

Stuart Foundation

NATIONAL CONVENING ON YOUTH PERMANENCE

April 10-11, 2003

Brief Summary

This convening was hosted by the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), funded by Stuart Foundation, San Francisco. Although CPYP works on youth permanency in California, the convening focuses on youth permanence nationally. As a long range outcome, the Youth Permanence Convenings focus on strengthening practice and policy in order to ensure permanency for older children and youth, first, in California and Washington, and, second, in the United States.

A. PROBLEM:

The issue of permanence for older children and youth has lacked serious attention in all but a few places and misconceptions about the issue abound, including the following: a) no one wants to adopt teens; b) teens do not want to be adopted; c) placements of teens are unsuccessful. Often, professionals working with teens focus on Independent Living, important certainly, but the need for permanence is even more so. As a result, outcomes for children who age out of the foster care system are dismal, including high rates of homelessness, incarceration, and victimization.

B. HISTORY OF CONVENING:

In 1999, the National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD), University of Oklahoma, surfaced the issue with a national Permanency Think Tank (co-sponsored by The National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning, Hunter College, and the National Resource Center on Special Needs Adoption, Michigan). The Think Tank affirmed that adolescents need connections with adults and peers throughout their lifetimes, that permanency is not a placement, but a state of mind, and that an adolescent must be a central actor in the planning process for the future.

In 2002, Stuart Foundation funded its 1st National Youth Permanence Convening of forty-five national experts who assessed youth permanence policies and practices. Research data and national and state models of successful reunification and adoption programs guided the convening structure. Especially enlightening were a) models of child specific recruitment, b) reunification models focused on reconnecting with birth families where the risk has changed and on finding extended long-lost family, and c) research on which children find permanence, what

2nd National Youth Permanence Convening, 2003

attitudes and beliefs social workers hold about teen permanence, and social workers' minimal use of recruitment strategies. See 2002 Summary for additional information.*¹

C. 2nd NATIONAL YOUTH PERMANENCE CONVENING, 2003

In preparation for the second convening of one hundred participants, five work groups formed to gather information and prepare recommendations prior to the convening. Workgroups were *Changing Attitudes, Best Practices, Recruitment, Implementation, and Research.*

The convening agenda included: a) Updates on significant progress in policy and practice since April 2002 from California, Illinois, New York City, Pennsylvania, Washington State, and the Dave Thomas and Stuart Foundations; b) New research on successful adolescent adoptions; c) Successful funding strategies; and d) The Y.O.U.T.H. Model (Youth Offering Unique Tangible Help), training developed by youth to teach practitioners how to effectively work with youth. Finally, the information gathered by the five workgroups and their recommendations provided the springboard for a discussion in which participants identified six key topics to pursue, developed action plans, and identified key strategies and persons responsible for taking the lead on the plans.

In keeping with a commitment to involve the perspective of those who had been foster youth, the convening began with what was the highlight of the conference, a panel of three young adults who spoke eloquently about their need for permanence and how they achieved it. Each young adult stressed that his or her initial resistance to permanency or adoption hid a fear of being rejected, and, although each had wanted permanence, they engaged in a significant testing period with their new families because the *feeling* of permanence takes time to develop; the youth may not *feel* part of the family until sometime in his or her twenties when it is clear that the family can be counted on throughout one's life. The three young adults were adamant about using all available means of seeking permanence (with the youth's permission), including public meetings, media, etc., even though a youth may experience disappointment and pain in the process of seeking a home.

D. OUTCOME OF 2003 YOUTH PERMANENCE CONVENING

The convening participants wish to continue working on the youth permanence agenda as a group. As is seen in the evaluation summary (p. 16), participants gained substantial additional knowledge, and several contacts were made between organizations active in youth permanence that had not met before. These contacts will continue as participants work together on the topics agreed upon in April, 2003, and individually, as different organizations take new steps towards youth permanence.

Participants agreed to concentrate on six key topic areas during 2003-2004. A group was formed on each topic and ongoing activities for each topic and key persons responsible for taking action were identified:

¹ Websites: www.stuartfoundation.org; Massachusetts Families for Kids, <http://www.csrox.org/pdffiles/Summary02.pdf>; or contact Mardi Louisell, Consultant, California Permanency for Youth Project, mjlouisell@aol.com

Six Key Areas:

1. *Belief System:* How to effect a change in the knowledge and attitudes of professionals and the public about youth permanency.
2. *Overrepresentation of Youth in Long-Term Foster Care:* How to decrease this disproportionality in the child welfare system.
3. *Financial Resources:* How to fund programs during mammoth financial cuts.
4. *Youth Involvement:* How to assure youth involvement in every aspect of finding and maintaining permanence.
5. *Lack of Urgency about Achieving Permanence:* How to shorten the length of time it takes to achieve youth permanence in child welfare systems.
6. *Independent Living as a Permanency Goal:* How to assure that Independent Living is never acceptable as a permanency goal; instead define youth permanence as a lifelong committed relationship.

Foundation participants met to consider how to support a youth permanence agenda and agreed either to support a 3rd convening or speak to their foundations about obtaining support. They also suggested additional sources for future support.

E. CONTACTS:

Stuart Foundation: Teri Kook, Child Welfare Program Officer, 415-393-1551; 415-393-1551 tkook@stuartfoundation.org.

Convening Facilitator: Madelyn Freundlich, Legal Analyst for Children's Rights, Inc., New York City, 212- 683-2210; mfreundlich@childrensrights.org

For information, contact Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director, California Permanency for Youth Project, 510-562-8472, patrh@sbcglobal.net, or Mardi Louisell, Consultant, California Permanency for Youth Project, 415-682-3708, mjlouisell@aol.com.

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Full Summary

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A. Background

I. 1999 Permanency Think Tank, University of Oklahoma

In 1999 a Permanency Think Tank was held at the National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD), University of Oklahoma, as part of a reevaluation of beliefs about adoption and independent living. First, a retreat was held in which adolescents provided practical suggestions for how to improve adoption efforts for youth. The reevaluation process culminated with the forty person Think Tank sponsored by NRCYD, the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning, Hunter College, and the National Resource Center on Special Needs Adoption, Michigan.

The Think Tank identified three underlying principles essential to youth permanence: 1) Adolescents need connections with adults and peers throughout their lifetime; 2) Adolescents must be taught skills to prepare them to live interdependently; and 3) Adolescents must be seen as central actors in their own futures and involved in the planning process. Permanency, it was emphasized, is a state of mind, not a placement; permanency is having the feeling that you are connected, that there is someone in the middle of the night who will answer your phone call.

II. 1st Stuart-funded Youth Permanence Grant and National Youth Permanence Convening 2002

In 2002, Stuart Foundation funded a youth permanence grant to: a) research current policy, practice and financial supports for youth permanency nation-wide, b) gather 35-40 youth permanence experts to discuss the results, assess what policies and practices might alleviate the problem and develop policy and practice recommendations, and c) disseminate the final recommendations to a broad group of stakeholders locally and nationally.

The 2002 convening accomplished the following:

1. Developed a Definition of Permanence for Older Children and Adolescents, identifying the following essential components of permanency. 1. At least one adult; 2. A safe, stable and secure parenting relationship; 3. Love; 4. Unconditional commitment; 5. Lifelong support; 6. Involvement of the youth as a participant, perhaps a leader, in the process; 7. Finally, unless the child is not free for adoption, a child should be legally adopted. Frey's definition of "The highest level of physical, legal and emotional safety and security that can be attained for each individual child or youth within the context of a family relationship" was highlighted.

2. Provided data on California Foster Care (supplied by Barbara Needell, Center for Social Service Research, University of California, Berkeley. Contact: (510) 642-1893; bneedell@uclink4.berkeley.edu

3. Reviewed adoption research data from New York State compiled by Rosemary Avery, Cornell University (607- 255-2578 (w); 607-255-4071 (f); rja7@cornell.edu) to find out why some kids get placed and others don't, including an examination of attitudes to recruitment.

4. Reviewed specific permanency practices and models including tools for decision-making; reunification; adoption models; and less traditional models. See Attachment A for contact information on these projects.

5. Developed recommendations for how to make a difference in permanency for older children and adolescents in different states and nation-wide.

B. 2nd Stuart-funded National Youth Permanence Convening 2003

I. Welcome and Convening Goals

Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director of the California Permanency for Youth Project, and former child welfare program officer for Stuart Foundation, reviewed youth permanence and spoke to the passion the present group brings to the issue: we should not allow any child to emancipate without a permanent family connection. Jennifer Rodriguez, California Youth Connection, had notified Ms. Reynolds-Harris of two former foster youth, recently killed in Iraq. Ms. Reynolds-Harris dedicated this convening to them and others who have passed through the child welfare system as foster youth in the hopes that we will honor them by a commitment to increase permanent relationships for youth in the system.

Christy Pichel, President of the Stuart Foundation, and Teri Kook, recently appointed program officer, also welcomed the group, emphasized their commitment to youth permanence, particularly in California and Washington State, and encouraged other funders to become involved in sponsoring the national convening.

Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights Inc., New York City, and facilitator of the convening reviewed the agenda and goals for the convening: by the end of the two days, the group will have identified key topics and developed specific strategies for each of the agreed upon recommendations, considered what resources will be needed to accomplish the task, what help will be needed to coordinate the task, and who will take responsibility for leading the charge on each strategy.

II. Young Adults Speak: Sarah Cedano, North Carolina; Chris Brown, Burlington, Kentucky; James Stevens, Russell, Massachusetts

Each of the three young adults spoke eloquently about the need for permanence, how they found it, and answered questions from the audience. As a rule, in their situations, social workers had not tried to find permanency for them; their permanence was achieved in the following ways: a) through the presenter's own efforts at age twenty-two (22); b) when presenter was age fifteen (15), a volunteer came forward, and c) When a presenter was sixteen (16), through a social worker. Each youth stressed that his or her initial resistance to permanency or adoption hid a fear of being rejected yet again. They credited their achievement (each attends college or graduate school) to the role models and help of their permanent families. Although each of these youth had wanted permanence, each of them also engaged in a significant testing period with their new families because the *feeling* of permanence takes time to develop. When a youth finds permanence in his or her mid-teens, he or she doesn't may not *feel* part of the family until sometime in college, when he or she begins to see that the family really can be counted on throughout one's life. Asked about how social workers should attempt to find families, the youth were adamant about using all available means (with the youth's permission), including public meetings, media, etc., even though the youth may experience pain in the process of seeking a home. As speaker Chris Brown said, "It is impossible to score if you don't shoot the ball: you can't find a family unless you try."

III. Progress on Youth Permanency by April, 2002 Convening Participants
(See Appendix 1, pp. 18-24, for details.)

A. Report from Washington State: Marie Jamieson, Families for Kids Partnership, Seattle, reported on the success of two goals set in 2002: 1) putting permanency on the agenda of current state youth initiatives; 2) accomplishing field-based permanency forums. Reports were also given on 1) Stuart-funded Family Group Conferencing with youth in group care; 2) Catholic Community Services, Western Washington, Tacoma, FAST program; 3) Northwest Adoption Exchange's Child Specific Recruitment Project; 4) The Ruby Slippers Project, which identifies all kids in care longer than two years, staffs the cases, and looks at barriers and child characteristics; 5) *COMPEL (Churches on the Move for Permanency in Every Life)*, A Faith-Community Based Model Program for Permanency that partners with African-American churches; 6) Washington State IL Program's Efforts to rewrite all IL contracts to include a section on youth permanence and a requirement for contractors to engage in specific activities with youth designed to develop permanent connections, to do relative and family searches and to reconnect youth to family.

B. Report from California Carol Biddle, Kinship Center, Monterey, reported on the *California Task Force on Youth Permanence*, Kathy Dresslar, Legislative Director to Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg, reported on the pending legislation of *Permanency for Older Foster Youth / Prudent Parent Standard for Foster Youth Activities* (AB 408), which, among other goals, declares legislative intent that no child be emancipated from the foster care system without a connection to a committed and caring adult and documents the need and possibilities for permanency for older kids, not just younger children. Pat Reynolds-Harris described the new California Permanency for Youth Project, funded by the Stuart Foundation, which aims to increase awareness of the necessity for youth permanence, promotes effective public policy on youth permanence, and works four California counties to create practice and administrative policy that will result in better permanency outcomes for the counties.

C. New York City Update: Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights, Inc., NYC, reported on the New York City's new policy that limits the use of IL as a permanency goal so that no child will age out without a committed caring adult. Ms. Freundlich also reported that Children's Rights, Inc., has developed a partnership with two other organizations that provide legal advocacy to children in foster care to conduct a major study with teens in congregate care. Sue Badeau, Consultant, reported on New York's Longest Waiting Children, a collaborative effort to find permanency for kids who were legally free and had been waiting in foster care the longest time. A year and half into the project, permanency has been achieved for twenty-six (26) kids.

D. Dave Thomas Foundation, Older Youth Adoption Initiative, Rita Soronen. The foundation has moved its older youth initiative to the forefront of its North American effort. In 2003, the Foundation funded the following three projects: Teen Adoption Initiative, Children's Aid Society, Birmingham, Alabama; Project Teen, Greater St. Louis Foster and Adoptive Care

Coalition; Teen Adoption Project: An Army of Recruiters, You Gotta Believe!, New York City. Ms. Soronen also reported on these foundation projects related to youth permanence: Adoption Backlog Initiative, Los Angeles, Alliance for Children's Rights; Research: Florida's Adoptive Families: A Longitudinal Look at Family Development – Identifying Key Indicators of Successful and Unsuccessful Adoptive Placements, Florida State University; Minnesota Adoption Resource Network (MARN), Minneapolis Minnesota.

IV. Other Updates,
(See Appendix 2, pp. 25-31, for details.)

A. State of Illinois Performance Based Contracting: Peggy Slater, Legacy Project, Illinois Department of Illinois Dept. of Children & Family Services, described this initiative in detail. Prior to performance contracting the Illinois permanency rate was 8%. In year one of the contract it jumped to 24%, year two was 30% and year three, 32%. Performance contracting, together with a reduction in the number of children coming into care, has achieved a caseload decline of more than 40%. Twice as many kids in post-permanency care are being supported by post-adoption and post-guardianship assistance as are in substitute care. However, although the contract provides that agencies receive a double performance credit for successful permanency placement of older kids, the contract model has not been tremendously successful for teens.

B. Court Related Update, California, CASA's Role in the Permanency Process. Robin Allen, California CASA, Oakland CA, described the project in which each county assigns a CASA to older youth with the goal of achieving permanence for the youth. The CASA will mine the files, work with the youth on resources for permanence, work on ILP goals, explore adoption, and pursue other activities that will insure that a young person can emancipate with permanent interconnected relationships which will sustain and support the youth to adulthood.

C. Report from Pennsylvania: Sue Badeau, Consultant. Partners in Permanency, Philadelphia, seeks to ensure that permanency is achieved for every child in DHS care, including adolescents. A massive effort to train 1800 DHS workers and private agencies and courts on permanency was undertaken and a training video and curriculum developed. Statewide, there has been a new focus on permanency and not just on adoption. Also now providers can be paid for services to prepare a child for permanence, even if he or she isn't free for adoption.

D. New Research: Successful Adolescent Adoptions Research Study, Cynthia Flynn, Center for Child and Family Studies, University of South Carolina. Funded by an Adoption Initiatives Grant, Children's Bureau, this three year research project aimed to find out the common elements of success in adolescent adoptions by interviewing adoptive parents and adopted youth. Parents answers included the following: "He's still here, he's rebelled, but he hasn't left." "The child lived with me for two years and that's the longest she had ever lived anywhere and she's still in touch with me." The research found that the parents made a commitment: "I'm adopting this child and it doesn't matter what he or she does." All of the

adoptive families said that if you adopt a teen, in some respect, you are adopting their birth family.

On their end, most teenagers wanted a life change and were willing to moderate their behavior to find permanent homes. Some of their words were: "I had a place to go. I could look forward instead of having to constantly think about where my next home would be." "The attention and love were the best part." The worst part of being adopted was: "Not being able to go home, to be in my old neighborhood, to see my birth family, to see my real mom all the time."

E. Funding possibilities:

1. ***Funding Streams: Using EPSDT in Orange County:*** Carol Biddle, Kinship Center, Salinas, CA. Carol Biddle explained how the collaboration began and the results of the funding collaboration. The clinic initially planned to see sixty-five (65) children per week and now serves 135 kids a week, all of whom are children from the county foster care system and either in need of permanent placement or in permanent adoptive or relative caretaker families. The key to success has been the EPSDT funding.

2. ***Using AAP to do wrap around for potential adoption disruptions. Santa Clara County,*** Carol Biddle, Kinship Center, Salinas, CA. Piloted by Santa Clara and Kinship Center, this project has served forty (40) adopted children placed by the county. Wraparound families are those facing possible disruption or institutional placement of their children in out of home care. The project is funded entirely through Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) funds.

3. ***Training: ACT, Kinship Center.*** Carol Biddle, Kinship Center, Salinas, CA. With Stuart Foundation's assistance, Kinship Center has developed clinic adoption training to provide in-depth knowledge to clinicians on working with adoption issues. To date, 2000 clinicians in California have been trained.

F. Partnership: Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services and EMQ Children & Family Services, Sacramento, Lyn Farr, Regional Director, EMQ Children & Family Services. In November 2002, Sacramento County began a collaboration with Catholic Social Services, Tacoma, Washington, to develop services for CPS, MH, or Probation kids in or at risk of high level group care. To fund this, Sacramento, a IVE and SB 163 county, uses foster care funding to support the child at home. Kids in high level group home care are referred to EMQ, which, as a wraparound provider, is responsible for finding a permanent family connection. Using the flexible funding, EMQ developed an FFA capacity in Sacramento to support quick movement from group care as soon as the behavior that brought the youth into the group home has been addressed. Foster families are trained to foster the relationship between the youth and their family connection. By June 30, thirty youth had stepped down from RTCs.

G. Y.O.U.T.H. (Youth Offering Unique Tangible Help) Training Project: Jennifer Rodriguez and Reina Sanchez, California Youth Connection (CYC). This training tool for social workers on working with youth, created by youth, was developed to demonstrate the powerful outcomes of using positive youth development techniques with transition aged foster youth. A secondary goal was to increase the ability of the social worker and others in the system

to effectively listen to youth. Best practices were identified, and training competencies were developed. Five foster youth created a two-day curriculum in different modalities, delivered by foster youth ages 16-23.

The training was developed with funding from the Children's Bureau of the DHHS through the Bay Area Academy and California Youth Connection. One of twelve 3-year projects funded in 2001, the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project is the only one guided, developed and delivered by current and former foster youth. Focus groups

Contact: Jamie Lee Evans, Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project Coordinator, 415-442-5060 ext 19, jamieleeevans@yahoo.com

V. Reports from Workgroups

(See Appendix 3, pp. 32-48, and Appendix 5, p. 52, for details).

In preparation for the 2003 convening, five workgroups formed to gather information and prepare recommendations prior to the convening.

