

260C.212 CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT.

Subdivision 1. **Out-of-home placement; plan.** (a) An out-of-home placement plan shall be prepared within 30 days after any child is placed in foster care by court order or a voluntary placement agreement between the responsible social services agency and the child's parent pursuant to subdivision 8 or chapter 260D.

(b) An out-of-home placement plan means a written document which is prepared by the responsible social services agency jointly with the parent or parents or guardian of the child and in consultation with the child's guardian ad litem, the child's tribe, if the child is an Indian child, the child's foster parent or representative of the residential facility, and, where appropriate, the child. For a child in voluntary foster care for treatment under chapter 260D, preparation of the out-of-home placement plan shall additionally include the child's mental health treatment provider. As appropriate, the plan shall be:

(1) submitted to the court for approval under section 260C.178, subdivision 7;

(2) ordered by the court, either as presented or modified after hearing, under section 260C.178, subdivision 7, or 260C.201, subdivision 6; and

(3) signed by the parent or parents or guardian of the child, the child's guardian ad litem, a representative of the child's tribe, the responsible social services agency, and, if possible, the child.

(c) The out-of-home placement plan shall be explained to all persons involved in its implementation, including the child who has signed the plan, and shall set forth:

(1) a description of the residential facility including how the out-of-home placement plan is designed to achieve a safe placement for the child in the least restrictive, most family-like, setting available which is in close proximity to the home of the parent or parents or guardian of the child when the case plan goal is reunification, and how the placement is consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child according to the factors under subdivision 2, paragraph (b);

(2) the specific reasons for the placement of the child in a residential facility, and when reunification is the plan, a description of the problems or conditions in the home of the parent or parents which necessitated removal of the child from home and the changes the parent or parents must make in order for the child to safely return home;

(3) a description of the services offered and provided to prevent removal of the child from the home and to reunify the family including:

(i) the specific actions to be taken by the parent or parents of the child to eliminate or correct the problems or conditions identified in clause (2), and the time period during which the actions are to be taken; and

(ii) the reasonable efforts, or in the case of an Indian child, active efforts to be made to achieve a safe and stable home for the child including social and other supportive services to be provided or offered to the parent or parents or guardian of the child, the child, and the residential facility during the period the child is in the residential facility;

(4) a description of any services or resources that were requested by the child or the child's parent, guardian, foster parent, or custodian since the date of the child's placement in the residential facility, and whether those services or resources were provided and if not, the basis for the denial of the services or resources;

(5) the visitation plan for the parent or parents or guardian, other relatives as defined in section 260C.007, subdivision 27, and siblings of the child if the siblings are not placed together in foster care, and whether visitation is consistent with the best interest of the child, during the period the child is in foster care;

(6) documentation of steps to finalize the adoption or legal guardianship of the child if the court has issued an order terminating the rights of both parents of the child or of the only known, living parent of the child. At a minimum, the documentation must include child-specific recruitment efforts such as relative search and the use of state, regional, and national adoption exchanges to facilitate orderly and timely placements in and outside of the state. A copy of this documentation shall be provided to the court in the review required under section 260C.317, subdivision 3, paragraph (b);

(7) the health and educational records of the child including the most recent information available regarding:

(i) the names and addresses of the child's health and educational providers;

(ii) the child's grade level performance;

(iii) the child's school record;

(iv) assurances that the child's placement in foster care takes into account proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement;

(v) a record of the child's immunizations;

(vi) the child's known medical problems, including any known communicable diseases, as defined in section 144.4172, subdivision 2;

(vii) the child's medications; and

(viii) any other relevant health and education information;

(8) an independent living plan for a child age 16 or older who is in placement as a result of a permanency disposition. The plan should include, but not be limited to, the following objectives:

- (i) educational, vocational, or employment planning;
- (ii) health care planning and medical coverage;
- (iii) transportation including, where appropriate, assisting the child in obtaining a driver's license;
- (iv) money management;
- (v) planning for housing;
- (vi) social and recreational skills; and
- (vii) establishing and maintaining connections with the child's family and community; and

(9) for a child in voluntary foster care for treatment under chapter 260D, diagnostic and assessment information, specific services relating to meeting the mental health care needs of the child, and treatment outcomes.

