

STANDARD: PERMANENT PLACEMENT 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 identification 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 Permanent Placement Committee.

TERMS

Adoptive Placement Agreement/Legal Risk Adoptive Placement Agreement – a written agreement between the Department and a child's pre-adoptive family which begins the required pre-adoptive supervision period of six months. An Adoptive Placement Agreement is used if the child is legally-free for adoption, and a Legal Risk Adoptive Placement Agreement is used if the child not legally-free or other legal-risk factors remain. The pre-adoptive family must be formally selected through the Permanent Placement Committee.

Alternate Permanent Placement – broadly refers to a family who has been formally recommended through the Permanent Placement Committee process to be the pre-adoptive or pre-guardianship family for a child.

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 permanency by with a family towards reunification while simultaneously working towards an alternative goal of adoption, guardianship, or another planned permanent living arrangement.

Concurrent Planning Family – a family who is licensed or approved to provide both foster care and adoption services. A concurrent planning family is willing and able to support reunification efforts while also being interested in providing permanency for a child through adoption or guardianship if reunification is not achieved. The family can be a relative, fictive kin/kin, or non-relative.

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.

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. Fictive kin or kin may include godparents, close family friends, clergy, teachers or members of a child's Indian tribe.

Fit and Willing Relative – individuals who meet Idaho's definition of relative (Idaho Statute 16-1602(38)) and qualify as a licensed foster home and/or receive a positive adoption home study. The relative must also possess the protective capacities; be able and willing to recognize and provide for a child's special needs; provide a safe and nurturing home for the sibling group when the child is being placed with his or her siblings; ensure the child's safety; and follow-through with visitation, contact, or relationship-building activities with the child prior to placement in the home.

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

Pre-Adoptive Placement – a relative, fictive kin/kin, or non-relative placement which has been identified as a child's adoptive placement through the Permanent Placement Committee process. Pre-Adoptive placements are formalized with the completion of an Adoptive Placement Agreement or Legal Risk Adoptive Placement Agreement.

Pre-Guardianship Placement – a relative, fictive kin/kin, or non-relative placement which has been identified as a child's guardianship placement through the Permanent Placement Committee process.

Primary Permanency Goal – the option identified as the most appropriate and preferred permanency option for the child, given the circumstances of the case. A primary permanency goal receives the strongest emphasis of the family and the CFS social worker as they work toward goal attainment. However, both the primary and secondary goals are worked simultaneously. A primary permanency goal may shift at any time to become a secondary permanency goal if it appears likely the primary permanency goal is not attainable.

Relative - a person related to a child by blood, marriage, or adoption. This includes a child's grandparent, great-grandparent, aunt, great aunt, uncle, great uncle, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, first cousin, sibling and half-sibling (Idaho Statute 16-1602(38)).

Secondary Permanency Goal – the option identified as another permanency option for the child. At any time in the case, the secondary permanency goal may become the primary permanency goal and the prior primary permanency goal may shift to the secondary goal. Although the primary permanency goal is the emphasis of the case, both goals are worked simultaneously.

Sibling - A person who shares the same biological or adoptive mother and/or father of the child. Siblings may be full-siblings or half-siblings. Siblings include those children who would be considered a sibling if not for a disruption in parental rights, such as a termination of parental rights (TPR) or death of a parent.

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 prior to permanent placement selection.

CFS STAFF REQUIREMENTS

This standard provides information regarding CFS staff requirements, guidance, and direction on implementation. Below are the requirements for CFS staff for this standard:

- All Department adoptive and guardianship placement recommendations must be made by the committee process described in this standard.
- Decisions to permanently separate siblings for permanent placement must be made by the committee process described in this standard.

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, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families 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/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 efforts of CFS 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 repeated efforts of CFS 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 Permanent Placement Committee meetings. The Six Principles of Partnership (everyone deserves 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 Field 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 Permanent Placement 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 – Federal legislation which requires CFS 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, CFS 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 CFS 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 with a significant relationship with the child.
4. 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.

Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act – Federal legislation which requires CFS to notify parents of a child’s sibling(s) when that child is placed in foster care. Notification must occur within 30 days of the child’s removal and follow the same guidelines as relative notification required under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act.

IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARD

Permanent Placement Committee meetings must be facilitated by the Field Program Manager, Child Welfare Lead Chief of Social Work, Child Welfare Chief of Social Work or a Field 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 formally identify an alternate permanent family once a child has been in foster care between three and 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 formally identify a permanent placement for a child with a permanent plan of adoption or guardianship when an alternate permanent placement was not previously identified. Identification in this situation occurs following recruitment efforts such as contacts with the child’s connections, use of media-based recruitment such as Wednesday’s Child and other child-specific recruitment efforts.

Model

The permanent placement committee process is a four-step model which incorporates various processes depending on specific case circumstances. Steps occur one at a time and do 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 are to 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 the 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.

This step applies only to cases where the child has siblings and consideration is being made to separate the siblings for permanency. Siblings may or may not be in foster care. For example, if

a sibling resides in the home of a potential permanent placement. The purpose is to consider the needs of the children in foster care 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 A or a Track B committee meeting is used to make this determination. The “Sibling Decision Making Matrix” is used at the 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, foster parent, and fictive kin/kin placement.

Step 3 applies to any case where a child’s relatives, current foster parents, and/or fictive kin/kin 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 relatives, current foster parents, and/or fictive kin/kin 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, current foster parents, and/or fictive kin/kin to assist them in being able to provide care to the child.

When permanent placement with the relatives, current foster parents, and/or fictive kin/kin 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 family should be ruled-out as a permanent placement option.

Step 4: Non-relative placement determination.

If the child’s relatives, current foster parents, and/or fictive kin/kin 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. 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 meetings (Step 2) is completed using the “Sibling Placement Documentation” template. Information includes 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, current foster parent, and fictive kin/kin (Step 3) and non-relative (Step 4) placement 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, summarize

the discussion held based on the “Best Interest Discussion Guide” for each family, state the final recommendation and provide an explanation of 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 Permanent Placement Committee meetings is maintained as part of 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 Permanent Placement 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.

Permanent Placement Meetings

Permanent placement meetings may be held in one of two formats:

Track A: Used in Step 2 (sibling placement) and Step 3 (relative, current foster parent, fictive kin/kin placement consideration). The child’s relatives, current foster parents, and fictive kin/kin with positive home studies cannot be ruled out using a Track A meeting.

Track B: May be used in Step 2 for sibling placement meetings. Must be used in Step 3 for relative, current foster parent, and/or fictive kin/kin placement consideration when multiple families are being considered for placement. Must be used in Step 4 when multiple non-relative families are being considered. Track B must also be used in situations where only one placement is being considered, however the social worker has identified significant concerns about this placement. The child’s relatives, current foster parents, and kin/fictive kin with positive home studies may be ruled out using a Track B meeting.

Hubs have the option of staffing any Track A case as a Track B; however, may not staff a Track B case as a Track A. For example, sibling placement meetings are typically held as a Track A meeting. Situations where more complicated factors are present and a Track B meeting may be more appropriate include:

- There is disagreement among assigned CFS social workers, supervisors or community partners regarding sibling separation.
- Consensus is unable to be reached utilizing a Track A meeting.
- One or more of the siblings has significant special needs and there are concerns about one family being able to meet the needs of the sibling group.

Child and Prospective Family Involvement

The purpose of a Permanent Placement 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 being adopted 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 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

Permanent Placement Committee participants provide information and input regarding the child's placement. Attendance may be in-person, via phone, or through VCE. 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.

Field Program Managers are responsible for making initial permanent placement recommendations, giving consideration to the input of the Permanent Placement Committee. It is not necessary for Field Program Managers to attend all Permanent Placement 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. It is essential the information and knowledge necessary to make the placement decision be present at the meeting. Thus, the exact make-up of those in attendance may vary based on case-specific circumstances.