A. *Workgroup Report: Best Practices on Permanency for Older Youth*, Chair: Virginia Sturgeon, Consultant, Kentucky. Group members: Maureen Heffernan, Sue Badeau and Richard Bell

Description of Problem: Moving adolescents to permanence is often overlooked or avoided by agencies and workers because of the perceived difficulty of finding families for these youth. This workgroup defined best practice for moving adolescents to permanence, focusing on preparing the agency, worker, youth and prospective families for achieving successful, permanent placements for adolescents.

This workgroup developed a set of recommendations for best practices in thirteen areas that could be used as a best practices template for agencies: 1. Concurrent Planning for Youth Permanency; 2. Preparing Youth for Permanency; 3. Identifying Potential Family Connections Already Known to the Youth; 4. Involving Caring Adults in Planning; 5. Supporting the *Process* of Family Making; 6. Pursuing Traditional Adoption Recruitment Avenues; 7. Prevention: Permanency as a component of all child welfare services; 8. Permanency Supports – Agency/Systemic; 9. Role of the Supervisor; 10. Role of the Manager; 11. Cultural Competence; 12. Quality Assurance; 13. Community Involvement /Advocacy

B. *Workgroup Report: Changing Attitudes*, Co-Chairs: Karin Gunderson, NW Inst., for Children and Families, U of Wash. School of Social Work, and Marie Jamieson, Families for Kids Partnership, Seattle; Committee Members: Susan Weiss, Zena Ogelsby, Karen Grace Kaho, Jill Jacobs, Dixie van de Flier Davis

Description of Problem: Practice shifts require systemic interventions that target policy, training and attitudes. This workgroup focused on attitude, building on the definition of permanence that was developed at last year's convening. We determined the system's internal

and external target audiences, identified barriers to attitude shifts and developed tailored messages and means for message delivery for the various audiences identified.

The group developed a grid to outline the issues according to these categories: Audience, Barriers/Negative Attitudes, Positive Attitudes/Message, and Delivery/Implementation Strategies.

Contacts: Marie Jamieson, 206- 695-3200, mmjamieson@aol.com; Karin Gunderson, 206- 616-7424, kgund@u.washington.edu

C. *Workgroup Report: Recruitment*, Chair, Lauren Frey, Massachusetts Families for Kids, Children's Services of Roxbury, Group members: Natalie Lyons, Millicent Williams, Dixie Davis, Zena Ogelsby, Amanda Tromblay, Ada White and Drenda Lakin.

Description of Problem: Finding permanent families for adolescents is all too often limited by the common negative beliefs that most adolescents don't want families and that most families don't want adolescents. This workgroup started with the core belief that 'there is a family for every adolescent' and explored positive strategies and potential solutions. Creative and successful models of recruiting families for adolescents were discussed, as well as the issues of privacy and confidentiality, professional boundaries/ethics, public relations, youth-driven recruitment, expanded kinship search and more.

The workgroup developed the following handouts: Successful Models of Family Recruitment for Adolescents; Funding Challenges in Family Recruitment for Adolescents. and Next Steps in Family Recruitment for Adolescents; "Teens Need Families Too" by Rose Garland, Adoption Consultant, was distributed as well (handout currently not available in computer form.) At the convening, the workgroup presented and discussed three challenges concerning recruitment:

1. *Values and beliefs of social workers, supervisors, managers and organizations responsible for permanence for youth.*
2. *Boundary and Confidentiality Issues and Professional Roles.*
3. *Kinship and Recruitment Issues.* Differential treatment in services, training and subsidies between relatives/ kin and non-relatives; reassessment of relatives, due to changes in families and maturation of child; neglect of paternal relatives as a resource.

D. *Workgroup Report: Implementation*. Chair: Mardi Louisell, Consultant, California Permanency for Youth Project, San Francisco. Group Members: Virginia Sturgeon, Sue Badeau, Kate Lodge, M.B. Lippold, Kevin Campbell, Peggy Slater

Description of Problem: How have those counties and agencies who have successfully implemented youth permanence models done so? What funding sources have they marshaled? How have they found resources for post-permanency services for the youth and family? How have grant-aided projects become sustaining? What agency administrative or court practices have they adopted to insure that finding youth permanence continues?

The group's main goal was to find out what models existed and what details would be important to another entity who wanted to start a similar program. To begin gathering data, the committee decided that analyzing in terms of issues and strategy components would help make sense of the information gleaned from successful programs as well as point to what questions still need answers. Research to complete a document on models is currently being undertaken by the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), to be completed by January, 2004.

E. Research, Chair: Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights Inc., New York City.
Group members: Rosemary Avery, Kate Cleary, Cynthia Flynn.

See Appendix 5 for detailed reports.

Description of Problem: The Research Work Group identified relevant research on permanence for older children and families (including evaluative studies of programs with this focus), identified current research gaps, and worked collaboratively with other work groups to identify the specific issues, related to permanency for older children and youth, on which research is particularly needed.

See Research Workgroup Reports: A. Background Materials, B. Research Challenges in Family Recruitment for Adolescents.

VI. Identification of key topics and development of action plan (See Appendix 4 for details.)

Most of the second day of the convening was spent in large and small groups on the following tasks: A. Identifying key themes/topics/areas for action, B. Identifying key recommendations for each action area.; C. Developing specific strategies for the agreed upon recommendations, considering what resources will be needed to accomplish the task and what help will be needed to coordinate the task. Finally the group began to identify who would be responsible for leading the charge on each strategy.

From eleven suggested topic areas, the group designated six as priorities for the coming year: 1) Belief systems about permanence in the child welfare system, related professionals and the public; 2) Youth and families of color in the child welfare system; 3) Funding resources and fiscal incentives; 4) Youth participation in the permanency process; 5) Length of time it takes to achieve permanence (importance of concurrent planning); and 6) Use of IL as a permanence goal.

VIII. Conclusion

The convening closed with a recommendation from the large group that a third convening be held in a year to continue the work of the 2003 convening. Toward that end, several foundations have awarded grants to the California Permanency for Youth Project to hold a 3rd National Youth Permanence Convening. Discussion are underway to plan the convening.

Evaluation Summary of 2003 National Youth Permanence Convening

As at the 2002 Convening, participants (90 to 100%) were satisfied that the goals of the convening were clear, that they had been achieved, that the time spent was sufficient, and that next steps to be taken were clear.

Two-thirds of participants felt that key stakeholders were present and suggested the following additions: Native American leaders; legislators; additional national adoption associations; representatives from additional major metropolitan centers; National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; more researchers; Children's Bureau; probation; more youth and family involvement, including birth parents; front line social workers; more county representation; children's attorneys, county councils, CASAs, judges, referees, and more commissioners. Some of these additions, if they are made, will require financial assistance to attend.

One hundred percent (100%) of participants found the material distributed so helpful that they had already distributed it. Other research desired included adoption outcomes for youth; information on multiple placements; overview of how new programs could be funded; and the benefits and problems once permanency has been achieved for youth.

As in 2002, each part of the convening was mentioned as most valuable for someone. Several persons mentioned the ex-foster care young adult presentation. Others mentioned the adoptions programs and permanency models, hearing about new policies and legislation supporting permanence, foster parent testimony, research, and, not least, the brainstorming and energy generated. One participant wrote, "My eyes were opened regarding the meaning of permanency for youth." And another, "It was by far one of the most productive and enlightening adoption events I have been to in my career. The discussion was professional, focussed, and action oriented. So many conferences I attend represent great words and solid motivations but do not end up in actionable strategies that will impact children's lives."

We continued to wonder whether the convening would have an impact on participants' work settings. Again, according to participants, the 2003 convening impact was significant in terms of their work. Some of the changes were specific and others, equally important, were attitudinal: "I will place an even greater emphasis on older youth who come into contact with our program; changing our contract with the State of California to include permanency plans for older youth." And, "It already has. I was reviewing our lit review for the Teens in Congregate Care project and discovered to my horror that we had failed to include family connections in our discussion of youths' transitioning from foster care. That has been fixed!" Participants will also carry this value into all grant making for foster youth, train staff on the ideas expressed, change her approach with all older adolescents, use sample policies distributed at the convening, try to bring the Western Washington Catholic Com. Services program to my state, pass along the ideas received to others in my role as a consultant/trainer/teacher. One participant said that the

research update enhanced her understanding of youth permanency issues. Another, that he was now aware of policy issues on a national level and gained ideas for policy initiatives in his state.

For a 2004 Convening, participants felt that the 2003 convening structure and facilitation were crucial to actually getting the work done. The pre-convening workgroup structure was generally thought good and several participants suggested using that structure in preparation for 2004. Perhaps, one suggested, the workgroups could get even more concrete and specific before the convening; two persons suggested that we use the workgroup topics as a starting framework for the 2003 convening.

Regarding content, participants suggested more research, discussion of guardianships, mental health issues, and racial disproportionality; and hearing from some young adults who found types of permanency other than adoption. Some county participants want a more even balance between public and private participants.

The biggest question the convening planning group faces is size: no participant wanted a larger group, but many suggested additional participants. Most seemed to feel that, although the group was large, the small group discussions were helpful to keeping it manageable. One wanted a smaller group that was regionally diverse.

***Stuart Foundation 2nd NATIONAL YOUTH PERMANENCE CONVENING Participants---
April 2003***

- ◆ Ackron, Julie, Monterey County Social Services
- ◆ Allen, Robin, California CASA, Oakland, CA
- ◆ Ansell, Dorothy, National Resource Ctr. for Youth Development, Univ. of Oklahoma
- ◆ Armstrong, Bonnie, Foundation Consortium, Child Welfare Partnerships
- ◆ Avery, Rosemary, Cornell University
- ◆ Badeau, Sue, Consultant, Philadelphia, Pew Commission and New York City
- ◆ Banks, Bahati, San Francisco Foundation
- ◆ Beasley, Gary, San Mateo County
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- ◆ Bettencourt, Bill, Annie E. Casey Family to Family, California
- ◆ Biddle, Carol - Kinship Center, Monterey, California
- ◆ Black, Berisha –CA Youth Connection and Emancipation Ombudsperson, LA County
- ◆ Bussiere, Alice, Youth Law Center, San Francisco
- ◆ Campbell, Kevin, Catholic Community Services, Tacoma, WA

- ◆Carter, Lucy Salcido, Consultant, Woodside, CA
- ◆Cedano, Young Adult Speaker, North Carolina
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- ◆Cleary, Kate, Consortium for Children, CA
- ◆David, Dixie, The Adoption Exchange, Colorado
- ◆Deckker-Davidson, Beverly, San Mateo County
- ◆Dresslar, Kathryn, Legislative Director, to Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg, CA
- ◆Farr, Lyn, EMQ Children and Family Services, Sacramento
- ◆Farris, Lindsay, CA Dept. of Social Services, Sacramento
- ◆Fatemi, Maryam, LA County Department of Children and Family Services
- ◆Flynn, Cynthia, Center for Child and Family Studies, Univ of S. Carolina, Columbia
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- ◆Foster, Gwen, The California Endowment
- ◆Freundlich, Madelyn, Children's Rights, Inc, New York
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- ◆Gunderson, Karin, NW Inst. for Children & Families, University of Washington School of Social Work, Seattle
- ◆Hart, Sandy, Washington State DCFS Region 6, Olympia
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- ◆Jacobs, Jill, Family Builders by Adoption, Oakland, CA
- ◆Jamieson, Marie, Families for Kids Partnership, Seattle
- ◆Johnson, Gail, Sierra Adoption Services, Nevada City, California
- ◆King, Diana, Monterey County Social Services
- ◆King, Gloria, Black Adoption Placement and Research Center, Oakland, CA
- ◆Knipe, Janet, California Youth Connection, San Francisco
- ◆Kroll, Joe, NACAC, St. Paul, Minnesota
- ◆Lacon, Colin, Stuart Foundation, San Francisco
- ◆Lewis, R. B. (Bob), Consultant, Gloucester, MA
- ◆Lippold, MB, Marion Superior Court, Indianapolis
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- ◆Ogelsby, Zena, Institute for Black Parenting, Los Angeles
- ◆Olenick, Michael, Emancipation Services Division, Los Angeles County

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- ◆ Pecora, Peter, Casey Family Programs, Seattle
- ◆ Pitcl, Joni, California Partnership for Children, Sacramento
- ◆ Ploehn, Trish, LA County
- ◆ Powell, Rita, Jim Casey Youth opportunities Initiative, Inc., Texas
- ◆ Quintanilla, Maria, Latino Family Institute, Los Angeles
- ◆ Ritchey, Raine, Children's Deputy, LA Cty Board Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
- ◆ Rodriguez, Jennifer, California Youth Connection
- ◆ Schroeder, Carroll, CA Alliance of Child and Family Services, Sacramento
- ◆ Shore, Erika, Alameda County, Oakland, CA
- ◆ Slater, Peggy, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
- ◆ Soronen, Rita, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Dublin, Ohio
- ◆ Stevens, James, Young Adult Speaker
- ◆ Sturgeon, Virginia, Consultant, Lexington, KY
- ◆ Sullivan, Dennis, Solano County, CA
- ◆ Townsend, Gwendolyn E. Lawson, UJIMA Community Services, Seattle
- ◆ Tromblay, Amanda, San Bernardino County, CA
- ◆ Vengapally, Varghese, Alameda County, Oakland, CA
- ◆ Walker, Ellen, Zellerbach Family Fund, San Francisco
- ◆ Weiss, Susan: Casey Family Programs, Seattle
- ◆ Wilber, Shannan, Legal Services for Children, San Francisco
- ◆ Williams, Millicent M., Child Welfare League of America
- ◆ Williamsen, Honorable Nancy, Juvenile Court, Stanislaus County, CA
- ◆ Wilson, Dee: Regional Administrator, Washington State Region Six
- ◆ Wilson, Gayle, Casey Family Programs, Bay Area
- ◆ Wirth, Judith, WA Dept. of Social and Health Services, Region 3, Arlington, WA

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- ◆ Teri Kook, Program Officer, Child Welfare

California Permanency for Youth Project

- ◆ Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director, California Permanency for Youth Project
- ◆ Mardi Louisell, Consultant, California Permanency for Youth Project

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APPENDIX 1: PROGRESS ON YOUTH PERMANENCY SINCE APRIL, 2002

A. *Washington State Report:* Reporter: Marie Jamieson, Families for Kids Partnership, Seattle
Goals set at the 2002 Convening and Progress:

1. Get permanency on the agenda of current youth initiatives, in particular DSHS Secretary Braddock's Select Committee on Adolescents in Need of Long Term Care. The state group worked on this for six months, holding extensive stakeholder interviews.

Outcome: Youth permanence recommendations are part of the final committee report on permanency. The Washington group has used those recommendations to bolster its credibility and move ahead with the youth permanence agenda.

2. Hold a state-wide convening. After considering a convening, the group instead decided to hold state-wide, field-based permanency forums, focusing on adolescents, with the goal of bringing different professional practitioners together, including DCFS, CASA, attorneys, Tribes, ILP providers and ILP and adoption social workers. Named, "Who still needs a family?", the group prepared by gathering data on youth in non-relative care for longer than four (4) years. One forum was held in each of Washington's six regions. Content of the half-day forums included youth data analysis, examination of youth permanence myths, defining permanency for youth, tools for what works (mining the file, reconnecting with relatives, child specific recruitment for adoption, establishing a planned process for reconnecting the seventeen year old with parents). Funding came from IL Chafee state money. The forums received positive responses, with one of the main comments being "hope." A Briefing Paper on the forums will be written in August, 2003.

In addition to the above goals, Washington reported on the following:

◆ *Family Group Conferencing:* The NW Institute for Children and Families, University of Washington School of Social Work, Seattle, continues to do Stuart-funded Family Group Conferencing with youth in group care. As of August 1, the project has completed forty-nine of the proposed seventy (70) conferences and many follow-up conferences. The average number of family members attending ranges is six (6), although one conference had fourteen (14). Some children have out of home care for up to ten (10) years with multiple placements. As a result of the conferences, children are moving to less restrictive placements, including family. On revisiting the family, the project has found that they are concerned about these youth and want to be involved. The group care agencies who work with these youths are enthusiastic about the conferences.

Systems barriers continue to prevent completing plans in a timely manner. The project will attempt to determine what those barriers are and how they can be changed.

Contact: Judith Wirth, wirj300@dshs.wa.gov, or Karin Gunderson, kgund@u.washington.edu

◆ *Catholic Community Services, Western Washington, Tacoma,* continues with its FAST program. (See Summary 2002.) Kevin Campbell highlighted the importance of expanding the perception of who the family is. When that is done, relatives who are willing and able to make

the commitment to the children become available. To achieve permanence, the search and find process must be invested with a sense of urgency. Otherwise, what could be done in months, takes years.

Contact: Kevin Campbell, 253-759-9544, kevinc@ccsww.org

◆ *Northwest Adoption Exchange* is doing the second year of its child specific recruitment project under Barbara Pearson. Eighty (80) kids have been identified and as of April, forty-five (45) of them have been placed with family. One half of the eighty kids are over ten (10) years old. However, only six (6) of these have been placed. The project staff feel that the key to success is answering each call with a live voice and getting to know the kids through mining the files, as well as finding out exactly how much weight to put on the MH diagnosis or incidents contained in file. For example, a sixteen (16) year old who had a sexual incident at age eight (8) but nothing since, could be stigmatized by the earlier incident's presence in the case file.

Contact: Barbara Tucker Pearson, 206-441-6822, Bpearson@nwresource.org

◆ *The Ruby Slippers Project, Region Six, Washington State, Dee Wilson and Sandy Hart.* Developed as a result of Dee Wilson's attendance at the 2002 convening, the project gathers information on all kids in care longer than two years in Region 6. The project, begun in 2002, identified the children, staffed the cases, and looked at barriers and child characteristics. Of the 486 kids, 159 did not have a permanent placement identified. Of the original 159 children, 121 were age 11 to 18. As of August 2003, eight-one (81) children are in permanent placements and forty (40) children are not. The project is completing plans, staffings and strategies to find homes for the remaining children.

Contact: Sandy Hart, 360-725-6798 or 360-725-6800, hasa300@dshs.wa.gov

◆ *COMPEL (Churches on the Move for Permanency in Every Life), Gwendolyn Townsend, Seattle.* A Faith-Community Based Model Program for Permanency in the Lives of Our Children and Adolescents. COMPEL (through UJIMA Community Services, Formerly One Church, One Child of Washington State), forms a partnership with African American community churches to a) recruit, train, educate and support prospective families for our children and adolescents in the foster care system of Washington State; b) seek practical supports (hair care, transportation, job referrals for teens, etc.) for the families who are connected to the child or adolescent; c) develop individualized support systems for the families.

The program continues the African American community's heritage of taking care of its own by developing individualized recruitment and training plans for each church; developing innovative ways of making the disproportionately large number of African-American children and adolescents who are available for forever homes more visible in the community; recruiting and training permanency planning resource families (foster, adoptive, kin) in church settings; developing a support system for each child and adolescent within his/her own faith community by supporting their Permanency Planning Resource Family.

Contact: Gwendolyn Townsend, 206.760.3456, gwendolyn@ococujima.org

◆ *Washington State IL Contracts, Lori McDonald, IL Program Manager.* McDonald is rewriting all IL contracts to include a section on youth permanence and a requirement for contractors to engage in specific activities with youth designed to develop permanent connections, to do relative and family searches and to reconnect youth to family (in a safe way).

