

1.1.3 Planning

This section covers the case management planning process. It contains planning standards for services provided by mandated child and family services agencies.

[Standards](#)

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Standards

Each and every open family service or child in care file requires a written plan. A family service file, regardless of which section of the Act it is open under, requires an Ongoing Family Plan. Every child in care file, regardless of the child's legal status, requires a Child in Care Plan.

Further, specialized plans may be required in some circumstances. Please see Preparing Youth for Leaving Care, Agreements with Young Adults, Voluntary Surrender of Guardianship, Absent and Missing Children, Voluntary Family Services.

Three types of plans that may be required:

Safety Plan – a specialized plan that addresses what a family or community will do to ensure the immediate safety of children. A safety plan is required when there is harm and imminent danger identified in the household which can be mitigated through the assessment and use of the protective abilities of the caregiver(s) in the home.

Ongoing Family Plan – addresses [risk/needs](#) identified in the [assessment phase](#) and what will be done to strengthen the ability of a person or family to care for children. This may include counselling, emergency assistance, and the use of family and agency supports or services. An Ongoing Family Plan is required on all open family cases under Part II and Part III of the Child and Family Services Act.

Child in Care Plan – addresses what will be done to meet the needs of a child in care of the agency. This includes: the need for a parent-child relationship; sibling and extended family involvement; continuity of care and permanency; and maintaining cultural, linguistic, racial and religious connections.

Safety Plan

Initiating a Safety Plan – In the event there are concerns about the immediate safety of a child, the case manager:

- completes the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Safety Assessment to assess and ensure;
 - the immediate safety of any children in the household (the here and now assessment not intended for long term)
 - that protective abilities and harm and imminent dangers are identified through conversation with the caregivers and, if appropriate, with the children. If there is the ability to mitigate those harm and imminent dangers through the protective abilities, then a household safety plan may be explored
- meets with the family to create the plan and then meets with the supervisor to approve the Safety Plan. A written copy of the Safety Plan must be given to the family
- ensures that when a Safety Plan involves actions by a child that the child is able to take the action outlined in the plan, understands what to do and when to do it
- ensures that when a Safety Plan involving actions by people who are not members of the household, these non-household members understand the specific actions they are responsible for and how these actions help ensure the safety of the children. All non-household members are to sign off on the safety plan.

Review Safety Plan – In the event that there are changes to the family circumstances a review will be required. These changes include but are not limited to:

- change of agency
- changes of family/household composition
 - birth or adoption
 - extended family moving in or out
- family moves
- any new incident where harm or imminent dangers are identified

Failure to Follow Safety Plan - When a parent or caregiver fails to follow the plan, the case manager ensures the safety of the child through completion of a new safety assessment to determine safety in the household.

Note:

A case or Intake cannot be closed if a child is considered conditionally safe.

Ongoing Family Plan

Managing the Planning Process – The case manager:

- meets with the family within 10 working days of an approved assessment to begin the planning process
- invites, and when possible, involves all individuals identified in the family assessment relevant to the development of a written plan for the family regardless of a child's status in care
- when consistent with legal requirements, agencies accommodate reasonable requests by caregivers, parents and children for participation of an individual they identify as a support
- in consultation with the supervisor and to the extent allowed by legislation, seek out participation of individuals (both extended family members and service providers) towards planning for ongoing safety and well-being
- involves the appropriate child and family services agency or authority in the development of the plan if the case was not [transferred](#) immediately after administering the Authority Determination Protocol (ADP) at [intake](#)
- records reasons an individual or agency refuses to participate or is not involved in the development of the plan
- identifies all service providers involved in the plan and which services will be provided directly by the case manager
- fully explains the plan to all individuals identified in the family assessment in a manner respecting varying abilities, language and reading levels, (e.g.

involving medical professionals, community supports educators, probation officers), and

- The plan is dated, signed and attached to the Child and Family Services Information System (CFSIS)
- A written copy of the Ongoing Family Plan must be given to the family

Areas to be Addressed – The case manager ensures that the Ongoing Family Plan specifically addresses:

- the ongoing safety, security and well-being of the children
- actions to improve the ability of parents to care for their children
- the need for a stable, permanent family environment

Where there is a child in care the family plan also addresses:

- the needs of both the children and the family when the goal is re-unification
- the activities to be undertaken by all the partners to enable reunification
- contact with parents, siblings or extended family even when reunification is unlikely or not possible

Approval of Plans

- A plan is not final until the supervisor has reviewed and approved them .
- When a child or family is [transferred](#) to the care of another agency, a supervisor ensures that a plan is in place that identifies:
 - the actions required by agencies, the family and any other service providers to ensure continuity of care and how any safety issues and risk factors are to be handled during the transfer process.

Updating Plans – The case manager ensures:

- Ongoing Family Plans are updated when a new information is received or when changes within the household inhibits the plan being acted on (see 1.1.2 (4)). If an incident is in regards to an allegation of abuse/neglect, a new safety assessment and probability of future harm will need to be completed by the worker.

- The case manager reviews the Ongoing Family Plans and updates the plan with the family every three months.

