

## California Permanency for Youth Project

### **2004 NATIONAL CONVENING ON YOUTH PERMANENCE APRIL 21-23**

#### Brief Summary

The 2004 National Convening on Youth Permanence met in San Francisco on April 21-23, 2004. The convening was hosted by the California Permanency for Youth Project and supported by the following foundations: Annie E. Casey; Casey Family Programs; Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities; Marguerite Casey; Stuart Foundation; and Zellerbach Family Fund. Madelyn Freundlich, Policy Director, Children's Rights Inc., New York City, facilitated the convening. The convening's goals were: 1) to continue to build the knowledge base regarding permanency for older children and youth; 2) to provide a roadmap for implementing youth permanence with a focus on public child welfare agency leadership and the development of public-private partnerships; and 3) to develop specific strategies for ensuring that youth permanence is a core outcome to which child welfare systems are committed.

#### ***Participants:***

Attendees included a diverse group of stakeholders from national organizations, foundations, former foster youth, non-profits, and university researchers. A grant from the Dave Thomas Foundation sponsored attendees from the states of Massachusetts and Washington and the counties of Los Angeles and Sacramento. Other public child welfare jurisdictions that sent teams were Cuyahoga County, Ohio, the City of New York, San Bernardino, San Francisco, Stanislaus, Alameda, San Mateo, Monterey and Nevada Counties (CA). Prior to the convening, these jurisdictions completed a youth permanency self-assessment so they could use convening information strategically in their agencies.

#### ***Former Foster Youth Perspectives:***

The keynote speech was given by Regina Louise Kerr-Taylor, from her perspective as a forty-year old adoptee.;

Other perspectives provided by current and former youth in foster care included:

1. Johnny Madrid, California Youth Connection (CYC), who presented a video (digital story) he created of the story of his life as a foster youth.
2. Berisha Black, Los Angeles County Ombudsperson, and Reina M. Sanchez, California Youth Connection, Foster Youth Advocate, spoke about the booklet, "Youth Perspectives on Permanency," written by Sanchez and based on interviews coordinated by Black.
3. Richard and Dominick Freeman and Justin Williams, New York City, and Kathleen, Curt and Jennifer Davis, Salinas, CA, and Jennifer Lee Slocum, Monterey County Adoptions Specialist, provided a panel

discussion of achieving permanency, moderated by Pat O'Brien, Director, You Gotta Believe, New York City,

### ***Model Programs***

The following 5 agencies presented their models for achieving youth permanence. All of these models are documented in “Model Program for Youth Permanency” by CPYP (see [cpyp.org](http://cpyp.org) for document on website or call Margot Simmons, CPYP, 510-268-0038 for paper copy)

1. New York City: Difficulties and Successes in Implementing Permanency Practice and

Policies including Congregate Care Changes: Lisa Parrish, City of New York Deputy Commissioner for Foster Care and Prevention; Alexandra Lowe, Special Counsel to the Deputy Commissioner for Foster Care; Susan Grundberg, Project Manager for Congregate Care Bed Reduction

2. Family Focus Adoption Services: A Twelve-Step System towards Permanency Maris Blechner, Family Focus Adoption Services, New York City

3. Child and Adolescent Placement Project, Marion County Superior Court, Juvenile Division, Indianapolis: The Role of the Court in Promoting Permanence through Reunification, Judge James W. Payne, and M.B. Lippold, Project Manager,

4. Sacramento County: The Wrap-Around Program, “30 x 30”: Finding Permanence for Youth in High Level Group Care, A Public/Private Partnership. Geri Wilson, Division Manager, Sacramento County, and Lyn Farr, Program Manager, EMQ Children & Family Service

5. State of Colorado, Adolescent Connections Pilot, Project Uplift: Hiring Sub-contractors to Seek Out Permanent Connections for Youth, Cheryl Jacobson, State of Colorado Recruitment and Retention Specialist,

Additional agency perspectives were addressed through:

1. A panel in which social workers provided their perspective on the hesitations and fears which social workers may experience in the youth permanence area.

