigned social workers from both the case management agency and the Department must attend.

- Adoption Worker/Consultant (cases with a concurrent or permanent plan including adoption only): the role of the adoption worker is to provide information regarding placement from an adoption perspective. This includes identification of the needs of the child and prospective families and suggesting ideas for post-placement support. If an adoption social worker/consultant has not been assigned to the case, and the child's plan includes adoption, a representative from the field office's adoption program should be present.

- Social Worker's Supervisor: includes either the supervisor for the child's current social worker, the supervisor for the adoption worker/consultant, or both. The role of the supervisor is to provide support to the social worker while identifying potential bias in the decision making process. The supervisor serves as a consultant and suggests alternative resources or strategies for pre-placement visitation or post-placement services. Supervisors should advocate for further discussion of issues which are unclear. They are also responsible for following-up with the social worker to develop a plan for implementation of the placement decision. If case management is provided by the Casey Family Program or other agency, the supervisor for that agency's social worker should attend as well as the Department supervisor.

- Chief of Social Work: most often, a Chief of Social Work assumes the role of facilitator. As such, they are responsible for articulating the goal of the meeting and the roles of each team member and ensuring each role is adequately represented in the discussion. They summarize discussion and areas for follow-up, move the team through the decision-making framework and test for consensus. In situations where the Chief is not acting as the facilitator, their role will be similar to that of the social worker's supervisor.

- Tribal Representative (ICWA Cases Only): in cases where ICWA involvement has been established, or is in the process of being established, the tribe must be invited to participate in the selection process. The tribe may choose to participate in person, via phone or in writing.

TRACK B CORE PARTICIPANTS
(Sibling placement determination; more than one placement being considered; one placement being considered with the presence of significant social worker concerns; or relatives may be ruled out)

Required core participants are those previously identified in Track A: child's social worker, adoption worker/consultant, social worker's supervisor, a Chief of Social Work and tribal representative if the child is subject to ICWA. A written Social History/Assessment for Permanency is required.

The following participants are required to be invited to attend Track B meetings; if they are unable to be present, they must be encouraged to provide information and/or input as to the child's placement to the Committee via other method (i.e. phone call, writing, discussion with a Committee member).

- Hub Program Manager or Lead Chief of Social Work: the Hub Program Manager or Lead Chief of Social Work may act as facilitator during Track B meetings. They are responsible for ensuring the perspectives of all participants are heard and considered,

provide summarization and identification of areas for follow-up. Hub Program Mangers or Lead Chiefs of Social Work are also able to provide a managerial perspective to the process.

- Third Party Department Representative: an individual from another Hub asks questions and provides input about the case and placement options from a non-Hub perspective.

- Any Previous Significant Social Worker: in cases where there have been other social workers assigned to the case who have significant knowledge or understanding of the child and his or her circumstances, they should be invited to participate. Their role is to provide a summary of the child's life experiences as they may relate to permanent placement.

- Child's Current Foster Parent/Caregiver (if not interested in permanent placement): share information about the child's daily living needs, need for structure and type of parenting to which they respond best. They can also provide feedback regarding their interactions with prospective families. Involving the current caregivers is one way to support them in the upcoming transition of the child.

  OR

- Community Representative (if foster parent is interested in permanent placement): a community representative chosen to participate should have knowledge regarding the child welfare system (i.e. uninvolved foster parent, University Partner, a Keeping Children Safe panel member, uninvolved child welfare professional, uninvolved service provider with understanding of child placement). A community representative cannot be a Department employee or that field office's embedded trainer. They can help to safeguard against bias in the process by providing a non-Departmental perspective on potential placement options.

OPTIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Optional participants are individuals who may be invited to attend or provide information to Placement Selection Committee meetings based on the specific circumstances of each case:

- CASA/Guardian ad Litem (GAL): summarizes points about the child's history, interests and needs and provides a non-Department perspective on potential placement options. Participation of a GAL should be considered in cases where there has been active involvement by the GAL.

- Child-Specific Recruiter: a recruiter who has coordinated with the child's social worker to identify potential permanent homes for the child. Their role is to provide information about the child's permanency-related needs, recruitment process used and information about the prospective families. The child-specific recruiter may also provide an assessment of the needs of the child and prospective families as they relate to the child's transition into the home.