Preparing to Return a Child to Family – Prior to returning a [child in care](#) to his or her family, the case manager:

- engages the children and family in reviewing the plan and completion of objectives.
- assesses that the issues related to the child being placed into care have been addressed and it is safe for the child to return home.
- Completes a new SDM Safety Assessment with a determination that the household is “safe” in order to have the child return home.

Child in Care Plan

Developing a Child in Care Plan – Child in Care Plans should be created within thirty days of the placement of a child, prior to returning a child to the family, within one month of a family assessment that suggest a child has needs that cannot be managed by the family and is likely to be in care for more than 6 months and in need of permanency planning.

- when consistent with legal requirements, agencies accommodate reasonable requests by caregivers, parents and children for participation of an individual they identify as a support.
- When consistent with legal requirements, agencies seek out participation of individuals (both extended family members and service providers) towards planning for ongoing safety and well-being.
- The Child in Care Plan should be documented on CFSIS.

Areas to be Addressed – The case manager ensures that the Child in Care Plan specifically addresses:

- the needs of both the children and the family when the goal is re-unification
- the activities to be undertaken by all the partners to enable reunification

including contact between the children and the family

- contact with parents, siblings or extended family even when reunification is unlikely or not possible
- appropriate matching for the cultural, spiritual and psychosocial needs of the child
- opportunities for children to establish other life-long relationships
- for some child this might mean accessing FASD supports (see [Children with FASD Section 1.4.9](#)), Agreements with Young Adults ([Section 1.1.8](#)) and Absent and Missing Children ([Section 1.4.7](#)).

Approval of Plans

- A plan is not final until the supervisor has reviewed and approved the Child in Care Plan. This should be done within five working days of receiving the plan from the case manager.
- The case manager fully explains and shares the Child in Care Plan with the children in a manner respecting varying abilities, language and reading levels.
- when a child or family is [transferred](#) to the care of another agency, ensures that a plan is in place that identifies the actions required by both agencies, the family and any other service providers to ensure continuity of care and how any safety issues and risk factors are to be handled during the transfer process

Updating Plans – The case manager ensures Child in Care Plans are updated annually or when new information is received.

Policy

[Planning Process](#)

[Planning Decisions](#)

Planning Process

At the planning stage, the case manager and the key individuals identified at the assessment stage develop ways to address the needs and issues of the family and the children. Based on the assessment, planning considerations are:

- specific, measurable achievable, relevant and timed case goals
- service activities

Planning also ensures that any risk factors identified in the assessment are addressed so children are safe and family functioning is strengthened.

Effective planning is more likely to occur when family members, including children and the other members of the community such as school and other service organizations are actively involved in a process that results in a written plan that is agreed to by all the partners. The case manager is ultimately responsible for the plan with a child in care. If there is a disagreement among the partners there are dispute resolution practices that can be followed.

Plans must be flexible, reviewed regularly and revised to recognize successes and changing needs. To recognize success, outcomes must be described in measurable ways. For example, what will the partners be able to see that will let them know a change is taking place? Successful outcomes depend on a realistic plan that matches the needs of the family or child with the resources that are available and work for them.

Planning Decisions

The case management decisions at the planning stage are related to questions such as:

- What actions are needed by the family to show the agency that the children will be safe in the family household?
- What actions are needed by extended family and other community partners, i.e., school, police, health, etc., to produce activities / outcomes that demonstrate safety of the child(ren)?
- How will the agency know that changes have been made in the family household to allow for the children to remain in the home or return to the home? Can these outcomes be described in clear and concrete terms so everyone knows they've happened?
- What services and resources will be provided to the family (and who will provide them) to ensure the greatest likelihood of successful achievement of the written ongoing family plan goals?
- How will the agency co-ordinate and manage these services?
- What are the responsibilities of the family members, as outlined in the case plan, to assist in keeping the children safe in the family household or to prepare for the children to be returned to the family household?
- If the child in care is not going to be returned and the agency is seeking a permanent order, what is the agency's plan to meet the child's needs, including, in addition to current safety, emotional, health and educational needs

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- What are the responsibilities of the child or youth? Consideration should be given to the capacity of the child or youth to participate.

Legislation

[Best Interests of the Child](#)

[Authority of Service](#)

Best Interests of the Child

[Subsection 2\(1\)](#) of *The Child and Family Services Act* and [section 3](#) of *The Adoption Act* define the best interests of the child. Under section 2(1), the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration in all proceedings under the Act other than proceedings to determine whether a child is in need of protection and in determining best interests the child's safety and security shall be the primary considerations. Best interests considerations include the merits and risks of any plan proposed by an agency that would be caring for a child compared with the merits and risks of the child returning to or remaining with the family.

Under both Acts, best interests include the child's sense of continuity and need for permanency with the least possible disruption, and the child's cultural, linguistic, racial and religious heritage.

Authority of Service

Under section 4 of the [Child and Family Service Authorities Regulation](#) as per the Authority Determination Protocol, the adult members of a family are entitled to choose an authority of service for the family. They may choose either the culturally appropriate Child and Family Services authority or another authority.