

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

DATE: November 1, 2006

CIRCULAR LETTER # SSA 07-07

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Foster Care Supervisors, Local Departments of Social Services,

FROM: Dr. Rebecca Bridgett
Acting Executive Director
Social Services Administration

RE: Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services/Foster Care/Kinship
Care/Adoption

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Children and Family Services

BACKGROUND: None

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments

REQUIRED ACTION: Implement policy and procedures regarding APPLA

ACTION DUE DATE: Immediate

CONTACT PERSON: Sharon Hargrove, Manager
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Social Services Administration
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Purpose

The purpose of this circular letter is to establish policy and procedure for the implementation of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) as the permanency goal for a child in Out-of-Home Placement. This circular letter details the requirements necessary for selecting an APPLA as a permanency option and the procedures for documentation in the child's record and presentation to the court.

Background

In 1997 the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (Public Law 105-89) changed the permanency planning hierarchy. Specifically, ASFA directed that Independent Living was not a permanency goal, but a group of services for children in foster care. ASFA went even further to say that plans of long-term foster care (including "permanent foster care") were not permanency goals in that they neither provided for a permanent placement with legal status outside of the child welfare system, nor did they prepare a child for the eventual emancipation from the system. This public law authorized APPLA as a permanency plan.

In Maryland, the permanency hierarchy was adjusted to meet federal standards in 2005 with the passage of House Bill 771 (Effective October 2005). The permanency planning hierarchy in Maryland is as follows:

- Reunification with parent or guardian
- Placement with a relative for adoption or custody and guardianship
- Adoption by a non-relative
- Guardianship by a non-relative
- Another planned permanent living arrangement

Definition

Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is a permanency plan option for children in out-of-home care, to be used only when all other options have been ruled out. APPLA requires an individualized plan for permanency that aims for the most secure and stable arrangement possible, considers not just the child's immediate needs but future needs as well, and promotes the development of supportive community relationships. To have an APPLA as a permanency goal for a child caseworkers are required to document reasonable efforts made to finalize a preferred plan, and must clearly articulate the plan to maximize stability, meet future needs, and encourage the development of enduring supportive relationships in the community. An APPLA is not truly "achieved" until a child exits care.

When to Choose APPLA for Permanency Planning

APPLA is the least preferred choice among the permanency plans and should be used only when all other plans have been clearly ruled out. APPLA is not a catch all, and should be reconsidered at regular intervals to determine the feasibility of another permanency plan. APPLA does not replace other permanency plans that no longer exist, but defines a permanency plan requiring an approach and delivery of services that considers the child's long-term needs,

including the importance of a stable and nurturing home environment with relationships offering support beyond foster care. APPLA may only be selected when reunification to either parent has been definitively ruled out, as have placement with relatives or an adoptive family. The key to an APPLA is relationship. Focus must be on building and nurturing relationships between the child and adult(s) who will be a **“Network of Support”** for the child. Caseworkers need to do clearances on the adult(s) to “checkout” the adult. Searches for relatives and others the child considers kin must be thorough and timely, and include the opportunity to provide not only housing but supportive long-term relationships. To ensure that the caseworker has searched for all family members, the case record must include the child’s family genogram, echo map and documentation of diligent searches completed. These assist in the constitution of reasonable efforts to achieve permanency.

Establishing an APPLA

Prior to selecting APPLA, thorough record review is necessary to establish the reasonable efforts made to finalize a different permanency plan, identify the obstacles to achieving an alternative plan, and rule out the possibility of re-visiting one or another preferred plan. Some issues to consider may include the following:

- When was the child placed in foster care and what were the reasons for placement?
- What are the obstacles to reunification with mother or father, and what services have been delivered to overcome those obstacles? What risk factors continue to exist?
- What efforts have been made to locate and engage absent parents?
- Have service plans addressed the services necessary to remedy the issues that led to the child’s placement? What has been the outcome of these plans?
- What are the child’s needs? What evaluations and assessments have been completed, and what have been the outcomes? Recommendations?
- Have regular attempts been made to identify and contact relatives and others the child considers kin?
- Has the Native American heritage been explored?
- What is the visitation plan with the parents? With relatives? With siblings?
- Have other supportive adults been explored as possible resources? Teachers, coaches, family, friends, employers?

Because an APPLA is an individualized plan, participation by the youth in the process from the beginning is key. Goals to be pursued are:

- Pursuit of supportive adults in the community for the child who may remain involved following exit from out-of-home placement; nurturing, supporting, and sustaining those relationships (use of internet search computer systems are encouraged as a means of

obtaining information about extended family and others who may consider becoming reconnected to the youth);

- Ensuring child well-being, including appropriate educational placement, and access to necessary medical and mental health evaluation and treatment;
- Delivery of independent living preparation services compatible with the child's developmental level and needs.

Concurrent Permanency Planning and APPLA

An APPLA can be a secondary plan as part of concurrent permanency plan, i.e. Return Home and APPLA. When all the other permanency plans have been conclusively ruled out, APPLA can be a permanency plan without a concurrent component.

Required Documentation

All 12 of the following APPLA questions must be answered in writing and retained as part of the case record. On the MD CHESSIE system, these questions are part of the caseplan as Caseplan 3.

1. Describe the timely assessment conducted and the relevant services provided when the child first entered out-of-home care?
2. What other permanency options were considered and why were they ruled out?
3. What efforts were made to identify and recruit a permanent placement for the child?
4. Was the child asked about his/her preferences for a permanent placement?
5. What is the compelling reason why a more preferred permanency plan was not selected?
6. Why is this proposed plan a valid "Permanent Living Arrangement?"
7. Is there a need to recommend that certain support structures be put in place?
8. Does the child require any type of special needs and what services are being provided?
9. What efforts were made to assess the safety, quality, and stability of this proposed APPLA?
10. Are there support systems available to assist the youth in the transition to self-sufficiency?
11. Describe the adults and/or peers that provide meaningful support? (include name, relationship and nature of support)
12. What supportive services (i.e. supervised living arrangements, housing, medical, etc) to be required after out-of-home services are terminated?

APPLA Reviews

Each local department is encouraged to develop their own APPLA review team to look at each Out-of-Home Placement child that has or is being considered for an APPLA. The APPLA review is a casework tool prior to establishment of the APPLA to assist the caseworker and supervisor in determining if APPLA should be the permanency plan, and for ongoing review of the appropriateness of the APPLA. Federal expectations are that no state will have more than 5% of their Out-of-Home Placement children with a plan of APPLA, and that no child under the age of 12 will have an APPLA plan. Therefore, continual review and monitoring of the youth of this least preferred plan is necessary. Although the child will continue to have permanency plan hearing with the court and other administrative reviews, such as the Citizen's Review Board for Children, continual monitoring of APPLA plans will be necessary. Staff from the Department of

Human Resources/Social Services Administration will once a year randomly select case records that have the secondary or permanency plan of APPLA to review. The purpose of the review will be to specifically examine the appropriateness of the APPLA and ensure that all steps were taken to rule out the other plans on the hierarchy. Written feedback on reviewed cases will be forwarded to the local director. Central staff will read the case records, discuss the review with casework staff, and work with casework staff around issues specifically related to achieving the APPLA outcomes.