

## ***Introduction***

This information is being given to you because your child(ren) has/have been placed into the foster care system. Although foster care provides a safe environment for children, it can disrupt a child's emotional security and the feeling of belonging to his/her family. A special social work practice that values a child's need for a stable home life and a predictable future is called Concurrent Planning.

## ***What is Concurrent Planning?***

Concurrent planning is a process that works towards providing your child the security of a permanent home in a time frame that is beneficial to your child's physical, social and emotional development. If returning the child to your home is the best plan for your child, then your caseworker will work with you in setting case plan goals so this can happen. At the same time, an alternative plan will be made in case you do not complete your case plan goals.

## ***What is expected of me?***

As a parent, you will be asked to complete a case plan which you and your caseworker will develop together. Other members of your family and a multidisciplinary team (MDT) appointed by the juvenile court may also provide input on case plan goals. The case plan will describe specific tasks you are to complete in order to provide a safe and secure home for

your child. These tasks will focus on the issues that caused your child to be placed in foster care. You will be asked to complete the tasks in a reasonable period of time.

It is important that you help the caseworker identify the services you will need to make your home a safe place for your child to return home to you. The types of services identified by you and your caseworker may mean that you need to make big changes in your life. It is important that you participate in services as soon as they are available because the courts will most likely allow you only 12 months to make your home safe for your child. When your child has been in foster care for 12 months, the juvenile court will hold a "Permanency Hearing" to make a final decision if your child should be returned to you or to live permanently with someone else.

## ***What If I Do Not Complete The Plan?***

You and your caseworker will monitor the tasks you complete in the case plan and the tasks you do not complete in the case plan. The tasks you do not complete in your case plan will provide the caseworker with an idea of your commitment in getting your child back. If you continue to fail to complete the tasks in your case plan, DFS may take steps in filing for permanent custody of your child. If the juvenile court agrees, your child may be adopted by extended family members or by a "concurrent planning foster-adoptive family."

## ***What is DFS' Role?***

The DFS caseworker will work with you in identifying what services you may need and the specific tasks you will need to complete in your case plan. The caseworker will monitor your success and will provide you with supportive services, when possible. The caseworker will also monitor how long your child is in foster care. The longer your child is in foster care, the more likely your child will not be returned to your home.

## ***Family Partners***

Your caseworker may encourage you to seek the help of your extended family, trusted friends, and community resources to help you in the process of developing and completing the case plan. We refer to this support team as Family Partners.

This support team will include people who most care about you and your child(ren). They are the people you most trust and on whom you can rely. They are the people who will be there to help long after the case is closed. The caseworker will help you identify your Family Partners. They may include appropriate community professionals. Your team will help you and your caseworker identify family strengths and needs. They may provide some of the resources you need to complete your plan.

### ***What are Concurrent Planning Foster-Adoptive Homes?***

Concurrent planning foster-adoptive homes are families that have been approved by DFS to provide foster care. They have committed to early permanency for your child. This means that they are trained to support the need of your child being returned to you or in the alternative to be adopted. These families will work with DFS in trying to return your child to you. They will also take on the responsibility of being your child's parent if your child becomes legally free for adoption. Placing your child with a concurrent planning foster home helps make sure that your child does not move from home to home in foster care by providing them the stability they need.

### ***What are Kinship Foster Homes?***

Kinship foster homes are another type of foster care. Kinship foster homes are families that are made up of relatives or close friends of the family that already have a relationship with your child. These homes must be approved by DFS just like concurrent planning foster homes. It is important that if you have a relative or a close friend that takes care of your child, that you tell your caseworker immediately. Failure to provide this information will result in your child being placed into a foster home that may be unfamiliar to your child.

### ***What Do I Do Next?***

Take an honest look at the problems that caused your child to be removed from your home.

Work with your caseworker, and when possible your Family Partner support team to identifying services you need to make your home safe for your child.

Work hard on completing the tasks in the case plan.

Visit your child as scheduled by you and your caseworker.

Take an active role in co-parenting your child with your child's foster parents. For example, talk to the foster parents about your child's likes and dislikes, go to doctor appointments with them, find out how your child is doing in school, and attend teacher parent conferences with the foster parents.

Help your child accept their foster parents as people who are helping you to care for them while you are making the changes in your life to provide them a safe and stable home

Evaluate your ability to provide a safe home for your child in the near future

If you have questions about concurrent planning, please contact your caseworker.

Caseworker Name:

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Telephone Number:

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## **Concurrent Planning: A Guide for Parents, Guardians and Custodians**



**Department of Family Services**

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