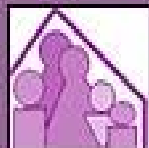
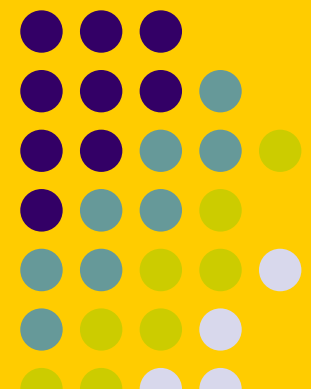


Unpacking the “NO” of Permanency for Older Adolescents

State of Louisiana, OCS
Staff Development &
Appreciation Day



National Resource Center for
Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning

*A Service of the Children's Bureau
at the Hunter College
School of Social Work*



Louisiana Child Welfare
Comprehensive Workforce Project

Who Wouldn't Want a Family?



Who wouldn't want a family?

Who wouldn't want to have a family to spend holidays with, to call when things don't go right, or to call when things are great to celebrate?

Who wouldn't want that?

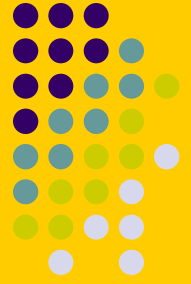
- Former Foster Care Youth

Family Centered Casework and Legal Strategies Which Support Permanency



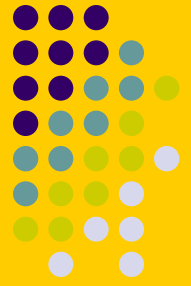
- Targeted and appropriate efforts to ensure safety, achieve permanence, and strengthen family and youth well-being.
- Reasonable efforts to prevent unnecessary placement in out-of-home care when safety can be assured.
- Appropriate, least restrictive out-of-home placements within family, culture and community - with comprehensive family and youth assessments, written case plans, goal-oriented practice and concurrent permanency plans encouraged.
- Reasonable efforts to reunify families and maintain family connections and continuity in young people's relationships when safety can be assured.

Family Centered Casework and Legal Strategies Which Support Permanency



- Filing of termination of the parental rights petition at 15 months out of the last 22 months in placement - when in best interests of the youth and when exceptions do not apply.
- Collaborative case activity - partnerships among birth parents, foster parents, the youth, agency staff, court and legal staff, and community service providers.
- Frequent and high quality parent-child and worker-parent visiting.
- Timely case reviews, permanency hearings and decision-making about where youth will grow up - based on the young person's sense of time.

Essential Elements to this Process



- Family-Centered and Strengths/Needs Based Practice
- Service delivery which is community based
- Cultural competency and respect for diversity
- Open and inclusive practice, with full disclosure to parents and youth
- Non-adversarial approaches to problem solving and service delivery
- Concurrent rather than sequential consideration of all permanency options



Permanency for Youth

They're always talking about this Permanency stuff. You know social workers. . .lawyers . . . always using these big social work terms to talk about simple things. One day one of them finally described what she meant by permanency.

After I listened to her description, which was the first time anyone ever told me what the term meant, I said, "Oh, that's what you mean? Yeah, I want permanency in my life. I don't think I ever had that! When can I get it?"

Foster care youth

The Concept of Permanency for Youth



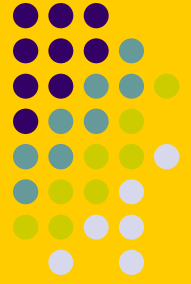
- The concept of permanence, is often not clear-cut for adolescents in foster care; permanency can be ambiguous.
- Adolescence is by definition a time of transformation, growth, and change (physically; intellectually; morally; spiritually; socially, and emotionally)
- Developmentally, adolescents are struggling to identify who they are and as a parallel process they are also developing their own unique worldview.
- The primary developmental tasks are identity formation and establishing independence.
- Within a backdrop of distrust of adults; reluctance to accept advice; and resentment of adult authority.

The Concept of Permanency for Youth



- Attempting to find permanence for an adolescent is often in direct conflict with normative adolescent developmental tasks.
- Developmentally, adolescents are separating from adults and trying to determine their *own* identities, their *own* values, make their *own* decisions, and ultimately create separation from their families.
- As teens struggle through this separation, they are scared. The fear is masked in a rebelliousness that is often viewed negatively by adults.
- The rebellion usually is a rejection of *anything* adults view as valuable. This is part of the challenge experienced in working with any teenager.

