

ANOTHER PLANNED PERMANENT LIVING ARRANGEMENT

Report to the Strengthening Families Act Committee

November 2017

APPLA SUBCOMMITTEE

- The group came together to make recommendations that support youth who are exiting the child welfare system to independent living.
- Stakeholders include community partners, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Children and Family Services, and young people who are or were involved in the child welfare system.
- The group identified three goals, which are reflected in the Stakeholder Guide to Best Practices in the Transition to Independent Living:
 - Include more youth voice in determining and achieving permanency goals;
 - Take a team approach to determining and achieving permanency goals; and
 - Promote best practices for implementation of APPLA provisions in the State and Federal Strengthening Families Act.

APPLA AND PERMANENCY

- “APPLA” stands for “Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.”
 - This permanency goal means that the youth will be self-sufficient, including through caring for themselves independently and providing for themselves financially, and that reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship were attempted and were not possible or were not in the best interest of the youth.
- Legal Permanency and Emotional Permanency
 - Legal permanency is essential and means that a youth is adopted, reunified with parents, or placed in a guardianship.
 - Young people place high importance on emotional permanency, which refers to the security and stability of relationships with the people in their lives.
 - While legal permanency is of high importance, emotional permanency should be a discussion with each youth, regardless of their legal permanency objective.

SUPPORTIVE CONNECTIONS

“The permanency plan shall include the identification of significant, supportive connections with identified adults willing to be consistently involved in the child’s life as the child transitions to adulthood.” Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-1312(4)

SUPPORTIVE CONNECTIONS

- At the start of the case, family and kin should be engaged in the youth's life, regardless of whether the family member can provide placement.
- Throughout the case, the identification of significant and supportive connections with identified adults should be an ongoing activity, regardless of the permanency objective.
- At the close of the case, it is essential to provide the youth guidance in navigating the relationships with the biological family.
- Considerations for identifying connections should include individuals who can:
 - Provide rides or transportation
 - Celebrate holidays and birthdays with the youth
 - Accompany youth to medical appointments
 - Give financial, career, education advice
 - Help the youth navigate complex family dynamics
- Establish policy and procedure for professionals working with the youth the say goodbye, explain their absence, and any boundaries or opportunities for continued communication.

INTENSIVE AND ONGOING EFFORTS

“The department shall document the intensive, ongoing, and, as of the date of the hearing, unsuccessful efforts made by the department to return the child home or secure a placement for the child with a fit and willing relative, a legal guardian, or an adoptive parent.” Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-1312(4)

ONGOING EFFORTS STAFFING

- In collaboration with youth, the group agreed the best way to ensure that intensive and ongoing efforts are undertaken before deciding that APPLA should be the youth's goal is to have a staffing procedure that has these elements:
 - Youth Informed
 - Youth Focused
 - Team Approach
 - Opportunity Focused
 - Ongoing Consideration of Permanency Goals

TRANSITIONAL LIVING PLAN AND LIFE SKILLS

When a child placed in foster care turns fourteen years of age or enters foster care and is at least fourteen years of age, a written independent living transition proposal shall be developed by the Department of Health and Human Services at the direction and involvement of the child to prepare for the transition from foster care to successful adulthood. Any revision or addition to such proposal shall also be made in consultation with the child. The transition proposal shall be personalized based on the child's needs and shall describe the services needed for the child to transition to a successful adulthood as provided in the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act. Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-1311.03

TRANSITIONAL LIVING PLAN AND LIFE SKILLS

- Transition Proposal
 - Youth Driven and informed, and reflect the goals, values, and abilities of the youth.
 - Attainment of life skills and development of permanent connections is a priority for the whole team.
 - Includes planning for life skill attainment informed by a life skills assessment to determine gaps in skills.
- Family Team Meeting
 - Each family team meeting should include a review of the transitional living plan and the identification of a life skills goal, regardless of the youth's permanency goal.
- Tracking Mechanism
 - Life skills attainment should be tracked as youth move from placement to placement. This will help foster parents identify gaps in independent living skills and support acquiring skills.

APPLA SUBCOMMITTEE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

APPLA SUBCOMMITTEE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AND NEXT STEPS

- Collaborative Efforts
 - Citizen Review Panel Feedback
 - Strengthening Families Act Advisor/Advocates
 - Preventative Legal Services
- Next Steps
 - Access to first jobs
 - Pregnant and parenting youth