

# MONTANA CHILD WELFARE MOVING THE DIAL

**Using of Concurrent  
Planning...**

**Raising the Bar...**

**Achieving Timely  
Permanency.**



# AGENDA

- 1 **The How and Why of Concurrent Planning (Part 1)**
- 2 **Implementation and Effective Use of Concurrent Planning (Part 2)**

# The How and Why (Part 1)

**1. CFSR and PIP Process**

**2. Achieving Timely Permanency: Program Improvement Plan (PIP) Implementation Process**

**3. Partnership/Stakeholders**

**4. What is Concurrent Planning**

**5. Team Breakouts**

# CFSR and PIP Process

Children's Bureau administers a review system known as the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).

States are assessed for substantial conformity with federal requirements for child welfare services.

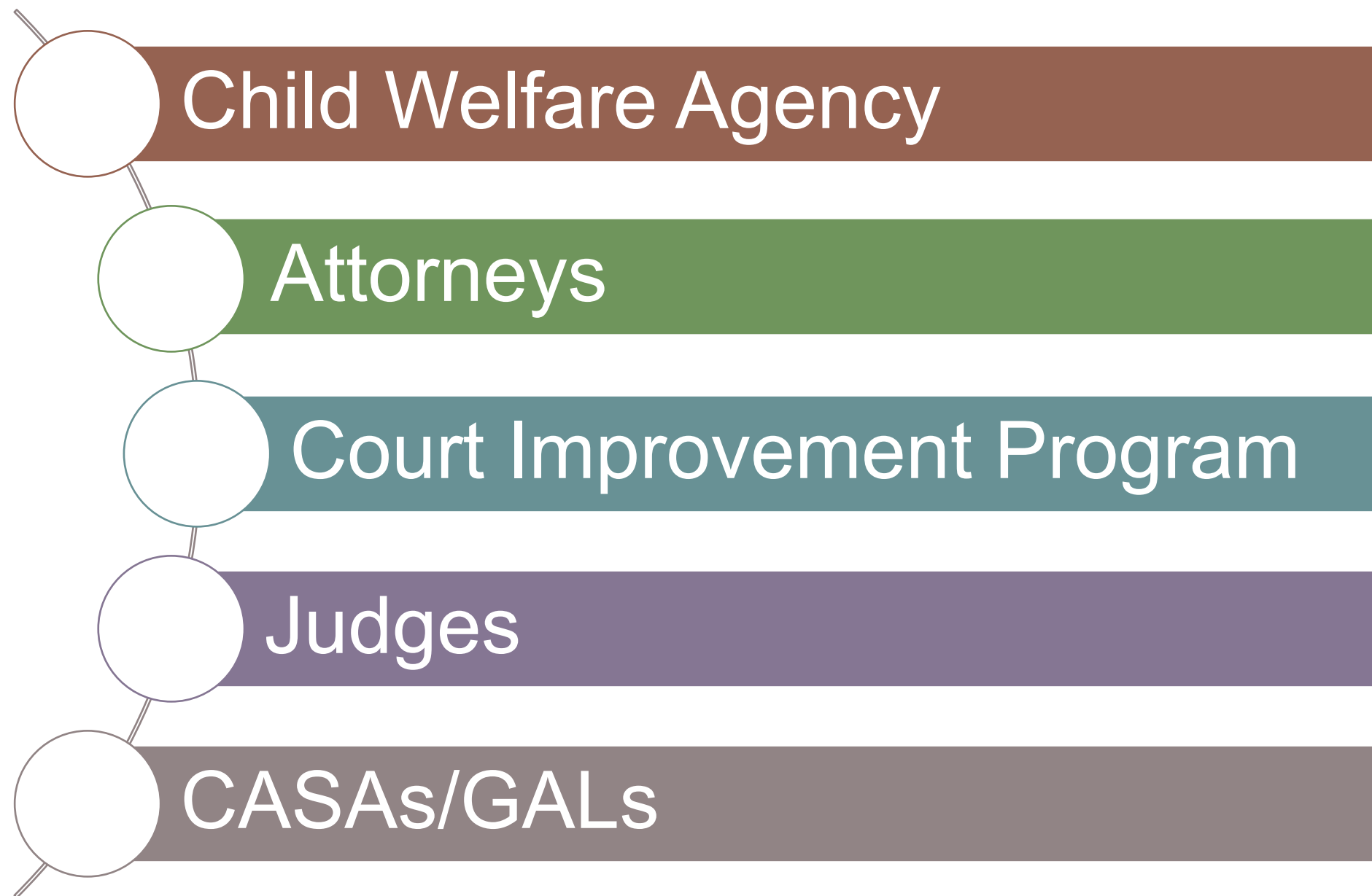
States create a PIP with a goal of improving child welfare services.