The Concept of Permanency for Youth



- Adolescents tend to operate in the realm of concrete thinking and permanency is, at best an abstract idea.
- How a teen feels about their current situation will influence their decisions. For many foster youth, previous experiences clue them to the fact that some families are not permanent.
- Permanency goals can be viewed as abstractions in themselves by youth who may view them as constructs being developed by adults and agencies.
- This is especially true when youth are not involved in the direct planning of their own permanency goals.

The Promise of Permanency for Youth



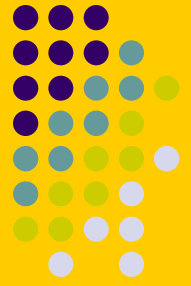
- The goal of permanence was created so foster youths would not be “forgotten” in the child welfare system.
- Unfortunately many youths have grown old in the system and, psychosocially, legal permanence is not always perceived as a realistic alternative.
- Youths need stability to appropriately tackle developmental tasks.
- For some the answer is legal permanence. For others, the answer is caring adults (both kin and non-kin) who can provide the stability to help them make the transition to adulthood.

Pathways to Permanency for Youth



- Youth are reunified safely with their parents or relatives
- Youth are adopted by relatives or other families
- Youth permanently reside with relatives or other families as legal guardians
- Youth are connected to permanent resources via fictive kinship or customary adoption networks
- Youth are safely placed in another planned alternative permanent living arrangement which is closely reviewed for appropriateness every six months

Pathways to Permanency Explored in this Presentation



- Reunification with Family
- Legal Guardianship
- Adoption
- Kinship Placement

Permanency Options



Perm Option	Definition	Legal Cust.	Physi. Cust.	Duties	Duration	Stipend
Foster Parent	Temporary Caretaker	No	Yes	All care of child and bi-weekly visit with birth family	From a few days to a few years	Yes
Guardian	Caretaker but no termination of parental rights (TPR)	Yes	Yes	All care	Until child is 18/21	No (though maybe soon)
Mentor	Provide guidance for child	No	No	Take child to cultural and educational activities	Depends-6 months to life	No
Adoptive Parent	Permanent caretaker for child (as if born to you)	Yes	Yes	All care	Life	Often, yes, sometimes no
APPLA	Provide guidance and opportunities for older youth	No	Probably not	Make sure child has emotional (e.g., holiday invitations), physical and financial security	Life	No

Reunification with Family



My Dad was in jail and I never really knew him. I had been in foster care for almost eight years, I was 15 years old and I had no connections to my family. One day my social worker asked if it would be all right if we wrote to my father in jail and I said – fine. I never thought it would happen, but he wrote back and we began to have this relationship. After 16 months he got released and I began visiting him. It was great to get to know him and after six months, he asked me to move in with him. I never thought this would ever happen – my social worker’s pushing me to connect with my Dad was really what brought this about.

Foster youth reunified with a parent

Reunification as a Preferred Permanency Plan



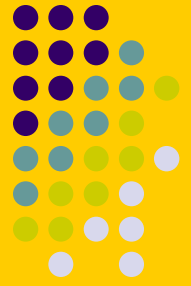
Reunification of the youth with his or her family continues to be the preferred permanency option outlined under ASFA.

When the permanency goal is reunification, ASFA anticipates this outcome will be achieved by the first permanency hearing, or shortly thereafter.

Reunification as a permanency pathway for adolescents is a possibility that is sometimes discounted by professionals that may hold the assumption that adolescents in care for long periods of time may not be able to be reunified with parents or family members.

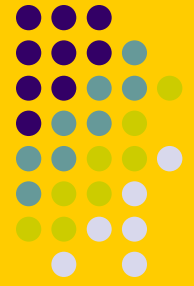
Families CAN and DO Change – Reunification is possible for many adolescents!

Reunification statistics



In 2005, of the 2,768 young people in care had a permanency goal of reunification, and 70.3% of the children or youth who left care were reunited with their birthparents or another relative.

Reunification Made on a Case by Case Basis



The decision to reunify is made on a case-by-case basis

Although there are no prescribed federally mandated services, states must describe in their state plans the services offered to reunify families.

These services typically include: assuring adequate housing for the family, identification and coordination of community-based health and mental health services for the entire family, assuring appropriate educational services for young person, and identification and coordination of age appropriate life skills services for the young person.

Youth Must be Collaborators in the Reunification Process



Working toward reunification with a youth and their family requires that the youth, their family, and the agency staff become collaborators in working together to insure permanence.

