

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE TIME TO PERMANENCY

Indiana Supreme Court | Indiana Office of Court Services | Children and Family Division | Court Improvement Program

Indiana trial courts exercising jurisdiction over Child in Need of Services (CHINS) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) cases share a common goal of helping achieve permanency for children and family quickly and safely.

In FFY 2025, 98% of children exiting foster care achieve legal permanency by reunification, adoption, guardianship, or relative placement. In FFY 2025, the median time to permanency was 470 days. The median time to permanency for cases closing in reunification was 359 days; guardianship was 511 days; relative placement 462 days; and adoption 863 days.

There can be many reasons for delays in permanency regardless of what the permanency plan is. The following 5 strategies have been identified by the Child Welfare Improvement Committee (CWIC) to assist in reducing time to permanency.

Early Permanency Planning

- Assignment of PDS early
- Engage parents and youth
- Transparency about timelines and possible alternative permanency options
- Community resources and support
- Identify relative/kinship early
- Concurrent planning

Quality Hearings

- Set first review and permanency dates at initial hearing
- Distinguish permanency from review hearing
- Have age-appropriate youth attend court
- Review statute, standard of review, and prep the hearing

Data Analysis

- Look at court data and trends
- Look at CIP data dashboard
- Look at local and national data
- Explore how data can help guide local practice
- Share individual agency data with stakeholders

Working with Local Partners and Stakeholders

Collaboration

- Assemble a multidisciplinary team of local DCS, GAL/CASA, PD, and stakeholders
- Share data across agencies
- Explore community options to sustain permanency
- Explore new ideas, models, pilots, and strategies

Innovation

- Take recommendations from multidisciplinary team, data analysis, and current trends and formulate plan to implement new programs/ideas/solutions
- Apply for grant funding through CIP to assist with implementation or project creation
- Use tools already in place such as legal CFTMs or permanency facilitations