



# Hoke County DSS Resource Family Newsletter

## PERMANENCY PLANNING

There are two words used a lot in Foster Care: Permanency Planning. What does it mean? Permanency planning is a social work practice philosophy that promotes a permanent living situation:

- for every child entering the foster care system;
- with an adult;
- with whom the child has a continuous, reciprocal relationship; and
- within a minimum amount of time.

The definition is from our state manual, Section 1201 Child Placement Services. We are required to provide children Permanence when they enter the foster care system. Within 30 days of a child entering care, we must have a plan in

place to quickly and safely get them out of care. Children can leave the system several ways: reunification, adoption, custody to non-removal parent or relative, custody to court approved caretaker, guardianship with relative or court approved caretaker, and APPLA. Children have a right to permanence, whether it is back with their parent, a relative or an adoptive family.

Foster care is TEMPORARY; we make every effort to reach permanence for children as quickly as possible. Some children enter foster care and go back home 6-12 months later....some go home after 1 1/2 years., and yet some children never return home but are adopted or custody is given to a relative. However, there are a few children that grow up in foster care...all the while we are trying to find them a home.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### AUGUST IS NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS MONTH

Public Health officials aren't just talking about the recent H1N1 flu virus when they talk about immunizations....measles, mumps, whooping cough, just to name a few, are still out there in our world. Immunizations should be kept current and up to date. Up to date immunizations are required for all of our foster children. In-

cluded in this issue are Immunization schedules for children 0-6 years, children 7-18 years, a catch up schedule for children 4 months to 18 years, and a schedule for adults. We hope you find this information helpful.

Want more information?  
Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).



## Hoke County DSS Foster Care & Adoptions

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## LINKS of Interest

- ☺ [WWW.hokecounty.org](http://WWW.hokecounty.org)
- ☺ [WWW.NCKIDS.COM](http://WWW.NCKIDS.COM)
- ☺ [WWW.NCREACH.COM](http://WWW.NCREACH.COM)
- ☺ [WWW.ncfapa.org](http://WWW.ncfapa.org)
- ☺ [WWW.cdc.gov](http://WWW.cdc.gov)
- ☺ [WWW.fosteringperspectives.org](http://WWW.fosteringperspectives.org)
- ☺ [WWW.ncdhhs.gov](http://WWW.ncdhhs.gov)
- ☺ [WWW.caseylifeskills.org](http://WWW.caseylifeskills.org)
- ☺ [WWW.statevoucher.org](http://WWW.statevoucher.org)
- ☺ [WWW.fosetrparentcollege.com](http://WWW.fosetrparentcollege.com)

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# REUNIFICATION

Reunification is the permanent plan of care that is usually put in place first when a child enters foster care. Reunification means that we are working towards returning the child to the parent from whom they were removed.

The department must make 'reasonable efforts' to return the child home; NCGS 7B-101 defines reasonable efforts as "the diligent use of preventive or reunification services when a juvenile's remaining in the home or returning home is consistent with achieving a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time." Policy further states that 'The primary considera-

*tion for the child's return home should be whether or not the child can be assured of at least a minimally sufficient level of care. Society can require that parents provide this level of basic care, and the County Department of Social Services has been given the authority to intervene when that level of care is not provided.'* (Insert taken from Family Services Manual, Volume I, Chapter IV, Section 1201 Child Placement Services).

We want children to return home and to grow up with their birth families. Plans are developed and goals are identified to help the parent correct areas that put their child at risk.

Child safety is our utmost concern—it is our duty—our responsibility. If a family is able to ensure child safety because of changes they have made and demonstrated—children can return home.

Sadly though, reunification efforts aren't always successful and some children can't return home. When children can't go back home, it then becomes our responsibility to ensure timely permanence by another means: custody/guardianship to relative/non-relative; adoption; or APPLA. Children DESERVE permanence—we work in partnership with birth families, foster families, mentors, friends, and other agencies to find permanence for children.

