

PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Policy

The Department of Children and Families shall operate a Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP) which shall include the statewide purchase of permanency placement services contracted between DCF and:

- private Connecticut child placement agencies; or
- private Connecticut clinical providers.

Note: Only licensed Connecticut child placing agencies may contract for:

- recruitment and screening; and
- home study and evaluation services.

Note: PPSP is not to be used for the purchase of services out of state or internationally. Please consult with ICPC or your Regional contracts liaison for direction.

Types of Services to be Purchased

The PPSP enables DCF to purchase from one to seven types of permanency placement services for a child. These are:

- recruitment and screening;
 - placement planning;
 - home study and evaluation;
 - post-placement supervision;
 - post-finalization services;
 - reunification services; and
 - supervision after reunification.
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Children Served

PPSP services may be purchased for any child currently active with DCF who is in need of a specialized service to assist in the realization of a permanency plan.

These services may also be purchased by the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) for any child who is post-adoption or -guardianship.

Approval to Purchase Services

The purchase of PPSP services is a Regional Office decision that shall be approved by the Regional Administrator or designee.

Note: The DCF Office of Children and Youth In Placement's Permanency Exchange Specialist shall be consulted when considering the purchase of PPSP Services. The PES can help determine if PPSP services are appropriate or if there are other options for permanency services that can be considered.

PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Core Contract Required

A Core Contract:

- is a legal umbrella agreement between DCF and a licensed private child-placing agency or a contractor or a licensed clinical provider that is in good standing with DCF;
- is usually written for a three-year period; and
- covers any number of individual service agreements which may be developed during the three-year period.

DCF:

- shall not make payments for individual child-specific PPSP service agreements unless a Core Contract is in place; and
- cannot pay for services provided prior to the start date of the Core Contract.

The Office of Children and Youth in Placement maintains the current list of PPSP providers.

If a private agency does not already have a Core Contract and the Area Office decides to develop a contract with a specific agency, the child's Program Manager shall request a Core Contract by contacting the PPSP liaison in the Office of Children and Youth in Placement. The following information about the private agency is required to process the Core Contract:

- legal name;
 - complete address;
 - contact person and telephone number;
 - federal I.D. number;
 - contract start date; and
 - contract end date, if prior to the typical three-year period.
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Referral to Private Agency

When the decision has been made to purchase PPSP services, the Social Worker shall obtain the list of currently-approved PPSP providers from the Office of Children and Youth in Placement or by accessing the DCF Foster Care Adoption Link on the DCF Intranet.

It is the responsibility of the child's Social Worker to identify a PPSP provider.

Social Workers are encouraged to research various PPSP providers to find the one that is best suited to meet the unique needs of the case. For example, if a child has trauma-related needs, the Social Worker shall inquire about the provider's trauma-informed practice to build child and family resiliency and create psychological safety.

PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Private Agency (continued)

The PPSP Lead at the Office of Children and Youth in Placement Permanency Exchange may be able to assist with the identification of a PPSP provider.

Once a decision has been made enter into a contract with a specific PPSP provider, a referral to a private agency shall be developed using the DCF 2107, "Service Agreement: Permanency Placement Services Program."

Payment, Maximum Amount of Contract, Hours and Exceptions

Payment for services provided under the Service Agreement shall be at an hourly rate determined by DCF and stated on the Contract Funding Face Sheet.

Payment shall be based upon a detailed Service Agreement completed for each child or sibling group and approved by the Area Office Social Worker prior to the start of service provision.

The Service Agreement, for any of the services described in this contract, shall include the maximum number of hours to be paid per service within a total maximum of 132 hours per child or 157 hours if an additional home study or studies must be completed.

The funding amounts identified in the Service Agreement are the maximum amounts that shall be paid when the provider completes all identified service components. Prorated payments shall be made when identified service components are not completed.

Recruitment Screening

Recruitment screening services may be purchased on behalf of a child for whom a permanent family resource is being sought. This component includes recruitment and screening of prospective permanent families when no permanent family resource is available for an individual child or a sibling group.

Casework services shall include intensive family search and engagement to identify people who have or have had a connection to the child. These individuals shall be assessed in terms of the type of resource they can be for a child. In addition, these casework services may include but are not limited to:

- case mining to identify relatives and fictive kin;
- completion of a genogram or timeline;
- utilization of people search engines to locate relatives and fictive kin;
- telephone and in-person contact with relatives and fictive kin; and
- preliminary assessment of the relative's or fictive kin's ability to be a legally permanent placement resource for the child or a lifelong connection.

Note: These services shall only be provided by licensed Connecticut Child Placing Agencies.

PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Placement Planning

Placement planning includes permanency preparation and the assessment of a child's readiness for permanency.

Permanency preparation shall be delivered through the application of the same or similar principles as outlined in the 3-5-7 Practice Model and shall address three critical components:

- clarification of life events;
- integration of all family memberships; and
- actualization in belonging to a new family.