(d) The parent or parents or guardian and the child each shall have the right to legal counsel in the preparation of the case plan and shall be informed of the right at the time of placement of the child. The child shall also have the right to a guardian ad litem. If unable to employ counsel from their own resources, the court shall appoint counsel upon the request of the parent or parents or the child or the child's legal guardian. The parent or parents may also receive assistance from any person or social services agency in preparation of the case plan.

After the plan has been agreed upon by the parties involved or approved or ordered by the court, the foster parents shall be fully informed of the provisions of the case plan and shall be provided a copy of the plan.

Upon discharge from foster care, the parent, adoptive parent, or permanent legal and physical custodian, as appropriate, and the child, if appropriate, must be provided with a current copy of the child's health and education record.

Subd. 2. Placement decisions based on best interest of the child. (a) The policy of the state of Minnesota is to ensure that the child's best interests are met by requiring an individualized determination of the needs of the child and of how the selected placement will serve the needs of the child being placed. The authorized child-placing agency shall place a child, released by court order or by voluntary release by the parent or parents, in a family foster home selected by considering placement with relatives and important friends in the following order:

- (1) with an individual who is related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption; or

(2) with an individual who is an important friend with whom the child has resided or had significant contact.

(b) Among the factors the agency shall consider in determining the needs of the child are the following:

- (1) the child's current functioning and behaviors;
- (2) the medical, educational, and developmental needs of the child;
- (3) the child's history and past experience;
- (4) the child's religious and cultural needs;
- (5) the child's connection with a community, school, and church;
- (6) the child's interests and talents;
- (7) the child's relationship to current caretakers, parents, siblings, and relatives; and
- (8) the reasonable preference of the child, if the court, or the child-placing agency in the case of a voluntary placement, deems the child to be of sufficient age to express preferences.

(c) Placement of a child cannot be delayed or denied based on race, color, or national origin of the foster parent or the child.

(d) Siblings should be placed together for foster care and adoption at the earliest possible time unless it is determined not to be in the best interests of a sibling or unless it is not possible after appropriate efforts by the responsible social services agency.

(e) Except for emergency placement as provided for in section 245A.035, a completed background study is required under section 245C.08 before the approval of a foster placement in a related or unrelated home.

Subd. 3. Limit on multiple placements. If a child has been placed in a residential facility pursuant to a court order under section 260C.178 or 260C.201, the social services agency responsible for the residential facility placement for the child may not change the child's placement unless the agency specifically documents that the current placement is unsuitable or another placement is in the best interests of the child. This subdivision does not apply if the new placement is in an adoptive home or other permanent placement.

Subd. 4. Agency responsibilities for parents and children in placement. (a) When a child is in foster care, the responsible social services agency shall make diligent efforts to identify, locate, and, where appropriate, offer services to both parents of the child.

(1) The responsible social services agency shall assess whether a noncustodial or nonadjudicated parent is willing and capable of providing for the day-to-day care of the child temporarily or permanently. An assessment under this clause may include, but is not limited to, obtaining information under section 260C.209. If after assessment, the responsible social services agency determines that a noncustodial or nonadjudicated parent is willing and capable of providing day-to-day care of the child, the responsible social services agency may seek authority from the custodial parent or the court to have that parent assume day-to-day care of the child. If a parent is not an adjudicated parent, the responsible social services agency shall require the nonadjudicated parent to cooperate with paternity establishment procedures as part of the case plan.