## Custody / Guardianship

Custody & Guardianship are two alternate permanent plans of care for children in foster care. If children can't return home, one of these plans might be determined to be in the

child's best interest.

### What is the difference?

Custody and Guardianship are similar plans of care;

the role of a Guardian is defined by law; the role of Custodian is usually defined by court order. One major difference between the two is how such responsibilities are terminated. A Guardian can resign voluntarily or the Court may determine a Guardian be 'unfit'. As Custodian, the parent or anyone else for that matter, can file a motion in court to become custodian of the child, regardless of the Custodian's ability to provide care.

Guardianship provides a much greater degree of permanence for children than custody. Adoption must be ruled out before Custody or Guardianship can be considered. Parental rights continue to exist under both of these plans. NCGS 7B-600, assigns legal authority for the guardian to act on behalf of the child without further DSS involvement, but with continued supervision of the court. Learn more: <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/>

## CONTACT INFO

### Supervisor:

Kristi Pigford 878-1925

### Foster Care Social Workers:

April Locklear 878-1927

Wally Sirenko 878-1928

Judy Anderson 878-1932

Wanda Harley 878-4040

### Adoptions Social Worker:

Ana Watson 878-1989

### Facilitator:

Jennifer Otero 878-1987

### Office Assistant:

Sheila Campbell 878-1926

### CPS Supervisor:

Julie Okrie 878-1929

### Intake Services:

Willie Carthens 878-1988

After Hours Emergency Contact Numbers:

**911 or 875-2135**

Please ask for the On-Call Social Worker. A Social Worker is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for EMERGENCIES.

# APPLA? APPLE?

Typo? APPLE Nope—APPLA! APPLA is a permanent plan of care for youth ages 16-17. It stands for Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. This is a fairly new plan of care designed only for youth 16-17; youth 14-15 may have it as a concurrent plan of care but not as a primary plan of care. APPLA gives youth an opportunity to remain in their family like placement until they reach the age of 18. In days gone by, there once was a plan of long-term foster care—meaning, it was ok for a child to grow up in foster care. That changed several years ago however, many youth

were left lingering in the system with nowhere to go and DSS' were left with the responsibility of trying to



find a 16-17 year old a family willing to adopt them or become their custodian. Not everyone is willing to parent a teen; with that knowledge, it was realized that some 16-17 year olds are in very stable family settings and all other permanency plans have been ruled out. BINGO! 16-17 year

olds who are in stable family settings can remain in that placement until they age out of care once the following conditions have been met: a mutual commitment exists between the caregiver and the youths; other permanency options have been ruled out; the youth has been in the home and fully integrated for at least six months; youth & caregiver want the placement to be made permanent; the Court and Permanency Planning Action Team approves the plan. Sometimes, it is best for a youth to stay in their placement—why ruin a good thing?

## ADOPTION

Adoption as a child's permanent plan of care provides the greatest assurance of permanence if the child can not return to the birth parent. Adoption is rarely the primary plan of care when a child enters the foster care system, but instead is often a concurrent plan or alternate plan. When reunification efforts don't work, adoption is considered the next best permanent plan of care for a child.

*"Adoption is the method provided by law to establish the legal relationship of*

*parent and child between persons who are not so related by birth, with the same mutual rights and obligations that exist between children and their birth parent."*

Children in foster care are most often adopted by relatives or their foster parents. Keep in mind though—there are hundreds of children across our state waiting for an adoptive family. You are not just limited to adopting children from Hoke County DSS; as a licensed foster parent or approved adoptive parent, you can look into adopting a child from any DSS in

the state or in the nation! Visit [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org) or call our Adoptions Social Worker to learn more information. The adoption process can take some time due to required legal proceedings—sometimes it can be two years or more from the time a child enters foster care until an adoption decree is issued. If you are committed to a child, the time is well worth it when that child legally becomes 'your' child. In our next issue: the steps involved in the adoption process.