By incorporating the same or similar principles of this model, Social Workers and families conducting the preparation work shall be prepared to assist the child in:

- grieving losses;
- formulating self-identity;
- establishing trust and security through attachments; and
- building relationships and openness to join families on a permanent basis.

The provider shall use a series of complementary activities to support permanency preparation.

Placement planning services may include, but are not limited to:

- coordinating the decision-making process for introducing the child and family which includes communication about traumatic events in the child's developmental history that will promote the caregiver's ability to have a positive relationship and understand the child emotionally;
 - communicating the needs and history of the child to the family in writing;
 - informing the child about the prospective family;
 - supporting the child and family during the visiting process using trauma-informed visiting techniques;
 - helping the family locate and arrange community services that will be needed after placement occurs in order to address the child's behavioral health needs, including any specialized trauma interventions based on previous screens and assessments;
 - discussing with the family the availability of subsidy payments, medical services, birth family and search issues, and disruption matters;
 - discussing strengths to build on and possible coping reactions related to early life triggers and anticipating potential triggers for disruptive behavior;
 - identifying safety plans to avoid disruptive behavior or disruption; and
 - developing or continuing a LIFE Book with the child.
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PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Home Studies and Evaluations

Home study and evaluation services may include, but are not limited to:

- assessing a prospective parent's readiness to be a legally permanent resource for a child, including a discussion of the parent's own trauma history and ability to respond to his or her own triggers and the triggers a child may bring;
 - providing basic training or information, individually or in a group, regarding the needs of children in general (including trauma and developmental history) for the particular child for whom the PPSP Agreement was entered into; and
 - completing the DCF-required home study and documenting compliance with DCF foster care regulations.
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Post-Placement Supervision

Post-placement supervision services focus on the child's successful integration into the identified permanent family and community and may include, but are not limited to:

- providing individual and/or group counseling to the child and/or family concerning the initial adjustment stages and all adjustment issues (this may be inclusive of applying the same or similar principles as outlined in the 3-5-7 practice model based on the needs of the child);
 - coordinating the child's contact with previous caregivers;
 - connecting the child and family to community services including evidence-based practice for clinical trauma intervention if assessed as needed;
 - participation in all related juvenile court hearings; and
 - assisting, if necessary, in the removal and re-placement of the child.
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Post-Finalization Services

Post-finalization services are provided to the permanent family following legal finalization of the adoption or subsidized transfer of guardianship in order to assist the family with resolving or handling difficulties experienced in the adjustment or full integration of the child into the family system.

These services may continue until the child's 18th birthday.

Families must contact the UConn Health Adoption Assistance Program (AAP), directly at 860-679-4006 or toll free in CT at 877-679-1961.

If PPSP is determined to be the appropriate service, AAP staff shall initiate a service agreement with one of the PPSP provider agencies.

Invoices and reports shall be reviewed, approved and forwarded by AAP to the DCF Social Work Supervisor on a weekly basis.

Any questions or concerns during the review shall be addressed by the AAP with the PPSP provider contact person.

PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Reunification Services Reunification services may be purchased on behalf of a child for whom it has been decided that return to the birth family, *e.g.*, parents, grandparents, relatives, is in the child's best interest. The goal of this service is to ensure the successful return of a child to a permanent family resource after a period of separation. These services may include but are not limited to:

- conducting the initial and ongoing assessments of the child's and family's readiness for reunification;
 - developing a reunification plan in collaboration with the family and, if age appropriate, the child;
 - involving foster parents in the reunification process;
 - providing supervised therapeutic visitation between the child and family and any transportation needed to support the visitation;
 - providing transportation to and from visits;
 - assessing family needs and connecting family to supportive community resources that will aid in the reunification process;
 - assisting the family with identifying natural supports;
 - ongoing contact with DCF staff and other community agencies involved with the child and family; and
 - attendance at DCF and community team meetings regarding the child and family.
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Supervision Following Reunification Supervision following reunification services are for children placed within Connecticut with an identified permanent family but for whom the permanency plan becomes reunification.

These services shall be provided during the time period between reunification and revocation of the commitment of the child. These services may include but are not limited to:

- assessment of the adjustment of the child and family;
 - providing counseling for the child and family related to adjustment issues;
 - connecting the child and family to community services and natural supports;
 - ongoing contact with the DCF Social Worker and community providers working with the child and family; and
 - attendance at DCF and community team meetings regarding the child and family.
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PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Developing an Agreement for Each Child

The nature of the Permanency Placement Services Program requires a team approach and joint case planning.

When the decision has been made to purchase PPSP services, staff from DCF and the private agency shall meet to:

- discuss the case;
- determine if the provider is able to provide the requested services;
- develop a service agreement for each child served in the program utilizing the DCF-2107, "Service Agreement: Permanency Placement Services Program."

The DCF-2107 shall specify:

- the type of services purchased on behalf of the child;
- the number of hours required to complete each service;
- the ceiling or maximum dollar amount for each service (see note below);
- the respective roles and responsibilities of DCF and the provider; and
- the start and expected end dates of the agreement.