Young people who come into placement as teens, can return to their families of origin within 15 of the last 22 months in placement, just, as many younger children do.

Working toward reunification with an older adolescent however requires that they become an active participant in the process of reunification.

Families will need support and encouragement to sustain reunification efforts.

Youth will also need support, encouragement, and follow up after they become reunified with their families – a critical element for promoting the positive permanency outcome of reunification.

Unique Circumstances Related to Reunification



There are two unique circumstances related to renunciation that should be considered:

- **First, it should be noted that not all families desire reunification. In some cases, the family or the young person might explicitly request that reunification efforts are not pursued as a permanency option.**
- **In other cases, families whose parental rights may have been terminated years before, have diligently worked to address their areas of need and may desire to have their parental rights reinstated.**

In either case, it is incumbent upon the caseworker and the permanency team, in conducting their ongoing assessments, to make a very complete assessment about the possibility of reunification as a permanency pathway for an older adolescent. Feelings about reunification from both the youth and their family must be fully explored and processed.

Guardianship



My younger brother and I live with my grandmother because my mother has a drug problem. I am 17, my brother is ten. My Mom has been in several drug treatment programs and always drops out before she finishes. We always hope that this time will be the time she gets it together, but she never does. My grandmother is a great lady and takes great care of us. Every time we got to court she tells the judge that she is willing to keep being our parent, but she feels guilty about adopting us. After a bunch of court dates, the judge finally asked to meet with us and asked what we thought about adoption. We told her that we just wanted to stay with our grandmother and not be adopted – she is already our family. The judge said that she would give my grandmother guardianship – which means that we can stay with her permanently, but not be adopted – that works for us.

Defining Legal Guardianship



“A legal guardianship is a formal legal arrangement which transfers custody of a minor child from the birth parent to a relative or other caregiver. The guardian stands in the place of the parent. ASFA defines legal guardianship as ‘a judicially-created relationship between child and guardian which is intended to be permanent and self-sustaining as evidenced by the transfer to the guardian of certain parental rights with respect to the child.’ These parental rights include: (1) protection; (2) education; (3) care and control of the person; (4) custody of the person; and (5) decision making.” - Fiermonte and Renne (2002)

Key Features of Legal Guardianship



There are three key features of a legal guardianship that promote guardianship as a permanent and self-sustaining relationship:

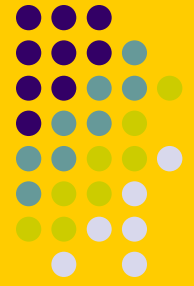
- The legal relationship between the guardian and young person does not end and may outlive the jurisdiction of the court.
- Unlike a adoption, where a parent's right to custody is completely and permanently terminated, legal guardianship suspends the parent's custodial rights, but allows the parent to continue to play a role in the teen's life. It is important to note that parents in open adoption situations may continue to play a role in their child's life as well.
- While guardians often have a blood relationship with the young person, ASFA explicitly states that a guardian need not be a relative, they can be fictive kin.

Legal Guardianship is a More Preferred Permanency Option Than Long-Term Relative Care



Legal guardianship is viewed as a more preferred, permanency option than long-term relative care. It is more permanent than foster care, and gives the guardian full control over caring for the older adolescent without child welfare agency involvement. This permanency option may be appealing for youth in kinship foster care because it allows relative caregivers to provide permanency and stability without ongoing state oversight and without termination of parental rights.

Legal Guardianship is an Underused Permanency Plan



Legal guardianship is underused as a permanency plan, as such agencies may not be familiar with the process. Not all states currently have laws which provide for legal guardianship.

It is important to consider this alternative when the prospective caregiver is a relative of the youth, a long-term care provider, or both and when adoption isn't feasible or desired.

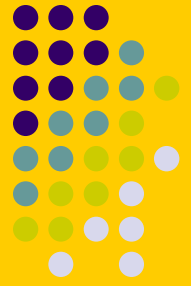
Legal guardianship is also a viable permanency alternative when grounds for termination of parental rights are not present or have not been successful and when a return to parent is deemed to be a not a safe alternative.