# Achieving Timely Permanency Areas of Concern



Effective use  
of concurrent  
planning

# Partnership



# What Is Concurrent Planning?

- ▶ The simultaneous pursuit of two permanency plans to reduce delays in achieving permanency for the child
  - Formally identified in the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997:
    - Efforts to place a child in an adoptive home or with a legal guardian “could be made concurrently.”

# What Is Concurrent Planning?

## Montana also permits concurrent planning:

- “(6) If reasonable efforts have been made to prevent removal of a child from the home or to return a child to the child's home but continuation of the efforts is determined by the court to be inconsistent with the permanency plan for the child, the department shall make reasonable efforts to place the child in a timely manner in accordance with the permanency plan, including, if appropriate, placement in another state, and to complete whatever steps are necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child. Reasonable efforts to place a child permanently for adoption or to make an alternative out-of-home permanent placement may be made concurrently with reasonable efforts to return a child to the child's home. Concurrent planning, including identifying in-state and out-of-state placements, may be used.”

(Montana Code Ann. 41-3-423)



# What Is Concurrent Planning?

The goals of concurrent planning include the following (CWDA, 2010):

- ▶ Expediting sustainable permanency through reunification, kinship care, adoption, or guardianship
- ▶ Minimizing a child's separation from parents, relatives, and caretakers while maximizing attachment and permanent connections
- ▶ Keeping siblings together
- ▶ Empowering parents by involving them in alternative placement plans when reunification is not possible
  - Ensuring a child's first placement is the last placement
  - Engaging a family's relatives and support system immediately for potential placement and permanency plan discussions and actions
- ▶ Communicating with parents directly at intake and throughout a case regarding their children's need for permanence, case plan progress, and the agency's concurrent planning policy

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2018). *Concurrent planning for timely permanence*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau

# What Is Concurrent Planning?

Montana also defines concurrent planning:

- “(8) ‘Concurrent planning’ means to work toward reunification of the child with the family while at the same time developing and implementing an alternative permanent plan.”

(Montana Code Ann. 41-3-102(8))

# Team Breakout

- 1. What stands out about the definition of concurrent planning? Anything to add?**
- 2. What are your top two barriers to concurrent planning?**
- 3. Why do you use or not use concurrent planning?**

# Implementation and Effective Use (Part 2)

**1. Challenges and Goals**

**2. Child and Services Family Policy**

**3. Barriers**

**4. Role of Stakeholders**

**5. How to Raise the Bar**

**6. Team Breakouts**

# Challenges and Goals

## ► Unique challenges:

- Distinct Judicial Regions
- Culture

## ► Goals:

- Law universally applied
- Practice improved to achieve permanency in a more timely manner

# What Is Concurrent Planning?

The National Center for Child Welfare Excellence at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College developed a toolkit for concurrent planning that lists the essential components of concurrent planning:

- ▶ Differential assessment and prognostic case review
- ▶ Full disclosure to all participants in the case planning process
- ▶ Family search and engagement
- ▶ Family group conferencing/teaming
- ▶ Visiting between family and child/youth
- ▶ Setting clear timelines for permanency decisions
- ▶ Transparent written agreements and documentation
- ▶ Committed collaboration between child welfare, the courts, service providers
- ▶ Specific recruitment, training and retention of dual licensed resource families

A WebBased Concurrent Planning Toolkit: The Core Components of Concurrent Planning, is available on the NCCWE website at [http://www.nccwe.org/toolkits/concurrentplanning/core\\_components.htm](http://www.nccwe.org/toolkits/concurrentplanning/core_components.htm).

