

Choosing Guardianship as a Permanency Option

Quality Conversation
June 29, 2016



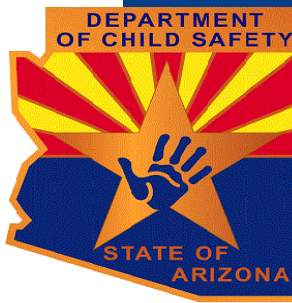
First a Word About Permanency



Benefits of Guardianship

Benefits for the Child

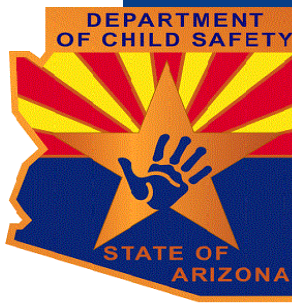
- Guardianship increases a child's sense of normalcy by retaining original family roles, such as grandparent/grandchild
- Children 12 and older must consent to guardianship and adoption, giving them some control over their future
- Guardianship may provide permanency for children who may otherwise remain in care



Benefits of Guardianship

Benefit for the Parents

- In some circumstances a parent may not be able to parent for a significant period of time, but there is optimism that this will change. Guardianship leaves that door open for them
- A parent may agree to guardianship, reducing the trauma and stress of severance and achieving permanency for the children more quickly
- A parent has more opportunity to maintain a relationship with the children following a guardianship plan



Benefits of Guardianship

Benefits to the Prospective Caregivers

- Guardianship may be the preferred option for the prospective permanent caregiver for a variety of reasons
- Kinship caregivers may prefer to retain their roles as grandparent, aunt/uncle, sibling, etc.
- Kinship caregivers may be optimistic that a parent will have the ability to someday assume a parenting role



When is a Guardianship Plan Appropriate?

State Statutes

- Guardianship must be in best interest of the child
- The child has been adjudicated as a dependent child
- The child has been in the custody of the prospective guardian for at least nine months
- Reasonable efforts have been made to reunify the child with the parents



Engaging Family Members in Permanency Decisions

Talking to Prospective Permanent Caregivers

- Be clear and honest about the obligation to secure permanency for children in the care of DCS
- Maintain frequent communication about the status of the case



Engaging Family Members in Permanency Decisions

Talking to Prospective Permanent Caregivers

- Avoid acronyms and jargon when discussing permanency options
- Listen to their concerns and provide answers to their questions



Engaging Family Members in Permanency Decisions

Talking to Children and Youth

- Provide age-appropriate information on guardianship and adoption
- Listen to their thoughts and provide answers to their questions
- Consider the needs and wishes of each child in a sibling group



Engaging Family Members in Permanency Decisions

Cultural Considerations

- Consider the prospective permanent family's perspective on adoption vs. guardianship
- Recognize that historical oppression may impact the values of some families regarding the acceptability of adoption



Adoption vs. Guardianship

- **Adoption**

- Life-long legal relationship
- Adoption subsidy includes financial assistance and medical coverage
- Once adoption finalized no further agency or court involvement

- **Guardianship**

- Legal relationship lasts until child turns 18
- Guardianship subsidy usually provides less financial assistance
- Usually a follow up court report and hearing one year after guardianship granted



Guardianship Subsidy

- Guardianship Subsidy is available to caregivers who finalize a permanent guardianship of a court ward
- Inform the guardian of the availability of subsidy and assist them with completing the application
- If needed, the guardian needs to apply for AHCCCS on behalf of the child and re-apply yearly
- The guardian needs to apply for any federal benefits the child may be eligible for
- Guardianship subsidy does not cover all expenses



Additional Resources

- The DCS Policy Manual
- Arizona Kinship Support Services (ArizonaKinship.org)
- Maricopa County-Duet (Duetaz.org)
- Information Sessions – Call 1-888-737-7494



What are Practice Guidelines?

Practice Guidelines describe today's best known skills, techniques, and knowledge to guide individualized practice and achieve positive outcomes.

- Developed using nationally recognized best practice guidance and input from staff and stakeholders.
- They are not policy or procedure, but they provide practice guidance **to be followed statewide**.
 - **Policy** – Generally an interpretation of statute or rule, describes something that shall or must be done, has widespread application and changes infrequently. **Example:** The Department shall facilitate an individualized, written, family centered case plan, consistent with the requirements of federal and state law for every child, youth, and family receiving ongoing services from the Department.
 - **Procedure** – Describes the detailed step-by-step process required to implement a policy. **Example:** Schedule the case plan staffing around the needs of parents, out-of-home care providers, and children. Invite the following service team members to participate in the case plan staffing:...
 - **Practice Guidelines** - Describe skills and techniques for engaging with youth, parents, and other team members; and knowledge for making informed choices about how to address each child's, parent's or family's individual needs. **Example:** To develop a solution-focused case plan, ask the parent to think about a time when the problem didn't exist. What conditions were happening at that time that you can work to re-create?



- The information for this presentation was adapted from:

Child Welfare Information Gateway, Bulletin for Professionals. Engaging Families in Case Planning.

National Indian Child Welfare Association

DCS Policy Manual



For more information review DCS Policy &
Procedure Manual Chapter 5

With questions, please e-mail +Office of
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Thank you!

