

*The Florida
Department of Children and Families
Children's Legal Services*

**TRANSITIONS
QPI CONFERENCE 2016**

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The Key to a Successful Transition is Planning Ahead



What the lawyers can do:

- ✓ Evaluate the situation before transition begins
 - ✓ Understanding when it is time to start transitioning
 - ✓ Ensuring a smooth transition
 - ✓ Being trauma informed
 - ✓ Maintain Ongoing Efforts
- "Advocating for Dependent Children"***

Evaluating the Situation



- ❑ Understand the relationship between the out-of-home caregiver and the parents (co-parenting)
- ❑ Listen and assess information from all sources
- ❑ Ask critical questions
- ❑ Requesting appropriate legal action
- ❑ Assess possible issues/objections
- ❑ Work with opposing counsel to iron out possible issues/objections.
- ❑ Zealous advocacy

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WHEN IS IT TIME TO START TRANSITIONING...?



Resolution of the 5 Safety Analysis Questions Monitored:

1. The parent/legal guardians are willing for an in-home safety plan to be developed and implemented and have demonstrated that they will cooperate with all identified safety service providers.
2. The home environment is calm and consistent enough for an in-home safety plan to be implemented and for safety service providers to be in the home safely.
3. Safety services are available at a sufficient level and to the degree necessary in order to manage the way in which impending danger is manifested in the home.
4. An in-home safety plan and the use of in-home safety services can sufficiently manage impending danger without the results of scheduled professional evaluations.
5. The parent/legal guardians have a physical location in which to implement and in-home safety plan.

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Considerations for a Smooth Transition



- **Has there been a gradual transition plan put in place that involves all key people? (parents, out-of-home caregivers, GAL, child's attorney, child, child's therapist, and parent's appropriate service providers)**
- **What are the child's and child's therapist thoughts about the transition?**
- **Is the child 5 years old or younger or is the child disabled?**
- **Has the child successfully spent extended periods of time, including unsupervised overnight and weekend visits with the parents or prospective caregivers?**
- **Is the input of the present out of home caregivers being considered? Note: Best Practice is for CLS to ensure that the out-of-home caregiver has given input and is involved.**
- **Is there a plan for the child to say goodbye to the out-of-home caregivers and other children and pets in the present home? Does the child have all their belongings?**
- **Where will the change of physical custody take place? Who will transport the child to the new home?**
- **Are there any upcoming events in the home that would suggest waiting for a day or two for placement change of the child?**
- **What is the educational plan for the child? If the child has to transfer schools, can the placement change wait until school is out?**
- **Are there any medical treatments, procedures or appointments for the child that requires education of or follow-up by the new caregiver?**
- **Are services transitioning with the child?**
- **Is there a plan for continued contact with the out-of-home caregivers after the placement change?**

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Understanding Trauma



There is trauma in any transition!

Removal – separation from birth family

Abuse/neglect and brain development

Going home is also traumatic

They change schools

How do we reduce the trauma?

Sufficient time for transition

Awareness of events in child's life

Best scenario is a written transition plan

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Efforts of Children's Legal Services



- ❑ **New Attorney Training– discussing trauma informed care and importance of transitions**
- ❑ **Ensuring out-of-home caregiver is involved in transition planning**
- ❑ **Objecting to modification of placements without transition plan**
- ❑ **Educating the court on importance of transition planning**
- ❑ **Performance Review requirements**
- ❑ **Encourage out-of-home caregiver involvement**

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We Can't Do it Without YOU!



Out-of Home Caregivers are Encouraged to:

- Participate at permanency staffings.
- Attend court hearings.
- Reach out to the CLS lawyer if you have concerns about the legal action in your case.

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