- Child's Connections: includes child's parents, siblings, extended family members or fictive kin. Having input from the child's connections can be very helpful, especially in

cases where ongoing contact between the child and his/her birth relatives are in the child's best interest. This input may include general desires regarding the type of home in which they would like to see the child placed; or may be more specific including asking for placement with a specific family. Relatives may receive a description of or even meet potential families. Input may be provided through the use of Family Group Decision Making meetings, attendance at the Placement Selection Committee, discussion with the social worker or in writing.

- Licensing Social Worker/Supervisor: includes a social worker or supervisor from the Department or private agency who performed the family's home study. They summarize relevant information about the family including their wishes regarding permanent placement and highlights their strengths and challenges. The child's social worker likely did not write the family's dual assessment or home study, and may not know the family personally, so obtaining first hand information from the person assessing the family can be important. **If input is received from the social worker for one family being considered, attempts to obtain input from the social workers for other families being considered must be made as well.** The family's social worker should be familiar with the home study, discuss how the family will meet the child's specific needs and advocate for the family based on specifics.

- Previous Social Worker's Supervisor: in cases where there have been other social workers assigned to the case who have significant knowledge or understanding of the child and his or her circumstance, and that social worker is unavailable to provide input into the committee process, their supervisor may be helpful in providing information regarding of the child's life experiences as they may relate to permanent placements.

- Treatment Providers and/or Department Clinician: the child's treatment providers can provide information based on their clinical judgment about the parental capacity needed to best support the child.

Meeting Preparation

Before presenting a case at the Placement Selection Committee, the child's social worker or adoption worker is expected to have provided all prospective families with information regarding the child's specific needs via discussion, copies of the Child and Family Social and Medical Information Form and redacted child's Social History/Permanency Assessment (when available). Prospective families being considered by the Committee must also be provided with a copy of the "Placement Selection Letter", which includes information regarding with whom their information will be shared. The social worker should assess each family's ability to meet the needs of the specific child and identify if any gaps exist in the information known about the family which should be resolved before proceeding.

The child's social worker is also responsible for ensuring notification of the upcoming meeting is provided to all interested parties, including but not limited to: CASA/GAL, child's parents, relatives, current care providers, prospective families and representatives from the family's agency or field office.

Each prospective family being considered for adoptive or concurrent (including adoptive) placement must have a current completed Dual Assessment or Adoption Home Study which

recommends the family for adoptive placement. Families being considered for guardianship or concurrent (including guardianship) placement must have a current Dual Assessment, relative, foster care or other type of home study. A current dual assessment or home study is one which was completed within the past year.

If a family from another office is being considered for placement, it is expected the child's social worker will have had contact with the family's social worker regarding the potential placement prior to the Committee meeting. The child's social worker needs to have discussed the potential permanent placement of the child with the social worker(s) of any other child placed in the prospective family's home.

The child's social worker is responsible for providing copies of the dual assessments or home studies to Department members of the Placement Selection Committee one week prior to the meeting, giving them sufficient time to review all materials. Copies of the child's Social History/Assessment for Permanency will also be provided for Track B meetings. It is the expectation that Department employee participants will come to the meeting prepared having read the materials provided. Non-Department participants should be encouraged to arrive early to the meeting to review the materials.

Given the enormity of the decision being made, it is important to ensure sufficient time is scheduled for Placement Selection Committee meetings. The number of families being considered, the level of special needs of the child and the potential challenges of placement will all impact the amount of time needed for individual meetings.

Meeting Process

Permanent Placement Selection Committee meetings have three general phases: information gathering, discussion and recommendation.

Phase One – Information Gathering

All participants attend phase one.

The child's social worker, adoption worker/consultant and others with knowledge of the child share information regarding each child's needs related to the eight best interest factors. These needs provide the basis for the ongoing discussion. Committee members with knowledge about the families then provide information about the prospective placements. Once the participants have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the information presented, interviews are conducted with one prospective family at a time (Track B). Interviews may occur by phone or in-person. Prospective families may only be present for the portion of the meeting when they are being interviewed. Consideration should be given to asking the prospective families to be available later by phone, in the event the Committee has additional questions.

Phase Two - Discussion

All participants attend phase two.
The "Sibling Decision Making Matrix" is used to facilitate discussion during Sibling Determination Meetings (Step 2).

The "Best Interest Discussion Guide" is used to facilitate discussion during Relative (Step 3) and Non-Relative (Step 4) Placement Determination meetings. The guide should be used in its entirety for one prospective family at a time. Once the Committee has had the opportunity to assess the first family's ability to meet all eight best interest factors of the child or sibling group consideration of the next family's abilities can begin.

