

Reasonable Efforts 8th District CHIPS Specialization Workshop

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Learning Objectives

- Understand how different perspectives may impact expectations regarding reasonable and active efforts.
- Understand and apply federal and state law regarding reasonable and active efforts (handouts as reference)
- Increase understanding of evidence-based case planning practice,
- Understand how county and tribal agency efforts support the child's safety, permanency and wellbeing
- Understand how county and tribal agency efforts support the parents' progress on the case plan
- Identify the roles of the county, Guardian Ad Litem, parent's attorneys, and tribal agency with respect to reasonable and active efforts
- Improve understanding and partnership between agencies, parents or legal guardian and the court to ensure the child's safety, permanency, and wellbeing

Reasonable and active agency efforts

Begins with assessment and case planning

Comprehensive needs assessments for parents and children

- Assessing the needs of all parent's and children based on the reason/s for placement (harm and danger)
- Informal Assessments:
 - Information obtained during home visit observations and other discussions
 - Information from collateral contacts: family members, school, other child welfare staff and service providers
- Formal Assessments:
 - Agency assessment – Tools include SDM safety, risk, and strengths and need assessments and reassessments (using overrides if appropriate)
 - Formal assessments – chemical health, CAGE-AID, mental health assessments, parenting assessments, trauma assessments, physical/medical assessments, developmental assessments

Case plan development-Who is involved?

- Custodial and noncustodial parents or legal guardians
 - including the right to counsel
- Consultation with tribal social services in ICWA cases
- Consultation with GAL
- Consultation with foster child if age and developmentally appropriate
 - Work creatively to involve younger children and those with developmental delays
- Consultation with maternal relatives and other information supports

Solution-based Casework (evidence-based practice) develops behavior goals instead of service goals

- **Behavioral goals:** Focus on improving parental capacity through changing thinking and actions to eliminate risk and remedy the conditions that led to a child's placement. Progress on behavioral goals is based on the demonstration of increased understanding, application of knowledge, observable or measurable action, and improved ability.
- **Service goals:** Based on accessing services. Progress on service goals is based on participation in and completion of services.

Developing Case Plan Goals

1. Use of formal and informal assessments to develop behaviorally-based goals to achieve safety, permanency and wellbeing for children
3. Case plan goals may the behavior changes the parent/s must make to address the problems or conditions led to child's removal from home or prevent reunification
 - May also be strategies for how Parent A can support parent B to achieve goals
4. Tasks and services needed should be appropriate to address the behaviors, including specific and targeted underlying causes, impacting safety, permanency, and well-being?
4. Ensure case plan/agency efforts include parents in meeting the child's medical/mental health needs, educational development, and childhood activities?
5. Review plan templates: safety, trial home visit and access to treatment
 - changing plan templates as placement, disposition or court jurisdiction changes

Determining Case Plan Tasks

- To help families understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from the caseworker and other service providers, each goal should be broken down into small, meaningful, and incremental **tasks**. These tasks should:
 - Include the specific services and interventions needed to help the family achieve the goals and outcomes
 - Describe what the children, family, caseworker, and other service providers will do
 - Identify timeframes for accomplishing each task

Solution-Based Casework is a child welfare practice model based on partnership with a family

1. Capitalizes on existing family strengths, capacities and supports
2. Finds exceptions to family's safety concerns or conditions by exploring with the family a time the family has successfully solved the concern or conditional previously
3. Goals and tasks are written using the families' own language
4. Includes family members as participants with respective supportive roles
5. Tracks progress with the family and celebrates all successes, even if there are ongoing challenges completing the case

Agency efforts to access services

**Reasonable and active efforts to prevent placement or
finalize the permanency plan**

Minnesota Statutes, section 260.012

Reunification: What is the agency going to do to help the parents achieve the case plan goals?

- The agency must make reasonable/active efforts to assist the parents to meet the goals, access task (services) to address the problems or conditions
- The agency's efforts may vary during the case depending on the assessment of need and progress on the goals

Agency efforts to support the case plan

What is the agency going to do to ensure the child's safety, permanency and well-being

- Safety: Placed in a licensed foster home or relative in the process of being licensed, assessment that the home is able to meet the child's needs, mental health assessments/services, crisis plan, chemical health assessments/services
- Permanency: conduct relative searches, consistent visitation, maintaining child connections, placement stability, coordination of support services foster parents
- Well-being: Normalcy and application of prudent parent standard, needs and services, medical care responsibilities, medication oversight, education stability

Array of agency efforts to access services and discussion about this effort

1. Referrals

1. Definition and context

2. Scheduling appointments

1. Agency vs client initiated

3. Transportation

4. Contacting service providers

5. Assessing barriers and challenges

1. What follow up did the worker/agency do to address barriers if parent to promote achievement of case plan goals

Reasonable and active efforts to finalize the permanency plan:

- Reunify the child with the parent or guardian from whom the child was removed
- Assess non-custodial parent's ability to provide day-day care for the child and where appropriate provide services necessary to enable the noncustodial parent to safely provide care for child during efforts to achieve reunification
- Conduct initial and ongoing maternal and paternal relative searches
 - Identify, locate, inform, and evaluate
- Place siblings together or ensuring visitation occurs when siblings are in separate placements
- Develop a plan to finalize a safe and legal permanent alternative for the child when the child cannot be reunified with a parent
 - initiating concurrent planning efforts at beginning of case history

Visitation

- Why is visitation important when a child is in foster care?
 - Important for ongoing child parent bond/relationship
 - Important to monitor parent capacity to parent child
- How is :
 - the level of supervision considered
 - frequency of visits determined
- How do the agency's efforts support quality parenting time between custodial and noncustodial parents and children and other relatives and the child?
- Court order should be specific (i.e., twice a week for 2-hours each time); flexible to allow SW to revise (increase or decrease) duration and frequency based on child/parent needs upon agreement of SW and GAL; supervised v. unsupervised addressed by court
- Efforts to include the parent in meeting the child's medical / mental health needs, school decisions and progress meeting, and childhood activities is not a substitution for coordinated parent-child visitation.

Evaluating the family's progress by
utilizing the SDM Reunification tool

Discussion about the SDM Reunification tool

How do you consider and determine the following?

- Is the family actively participating in the services agreed to in the case plan?
- Is the child safe? Have the risk and protective factors, strengths, or safety threats changed, warranting a change or elimination of the safety plan or the development of a safety plan?
- What changes, if any, have occurred with respect to the behaviors and conditions contributing to the risk of child maltreatment or neglect?
- What progress has been made toward achieving case goals?
- Have the services been effective in helping clients achieve goals and, if not, what adjustments need to be made to improve outcomes?
- What is the current level of risk in the family?
- If there are safety concerns, can those be addressed through services after the child is reunified in the home?

Continued: How do you consider and determine the following?

- Have the protective capacities increased sufficiently so that parents or caregivers can protect their children and meet their developmental needs so the case can be closed?
- Family visitation – What is the frequency and quality of visits?
- If the child has been removed from the home, has it been determined that reunification is unlikely within the Federal and/or State-required timeframes with no significant progress toward outcomes? If so, is a different goal for achieving permanency needed? What is the status of concurrent permanency plan development and implementation?

Consider how information regarding the agency's reasonable or active efforts is provided to the court

- A. Petitions**
- B. Case plans (OHPP)**
- C. Progress is reported in court reports**
 - Provider reports and documentation**
- D. Case presentation at court**

Questions?