(2) If, after assessment, the responsible social services agency determines that the child cannot be in the day-to-day care of either parent, the agency shall:

(i) prepare an out-of-home placement plan addressing the conditions that each parent must meet before the child can be in that parent's day-to-day care; and

(ii) provide a parent who is the subject of a background study under section 260C.209 15 days' notice that it intends to use the study to recommend against putting the child with that parent, as well as the notice provided in section 260C.209, subdivision 4, and the court shall afford the parent an opportunity to be heard concerning the study.

The results of a background study of a noncustodial parent shall not be used by the agency to determine that the parent is incapable of providing day-to-day care of the child unless the agency reasonably believes that placement of the child into the home of that parent would endanger the child's health, safety, or welfare.

(3) If, after the provision of services following an out-of-home placement plan under this section, the child cannot return to the care of the parent from whom the child was removed or who had legal custody at the time the child was placed in foster care, the agency may petition on behalf of a noncustodial parent to establish legal custody with that parent under section 260C.201, subdivision 11. If paternity has not already been established, it may be established in the same proceeding in the manner provided for under chapter 257.

(4) The responsible social services agency may be relieved of the requirement to locate and offer services to both parents by the juvenile court upon a finding of good cause after the filing of a petition under section 260C.141.

(b) The responsible social services agency shall give notice to the parent or guardian of each child in foster care, other than a child in voluntary foster care for treatment under chapter 260D, of the following information:

(1) that the child's placement in foster care may result in termination of parental rights or an order permanently placing the child out of the custody of the parent, but only after notice and a hearing as required under chapter 260C and the juvenile court rules;

(2) time limits on the length of placement and of reunification services, including the date on which the child is expected to be returned to and safely maintained in the home of the parent or parents or placed for adoption or otherwise permanently removed from the care of the parent by court order;

(3) the nature of the services available to the parent;

(4) the consequences to the parent and the child if the parent fails or is unable to use services to correct the circumstances that led to the child's placement;

(5) the first consideration for placement with relatives;

(6) the benefit to the child in getting the child out of foster care as soon as possible, preferably by returning the child home, but if that is not possible, through a permanent legal placement of the child away from the parent;

(7) when safe for the child, the benefits to the child and the parent of maintaining visitation with the child as soon as possible in the course of the case and, in any event, according to the visitation plan under this section; and

(8) the financial responsibilities and obligations, if any, of the parent or parents for the support of the child during the period the child is in foster care.

(c) The responsible social services agency shall inform a parent considering voluntary placement of a child under subdivision 8, of the following information:

(1) the parent and the child each has a right to separate legal counsel before signing a voluntary placement agreement, but not to counsel appointed at public expense;

(2) the parent is not required to agree to the voluntary placement, and a parent who enters a voluntary placement agreement may at any time request that the agency return the child. If the parent so requests, the child must be returned within 24 hours of the receipt of the request;

(3) evidence gathered during the time the child is voluntarily placed may be used at a later time as the basis for a petition alleging that the child is in need of protection or services or as the basis for a petition seeking termination of parental rights or other permanent placement of the child away from the parent;

(4) if the responsible social services agency files a petition alleging that the child is in need of protection or services or a petition seeking the termination of parental rights or other permanent

placement of the child away from the parent, the parent would have the right to appointment of separate legal counsel and the child would have a right to the appointment of counsel and a guardian ad litem as provided by law, and that counsel will be appointed at public expense if they are unable to afford counsel; and

(5) the timelines and procedures for review of voluntary placements under subdivision 3, and the effect the time spent in voluntary placement on the scheduling of a permanent placement determination hearing under section 260C.201, subdivision 11.

(d) When an agency accepts a child for placement, the agency shall determine whether the child has had a physical examination by or under the direction of a licensed physician within the 12 months immediately preceding the date when the child came into the agency's care. If there is documentation that the child has had an examination within the last 12 months, the agency is responsible for seeing that the child has another physical examination within one year of the documented examination and annually in subsequent years. If the agency determines that the child has not had a physical examination within the 12 months immediately preceding placement, the agency shall ensure that the child has an examination within 30 days of coming into the agency's care and once a year in subsequent years.