Considering Other Ways to Maintain Family Ties



- It should also be noted however that some caseworkers might inadvertently view legal guardianship as the only option if the youth wants to maintain ties with their family. Open adoption approaches, are increasingly a more contemporary approach to adoption. Open adoption permits youth to maintain ties and connections with family members. Preserving the connection is often essential for the young person. Reducing the risk of disruption and multiple placements is critical to the well-being of young people.
- Often youth placed in legal guardianship situations maintain ties to siblings, extended family members, and even parents. These relationships provide psychological benefits to the young person.

Legal Guardianship Has Relevance for Youth



Legal Guardianship has particular relevance for the older adolescent in foster care as it permits the young person to identify non-related adults (fictive kin) with whom they may be able to form lifetime permanent connections through legal guardianship.

Youth do however need the adults in their lives to make sure that these connections are stable, safe, and secure. Youth should be encouraged and empowered to make connections with adults that they think are meaningful and important to them in their lives.

Customary Adoption for Tribal Youth



One of the most promising developments for Indian children incorporates traditional forms of adoption into “customary adoption”

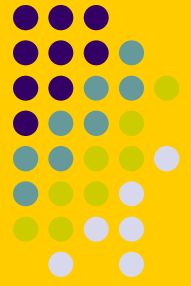
This approach to permanency can be viewed as midway point on a continuum between termination of parental rights and legal guardianship. Customary adoption promotes the use of Indian traditions to guide the conduct of permanency as opposed to formal adoption, which includes termination of parental rights. Customary adoption fits culturally with the extended family concept, and it formalizes and protects on-going care of the child by an extended family member or other recognized potential parents. It eliminates the philosophical barrier to adoption as they happen in the mainstream society, namely the abhorrence of termination of parental rights

Relative Care



In sequential planning, finalizing a permanency plan of relative care assumes the preferred permanency options of reunification, adoption, and legal guardianship have been ruled out and the permanency goal is relative care. However, in concurrent planning, relative care may be viewed as a concurrent option that pursues permanence with relatives.

Defining Relative Care



Relative Care is defined as the placement of a youth in custody in a home in which one of the responsible caretakers is a person related to the child by blood, marriage or adoption who is the youth's:

- siblings;
- grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents – on both side of family;
- uncles or aunts, nieces or nephews, or first cousins – on both sides of the family;
- the current or former spouse of any of these persons; or
- the child's stepparent.

Advantages of Relative Care



Relative care has many advantages for young people, among them are:

- Enable youth to live with persons they know and trust;
- Reinforce youth's personal and cultural identity;
- Encourage families to cultivate and rely on their own resources and strengths;
- Enable families to participate as responsible and essential members of the youth's and family's support team;
- Exemplifies the child welfare system's commitment to "protect children and strengthen families in partnership with families and communities."

Relative Care a la ASFA



ASFA specifically lists placement with a “fit and willing” relative as one of the permanency options.’ ASFA does not define the terms “relative” or “fit and willing,” or create a separate legal authority for relative care. ASFA also provides that relative placement is an exception to the requirement to file a termination of parental rights action when the teen has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. And states must consider giving preference to a relative when they meet all the safety standards.

I Always Thought I Was Adoptable . .



I always thought that I was adoptable even though I was 16 years old, but my social worker kept saying I was too old every time I asked him about it. I worked after-school at this hardware store and the guy who owned it was so kind to me. He was such a good guy and I always talked to him. I never really told him I was in foster care, but one day when we got to talking, he started to ask me a lot of questions about my family and then about life in foster care. I invited him to my case conference because my social worker said I could invite anyone who I wanted to, and at that point he asked about adoption. I was shocked at first, but it made sense. We finalized my adoption three months ago. That day was the happiest day of my life.

- *Former foster youth*

Leadership in Promoting an Adoption Positive Approach



It is incumbent upon adults who have a relationship with the young person to help them to consider the option of lifetime connections by helping to reframe the initial "NO!" into a "YES" or "I'll Think About it" response.

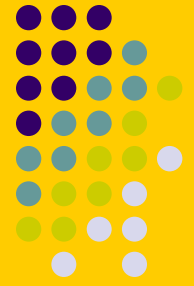
Changing the Initial "NO" to "Yes"



Exploring the permanency option of adoption is a process, not a one time event.

- "I don't want to give up past connections"
- "I don't want to lose contact with my family"
- "I don't want to lose contact with important people"
- "I will have to change my name"
- "No one will want me"
- "I am too destructive for a family"

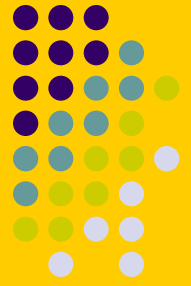
Changing the Initial "NO" to "Yes"



Exploring the permanency option of adoption is a process, not a one time event.

