

SOME QUESTIONS TO GUIDE PERMANENCY HEARINGS

What follows are examples of areas to be developed and questions to be answered during a permanency hearing:

What is the child's permanency goal?

- If the goal is return home:
 - ◆ What steps have you taken to ensure the child's safe return to the family?
 - ◆ How have the conditions leading to the removal of the child been corrected?
 - ◆ Has the child had overnight visits? Weekend visits? How did they go? How do you know?
 - ◆ What services will be provided when the child returns home?
 - ◆ When will the child be returning home?
 - ◆ How does the child feel about returning home?
 - ◆ Have you attempted to help the child address any concerns?
 - ◆ If the child has siblings, will the siblings be going home at the same time? Why or why not?

- If the goal is adoption:
 - ◆ Did you consider return home?
 - ◆ Why was it rejected?
 - ◆ Who will be adopting the child?
 - ◆ Have you completed the home study?
 - ◆ Were kin considered as adoptive resources for the child?
 - ◆ If you do not have an adoptive family, what efforts have you made, so far, to find one? What else do you plan to do? When will you do it?
 - ◆ When will the termination of parental rights petition be filed? (If a judge does not think it is soon enough, the judge should order it be done more quickly.)
 - ◆ How does the child feel about the adoption?
 - ◆ What counseling or other services have been provided to help the child with the transition into an adoptive family?
 - ◆ If the child has siblings, will this family adopt the siblings as well?
 - ◆ If not, will the child have access to his or her siblings after the adoption?

- If the goal is legal guardianship:
 - ◆ Who is the identified guardian?
 - ◆ What is the relationship between the guardian and the child?
 - ◆ Is the guardian committed to caring for the child on a permanent basis?
 - ◆ Did you consider return home and adoption?
 - ◆ Why were they rejected? Why are they not in the child's best interests?
 - ◆ Have you completed a home study?
 - ◆ How are you ensuring the child's safety in this home?
 - ◆ Has the child moved into the home yet?
 - ◆ If not, when will the child be moving in?
 - ◆ Has the child been visiting in the home?
 - ◆ How does the child feel about the arrangement?
 - ◆ If the child has siblings, will they be living in this home as well?
 - ◆ If not, is a visitation plan established?
 - ◆ If age appropriate, have you considered providing independent living services to the child?

- If the goal is permanent placement with a fit and willing relative:
 - ◆ Who are the relatives and does the child have an attachment to them?
 - ◆ Has a home study been done of their home?
 - ◆ What efforts are being made to ensure the child's safety in the home?
 - ◆ How long has the child been in foster care before the relative came forward?
 - ◆ Has the agency discussed more permanent options with the relatives?
 - ◆ Are there other people who are willing to offer the child a more permanent option?
 - ◆ Do the relatives understand that they are making a long term commitment to the child?
 - ◆ How old is the child?
 - ◆ How does the child feel about placement with the relatives?
 - ◆ Has the child moved into the home yet?
 - ◆ If not, when will the child be moving in?
 - ◆ Has the child been visiting in the home?

- If the goal is another planned permanent living arrangement:
 - ◆ What are the compelling reasons that return home, adoption and legal guardianship are not in the child's best interests?
 - ◆ What is the planned permanent living arrangement?
 - ◆ If the child is in a group home or institutional setting, what are the reasons the child can not be placed in a family setting?
 - ◆ When will you review the plan again to decide if it is still appropriate?
 - ◆ Is there a visitation plan for the child and family?
 - ◆ What does the child say about this arrangement?
 - ◆ If age appropriate, what independent living services are being offered to the child?

- If the request is extension of foster care:
 - ◆ What are the compelling reasons showing that the biological parents and child have a strong and positive relationship, parents have made substantial progress toward the child's return home, and return home is likely within six (three) months?
 - ◆ Why is it too early to set a specific date for return home?
 - ◆ What is the reunification plan, in detail?
 - ◆ Why is extension in the child's best interests?