McDonald held a Positive Youth Development Conference on July 31, 2003, which included two workshops on youth permanence: a) developing permanent connections, and b) reconnecting youth to family. Youth in care and alumni were hired as facilitators and through small group exercises assisted their adults "helpers" (social workers, CASAs, foster parents, IL providers, group care providers and community partners).

Contact: Lori McDonald, 360- 902-8262, mclo300@dshs.wa.gov

B. California Report:

1. *California Task Force on Youth Permanence:* Carol Biddle: Despite national and state fiscal crises in child welfare, California participants in the 2002 Youth Permanence Convening formed a workgroup of forty people with varied membership, including youth adults, and met approximately every three months. Five committees developed: 1) models of change in behavior; 2) practice; 3) ad hoc resource committee (research evaluation and data); 4) fiscal innovation and funding sources; and 5) public policy. The group has made progress at the same time it faces challenges in the size of the group, the diversity of the state and of the workgroup, and differing perspectives between counties and private nonprofits. A retreat was held in May to focus on vision and goals for 2003-2004.

2. *Development of AB 408, Permanency for Older Foster Youth / Prudent Parent Standard for Foster Youth Activities.* Kathy Dresslar, Legislative Director to Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg reported on the AB 408, which proposes to:

- Declares legislative intent that no child be emancipated from the foster care system without a connection to a committed and caring adult. Documents the need and possibilities for permanency for older kids, not just younger children.
- Strengthens the right of children 10 years of age and older to be notified of and present at their own dependency hearings, to have their voices heard.
- Improves the quality and "normalcy" of foster care life by establishing a "prudent parent" standard for foster caregivers, empowering them to allow foster kids to spend overnights with friends, go on field trips or to the mall without requiring criminal background checks of chaperones / friends and their friends' parents / supervisors.
- Requires social workers to ask children aged 10 and older, who are not placed with relatives, and who have been in the foster care system for six months or longer about relationships they have that are important to them, whether they are family or non-family relationships. Allows social workers to make these same inquiries of younger children, as appropriate.
- Requires social workers to include in their periodic reports to the court regarding children placed with non-relatives that have been in the foster system for six months or more their

continuing efforts to identify and maintain relationships with appropriate individuals who are important to the child, consistent with the child's best interest.

- Promotes permanency for older kids, not just younger children, by encouraging use of child specific recruitment and listing on adoption registries.

3. *California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director.*

The goals of the three year project, funded by the Stuart Foundation, are a) to increase awareness of the necessity for youth permanence through meetings and conferences; through documentation of model programs and through a report on youth's perspectives on permanence; b) to promote effective public policy on youth permanence; and c) to work with four California counties (Alameda, Monterey, Stanislaus, and San Mateo) to create practice and administrative policy that will result in better permanency outcomes for the counties. The project will provide technical assistance and development of youth permanence curricula, as well as a formative evaluation on how the counties develop their models and achieve success. With the goal of raising funds to hold a 3rd National Youth Permanence Convening in 2004, CPYP invited the foundations represented to meet during the 2003 convening to consider how to fund a third convening.

C. New York City

1. New Policy: Limiting the Use of Independent Living as a Permanency Planning Goal and Requiring Family-Based Concurrent Plans for Youth with Goals of IL.
Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights, Inc., New York City

See Appendix 6 for policy.

This policy limits the use of IL as a permanency goal and is designed to create a culture shift so that no child will age out without a committed caring adult. It is still possible to assign IL as a goal, but, if the person is fifteen (15) years old or younger, a deputy commissioner with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS, the City's public child welfare agency) must sign off. If the person is sixteen (16) or over, someone lower in the ACS hierarchy must give written approval. Particularly important is the requirement that any child who has an IL goal must have on file a written concurrent plan for one of the following: reunification, adoption, guardianship, custody or a caring adult identified. Active youth participation is required to identify members of family, extended, or fictive kin, with whom they would like to be connected, whether from present or past. This youth participation must be documented as the plan is developed. The policy requires that steps be taken to actively engage family, to identify barriers to family participation and to identify supports to enable the families to accomplish this. To support this policy, Bob Lewis has consulted with the department and trained private child welfare agencies in the City on how to talk to young people about adoption, what a social worker might say when the youth says no to adoption, how to address what adoption means practically, and how to clarify that birth family connections can be maintained.

One of the most controversial points in the policy is that, from this time on, a youth cannot be presented with a document that states the youth does not want to be adopted under any circumstances. In the past, when this was done, the youth waived any consideration of adoption. In research on the adoption waiver, as reported by Rosemary Avery, the single most important

factor in not getting adopted was the filing of the legal document of the adoption waiver. Now, a youth can say he or she doesn't want to be adopted by a specific party, but not that he or she doesn't want to be adopted at all.

2) Teens in Congregate Care Project, Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights, Inc. NYC.

Children's Rights has developed a partnership with two other organizations that provide legal advocacy to children in foster care to conduct a major study with teens in congregate care. These youth rarely receive quality permanent planning services. The study will examine seven different domains: 1. permanency; 2. transitioning out of foster care; 3. youth's placements while in care; 4. services to youth while in care; 5. safety issues for youth in congregate care; 6. youth involvement in decision making and planning for themselves; 7. recommendations for improving the foster care system for youth. The project has conducted interviews with key stakeholders at ACS (the City's public child welfare agency – the Administration for Children's Services), representatives of private child welfare agencies that provide congregate care, judges, law guardians (lawyers), social workers, representatives of advocacy organizations, and young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who have left care. It is anticipated that the results of the study will be released in the fall of 2003.

3) New York's Longest Waiting Children, Sue Badeau, Consultant

This collaborative effort is funded by a federal adoption opportunity grant to New York state, who, in turn, collaborates with New York City. The project looked for kids who were legally free and had been waiting in foster care the longest time. Some had been in care for as many as eighteen (18) years, some "only" ten (10) years. There were more males than females, they were predominately African-American, and most were in congregate care. Objectives of project are: 1. To develop specific case approaches for permanency; 2. To identify barriers; 3. To provide incentives: if the agency achieves permanency for a young person in the system for five years or more, it gets credit for 1.5 child; 4. Create training; 5. Develop a monitoring instrument.

The project hired three (3) expeditors, e.g., professional nags, who convened Adoption (or Permanency) Action Team meetings and implemented Individualized Adoption Plans for each child in the project. Then expeditors also do such things as call social workers, judges, etc., frequently to ask what's next. Some changes that have occurred include the following.

1) The school-system IEP (Individual Education Plan) has been adapted for child welfare and is called the IAP (Individual Adoption (permanency) Plan.

2) Now all multidisciplinary adoption and permanency action teams ask "What would it take to get past this hurdle or barrier?" The answers heard are no money, no permanency person available and no transportation, so the project works on making those happen. Sometimes basic resources are a barrier, such as a child who does not have clothes suitable for the photoshoot. The project also tries to do five things concurrently, rather than one thing at a time.

3) The project has developed a permanency ceremony for those who have a permanent connection but are not being adopted (often due to college aid inducement);

4) Developed training tools about how to talk with young people about permanency and how to talk with those around the children about permanency;

5) Worked with NYC ACS to develop a speakout bureau and an inter-jurisdictional placement improvement group.

6) Increased the number of children who are monitored for permanency. In the past, the children who were monitored were those whose stated goal was adoption; now any child whose goal is reunification, guardianship, and IL is monitored also.

Results: A year and half into the project, permanency has been achieved for twenty-six (26) kids.

Contact: Sue Badeau, 215- 327-3579; 212- 676-6979 (NYC), sbadeau@aol.com

D. Older Youth Adoption Initiative, Rita Soronen, Dave Thomas Foundation.

The 2002 National Convening on Youth Permanence motivated the Dave Thomas Foundation to distribute the video more aggressively. As of April 2003, 6000 videos had been sent out. The foundation will continue marketing the video. The convening also motivated the foundation to move its older youth initiative to the forefront of its North American effort. In 2002, the foundation sent out an RFP for results-driven teen adoptions and in 2003, the Foundation funded the following three projects (each summary written at six months into the grant).

◆ *Birmingham, Alabama, Children's Aid Society: Teen Adoption Initiative:* Child-specific recruitment model promoting the adoption of older youth. Alabama is fiftieth in the nation in fiscal resources devoted to children. The project seeks to identify teens in long term foster care who are appropriate for permanency planning. Fifteen (15) teens have been identified; of these fifteen, families have been identified for eight (8) but none are permanent as yet. Some of the usual barriers were identified: resistance from social workers, supervisors and the teens themselves. Prior to this point, the teens believed they would simply age out of long term foster care; foster families distrusted the system because they had approached the system years ago and been told they could not be permanent families; none of the teens had participated in discussions with social workers about adoption.

◆ *Greater St. Louis Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition: Project Teen:* Recruiting families for waiting teenagers in metro St. Louis. The Coalition services thirteen (13) Missouri and Illinois counties with eighteen (18) foster homes and Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs). Four of these from East St. Louis and four from St. Louis participate in the project, doing a strength-based assessment, discussing the assessment with the children, and looking for permanence possibilities. The team wraps around each child, holds monthly meetings, and updates teens weekly on progress. Other areas are addressed, such as employment. DCF has committed to fast tracking the documents needed for permanence. As of April, 2003, two teens have been placed and five identified. Some challenges were unanticipated, for instance, there are more families waiting than teens available; the families are from rural Missouri and the teens are urban and want to stay where they are.

◆ *New York City, You Gotta Believe!: Teen Adoption Project: An Army of Recruiters:* Recruiting adoptive families for waiting teenagers. Program is based on research noting that parents come to be special needs adoptive parents because they have had personal contact with an agency staff member or another adoptive parent. The program is recruiting and sending a "army" of experienced adoptive parents, former foster children adopted as teens, and community

activists to recruit new homes for teens by making one-to-one contact. The project will support 12- 24 recruiters who work 5-10 hours/week, with a goal of fifteen (15) new families and ten (10- teens placed. To date, fifteen (15) families have been certified, sixteen (16) recruiters hired, and five (5) teens matched with families.

Other Older Youth Projects of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption:

◆ *Los Angeles, Alliance for Children's Rights: Adoption Backlog Initiative:* Facilitating the legal finalization of special needs adoptions and reducing the backlog of special needs adoption cases in LA County. This project aims to eliminate bureaucratic barriers towards special needs adoption. The adoptions in this program are all in the final stages, simply waiting for the legal paperwork to be complete and a hearing to be held. The goal is that 140 of the teens identified will be adopted. From June 1, 2002 – February 1, 2003, the adoptions of 110 older youth (11 years and older) had been finalized.

◆ *Florida State University Research: Florida's Adoptive Families: A Longitudinal Look at Family Development – Identifying Key Indicators of Successful and Unsuccessful Adoptive Placements;* Research examining factors that contribute to successful adoption of special needs children. This is funding for a 3 year period. the project will collect data from 900+ adoptions. Short-term goals include the collection and analysis of current and relevant data to illuminate the factors that contribute to disrupted placement as well as those that make satisfied and permanent placements. Long-term goals include convening best practices, decreasing disruptions and increasing permanency. To date, 14,000 surveys have been distributed to adoptive parents and 4,700 surveys to adopted teens. 2,200 adoptive parent surveys have been returned and 440 adopted older youth surveys have been returned.

◆ *Minneapolis Minnesota: Minnesota Adoption Resource Network (MARN).* To create an outreach campaign (*Our Voices Matter*) in which Minnesota foster youth, ages 14 –21, advocate for permanency while educating public and policy makers about changes that would improve the lives for older youth who await adoption.

Contact: Rita Soronen, 614- 764-8482, rita_soronen@wendys.com

APPENDIX 2: OTHER UPDATES

A. *State of Illinois Performance Based Contracting:* Peggy Slater, Legacy Project, Illinois Department of Illinois Dept. of Children & Family Services

In the early 1990s the child welfare population in Illinois was on the rise. Children were entering the child welfare system at an alarming rate and remaining there. Illinois started the following four initiatives to move children to permanency:

1. In 1996, **home of relative reform** imposed a requirement that relatives become licensed foster care providers in order to receive full board rate; a lower rate was provided to unlicensed relatives.
2. In 1997, the **Permanency Initiative** made several changes in the Juvenile Court Act including permanency reviews every 6 months beginning at the 12th month in care, with the court setting the child's permanency goal at the recommendation of DCFS. Long term foster care was eliminated as a permanency goal. In Cook County, extra courtrooms were assigned to termination of parental rights hearings, and a special call was set up to hear guardianship cases.
3. Also in 1997, IV-E funding was made available for **subsidized guardianships**.
4. In 1998, **Performance Contracting** went into effect, as explained below.

All four of the above contributed to the dramatic improvement in moving children to permanency, but the single most effective factor was Performance Contracting.

History: Around 1996, the Department of Children and Family Services opened its door to increased private sector participation in the delivery of child welfare services. Previously, the state department had 80 % of kids in care, and the private sector, 20%. By 2001, the balance had shifted to 80% in private and 20%, public. The department began its partnership with the private sector by outlining objectives in a contractual agreement: improve permanence, stability, accountability and performance.

To foster buy in, the department sought input from all parties prior to setting the terms of the contract. The department and representatives of the state Child Care Association and many of the individual agencies met and established a common goal, created common objectives, and set realistic expectations. At this point, the average child in Illinois still remained in care for five(5) to six (6) years. The department set up a level playing field, i.e., the department would be held to the same standards as private agencies and would also have the autonomy to restructure service delivery systems. The initial performance contract required that six (6) permanencies (return home, adoption, guardianship) be achieved each year out of each caseload (25 cases). Each caseload was permitted two non-permanency exits (i.e. age-outs). Only agencies that achieved this goal would receive additional intake. Agencies were given access to resources such as training and dollars for counseling and reunification. When permanency was achieved early in the year, the agency was permitted to invest remaining dollars in their agency efforts. Later yearly contracts required one-third rather than one-fourth of the cases to move to permanency.

Caveat: In this initiative, it is still an ongoing necessity to confirm that the practice of the partnership continues to meet the common goal for ALL children, e.g., there must be an

accountability loop to make sure that some specific group of children doesn't fall to the bottom because there is no incentive to serve them.

Results: Prior to performance contracting the permanency rate was 8%. In year one of the contract it jumped to 24%, year two was 30% and year three, 32%. Performance contracting, together with a reduction in the number of children coming into care, has achieved a caseload decline of more than 40%. In 1997, the caseload peaked at 51,000 children in care; in April, 2003, the number was below 20,000. The average caseload has fallen from 30.5 to 15. A banner achievement is that twice as many kids in post-permanency care are being supported by post-adoption and post-guardianship assistance as are in substitute care. However, although the contract provides that agencies receive a double performance credit for successful permanency placement of older kids, the contract model has not been tremendously successful for teens.

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B. *Court Related Update, California, CASA's Role in the Permanency Process.*
Robin Allen, California CASA, Oakland CA.

Funded by the Office of Criminal Justice Prevention (OCJP), Children's Justice Task Force, this project involves local CASA programs in San Mateo, Santa Clara and Imperial counties. Each county assign CASAs to older youth with the specified goal of achieving permanence. The CASA will mine the files, work with the youth to determine who might be a resource for permanence, work on the ILP goals, explore adoption, identify barriers and seek remedies, and pursue other activities that will insure that a young person can emancipate with permanent interconnected relationships which will sustain and support the youth to adulthood. Volunteers specifically interested in working with older youth will be recruited. CAL CASA will provide Technical Assistance and support for the project and bring together curricula for training volunteers. will disseminate best practices to other programs in the state and the nation, and engage and supervise the evaluator for the project.

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C. *Report on Pennsylvania: Partners in Permanency, Philadelphia.* Sue Badeau, Consultant

Initiated by Commissioner Alba Martinez, the goal is to ensure that permanency is achieved for every child in DHS care, including adolescents. A new permanency option, Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship (SPLC) has been introduced. As part of the unveiling of this new option, a massive effort to provide training to all 1800 workers in DHS and private agencies on permanency decision making was undertaken. Sue Badeau, her daughter Chelsea, and Cornerstone Consulting worked with Philadelphia to create a training video, curriculum and other materials to train these workers, supervisors and administrators. The project has trained all judges in Philadelphia family and juvenile court. Statewide, there has been a decision to add permanency to what had been an adoption focus. Previously providers in the state were only paid for services when a child was free for adoption. Now, providers can be paid for services to prepare a child for permanence, even if he or she isn't free for adoption.

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D. *New Research: Successful Adolescent Adoptions Research Study*, Cynthia Flynn, Center for Child and Family Studies, University of South Carolina

Funded by an Adoption Initiatives Grant, Children's Bureau, this three year, field initiated research project aimed to find out the common elements of success in adolescent adoptions. The original age group was to be 12 to 18 years old, but was expanded to 12 – 20 years old. The project started by looking for participants in South Carolina but, to obtain sufficient families, it had to expand beyond the state. A total of forty-nine (49) families from eighteen (18) states participated, many located through NACAC. Fifty-eight (58) parents were interviewed and thirty-seven (37) adoptees from thirty (30) families. Marital status included fifteen (15) single mothers, five (5) single dads and thirty (30) couples. Because the participants are all volunteers, the research is a biased selection, not a random sample. The interviews took an hour to an hour and a half. A twenty dollar stipend was offered, which all teens and some parents accepted.

Twenty (20) families had multiple adoptions, seventeen (17) families adopted sibling groups. Other data gathered included the ages of the parents, what age child the parents anticipated adopting versus the actual age of the child adopted, and services provided after the adoption was finalized. The number of placements prior to adoption for the adolescents ranged from one to thirty placements.

The parents were asked how they defined success and answers included the following: "He's still here, he's rebelled, but he hasn't left." "We're still here." "We're making him go to counseling, but he's still in the home." "The child lived with me for two years and that's the longest she had ever lived anywhere and she's still in touch with me." "We gave her a place to launch into adulthood, she was the first in her family to graduate from high school and she got married before she got pregnant." In the end, the research found that the parents made a commitment: "I'm adopting this child and it doesn't matter what he or she does."

On their end, most teenagers wanted a life change and were willing to moderate their behavior to find permanent homes. Some of their words were: "If you get a chance to be adopted, it's the greatest thing in the world." "You need grandparents." "I have a permanent home and don't have to move around so much." "I had a place to go. I could look forward instead of having to constantly think about where my next home would be." "The attention and love were the best part." The worst part of being adopted was: "Not being able to go home, to be in my old neighborhood, to see my birth family, to see my real mom all the time." All of the families said that if you adopt a teen, in some respect, you are adopting their birth family.

