



## **Pennsylvania Permanency Barriers Projects -- Two Approaches to Achieving Timely Permanency**

**Free help tailored to your county's needs. We can help your county's children and families reach safe, stable permanency more quickly.**

Permanency is achieved in many different ways. The ABA Permanency Barriers Projects offers a variety of ways to help counties attain permanency for their foster children. Counties may choose which specific project or projects best fits their individual needs. We will be happy to customize a project for you.

### **Permanency Barriers Project**

Children in foster care need permanency quickly and safely. Parents deserve help so they can care for their children. If a family cannot be reunited, then children must get the most permanent home that meets their needs as soon as possible.

The Permanency Barriers Project has been helping states help children and families achieve permanence for over 20 years. For the last five years the ABA has worked with specific counties in Pennsylvania to help children reach permanency through system change. By working with all the stakeholders in the county's child welfare system, Permanency Project counties have seen results.

Now for the first time the counties may select from two different program options – either the full two year Permanency Barriers Project or a modified version, the Technical Assistance Permanency Project. In addition to the projects, counties are also invited to participate in annual training opportunities.

### **How does the Permanency Barriers Project work?**

An ABA Project attorney visits the counties monthly for two years working with a project county to analyze permanency delays, develop tools, establish protocols, and implement reforms. This work may include trainings for child welfare professionals and mediating conflicts between groups in the system. The ABA Project attorney will help counties get the best outcomes for their children and families. Project attorneys have a total of over 165 years of experience in the child welfare field and we've developed a national perspective about what works well. The Project has helped 17 Pennsylvania counties **reduce the time children spend in foster care by an average of 9 months and has saved about \$8,000,000 in foster care dollars.**

### **Technical Assistance (TA) Permanency Project**

The Technical Assistance Project focuses on single or smaller issues for quicker fixes. Not every county has two years to devote to the Permanency Project. Permanency Project Technical Assistance is targeted, issue-specific, on-site training and TA. Your county may be new to the ABA or you may have already worked with the Permanency Barriers Project, but may want some permanency refresher help. **If your county needs help working on a legal issue such as combining TPR and goal change hearings, you are a perfect fit for the Technical Assistance Permanency Project.**

## **What can the Technical Assistance Permanency Project do to help my county?**

Identify where your county needs help. An ABA Project attorney will help you work toward solutions, draft and help implement new protocols and train your county's stakeholders, including agency staff, attorneys and judges.

## **What are examples of Permanency Project Technical Assistance issues?**

We will work on any type of legal issues that you may need help with. Some areas that we can help with include:

- Kinship policy
- Notifying and engaging relatives
- Concurrent planning implementation
- Education
- Training on specific legal topics
- Protocol drafting
- Testifying in court
- Timely and complete mental health evaluations
- Improved collaboration and communication between the agency and courts
- Missing parents
- Putative fathers
- Reasonable efforts

Individual projects are driven by county needs. You identify where your county needs help. If you don't see it on our list, ask us and we'll tell you if we can help.

## **Annual Attorney Training Day**

Every year we invite all Pennsylvania attorneys working in the child welfare field to a free full day training on a permanency planning topic. Past trainings have included topics such as: Best Practices in Permanency: Ethics, Education and Permanency Planning; Involving Children and Youth in Dependency Court; Making Differences Work; Trial Skills for Child Welfare Attorneys; and Advocating Outside the Courtroom to Help Children and Families Achieve Better Outcomes.

## **County Training Day**

Additionally, every year we get all of our past and current counties together to share ideas and receive training on cutting edge legal issues. Past topics for these days include: Reentry Issues, Substance Abuse Issues, Collaboration and Forms Sharing; Confidentiality and What You Need to Know from the Doctor; Become Your Own Expert: Bonding, Visitation and Permanency; Providing Reasonable Efforts In Difficult Cases; and Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act: Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care.

## **How much will the Permanency Projects cost my county?**

**It's free** – both the **Permanency Barriers Project** and the **Technical Assistance Permanency Project** are offered at no cost to you. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare is working with the ABA to give your county these services for free.

## **How do I get the ABA's Permanency Projects in my county?**

**To get the ABA's Permanency Barriers Projects in your county, call: Anne Marie Lancour**, Director of State Projects at the ABA Center on Children and the Law, 202-662-1756, or email her at: [AnneMarie.Lancour@americanbar.org](mailto:AnneMarie.Lancour@americanbar.org). She will work with you to find a project that will fit your county's needs.