TRACK A CORE PARTICIPANTS

(Sibling placement; only one placement being considered; the child's relatives, current foster parents, and fictive kin/kin not being ruled out)

Track A Permanent Placement 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 must 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 individuals participate in all Permanent Placement 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 CFS must attend.
- Adoption Worker/Consultant or Supervisor (cases with a concurrent or permanent plan including adoption only): the role of the adoption worker or supervisor 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.
- Child Welfare Supervisor: either the supervisor for the child's current social worker or the supervisor for the adoption worker/consultant. 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 may attend as well as the CFS supervisor.
- Chief of Social Work or Lead Chief of Social Work: most often, a Chief or Lead 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 child welfare supervisor.
- CASA/Guardian ad Litem (GAL): in cases where a GAL has been assigned, CASA must be invited to participate in the selection process. The GAL summarizes points about the

child's history, interests and needs and provides a non-Department perspective on potential placement options.

- 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

(More than one placement being considered; one placement being considered with the presence of significant social worker concerns; or the child's relatives, current foster parents, and/or fictive kin/kin may be ruled out)

Required core participants are those previously identified in Track A: child's social worker, adoption worker/consultant or supervisor, child welfare supervisor, a Chief or Lead Chief of Social Work, CASA/GAL and tribal representative. 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).

- Field Program Manager: the Field Program Manager 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. In situations where the program manager is not acting as the facilitator, their role will be similar to that of the child welfare supervisor. Field Program Managers 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.
- Child's Current Foster Parent (if not interested in permanent placement): shares 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 or not able to participate): 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 Permanent Placement Committee meetings based on the specific circumstances of each case:

- Any Previous Significant Social Worker/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 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-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 Permanent Placement Committee, discussion with the social worker or in writing.
- Licensing Social Worker/Supervisor: includes a social worker or supervisor from CFS or the 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. Prospective adoptive families may perceive licensing social workers/supervisors as advocates for the family they license. Thus, 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 offer specific information as to how the family will be able to meet the child or sibling group's needs.
- 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 Permanent Placement 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 (for Track B meetings). Prospective families being considered by the Committee must also be provided with a copy of the "Placement Meeting 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. If any of the potential adoptive placements would result in a placement change for the child, the social worker should be prepared to discuss the potential impact of a move on the child given the child's specific needs and trauma history.

The child's social worker is also responsible for ensuring notification of the upcoming meeting is provided to all interested individuals, including but not limited to: the child's parents (if termination has not occurred), 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 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. Families with an open or pending safety assessment cannot be considered for placement.

If a family from another office is being considered for placement, it is expected the child's social worker will have contacted 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 CFS members of the Permanent Placement 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 CFS employee participants will come to the meeting prepared having read the materials provided. Non-CFS 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 Permanent Placement 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 Committee meetings are facilitated by a Chief of Social Work, Lead Chief of Social Work, Field Program Manager or designee. They have three general phases: information gathering, discussion and recommendation.

Phase One – Information Gathering

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

The "Sibling Decision Making Matrix" is used to facilitate discussion during Sibling Meetings (Step 2).

The "Best Interest Discussion Guide" is used to facilitate discussion during relative/foster parent/fictive kin/kin (Step 3) and non-relative (Step 4) placement 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 Permanent Placement Committee. As a result of these thorough assessments, they are likely to have developed an opinion regarding the sibling, relative, fictive kin/kin, 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

A sibling placement 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, current foster parent, fictive kin/kin and non-relative families willing, capable and dedicated to providing permanency for the sibling group must be considered for placement prior to relative, current foster parent, fictive kin/kin and non-relative families interested in providing permanency for less than the entire sibling group who should be placed together.

Placement recommendations during relative/current foster parent/fictive kin/kin (Step 3) and non-relative (Step 4) 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 should 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, the placement preference of each participant will be noted in the record to be shared with the Field Program Manager.

