

**Department of Human Resources
Social Services Administration
311 W. Saratoga St.
Baltimore, MD 21201**

DATE: April 15, 2012

POLICY DIRECTIVE: SSA# 12-32
(Supercedes Policy SSA #07-07)

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors, Services

FROM: Carnitra D. White 
Executive Director
Social Services Administration

RE: Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

PROGRAMS
AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Out-of-Home Placement

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments

REQUIRED ACTION: Implement Policy and Procedures

ACTION DUE: May 1, 2012

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to provide guidelines to the local departments of social services on updated procedures for youth with the permanency plan of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). This policy provides the requirements for selecting APPLA as a permanency plan and services to provide for youth with the permanency plan of APPLA.

At the time of establishing the plan of APPLA and at each case reconsideration, the 12 questions shown on pages 3 and 4 of this policy shall be answered to justify this permanency plan. This can be found in MD Chessie case plan 3 APPLA and shall be used for every child with a permanency plan of APPLA.

This policy directive supercedes Policy Directive SSA# 07-07.

Background

In 1997, the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) changed the permanency planning hierarchy. ASFA excluded Independent Living as a permanency plan and defined it as services provided to youth. The law specifically stated that long term foster care and permanent foster care were not permanency goals because they did not provide permanent placements with legal status outside the child welfare system. ASFA adopted APPLA as a permanency plan.

In 2005, Maryland House Bill 771 adjusted the state permanency goals to align with the federal standards. The permanency plan hierarchy in Maryland is as follows:

1. Reunification with parent or guardian
2. Placement with a relative for adoption or guardianship
3. Adoption by a non-relative
4. Another permanent planned living arrangement

Definition

Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is a permanency plan option for youth in out-of-home placement which is to be used only when all other options have been ruled out. APPLA requires an individual plan for permanency that aims for the most secure and stable arrangement possible, considers not just the child's immediate needs but future needs and promotes the development of supportive community relationships. The establishment of APPLA as a permanency plan for a youth requires the caseworker to document reasonable efforts made to finalize a preferred permanency plan and must clearly articulate the plan to maximize stability, meet future needs, and encourage the development of enduring support relationships in the community. The permanency plan of APPLA is not achieved until the youth exits care.

APPLA as a permanency plan

APPLA is the least preferred choice among the permanency plan hierarchy and should be used only when all other plans have been completely exhausted. APPLA should not be used if any other plan can be explored or if the local department has not made full attempts to engage all parents and relatives and explored adoption. Prior to adopting a plan of APPLA, the caseworker and supervisor shall review the case record to ensure the following have been completed in order to rule out other permanency plans:

- LDSS has located both parents
- LDSS has offered the necessary services to the parents
- Service agreements have been offered and unsuccessfully completed by parents
- Use a genogram or echomap to ensure that all relatives have been explored for the youth
- Contacted and engaged all relatives on both sides of the family
- Have explored potential family friends
- LDSS has done a child-specific recruitment for the youth including interjurisdictional matching and AdoptUSkids
- Have ruled out adoption after educating the child or foster family on adoption
- Discuss the proposed change in the permanency plan with parents and relatives

APPLA may be an appropriate plan for youth who:

- Are over the age of 18
- Do not wish to be adopted and are under the LDSS guardianship
- Do not have a parent or relative willing or able to care for the youth
- Have a severe medical, physical, or emotional disability and are unable to function in a family setting

APPLA shall not be used as a permanency plan for any youth under the age of 13.

APPLA shall not be used as the secondary plan as part of the concurrent permanency plan.

Required Documentation:

The federal requirement for APPLA dictates that the following 12 questions shall be answered in writing and be retained in the case record:

1. Describe the timely assessment conducted and relevant services provided when the child first entered out-of-home?
2. What other permanency options were considered and why were they ruled out?
3. What efforts were made to identify and recruit a permanency placement for the child?
4. Was the child asked about his/her preferences for permanency placement?
5. What is the compelling reason why a more preferred permanency plan was not selected?

