



Family &  
Community  
Services

# Achieving permanency for children through the Permanency Support Program

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Care proceedings: Achieving the best outcomes for children

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# Out-of-home care reform



Out-of-home care is being reformed in NSW



It supports children and young people securing permanent and safe living arrangements



The reform is known as the Permanency Support Program (PSP)



PSP uses a 'commissioning' approach to deliver services



# Permanency Support Program Goals



## **Goal 1 Fewer entries into care**

By keeping families together



## **Goal 2 Shorter time in care**

By returning children home safely or finding a permanent home



## **Goal 3 A better care experience**

By supporting children's individual needs and their recovery from trauma



# Shorter Term Court Orders

*supporting timeliness and permanency*

# Shorter Term Court Orders (STCOs)

One of the key objectives of STCOs is to **drive urgency in casework** so that permanency is achieved within 2 years and *is achieved within the **child's timeframes***



# Shorter Term Court Orders

- STCOs provide the necessary time to:
  - support parents to make necessary changes to restore the child home safely
  - develop relationships, support family time and build connections with people important to the child
  - assess prospective guardians or adoptive parents
  - gather important evidence to seek guardianship or adoption orders

# Impact of STCOs and the reforms

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More STCOs are being sought to pursue permanency outcomes

Reduction in long term care as a permanent plan for children entering care

Streamlined court processes for s.90 applications



# Care Proceedings

*collaboration, gathering evidence and achieving best outcomes*

# During care proceedings



- DCJ and FSPs work together
- STCOs – shorter term court orders are made to support achieving permanency
- DCJ legal services still play a role in making sure casework remains consistent with current legislation

# Collaborating during care proceedings

- Service providers and the department have complementary roles during care proceedings
- The **department's** statutory role includes assessing safety and risk and leading court proceedings.
- **Service providers** work collaboratively with the department, the child, their carers, parents, family/kin and the services working with them, to achieve a child's permanency goal



# Case responsibility and service providers

When a service provider holds *primary* case responsibility, the primary casework relationship is between the provider and the child, their carer, parents and family/kin.

An example of our complementary roles include (but are not limited to):

The department	Service providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• responds to child protection reports</li><li>• assesses safety and risk</li><li>• leads court proceedings</li><li>• makes all the decisions parents would normally make in relation to children in OOHC</li><li>• sets the permanency goal</li><li>• funds urinalysis, DNA testing and court ordered assessments during care proceedings</li><li>• birth registration, passports, name change</li><li>• interstate and overseas movements</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• regular case planning and reviews (including family action plan for change)</li><li>• individualised casework support</li><li>• assessments to support achievement of the case plan goal</li><li>• practical assistance and flexible wrap around services to the child/family</li><li>• achieve the child's case plan goal as soon as possible, or within two years</li><li>• provides information on progress towards achieving their case plan goal</li></ul>

# Your role in gathering evidence

- Service provider casework forms a significant portion of evidence required to seek the orders that are in the child's best interests
- The **service providers evidence** includes:
  - case notes
  - family time reports
  - evidence based assessments
  - updates and reports from services involved with the child/family
  - reports on the child's progress i.e. medical/educational
- The **departments evidence** will include:
  - child protection history and any assessment of risk or safety
  - drug testing, paternity testing or other specialist reports
  - court ordered assessments

# Permanency Coordinators

- Permanency Coordinators in each local district have extensive knowledge about PSP
- Permanency Coordinators are not casework decision-makers
- Permanency Coordinators provide **specialist advice** or consultation and make recommendations in relation to permanency decision making
- Permanency Coordinators monitor and **support service providers** to achieve permanency for children within two years



# Permanency Planning

*the evidence, the need for timeliness*

# What is permanency planning?

The ultimate goal of permanency planning is to ensure a secure environment with lifelong bonds that will support the child into adulthood.

Better Care Network accessed 2019

Permanency planning is about relationships, identity and a sense of belonging.

Brydon 2004; Fein & Maluccio 1992; Lahti 1982; Sanchez 2004\*



# Wellbeing outcomes for children

The most critical factors to improve wellbeing outcomes are:

1. a stable foster care placement
2. strong participation in education and
3. access to a mentor-type figure to provide after care support.

Gypen, Vanderfaeillie, De Maeyer, Belenger, Van Holen 2017

Relational permanence – continuous supportive relationships marked by mutual trust and respect – improve mental health outcomes.

Williams-Butler, Ryan, McLoyd, Schulenberg, Davis-Kean 2018

- Ecological theories help us understand wellbeing:
- the importance of primary attachment - and -
- interconnectedness of individual and environmental influences

Wulczyn, Barth, Yuan, Harden & Landsverk 2005\*



# Permanency planning

## *Timely planning*

A permanency plan is to be prepared in a timely manner recognising that, the younger the age of the child, the greater the need for early decisions to be made in relation to a permanent placement.

DCJ Permanency Planning Guidelines 2008

Timely decision-making is very important. However timeframes alone do not drive decision-making.

Tilbury and Osmond 2006; Thoburn 2003\*

Individualised permanency planning and decision-making with families should begin when a family first comes in contact with the child welfare agency.

Mallon & Leashore 2002\*



# Permanency planning

## *Which care arrangements?*

Preservation

Restoration

Guardianship

\*Adoption

Long term care

Often the best outcome is to improve a parents' capacity to care for their child to enable the child to remain or return home.

If this is not possible, other permanent care arrangements should be determined as soon as possible.

Tilbury and Osmond 2006

There is no evidence that one permanency option is universally better than another – the best arrangement depends upon the circumstances of an individual child and his/her family.

Barber & Delfabbro 2005; Parkinson 2003; Thoburn 2003\*

\* Adoption is the least preferred option for Aboriginal children

# A two year timeframe

- Changes to legislation will likely lead to more children being safely restored.
- Restoration is the first preference and is *considered* for all children **entering care**.
- STCOs provide parents with up to 24 months to make the necessary changes for their child to return home safely where it is assessed this is realistic.

Most restoration take place in the first 2½ years after placement. This timeframe is a long period in the life of the child, especially when characterized by uncertainty about permanency.

Goemans, Vanderfaeillie, Damenc, Pijnenburgd, Van Holen 2016





# Questions?