

Topic 3: Reasonable Efforts

Link to [Procedure](#)

Before determining a child to be unsafe and initiating removal of the child from the child's home, you must consider **reasonable efforts to prevent removal**, including:

- ◆ Initiating community services such as public health visitor or visiting nurse services.
- ◆ Initiating homemaker services or family-centered services (dependent on an abuse finding or a court order).
- ◆ Implementing intensive family-centered services (dependent on an abuse finding or a court order).
- ◆ Bringing protective relatives to the child's home while the parents leave the home.
- ◆ Obtaining a court order requiring the person responsible for the abuse to leave the home, when other family members are willing and able to protect the child adequately.
- ◆ Having the nonabusing caretaker move to a safe environment with the child.
- ◆ Placing the child voluntarily with relatives or friends.
- ◆ Placing the child in voluntary foster or shelter care.

Always ensure that the child's health and safety are the paramount concerns in making reasonable efforts to prevent removal, reunify the family, or achieve another permanent placement.

Progress towards achieving the permanency goal in a timely manner must be documented in the case plan. Consider the following key factors in assessing service delivery for **reasonable efforts to achieve the permanency goal**:

- ◆ Relevance of services: Were the right services provided to address the unique needs of the child and family?
- ◆ Adequacy of services: Were enough services provided? What was the duration and intensity?
- ◆ Coordination of services: Was there coordination and communication among the family's providers?
- ◆ Accessibility of services: Were services offered at times and in locations best suited to the family's needs?

- ◆ Diligence of efforts: Did the state agency make affirmative and diligent efforts to offer and provide services?
- ◆ Agency constraints: Were there any constraints on the state agency's service delivery?

Aggravated Circumstances

Situations that qualify as "aggravated circumstances" and may furnish grounds for a judge to waive efforts to reunify the child with the parents include the following:

- ◆ The parent has abandoned the child.
- ◆ The parent has been convicted of:
 - A felony assault that resulted in serious bodily injury to the child or a sibling; or
 - The murder or voluntary manslaughter of the child's sibling; or
 - Aiding or abetting, attempting, conspiring in, or soliciting the commission of the murder or voluntary manslaughter of the child's sibling.
- ◆ The parent's parental rights have been terminated for another child in the same family in Iowa or in another state, and there is clear and convincing evidence that the offer or receipt of services would not be likely to correct the conditions that led to the child's removal.
- ◆ The child meets the definition of a child in need of assistance based on a finding of physical or sexual abuse or neglect as a result of the acts or omissions of one or both parents, and there is clear and convincing evidence that both:
 - The abuse or neglect posed a significant risk to the child's life or constituted imminent danger to the child, and
 - The offer or receipt of services would not correct the condition that led to the child's abuse or neglect within a reasonable period.

Offer evidence to the county attorney to present to the court to show that reasonable efforts have been made or to justify a finding of "aggravated circumstances." Presentation of this evidence in reports and testimony will provide specific information for judges to include in reasonable effort findings in their court orders.