(e) Whether under state guardianship or not, if a child leaves foster care by reason of having attained the age of majority under state law, the child must be given at no cost a copy of the child's social and medical history, as defined in section 259.43, and education report.

Subd. 4a. **Monthly caseworker visits.** (a) Every child in foster care or on a trial home visit shall be visited by the child's caseworker on a monthly basis, with the majority of visits occurring in the child's residence. For the purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) "visit" is defined as a face-to-face contact between a child and the child's caseworker;

(2) "visited on a monthly basis" is defined as at least one visit per calendar month;

(3) "the child's caseworker" is defined as the person who has responsibility for managing the child's foster care placement case as assigned by the responsible social service agency; and

(4) "the child's residence" is defined as the home where the child is residing, and can include the foster home, child care institution, or the home from which the child was removed if the child is on a trial home visit.

(b) Caseworker visits shall be of sufficient substance and duration to address issues pertinent to case planning and service delivery to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child.

Subd. 5. **Relative search.** (a) In implementing the requirement that the responsible social services agency must consider placement with a relative under subdivision 2 without delay after

identifying the need for placement of the child in foster care, the responsible social services agency shall identify relatives of the child and notify them of the need for a foster care home for the child and of the possibility of the need for a permanent out-of-home placement of the child. The relative search required by this section shall be reasonable and comprehensive in scope and may last up to six months or until a fit and willing relative is identified. The relative search required by this section shall include both maternal relatives of the child and paternal relatives of the child, if paternity is adjudicated. The relatives must be notified that they must keep the responsible social services agency informed of their current address in order to receive notice that a permanent placement is being sought for the child. A relative who fails to provide a current address to the responsible social services agency forfeits the right to notice of the possibility of permanent placement. A decision by a relative not to be a placement resource at the beginning of the case shall not affect whether the relative is considered for placement of the child with that relative later.

(b) A responsible social services agency may disclose private or confidential data, as defined in section 13.02, to relatives of the child for the purpose of locating a suitable placement. The agency shall disclose only data that is necessary to facilitate possible placement with relatives. If the child's parent refuses to give the responsible social services agency information sufficient to identify the maternal and paternal relatives of the child, the agency shall ask the juvenile court to order the parent to provide the necessary information. If a parent makes an explicit request that relatives or a specific relative not be contacted or considered for placement, the agency shall bring the parent's request to the attention of the court to determine whether the parent's request is consistent with the best interests of the child and the agency shall not contact relatives or a specific relative unless authorized to do so by the juvenile court.

(c) When the placing agency determines that a permanent placement hearing is necessary because there is a likelihood that the child will not return to a parent's care, the agency may send the notice provided in paragraph (d), may ask the court to modify the requirements of the agency under this paragraph, or may ask the court to completely relieve the agency of the requirements of this paragraph. The relative notification requirements of this paragraph do not apply when the child is placed with an appropriate relative or a foster home that has committed to being the permanent legal placement for the child and the agency approves of that foster home for permanent placement of the child. The actions ordered by the court under this section must be consistent with the best interests, safety, and welfare of the child.

(d) Unless required under the Indian Child Welfare Act or relieved of this duty by the court under paragraph (c), when the agency determines that it is necessary to prepare for the permanent placement determination hearing, or in anticipation of filing a termination of parental rights petition, the agency shall send notice to the relatives, any adult with whom the child is currently

residing, any adult with whom the child has resided for one year or longer in the past, and any adults who have maintained a relationship or exercised visitation with the child as identified in the agency case plan. The notice must state that a permanent home is sought for the child and that the individuals receiving the notice may indicate to the agency their interest in providing a permanent home. The notice must state that within 30 days of receipt of the notice an individual receiving the notice must indicate to the agency the individual's interest in providing a permanent home for the child or that the individual may lose the opportunity to be considered for a permanent placement.

