

Case planning in Preservation and Restoration

This document provides an overview of case planning for change when a goal is preservation or restoration. It is the first of two documents for case planning for change, the other provides casework staff with practical tips. This document should be read together with the [Permanency Case Management Policy](#) and [Aboriginal Case Management Policy](#).

Please see [Case Planning for Preservation or Restoration - Practice Tips and Foundations of Case Planning in PSP](#) for further information.

A Family Action Plan for Change (FAP) is a case plan created to address the worries and concerns about the safety of a child or young person (child). Different PSP service providers may have different names for these case plans. The principles of case planning apply regardless of what the case plan is called. A FAP (or like) will be created if the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has responded to a risk of significant harm (ROSH) report and

- has ongoing worries about the safety of a child or
- where restoration is being assessed and parents are being supported to address any worries or concerns that prevent the child from returning home.

A FAP helps the parents understand what DCJ and PSP service providers are concerned about, and the goals the parents need to achieve for the child to be safe at home. A FAP (or like) is used while the child is still at home with preservation services, or if a child is in OOHC with a goal of restoration.

A FAP is a specialised case planning tool designed to help caseworkers help families. It is also a tool for families. It helps families express their worries in their own words, document their goals and their achievements against those goals. It allows caseworkers to balance assessing risk and holding hope, while parents take steps to achieve the change they need to keep a child safe. FAPs help everyone be clear about what needs to happen, when and why.

When a child is not in out-of-home care (OOHC) and their case plan goal is preservation you should use a FAP.

When a child is in OOHC and their case plan goal is restoration, you need to use both a FAP (for parent goals) and an OOHC case plan (to plan for the child's needs).

Only develop an OOHC case plan if a child has been removed from their parents...

When developing a case plan or FAP it is essential to involve children, parents, extended family, carers and other important people in their lives. FAPS must be developed with parents so that they own the plan. With Aboriginal families they must be involved through family-led decision making, outlined in the Aboriginal Case Management Policy. If you alone decide what should be in the FAP, parents may not be committed to the plan and the changes that are needed to keep their children safe.

What is a Family Action Plan?

A FAP is a tool used to help parents plan for and measure change so that their child can safely stay at home (preservation) or safely return home (restoration). The plan is created collaboratively between the child, parents and service providers.

A FAP:

- identifies worries, goals and outcomes and sets out what actions, support, monitoring and review will occur
- is based on the outcome of the risk reassessment or restoration assessment tool
- is a realistic assessment of the parent's capacity to change within the period (90 days)
- has the child at the centre of all these conversations.

The FAP uses worry and goal statements to answer key questions:

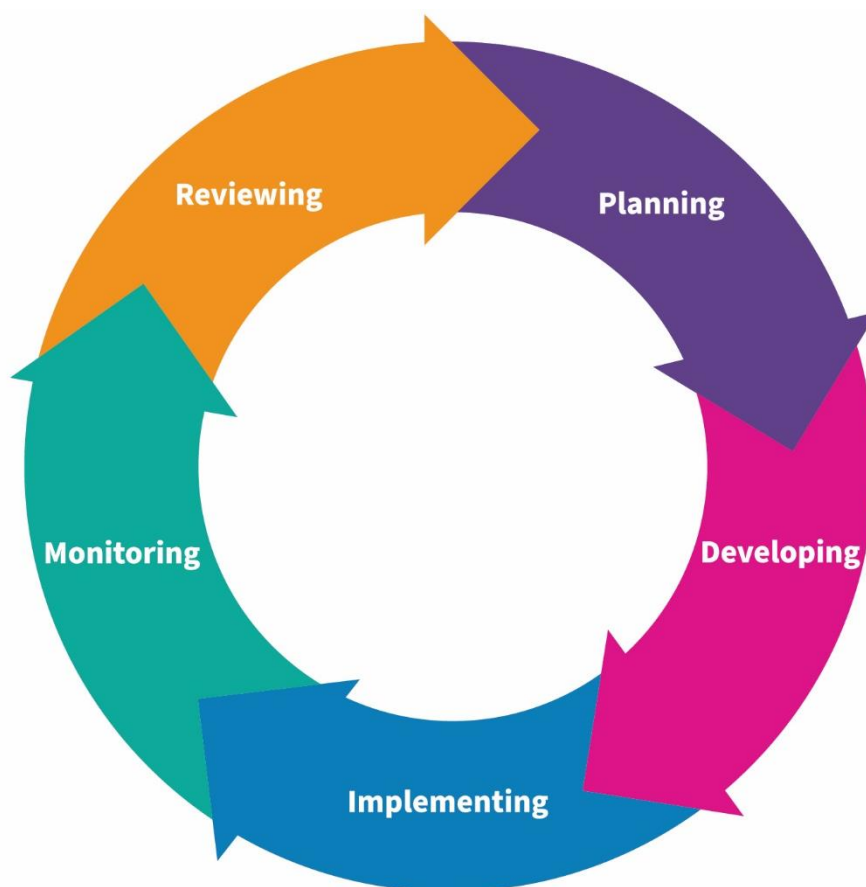
- What needs to change for it to be safer for my children?
- What will be done to make these changes?
- Who will do it and by when?
- What will be different? How will the child experience this change?