# What is Concurrent Planning?

If the child welfare agency determines the safety risk posed by the family remains high and the prognosis for reunification is poor, a concurrent goal for permanency must be considered and evaluated to determine appropriateness. Key to concurrent planning is early assessment.

Poor prognosis indicators have been identified by several states. (Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2016). Reasonable efforts to preserve or reunify families and achieve permanency for children. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/reunify/>)

## 402-3 Child and Family Services Policy Manual: Substitute Care for Children Concurrent Planning and Placement

**CONCURRENT PLANNING:** A case plan that includes the development and implementation of two or more simultaneous plans, aimed at developing or ensuring a permanent outcome for a child in the shortest possible period of time through reunification, adoption, guardianship or other planned permanent living arrangement. **Plan A:** intended to safely reunify the birth parents with their child(ren) **Plan B:** permanency for the child through adoption, guardianship, or other planned permanent living arrangement.



# 402-3 Child and Family Services Policy Manual: Substitute Care for Children Concurrent Planning and Placement

**CONCURRENT PLACEMENT:** The planned placement of a child with a concurrent family. A concurrent placement does not occur by default.

## 402-3 Child and Family Services Policy Manual: Substitute Care for Children Concurrent Planning and Placement

Concurrent planning requires that the Child Protection Specialist and/or designee (identified through a supervisory or permanency staffing) identify and work toward developing an alternative permanent plan for the child at the same time the Child Protection Specialist and parents are working toward the child's return to the parents.

## 402-3 Child and Family Services Policy Manual: Substitute Care for Children Concurrent Planning and Placement

The steps of the concurrent planning process and placement are: Step 1. The Child Protection Specialist and/or designee (identified through a supervisory or permanency staffing) conducts a diligent search for the absent parent and other relatives. Step 2. Immediately upon placement or as soon thereafter as possible, the Child Protection Specialist must discuss concurrent planning with the parents and/or family.

# What Is Concurrent Planning?

- ▶ There should be full disclosure to all participants in the case planning process. The agency should engage the parties in the development of the concurrent goal during the case plan meeting.
- ▶ It is important to identify extended family as soon as possible and attempt to engage the family early. This case be done during a child and family team meeting.
- ▶ Concurrent planning is an opportunity to partner with families and engage them in planning for the children

# Barriers to Concurrent Planning

Factors found to be barriers to effective concurrent planning are:

- ▶ High caseloads and staff turnover
- ▶ Lack of time
- ▶ Courts (including judges, citizen panels, attorneys, guardians ad litem, and CASAs) not understanding concurrent planning
- ▶ Private providers of family services not understanding concurrent planning
- ▶ Lack of placement resources
- ▶ Lack of meaningful parent-child visitation
- ▶ Lack of quality assessment of resource families
- ▶ Insufficient time for case managers to support resource parents

(Georgia Division of Family and Children Services and the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, 2008)

# Roles of Stakeholders

## Agency attorneys:

- ▶ Assist the agency in identifying and analyzing prognosis indicators
- ▶ Assist the agency in analyzing any barriers to permanency plans
- ▶ Assist the agency in taking actions to identify relatives

## Parent attorneys:

- ▶ Encourage the parent to identify relatives
- ▶ Encourage the parent to participate in concurrent planning