Taking part were Jennifer Lee Slocum, Monterey County Adoptions Specialist; Sheryl Dickson, ILP and Kinship Care Coordinator, Modesto Junior College (Former Social Worker, Stanislaus County); and David Brownstein, Adoption Specialist, State of California, Sacramento District Office,

2. A panel on how to make structural changes in a child welfare agency included moderator Jim Brown, Consultant, California Permanency for Youth Project, and panelists from the convening, including Judge James Payne and M.B. Lippold, Marion County, and Teri Kook, Stuart Foundation.

***Updates*** on permanency at the federal level were provided by Mary Lee Allen, Children’s Defense Fund; on AdoptUSKids, by Barb Holtan, AdoptUSKids, Baltimore; and on the youth permanency efforts of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, by Rita Soronen, Executive Director.

***AB 408 Legislation(CA):***

The history, difficulties in coming to agreement among stakeholders and eventual passage of AB 408 legislation in the State of California was discussed by Moderator Jim Brown, Consultant, CPYP, and panelists Alice Bussiere, Youth Law Center, Jennifer Rodriguez, CYC, Teri Kook, Child Welfare Program Officer, Stuart Foundation.

***Suggested Resource:***

Military Families as an Adoption/Permanency Resource was presented by Dixie Davis, The Adoption Exchange, Inc., Colorado,

***Funding Strategies:***

Doug Schmid, Casey Family Services Consultant, and Doug Crandall, State of Washington Mental Health Division, discussed funding strategies. (See Appendix 1 for details of Schmid's funding analysis.)

***Research Updates:*** The following updates were provided:

A. Overview of Chapin Hall's 2004 Study, "Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: conditions of youth preparing to leave state care," Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights, Inc. New York City

B. Collaboration for Adopt USKids Research: Ruth McRoy, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Research at the University of Texas School of Social Work

C. Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study, Holly Merz, Permanency Systems Improvement Specialist, Casey Family Programs, Seattle,

D. "Time Running Out: Teens in Foster Care," Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights, Inc. New York City.

E. Vision for a Youth Permanence Research Agenda: Rosemary Avery, Weiss Presidential Fellow & Professor, Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell University

***Working Group Sessions and Reports:***

On the final day, each state, county or city gathered together to devise a plan for 2004-2005 on how to implement specific strategies to achieve youth permanence, and then presented it to the convening as a whole. In 2005, jurisdictions will report on their successes.

***Making Youth Permanence an Ongoing Presence in Child Welfare.***

The convening concluded with a discussion led by Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director, California Permanency for Youth Project, about the possibility of a center on youth permanency that would function as a resource center for national youth permanence work.

***Evaluation:***

Evaluations were uniformly excellent. Presentations receiving the highest rankings by the largest number of persons were included those by current and former foster youth and presentations on various youth permanence models. Nearly every

session was rated as “most useful” by someone: some sessions rated most useful by some participants were rated least useful by others, and vice versa, indicating that the convening met a variety of needs. The one dissatisfaction was that the convening was tightly scheduled and there was not enough time for discussion and networking.

## ***California Permanency for Youth Project***

### **2005 NATIONAL CONVENING ON YOUTH PERMANENCE**

**April 21-23, 2004**

#### **Full Summary**

Mardi Louisell, consultant for California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), welcomed the group in place of Project Director Pat Reynolds-Harris, who was unable to do so because of illness. Pat has spearheaded the youth permanency movement in California and nationally and although she was not there, her passion and commitment permeated the sessions.

Facilitator Madelyn Freundlich, Policy Director, Children's Rights Inc., New York City, reviewed the convening agenda and goals: 1) to continue to build the knowledge base regarding permanency for older children and youth 2) to provide a roadmap for implementing youth permanence with a focus on public child welfare agency leadership and the development of public-private partnerships and 3) to develop specific strategies for ensuring that youth permanence is a core outcome to which child welfare systems are committed.

Attendees included a diverse group of stakeholders from national organizations, foundations, former foster youth, non-profits, and university researchers. Particularly notable were twenty persons, sponsored by a Dave Thomas Foundation grant, from the states of Massachusetts and Washington and the counties of Los Angeles County and Sacramento. Other public child welfare jurisdictions that sent teams were Cuyahoga County, Ohio, the City of New York, San Bernardino, San Francisco, Stanislaus, Alameda, San Mateo, Monterey and Nevada Counties (CA). Prior to the convening, these jurisdictions completed a youth permanency self-assessment so they could use convening information strategically in their agencies. (Contact CPYP for the *Agency Self Assessment Tool on Youth Permanence*.)

