

Relative permanency services: Reducing time in foster care

The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families has expanded efforts to engage, support, and work with relatives and kin of children under state or tribal guardianship. Contracted agencies assist with home study services for identified relatives and kin, including outreach to assist in the licensing application process. If a child is placed in a relative's home, contracted agencies provide placement services until reunification or finalization. Relative Concurrent Permanency Planning focuses on children who enter foster care where caseworkers vigorously pursue family reunification while also developing alternative permanency plans, if safe reunification is not achievable within legal timelines. By planning concurrently early on, rather than sequentially, temporary foster care placements can be shortened, and children and youth can thrive in safe, stable, permanent families.

Children need stability

Because all children need stable, loving, permanent families for healthy growth and development, the number of children requiring out-of-home care and the number of months children spend in care are important measures. On any given day, approximately 5,865 children and youth are in foster care in Minnesota. In most cases, the uncertainty and unpredictability of lengthy foster care placements do not promote children's healthy growth and development.

Children enter foster care for a variety of reasons

During 2024, approximately 5,865 children and youth entered out-of-home placement. The most common reasons they were removed from their homes include:

- Caretaker drug abuse (25.6%), allegations of neglect (14.5%), allegations of physical abuse (11.8%), child mental health (9.4%); these were largely voluntary placements for children 12 years and older

Removing children from people they love and environments that are familiar to them can be traumatizing. When children must leave their homes, placement with relatives is considered first. In 2024, 66% of children in family foster care on any given day were placed with relatives. Of the 5,865 children and youth entered out-of-home placement approximately:

- 37% white, 26% two or more races, 18% American Indian/Alaska Native, 15% African American/Black, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 11% Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, of any race
- From homes that speak a variety of languages. English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong are the most frequently listed primary languages.
- Youth ages 14-21, are more than one-quarter of children in foster care

Most children are reunited with parents or live permanently with relatives

In 2024, 656 Minnesota children found permanency from the foster care system with relatives through Transfer of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody (TPLPC) sometimes referred to as TLC. This a permanency order done by the courts. This means physical and legal custody of a child is transferred to someone else. This is a permanent decision unless the biological parent petitions the court to have the decision reversed. Of these 656 children approximately:

- 29.1% are white, 30.9% are two or more races, 22.7% are American Indian, 15.2% are Black/African American, 1.1% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and about 1% declined to provide race information or is unknown
- 43.8% with Grandparent, 20.1% with an aunt or uncle, 18.6% kin, 17.5% with other relative found permanency through TPLPLC.

Relative Concurrent Permanency Planning requires collaboration

Relative Concurrent Permanency Planning requires child welfare agencies, community resources and the court system to work together with children's birth parents, extended families, foster parents and children, when appropriate, from the beginning of a foster care placement. In a Relative Concurrent Permanency Plan, everyone involved works with the birth parents toward reunification, while also securing a commitment from foster parents and relatives that they are willing to make a permanent commitment to children through adoption or transfer of permanent legal and physical custody (TPLPC), if reunification with birth parents is not possible. Together, everyone works toward:

- Achieving safety, timely permanency and well-being goals for children
- Reducing the number of moves and length of stay for children in foster care
- Minimizing the negative emotional impact of separation and loss on children
- Supporting continuity in children's family, culture, school and community relationships

The department contracts with private child-placing agencies to provide Relative Concurrent Permanency Planning services for children under state guardianship or tribal jurisdiction or in out-of-home care. If requested by a county or tribal child welfare agency, these private agencies are available to provide services for children in foster care and their families and kin who care for them by:

- Educating prospective parents about concurrent planning, reunification and adoption
- Supporting and engaging relatives and kin through outreach
- Completing and updating home studies
- Providing placement support for children in relative and kin foster homes.

Please visit the [Permanency Services Resource Hub](#), a centralized tool and site to find a wide range of resources and support services for the kinship, foster and adoption communities across Minnesota and the professionals who serve them.

Timely permanency requires best practices

Relative Concurrent Permanency Planning involves using family engagement, relative searches, targeted case practice and legal strategies to achieve timely permanency. Practices in Minnesota include:

- Encouraging frequent parent-child visits from the moment children are placed in foster care
- Providing intensive services for birth parents, focusing on parental ability and willingness to make changes, and giving family reunification every chance to work within clear timelines
- Informing birth parents early on about the importance of their involvement and actions in planning for the return of their children, and disclosure about the legal consequences if they do not prepare for children to return to their care in a safe, timely way
- Identifying absent birth parents and extended family members and kin early on, involving them in case planning and visitation with children
- Encouraging all family members and foster parents to work as collaborators, not adversaries, as they develop and implement a timely permanency plan
- Convening Family Group Decision Making meetings, which brings families together with the support of professionals and community resources to plan for the safety, permanency and well-being of children
- Recruiting, training, and retaining relative and nonrelative foster families.

Children's Justice Initiative supports permanency planning

The department and the Minnesota Supreme Court are partners in the statewide Children's Justice Initiative. This initiative has several objectives that reinforce Relative Concurrent Permanency Planning, including:

- Providing training and ongoing technical assistance regarding permanency laws and Relative Concurrent Permanency Planning best practices
- Improving the process of juvenile foster care cases so courts make timely decisions about permanency



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