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E. *Funding possibilities:*

1. *Funding Streams: Using EPSDT in Orange County:* Carol Biddle, Kinship Center, Salinas, CA

Because Orange County was interested in having adoption and permanency-competent mental health services, Kinship Center and Orange County investigated blended funding. In this way, the Health Care Agency, Social Services Agency, and Kinship Center developed an adoption clinic that was EPDST funded, with the exception of a small amount of start up money

from social services. The clinic initially planned to see sixty-five (65) children per week, but within ninety days was seeing eight (80) children and had a waiting list. Eventually, with the help of the Orange County Families and Children's Commission (Proposition 10) the Mental Health clinic was expanded and now serves 135 kids a week, all of whom were children from the county foster care system and were either in need of permanent placement or in permanent adoptive or relative caretaker families. The Commission also fully funded, for one year, a developmental program for children under six years old, connected to the mental health clinic, which was converted to an EPSDT-funded program beginning in year two. The leveraged funding from the Commission over several grant years has allowed the clinics to move toward total self sufficiency, which will be achieved by the end of 2004. These two clinic projects, the Adoption Clinic and the Seedlings Clinic received an 2002 Adoption Excellence Award from the US Department of Health and Human Services.

The Berger Institute at Claremont McKenna College is conducting research on the clinics with the first data on outcomes about to be published. An Attachment Assessment Tool was developed by the clinic and the Burger Institute has normed the tool specifically for adopted children.

The key to success has been the EPSDT funding. Staffing includes therapists, case managers, child assessment specialists, psychologists, occupational therapist, psychiatrist and a parent educator. The Commission has recently funded a separate project, connected to the clinics, that provides for a speech therapist and therapist to see non-Medic-Cal covered, adopted children. Additional funding is being sought for an educational tutoring component.

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2. *Using AAP to do wrap around for potential adoption disruptions. Santa Clara County.* Carol Biddle, Kinship Center, Salinas, CA.

Piloted by Santa Clara and Kinship Center, this project has served forty (40) adopted children placed by the county. Wraparound families are those facing possible disruption or institutional placement of their children in out of home care. The project is funded entirely through Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) funds.

The private agency receives a contracted rate for these services that allows for the provision of specific services that each individual family might need, e.g., tutoring, respite, handicapped accessibility, practical equipment. The goal of wraparound is to keep the family intact and functioning, avoid institutional placement, or, in some cases, to return a child from residential care back into his/her family. Outcomes for the first two plus years of wraparound have been promising, with children staying connected to their families. If for extraordinary reasons a child needs temporary placement outside the home, that also is paid for through the fund. Several kids have come into foster care temporarily on a planned respite basis while the family restores.

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3. *Training: ACT, Kinship Center.* Carol Biddle, Kinship Center, Salinas, CA. With Stuart Foundation's assistance, Kinship Center has developed clinic adoption training to provide in-depth knowledge to clinicians on working with adoption issues. To date, 2000 clinicians in

California have been trained. ACT is an 8-session intensive curriculum that has been taught in fifteen (15) California counties.

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F. *Partnership between Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services and EMQ Children & Family Services, Sacramento*, Lyn Farr, Regional Director, EMQ Children & Family Services.

History: Sacramento County had a significant number of kids placed in RTCs and group homes with lengthy stays because they had no identified family to support their transition to lower levels of care. Catholic Social Services of Tacoma WA had presented the FAST program to Sacramento County in 2001. In response to the vision, leadership and commitment of Jim Hunt, DHHS director, and the support of the Mental Health and CPS directors, EMQ implemented an approach that operates with the belief that all kids have a right to live in families. (See 2002 Youth Permanence Convening Summary for description of FAST program.) In November 2002, Catholic Social Services offered a consultant to Sacramento County to assist with service development, once a month for a year at minimal cost. By sharing and partnering with EMQ, Catholic Social Services believed they could further their mission and advance systemic change so that all children have an opportunity to grow up with unconditional love and belonging.

Target Youth: Kids in or at risk of high level group care; referrals originate from CPS, MH, and probation.

Funding: Sacramento is a IVE and SB 163 county which enables flexible use of foster care funding to support the child at home.

Structure of Program: Kids in high level group home care are referred to EMQ, which, as a wraparound provider, is responsible for finding a permanent family connection. Using the flexible funding, EMQ developed an FFA capacity in Sacramento to support quick movement from group care. New foster families are recruited who know that permanent relative connections are being sought. The foster parent is supported to foster the relationship between the youth and their family connection, whether a biological parent, grandparent or fictive kin. The initial recruitment has been very successful with ten new foster parents licensed and with youth placed. The monthly Catholic Social Services consultation has supported the rapid development of staff and supervisory skills and provided significant practical support with problem solving. The urgent identification of relatives and plans that support reconnection or development of relationships between the adults and youth has been critical to development of permanent placement options.

Barriers: It has been difficult for social workers and group home providers to let the kids go. Group homes, for their part, develop strong connections and often want the youth to finish the healing process before leaving group care. The social worker often relied on the group home clinicians to say when the healing was complete. From a social worker's perspective, group homes are safe and this is a good thing for kids. In addition, often workers can't tolerate the risk of pain and disappointment for the children if permanency doesn't materialize.

EMQ argued that children shouldn't grow up in group homes and that behavior was often made worse by intense settings; also, important goals that can't be accomplished in group homes can be accomplished in families. EMQ emphasized that if a child requires a group home, once the behavior that brought the youth into the group home has been addressed, that youth should be stepped down to a home environment as quickly as possible. Group homes are not places for healing.

Everyone wants the youth to be safe in their family and community. The system resistance comes, not because people don't care, but because, overall, the Child Welfare System does not provide guidance on how to safely share risk and responsibility with others. Building partnership relationships with county workers and group homes is slowly improving and making the process easier and more productive.

Researching the early records to find the family takes courage. In the beginning, both child welfare and EMQ staff resisted the research and phone calls. Asking uncomfortable or intrusive questions of a stranger seemed impossible. However, calls that are envisioned as difficult and awkward when a staff thinks about making them have turned out to be not so difficult with a live person on the phone. The conversations have tended to flow and responses have been high. Afterward, staff frequently say, "I don't know why I waited to make the call." The experience of doing it makes it easier over time and the rewards are priceless.

Goal: Of the 100 youth in the EMQ Wraparound caseload on 1/1/03, one-third were in group homes. Target of the Homeward Bound initiative was to have thirty (30) youth home by June 30. By June 30, 30 had stepped down from RTCs: nineteen (19) went to parents/kin (10 to a single mother, 1 to a single dad, 4 to two parents, 1 to an aunt and uncle, 1 to an older brother, 2 to their grandmother); and eleven (11) went to foster families who support the continuing search for relative links. Family connections were identified for some of the kids who have not yet achieved permanent home placements.

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G. Y.O.U.T.H. (Youth Offering Unique Tangible Help) Training Project: Training tool on working with youth, developed by youth. Jennifer Rodriguez and Reina Sanchez, California Youth Connection (CYC)

This training for social workers was developed to demonstrate the powerful outcomes of using positive youth development techniques with transition aged foster youth. A secondary goal was to increase the ability of the social worker and others in the system to *really* listen to youth.

Best practices include: social workers being culturally competent about relevant milestones in a foster teen's life; social workers engaging in conversations vs. interviews with youth; social workers getting to know youth before assigning labels based on case notes; and social workers partnering with youth on planning for permanency and the future. The training was developed with funding from the Children's Bureau of the DHHS through the Bay Area Academy and California Youth Connection. One of twelve 3-year projects funded in 2001, the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project is the only one guided, developed and delivered by current and former foster youth.

During year one, project coordinators asked social workers what types of training they wanted and asked foster youth what type of training they thought social workers needed. Focus groups with social workers and youth were conducted with a particular emphasis on marginalized youth, e.g., lesbian/gay, youth with mental health issues, youth with children.

Five training competencies were developed:

1. Participant applies knowledge of cultural and developmental needs of foster care youth when making assessments and case plans.
2. Participant is able to develop relationships, obtain information, communicate and listen effectively to foster care youth.
3. Participant utilizes traditional resources/referrals as well as experiential learning to prepare foster youth for emancipation.
4. Participant demonstrates compassion and commitment to foster youth.
5. Participant demonstrates sensitivity and skill in working with stigmatized foster youth groups including teen parents, youth with mental health issues and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/questioning youth.

Training development and delivery: Five foster youth created a two-day curriculum to address these competencies in different modalities. Foster youth (age 16-23) deliver the training. In order to prepare for delivering the training, youth received support and training in curriculum development, adultism, adult learning styles, dealing with group process, adolescent development, mind mapping, video production and facilitation skills. As part of the training digital stories were created. These are mini-documentaries, in which a youth creates a story about him or herself, and are an opportunity for the foster youth to tell his or her story in words he or she chooses. To create the digital story, the youth must learn multimedia skills, write a script, select images, music, create and edit. Fourteen digital stories have been developed for this project.

Funding is being sought to continue the Y.O.U.T.H. presentations and training and to develop another curriculum geared towards foster parents. Since June of 2002, Y.O.U.T.H. has conducted training at least once a month.

How does this curriculum relate to permanency? A youth must be a central player in the process of achieving permanence. Oftentimes those who most need permanence are youth with mental health problems, in group homes or in high level mental health facilities. This training helps social workers listen and better understand youth and emphasizes the importance of experiencing the youth as a real, live person, rather than an incident watch or suicide report. By learning to talk to and hear a youth, a social worker can hear what the concept of family means to a youth, rather than guessing what family means to youth and acting upon that.

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APPENDIX 3: REPORTS FROM WORKGROUPS

A. *Workgroup Report: Best Practices on Permanency for Older Youth*, Chair: Virginia Sturgeon, Consultant, Kentucky. Group members: Maureen Heffernan, Sue Badeau and Richard Bell

Description of Problem: Moving adolescents to permanence is often overlooked or avoided by agencies and workers because of the perceived difficulty of finding families for these youth. This workgroup defined best practice for moving adolescents to permanence, focusing on preparing the agency, worker, youth and prospective families for achieving successful, permanent placements for adolescents.

In addition to the work group's report, the following points were made during the presentation and discussion of this issue.

- ◆ It's not the youth's "no" we must unpack, but our own.
- ◆ Quality Assurance: The key to success is accountability. People will do what you measure, so if permanency is not measured and other outcomes are, people will do those and ignore permanency.
- ◆ Successive approximations: An agency does not have to train *everyone* to implement *anything*. One person can try something with one child and go from there.
- ◆ Each of us should evaluate our agencies to assure that the agency design provides opportunities for permanency, not barriers. In the majority of cases, permanency work is not necessarily an addition to the current work load, but instead a change in the way we work – from doing work at the back end to doing work at the front end.

Best Practices Recommendations:

1. Concurrent Planning for Youth Permanency. For older youth in the system, a number of activities should occur simultaneously and on an ongoing basis until a permanent family is identified. For instance, while it is often likely and best that a family can be found among those already known to the youth, the utilization of traditional recruitment resources should not be delayed pending the outcome of those efforts. Similarly, the other supportive interventions described below should also be provided in order to maximize every opportunity to find, nurture and sustain permanent families.

2. Preparing Youth for Permanency

- Listen to youth about their hopes and fears for family life.
- Understand that an initial “No” to adoption is only the beginning of the conversation and should in no way diminish active efforts to identify a permanent family for the youth.
- Provide individual and group therapeutic and educational interventions to help youth understand their lives and plan for their futures, including permanency considerations.

- Teach interpersonal and family living skills, and address emotional/behavioral issues that impact relationships.
 - Provide youth with opportunities for contact with other youth or young adults who have achieved permanence.
3. Identifying Potential Family Connections Already Known to the Youth
- Listen for the family connections that youth may already have, or for existing relationships with the potential to become family
 - Contact significant adults who are identified by the youngster and engage them in helping to plan for the youth's permanency; not all of these adults will have potential to be permanency resources, but some will have potential to form long-term caring relationships.
 - Utilize careful record-review to identify any significant adults in the child's life now or in the past who can be engaged to help plan for the youth.
 - Make a thorough search for relatives using case record information plus specialized locator services and technology. Update searches that may have been unsuccessful in the past.
 - Make renewed contact with birth parents or other family to reconsider their current status as an option for relationship or permanency
 - Don't rule out adults whose relationship with the youth began on a professional basis – therapists, teachers, childcare staff, etc. Do not allow policies regarding dual relationships, which are designed to protect children, to be used as a barrier to pursuing what may be their only option for permanency.
4. Involving Caring Adults in Planning
- Listen, prepare, educate, and engage current caregivers and significant adults in order to encourage their positive support for permanency planning on the youth's behalf. Try to avoid power struggles and allow these caregivers to change their minds and become more supportive of permanency planning once they are convinced you do not wish to hurt the child.
 - Utilize family decision-making models to engage all that can be considered kin (broad definition of kin) in planning for the youth.
 - Utilize models from the MRDD and Mental Health communities (ex: Circles of Support, Personal Futures Planning) to engage all types of adults (formal and informal relationships) in helping the youth plan and achieve goals related to all life domains, and also to identify and formalize permanent family connections
5. Supporting the *Process* of Family Making
- Avoid power struggles whenever possible, while persistently working towards permanency. For instance, understand a youth's reluctance to consider adoption when there is, as yet, no specific, identified family for the youth to meet, while continuing to look for a family.

- Reassure youth of their power in the process, but ask that they be willing to meet a potential family when one is identified.
- Recognize that relationship building is a process - provide ongoing interventions and support to youth and caring adults in order to move it forward.
- Develop safety plans and provide individualized education (re: mental health issues, chemical dependency, personal safety) when moving towards permanency for an older youth with birth parents or others who have difficulties in functioning.
- Do not allow a child's need for treatment in a group care setting to undermine potential permanent family connections. Remember, permanency is a relationship not a place. Encourage treatment/residential facilities to participate in planning for the child's future by recommending that each child have a least one visiting resource family, whether it be a relative, foster family or other resource family to assist the young person in forming relationships outside the facility and to "practice" family relationships and/or family living.
- Recruit, train, and pay young people who have been adopted as adolescents by the agency to serve as peer mentors or case consultants in adolescent cases.

6. Pursuing Traditional Adoption Recruitment Avenues

- Utilize all available recruitment resources, e.g. state, regional and national exchanges, adoption events, media recruitment, etc,
- Keep the conversation going with reluctant youth regarding their participation in recruitment
- Empower youth to take charge of as many pieces of their recruitment materials as possible, e.g. make a video, write a vignette, etc.
- Update photos and materials at least yearly to reflect the child's growth and development
- Provide opportunities for older youth to meet and interact with prospective adoptive families (i.e. picnics, agency-mentoring program, visiting family for children in residential facilities, etc.)
- Utilize professionals to produce high quality, appealing photos, vignettes and other recruitment materials
- Fully disclose youth's appealing, healthy qualities as well as the "special needs" which may be both challenging and off-putting to prospective parents.
- Implement a preparation program for youth awaiting adoption that addresses their questions and fears, assists them in accepting permanence and prepares them to move to a permanent family.

7. Prevention: Permanency as a component of all child welfare services:

Child welfare services should be delivered with an eye to permanency from the time of the agency's first contact with a child and family. Permanency thinking should be an element of high quality services including: Family Support & Preservation (plus needed supports – mental health & chemical dependency treatment, housing, etc.); Family Decision Making Models,

Mediation and other non-adversarial options; Concurrent Planning; Intensive Reunification; Kinship Care; Resource & Foster Adopt Families

These interventions would make it likely that the great majority of children entering the system would find early permanency with their birth parents, kin or resource/foster/adopt family. As a result, few older children would require specialized efforts to find a permanent family, and the system would be able to concentrate efforts and resources more effectively on meeting the needs of this small group of children.

8. Permanency Supports – Agency/Systemic

Financial resources and meaningful supportive and treatment services must be available to youth and their families once a permanent placement has been identified. This includes adoption, guardianship and kinship subsidies, concrete assistance (housing, furnishings, etc.), treatment resources and other supports. Many older youth have significant emotional, behavioral or educational needs and the same level of treatment and services should be available to the youth and family as would have been the case in system care.

To promote permanency for older youth the agency/system as a whole must adopt new policy, procedures and practices that promote rather than impede permanence. Some recommended changes are:

- Remove “independent living” as a goal for a child in the system or, if that cannot be achieved, put into place strong requirements that the change of a goal to independent living can only be made under very tightly monitored circumstances and must be revisited periodically.
- For all youth who currently have a goal of independent living, require that they also have a concurrent plan for achieving permanent family connections.
- Provide all youth over a certain age (14, 16, whatever is realistic in the setting) with independent living services, including a curriculum on how to develop and sustain meaningful permanent relationships in their lives.
- As a support to families providing permanence through adoption or guardianship for older youth, allow those youth to also be enrolled in independent living services to gain and enhance their skills at living interdependently as adults.
- Eliminate any practice that encourages or even allows youth to completely “waive” their consent to adoption in a generic way. Consent to or refusal of an adoption should be limited to a particular potential adoptive family, not to the concept of being adopted.
- In each jurisdiction, employ at least one “adolescent permanency specialist” who has training on how to communicate with youth about adoption and permanence, how to respond to a young person who says “no” to adoption, etc. This person should be available to serve as a trainer for other staff and to consult on specific cases.
- Provide agencies with a monetary incentive or bonus for successful implementation of permanency plan for adolescents in care. This “bonus” option could also be offered as an incentive to workers who achieve permanence for adolescents in care.
- Make efforts at the state level to remove college and financial barriers to the adoption of adolescents. A child who is adopted should be eligible for all benefits to which he would have been entitled had he remained in foster care.

9. Role of the Supervisor

Supervisors should have specific knowledge of permanency planning, as well as other aspects of their service area, and should be provided with regular opportunities for professional development, peer support and management supervision. Their responsibilities should include coaching and teaching staff in order that they can better achieve permanency outcomes. Supervisors should also set objective targets for staff permanency activities (for example, completing record reviews, relative searches or specific recruitment activities). Completion of these targeted activities should be included in staff performance appraisals.

10. Role of the Manager

- Hold supervisors accountable for permanency outcomes
- Arrange professional development opportunities for supervisors and staff
- Provide needed tools and resources
- Use case review and quality assurance processes to monitor and promote the achievement of permanency

11. Cultural Competence

- Culture strongly impacts the meaning and boundaries of family
- Makeup of staff should reflect the racial and cultural makeup of the children and families served
- Cultural competence is necessary to identify and evaluate permanency options
- Adolescents' sense of identity and preference regarding racial/ethnic make up of potential family and/or their ability to keep the child connected to his heritage should be considered

12. Quality Assurance

- Incorporate monitoring and measuring of permanency interventions into each agency's case review and quality assurance programs; develop such programs when not already in place
- Assure that all computer-based case monitoring systems include questions that will remind workers and supervisors of youth in foster care with whom they must revisit the discussion about permanence and also that social workers must continue their efforts to find permanence for that youth.
- Review cases of youth over a certain age (e.g., fourteen) for progress on permanency planning and implementation *more* frequently than other cases. (i.e. every 3 months instead of every 6 months)
- Develop accountability benchmarks and consequences for permanency outcomes (similar to those utilized in relation to Medicaid billing in many settings)
- Develop a utilization management function to address permanency interventions so that all children in care are receiving "best practice" services at the right time, in the right amount, to maximize achievement of permanency

13. Community Involvement /Advocacy: Child welfare organizations should:
- Advocate with governmental funders at all levels for adequate, flexible funding to allow for comprehensive services that address each youths unique needs
 - Advocate for college tuition waivers for youth for system youth, including those who have found permanent families
 - Develop and nurture community and neighborhood relationships (e.g. Family to Family model)

B. *Workgroup Report: Changing Attitudes*, Co-Chairs: Karin Gunderson, NW Inst., for Children and Families, U of Wash. School of Social Work, and Marie Jamieson, Families for Kids Partnership, Seattle; Committee Members: Susan Weiss, Zena Ogelsby, Karen Grace Kaho, Jill Jacobs, Dixie van de Flier Davis

Description of Problem: Practice shifts require systemic interventions that target policy, training and attitudes. This workgroup focused on attitude, building on the definition of permanence that was developed at last year's convening. We determined the system's internal and external target audiences, identified barriers to attitude shifts and developed tailored messages and means for message delivery for the various audiences identified.