- "Families are for little kids"
- "I don't want to betray my birth family"
- "Mom said she would come back"
- "I want to make my own decisions"
- "I'll just mess up again"
- "I don't want to risk losing anyone else"

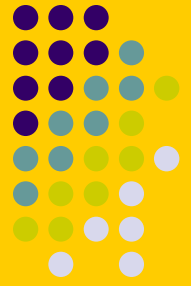
How to Approach Adoption with Adolescents?



What do you say instead of accepting
NO

- Who are the three people in your life with whom you have had the best relationship?
- Would it help to review where you have lived in the past to help you recall important adults in your life?

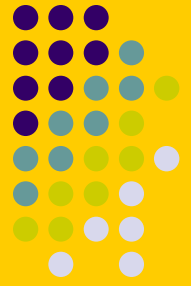
How to Approach Adoption with Adolescents?



What do you say instead of accepting NO

- To whom have you felt connected to in the past?
- Who from the past or present do you want to stay connected to? How? Why?
- How are you feeling about this process? What memories, fears, and anxieties is it stirring up?

What do you say instead of accepting NO?



- Who cared for you when your parents could not?
- Who paid attention to you, looked out for you, cared about what happened to you?
- With whom have you shared holidays and/or special occasions?

What do you say instead of accepting NO?



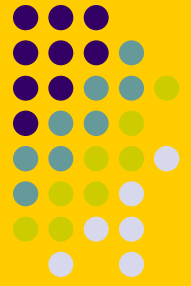
- Who do you like?
- Feel good about?
- Enjoy being with?
- Admire?
- Look up to?
- Want to be like someday?

What do you say instead of accepting NO?



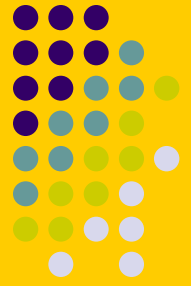
- Who believes in you?
- Stands by you?
- Compliments or praises you?
- Appreciates you?

What do you say instead of accepting NO?



- Who can you count on?
- Who would you call at 2 am if you were in trouble?
- Who would you call if you wanted to share good news?
- Bad news?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



- What kind of child do you want?
- One that wants just a mother or just a father?
- What about other siblings?
- Does it matter if the child is gay or lesbian?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



- Are you part of a couple or single? How will that affect you parenting?
- Are you married? Dating? Are you hoping to be? How will that affect the way you care for me? Are committed to me?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



- Can you afford to / will you send me to college?
- Can you show and have respect for a teenager? How will you show it?
- Can you meet a teens needs? How will you do it?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



- Will you still be my family even if something gets in the way?
- Like if the court holds things up?
- If I am not free for adoption? If I want to be connected to my birth family or other people?
- How will you show me that I am still part of your family?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



- How do you discipline young people in your family?
- What did you do when you were the most mad at a kid?
- How were you disciplined when you were a child?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



- How do show affection to a child or teenager?
- How do you accept and expect them to show affection?
- Have you been a parent?
- For how long?
- For how many kids?
- Why did kids leave you care (if they did)?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



- When there are problems between new kids and kids that are already in the family, how will you handle them?
- Will you bring foster kids on vacation with you? To holidays or special occasions?
- What do you think your first reaction to me will be? How will you try to make me feel comfortable? Part of the family? Accepted?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



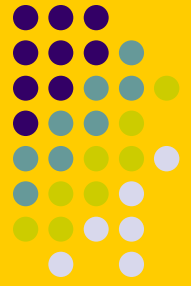
- How do show affection to a child or teenager?
- How do you accept and expect them to show affection?
- Can you please provide a letter of reference from a youth who has known you for a while. Especially one from a former foster child.

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



- How do feel about teenager's sexuality?
- How will my age and order in the family change things?
- If your child has a mental or physical disability will you still be there? If they are in residential placement? In hospital? In jail or juvenile custody?

What Do Adolescents Say They Need?



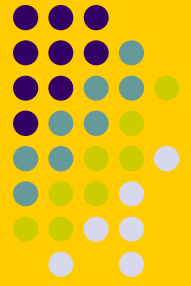
- What would make you give up on me?
- Is there anything that will make you replace me?
- How do you expect me to show gratitude to you?
- What are your expectations for me?

