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<input type="checkbox"/> BCAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CWTI <input type="checkbox"/> SACWIS		

The purpose of this communication is to provide best practice information and technical assistance to field staff to increase the stability and permanency for children in foster care and prevent placement changes.

At times, placement changes for children are appropriate when the move supports achievement of case plan goals. However, placement disruptions can contribute to behavioral, attachment, and other challenges for children, including mental health issues, educational delays, as well as unemployment and poverty in adulthood.

The Child and Family Services Review, Permanency Outcome I, Item 6 – Stability of Foster Care Placement addresses placement stability by reviewing the following:

- Is the child in foster care in a stable placement? Were any changes in placement in the best interests of the child, and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal?
- How effective is the agency in providing placement stability for children in foster care by minimizing placement changes?

Policy Supports to Increase Placement Stability for Children in Foster Care

Policy cites include the following:

- FOM 722-3 Foster Care - Placement/Replacement
 - Placement and replacement selection criteria to determine safety and best interests.
 - Placement selection criteria
 - Placement of sibling groups
 - Placement with a relative Considerations of placement of older teenagers
 - Replacement priorities
 - Replacement
- Native American Children
 - NAA 215 Foster Care Placement Preference.
 - NAA 220 Placement/Replacement of Indian Children.
 - Indian Child Welfare Act 1915 Placement of Indian Children.

Best Practices to Increase Placement Stability for Children in Foster Care

Assessing and addressing identified needs is critical to prevent placement changes. The following information outlines best practices to support a child's placement:

Assess Needs:

- Complete a comprehensive assessment of the child's needs to determine the best placement.
- Once the child's needs are determined supportive services must be provided to the placement in a timely manner to reduce the likelihood of a placement change.
- Assess the foster care parent/caregiver needs.

Address Needs:

- Document reasonable efforts to prevent a placement change in the service plan and promote stability of children in their current placement.
- Locate and engage absent parents in the service planning process to assess if placement is appropriate.
 - Access the judicial data warehouse "name search" to locate absent parents.
- Be creative in individualizing support services to meet the child/youth's unique needs to increase placement stability.
- Address the foster care parent/caregiver needs in the foster care parent/agency treatment plan.

Prevent Placement Changes:

- Teaming - Include all significant individuals to the child and family when planning services to maintain a placement or determining placement changes.
- Actively engage youth 14 and older in the development of service plans and transition plans (FOM 722-3 page 22).
- Document support services including efforts to utilize Wraparound services before a child enters any residential setting.
- Involve youth in a mentor program.
- Reasonable efforts must be made to maintain the stability of a foster care placement.
- Supervisory case reviews should include assessing placement stability and addressing multiple placements.

If a placement change occurs:

- First consideration shall be given to retuning the child to the parent, placing the child with siblings, or with a suitable relative. (FOM 722-3).
- Follow CWTI Job Aid: Replacement Checklist which can be found at: <http://www.michiganchildwelfaretraining.com/Training/Resources/JobAids.aspx>.
- Follow placement standards and limitations (FOM 722-3) that:
 - Meets requirements for a licensed foster home, a licensed facility, or an unlicensed relative home.
 - Meets the needs of the child.
 - Supports the child's best interests.
 - Allows for siblings to be together.
 - Is as close to the child's home and community as possible to preserve and maintain relationships with relatives, friends, teachers etc. and limit changes in school whenever possible (Fostering Connections Act).
 - Is the least restrictive, most home-like setting.
 - Is with a family in which adoption is possible when adoption is the permanency goal.
- Complete the DHS-69 Foster Care/Juvenile Justice Action Summary and distribute to all parties.

Resources

The State Department of Human Services, Special Report for Higher Risk Cases, Executive Report of Findings and Analyses, May 2011 (Cohort C).

AFCARS data on placement stability drilled down to county level. InfoView Reports are available.

Permanency Composite 4 – Placement Stability National Ranking showing Michigan’s performance.

Fostering Connections Act – promotes educational stability.

CW360, a comprehensive look at prevalent child welfare issue. Promoting Placement Stability.
http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascw/attributes/PDF/publications/CW360_2010.pdf

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections, Placement Stability Informational Packet.
http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/Placement_Stability_Info_Pack.htm

Placement Stability In Child Welfare Services, Issues, Concerns, Outcomes and Future Directions Literature Review. <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/res/pdf/PlacementStability.pdf>