The group developed a grid to outline the issues according to these categories (see below).

Additional points made during the presentation and discussion:

One must plan change carefully or there will be unintended consequences; for example, an extremely successful campaign might identify many youth interested in permanency but find there are no homes available. The first steps are to identify the early adopters of ideas, assess readiness for change in a specific area, and determine key stakeholders. Asking stakeholders about their worries about youth permanence might be a useful diagnostic tool. For example, when Northwest Institute was investigating why social workers didn't refer to Family Group Conferencing, it found that social workers were scared that the plan might blow up or that the child might be sent out of state. NW Institute could then address those fears realistically.

It is also crucial that we convey the same sense of urgency about permanence as we do about risk. Permanency should be mentioned in every training and "What have you done for permanence today?" should be a mantra.

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See attached grid in separate file.

C. Workgroup Report: Recruitment, Chair, Lauren Frey, Massachusetts Families for Kids, Children's Services of Roxbury, Group members: Natalie Lyons, Millicent Williams, Dixie Davis, Zena Ogelsby, Amanda Tromblay, Ada White and Drenda Lakin.

Description of Problem: Finding permanent families for adolescents is all too often limited by the common negative beliefs that most adolescents don't want families and that most families don't want adolescents. This workgroup started with the core belief that 'there is a family for every adolescent' and explored positive strategies and potential solutions. Creative and successful models of recruiting families for adolescents were discussed, as well as the issues of privacy and confidentiality, professional boundaries/ethics, public relations, youth-driven recruitment, expanded kinship search and more.

The workgroup developed the following handouts: Research Challenges in Family Recruitment for Adolescents (see below); Successful Models of Family Recruitment for Adolescents, a seven page document of models descriptions and related documents; Funding Challenges, Next Steps in Family Recruitment for Adolescents; Literature Review; "Teens Need Families Too" by Rose Garland, Adoption Consultant (Material not available on computer.)

At the convening, the workgroup presented three challenges concerning recruitment:

1. *Values and beliefs of social workers, supervisors, managers and organizations responsible for permanence for youth.* We must examine where these values and beliefs have resulted in policies that limit our recruitment action and restrict us, just as we must examine our own attitudes.

2. *Boundary and Confidentiality Issues and Professional Roles.* Confidentiality is a policy because of the best interests of the child, but it should not be used as a shield against the best interests of the child. When boundaries and confidentiality are issues, they can be dealt with – so long as the organization has a procedure for dealing with them. If there isn't a process in place when the issue arises, each time it comes up, it will be a barrier instead of an opportunity to make an informed decision. Bob Lewis has drafted a model staff adoption policy that looked at all the questions that arise about barriers and he is willing to share the draft with participants.

3. *Kinship and Recruitment.* Historically, relatives and kin were seen as a fallback position. Now we see them as a primary connection but, even so, there is often a green door for services, training and subsidies for non-relatives, and a red door for relatives. The room beyond the red door often doesn't contain as many services and subsidies. But both groups have the same needs. In Ohio, when the green door was opened to relatives, the agency was flooded with applicants. Using dual licensing also cut down on the length of the process.

Of course, the agency must take into account that relatives change over time, families grow, develop and heal, and our protection of these kids from those relatives may not be appropriate anymore. Paternal relatives are still neglected as a resource and should be engaged in the beginning. An interesting situation was mentioned in which a mother in Kentucky saw her kids on TV, adopted them, and the state was able to give her an adoption subsidy. Agencies generally have no requirement for doing a continuous search or for revisiting a search. The social worker and agency must ask the child on a periodic, consistent basis, who is your kin, who do you feel is kin?

That said, a relative or kin placement is not a reason to stop actively recruiting for teens and older youth. Relative adoptions are increasing while non-relative adoptions are decreasing. Active recruitment must be done in the community from which the kids come.

Casey Family Programs National Center for Resource Family Support has a website: www.casey.org/cnc with a report on "Individualized and Targeted Recruitment for Adoption." Recruitment projects, suggestions for recruitment success and an extensive reference list are included.

SUCCESSFUL MODELS OF FAMILY RECRUITMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS

“Connected and Cared For,” Karin Gunderson, Project Manager 206-616-7424

Using relative search and family group conferences to find permanent placements and family connections for older youths.

Catholic Community Services of Western Washington

Kevin Campbell, Intensive Resources Director, KevinC@ccsww.org

Using “family search” from existing child welfare case records and consistently finding relative connections for adolescents who have been living for years in institutional and foster care settings.

The Northwest Adoption Exchange, Barbara Pearson

Special recruitment project with the state of Washington working to place 80 children in adoptive or permanent families in a two-year period – all but 18 have found permanent families. This project is collaboration with 6 private adoption agencies. Reviews the child's entire file; does an updated relative search; contacts significant adults from the child's past searching for permanent contacts for the child; uses community meetings; uses AdoptUSKids website when necessary.

Family Focus, Maris Blechner

Small agency recruiting for adolescents by word of mouth, local advertising, etc.

Family Builders Through Adoption, Jill Jacobs

San Francisco Dept. of Human Services, SFChild Project, Gloria King (510) 839-3678 ext. 200

The SFChild Project is a successful targeted recruitment model for older and minority children and a private/public collaboration.

“Lifelong Family Connections for Adolescents,” Children's Services of Roxbury/Massachusetts Families for Kids. Kim Stevens, Program Director, Education and Training, 617-445-6655 X346 kstevens@csrox.org

Collaborative project with Massachusetts Department of Social Services. Uses Community of Care© review - a youth-driven process of identifying permanent family connections from a

youth's own network of significant relationships. A Family Consultation Team© process is then facilitated, incorporating the principles of concurrent planning, family group decision-making and mediation.

**Iowa's Permanency for Teens Project, Four Oaks, Inc.,
1916 Waterfront Dr., Iowa City, IA 52240 319-337-4523**

Former three-year demonstration project that made use of permanency "teams" consisting of the youth, caseworker and significant adults in the teen's life such as kin, former foster parents, therapists/counselors, and others.

The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids, Dixie Davis

\$22 million federally funded project, four-year national recruitment campaign that the federal government will be conducting through its cooperative agreement with AEA (the Adoption Exchange Association).

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities, Initiative

307 Buttercup Trail, Buda, Texas 78610

Rita Powell, Senior Director , Cell phone: (512) 659-7326, Office: (512) 295-2684

E-mail: rpowell@jimcaseyyouth.org

State of Indiana, MB Lippold,

(317) 924-7505

mblippold@mcjc.net

Kentucky - Special Needs Adoption Program, Virginia Sturgeon, sturgeon@infi.net

State-designated specialists, whose primary responsibility is to recruit adoptive families, provide funding to support adequate pre-placement visitation (in or out of state) and allow recruitment activities where prospective families interact with youth.

FAST Program, Catholic Community Services, Tacoma, Washington

Mary Stone Smith MarySS@ccsww.org

Family Assessment and Stabilization Team or Family: Assessment, Stabilization and Transition: therapeutic response to youth disrupting - whether from foster, adoptive or birth homes. Uses a variety of methods to locate relatives and other placement resources.

The Kinship Center, Carol Biddle, cbiddle@kinshipcenter.org

Kinship Center program in Southern California specializes in placement of older youth.

FUNDING CHALLENGES IN FAMILY RECRUITMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS

Adequate and consistent funding is required for:

- Comprehensive child welfare system reform to assure that family permanence is prioritized from the point of entry into the system, assuring that the younger children of today do not become the older youth of tomorrow.
- Adding evaluation components to existing models/programs that have been unable to adequately document or disseminate their success.
- Research, documentation and dissemination of successful recruitment approaches and evidence-based best practices.
- Research, documentation and dissemination of successful family and youth assessment and preparation techniques, which are so foundational to youth-specific recruitment and matching.
- Family support and adoption preservation services that not only include therapy but also parent groups, teen groups, camps, educational advocacy and support, mental health advocacy, and substance abuse services.
- The continuum of Transitional and/or Independent Living services (housing assistance, job training, continued education, etc.) available to youth in foster care must be available for older youth that achieve legal adoption or guardianship.
- Facilitating a team decision-making process that is youth-driven and brings together family members, other significant individuals in a youth's life and professionals to develop and support the best plan for a permanent family connection.
- The labor-intensive and essential work of preserving existing relationships, facilitating openness and integrating new relationships for older youth in the child welfare system.
- Ongoing continued funding for adoption listing services, public information and education, child-specific recruitment and other targeted recruitment campaigns.

NEXT STEPS IN FAMILY RECRUITMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS

VALUES, BELIEFS AND PHILOSOPHICAL CHALLENGES

- The most foundational barrier to successful recruitment for older youth continues to be the values and beliefs of the social workers, supervisors, managers and organizations responsible for the youth's safety, permanence and well-being. Unless the system fully embraces the belief in the adoptability of all adolescents and the essential need for all youth to have a permanent family no matter what their age, recruitment will never be successful.
- The central role that "connections" play in the lives of thriving individuals, families and communities is, in general, still not fully appreciated. This creates a barrier to recruitment for older youth in the child welfare system because "connections" that could be potential permanent family resources for youth are so often casually ignored, inadvertently dismissed and often purposely rejected.
- Professionals within the system are suspect of families that want to adopt teens.
- Agency staff persons maintain biases against some types of potential homes that are successful with teens, such as single parents, transracial placements, and gay/lesbian parents.
- The double myth that "teens don't want to be adopted, and families don't want to adopt teens" is still too pervasive.
- Agency staff persons do not believe that older youth are adoptable, and therefore fail to conduct diligent searches for homes.

SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

- The child welfare system as a whole continues to be overwhelmingly ineffective in engaging and collaborating with families. Youth are too often moved repeatedly through a series of well-meaning "stranger care placements" while that youth's family or kin continues to care successfully for other siblings, cousins, nephews and nieces – often unaware of the plight of the youth.
- Caseload sizes must be adjusted to do successful recruitment for older youth. The work is labor-intensive.
- Achieving permanence for teens is extremely labor intensive. It is necessary to have social workers specifically trained to work with adolescents and the time needed is double what it is to achieve permanence for younger children.

- A major barrier to successful recruitment of families for teens is the lack of support services for families. More people would adopt if we could say “we’ll be there for you as you parent this youth.”
- Very few after-school resources are available for teens, which becomes a “supervision” issue if the permanent parent works and the child is still in foster care. (Regulations in some states say that foster youth cannot be left at home without adult supervision, even at the age of 16 or 17.)
- Specialized clinical services are needed to help teens deal with their past and their family history and begin to integrate into their current family.
- Unless services like outpatient home-based counseling, residential treatment and respite care can be guaranteed to families, they often will not make a commitment to an older youth.
- Public relations efforts that present the successes of teen adoption are inadequate. A long-range comprehensive strategy for consistent positive messages to the public is essential.
- The lack of gathering, tracking and analyzing data leaves agencies without information about successful recruitment efforts on behalf of older youth.

PRACTICE CHALLENGES

- Comprehensive assessment is an absolutely essential dimension of successful recruitment for adolescents. If the assessment of the youth's individual needs is not thorough, families will not be able to sustain their commitment. If the assessment of a youth's network of kinship and other significant relationships is not thorough, potential permanent family resources will be overlooked.
- Child welfare agency staff lack adequate understanding of the developmental issues that influence adolescent feelings about adoption and permanence.
- Recruitment approaches must be individualized to each youth. A customized approach is even more crucial for this age group.
- Every tool that is used in older child and special needs adoption is applicable to older youth as well. However, every tool is not always optimal. Some older youth are not comfortable with the use of media, photo listing, etc. and their wishes must be honored.
- Adolescents require more intensive (and different) preparation for permanency than younger children, particularly if they have been in care for a long time and have suffered hurt and disappointment in previous families.

- Agencies fail to follow up aggressively on potential leads, including both calls elicited by recruitment campaigns and those generated through interviews with children and families.
- Family preparation takes on new dimensions with older youth, and is an essential ingredient in order to successfully retain the families recruited for them. Issues of sexuality, music, adolescent peer culture, etc. all take on heightened importance in preparing families to make enduring commitments to older youth.
- The recruitment of permanent families from the network of existing significant relationships of older youth sometimes present barriers such as: the blurring of professional/personal boundaries as in matching youth with former social workers, child care staff, or others that had previously had a professional role with the youth; confidentiality issues that emerge in talking about a youth's circumstances with birth family members, community/church members, etc.
- The issue of legal family membership continues to be a challenge in recruiting for older youth. Given the dynamics of working with older youth, adoption is not always the most appropriate permanency outcome even though it is the most legally binding and secure. Families that enter a relationship with an adolescent must be prepared to make the highest level of commitment, but also be flexible in terms of what the youth will accept as the relationship matures.
- It is less costly and more productive to put resources into locating family, recruiting kin and facilitating a family group conference process than recruiting strangers who are unrelated to the youth. It is important that we bring these players in a youth's life together as so many youth re-initiate contact with family and kin upon exiting the system.
- Because kinship connections often emerge as the family option that older youth are most invested in, a number of issues were discussed as primarily (but not exclusively) barriers to kinship placement for older youth:
 - (a) Previous child protective service involvement and criminal records present licensing barriers that sometimes stand in the way of the best interest of that youth. Some states have extremely stringent licensing requirements and the lack of a waiver/appeal process for individual situation.
 - (b) Some kinship parents that are an appropriate match for a youth still need to finalize a divorce in order to process an adoption and do not have the funds to do so.
 - (c) Some kinship families have significant needs for concrete services (room renovation, beds, furniture, larger apartment, etc.) in order to meet licensing requirements in accommodating an older youth in their home.
 - (d) When kinship matches are made for older youth, the questions remains "why wasn't this placement made earlier in the youth's life? was this match not a "safe and stable" option previously, or did the system overlook it or minimize the potential?"

(e) The role of fathers and paternal relatives in offering permanency to older youth is still under-recognized and not consistently explored.

RESEARCH CHALLENGES IN FAMILY RECRUITMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS

(A) CURRENT RESEARCH ON RECRUITMENT

There are many reports and articles written about successful recruitment programs as well as final reports of projects funded through HSS Adoption Opportunity grants. The National Adoption Information Clearing House (NAIC) has a comprehensive report on those programs. Scholarly studies analyzing the successes or failure of recruitment strategies appear to be almost non-existent or not published.

Kansas Families for Kids (a program funded by the Kellogg Foundation) created a successful recruitment campaign based on market research and demographic analysis based on information provided by parents who had fostered or adopted from their agency for the past five years. To date there is no published final report on the project.

(B) CURRENT CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF RECRUITMENT

Kinship Center and San Francisco County, Partners in Placement

This program, funded by the Stuart Foundation, placed 100 of San Francisco's older children in adoptive placements.

You Gotta Believe! The Older Child Adoption and Permanency Movement

"A Family Is No Where" or "A Family Is Now Here." This statement may be viewed as a family is "now here" in every teen's life, or that a family is "no where" for a teen. How this is read is largely a matter of personal choice. Whatever is in an individual recruiter's mind is all that matters. If someone truly believes that a family is available for each and that every teen that needs one, a family can be found. The attitude of the person who has the responsibility for finding a home for teens and pre-teens must be that a family can be found for a teen and is therefore "now here."

There is no question that many families are out there for any given teen; the only question is "where is just one of those families?" An answer to this question, more often than not, is that a family can be found right in the life cycle of the teen whom one is recruiting for. Involving teens in the process of finding their forever family helps to give them a sense of ownership in this process, and then teens can team up with their recruiter. All children in foster care have attachments. Recruiters are responsible for identifying and reaching out to those attachments in a child's life and exploring with these persons the possibility of learning what it might be like to parent the child on a long-term, permanent basis.

The question then becomes, "Who are these attachments?" You Gotta Believe! has found that about half of the people from a teen's life circle whom they approach are willing to learn more about the adoption process. The ultimate goal is to encourage families to become involved

as a support network for the teen. This involvement may eventually lead to a permanent home, but in any case, the individual or family will at least be "now here" in the teen's life.

Families for Teens, a program developed under a Federal Adoption Opportunity Grant and implemented by the Northeast Ohio Adoption Services. The Families For Teens demonstration project was designed to place teens that are in the care of two county child welfare agencies in permanent homes. Teens identified by the agencies received special project and advocacy services to help them achieve family relationships and stability. The goals of the program were to complete a comprehensive permanency assessment for each teen participating in the project; utilize innovative models to work with teens to achieve permanence; recruit families to adopt or serve as permanency resources for teens; provide support services to newly created families; and provide cross systems training to improve permanency outcomes. The placement rate differed significantly between the two counties because one of the sites had prepared participants before the program. Barriers to the implementation of the project included reliance on sequential planning, acceptance of the teen's reluctance to seek adoption, resistance of teens to recruitment activities conducted without their involvement, and geographic distances. Program managers learned that adoption planning must happen concurrently with other planning and that permanence enhances therapeutic effectiveness. Teens should be involved in recruitment activities and can advocate for themselves and others who are waiting for a permanent family

Iowa's Permanency for Teens Project

In February 1999, the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Four Oaks, Inc., a private not for profit published a final report about Iowa's Permanency for Teens Project. The three-year federally funded project succeeded in making permanent placements and lasting connections for 30 legally free teens in Iowa.

(C) RESEARCH GAPS IN THE AREA OF RECRUITMENT

There are large gaps in research pertaining to recruitment. There is much anecdotal information and program models but very little, if any, published scholarly research on the subject. (See Research Summary Prepared by Kate Cleary and Madelyn Freundlich)

Research Component of Collaboration to AdoptUSKids

The research component for the Collaboration to AdoptUSKids will identify actual and potential barriers to the completion of the adoption process from the perspectives of current families seeking to adopt and families who have dropped out of the process, as well as agency personnel; and to assess factors that lead to favorable long-term outcomes for families who adopt children with special needs, from the viewpoints of adoptive families and agency staff. A variety of data will be collected and analyzed, both quantitatively and qualitatively in this a five-year study. The University of Texas at Austin Research Team directed by Dr. Ruth McRoy is doing the research. (Information Provided by Ada White, Child Welfare League of America, awhite@cwla.org)

D. Workgroup Report: Implementation. *Chair: Mardi Louisell, Consultant, California Permanency for Youth Project, San Francisco. Group Members: Virginia Sturgeon, Sue Badeau, Kate Lodge, M.B. Lippold, Kevin Campbell, Peggy Slater*

Description of Problem: How have those counties and agencies who have successfully implemented youth permanence models done so? What funding sources have they marshaled? How have they found resources for post-permanency services for the youth and family? How have grant-aided projects become sustaining? What agency administrative or court practices have they adopted to insure that finding youth permanence continues?