A FAP is future-focused and goal oriented. It should use SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time bound) and be written in the family's own words. Aboriginal family voices should be incorporated into the FAP through Aboriginal Family-led Decision Making.

The FAP has five stages: planning, developing, implementation, monitoring and review.



However, because case plans are living documents, it is more helpful to think of the process as a continuous cycle



1: Planning

Getting yourself clear about what needs to change

Before you start a FAP with a family you need to know:

- what the safety and risk concerns for the child are
- what needs to be different for the child to be safe

Without this information, you can be left feeling unsure about what is 'safe enough'.

With Aboriginal families, local community members may be involved.

Consider the following with parents:



Talking with parents and families

To increase safety for children, casework staff must work in partnership with parents and families. To do this you need to have a shared view about the risks or safety concerns. You will only get a real sense of what families see as the issues, strengths and priorities by listening to them and asking questions.

Make sure that the family understand what you are worried about and what needs to change. Having these important conversations with families can be hard for casework staff. If you are not clear, families will not have a fair opportunity to make the necessary changes or may feel that you are shifting the goal posts. This could damage your relationship with the family. Arriving at a shared understanding can take time. Be patient and give the parents time to both understand your worries and express their own.

A FAP should also involve a support network, as you can't create safety with only the people you are worried about.

When working with Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse families, approach these conversations with cultural understanding and sensitivity. Consult with others and offer the family a culturally appropriate support person. For Aboriginal families this can be formal or informal through Aboriginal family-led decision-making or Aboriginal community-controlled mechanisms (see the Aboriginal Case Management Policy).

If you and the family both understand what needs to change, it will be easier to plan for how that change can be achieved.

Casework staff must not create goal statements based on what they think parents should do to create a safer home for their child. Casework staff must work with parents in creating goals. Parent input is imperative in the goal making for them to see what needs to be changed, what they would like to change and for change to develop and become successful.

Participation of children in case planning

Children tell you through their own words or actions about their experiences. They can tell you what needs to change and whether there has been enough change to keep them safe. Spend time with children to understand what is important to them and what their home life is like.

Kids should be asked about stuff that's got to do with them... they can tell you stuff you'd never think of – 'cos you're not a kid.' – 6-year-old girl in OOHC

2: Implementing the Family Action Plan for Change

Help families own their plan

Once what needs to change is agreed, you need to work with the family to set goals and plan the steps to achieve these goals. With Aboriginal families use Aboriginal family-led decision-making.

Families need to genuinely participate in the development of the family goals and case plan tasks. This helps them take ownership of their progress towards those goals.

When developing a FAP speak and write in ways the family understands. This will help them know what's expected and take ownership of their change.

Using family networks

Most children and parents have family and other important people who care about them. Many children will be from communities which have numerous people you could call upon for support. These people should be involved in supporting change and keeping a child safe.