All Permanent Placement Committee findings are reviewed by the Field Program Manager who makes the initial placement recommendation. If an accepted request for a Permanent Placement Review is not received within four (4) days of the prospective families being notified of the initial placement recommendation, the recommendation becomes final.

Family Notification

The Permanent Placement Committee develops a plan for communicating the outcome to all prospective concurrent planning, adoptive or guardianship families. Notification should not occur prior to receiving the Field Program Manager's recommendation regarding the placement. The notification plan includes 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 families go through a grieving process and may need to have additional conversations with the social worker. If the recommended placement will require a placement change for the child, the Permanent Placement Committee identifies elements of a potential transition plan to support the move of the child from their current placement to their permanent home. This information will then be used in the development of the formal transition plan.

In situations where a current foster parent, relative, or fictive kin/kin of the child is considered but not selected, notification must include information on how to request a Permanent Placement Review. 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 a Permanent Placement Review. FACS must receive this request within four business days from the date the family is notified of the initial decision.

Notification of the CFS placement recommendation 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, pre-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. If the child is legally free for adoption, an Adoptive Placement Agreement should be signed.

Permanent Placement Review

A relative, current foster parent or fictive kin/kin who was considered by but not selected for a child's permanent placement by the Permanent Placement Committee may request a Permanent Placement Review. Requests must be received no later than four business days after notification is received by the family they were not identified by the initial Permanent Placement Committee as the adoptive or guardianship parent for the child. Every attempt shall be made to conclude the process as quickly as possible due to the child's need for a timely decision. The Director, or Director's designee, makes the final Department placement recommendation. There are some situations in which a case will not be accepted for a Permanent Placement Review including:

- The requestor was not considered by the Permanent Placement 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.
- Request for a Permanent Placement Review is made more than four (4) business days following notification of the initial permanent placement recommendation.

Permanent Placement Review requests are made utilizing the Permanent Placement Review Referral Form via online request, e-mail, or fax sent to:

Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, FACS

Attn: Permanent Placement Review

Phone: (208) 334-5918

Fax: (208) 332-7330

Adoption@dhw.idaho.gov

A Permanent Placement Review liaison will notify the requestor and local CFS office via telephone or e-mail that the referral has been received.

Review Assignment

Requests for Permanent Placement Review are initially considered by the Family and Community Services (FACS) Deputy Division Administrator who assigns them in one of two ways depending on the complexity of the case. All case documentation including the initial

Permanent Placement Committee documentation must up to date in iCARE in order for the Permanent Placement Review to be completed.

1. **Division Review:** a Central Office program specialist reviews information provided by the requestor as well as documentation from the initial Permanent Placement Committee. A timeline of case events related to permanent placement is developed based on information contained in iCARE and provided documentation. The request is discussed with the responsible Field Program Manager or Lead Chief or Chief of Social Work as well as the requesting family. The Deputy Division Administrator utilizes the compiled information and works in conjunction with the Division Administrator and Director to make a final Department recommendation.
2. **Extended Placement Selection Committee (EPSC):** The EPSC is comprised of individuals selected by the Deputy Division Administrator. These individuals may include: the Division Administrator and/or Deputy Administrator, Child Welfare Program Manager, Central Office program specialists, and field CFS staff. A Lead Chief of Social Work or Chief of Social Work from the region where the request originated will also participate on the EPSC. A minimum of four members must participate in each meeting.

The Permanent Placement Review liaison will schedule an EPSC meeting and request copies of records and any other documentation to be considered by the EPSC. It is essential that all case documentation be up to date in iCARE. All materials to be considered by the EPSC must be received two (2) business days before the scheduled meeting time.

EPSC meetings are held 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. 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 Deputy Division Administrator and Division Administrator. The Division Administrator, in conjunction with Director, or the Director's designee, makes the final placement recommendation. Notification of the selection will be made via telephone or e-mail to the field Program Manager, Lead Chief of Social Work and Chief of Social Work. Copies of the written summary will be sent to the Field 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 if requested by the field office 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.

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