

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

April 7, 2006

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS, AND
CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: PAULA NEESE, INTERIM DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: POLICY CLARIFICATION RELATING TO FSTs and PPRs

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify our policy and practice of scheduling and completing the federally required Administrative Review, also referred to as the Permanency Planning Review (PPR), for children placed in the legal custody of the Division. We understand that staff are often rightfully confused by what might be considered to be a PPR and what is considered to be the required Family Support Team (FST) meeting. Although both are to be held in a team-like format, there are key differences in their intent and their required timeframes.

Family Support Team Meetings

Our current policy states that staff are to meet with the family within 24 hours of the initial placement and conduct Family Support Team meetings within 72 hours, and 30 days from the date of the initial placement in order to manage initial placement and visitation activities and to establish a case plan. Subsequent FST meetings are then to be held every thirty days until court adjudication and as needed, or required, thereafter.

- ✓ By good practice, FSTs should be held in order to make key decisions and for the purpose of determining service and treatment needs; determining the need for placement and developing a plan for reunification or other permanency options; determining the

appropriate placement of the child; evaluating case progress, and establishing and revising the case plan;

- ✓ After a child is in Division custody and placement has been made, the Division shall arrange an additional Family Support Team meeting prior to taking any action relating to the placement of such child; except that, when the welfare of a child in the custody of the Division requires an immediate or emergency change of placement, the Division may make a temporary placement and shall schedule a Family Support Team meeting within 72 hours.

Permanency Planning Reviews

Our policy relating to Permanency Planning Reviews states that such reviews are to be conducted prior to the date of the child's sixth month in care, and every six months thereafter.

A key requirement for a PPR is that at least one person not responsible for the case management of, or the delivery of services to, either the child or the parents must participate in administrative review. PPRs are to determine:

- ✓ The safety of the child;
- ✓ The continuing necessity for and appropriateness of the placement;
- ✓ The extent of compliance with the case plan;
- ✓ The extent and progress which has been made in alleviating or mitigating the causes necessitating placement in foster care; and
- ✓ To project a likely date by which the child may be returned to and safely maintained in the home or placed for adoption or legal guardianship.

Policy Clarification

We understand that the expectations for FST meeting timeframes, and if a PPR is required within the first 30 days of placement is not clear. We are in process of providing such policy clarification.

Our current policy is as stated below:

- ✓ FST meetings are required within 72 hours and 30 days from the date the child entered Division custody (initial placement date).
- ✓ Subsequent FST meetings are then to be held every thirty days until court adjudication and as needed by good practice, or as required by a change in placement, thereafter.

- ✓ A case plan shall be completed within 30 days of date the child entering Division custody.
- ✓ The 30 FST meeting does not require the presence of at least one person not responsible for the case management of, or the delivery of services to, either the child or the parents (“outside reviewer”).
- ✓ A PPR must be completed within 6 months of the date the child entered Division custody (initial placement date) and every six months thereafter.

We realize that as our family-centered policy has evolved over the years, the requirements relating to PPRs and FSTs have become blurred. Our participation in the Program Improvement Plan, with its reliance on accurate data system entry and quarterly outcomes has accentuated these discrepancies. We regret any confusion that this may have caused.

Manual clarifications relating to these policies are forthcoming; please use this memorandum for policy direction until additional clarification is provided. I also encourage you to review the upcoming ***IN FOCUS*** newsletter as these issues are addressed in further detail.

Thank you for your good services to Missouri’s children and families.

Necessary Action:

1. Review this memorandum with all Children’s Division Staff.
2. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels.

PN/JCH/ct