

A Glance at a State or Tribal Child Welfare System

*Adapted from the Quality Improvement Center for Non-Residential Fathers

Report to the Agency

When somebody is worried about the child(ren) they call the police or child welfare authorities. Child welfare authorizes them to ask questions and look over all the information and may decide to go see the family.

Investigation/Assessment & First Plans

Child welfare authorities meet with family members to try to understand what is going on for the family and if the children are safe.

Placement

If children are not safe at home and the family is not able to make a plan for their safety, the children are temporarily placed out of the home. Placement may be through a voluntary placement or a court order.

In-Home Services

A safety plan can be designed to keep the child(ren) safe, a family may receive a variety of services to maintain the children in the home such as home visits, in-home counseling, or concrete services.

More Assessment & Planning

- What does the family need?
- What strengths does each family member have that can help him or her help the children?
- How can each person in the family help the children?
- What services and other help can be put in place for family members?

Develop a Written Plan

- What will each family member do or be responsible for?
- What will caseworkers do and be responsible for?
- Who are the service providers and what will they do and be responsible for?
- What are the timelines for everyone?
- What's the permanency goal? (*ex. Child will go home to one of his parents or relatives*)
- What are the goals for the parents? (*ex. Parents will be sober*)
- What are steps to the goals? (*ex. Parents will attend AA*)
- How will it be clear that there is progress and success?

Court Hearings

Hearings may occur at this point.

Work on the Plan

- Family works on the plan: participates in services, and tries to make changes that will be good for them and the children.
- Service providers and others help the family as is written in the plan.
- Caseworker supports the family, talks with them about how they are doing, makes sure services are available, reassesses safety and how family is doing, and writes progress reports.
- Foster family or relative takes care of the child.
- Family visits with child.
- Changes made to plan if needed.

Court Hearings

Every 6 months after child removed from home determine if progress is being made and if the permanency plan should stay the same or change.

Permanency Court Hearings

The court must decide whether the child should be returned to a parent or live elsewhere. If the child continues in out-of-home placement, the court will look at adoption or guardianship with a relative. If the court decides the children should be adopted, this is likely to lead to a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) hearing to terminate parents' rights to their children or Tribal Customary Adoption.

Closure & Follow Up

When the child is reunified with family, adopted, placed in a guardianship arrangement, or emancipated, the family, caseworker and others may decide to provide after-care services and other help if needed.