Talk with parents and children about who is in their network. Think about building connections through family finding. Could they participate in developing and supporting the FAP? Consider using structured Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) services in decision making. Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is DCJ's preferred ADR format, but the family you work with may have a different preference. Family Group Conferencing must be offered to a family before a child is taken into care. (Families can choose to decline an offer of an FGC.)

If the family has a strong relationship with another service, get them involved to help sustain change.

3: Monitoring the Family Action Plan for Change

Keep developing your relationship with the parents and the children so you can understand whether the plan is being followed and is meeting their needs.

Making a change is one thing. Being able to sustain it can be much more difficult. Many parents have a lot of different challenges in their life which can make keeping on track hard. A parent may need support for a long time to maintain the progress they've made.

A good FAP will build on family strengths and take small steps towards a larger sustainable change. You can help build on those small steps by monitoring, reviewing and reassessing progress and risk.

Give realistic and positive feedback to parents and make sure they are clear about decisions regarding safety and permanency for their child.

Identify and acknowledge meaningful improvements in a family's life. Doing this will reinforce the positive steps that parents have taken to keep their children safe.

4: Reviewing the Family Action Plan for Change

Regularly review the plan with the family to:

- ensure that everyone is on the same page and working towards the same goals
- let families keep a track of their progress
- celebrate achievements
- identify and address concerns
- refine the goals without making parents feel that the goal posts have been shifted.

A FAP is to be reviewed at least every 90 days. This is to be done alongside the risk reassessment conducted by the local DCJ caseworker.

Please see [*Foundations of Case Planning in PSP*](#) and [*Case Planning for Preservation and Restoration – Practice Tips*](#) for further information.

Permanency goal reviews

Permanency goal reviews allow you to discuss the child's situation with DCJ staff, whether a family needs more support and what more you might be able to do to help. Permanency goal reviews are an essential part of the PSP and usually occur with Permanency Coordinators.

For restoration, permanency goal reviews can also help you work out if this is still the best option for a child and can realistically be achieved by the family.

(Note: Permanency goal reviews were previously called 'case plan goal reviews.')

You might be concerned that a child's case plan goal is not appropriate and needs to be changed. For example:

- If the goal is preservation, you may be worried that the child is not safe living with their family.
- If the goal is restoration, you may think it is unrealistic to expect the family to make and sustain the necessary changes.

DCJ is always responsible for approving changes to a case plan goal (and bringing a child into care). For restoration you will need to talk to your Permanency Coordinator. In preservation, a change to the case plan goal will usually occur after a safety assessment with an outcome of 'not safe'. A safety assessment would be conducted following a report to the Child Protection Helpline. Remember if you feel a child you are working with is at risk of significant harm, you are required to make a report to the Helpline. Your Permanency Coordinator needs to be kept updated about decisions that you and the DCJ caseworker make.

Working with Aboriginal children and families

The participation of Aboriginal families, extended families, communities and representative organisations is important to making informed decisions in the best interests of Aboriginal children. Caseworkers must work proactively with Aboriginal families and their community when delivering preservation or restoration services.

Aboriginal family-led decision making

When developing a Family Action Plan with Aboriginal families, caseworkers should offer Aboriginal family-led decision making (processes to assist families set their own goals, priorities and plans for change. Some features of Aboriginal family-led decision making includes:

- An Aboriginal community facilitator
- Families are the key decision-making partners
- Families are given private family time to develop their own plans
- The child protection concerns are clearly communicated to the family before they meet
- Families are given the opportunity and support to establish their plans, without non-family members being present.
- Aboriginal family-led decision making is not a one-off process. Meetings occur regularly to review the family plans

Aboriginal family-led decision making should be used when developing, reviewing and updating the Family Action Plan. Aboriginal family-led decision-making options are voluntary for families. Make sure that families understand that this is a voluntary process, and that they don't have to use it when developing the FAP if they don't want to.

Aboriginal Consultation

Caseworkers should consider having an Aboriginal Consultation prior to developing the FAP. Discuss the options for consultation with your Permanency Coordinator.