***Keynote: Youth Permanence: The Perspective of a Forty-Year Old Adoptee and Her Mother:***

*Regina Louise Kerr-Taylor, author, former foster child; Jeannie Taylor, adoptive mother, (Contact: jeannetaylor@computerpath.com)*

Teri Kook, program officer of Stuart Foundation, emphasized Stuart's commitment to youth permanence, and introduced Regina Louise, 40 year old former foster youth, now a motivational speaker, business owner and author of a memoir about being in foster care, *Somebody's Someone*.

Regina told of entering the system 30 years ago in Austin, Texas. As a pre-teen she had connected with Jeannie Kerr, a counselor with whom she built a significant relationship. However, Jeannie, who is Caucasian, was denied any permanent connection

with Regina, who is African-American. Because of her interest in creating a connection with Regina, Jeannie was accused of being a lesbian and therefore an unfit parent. Both were caught up in what Regina now perceives to be the racist and homophobic ideology of that era's foster care system.

Regina navigated through endless difficulties of placement changes, jail time and hospitalizations, showing resilience and resourcefulness. Despite the system's refusal to allow a relationship between Jeannie and Regina, Regina had internalized Jeannie's support and love, which gave her a belief in herself. In difficult situations, Regina asked herself, "What would Jeannie have done?"

Even as a successful adult, Regina felt the need for a permanent connection, someone to feel proud of her, especially when her book was published. It was due to the book's publication that, twenty-five years later, Regina and Jeannie found each other again. After some psychological adjustment to the reunion, Jeannie invited Regina to call her "Mother" and Regina accepted. For Regina, a former foster youth who did not call anyone "mama" until she was 40 years old, having a person to call "mother" filled a huge hole.

Regina's mother, Jeannie Taylor, then spoke of the reconnection and how she had been robbed of the years she and Regina had missed together.

***Conveying the Aha! Youth Perspectives on Permanence: Johnny Madrid, California Youth***

*Connection (CYC), [jmadrid@stanford.edu](mailto:jmadrid@stanford.edu); Berisha Black, Los Angeles County Ombudsperson, [blackbb@dcs.co.la.ca.us](mailto:blackbb@dcs.co.la.ca.us); Reina M. Sanchez, California Youth Connection, Foster Youth Advocate, [reina@calyouthconn.org](mailto:reina@calyouthconn.org)*

Digital Stories<sup>1</sup> and Permanence: Johnny Madrid showed the digital life story video he made. Digital Stories are videos that document one's life story. The process of making a digital story develops the storyteller's communication and technical skills and the stories themselves educate others about the need for youth permanence. Johnny Madrid had 19 foster homes in 9 years and 10 different social workers. Sometimes, foster parents treated him differently than their biological children, a difference he felt acutely. Recently Johnny found a professor and mentor with whom he has a connection and with whom he can stay during the holidays. Johnny said that had he had a permanent connection earlier in his life, it might have helped him in hard times.

Youth's Words on Permanence: Berisha Black, Los Angeles County Ombudsperson, coordinated the Youth Perspectives on Permanency Project, which interviewed 25 youth, ages 15-24, on their attitudes toward permanency. (For further information on the project, please see the booklet "Youth Perspectives on Permanency" by Reina M. Sanchez, available from CPYP and CYC, [www.cypyp.org](http://www.cypyp.org), [www.californiayouthconnection.org](http://www.californiayouthconnection.org)) Interviews with youth showed that they sometimes understood permanency differently than professionals. Rather than the legal or physical

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<sup>1</sup> Ten Digital Stories focusing on permanency are available through CPYP (email: [margotscypymail@sbcglobal.net](mailto:margotscypymail@sbcglobal.net), 510-268-0038) Digital Stories were developed and made by former foster youth with the assistance of Jamie Lee Evans, Bay Area Academy, CYC, and the Center for Digital Storytelling, Berkeley.

aspects of permanence, youth emphasized the significance of an emotional relationship. Interviewees also stressed that helping professionals, rather than relying on jargon, must communicate clearly about permanency in language young people understand.

