



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Protocol for Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

Supplemental to DCS Policy: [16.31, Permanency Planning for Youth in Department of Children's Service Custody](#)

The goal of "Planned Permanent Living Arrangement" (PPLA) is used in very specific situations when Reunification, Adoption, Permanent Guardianship and Exit Custody to Relative or Kin are not viable permanency options. While PPLA is a "permanency" goal, it is only relevant when

- a) The goal is associated with a foster family/caregiver willing to make a commitment to the youth up to the age of majority, at a minimum, and preferably into adulthood, for example, making a commitment to being the family/caregiver with whom the young adult can spend significant holidays or come "home" to during school vacations and share major life milestones; or
- b) The goal may be associated with a youth who has a developmental or intellectual disability and will transition to support services through Employment and Community First CHOICES (ECF) program administered by TennCare for services through adulthood.

If all other conditions for PPLA have been met and the foster family/caregiver will provide care until the age of eighteen (18) but is unable to make any commitments beyond that age, PPLA can be an appropriate goal. The Child and Family Team (CFT) must be convinced that this foster family/caregiver is the best option for the youth until the age of majority and the youth must express a desire to remain with that foster family/caregiver.

Research has clearly demonstrated that youth who age out of foster care without a long-term commitment from a caring adult have many more difficulties making the transition to adulthood. For this reason, the use of PPLA as a permanency goal is only to be used as a last resort and when specific circumstances, outlined above, exist.

Requirements:

The conditions under which PPLA can be identified as a sole or concurrent permanency goal for youth are when:

- a) The youth is at least sixteen (16) years of age.
- b) The Department has made reasonable and appropriate efforts to return the youth to their parent(s), and has been unable to do so;
- c) The Department has made reasonable and appropriate efforts to place the youth with appropriate family or kin and has not located any viable options. Documentation must reflect recent diligent search efforts (within the last sixty (60) days) and relatives once considered but ruled out must be re-explored to determine if there has been a change in circumstances.

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- d) The Department has made reasonable and appropriate efforts to explore adoption, including but not limited to the youth receiving permanency related counseling.
- e) The youth is fully informed of permanency options available and consents to the use of a sole or concurrent goal of PPLA. If the youth is unable to consent, documentation from a mental health or medical professional is provided to support the lack of consent.
- f) The caregiver(s) and the youth have a significant relationship that is established through and documented by placement in the home for a minimum of six (6) months. Exceptions include youth who will turn eighteen (18) years old before being placed in the home for six (6) months, if there is a prior significant relationship, or if the youth is a residential setting transitioning to services as an adult through the ECF.
- g) The caregiver(s) has demonstrated a commitment to assuming long-term responsibility for the youth;
- h) The caregiver(s) is fully informed of all available permanency options and expresses a reasoned judgment for pursuing PPLA;
- i) For youth who are in a supportive living arrangement and are planned to transition to adult services through ECF, there is documentation from the provider as to why the congregate care setting is the least restrictive setting for the youth. When a PPLA goal is approved under these circumstances, the approval will not exceed a period of six (6) months.
- j) It is in the best interest of the youth to remain in the proposed placement rather than be considered for adoption by another person(s);
- k) The Child and Family Team has carefully considered all the permanency options for this youth and recommends PPLA as a sole or concurrent goal; and,

Requesting Approval of PPLA:

1. The Child and Family Team meets to discuss permanency options for the youth. If PPLA is considered as a potential permanency goal the team will:
 - a) Review the standards and requirements for approval of PPLA;
 - b) Explore the desires of the youth;
 - c) Assess the commitment of the caregiver(s);
 - d) Make a recommendation for the goal;
 - e) Discuss, complete and sign form [CS-1006, Planned Permanent Living Arrangement Agreement](#).
 - f) Document the discussion and team agreement on [CS-0747, Child and Family Team Meeting Summary](#);

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2. Once team consensus is reached, the FSW/JSW completes and submits the request packet for approval through their regional supervision. The packet includes:
 - a) [CS-0681, Request for Permanency Goal of PPLA](#), completed by the FSW/JSW outlining the details of the request;
 - b) [CS-1006, Planned Permanent Living Arrangement Agreement](#), which was reviewed and signed in the CFTM;
 - c) [CS-0747, Child and Family Team Meeting Summary](#), describing the team's involvement and recommendation of this goal; and
 - d) Any other paperwork considered to be relevant to the request, such as court orders, reports or evaluations of therapists, documentation of adoption counseling, letters from the resource parents or the youth, etc.
3. The packet should be reviewed and approved by the Team Coordinator and submitted for approval to the Regional Director. Approvals are documented in the Electronic Case Record under Case Consultation Type PPLA Approval.

Reconvening The Child and Family Team:

Upon receipt of the approval, the FSW/JSW should reconvene the CFT to revise the Permanency Plan to include PPLA as a sole or concurrent goal. Permanency plans with a goal of PPLA must include action steps designed to help the youth develop additional meaningful relationships and family-like connections with other adults. These are resources that may remain actively involved and supportive of the youth into and throughout adulthood. Strategies should include efforts to involve the youth in extra-curricular activities through which such relationships can naturally evolve. There should also be efforts to help the youth reconnect with significant adults from his or her past who may become valuable resources for the future.

Periodic Reviews of PPLA:

- a) **Child and Family Team Review-** The Child and Family Team must specifically review the continued appropriateness of the PPLA goal for the youth at least once every six (6) months to ensure the placement continues to meet the youth's needs, that efforts to develop other relationships are ongoing and that the goal is still the best option for the youth. This review should be done through the contexts of a CFTM and documented on form [CS-0747, Child and Family Team Meeting Summary](#) and reflected in the electronic record.
- b) **Annual/Bi-Annual Central Office Approval-** For most youth who have an approved goal of PPLA a new request is submitted annually using the same process outlined above to continue the use of PPLA. For youth transitioning to ECF services, a new request is made every six (6) months to continue the use of PPLA. All request to continue the use of a PPLA goal is submitted thirty (30) days before the end of the current approval.

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In the Event of Placement Disruption:

Because PPLA is directly related to a specific living situation, if a disruption occurs, the goal of PPLA cannot continue unless:

- a) The Child and Family Team reviews the goal and makes a new determination, based on the new circumstances, that PPLA continues to be an appropriate goal;
- b) All of the requirements for PPLA have been met (i.e., there is a foster family/caregiver willing to make a comparable long-term commitment to that youth) or circumstances exist that make it appropriate to ask for an exception for requirements that are not met; and,
- c) The FSW/JSW submits another request to obtain approval utilizing the process outlined above.