## What is a Case Plan? (AKA Out of Home Services Agreement)

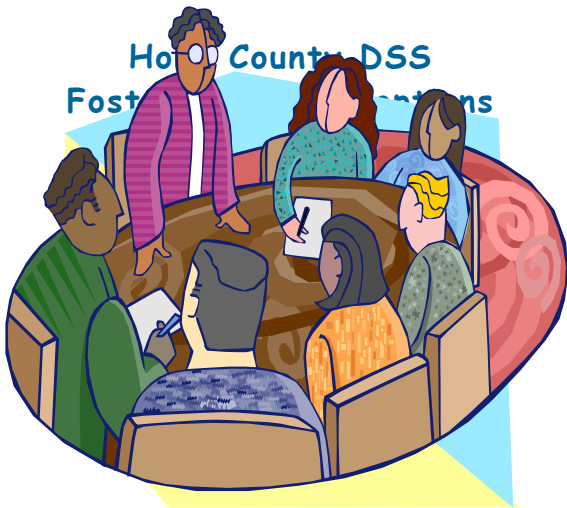
When a child enters foster care, the Social Worker works with the family to develop a case plan. A case plan is a written document that identifies the needs that must be addressed to ensure child safety before a child can be returned home. A case plan identifies needs, sets objectives, and lists what activities need to be completed, and by whom, to meet the objective.

Case plans have obtainable goals that can be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time. Parents are informed

from the beginning that their progress will be monitored and that failure to make progress could result in the loss of their children permanently.

Case plans are reviewed periodically to determine their effectiveness; they are modified as needed. Families, youth, and members of their support system are encouraged to take part in developing the plan. Families have voices and we want them to be heard and to be active in the process. A few years ago, a case plan was written by

the Social Worker and given to the parents to sign; the parent had no input in planning. Today, a case plan must be developed with the parent/child/family. Case plans are developed during a family meeting; families know what will make them be successful. We try to give families as much input as possible, but do keep in mind that child safety comes first—it is non-negotiable!



Topics for the next issue:

1. Recruitment: Foster & Adoptive Families
2. Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP)
3. TPR? What does that mean?
4. Adoption Resources
5. Foster to Adopt
6. Ideas needed for an Adoptive Parent Appreciation Event to be held in November for National Adoption Awareness Month

**What is a CFT?** Child and Family Teams are family members and their community supports that come together to create, implement and update a plan *with* the child, youth and family. The plan builds on the strengths of the child, youth and family and addresses their needs, desires and dreams. The definition comes from our state policy manual: Chapter VII. CFT's are held throughout the life of a case, keeping the family and youth involved throughout as well. Resource families often play a support role in CFT's. A trained Facilitator (neutral party) leads the meetings. CFT's are fairly new in our child welfare practice; we work hard to incorporate family-centered practice in all that we do with the families we work with. Questions? Ask any of our Social Workers!

**Guiding Principles and Values for the NC Child Welfare System** (Chapter VII: Child & Family Team Meetings)

Family-Centered Practice	System of Care Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone Desires Respect</li> <li>• Everyone Needs to be Heard</li> <li>• Everyone has Strengths</li> <li>• Judgments can Wait</li> <li>• Partners Share Power</li> <li>• Partnership is a Process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child and Family Involvement</li> <li>• Interagency Collaboration</li> <li>• Cultural Competence</li> <li>• Individualized Strength-based Care</li> <li>• Community Based Services</li> <li>• Accountability</li> </ul>

You can view all of our Child Welfare Policy manuals online:  
<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/manuals.aspx?dc=dss>

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**Editor's Note:** There simply isn't space to include everything we want to include in one issue! There is so much information to give out to you; we want you to be informed! We want you to have a better understanding of why we do some of the things we do....you *are* a partner in the process. Please, give us suggestions; ask questions; make this your newsletter!

Kristi Pigford, SWS III