(e) The Department of Human Services shall develop a best practices guide and specialized staff training to assist the responsible social services agency in performing and complying with the relative search requirements under this subdivision.

Subd. 6. **Change in placement.** If a child is removed from a permanent placement disposition authorized under section 260C.201, subdivision 11, within one year after the placement was made:

(1) the child must be returned to the residential facility where the child was placed immediately preceding the permanent placement; or

(2) the court shall hold a hearing within ten days after the child is removed from the permanent placement to determine where the child is to be placed. A guardian ad litem must be appointed for the child for this hearing.

Subd. 7. **Administrative or court review of placements.** (a) There shall be an administrative review of the out-of-home placement plan of each child placed in foster care no later than 180 days after the initial placement of the child in foster care and at least every six months thereafter if the child is not returned to the home of the parent or parents within that time. The out-of-home placement plan must be monitored and updated at each administrative review. The administrative review shall be conducted by the responsible social services agency using a panel of appropriate persons at least one of whom is not responsible for the case management of, or the delivery of services to, either the child or the parents who are the subject of the review. The administrative review shall be open to participation by the parent or guardian of the child and the child, as appropriate.

(b) As an alternative to the administrative review required in paragraph (a), the court may, as part of any hearing required under the Minnesota Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure, conduct a hearing to monitor and update the out-of-home placement plan pursuant to the procedure and standard in section 260C.201, subdivision 6, paragraph (d). The party requesting review of the out-of-home placement plan shall give parties to the proceeding notice of the request to review and update the out-of-home placement plan. A court review conducted pursuant to section 260C.193;

260C.201, subdivision 1 or 11; 260C.141, subdivision 2 or 2a, clause (2); or 260C.317 shall satisfy the requirement for the review so long as the other requirements of this section are met.

(c) As appropriate to the stage of the proceedings and relevant court orders, the responsible social services agency or the court shall review:

- (1) the safety, permanency needs, and well-being of the child;
- (2) the continuing necessity for and appropriateness of the placement;
- (3) the extent of compliance with the out-of-home placement plan;
- (4) the extent of progress which has been made toward alleviating or mitigating the causes necessitating placement in foster care;
- (5) the projected date by which the child may be returned to and safely maintained in the home or placed permanently away from the care of the parent or parents or guardian; and
- (6) the appropriateness of the services provided to the child.

(d) When a child is age 16 or older, in addition to any administrative review conducted by the agency, at the review required under section 260C.201, subdivision 11, paragraph (d), clause (3), item (iii); or 260C.317, subdivision 3, clause (3), the court shall review the independent living plan required under subdivision 1, paragraph (c), clause (8), and the provision of services to the child related to the well-being of the child as the child prepares to leave foster care. The review shall include the actual plans related to each item in the plan necessary to the child's future safety and well-being when the child is no longer in foster care.

(1) At the court review, the responsible social services agency shall establish that it has given the notice required under Minnesota Rules, part 9560.0060, regarding the right to continued access to services for certain children in foster care past age 18 and of the right to appeal a denial of social services under section 256.245. If the agency is unable to establish that the notice, including the right to appeal a denial of social services, has been given, the court shall require the agency to give it.

(2) The court shall make findings regarding progress toward or accomplishment of the following goals:

- (i) the child has obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent;
- (ii) the child has completed a driver's education course or has demonstrated the ability to use public transportation in the child's community;
- (iii) the child is employed or enrolled in postsecondary education;

(iv) the child has applied for and obtained postsecondary education financial aid for which the child is eligible;

(v) the child has health care coverage and health care providers to meet the child's physical and mental health needs;

(vi) the child has applied for and obtained disability income assistance for which the child is eligible;

(vii) the child has obtained affordable housing with necessary supports, which does not include a homeless shelter;

(viii) the child has saved sufficient funds to pay for the first month's rent and a damage deposit;

(ix) the child has an alternative affordable housing plan, which does not include a homeless shelter, if the original housing plan is unworkable;

(x) the child, if male, has registered for the Selective Service; and

(xi) the child has a permanent connection to a caring adult.