Black noted that one aspect of institutionalization that puts foster youth at a social disadvantage is limited opportunities for normal relationships. This limitation then hinders foster youth in their future careers and relationships as adults. Social workers should consider connecting youth who live in group homes and residential homes with mentors in the community and assure that they can build connections through scheduled time with peers.

Given the lack of opportunity for normal relationships, especially for youth with multiple placements, many youth have only connected emotionally with professional helpers. Policies that prohibit professionals from establishing permanent connections with youth, including adoptions, must be reexamined. While it is essential for professionals to have clear boundaries, it is critical to develop boundary policies which do not erect a barrier to permanency. Several groups are developing such guidelines.

Reina M. Sanchez, author of “Youth Perspectives on Permanency,” spoke of how interviewed foster youth were eager to share their insight, comfort, love and acceptance were their primary concerns. Not only should we work towards legislation and policies that incorporate relational permanency but we must engage with individual youth to increase that kind of permanency.

Former Foster Youth Experience: Anthony Barrows, a former foster youth and a youth outreach worker in Massachusetts, also emphasized the de-facto connection that goes beyond a name or legal connection. Anthony said:

- 1) Permanency works. Many foster youth are successful today because of connections that they now consider close family and friends. “Interdependent living” rather than just “independent living” is necessary for emancipating youth.
- 2) We must ask foster youth where their connections are.
- 3) We must facilitate improved communication between agencies that work together on permanence. When communication breaks down, it limits aid to youth.
- 4) Make use of youth organizations, such as speakers bureaus and CYC. CYC has sponsored a number of bills supporting foster youth, including AB 490 and AB408.

Other Resources Emphasizing Youth Voices: Y.O.U.T.H. Training helps dispel misinformation social workers may have about foster youth and youth permanency. The training, developed and presented by current and former foster youth, suggests limiting over-professional language and includes LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender] issues as well as how to discuss such issues with foster youth in an open, caring manner. (Y.O.U.T.H. Training is available through the Bay Area Academy; contact Jamie Lee Evans, [jle@sfsu.edu](mailto:jle@sfsu.edu).)

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***Moving from Aha! Difficulties and Successes in Implementing Permanency Practice and Policies including Congregate Care Changes:*** Lisa Parrish, City of New York Deputy Commissioner for Foster Care and Prevention; Alexandra Lowe, Special Counsel to the Deputy Commissioner for Foster Care, [Alexandra.lowe@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:Alexandra.lowe@dfa.state.ny.us); Susan Grundberg, Project Manager for Congregate Care Bed Reduction, [Susan.Grundberg@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:Susan.Grundberg@dfa.state.ny.us) (For detailed description, see “Model Programs for Youth Permanency,” by CPYP at [www.cpy.org](http://www.cpy.org))

New York City presenters talked about lowering the number of foster youth in care and working hard to reverse the investment of resources from foster care into families. The city has the same fiscal crisis as many large cities and states; emphasizing the need to save money and using money already funded for reunification services, ACF strove to get teens out of foster care and reunified with their families.

To do so, they developed the policy *Family-Based Concurrent Planning For Youth with Goals of Independent Living* (June 12, 2003), which limits the use of independent living (IL) as a permanency goal and is designed to foster a culture shift in the system to ensure that no child ages out without a life-long connection that is as legally secure as possible to a caring adult committed to functioning in a parental capacity. It is still possible to assign IL as a goal but it is not easy – it requires high level administrative signatures and a written, concurrent family-based plan that is updated at six-month intervals. This plan must be developed with active youth participation and such participation must be documented, Social workers must actively engage family members and other caring adults and identify supports that families need to begin and sustain permanency for the youth.

Under this policy, a youth can say he or she doesn't want to be adopted by a specific parent, but cannot waive his or her right to adoption across-the-board.

