

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP) *A Home for Every Child (AH4EC)*

Introduction: Alabama's Commitment to A Home for Every Child (AH4EC) Initiative

Alabama is participating in the *A Home for Every Child (AH4EC)* initiative as outlined in Technical Bulletin #14. This effort provides an opportunity to align and strengthen the State's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan within a focused framework targeting the system drivers that most directly influence permanency outcomes, placement disruption, and overall system performance.

This Program Improvement Plan is informed by Alabama's statewide assessment conducted in alignment with 42 U.S.C. § 1320a-2a(b) and 45 C.F.R. §§ 1355.32–1355.34. The statewide assessment incorporated federal statewide data indicators, structured case reviews conducted through the State's Quality Assurance (QA) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system aligned with the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI), and stakeholder input consistent with federal expectations.

Alabama's statewide assessment identified key performance challenges, most notably delays in achieving timely permanency for children who remain in care beyond 12 months and placement disruption and instability associated with placement capacity, resource availability, and alignment of placements with child-specific needs. These challenges are supported by both statewide data indicators and QA/CQI case review findings, which reflect delays in permanency decision-making, inconsistency in case progression, and misalignment between child needs and available placement resources.

These findings indicate that performance challenges are not isolated to individual cases or discrete practice areas, but are driven by interconnected system-level factors that influence length of stay, placement disruption and stability, and timely permanency outcomes.

Goals

Alabama's Program Improvement Plan is organized around two primary goals that directly address the findings of the statewide assessment and align with federal permanency and placement stability outcomes.

Goal A: Timely Permanency for Children in Care Beyond 12 Months

Alabama will improve permanency outcomes for children who remain in foster care beyond 12 months by strengthening case progression, reducing delays in permanency decision-making, and ensuring timely achievement of reunification, guardianship, or adoption.

This goal directly addresses:

- Delays in permanency for children with extended lengths of stay
- Barriers to timely reunification, guardianship, and adoption
- System factors affecting case progression, decision-making, and legal timelines

Goal B: Placement Stability and Reduction of Placement Disruption

Alabama will reduce placement disruption and improve placement stability by increasing and aligning family-based placement capacity, strengthening placement matching, and expanding supports to caregivers and children.

This goal directly addresses:

- Placement disruption and instability
- Gaps in placement availability and capacity
- Misalignment between child needs and available placement resources
- Service and support gaps impacting placement sustainability

System Context

As of April 1, 2026, Alabama has 5,963 children in out-of-home care and 3,186 available family-based foster and kinship homes, resulting in approximately 0.53 homes per child (1 home for every 1.87 children).

This imbalance directly contributes to placement disruption, limits placement stability, and delays timely permanency outcomes, particularly for children with extended lengths of stay. These system conditions reinforce the need for targeted strategies that address both placement capacity and the effectiveness of case progression toward permanency.

Approach

Alabama's Program Improvement Plan builds upon findings from the statewide assessment, QA/CQI case reviews, and stakeholder input. The strategies outlined in this plan are designed to directly address identified areas not in substantial conformity and the system-level factors driving performance challenges.

Specifically, Alabama's approach is designed to:

- **Improve timely permanency outcomes for children with extended lengths of stay**
- **Reduce placement disruption and strengthen placement stability**
- **Improve placement matching and alignment with child-specific needs**
- **Increase and stabilize family-based placement capacity**
- **Strengthen consistency in case practice, service delivery, and decision-making**
- **Ensure accountability through structured monitoring, QA/CQI integration, and corrective action processes**

Each strategy includes clearly defined implementation actions, lead measures (practice and process indicators), and outcome measures aligned with federal statewide data indicators. Monitoring and accountability structures are designed to ensure that improvements in practice translate into measurable changes in permanency outcomes, placement stability, and overall system performance.

By aligning targeted implementation strategies with structured monitoring and accountability, Alabama will ensure that improvement efforts result in measurable progress toward achieving timely permanency and reducing placement disruption for children and families served.