The group's main goal was to find out what models existed and what details would be important to another entity who wanted to start a similar program. To begin gathering data, the committee decided that analyzing in terms of issues and strategy components would help make sense of the information gleaned from successful programs as well as point to what questions still need answers. An example of the format analyzing one issue with one successful strategy is included below. Research to complete a document on models is currently being undertaken by the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), to be completed by January, 2004.

ISSUE: LACK OF AVAILABLE PERMANENT HOMES FOR YOUTH

◆**STRATEGY:** Enlist private providers to help; Grapple with access to file issues for private providers. Form a state/private partnership

Example: Washington State

Brief Description: Washington State/Northwest Adoption Exchange Partnership has a recruitment project to recruit adoptive or permanent families for 160 children in a four year period. The project is a collaboration between seven private adoption agencies and the Northwest Adoption Exchange.

Success to Date: Of the 80 children served in the past two years 34 were over the age of 11 and to date 6 of that group have been placed. Of the original 80 children, 42 have been placed or are in the process of transitioning into permanent homes.

Genesis: Private adoption agencies together with Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE) approached the Washington State Adoption Program manager who, in turn, wrote an RFP for special recruitment for exceptionally hard to place children who were legally free and who had no identified permanent family.

Structure: The Northwest Adoption Exchange, as the lead agency, subcontracts with private agencies to: 1) mine children's files to look for relative or significant adult contacts that may be possible placements; 2) gather up to date and pertinent information about the child and his or her strengths or needs;) utilize the private agency's own network of contacts to recruit for a particular child; and 4) work in partnership to staff particular children's permanent plans. 5) make certain that adoptive families and other resource families have had the opportunity to discuss the option of adoption, guardianship or permanent foster care.

Formalization of practice: Written agreements were established between NWAE, private agencies and the state DCFS workers

Funding: The dollars for this project in Washington's state-run system came from the central state child recruitment budget.

Case Access: Each Regional Administrator was initially involved in the selection of the children from their region who were eligible to participate. The NWAE project coordinator then spoke with individual caseworkers about what the project would involve and those workers were asked to sign a working agreement with NWAE if a child from their caseload were to be involved in the project.

Since there was involvement from the Regional Administrators as well as from the Central Children's Administration, it was relatively easy to gain access to children's files and private agency staff actually went to the DCFS office that housed the child's file.

Partnership: Finally, the partnership between DCFS caseworkers and the private agencies in most cases has been most positive. Working in tandem has provided the DCFS worker with ways to explore some ideas and potential families that might not have otherwise been explored if that worker alone were left to the task.

In year two, workers were much more open to working with the project as they had heard about the project and realized that it might be a help and not a time consuming effort with little or no results.

How Child Assigned to Agency: NWAE made the decision in conjunction with the private agencies as to which child would be assigned to which private agency. If a child was still available after the first year, NWAE and the private agency made the decision jointly as to whether or not the private agency would continue to follow the child, or if the child would move to another agency and get a fresh look.

Budget: \$180,000 per year. Forty new children were assigned to the project each year. The NWAE staff on the project in the first year was 1 FTE and contracts with the private agencies were \$120,000. In the second year, the NWAE staff on the project was 1.65 FTE and the contracts with the private agencies were \$66,000. The change was at the request of the private agencies. They were more comfortable in "mining the files" and gathering the information about the children, but did not feel as if they wanted to be involved in the actual recruitment of families from outside of the state, nor did they feel they could attend to the inquiries in a timely manner. The private agencies remained as active staffing partners when children's plans need to be reviewed.

Duration of project: Originally funded for 2 years, the project has been renewed for an additional 2 years

Person Ultimately Responsible for Implementation: Donna Davis, NWAE, is project manager

Reasons for Success: The success of the project seems to be due to several themes.

1) The recruitment staff: those who answer the inquiries on a child have up to date information about each child; 2) all inquiring families or agencies receive immediate personal responses with all questions answered or researched. Families who are not home studied are interviewed to see if they have the potential for following through; 3) Staff work with child's caseworker and/or supervisor to problem solve when there appears to be a stall in a child's movement. This facilitation of problem solving from a knowledgeable outside party has proven most productive. 4) Individual CD Rohm's are developed for the project children. These are distributed to all of the partnering private agencies, to national recruiter agencies, to inquiring families and to special needs private agencies across the country.

APPENDIX 4: IDENTIFICATION OF KEY TOPICS AND ACTION PLANS

1. Belief systems about permanence in the child welfare system, related professionals and the public: Bob Lewis and Madelyn Freundlich will develop a listserv. The group recommended that all organizations with websites post a message about their commitment to youth permanence.

2. Youth and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System: Issues here include the disproportionate number of African American kids represented in the child welfare system, the disempowerment of communities of color because of legislative and policy issues, and removal of children resulting from liability concerns, coupled with a lack of training. **Goals:** Convening participants who are members of California Stakeholders will assure that stakeholder products incorporate disproportionality, outcome measures and accountability around disproportionality issues. Bonnie Armstrong and Miryam Choca will examine the Breakthrough Series on Community Based Child Welfare Early Intervention to assure that the disproportionality measure is addressed. Marie Jamieson, Seattle, will seek funding to develop a list of permanency options for communities of color. These will include the following: a legal description of permanency options that would make sense for families, a separate version for youth, and a user's guide for social workers so that they can become more articulate about how to communicate with families about the options and implications of permanence.

3. Funding resources and fiscal incentives:

Key Problem: 1. Where to find funds for innovative programs in times of horrific financial cuts; and 2. Identifying and understanding funding streams, ways to access them, and how existing funds have been used in other jurisdictions.

Specific Strategies to Address the Problem: 1. Investigate how to distribute Casey Family Program document on federal funding streams for foster care and examples for use to interested parties (Sue Badeau); 2. Try to move children from long term foster care into permanency and save money (Varghese Vengapally, Alameda County); 3. Examine primers on innovative funding strategies through convening a roundtable (T. Kook); 4. Complete a bibliography on national reinvestment strategies (Dee Wilson, Washington State); 5. Examine the proposed administration federal waiver (M.B. Lippold); 6. Anticipate unintended consequences of incentives (Carol Biddle).

Measures of Success: 1. Documents will be disseminated; 2. Alameda county will lower long term foster care percentage; 3. Convene roundtable and share information.

Youth Involvement: 1. We can invite youth, but topics may not be interesting to them; there may, however, be foster youth with interests in math who would like to participate.

4. Youth Participation in the Permanency Process: Goal of this group is to infuse the youth voice into the permanence process and into the child welfare system. The group's tasks are: 1. To compile a listing of already established youth participation programs, including the purpose of the group, cost of hosting a group, resource person for contact, etc.; 2. To challenge funders to establish resources so that the youth voice is present in their local area; 3. To encourage two to three states without youth participation programs to develop such programs; 4. To challenge the feds to broaden ACF's adoption opportunity grants to include youth permanence and to develop a priority area for youth participation and involvement; 5. To increase the distribution plan for the Stuart Youth Permanence Project so that it can influence the legislature; make the final document available to other states. 6. Lauren Frey will continue work on a monograph about lessons learned from the Massachusetts Families for Kids pilot project on youth permanency and will share it with Youth Permanence group when it is completed. 7. Washington State will seek funding for a program for the establishment of a youth voice and to assure that the youth participation program crosses the IL, adoption, foster care and kinship programs. These programs haven't been cross-fertilized and youth could be the means by which that happens.

5. Over-Long Length of Time to Achieve Permanence (Importance of Concurrent Planning).

Issues are:

A. Not involving those who love the youth.

Strategies to address this: Sandy Hart, CWS Program Manager, Children's Administration Washington State, Region 6 Permanency Project ("Ruby Slippers Project") will recommend that a staffing conference occur for each Ruby Slippers child who remains in care without a permanent placement family. Examples of such staffings include Family Group Conferencing or Emancipation Meetings that involve the youth and caring adults (family, friends, providers, community connections, etc.) in the youths life."

Kevin Campbell, Catholic Community Services of Western Washington, Tacoma, along with three other CCS staff have formed a collaboration between EMQ, Santa Clara County and Catholic Community Services of Western Washington to identify and engage relatives for twenty-seven (27) youth living in out-of-home care in Santa Clara County by December 31, 2003. In addition, every child who is living in out-of-home care or who may be at imminent risk of out-of-home care placement and is served by EMQ in California will receive family-finding services as an important part of basic child welfare services

B. Inadequate court and case review for permanency. Honorable Nancy Williamsen, Juvenile Court Commissioner, Stanislaus County, will convene stakeholders, including court personnel, lawyers, advocates and those who determine the court review process in Modesto County, to consider a) what questions should be asked to make the review process more meaningful with regard to permanency and b) how to work with the judges, review facilitators, etc. on using those questions.

C. Lack of measures to tell how well we are achieving permanency for youth. Trish Ploehn, Adoptions, LA County, will begin the process of establishing these.

6. Use of IL as a permanency goal.

Goal: That public and private agencies demonstrate an increased commitment to youth permanence, defined as a lifelong, committed, caring relationship.

Outcomes: 1. See an increase in concurrent planning policy/legislation (such as New York City has accomplished) in New York, California, and Washington State; 2. See legislation/policy in place that makes foster care discharge conditional upon achieved permanence, as defined above. 3. Provide a written definition of IL in the Chafee plan as a *service*, not a permanency goal, and in the children and family services plans in New York, California, Washington, both of which are due in a year; 4. Develop written strategies on how to achieve a commitment to engage youth in the permanency process in Chafee, Children and Families Services Plans and other policies.

Strategies: **1. *Washington State:* influence the Judge's checklist. 2. *Kentucky:* influence the judge's training; 3. *New York:* Convening member will participate in statewide implementation of NYC policy; 4. *Massachusetts:* work to do pilot project based on NYC policy; Other/National: develop a permanency scale that can be used as an agency assessment checklist.**

APPENDIX 5: REPORT FROM RESEARCH WORKGROUP: Chair: Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights Inc., New York City. Group members: Rosemary Avery, Kate Cleary, Cynthia Flynn.

Description of Problem: The Research Work Group identified relevant research on permanence for older children and families (including evaluative studies of programs with this focus), identified current research gaps, and worked collaboratively with other work groups to identify the specific issues, related to permanency for older children and youth, on which research is particularly needed.

See Research Workgroup Reports below: A. Background Materials, B. Research Challenges in Family Recruitment for Adolescents.

Currently, little research on post-adoption services exists because it is a relatively new phenomenon. Presenters noted that the advent of administrative data means we can measure to the day and month what the system's output is. Therefore, it is even more important now to document the success of individual programs. If a program succeeds, but you don't now why, you can't replicate the success. Research should be standardized across states and municipalities so we can make a collective judgement about whether the models work. Meta-analyses across projects is going to become the wave of future.

Presenters reviewed the data on the deleterious effects of aging out of the system, as well as what we know about the inadequacy of Independent Living preparation, e.g., uneven preparation, youth feeling unprepared, lack of real life activities and lack of a serious learning environment. They also reported that youth have their own definition of permanency, demand a voice in planning what permanency means for them, and are upset that their age may deem them "unadoptable." Sometimes youth feel that traditional adoption creates further disempowerment and lack of control of their lives. Youth want the ability to maintain connection to siblings, access to their records at age eighteen (18), the ability to maintain connections to their families, and want the child welfare systems to be evenhanded: they are frustrated that the Child Welfare systems do not all work in the same way.

No curriculum specifically for adopters of older youth is available. General adoption training does refer to the following specific issues in older youth adoption: full disclosure; detailed and realistic preparation; behavior management training (post traumatic stress disorder, etc.); commitment and functional relationship training. Adult adopters do not want surprises: surprise throws them off kilter. One mother said that she heard all the bad things that could happen before she adopted; then, after she adopted, she could be joyful about the bad ones that didn't happen.

We do not have any substantial review of the characteristics of post-adoption services in the long term and little analysis of their effectiveness. We do know that children adopted when older have the most serious problems, have more need for health services, more need for material information, more clinical counseling and family support services.

However, perhaps we should look at the long-term adoptive outcomes – after all the number of birth parents who have problems with their children is also shocking. Some outcomes

we would want to know are if the disruption lasted a week or two, if the kids reentered care, but also how the kids are doing in school, in relationships, in young adulthood. These answers take time, but permanency outcomes are going to have some relationship to child well-being and adult well-being outcomes. Although longitudinal studies bear a significant cost, if we judged success by outcomes at age twenty-five, it would make a tremendous difference in how we practice. Another option to longitudinal studies is to bring ten to fifteen, 25-30 year olds in a room and ask them about growing up.

Lois Wright and Madelyn Freundlich wrote *Post Permanency Services*, a book available from Casey Family Services (through their web site at: www.casey.org). This provides a framework for a start on the role of these services.

◆ *Casey Family Programs Research, Peter Pecora*

Peter Pecora of Casey Family Programs noted that he had some analyses of what predicts success of foster care alumni as adults, and it reinforces what we know. Important factors included completing high school before leaving foster care, employment training, IL skills development, positive relationships with an adult and a positive relationship with a foster mother. (See Pecora, Williams, Downs, Kessler, O'Brien, Hiripi, & Morello, 2003)

People have myths that all kids graduating from foster care have many major mental health issues, but his research team found that major depression, minor depression, and other forms of mental illness were no greater than in the general population. However, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PSDT), Panic disorder, Generalized anxiety disorder, and drug dependence were greater in foster care graduates than in the general population of the same age range. These data will showcase that a small but significant proportion of foster care alumni do have enduring mental health treatment needs." (Northwest Alumni Study report to be available by December 2003 from Casey and Harvard University.)

"While in Foster Care," from Casey Family Programs study of youth progress and relevant to the success of a permanent homes for adolescents, explored the ways in which cultural identification and family adjustment related to emotional health. In foster youth, they found that a very strong positive relationship existed 1) between family adjustment and emotional health, and 2) between cultural identification and family adjustment. Implications for practice suggest that one way to increase the emotional health would be to focus on increasing key areas of family adjustment (respecting others, integrity, willingness to help others, peer relationships and relationship with an adult). Similarly, one way to increase family adjustment would be to focus on increasing cultural identification (understanding and appreciating their ethnic heritage, and demonstrating respect and appreciation for other ethnic groups)." See Pecora et al. 2003²

¹ Pecora, P.J., Williams, J., Downs, A.C., Kessler, R.J., O'Brien, K. Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). What Casey Family Programs Intervention Components Provide the Most Leverage towards Achieving Key Program Outcomes? Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Website: http://www.casey.org/research/alumni_studies/products.htm (Working Paper No. 8)

A. Background Materials for Stuart Convening on Youth Permanence

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DELETERIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Dr. Rosemary Avery and Madelyn Freundlich

Research establishes the negative consequences of aging out of foster care in a number of areas: economic instability, education, crime, victimization, homelessness, health problems, substance abuse, and parenthood. It also assesses the adequacy of independent living preparation for youth aging out of foster care and finds it to be inadequate.

ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

In 1990, Barth found that many of the 55 youth in his study (all of whom had been in foster care and had left care 1 to 10 years before the interview) had faced extreme financial hardship. Half of them had serious money problems—such as not being able to buy food or pay bills. Thirty-three percent reported that they had done something illegal to get money (stealing, prostitution, or selling drugs). A study by Westat (1991) followed youths who had been emancipated from foster care during the period January 1987-July 1988 and who had been on their own between 2.5 and 4 years. This study found that only 54% of the study population had completed high school, a mere 49% were employed at the time of the study, 38% had maintained a job for at least one year, and 40% were a cost to the community (that is, they received public assistance or were incarcerated). A University of Wisconsin study looked at youth 12 to 18 months after discharge from foster care and found that 37% had not finished high school and 32% were receiving public assistance (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nast, 2001).

In their study of youth formerly in foster care in Wisconsin, Dworsky and Courtney (2000) found that 21% of youth who exited foster care during the period 1995 through 1997 were unemployed, and 24% had been sporadically employed in the 2 years following discharge. Youth of color in their study were far more likely to be unemployed than whites, and youth discharged from institutions were more likely to be unemployed than those discharged from family foster care. Total earnings among youth in their sample were, on average, substantially lower than full-time minimum wage earnings, and African American youths earned less than whites. Two years after discharge, 26% of their sample were receiving public assistance. In the KIDS COUNT study in Nevada conducted in 2001 with 100 youth who had aged out of care at least 6 months previously, researchers found that 41% did not have enough money to cover basic living expenses, 34% earned less than \$5,000 in 1999, and 60% earned less than \$10,000 in that same year.

The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago (Goerge, 2002) also found that youth aging out of foster care had high rates of unemployment: 30% of the youth who aged out of foster care in Illinois were unemployed; 23% of the youth in California were unemployed; and 14% of the youth in South Carolina left care without a job. The study further found that youth often were underemployed. Youth aging out of foster care had mean earnings below the poverty level, and earned significantly less than youth in any of the comparison groups both prior to and after their 18th birthday (Goerge, 2002). McMillen and Tucker (1999) found somewhat better outcomes regarding employment for youth who aged out of foster care. The researchers found that 38% of the youth had jobs and 66% had some employment experience, an outcome that they attributed to the recent emphasis on providing youth with independent living skills.

EDUCATION

Research indicates that youth who age out of foster care tend to be educationally disadvantaged. Mech (1994) aggregated four studies of youth entering adulthood from foster care and found that the average high school completion rate among them was 58%. National estimates of the percentage of youth in foster care who leave care with a high school diploma range from 37% to 60%, depending on the size of the population studied and other research constraints. As one example, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration found in its study of youth age 18 or older who left foster care between January and June 2000 that only one-third (34%) of those leaving foster care had a high school diploma or GED (Burley & Halpern, 2001). By comparison, the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) reports that 84% of all young adults 25 to 29 years of age have completed high school.

The Washington State study (Burley & Halpern, 2001) also found that in addition to the one-third of youth with a diploma or GED, slightly more than another one-third (38%) were currently enrolled in educational or vocational programs. Nonetheless, the researchers also found more than one-quarter (28%) of the youth who left foster care were not involved in any educational program (Burley & Halpern, 2001). In another study of youth leaving care (McMillen & Tucker 1999), the researchers found somewhat better outcomes: 39% had a high school degree or GED and 64% were progressing toward a degree.

Research further indicates that many youth who leave foster care have learning challenges that further complicate their ability to live on their own. Reading, auditory, and attention problems have been found to undermine the ability of many youth to succeed in school or benefit from independent living preparation (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000). In addition, the Youth Advocacy Center (2001) found in its study that many teens in foster care reported few role models who could assist them in understanding the value of education or work experience as preparation for adulthood.

