



What is permanency planning?

Permanency planning is what the Department for Child Protection (the Department) does to ensure that children have a stable and secure home and are connected to the people most important to them. This helps them grow up happy, healthy and able to learn well at school.

If the Department has your child in its care it will work with you to ensure your child has the stability and security they need.

The Department's best hopes are that your child will go home to live with you. However we know that going home and coming back into care or moving from one care arrangement to another is not good for children. Everybody wants to avoid this.

What can I do to help my child to return home?

In order for your child to return home, you will need to work together with the Department to address the worries that led to your child coming into care.

Parents and family members will be treated with respect and honesty by departmental workers. This means everybody talking openly and honestly with each other about what is happening.

You will be involved in *Signs of Safety* planning meetings that will determine what has to happen for your child to return to your care and the timeframe in which this needs to occur. *Signs of Safety Meetings* brochures are available to help you understand more about what these meetings involve.

What if my child can't come home?

The planning around your child's permanency must be realistic, so while the Department's best hope is for your child to return home, this may not always be possible. This means the Department will need to have a couple of plans running side by side.

For example, while the goal might be to return your child to live with you, the Department will also explore other ideas just in case you are unable to make the necessary changes within the timeframe that has been set.

The following long-term options will be considered as part of the planning done for your child:

- living in the long-term care of relatives or significant others;
- living in the long-term care of foster carers; or
- living in the long-term care of a court-approved legal guardian (through a special guardianship order).

What is the Department's role in permanency planning?

The Department's role is to ensure that permanency and stability is made a priority from the moment the Department becomes involved in caring for your child so there is a clear plan for their future. It is also the Department's role to give you as much support as possible to help you have your child return home within the agreed timeframe.

What are the timeframes for permanency planning?

Permanency planning means that decisions about the long-term plans for your child will be made within set timeframes.

Once a protection order (time-limited or until 18) is granted by the Children's Court, decisions about the long-term plans for your child need to be made within:

- 12 months for a child less than 2 years of age; and
- 24 months for a child over 2 years of age.

This is because children need safe, continuous and stable care arrangements, lifelong relationships and a sense of belonging.



How will I know what my child's permanency plan is?

You will be involved in *Signs of Safety* planning meetings and Care Plan meetings to talk about your child's permanency plan. Through the ongoing work with your child's case manager, you will also be able to discuss how your child's plan is going.

Will I get a say in the decisions about my child's permanency plan?

Yes. In addition to ongoing discussions with your child's case manager, *Signs of Safety* planning meetings and Care Plan meetings are held so that you and other people involved in your child's care can have input into the long-term decisions being made about them..

What if I disagree with my child's permanency plan?

If you or a family member disagrees with a decision made at a Care Plan meeting you can ask for the matter to be referred to the chairperson of the Care Plan meeting. Contact details of the chairperson will be on the copy of the Care Plan provided to you or you can contact the case manager to ask for more details.

If you feel the matter has not been resolved after referring the matter to the chairperson, you can apply to the Case Review Panel to have the Care Plan decision reviewed. *Case Review Panel* brochures are available to help you understand more about this process.

Will I be able to see my child while they are in care?

Yes. The Department will work with you to develop a plan for seeing your child. The plan is to help you have regular contact with your child while they are in care.

In some situations, contact between a child and their family will need to be supervised by the child's carer, a relative, or a departmental worker. Every family's contact plan will be different and will be based on the child's needs and wishes.

What does permanency planning mean for Aboriginal children?

Aboriginal children have a right to maintain links with their family and community. This connection enables Aboriginal children to maintain or develop a strong sense of their identity, which includes their culture and belonging to their country.

The Department is guided by the Aboriginal child placement principle which states the importance of maintaining a connection with family and culture for Aboriginal children who are placed in the CEO's care

Where it is necessary for an Aboriginal child to be placed with non-Aboriginal carer/s, the Department must be satisfied that the potential carer will preserve and enhance the child's cultural and spiritual identity. The Department will make all attempts to involve a child's family and significant others regarding the decisions being made for the child.

What does permanency planning mean for culturally and linguistically diverse children?

The same principles that apply for Aboriginal children also apply for all children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Where can I find out more about permanency planning?

If you have any questions about permanency planning you should make a time to speak to your child's case manager or team leader. If you like you can bring along a friend, family member or someone from outside of the Department who is helping you, such as a support worker. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the *Family Inclusion Network of Western Australia* (FINWA) on 9227 5818. FINWA provides free support, advocacy and information to parents and families.

Related Resources:

Signs of Safety Meetings brochure

Case Review Panel brochure

Special Guardianship Orders fact sheet