

Foundations of Case Planning

In the Permanency Support Program

Case planning is the process used in the Permanency Support Program (PSP) to give children and young people (child) safety, stability, permanency, connection and wellbeing. A case plan guides how case workers and other people support children and their families. It is a living document which is reviewed and updated to reflect the changing needs of the child and their family. Under the PSP there are different types of case plans depending on the child's permanency goal.

Case planning is a cornerstone of keeping kids safe

Before starting the case planning process, you need to be clear about the child's permanency goal.

Case Planning and Permanency Case Plan Goals

Every child receiving services through the PSP will have a permanency case plan goal. The child's permanency goal will determine what type of case plan(s) casework staff need to use. A child who is not in out-of-home care (OOHC), but whose family is working with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) or a preservation service to increase safety and wellbeing will have a permanency goal of **preservation**.

Every child in foster care and under the legal care of the Minister will have one of four permanency goals:

- Restoration
- Guardianship
- Adoption
- long-term care.

Permanent Placement Principles

The [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#) (the Care Act) clearly defines that there are preferred options for where a child lives (placement), if they need to come into care.

Restoration is the preferred permanency option for a child entering care.

The preferred order for the permanent placement of a child in OOHC is:

1. restoration
2. guardianship
3. open adoption (for a child that is not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)
4. parental responsibility to the Minister (long term care)
5. open adoption (for a child that is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander).

Permanency Hierarchy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children



Permanency Hierarchy for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children



A child can only have one permanency goal at a time. The permanency goal directs the work done with the child and family and informs the case plan(s). The case plan that you develop will depend on the child's permanency goal.

Different Types of Case Plans in PSP

Family Action Plan for Change (or similar)

If DCJ has ongoing worries about a child's safety, a Family Action Plan for Change (FAP) will be developed to support families to make meaningful change. A FAP is needed if a family is working directly with DCJ or a family preservation service (when the child's permanency goal is preservation).

A FAP is also required when a child enters care, but the aim is to have them safely returned to their parents care (when the permanency goal is restoration). A FAP is not used with families if the child has final orders with a permanency goal of guardianship, adoption or long-term care.

Please also see: [Case Planning in Preservation and Restoration](#) and [Case Planning for Preservation and Restoration - Practice Tips](#).

OOHC case plan

An OOHC case plan is a plan for how the child's needs will be met. Every child in OOHC needs an individual OOHC case plan, regardless of their permanency goal. This plan will be reviewed regularly until the child leaves care either via a permanent home (restoration, guardianship or adoption) or when they turn 18.

If a child in OOHC has a permanency goal of restoration they will have an individual OOHC case plan and a FAP.

Please also see: [Case Planning in Out-of-Home Care](#) and [Case Planning for Out-of-Home Care – Practice Tips](#).

	Family Action Plan (FAP)	Case Plan (OOHC)
Who does the plan set goals for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the parent/s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the child
When is this plan required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all families receiving preservation services When a child is in OOHC and has a case plan goal of restoration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For every child in OOHC (permanency goal of restoration, guardianship, open adoption of long-term care)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be developed within 30 days of the child entering statutory OOHC (within 30 days after removal)
How frequently is the plan reviewed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> every 3 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 2 months of the date of the interim order within 2 months if child is under 2, or 4 months if child is over 2, of the date of the final order every 12 months following a final order being made after the death of a parent or carer when there is a significant change including an unplanned placement change
Who is involved in the creation of the plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> child parents the family and parents support network PSP service provider other support services community (where appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> child parents and family carers PSP service provider the child's network (i.e. education, health) the family's network
Who is primarily responsible for the creation of the plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the PSP service provider funded to deliver the preservation or restoration services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSP service provider

Changing a case plan goal

If caseworkers believe that the child's permanency goal is not the most appropriate and needs to be changed, they must consult with their DCJ Permanency Coordinator. DCJ will decide whether to approve the change to the child's permanency goal. In some instances, a meeting (group supervision) may be organised between DCJ and the service provider to discuss the child's goal.

A child's case plan goal can be changed from parental responsibility to guardianship or adoption without the approval of the Children's Court, but it does need the approval of DCJ. If the new case plan goal is approved, a PSP service provider can begin work to achieve guardianship or adoption. A further application to the Court does not need to be made until assessments (for guardianship or adoption) have been completed.

DCJ can approve a change in case plan goal to restoration, but where the Court has earlier found that it wasn't realistic for a child to return to live with their parents, neither DCJ or a PSP service provider can take steps to implement that plan, until an Application has been made to the Court (called a section 90 application). Once a section 90 Application has been made the Court will then decide if it approves of the plan to pursue restoration. Casework towards restoration can only occur once the Court has approved a restoration plan.

For more information see [Restoration Legal Process from Long-Term Care \(PRM-18\)](#).

If PSP service providers have concerns about achieving the child's permanency case plan goal within the designated timeframe, they must discuss their concerns with a DCJ Permanency Coordinator as early as possible.

Permanency Goal Reviews (previously case plan goal reviews)

PSP service providers are required to regularly review progress towards the child's permanency goal together with DCJ. Permanency goal reviews are separate to a case plan review. But the child's OOHC Case Plan and/or FAP is critical in reviewing the progress towards permanency. A permanency goal review is usually held between the PSP service provider and the DCJ Permanency Coordinator. The timeframes for a permanency goal review depend on the child's permanency goal.

For more information see [Who are Permanency Coordinators?](#)

Difference Between a Care Plan and a Case Plan

The case plan is different to the care plan. The case plan is a living document that is regularly reviewed. A case plan is developed by the PSP service provider who has primary case responsibility and it gives effect to the permanency plan for the child. The case plan does not need to be given to the Children's Court.

The care plan is a document that must be prepared by DCJ and approved by the Court before the Children's Court can make a final order for a child. The care plan tells the Children's Court how the child's needs and interests will be met in the future including what the long-term permanency plan is for the child. It includes details about the child's prior experience, where the child lives, what services they will receive and what family time is expected to look like between them and their family.

The care plan is developed collaboratively by DCJ and the agency with primary case responsibility for a child and in consultation with the parties to the proceedings. DCJ should provide a copy of the care plan to the agency once it has been approved by the court. [Section 78](#) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* details the requirements of care plans.

The Court cannot make Final Orders unless they have approved the permanency plan in the care plan. Where a care plan is proposing that a child return to live with their parent, the care plan will also set out the things that the parent needs to do for the restoration to occur.



Care Plan

- One-off plan
- Developed by DCJ
- Collaboration from PSP service provider
- Approved by the Court
- Details the Permanency goal for a child and how this will meet their long term needs



OOHC Case Plan

- Live document, reviewed annually
- Developed by PSP service provider
- Collaboration from DCJ
- Approved internally by PSP service providers and uploaded to ChildStory
- Sets goals to enact the Permanency goal and the holistic wellbeing of child

Other Specialised Plans which are Not Case Plans

Restoration plans and **adoption plans** are one-off plans developed for and lodged with the court during legal proceeding.

These plans detail to the court how the requested permanency goal will meet the child's needs into the future. Each plan is specific to proceedings:

- Restoration plans are required when a child's permanency goal is restoration and the plan forms part of the Care Plan. Restoration plans tell the court what changes are expected of parents to keep children safe and the services that will support them make the necessary changes. [Section 84-85](#) of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 details the requirements of restoration plans.
- Adoption plans are required during adoption applications. The requirements of an adoption plan are contained in sections 46-51 of the [Adoption Act 2000](#).