

SUPREME COURT OF COLORADO

Office of the Chief Justice

DIRECTIVE CONCERNING PERMANENCY PLANNING
IN DEPENDENCY AND NEGLECT CASES

The following policies are adopted to expedite the permanent planning and placement for all children subject to Dependency and Neglect actions. It is the responsibility of judges handling these cases to ensure that the issue of permanent placement for dependent and neglected children is addressed within twelve months of a judicial finding of abuse and neglect or sixty days after the child's removal from home. Districts are responsible for developing case processing procedures that will enable the courts to reach the twelve-month goal. These policies are intended to reduce the time needed for courts to reach approval of permanent placement plans for children.

The State Court Administrator's Office will provide a *Memorandum of Procedures* (MOP) to serve as a model for districts to use in adopting case processing procedures and specifies the responsibilities of judges, districts, and the State Court Administrator's Office in implementation of these policies.

Case Processing Procedures

Each district shall adopt case processing procedures to implement this directive in collaboration with the local department of social services, county attorneys, guardians ad litem, and respondent parents' counsel. These procedures shall have the following factors.

1. "Front-loading" of key processes including: early identification of needed services, timely notification of parents and interested family members, early assessment and evaluation, and advanced preparation of meaningful treatment plans.
2. Procedures to clearly define the objectives and specific actions which need to take place to assure that court hearings are meaningful.
3. Procedures which provide offer parties opportunities to resolve issues consensually in a non-adversarial problem solving environment.

The *Memorandum of Procedures* (MOP), which was developed by case managers and recommended by a committee of judges and magistrates, is designed meet this time

frame and is intended to serve as a model for districts to consider. This procedure was designed based on current resources available to districts.

Responsibilities

The following responsibilities are assigned:

1. Districts will collaboratively develop a uniform set of procedures, which will ensure that permanency is considered by the court within twelve months of the shelter hearing or the filing of a petition. Districts are encouraged to utilize the MOP provided with this directive. However, a district can use other procedures if they meet the objectives of the directive or the MOP is not feasible given local legal culture or available resources.
2. Judges will implement the procedures adopted by their district.

Reports

Each district shall report on the progress in implementing a local case processing procedure to the State Court Administrator's Office by July 31, 1998. Annually, the chief judge shall report to the chief justice on the effectiveness of these procedures. The State Court Administrator's Office shall provide periodic reports to the districts on the how well they are meeting the time frames.

Signed this _____ day of February, 1998.

Anthony F. Vollack, Chief Justice