Note: The child's social worker and adoption worker/consultant will have spent a significant amount of time assessing the child and each prospective family prior to the Placement Selection Committee. As a result of these thorough assessments, they are likely to have developed an opinion regarding the sibling, relative or non-relative placement. It is important for these opinions to be shared prior to the discussion phase of the meeting. The social worker and adoption worker/consultant should be provided with an opportunity to summarize how they have assessed each child and family and describe how they arrived at their opinion. This information should then be incorporated into the subsequent facilitated discussion.

Phase Three - Recommendation

Phase three participation is limited to current Department child welfare employees only. Non-Department committee participants such as the current foster parent, CASA/GAL, community members, child's connections and private treatment providers may not participate in the recommendation-making portion of the meeting. Once the Permanent Placement Selection Committee has completed the discussion phase, those participants not involved in the recommendation process will be excused. Further information regarding participants and this phase is provided in the following section of this Standard.

Recommendations

The following Placement Selection Committee participants are responsible for making all placement recommendations:

- Chief of Social Work
- Child's Social Worker
- Adoption Social Worker/Consultant/Representative (for children with a concurrent plan which includes adoption or a plan of adoption only)
- Supervisor(s) for the Child's Social Worker and/or Adoption Worker
- Tribal representative when the child is subject to the ICWA **and** the Tribe has legally intervened in the case.

The following Placement Selection Committee participants are additionally responsible for making placement recommendations when they have attended the Committee meeting:

- Lead Chief of Social Work
- Child's previous significant social worker(s)
- Supervisor for the previous significant social worker(s)
- Adoption/Permanency Supervisor
- Third Party Department Representative

Department social workers and supervisors whose role in the child's case has been limited to conducting and/or approving dual assessments or home studies for the families being considered should not be included in the recommendation process. As assessors and approvers for the prospective families, they may be considered advocates for those families; while the focus of the process is on meeting the best interests of the child.

A sibling placement determination meeting may result in several recommendations: siblings (all or some) must be placed together; joint sibling (all or some) placement is a priority; or siblings (all or some) should not be placed together. A decision that siblings must be placed together indicates only families interested in caring for the entire sibling group (or portion of the sibling group) will be considered for placement. A decision that joint sibling placement is a priority indicates recruitment for joint and separate placements will occur; however families interested in providing care for the sibling group will be given stronger consideration for placement. This type of recommendation may occur in situations where there is a substantial difference in needs between siblings, a large size sibling group or the combined needs of the siblings are significant.

If the determination is made to prioritize joint sibling placement, relative and non-relative families willing, capable and dedicated to providing permanency for the sibling group must be considered for placement prior to relative and non-relative families interested in providing permanency for less than the entire sibling group who should be placed together.

Placement recommendations during relative (Step 3) and non-relative (Step 4) determination meetings are made using information obtained during Step 1 about the child's identified needs and how each prospective family's is able or unable to meet those needs. The "Best Interest Discussion Guide" is used to assist in this assessment. The assessment will change for each prospective family based on how the identified qualities of the prospective parent(s) enable them to meet the child's needs.

Committees utilize an open and thorough discussion process to come to a consensus recommendation. When significant questions or concerns remain, the Committee is strongly encouraged to postpone the final recommendation while additional information or input is obtained. Otherwise, if a consensus is unable to be reached after a reasonable period of time, an open vote will be held. Any Committee member participating in the recommendation process may also call for an open vote.

All Placement Selection Committee recommendations are reviewed by the Hub Program Manager who makes the Hub placement decision. If an accepted request for an Extended Placement Selection Committee meeting is not received within four (4) days of the notification of the decision to the prospective families, the Hub placement decision becomes the final placement decision.

Decision Notification

The Placement Selection Committee develops a plan for communicating the decision to all prospective concurrent planning, adoptive or guardianship families. Notification should not occur prior to receiving the Hub Program Manager's decision regarding the placement. The notification plan includes the information to be shared regarding the reasons for the placement recommendation. Ideally, families not chosen for placement are notified in-person. When that is

not possible, telephone notification is appropriate. Many of these families go through a grieving process and may need to have additional conversations with the social worker.

In situations where a current caregiver or relative of the child is considered but not selected, notification must include information on how to request an Extended Placement Selection Committee meeting. It is essential that prompt documentation of the notification occur, as notification marks the beginning of the period of time a family has to request an Extended Placement Selection Committee meeting. Families have four business days from the date they are notified of the decision to make this request.