Carefully Look at Foster Parents and Others Known to the Youth



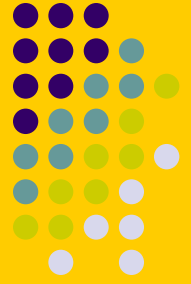
- Interview the young person's current and former foster parents, as well as group home staff and child care staff to determine who the youth currently has connections to: who does the young person get telephone calls from? Who has the young person had a special relationship with in the past? Who visits the young person and whom does the young person visit? Has the young person formed a bond with any group home or child care staff that might turn into a permanent connection?

Work With Youth to Identify Important Adults in their Life



- Work with the youth to identify caring, committed adults with whom the youth would like to establish a connection or re-establish a former connection. Youth should be asked who they feel most comfortable with, who they trust (or with whom they might like to build a trusting relationship) and who they feel they have formed bonds to, such as former foster parents, former neighbors, parents of close friends, members of their extended family, group home staff, cafeteria workers, maintenance staff, administrators, teachers, coaches, and work colleagues.

Unpack the “NO”



- Discuss sensitively with the youth where they might like to belong and to address the strong feelings that might underlie a statement by a young person that he or she does not want to be adopted. A concurrent adoption plan must include plans to help the young person “unpack the ‘No’” and to find out what underlies their reluctance to consider adoption.

Provide Information About Permanency to Youth and Family



- Engage the youth, his or her parents (if the youth is not currently freed for adoption) and foster parents or prospective adoptive parents in a discussion about shared parenting and ongoing contacts with members of the youth's birth family after the adoption. Youth and parents need help understanding that although a termination of parental rights ends the rights of the birth parents to petition the court for visits or other contacts with their child, a TPR does *not* prevent the young person from visiting or contacting members of his or her birth family.

Keep Searching for Permanent Connections



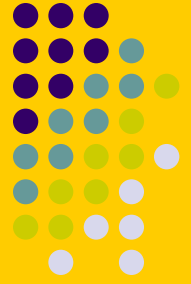
- Identify permanency leads if a record review and interviews with the youth and staff do not yield possible permanent connections. Do this on a case by case basis – not the total population of all adolescents on your caseload.

Prepare Families Who Wish to Be a Permanent Resource for Adolescent



- Help prepare prospective permanency resources to understand the commitment they are making when they undertake to provide a permanent home for an adolescent.

Provide On-Going Support



- Post-permanency services must be put in place to support the stability of the home

Supporting Permanency for Older Adolescents Through Positive Youth Development Approaches



- **Mentoring**
- **Life Books**
- **Person Centered Planning**
- **Family Group Conferencing**
- **Digital Storytelling**
- **Appreciative Inquiry**
- **Family to Family Approaches**
- **Youth Empowerment Approaches**

Involving Youth in Permanency Efforts



- Youth must be involved in the process and must have input
- Many youth do want to be adopted, even if they initially say no
- Youth need to be involved in recruitment efforts
- Youth need to be able to identify persons with whom they feel they have connections
- Youth need to work with professionals who understand them and enjoy working with them



In Summary...

- Believe that permanency for this teen is possible!
- Don't take "No" for an answer
- Be ready to identify a permanent connection for every young person
- Be Youth-Focused!
- Take The Risk!

References & Resources



Mentoring USA

www.mentoringusa.com

An organization that links foster care youth with caring adults and promotes life-long connections

www.nrcadoption.org/youthpermanencycluster

This web page offers the field of child welfare information on the accomplishments of the nine CB grantees as they progress, and highlights some of the products they developed.

The grantees addressed the issues of youth permanency in creative ways, including development of curriculum and attitude scales about options for youth permanency, including open adoption. Grantees have demonstrated success in connecting youth to permanent families through reunification, relative placement and adoption. We hope you find the information useful and consider incorporating some of the tools and practices the grantees have developed into your permanency program for youth in foster care.

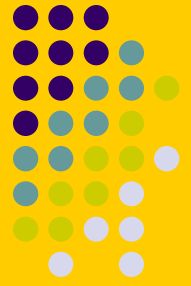
References & Resources



**Lewis, R.G., and Heffernan, M.S. (2000).
Adolescents and families for life: A
toolkit for supervisors. Boston, MA:
Lewis & Heffernan.**

**A guidebook for child welfare providers
interested in developing skills in working
toward permanency with adolescents.**

References & Resources



Lewis, R.G., and Communities for People, Inc. (2002). The family bound program: A toolkit for preparing teens for permanent family connections. Boston, MA: Lewis.