Note: The dollar amounts in the agreement are the maximum to be paid if the private agency completes all the services. Circumstances may dictate that the entire amount is not paid. For example, an agreement may include a dollar amount for Recruitment/Screening and Home Study/Evaluation, but the family that is finally matched with the child may have been recruited and approved by another agency. In that case, the agency with the service agreement will still receive compensation for the hours they spent implementing the agreed-upon services although the total compensation will not equal the agreed maximum. An explanation must be attached to the service agreement for the DCF record.

The service agreement must be signed by:

- the private agency representatives; and
- the child's Social Worker, Social Work Supervisor and Regional Administrator or designee.

The child's Social Worker shall:

- enter the service agreement information in the child's LINK narrative; and
 - submit a copy of the signed service agreement to the Office of Children and Youth in Placement.
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PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Amending Agreements

If, in the provision of services, the private agency or DCF determines that additional services or a change in services are needed for a child, an amended service agreement shall be written, briefly indicating the reason for the additional or changed services with dollar amount totals.

The child's Social Worker and the PPSP agency representative shall agree on the specific amendments to the service agreement based on the specific needs of the case. Amendments may include but are not limited to:

- the amount of hours for a specific service;
- additional activities under a specific service;
- extend timeframes; and
- additional services or changes in services.

The dollar amount shall remain within the ceiling amount of 132 maximum hours.

Once an amendment has been made, a copy of the amended, signed service agreement shall be sent to the PPSP Lead in the Office of Children and Youth in Placement.

If services are not completed within the originally agreed upon or amended time frame, the provider must submit a written explanation to DCF.

Without the amended agreement, DCF shall not reimburse the provider for additional or changed services.

Terminating an Agreement Prior to the Completion of Services

If DCF or the private agency desires to terminate a service agreement prior to the completion of services, the parties shall meet to discuss the reasons for ending the agreement.

If, following discussion, the decision to terminate stands, the party ending the agreement shall send a written notice of the termination at least 30 days prior to the termination date.

Note: Payment for all services completed prior to the termination shall be made by DCF with the understanding that DCF shall not be obligated to pay for improperly rendered or documented services.

PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Types of Communication There shall be regular (at least monthly) communication between DCF and the private agency.

Telephone contacts and meetings are the most desirable forms of ongoing, timely communication.

Private agencies are expected to take the lead in keeping all parties up to date regarding progress toward service agreement goals and case activities. DCF shall, however, retain legal responsibility and decision-making authority for the case

Progress Reports The private agency shall submit progress reports to the child's Social Worker at least monthly.

Note: For post-finalization services, providers shall submit a service plan, quarterly reports and a discharge summary. The outline for this report shall be obtained from AAP by the PPSP provider.

Monthly Invoice Private agencies shall submit an invoice to DCF at the end of each month, even if services are not provided during the month. Invoices accumulated prior to the achievement of legal permanency shall be sent to the child's Social Worker.

The provider shall utilize DCF-2106, "Accounting Invoice: Permanency Placement Services Program," to bill for services. Each invoice shall list the date of the specific service performed and the type of service rendered, *e.g.*, home visit, school meeting.

Invoices for post-finalization and post-adoption and -guardianship services shall be sent by the provider to the UConn Health Adoption Assistance Program (AAP), mailing address: 263 Farmington Avenue, Farmington, CT 06030-6020. AAP will review and forward approved invoices to the Adoption Subsidy Unit in the Office of Children and Youth in Placement at DCF, 505 Hudson St, Hartford, CT 06106 for payment.

Note: AAP utilizes a program-specific invoice. PPSP agencies must obtain this invoice from AAP and utilize it when seeking payment for services post-adoption or -guardianship.

PERMANENCY

Permanency Placement Services Program (PPSP)

48-22-2

Service Hour Rate The basic unit used for determining all costs is the service hour. The current rate is \$70.63 per service hour.

A service hour includes the cost of a case worker hour plus a portion of the salaries of supporting staff (supervisory and clerical) to complete:

- home visits;
- attend conferences;
- participate in telephone calls;
- travel;
- writing the home study; and
- other necessary case-specific activities.

A service hour does not include:

- typing costs;
 - filing costs;
 - time preparing invoices;
 - time for organizing paperwork; or
 - fundraising
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Companion Contracts In some instances, DCF has contracted with private agencies to provide permanency placement services and has also contracted with the same agencies to provide residential treatment or foster care.

Reimbursement Policy when there are Companion Contracts If the child is already in the provider's residential program, DCF may reimburse that provider for the full complement of mutually-agreed upon PPSP services *except for* pre-placement planning and placement planning.

If a child is in the provider's foster care program, DCF may reimburse the provider for recruitment and screening and home study and evaluation services regarding families *other than* the child's current foster family.

If a private agency foster family becomes a child's adoptive family and DCF is no longer paying the foster care rate, DCF may reimburse the provider for mutually-agreed upon PPSP services *except for* pre-placement planning, placement planning, recruitment and screening, and home study and evaluation.