Notification of the placement decision should also be provided to the licensing social worker(s) for the family or families, the child's GAL, the current caregivers, relatives and the child's parents whose parental rights have not been terminated. The court should be notified at the next court hearing.

Once a concurrent planning adoptive or guardianship placement has been identified, the child's social worker and/or adoption worker need to consider how the child is integrating into the identified family. If concerns regarding the placement are identified, prompt inclusion of the family's licensing social worker should be sought and consideration of the use of a Family Development Plan and the provision of services to support the placement should be implemented. In situations where the identified placement is in another community or state, pre-placement contact and visitation should be arranged. Once the child's permanency goal has been changed to Adoption, a Legal Risk Placement Agreement may be signed with the family.

Extended Placement Selection Committee (EPSC)

A relative or current foster parent who was considered by but not selected for a child's permanent placement by the Hub Placement Selection Committee may request an Extended Placement Selection Committee (EPSC) meeting.

There are some situations in which a case will not be accepted for an EPSC including:

- The requestor was not considered by the Hub Placement Selection Committee for permanent placement of the child.
- The child's move is being made for the purpose of achieving placement with siblings.
- Placement of an Indian child is being made in accordance with the ICWA placement preferences.
- Referral to the EPSC is made more than four (4) business days following notification of the Hub permanency placement decision.

The EPSC is comprised of individuals selected by the Division Administrator for Family and Community Services (FACS). These individuals may include: the FACS Division Administrator, Child Welfare Program Manager, state level Program Specialists and Hub CFS representatives. A Lead Chief of Social Work or Chief of Social Work from the office where the request originated will also participate on the EPSC. A minimum of four members must participate in each meeting.

Every attempt shall be made to conclude the EPSC process as quickly as possible due to the child's need for a timely decision.

Referral to the EPSC is made using the EPSC Referral Form or a written statement. EPSC referrals should be sent to:

Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, FACS
Attn: Tina Griffin, Extended Placement Selection Committee
Phone: (208) 334-5690
Fax: (208) 334-5691

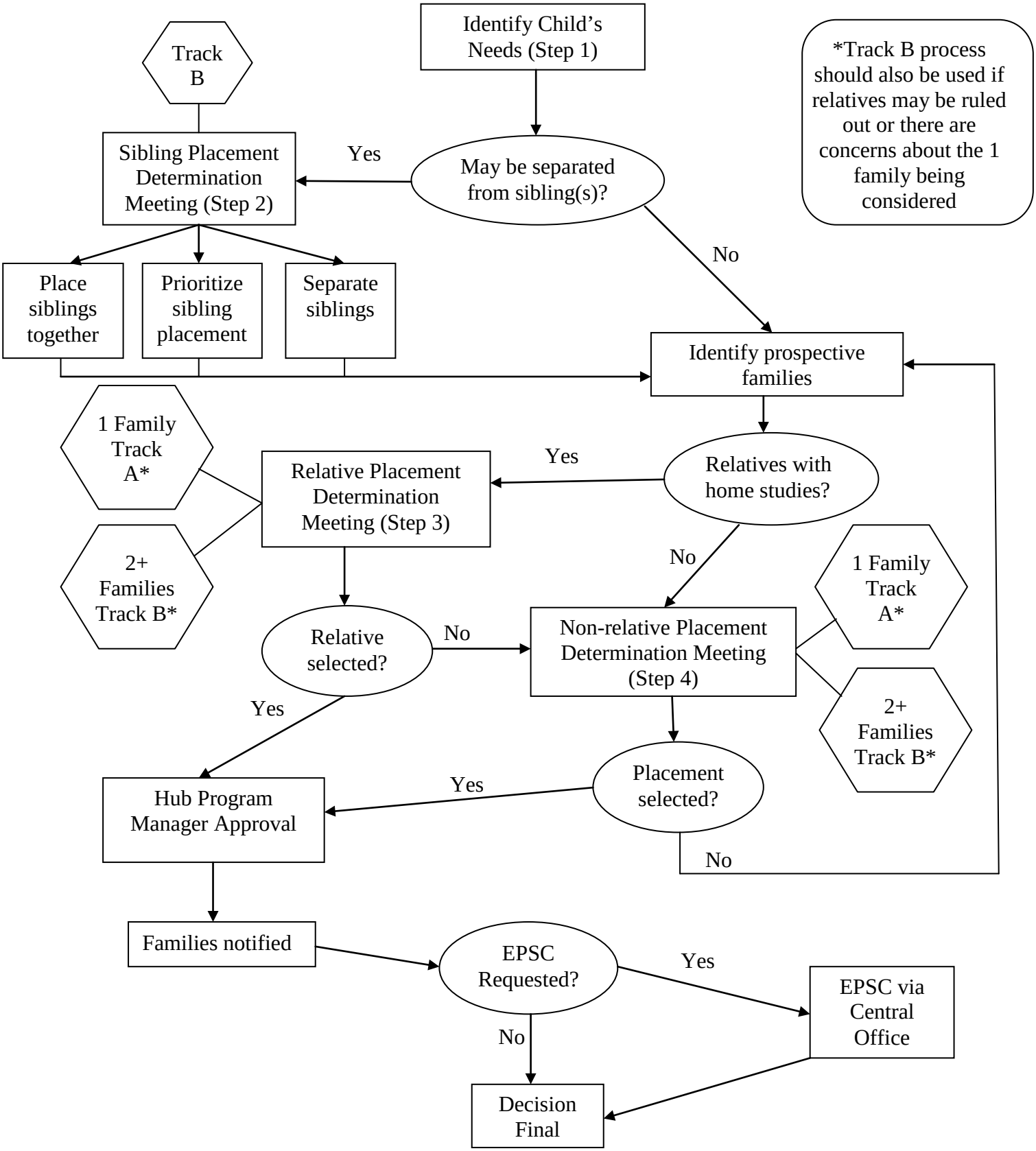
An EPSC liaison will notify the requestor and local CFS office via telephone or e-mail that the referral has been received. The liaison will schedule an EPSC meeting and request copies of records and any other documentation to be considered by the EPSC. All materials to be considered by the EPSC must be received two (2) business days before the scheduled meeting time.