A guidebook for working with families to promote and prepare teens for permanent family connections.

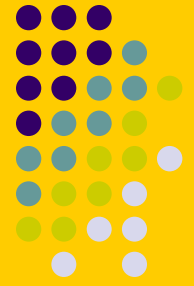
References & Resources



Mallon, G.P. (2004). Facilitating permanency for youth: A Toolbox for youth permanency. Washington, DC: CWLA.

A toolbox for practitioners, policy-makers, and advocates for promoting permanency and life-time connections for older adolescents. www.cwla.org

References & Resources



American Bar Association. (2006). Achieving permanency for adolescents in foster care: A guide for legal professionals. Washington, DC: American Bar Association.

A guide for legal professionals, judges, attorneys, and litigants for promoting permanency and life-time connections for older adolescents. www.aba.org

References & Resources



NRCFCPPP. (2008). Six Steps to Find a Family. New York: NRCFCPPP.

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/SixSteps.pdf>

This guide from the NRCFCPPP provides detailed guidance on casework practice that supports family search and engagement in the quest to provide permanency for youth people. There is an accompanying PowerPoint presentation as well at:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/ppt/SixSteps.ppt>

Responses from Louisiana's Youth

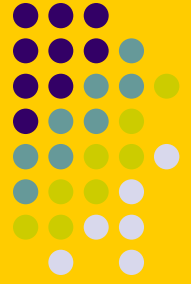


- The following questions were asked of 12 youth who are State Board Members of LYLAC (Louisiana Youth Leadership Advisory Council) on July 16, 2009 at their quarterly meeting.

These Questions Focused on Permanency:

- **Q.1.** For those of you who have experienced more than one placement, what might the agency have done or done differently to prevent your placement disruptions(s)?
- Check out foster parents to match personalities better
- Some foster parent are in for the check, they are mean
- Some foster parents have really bad attitudes
- Foster parents don't know how to treat children in different age groups
- They need more training in understanding the needs of children placed and the age groups

Questions to Louisiana's Youth

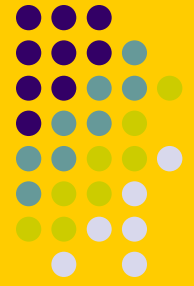


- **Q.2.** Did you feel as though you had a say, or that your voice was heard in the decision making and case planning (FTC) processes?
- **need to have voice in plans**
- **always had a say so**
- **had a voice but then the worker went back and changed things without my knowledge**
- **Didn't understand what was going on-not explained my level**
- **Need to explain the purpose of the questions**
- **Child's voice not listened to**



Questions to Louisiana's Youth

- **Q.3.** Did you feel as though you had a say or that your voice was heard in the judicial process (in preparation of and at court hearings)?
 - **yes**
 - **No – child's lawyer did not talk to the youth – attorney spoke for the youth**
 - **Been to court but never called in or asked to speak**
- **Q.4.** Did you understand your permanency goal and why that goal was assessed as most appropriate for you?
 - **Yes**
- **Q. 5** Did you agree with your permanency goal? If not, why not?
 - **Yes and no- not listened to**
 - **Don't really understand what permanent goal means**
 - **Inconsistency in nature of goals and youth's understanding**



Questions to Louisiana's Youth

- **Q.6.** What, if any, steps might OCS have taken and that we didn't take that might have proved beneficial in reunifying you with your family of origin or aided you in achieving permanence with a suitable relative.
- **waited too long for connection to bio family**
- **Timing and completion of paperwork, follow through with relative home studies**
- **Q.7.** Can you tell us about your experiences in maintaining family connections/visits with parents, siblings and other relatives while in foster care?
- **No contact**
- **Exhaust all efforts to maintain family contacts**
- **Workers should put forth more effort to make visits happen**
- **Grandfather died...worker knew but waited 3 days to tell youth unable to attend funeral**
- **Youth reaches out to family because worker makes no effort to do so**
- **Some workers made great efforts to keep youth informed and connected with family**



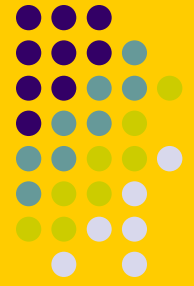
Questions to Louisiana's Youth

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 - **Some workers made great efforts to keep youth informed and connected with family**
- **Q.8.** What might have OCS done differently to strengthen these important connections?
 - **encourage/increase family visits and provide family information**
 - **Therapy should be directed toward the permanency goal.**
 - **Use therapeutic relationship to work with family and connections**
 - **Need better communication**
 - **Need support from professionals to encourage family relationships**