6. Why is this proposed plan a valid “Permanent Living Arrangement”?
7. Is there a need to recommend that certain support structures be put in place?
8. Does the child have any type of special needs and what services are being provided?
9. What efforts were made to assess the safety, quality, and stability of this proposed APPLA?
10. Are there support systems available to assist the youth in the transition to self-sufficiency?
11. Describe the adults and/or peers that provide meaningful support? (include name, relationship and nature of support)
12. What supportive services will be required after out-of-home services are terminated? (i.e. supervised living arrangement, housing, medical, etc.)

Reviews:

The plan of APPLA shall be reviewed by the caseworker and supervisor during supervision at the time of the completion of court report or case reconsideration. The supervisor shall ensure that the 12 APPLA questions are answered accurately and that the local department is ensuring the individual needs of the child including educational plan, emotional stability, physical placement, and socialization needs are being met. At anytime, if a more desirable permanency plan can be adopted, the local department shall request a change in the permanency plan.

Citizen Review Board

The Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) reviews cases of youth in out-of-home placements. The CRBC reviews cases of youth with a permanency plan of reunification over 12 months, adoption or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). CRBC reviews APPLA cases at the following periods:

- Youth with newly-established primary permanency plans of APPLA, to ensure that the LDSS made adequate and appropriate efforts to assess if a plan of APPLA was the only recourse for the child. (reviewed three months after the plan has been changed).
- Youth age 17 or 20 years old with existing or new cases to assess services provided to prepare the youth to transition to adulthood (reviewed three to five months after the youth’s birthday).
- Youth 16 and younger who have an established primary permanency plan of APPLA. The primary function of the review is to assess appropriateness of the plan and review documentation of the Federal APPLA requirements. Written recommendations listing identified barriers will be forwarded to the LDSS and the Juvenile Courts.

CRBC will review the case to determine whether:

- Appropriate efforts were being made to find alternative permanency placement options for a child before the plan was changed to APPLA;
- The youth is receiving the services necessary to prepare the youth to live independently;
- The LDSS is working with the youth to identify a permanent connection for the youth;
- APPLA is viewed as a “catch-all” without exploring other permanency options; and,

- The youth is made part of the service and case planning processes.

Family Finding:

Maryland has implemented the Family Finding Initiative to assist with establishing supportive connections for youth. Youth with a permanency plan of APPLA languish in foster care because they have lost connections to family members who may be willing to step in and provide assistance, a permanent placement, or at least a source of emotional support. The caseworker shall initiate assistance of the Family Finder prior to changing a permanency plan to APPLA. The Family Finder will assist the caseworker in locating relatives that can be explored or re-explored as a possible replacement resource for the youth. If a relative was unable to care for the youth when the youth entered care, the relative shall be re-explored prior to changing the plan to APPLA. On many occasions situations change which may now allow the relative to be a resource even though the relative could not in the past.

The Family Finders main responsibility is to help reconnect children with safe, healthy families and speed their recovery from emotional trauma. Through technology and other resources, the family finder is able to find biological family members for children in the system. Once family members are identified, the family finder works to reestablish relationships and explore ways to find a permanent family placement for the child. When a youth has a permanent adult connection the youth experiences less rejection, trauma, and emotional instability because of failed placements.

In 2011, House Bill 255 amended the current law and allows the LDSS to contact a sibling who has been adopted and is 21 or over, on behalf of a younger sibling in foster care in order to discuss the possibility of placement with the sibling or a family connection. The law redefines search, contact and reunion services to include contacting the sibling of a minor in out-of-home placement for the purposes of developing a placement resource or facilitating a family connection. The LDSS must request permission from SSA to contact the adult adoptee. The LDSS Family Finder shall make a request to SSA for permission for the LDSS confidential intermediary to contact the adult adoptee.