CRIME

Thirty-three percent of the respondents in the Barth (1990) study of youth formerly in foster care in the San Francisco Bay area had been arrested in the previous year, and 26% had spent time in jail or prison. In the Nevada KIDS COUNT study (2001), 24% of youth formerly in foster care reported supporting themselves by dealing drugs at some time, and 11% reported performing sexual intercourse for money. Forty-five percent had been in trouble with the law, with 41% of this group having spent time in jail (Nevada KIDS COUNT, 2001). In the 1991 Westat study, 40% of the males had spent time in jail and 33% reported stealing or prostitution.

VICTIMIZATION

Research also indicates that youth who leave foster care are at risk of victimization. According to Courtney and colleagues (2001), 25% of males and 15% of females experienced serious physical violence (including beatings and attacks), and 13% of females experienced sexual assault and/or rape in the 12 to 18 month period following discharge. Data also indicate that youth with learning disabilities - which studies suggest affect many youth who age out of foster care - place youth at greater risk of sexual abuse victimization (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000).

HOMELESSNESS

Studies of homeless young people in New York and Los Angeles in the 1980s found that 30% to 40% had been in foster care. A more recent study estimates that approximately 40% to 50% of emancipated youth become homeless (League of Women Voters, 2002). Thoma (2002) reported that more than one out of five youth who arrive at a shelter come directly from a foster or group home. Nationally, 38% of the youth in shelters report that they had been in a foster care system at some point time during the previous year (Thoma, 2002). Some experts estimate that 45% of those leaving foster care become homeless within a year (Thoma, 2002). The University of Wisconsin study found that after leaving foster care, 14% of the males and 10% of the females had been homeless at least once (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nast, 2001). In the Nevada KIDS COUNT study (2001), 19% of youth formerly in care had lived on the street and 18% had lived in a homeless shelter.

HEALTH PROBLEMS

The Texas Foster Care Transitions Project (2001) found that health problems after aging out from foster care were prevalent among youth. Similarly, in his study of 55 youth formerly in foster care in the San Francisco Bay Area who had been emancipated for between 1 to 10 years, Barth (1990) found that many were suffering from ill health, including headaches, dental and vision problems, hearing problems, depression, and thoughts of suicide. About one third of those affected were receiving treatment. In the Nevada KIDS COUNT study (2001), 55% of youth formerly in care reported having no health insurance, and 30% reported having serious health problems. Another study concluded that youth formerly in foster care experienced more psychological distress than their peers who had not been in foster care (Youth Advocacy Center, 2001). Similarly, the Texas Foster Care Transitions Project (2001) found that youth who aged out of foster care often reported mental health issues, particularly feelings of fear and loneliness.

Studies indicate that youth who leave foster care, although needing health care services, often lack information about how to obtain the services they need. Marsenich (2002), for example, reported that youth often found that the information made available to them on mental health issues and services tended to be inadequate. Other studies indicate that even when youth know about services, they often lack the resources to obtain needed services. One study found that only 21% of youth in foster care reported receiving mental health services post-care, a drop from the 47% who received services while in care, because they could not afford the services (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nast, 2001). Many youth leaving care enter into jobs that do not provide health insurance or pay too little for them to be able to afford independent health care coverage. The Texas Foster Care Transitions Project (2001) found that lack of health insurance deterred youth from seeking the attention they needed.

The poor health status of many youth who leave foster care also places them at risk of a number of other poor outcomes. Youth with physical and mental health conditions and disabilities have been found to have the lowest rates of high school graduation, post-secondary education, employment, and successful independent living (National Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000).

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Greene, Ennett, and Ringwalt (1997) studied the prevalence of substance use by runaway and homeless youth between the ages of 12 and 21 in three national samples. The results indicated that many homeless and runaway youth used tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs at rates substantially higher than non-runaway and homeless youth. Looking at youth who were emancipated from foster care between January 1987 and July 1988, Cook (1990) found that 17% of the youth had a drug abuse problem.

PARENTHOOD

The Westat study mentioned earlier (1991) reported that 60% of young women in their study had given birth to a child within 2.5 to 4 years after discharge from foster care, and 24% of the males had fathered a child. In the study of youth formerly in foster care who were studied by the University of Wisconsin, 42% of former foster youth had given birth or fathered a child within 12 to 18 month of discharge from care (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nast, 2001). Barth's study (1990) found that 40% of the women who were formerly in foster care in his study were pregnant within a year.

ADEQUACY OF INDEPENDENT LIVING PREPARATION

Research indicates that although youth often report that they received some preparation for independent living, the preparation that they receive often appears uneven, and in spite of the independent living services that they receive, youth often do not feel prepared for life on their own after exiting foster care. One study of youth's transitions from foster care to adulthood, for example, found that 85% of the youth respondents said that they had been educated about personal health care, job-seeking, and decision-making skills, but fewer than 70% had been trained in money management, legal skills, parenting, and how to use community resources (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001). The study found that the independent living training programs often did not involve youth in "real-life" activities, and youth stated that they unprepared to find housing, live on their own, and deal with health issues (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001).

Similarly, a study by the Youth Advocacy Center (2001) indicated that many teens found that independent living workshops did not provide a serious learning environment and that greater emphasis was placed on field trips and games than on workshops focused on life skills. The teens reported that the themes of many independent living workshops related to substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases and that few workshops addressed education, career planning, or relationship building. The Youth Advocacy Center (2001) concluded that youth needed individually tailored independent living services and plans, but they rarely received such assistance. In some cases, independent living programs were not offered at all because the youth were thought to be unable to achieve "independent" living (Youth Advocacy Center, 2001). Other research suggests that some youth find the challenges of being in foster care to be so great that they do not make use of the services that are available -- removing themselves from the system before turning 18 and neglecting to make long-range plans (Texas Foster Care Transitions Project, 2001).

Summarizing the three main studies in the area:

STUDY	FINDINGS
Westat (1991): 810 former foster youth in 8 states 2.5-4 years after discharge.	<p><u>Education:</u> 46% had not completed high school</p> <p><u>Employment:</u> 51% were unemployed 62% had not maintained a job for at least a year</p> <p><u>Other outcomes:</u> 40% were a cost to the community 25% were homeless at least one night 42% had birthed or fathered a child</p>
Courtney & Piliavin (1998): 113 former foster youth in Wisconsin at 12 -18 months after discharge.	<p><u>Education:</u> 37% had not completed high school</p> <p><u>Employment:</u> 39% were unemployed 19% had not held a job since discharge from care</p> <p><u>Other outcomes:</u> 32% had received some kind of public assistance 12% had been homeless at least once 22% had lived in 4 or more places 44% had problems getting medical care 27% of males and 10% of females were incarcerated at least once</p>
Barth (1990): 55 former foster youth in the San Francisco Bay area at 1-10 years after discharge.	<p><u>Education:</u> 38% had not completed high school</p> <p><u>Employment:</u> 25% were unemployed</p> <p><u>Other outcomes:</u> 35% were homeless or moved frequently 38% did not have health or medical coverage 13% reported hospitalization for emotional problems 40% of female reported a pregnancy 35% had been arrested or spent time in jail or prison</p>

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PERMANENCY FOR YOUTH EXITING FOSTER CARE
Dr. Rosemary Avery

Background on Support for Youth Exiting Care

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (FCIA) (P.L. 106-169) established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, which offers important help to young people making the transition out of care. It has been an important catalyst in states for broader reform on behalf of young people. It replaces the Independent Living Initiative (1986) programs at the state level. The new program is a 80%-20% federal state cost sharing program that:

- Allows states to provide Medicaid coverage to young people 18-21 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday. The CBO estimates that at least 24,000 additional young people would have qualified for Medicaid in 2002 if all states had fully implemented their FCIA option in 1999. Two years after the FCIA was passed in 1999, only a few states have opted to take on this new eligibility category: Alaska, Arizona, California, Mississippi, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Wyoming (Ladew, 2002).
- Allows increases in the value of the assets that a young person in foster care can have and still maintain his or her eligibility for Title-IV-E foster care increasing the value from \$1,000 to \$10,000.
- Authorizes additional funding for adoption incentive payments to the states to assist in finding permanent homes for children in foster care.
- Offers increased assistance, including room and board, for young people 18-21 who are leaving foster care. Assistance can be provided to those who age out at 18 or older (up to 21) and who go directly into independent living arrangements and those who age out and lose touch with the agency but return for assistance before reaching the age of 21. Over two years after P.L. 106-169 was passed into law (2001), only few states have opted to take on these new eligibility categories provided by P.L. 106-169.
- Increases funding for independent living activities, regardless of whether or not the person is eligible for the Title IV-E Foster Care Program.

The program provides a broad framework for services to youth transitioning out of foster care; it expands supports for youth and eligibility for services; it increases funding for independent living services and supports; and it emphasizes the importance of securing permanent families for young people in foster care.

Decisions about the specific legislative, administrative, and/or programmatic changes are necessary to comply with P.L. 106-169 depend on current policies and practices in the states.

Number of Youth Exiting Care by Emancipation

The population of youth who age out, or are emancipated, from foster care total approximately 20,000-25,000/year. In New York State in 2000, approximately 19,895 or 7% of all exits from care in that year were emancipating youths. Approximately 37% of youths emancipating out of care in the U.S. have had no independent living skills training, and the incidence of developmental disabilities, emotional and health problems is significantly higher than in the general population of youth. In the U.S. its estimated that 20,000 young people leave foster care at ages 18 or 19 each year with no formal connection to family (Casey Family Program, 2000). Despite the fact that ASFA requires that all young people in foster care have a permanency plan and the fact that independent living is not included as a permanent plan arrangement, 49% of the youth in care with goals of independent living and nearing their discharge have no plan in their record indicating their living arrangement upon discharge from foster care system. The majority of males who have a goal of independent living (58%) have no post-discharge living arrangement (Casey Family Program, 2000).

The Concept of Permanency

Permanency has been defined as the highest level of physical, legal, and emotional safety and security that can be attained for each individual child or youth within the context of a family relationship. It is a mind set of those claiming the child as their own, a moral unconditional commitment. Significant research underscores the fact that consistent, secure, permanent, relationships with adults are a strong indicator of “resilience” in children, a factor which helps determine the extent to which youth are able to overcome obstacles and avoid negative outcomes. In the same context, permanency planning has been defined as the systematic process of taking prompt, decisive action to maintain children and youth in their

homes or place them with permanent families or find other permanent resources for them. A permanency plan focuses on adolescents' connections to adults and peers throughout their lifetime and recognizes adolescents as central actors in their own future. The high percent of youth who age out of care are homeless because they have no functioning human relationships in their lives. A better term for permanency planning is relational planning, or the development of a permanent lasting relationship with at least one unconditionally committed claiming adult. Furthermore, the concepts need to be "interdependent living," not independent living for youth aging out of care (O'Brien, n.d.).

Permanent connections are positive relationships intended to last a life-time. They may be formal (adoption or return to parents) or informal (mentor relationships and peer supports). Very often they are identified by the youth. A permanent placement needs to be re-conceptualized to include a broad range of options. It needs to be expanded beyond the notion of either legal status (adopted, emancipated) or a placement category (long-term foster care, adoptive home, independent living). Permanency is better understood as a multifaceted construct which includes several key dimensions such as legal status, stability in and appropriateness of the placement setting, connectedness to family and significant others, and youth's emotional well-being.

Some Barriers to Achieving Permanency

Independent living, when used as "the permanency goal," removes the focus from achieving permanency.

Independent living allows youth as young as 14 to sign their lives away to a life of impermanence. Upon discharge from foster care, there is a strong probability that these same youths will never find a job nor a permanent place to live – and will function without a functioning human relationship recruited for them before their discharge from foster care. Furthermore, age discrimination is at its most destructive worse when the child's age influences the decision of the court or child welfare bureaucracy against termination of parental rights. The tragic result is that the inability to return a child to his or her parent is translated into no parent planning for the permanency of the child and a youth is allowed to stay in legal limbo. In New York and other states, court-validated across-the-board adoption waivers (in which youth are provided with opportunities to sign waivers that preclude any consideration of adoption) undermine permanency.

Timely recruitment and permanency planning is needed early in foster care history for every child in care. Furthermore, termination of parental rights and concurrent permanency planning must occur for all children filing an adoption waiver.

Independent living describes a set of services and supports, not a permanency plan.

Independent living services should be provided to all youth in foster care – regardless of their permanency plan – up to age 21. Youth need consistent and long term training/counseling in how to have relationships – covering issues such as self esteem, loyalty, and coping with loss. Independent living services need to be provided to all youth in foster care regardless of their permanency planning goal.

Service delivery while youth are in foster care must be examined

Research indicates that caseworkers' perceptions regarding the "unadoptability" of youth in care impact youth permanency outcomes, and that in practice, permanency priorities are often weighted toward younger children. Other research has documented a lack of adequate independent living skills provided to youth in care. Research indicates that there is a lack of support after youth exit from foster care, particularly housing services, medical services, and financial support. Finally, other research emphasizes the inadequacy of permanency planning provisions for functional social supports through requiring safe living plans for all youth aging out of care.

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HOW ADOLESCENTS VIEW PERMANENCY

Kate Cleary

The definition of “permanence” from the perspective of adolescents runs the gamut from informal arrangements through adoption. Many foster adolescents express the opinion that they have had no control over their destiny while in the child welfare system and feel that they should have a voice in defining what “permanency” might look like for them.

Many foster youth express frustration with child welfare systems that take the position that adolescents, because of their age, are unadoptable. Some adolescents are willing to consider being adopted if they are able to maintain ties to their family of origin (Knipe & Warren, 1999).

Foster youth feel a strong connection to their siblings and are angered when child welfare systems discount the importance of sibling connections. This feeling applies to siblings whom the youth has never met as well as those they know. Many youth view adoption as permanently severing connections with their brothers and sisters.

Many adolescents also view adoption as robbing them of their family history. Many youth believe strongly that their records must be made available to them once they turn 18 years of age.

Many youth feel that a permanent plan for their lives must involve their participation and input as to what that plan might look like. There is a frustration with child welfare systems that operate one way in one county or state and another way in a different county or state. There is an expressed need for evenhandedness in terms of permanency for adolescents (Knipe & Warren, 1999).

The idea of adults committed to “being there” for the rest of their lives is attractive to many adolescents in foster care. However, in reviewing the comments of foster youth, one might begin to see the need for child welfare systems to re-define what adoption is and tailor it to meet the needs of the children it serves. Traditional adoption is not embraced enthusiastically by foster youth – it creates further disempowerment and lack of control over their lives.

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RECRUITMENT OF FAMILIES AS RESOURCE FAMILIES FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUTH. Kate Cleary

Although there is a dearth of scholarly research on effective recruitment methods for foster and adoptive families, there are many excellent programs that are successful in the recruitment of resource families for children as well as adolescents. All of these programs demonstrate similar philosophies and strategies.

◆Philosophy Shift:

Recruitment of families for older children must begin with changing the philosophy of many child welfare systems that adolescence makes a child “un-adoptable”. While paying lip service to “leave no child behind,” some agencies feel it is impossible to recruit families for older youth. Many adolescents have grown up in the child welfare system and have difficulties (beyond their age) that might make adoptive placement difficult.

Due to ASFA, there is pressure to “move children to permanence” in an expedient fashion. For children entering the system today, there is an expectation that they will either return home or be placed for adoption in a time efficient manner. ASFA does not take into account for is the children who are difficult to place and have been in the child welfare system for a good portion of their lives. Agencies have worked diligently to move children into a permanent placement – but are struggling to find families for children who are easy to place (infants, young children). The recruitment of families for adolescents must seem daunting and nearly impossible for those agencies.

The child welfare system must, as a whole, decide that they can identify families for older youth and begin the process of permanence one child at a time. Units should be created in public agencies that specialize in permanent plans for older children. Programs like “You Gotta Believe!” have proven that when we believe we can find permanence for older youth – we can.

◆Utilizing Existing Resources

Successful recruitment programs often look at what resources and important connections currently exist for a child. A family member, a coach, a teacher, or a therapist might be an individual willing to commit to a youth for life. Often the environment that was unsafe for a six year old is not unsafe for an adolescent child. Parents often recover and are able to parent. Many programs comb the youth’s files for individuals who are significant to the child or determine if the youth can return home safely.

◆General Recruitment

Creativity, commitment to finding a family, and diligence seem to be the key components of recruitment of families for older youth. Los Angeles County, at one time, placed ads in the sports section of their local newspaper to recruit families for older African American males. The ads were extremely successful. Some agencies have reported developing families for older children during the home study process. Many agencies are hesitant to propose the adoption of an adolescent to families interested in adopting a younger child for fear of losing the family. Those agencies that have utilized this method of identifying families report some success.

◆Youth Specific Recruitment

Next to using foster parents for recruitment, child specific recruitment is believed to be the most successful recruitment method available to agencies. When dealing with older youth, child specific recruitment should be handled carefully. The youth in question should be fully engaged and approve of the strategy. Adolescence is a time when youth want to blend in, not stand out. Specific recruitment could embarrass the youth or cause emotional damage.

ADOPTIVE PARENTS TRAINING

Dr. Rosemary Avery and Dr. Cynthia Flynn

Despite an extensive literature search, we found almost no information on the training and preparation needs for adopters of older youth. However, studies of adoption training did refer to specific aspects of adoption preparation that are important to adopters and adoptees during adolescence. These are noted below.

Full Disclosure

Full disclosure requires that families know that all information will be available and utilized in permanency planning for the child (Buie & Mallon, 2002). Barth and Berry (1991) found that agencies provide parents with inadequate information about the child, or information that is too favorable, perhaps to increase the child's chance of being adopted. Parents complain of not knowing the severity of the child's problems and/or the child's history before entering into the adoption. This is particularly problematic in the "exploration" phase of adoption that takes place during adolescence (Brooks, Allen, and Barth, 2002) when material evidence is needed to guide and manage difficult behavior. It is essential that training materials for parents adopting older youth have compiled for them comprehensive histories of children and their biological families, and materials that clarify vague, incomplete, or discrepant information. Complete written materials provided at the time of adoption, including information on possible resources, that can be referred to later become even more important to adoptive parents as their children grow older.

Detailed and Realistic Preparation

Successful adoption practice whether pre- or post-placement requires that practitioners be realistic about what adoption offers. Knowing that the risk of a difficult adjustment is a reality can help adoptive parents to have reasonable expectations, a critical component of successful adoptions (Brodzinsky et al., 1998). In a study of 85 adopted children Berry and Barth (1989) found that many children who had experienced abuse or neglect prior to adoption displayed antisocial behavior in the post-adoptive period. They conclude that more detailed preparation of adoptive parents to deal with this behavior that is exacerbated during adolescence is essential. Barth and Miller (2000) discuss their concern that older children move into adoptive homes too quickly and that these homes have not been well prepared for adoption. Barth indicates that the leading factor in adoption failure is a child age. Older children adopted from foster care have been exposed to more abuse than younger children, have stronger ties to their birth parents, and have more ingrained learning and behavioral problems, making it more difficult for them to adjust to their new family. Adoptive parents of children with serious behavioral and educational problems are also at an increased risk of dissolution, especially when the child's progress does not meet the parents' hopes and expectations (Christian, 2002). They conclude that training must ensure that adoptive parents have realistic expectation regarding the demands that will be placed on them, their time, and their emotions in the post-adoptive period.