Questions to Louisiana's Youth



- **Q.9.** If a sense of permanency were equated to a feeling one has of belonging, of fitting in, of knowing what to expect tomorrow, next week and next year in your living arrangement, your school attendance, and your family and relative connections, then what measures might OCS take in promoting a sense of permanency for the children and youth in foster care that perhaps we may not have considered, or if considered, may not have placed enough importance upon.
- **Foster Parent understands me (good match)**
- **reassurance that I belong**
- **hotline to get in touch with the worker is not for everything that goes wrong, but should be for emergencies**
- **rules of the house should be discussed; what would warrant removal**
- **openness and willingness to discuss problems**
- **foster children are treated differently from natural child**



Questions to Louisiana's Youth

- **WELL BEING:**
- Q.1. How were your health conditions addressed (either physical or behavioral health conditions)? Who was involved in coordinating these services?
- **Foster Parent wanted youth on meds but youth stopped taking and did ok**
- **Overmedication**
- **Not coordinating the services foster parent got more than one doctor to give meds**
- **Trying to maintain special board so want youth on meds**
- **How to pay for medications not covered Rx cost over \$300 every 3 months**
- **When youth told worker about a problem, worker would address medical issues and seek appropriate referral**
- **Worker listens to foster parent and all that foster parent says is not true**



Questions to Louisiana's Youth

- **WELL BEING:**
- Q.2. Have you received evaluative or counseling services? Do you feel these services were effective in addressing your needs? Were the services appropriate in terms of frequency of appointments and duration of services? Who would you speak to if your needs were not adequately addressed?
- **1 out of the 12 youth present for the focus group did not receive counseling**
- **Level to intensity -- when family counseling got to intense then treatment stopped**
- **therapeutic Confidentiality- feels that the therapist would tell to many people about the sessions**
- **Professionals give all types of labels instead of dealing with problems**
- **Therapist made therapy drag-out**
- **Majority of youth present at this focus group were in therapy for over 12 months**
- **Believed that the therapist made them more dependent**
- **Youth responded that they would speak to: workers, foster mom, biological family and therapist**

Questions to Louisiana's Youth



- Q.4. Was medication prescribed for physical or behavioral health needs? Were other treatment goals recommended? Was a treatment plan implemented to address your needs (either physical or behavioral health needs)? Was treatment effective? Did you receive medication reviews or other follow up services? Please explain.
- **Length for medical approval for therapy was too long**
- **Medication for migraines not covered under Medicaid**
- **Medication for eyes cost \$300 a month. Medicaid only pays half. Youth or foster parent pays the rest**
- **Youth received bill for physical medical treatment after a 4 wheeler accident**
- **Cost of medications**
- **Duplication of treatment. Broke left foot. Trainer at school was providing physical therapy. Doctor said youth must go to PT. Youth felt PT did the same thing as the trainer**
- **Have panic attacks, meds paid for**
- **4 of the 12 youth in this group did not receive medications for mental health issues**
- **Of the 8 youth who were on medications for mental health issues, none are currently on medications**
- **7 of the 8 youth decided to take themselves off the medication and are functioning fine**
- **Youth would talk with their foster parents, biological family, and Medicaid provider.**
- **Many youth did not know what their treatment goal was for therapy and again expressed the fact that they were labeled**



Questions to Louisiana's Youth

- Q.5. What suggestions would you offer for addressing physical and/or behavioral health needs of youth more effectively?
- **Less money spent on therapy and more on medical needs**
- **Get 2nd opinions when being labeled**
- **When you keep telling us how we are then that's how we are going to act**
- **To stop being labeled—some behaviors are merely being a youth**
- **Need more providers-stuck with only a few**
- **Most Medicaid providers are not taking new patients**
- **Hard to find someone in the area**
- **Foster parents need to address consequences in the home and not change the rules and ask for removal without trying to work things out**
- **Foster parents need more training to understand age related behaviors and use of age related consequences.**
- **Perhaps youth could do a training on who they are**



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Family Connections**
**Louisiana Child Welfare Comprehensive Workforce
Project**

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www.lcwcwp.org



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Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning**

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School of Social Work*