## Child attorneys/Court appointed special advocate (CASAs):

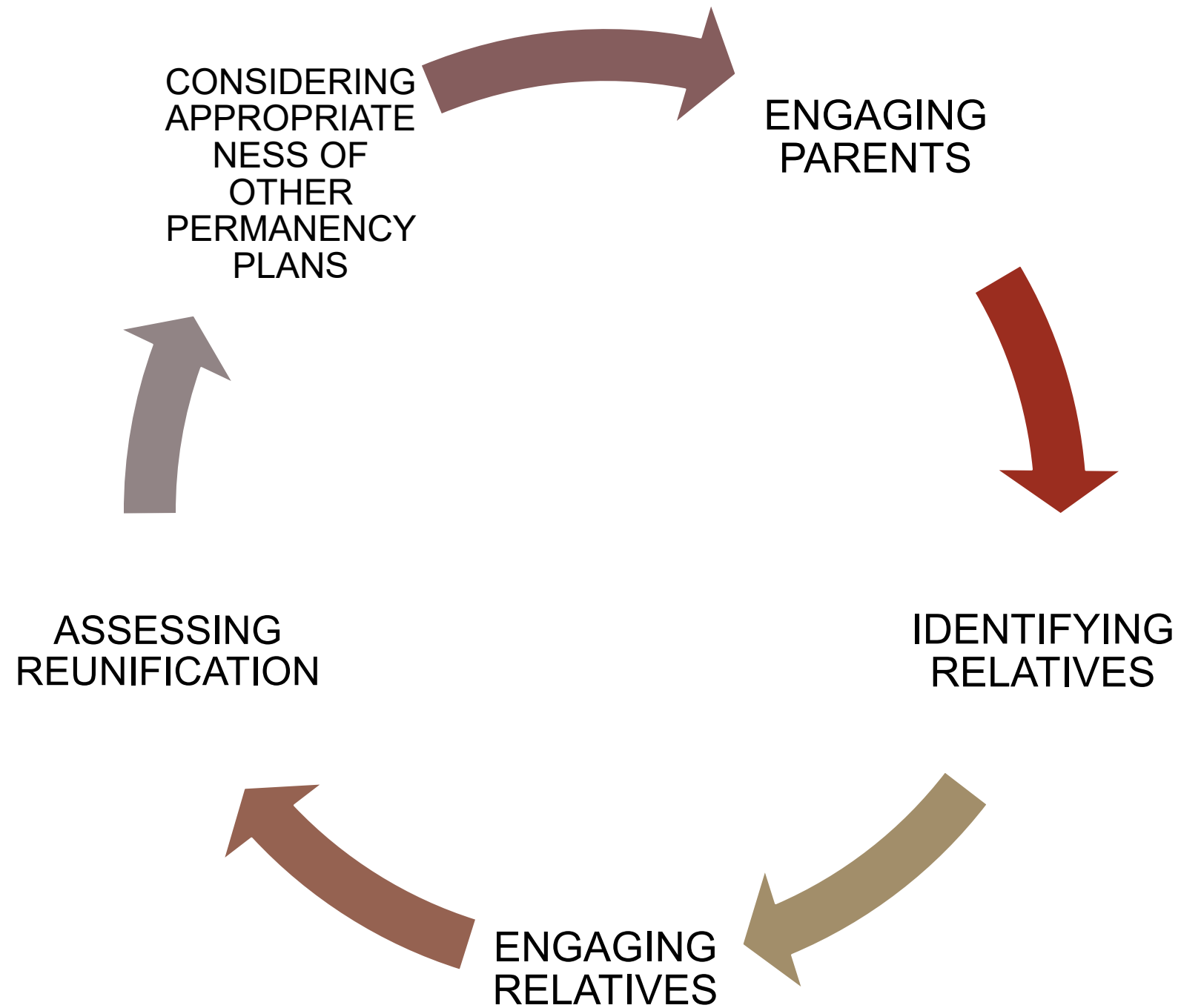
- ▶ Provide the agency with names of any relatives identified by the child
- ▶ Advocate for appropriate concurrent planning to reduce delays to permanency

# Roles of Stakeholders

Judges play an important role in introducing the subject of concurrent planning at the first hearing, giving courts the primary responsibility for ensuring that agencies implement it within Adoption and Safe Families Act timeframes. (Gatowski, S., Miller, N., Rubin, S., Escher, P., & Maze, C. [2016]. Enhanced resource guidelines: Improving court practice in child abuse and neglect cases.)

- ▶ Judges should inquire about relatives and remind the parents to continue to provide relative information as it becomes available.
- ▶ Judges should encourage parents to engage in the planning for their children.
- ▶ Judges should ensure the agency is considering concurrent planning as appropriate.

# Concurrent Planning





# Team Breakout

- 1. How often are concurrent planning discussions occurring?**
- 2. Do parents understand why concurrent discussions are occurring?**

# Contact Information

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