(3) The court shall ensure that the responsible agency in conjunction with the placement provider assists the child in obtaining the following documents prior to the child's leaving foster care: a Social Security card; the child's birth certificate; a state identification card or driver's license, green card, or school visa; the child's school, medical, and dental records; a contact list of the child's medical, dental, and mental health providers; and contact information for the child's siblings, if the siblings are in foster care.

Subd. 8. Voluntary foster care; required court review. When the responsible social services agency and the child's parent or guardian agree that the child's safety, health, and best interests require that the child be in foster care, the agency and the parent or guardian may enter into a voluntary agreement for the placement of the child in foster care. The voluntary agreement must be in writing and in a form approved by the commissioner. When the child has been placed in foster care pursuant to a voluntary foster care agreement between the agency and the parent, under this subdivision and the child is not returned home within 90 days after initial placement in foster care, the agency responsible for the child's placement in foster care shall:

(1) return the child to the home of the parent or parents; or

(2) file a petition according to section 260C.141, subdivision 1 or 2, which may:

(i) ask the court to review the child's placement in foster care and approve it as continued voluntary foster care for up to an additional 90 days;

(ii) ask the court to order continued foster care according to sections 260C.178 and 260C.201; or

(iii) ask the court to terminate parental rights under section 260C.301.

The out-of-home placement plan must be updated and filed along with the petition.

If the court approves continuing the child in foster care for up to 90 more days on a voluntary basis, at the end of the court-approved 90-day period, the child must be returned to the parent's home. If the child is not returned home, the responsible social services agency must proceed on the petition filed alleging the child in need of protection or services or the petition for termination of parental rights or other permanent placement of the child away from the parent. The court must find a statutory basis to order the placement of the child under section 260C.178; 260C.201; or 260C.317.

Subd. 9. [Repealed, 2008 c 361 art 6 s 59]

Subd. 10. **Rules; children in residential facilities.** The commissioner of human services shall promulgate all rules necessary to carry out the provisions of Public Law 96-272 as regards the establishment of a state goal for the reduction of the number of children in residential facilities beyond 24 months.

Subd. 11. **Rules; family and group foster care.** The commissioner shall revise Minnesota Rules, parts 9545.0010 to 9545.0260, the rules setting standards for family and group family foster care. The commissioner shall:

(1) require that, as a condition of licensure, foster care providers attend training on understanding and validating the cultural heritage of all children in their care, and on the importance of the Indian Child Welfare Act, United States Code, title 25, sections 1901 to 1923, and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act, sections 260.751 to 260.835; and

(2) review and, where necessary, revise foster care rules to reflect sensitivity to cultural diversity and differing lifestyles. Specifically, the commissioner shall examine whether space and other requirements discriminate against single-parent, minority, or low-income families who may be able to provide quality foster care reflecting the values of their own respective cultures.

Subd. 12. **Fair hearing review.** Any person whose claim for foster care payment pursuant to the placement of a child resulting from a child protection assessment under section 626.556 is denied or not acted upon with reasonable promptness may appeal the decision under section 256.045, subdivision 3.

History: 1999 c 139 art 3 s 26; art 4 s 2; 1999 c 245 art 8 s 19-25; 2001 c 178 art 1 s 25-31,44; 2002 c 290 s 2; 2004 c 288 art 3 s 30; 2005 c 56 s 1; 2005 c 98 art 3 s 21; 2005 c 136 art 15 s 7; 2005 c 165 art 2 s 6; 2007 c 147 art 1 s 19-21; art 3 s 30; 2008 c 361 art 6 s 37-41