Strategy 1: Strengthening Decision-Making and Prevention to Support Entry Reduction and Case Practice
Supports Goal A (Indirect Impact)

Strategy	Implementation / Ongoing Support	Monitoring / How We Will Know	Impact to Goal A	Impact to Goal B
Strengthening Decision-Making and Prevention to Support Entry Reduction and Case Practice	a. Implementation of structured safety decision-making protocols with required supervisory approval at key decision points b. Required documentation and supervisory validation of prevention efforts prior to removal c. Standardized case handoff protocols across intake, investigation, and ongoing services d. Workload alignment to ensure decision-making capacity e. Formalized coordination with courts and community partners f. QA/CQI-driven corrective action when inconsistent practice is identified	Lead Measures: 1. Monthly entries into foster care 2. % of cases with documented prevention efforts 3. Re-entry within 12 months Outcome Measures: • Re-entry into foster care (federal) • Permanency within 12 months (federal) Baseline: Appendix 1 statewide data indicators Validation: QA/CQI review ratings + trend analysis	☒	☐

Strategy 2: Improving Permanency Outcomes Through Timely Case Progression and Decision-Making
Supports Goal A (Direct Impact)

Strategy	Implementation / Ongoing Support	Monitoring / How We Will Know	Impact to Goal A	Impact to Goal B
Improving Permanency Outcomes Through Timely Case Progression and Decision-Making	a. Implementation of permanency tracking dashboards b. Supervisory oversight tied to permanency benchmarks c. Targeted case staffing and escalation for delayed permanency cases d. Formal judicial coordination to support permanency timelines e. QA/CQI-informed corrective actions for delayed case progression	Lead Measures: 1. Permanency within 12 months (cohort) 2. Median time to permanency 3. % of children 15+ months with TPR or compelling reason Outcome Measures: • Permanency (12 months) • Permanency (12–23 months) • Permanency (24+ months) • Length of stay Baseline: 37.2% (12–23), 34.8% (24+)	☒	☐

**Strategy 3: Strengthening Placement Stability and Matching Through Supports and Early Intervention
Supports Goal A and Goal B (Direct Impact)**

Strategy	Implementation / Ongoing Support	Monitoring / How We Will Know	Impact to Goal A	Impact to Goal B
Strengthening Placement Stability and Matching Through Supports and Early Intervention	a. ISPs within 72 hours of placement b. Standardized placement matching protocols based on child-specific needs c. Targeted stabilization supports for high-risk placements d. Early identification and engagement of kinship placements e. QA/CQI-driven identification and correction of placement disruption patterns f. Monthly reports identifying children by County who have a placement change within 30 days of placement	Lead Measures: 1. % of ISPs within 72 hours of placement change 2. % of high-risk placements receiving supports 3. % of kinship placements 4. Timeliness of service access	☒	☒
		Outcome Measures: • Placement stability • % of children with multiple placements • % stable at 90 days Baseline: 7.79 moves per 1,000 days Validation: QA/CQI + disruption trend analysis		

Strategy 4: Increasing Family-Based Placement Capacity Through Recruitment, Retention, and Kinship Engagement
Supports Goal B (Direct Impact)

Strategy	Implementation / Ongoing Support	Monitoring / How We Will Know	Impact to Goal A	Impact to Goal B
Increasing Family-Based Placement Capacity Through Recruitment, Retention, and Kinship Engagement	a. Targeted recruitment aligned to child-specific needs and placement disruption trends b. Early kinship identification and engagement protocols c. Standardized and monitored licensing timelines d. Structured foster parent retention supports and service access e. Data-driven alignment of placement resources to demand f. Integration of capacity strategies with placement stability goals	Lead Measures: 1. Number of newly licensed homes ☐ 2. Time to licensure 3. % of kinship placements 4. Foster home retention rate 5. % of placements out of county 6. % of placements out of county in traditional, basic, or kin homes Outcome Measures: • Home-to-child ratio • Placement stability (federal) • % of relative placements Baseline: 1:1.87 ratio Validation: Monthly capacity + QA/CQI findings	☐	☒

**Strategy 5: Enhancing Monitoring and Monthly Review Discipline
Supports Goal A and Goal B (Accountability)**

Strategy	Implementation / Ongoing Support	Monitoring / How We Will Know	Impact to Goal A	Impact to Goal B
Enhancing Monitoring and Monthly Review Discipline	a. Monthly statewide and regional performance reviews b. Standardized dashboards aligned to statewide data indicators c. Required structured review meetings with documented action steps d. Integration of QA/CQI findings into monitoring e. Formal escalation framework (county → region → state leadership) f. Required documentation of corrective actions and follow-up	Lead Measures: 1. Monthly review completion ☒ 2. Trend analysis across indicators 3. Documented corrective actions Outcome Measures: • Permanency (all cohorts) • Placement stability (federal) • Re-entry (federal) Baseline: Current monitoring structure Validation: Documented action + QA verification	☒	