Behavior Management Training

In a study of 85 adopted children Berry and Barth (1989) found that many children who had experienced abuse or neglect prior to adoption displayed antisocial behavior in the post-adoptive period. They conclude that behavior management training for adoptive parents is essential.

Commitment and Functional Relationship Training

Relationship building and the establishment of commitment on the part of the adopting parent(s) should be the basis of parent training for older child adoptions. This is the philosophy of successful adolescent placement agency practices such as those undertaken by Pat O'Brien in his A-OKAY training at You Gotta Believe, Inc. Commitment is the central concept in adoption training involving youth whose

behavior is likely to be most disruptive to emotional bonding. Barth and Brooks (1997) found that the proportion of parents who felt somewhat to very warm and close to their child hit a low of 59% during the adolescent years 13-18, and Spencer (1987) discusses essential services needed in the adoption preparation stage: individual and family counseling, and instruction on the meaning of functional family relationships.

POST-ADOPT SERVICES TRAINING

Dr. Rosemary Avery

Literature on post-adoption services is relatively small but growing quickly (Brooks, Allen, and Barth, 2002) and available research on post-adoption services is largely descriptive and based on small cross-sectional samples. Indeed, there has been no substantial review of the characteristics of post-adoption services in the long term, and little analysis for their effectiveness (Barth & Miller, 2000). No studies have specifically focused on post-adoption support services for families adopting older youth. There is reason to believe that adopters of older youth may have different needs in the post adoption period. In a study of more than 4,000 adopted children conducted by Sharma, McGue, and Benson (1996) they found that children adopted at older ages, when compared to children adopted as infants, had greater adjustment difficulties, and that children placed with their adoptive families after the age of 10 had the most serious problems, including higher rates of substance abuse and antisocial behavior in adolescence.

There were, however, two service areas that emerged in studies of post adoption services that seem specific and particular to older adopted youth:

(1) Material information

Brooks, Allen, and Barth (2002) found a great need amongst older adoptees for material health and background information. This emphasis on evidence or material information is a part of a phenomenon they call "exploration." This takes place significantly so in the phase of adolescent identify formation.

(2) Clinical counseling and family support services

Clayton-Brunjulfson (1991) reports that the most widely used services for older adoptees were described as short-term counseling, provision of background information on adoptee, and intermediary services between adoptees birth parents, and adoptive parents. Groze and Gruenwald (1991) reported that the most intensive direct treatment involved the provision of clinical services for up to ten hours per week for 90 days and access to short-term, out-of-home placements. In a study by Smith and Howard (1994) they found that family support groups were reported by parents to be the most beneficial aspect of adoption preservation services.

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APPENDIX 6: New York City's Policy



Administration for Children's Services

150 William St. 18th floor
New York, New York 10038

WILLIAM C. BELL
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Directors, Contract Foster Care Agencies
ACS Staff

From: William C. Bell, Commissioner

Date: June 12, 2003

Re: Implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, Part V:
Family-Based Concurrent Planning for Youth with Goals of Independent Living

I. Family-Based Concurrent Planning for Youth with Goals of Independent Living: Finding Permanent, Nurturing Family Connections

Permanent, nurturing family connections are the foundation of all child welfare services and are as critical for adolescents in foster care as they are for younger children.

The Administration for Children's Services calls on all its staff and foster care agency partners to actively participate in a culture shift aimed at ensuring that no youth ages out of foster care without a life-long connection that is as legally secure as possible to a caring adult committed to functioning in a parental capacity. With family-centered casework and support services, many adolescents in care could be discharged to their parents or members of their extended families or find adoptive families.

Effective July 1, 2003, family-based concurrent plans must be developed for (a) youth for whom it is proposed to assign the permanency planning goal of independent living and (b) for youth who already have a goal of independent living and who have indicated their intention to sign themselves out of care or who will age out of care within the next 12 months.

Effective for UCR's due in January 2004, family-based concurrent plans must be developed for all other youth in care who currently have a goal of independent living.

In each case, these plans must be documented in the Concurrent Planning section of the UCR or in a Plan Amendment and updated in the Concurrent Planning section of each subsequent UCR.

To this end, certain specific casework steps needs to be taken to identify and nurture permanent family connections for youth with goals of independent living. These include, at a minimum:

1. At the time of the youth's entry into care (and before a voluntary placement of a young person in care occurs), all participants in the placement process, including ACS child protective staff and Child Evaluation Specialists, must take steps to work with the youth to identify trusted caring, committed adults to serve as a permanency resource and to participate in planning for the youth's future. Caring committed adults might include:
 - a. family members (not only the youth's parents, but extended family members such as grandparents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, godparents),
 - b. current and former foster parents, or siblings' foster or adoptive parents,
 - c. current and former neighbors,
 - d. parents of close friends,
 - e. agency staff, group home staff and child care staff,
 - f. teachers, coaches, mentors, and acquaintances from school, work, summer camp, church and after-school activities,
 - g. other responsible adults whom the young person trusts or with whom young person feels or may have felt safe.

2. Congregate care child care staff and milieu workers, foster care caseworkers and social workers must work with youth currently in foster care to try to identify caring, committed adults whom the youth trusts and with whom the youth might like to establish a permanent family connection. Caring, committed adults might include:
 - a. family members (not only the youth's parents, but extended family members such as grandparents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, godparents),
 - b. current and former foster parents, or siblings' foster or adoptive parents,
 - c. current and former neighbors,
 - d. parents of close friends,
 - e. agency staff, group home staff and child care staff,
 - f. teachers, coaches, mentors, and acquaintances from school, work, summer camp, church and after-school activities,
 - g. other responsible adults whom the young person trusts or with whom young person feels or may have felt safe.

3. A permanency focus needs to be incorporated into independent living workshops and activities as well as into daily life in congregate care settings. For instance:
 - a. As a normal part of child care staff's interaction with youth, conversations should include a focus on who might the young person like to go home to, who did they spend time with on weekends and holidays, who do they trust, who would they like to visit, who do they wish to be in contact with.
 - b. Routine independent living skill-building activities like cooking and budgeting offer an opportunity to ask youth questions like: "Is there someone in your past who you remember being a really good cook? Do you know anyone who is good with budgeting their money? Who would you trust to take care of your savings?"
 - c. Routine health discussions might include questions like, "When your mom wasn't available, was there someone you would go to when you didn't feel well?"
4. Efforts must be made by social work staff to interview group home and child care staff, as well as the youth's foster parents, to find out who the youth has connections to: "Who loves this young person? Who does the young person trust? 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? Does the youth miss a particular former foster parent? Where does the young person go if they go AWOL?"
5. Steps need to be taken to involve caring, committed adults identified by the youth in family team conferences aimed at planning for the youth's future and their discharge from foster care.
6. When reunification is the concurrent plan, steps need to be taken to:
 - a. engage members of the youth's family around the family's role in decision-making and treatment conferences, in visiting, and in discharge planning,
 - b. identify preventive services and supports the family may need to prepare for the youth's discharge from care (such as linkages to peer support groups, family mediation programs, tutoring and other academic supports, vocational training, community mental health programs etc.)
7. Steps need to be taken to sensitively address the strong feelings that might underlie a statement by a young person that he or she does not want to be adopted. Young persons who have been freed for adoption or whose parents are not meaningfully

- planning for their return need to be helped to “unpack the ‘No’” and to find out what underlies their reluctance to consider adoption. Possible steps might include:
- a. Calling the Dave Thomas Foundation (1-800-ASK-DTFA) to order a free copy of the video “*Finding Forever Families: Making the Case for Child-Specific Recruitment*” and arranging to watch the video with young people who need families but who have said “no” to adoption;
 - b. Making arrangements for the young person to talk to several young adults who were adopted as adolescents. Agencies unable to identify one of their own former foster children who were adopted as teens can contact the *ACS Families for Teens Speakers’ Bureau* coordinated by ACS’ Parent Recruitment and Expedited Permanency Unit (212-676-WISH) and ask for assistance in identifying an adopted young adult;
 - c. Providing an opportunity for the young person to meet adoptive parents who have previously adopted an adolescent. Agencies unable to identify adoptive parents interested in teens can contact ACS’ Parent Recruitment and Expedited Permanency Unit (1-212-676-WISH). For additional suggestions, see the attached *Families for Teens Resource Guide*.
 - d. Engaging 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 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 legal rights of the birth parents, a TPR does *not* necessarily terminate their emotional relationship or prevent the young person from visiting or contacting members of his or her birth family.
 - e. In certain special cases, the best permanency resource for a young person who has been freed for adoption may be a member of the child’s birth family, including a parent from whom the child has been freed. Sometimes, a parent’s situation has changed significantly since the time of the termination proceeding and a bond between the youth and his birth family continues. The assessment of whether that resource is appropriate at this time is a social work decision. Close consultation with the ACS attorney and the youth’s law guardian is essential.
8. For youth who are freed or whose parents are not meaningfully planning for reunification, steps need to be taken to identify permanency leads if interviews with the youth and staff do not yield possible permanent connections. Such steps include (1) making referrals to specialized adoption recruitment agencies such as those identified in the attached *Families for Teens Resource Guide*, and (2) making arrangements with ACS’ Parent Recruitment and Expedited Permanency Unit (1-212-

676-9474) for the young person to be featured on Wednesday's Child, a program on WNBC (Channel 4) which features freed young people in need of a family.

9. For foster parents who may be reluctant to adopt a child living in their home, steps need to be taken to sensitively address the feelings and concerns that might underlie their reluctance to proceed with an adoption. Such steps might include:
 - a. Making arrangements for the foster parent(s) to talk to adoptive parents who have adopted adolescents and who can help foster parents understand the importance to the young person of having a parental figure make a permanent commitment to them. Agencies unable to identify one of their own adoptive parents can contact the ACS *Families for Teens Speakers' Bureau* coordinated by ACS' Parent Recruitment and Expedited Permanency Unit (212-676-WISH) and ask for assistance in identifying adoptive parents who chose to adopt teenagers, including adoptive parents of a similar cultural background;
 - b. Helping foster parents address some of their financial concerns about adoption (availability of adoption subsidy, SSI and other benefits; availability of financial aid for higher education);
 - c. Helping foster parents identify services that would be available after an adoption to address ongoing needs the young person might have for medical or mental health services, education, vocational training etc.;
 - d. Helping kinship foster parents understand and address some of the concerns that are specific to kinship adoption. For specific resources, see the *Resources for Kinship Caregivers* section of the attached *Families for Teens Resource Guide*.

II. Limiting the Use of Independent Living as a Permanency Planning Goal

A. ACS Approval Required for Independent Living Permanency Planning Goal and Family-Based Concurrent Plans for Reunification, Discharge to Relatives, Adoption, Guardianship, Custody or (for Youth 18 and Older Only) Another Ongoing Supportive Relationship

Consistent with the Adoption and Safe Families Act, ACS views independent living as a strongly disfavored permanency planning goal³ which may be assigned only if a concurrent

³ See May 16, 2001 ACS Memorandum from Nicholas Scopetta, *Implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, Part IV: Guidelines for Choosing a Child's Permanency Plan*, section III(E)(independent living is the least preferred choice among the five ASFA permanency plans; except in unusual circumstances, children under 16 should not be given a goal of independent living since a child under 16 is not an "older teen" within the meaning of federal ASFA regulations, 45 C.F.R. section 1356.21(h)(3)(i)).

family-based plan for reunification, discharge to relatives, adoption, guardianship or custody, or (for youth 18 or older only) another ongoing supportive permanent relationship⁴ has been documented in writing for ACS, the Family Court and the child's law guardian.

ACS is now amending the delegation of case management set forth in a memorandum from ACS, "*Delegation of Selected Case Management Functions*" dated April 26, 1999, as supplemented by a subsequent August 30, 1999 Questions & Answers memorandum, by requiring that effective July 1, 2003:

1. No youth in foster care aged 15 or younger may be given a permanency planning goal of Independent Living (Permanency Planning Goal 03) without the prior written approval of the goal and of a written concurrent family-based plan for reunification, discharge to relatives, adoption, guardianship or custody by the ACS Deputy Commissioner or his/her designated delegate from the responsible case management area. The family-based concurrent plan must be updated in the Concurrent Planning section of each subsequent UCR.
2. No youth in foster care aged 16 or older may be given a permanency planning goal of Independent Living (Permanency Planning Goal 03) without the prior written approval of the goal and of a written concurrent family-based plan for reunification, discharge to relatives, adoption, guardianship or custody by an ACS case management Supervisor II or Field Office Child Protective Manager. The family-based concurrent plan must be updated in the Concurrent Planning section of each subsequent UCR.
3. Written approval of the concurrent plan by a Level II ACS case management supervisor (when OCACM or ACM is responsible for case management) or a Child Protective Manager (when the ACS Field Office is responsible for case management) is required for all youth in care who currently have a goal of independent living. In these cases, the family-based concurrent plan must be submitted to the appropriate ACS case management area in the Concurrent Planning section of the next UCR and updated in the Concurrent Planning section of each subsequent UCR. This provision is scheduled to take effect beginning with UCR's due in January 2004, except for youth who have indicated their intention to sign themselves out of care or who will age out of care within the next 12 months. In those cases, this provision takes effect on July 1, 2003.

⁴ An "ongoing supportive relationship" for youth 18 and older would involve a parent-like adult who is committed to the youth's emotional and future well-being beyond the age of 21, including a demonstrated willingness to provide housing and financial assistance consistent with the adult's own financial resources. For youth over 18 who have been freed for adoption, steps need to be taken along the lines described in section I, subsection (7) above to address any objections the youth may have to adoption, including providing the youth with opportunities to speak with young adults adopted as teenagers and to meet parents who have adopted teenagers.

4. Goal changes to Independent Living (PPG 03) may no longer be entered into CCRS and CONNECTIONS by foster care agency staff. Goal changes approved in accordance with this memo may be entered into the computer system of record only by approved ACS case management staff.
5. Active youth participation in developing these concurrent plans is essential and must be documented in the Concurrent Planning section of the UCR.
6. ACS' decision to approve or disapprove the goal change and concurrent plan shall be made within thirty (30) days of submission.

B. Permanency Hearings and Permanency Hearing Petitions

In preparing permanency hearing petitions and participating in permanency hearings in Family Court (including any Family Court permanency mediation sessions), foster care agency and ACS staff and attorneys shall not propose or advocate for a goal of independent living unless that goal has been approved as set forth in this Memorandum.

C. Court-ordered Goal Changes to Independent Living

If the Family Court orders a change of goal to independent living that has not been approved as set forth in this Memorandum, then a written family-based concurrent plan must be developed by the agency for that youth and approved by ACS, as set forth in section II(A) above.

While it is the responsibility of the agency to comply with the court order, it is the responsibility of the ACS attorney to bring the court order to the attention of the Supervising Attorney, who will discuss with the ACS General Counsel and/or his or her designee whether to seek a re-hearing or to appeal an order mandating a goal change that has not been approved as set forth in this Memorandum.

III. Adoption as an Option for Adolescents

The appropriate concurrent plan for a youth in care needs to be determined on an individual, case-by-case basis, with active youth participation. For many youth with goals of independent living and a strong attachment to their birth families, reunification with their parent(s) or members of their extended family may be the best concurrent plan. However, ACS believes that adoption has been too readily discounted in the past both by casework staff and by young people themselves as a permanency option.

ACS explicitly rejects the notion that there is an "age limit" for adoption or that adolescents are "too old" to be adopted. On the contrary, adoption is a viable option for adolescents, who have a critical role to play in identifying their own potential adoptive resources.

Too often, it is the misplaced fear that adoption will lead to the severing of their emotional ties with members of their birth families that leads some adolescents to reject the idea of adoption for themselves. Adolescents, along with child care staff, caseworkers, mental health professionals and others, need help to understand that the nature of adoption has undergone a radical transformation over the past several decades.

No longer does adoption mean the complete replacement of the birth family by the adoptive family. Adolescents who wish to do so should be supported in their desire to remain safely in contact with key members of their birth family: parents, grandparents, siblings and other significant members of their extended families.

The participation of adolescents in planning for their own adoption is critical. Adolescents need to be actively involved in identifying past and present connections who can be explored as potential adoptive resources.

Young people 18 and older should be informed by their caseworker that they can consent to their own adoption and that there is no need for legal proceedings to terminate their parents' parental rights. Adoption subsidy may be available if the youth was freed before age 18.

Adoption Waivers

No youth in foster care may be asked to sign an across-the-board adoption waiver or to sign a general statement that they do not wish to be considered for adoption.

Although Section 111 of the New York Domestic Relations Law provides that an adoptive child over 14 years old must consent to his or her own proposed adoption by a specific set of adoptive parents (unless the judge presiding over the adoption “dispenses with such consent”), the law does not mandate or envision an across-the-board written waiver of adoption as a permanency goal.

ACS hereby prohibits the use of adoption waivers. Youth over the age of 14 may certainly object, as permitted by DRL section 111, to a specific adoption by a specific set of adoptive parents, but agencies and ACS staff may no longer invite youth in care to waive their right to adoption by any and all prospective adoptive parents. Furthermore, even if a youth objects to a specific set of adoptive parents, agencies and ACS must continue to seek to identify other prospective adoptive parents for youth.

IV. Post-Reunification and Post-Adoption Services

It is essential to bear in mind that families that are reunited or families that are created for youth in care through adoption may need effective support services to thrive and to endure.

Staff are strongly encouraged to make use of the resources identified in the attached *Families for Teens Resource Guide* and other available counseling, medical and mental health services, educational advocacy, vocational and mentoring services.

V. Reporting to ACS, Family Court and the Youth's Law Guardian on the Family-Based Concurrent Plan

The family-based concurrent plan for a youth with a goal of independent living must be submitted to ACS in writing as part of a Plan Amendment (if a goal change to independent living is proposed) and regularly updated in the Concurrent Planning section of the UCR (section 10 of the Initial UCR and Section 9A of the 90-day and 6-month periodic UCR).

Copies of the family-based concurrent plan shall also be made available to the Family Court judge and to the child's law guardian in connection with any Permanency Hearing or other Family Court proceeding to review the status of the youth's foster care placement. ACS case managers responsible for preparing Permanency Hearing petitions shall attach the family-based concurrent plan, as reflected in the Concurrent Planning section of the UCR, to the Permanency Hearing petition. Agency caseworkers shall include the family-based concurrent plan in any updated report they submit to the court in conjunction with the Permanency Hearing.

Diligent efforts to implement the concurrent plan must be documented in the Concurrent Planning section of the UCR. At a minimum, that section must include:

1. a description of the specific casework practice steps taken to identify and nurture permanent family connections for youth with goals of independent living, as outlined in section I above;
2. the name, address, telephone number and relationship to the young person of all caring adults identified through the casework process outlined in section I above;
3. a description of the efforts taken by the agency to involve those caring adults in:
 - a. visiting the young person;
 - b. planning for the young person's future;
 - c. participating in a series of conversations and/or family team conferences to explore their willingness to make a permanent commitment to the young person.

VI. Effective Date

This memorandum becomes effective July 1, 2003, except as provided in section II(A)(3).