EPSC meetings will be held in-person, telephonically and/or via video conferencing as soon as scheduling allows. EPSC members are expected to have reviewed all provided written documentation prior to the meeting. Except in extreme circumstances, the EPSC shall conduct interviews with appropriate CFS staff and supervisors as well as the requestor and any others determined by the Committee to be impacted by the disagreement. Interviews may be held either in-person or telephonically. Due to the time-sensitive nature of these requests, it is incumbent on the requestor to make themselves available for interviews at the scheduled time.

The EPSC will develop recommendations based on all information received. A meeting summary including a description of information and documentation considered will be compiled into a report and submitted to the FACS Division Administrator. The summary is a document for internal use and Departmental decision-making. The Division Administrator will forward the recommendation to the Director, or the Director's designee, for consideration. The Director, or the Director's designee, will make a final placement decision. Notification of the decision will be made via telephone or e-mail to the Hub Program Manager, Lead Chief of Social Work and Chief of Social Work. Original copies of the written decision will be sent to the Hub Program Manager, Lead Chief of Social Work and Chief of Social Work. The local office will verbally notify the requestor and other involved parties of the decision. The EPSC will mail a written notice of the decision to the referent and other involved families once confirmation of verbal notification has been received. Courtesy copies of the written decision will be provided to EPSC members, the Foster Care Program Specialist, and the Permanency Program Specialist within ten (10) business days.

The Director or Director's designee has the final decision making authority regarding EPSC referrals. If action by the Hub is outlined in the final recommendations, the Hub Program Manager will prepare a written response to the recommendations including their plan for implementation. The plan shall be sent to the EPSC liaison within two (2) weeks of receiving the final written decision.

Any variance to these standards must be documented and approved by the Division Administrator, unless otherwise noted.


Identify Child's Needs (Step 1)
*Track B process should also be used if relatives may be ruled out or there are concerns about the 1 family being considered
Track B
Sibling Placement Determination Meeting (Step 2)
Yes
May be separated from sibling(s)?
No
Place siblings together
Prioritize sibling placement
Separate siblings
Identify prospective families
1 Family Track A*
Relative Placement Determination Meeting (Step 3)
Yes
Relatives with home studies?
2+ Families Track B*
No
1 Family Track A*
Relative selected?
No
Non-relative Placement Determination Meeting (Step 4)
2+ Families Track B*
Yes
Placement selected?
Hub Program Manager Approval
Yes
No
Families notified
EPSC Requested?
Yes
EPSC via Central Office
No
Decision Final