

**Louisiana OCS Staff Development and Appreciation Day**  
**Sponsored by the**  
**Louisiana Child Welfare Comprehensive Workforce Project at the**  
**LSU School of Social Work**

[www.LCWCWP.org](http://www.LCWCWP.org)

**Theme for Year One:**

**Appropriate Utilization of Another Planned Permanent Living  
Arrangement – APPLA as a Permanency Goal for Youth**

**and**

**Unpacking the “NO!” of Permanency for Youth**

Facilitating permanency for youth in foster care can be very challenging work. Many teens that have been in the child welfare system have experienced multiple placements and relationships and are at a challenging crossroad between childhood and adulthood. Adults who work with youth have an ethical and moral responsibility to help them identify caring, committed adults with whom they might want to establish a lifelong connection. The practice and professional literature speaks to the importance of permanence for youth and how continued instability increases the long-term risks for teens, which may continue well into adulthood.

One young woman from the foster care system said it best at a workshop presentation on the importance of permanency for youth, when a participant asked if she would still want to be adopted as a 17-year-old:

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? Who wouldn't want that?

So if long term foster care is not the answer (and it isn't) --the larger question then becomes: How can practitioners best achieve permanence for teens?

There is no easy answer. In fact, no “one size fits all” fix to this dilemma exists, because permanency and developmental needs of adolescents in foster care are complex and varied.

As if the main question itself were not complicated enough, two additional questions exists as well. The first is:

- How has independent living become viewed as the default plan for most adolescents in foster care?
- How do states jointly deliver independent-living skills development services while working to achieve permanence for youth?

Contemporary child welfare, despite systemic reform efforts, has held firmly to a crisis orientation that tends to focus especially on younger children, who it views as more vulnerable. Independent Living as a separate program with a separate funding stream, combined with questions regarding adolescent adoptability and willingness to be adopted,

have contributed to the system's further estrangement from its adolescent population, who often experience long lengths of stay in care.

All adolescents, even those who live with their birth families, require independent living skills, a set of self-sufficiency skills to assist them in transitioning toward adulthood. But all youth also need stability and permanence in their lives as well. Even with solid life skills training and practice, youth in foster care need a familial support system when they exit care that allows for lifelong connections. In addition to the challenge of defining what permanency means for adolescents, state agencies have struggled with how achieving permanency affects the independent living program.

**Schedule of the Staff Development and Appreciation Day  
for Louisiana OCS Staff**

**Sponsored by**

***Louisiana Child Welfare Comprehensive Workforce Project  
at the LSU School of Social Work***

**9-10 am          Breakfast**

**10 am            Welcome, Introductions**

**10:15 am          Appropriate Utilization of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement – APPLA as a Permanency Goal for Youth** frames the discussion for the morning session. APPLA in and of itself is not a “bad” permanency plan for youth, it is only undesirable when it becomes the default plan for all youth or when it is assigned to a youth at a young age and not evaluated for appropriateness every six months. This session will challenge staff to think beyond Long Term Foster Care and inappropriate use of this permanency option. Staff will be provided with tools and opportunities for realistic discussion about achieving permanency for youth. How many APPLA cases does your Region have and could those young people be given other more durable permanency goals?

**12 noon          Lunch**

**1:00 pm          Unpacking the NO of Permanency for Youth** specifically looks at how social workers might work with youth toward considering reunification, adoption, guardianship, and kinship as a permanency options. This afternoon session assists workers in helping youth who may initially say NO to permanency to unpack that NO and deconstruct what it might mean to have a permanent family connections. Staff will be provided with tools and opportunities for realistic discussion about achieving permanency for youth

**3:30              Staff Appreciation – Refreshments**

**4 pm             Adjourn**