To support the policy, training and case consultation were provided to ACF staff and associated private agencies on how to talk to young people about permanency options, what might underlie a youth's rejection of adoption, and how to address the reluctance potential resources may feel about making a permanent commitment to a young person. When a child says that he or she wants long-term care as a permanency option, staff must be able to help foster youth and foster parents “unpack the no,” that is, investigate the reluctance to formalizing a permanent connection and address financial, emotional, or behavioral barriers to permanency. ACF now has a series of questions to ask when a youth first enters care to immediately identify the natural helpers for that youth. (To obtain these, contact Bob Lewis, [rglewis@highpopples.com](mailto:rglewis@highpopples.com), or Alexandra Lowe, [Alexandra.lowe@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:Alexandra.lowe@dfa.state.ny.us)) ACF also emphasized that staff at group homes often spend more time with youth than social workers and therefore may know about the youths' connections; they should be included in the discussion of permanency opportunities for youth.

The movement in New York City to replace Independent Living with permanency met with resistance, litigation and difficulties between agencies. Many people thought teens were too damaged and difficult to help; ACF worked hard to articulate a new practice model emphasizing preventative and wrap around services.

ACF is working with Annie E. Casey to track the needs of program youth. Outcome data will be used to plan permanency programs that will incorporate post-

permanency care such as the Family Rehabilitation Program that now incorporates teens as well as adults in its substance abuse program.

**Progress:** Of approximately 11,600 adolescents in care 12 years of age or older in May 2001, 3,568 adolescents had a permanency planning goal of independent living. However, as a result of the 2003 policy limiting Independent Living as a goal, ACS expects to see a reduction in the number of children under the age of 16 who have that as a goal and an increase in the number of adolescents discharged to their families, relatives or adoptive families. Children as young as 12, 13 and 14 used to receive IL goals. As adoption and reunification rates for teens rise, these numbers have decreased 11% in 2004 .

**Recommendations:**

1. Training has helped Children’s Services meet its permanency agenda but unless an agency’s leadership visibly invests in youth permanency, the effect of training is limited.

2. Set up ways for peers to support each other in youth permanency work; provide forums that allow them to share their success stories.

3. Consider that group home staff spend time with youth daily and may know more about a youth’s connections than anyone else.

4. Allies are found in unexpected places. Those agencies with whom you had a litigious relationship in the past may come on board for new practice and philosophies.

5. Assure that professionals have permanency uppermost in their minds – any time a social worker hears that a foster youth wants to visit somewhere, the social worker must think, “Why? Why there? Does a person live there who’s important? I’d better explore that.” Professionals must help foster youth believe that permanency is possible for them.

6. Develop a speaker’s bureau to recruit foster and adoptive homes. In NYC, a bureau of 60-70 members speak with potential foster parents and foster teens. New media recruitment ads now emphasize teens instead of (as had been the case traditionally) younger children and babies.

***NYC Congregate Care Bed Reduction Project: Susan Grundberg, Project Manager,  
Susan.Grundberg@dfa.state.ny.us***

NYC has been reducing the numbers of beds available to foster youth in congregate care. Budget cuts were the impetus for this, but it turned out that bed closures benefited foster youth.

**Process:** Before a congregate care home closes, the NYC ACF staff interview congregate care home staff to assess the best place for youth after the home closes. Generally, congregate care home staff recommend another group home as the best place, but when ACF staff interviews the youth, the youth often names family members or other permanent placement options. Group home staff are surprised to hear that, but youth point out that staff hadn’t asked them about their connections. Once the youth’s preferences are named, ACF staff work with these preferences in what is a lengthy and difficult process. Once a connection is found, the agency follows up to make sure the placements work and to make sure youth receive adequate support.

At the same time, NYC is working with providers to increase their continuum of care. For sites considered poor performers in youth permanence, family-bound training is provided. Sites continually identified as poor performers may be closed and those contracts given to sites that do better.

**Recommendations:**

1. Outside consultation will help you create a strategic plan and anticipate difficulties during the process. For NYC, the Casey Strategic Consulting not only helped structure the plan, but supported the agency in its decision to reduce beds and added credibility to the process.
2. Given the resistance to reducing beds, be as transparent as possible about your decisions. Provide results from the policies pursued so that others can clearly see what changes have been made and what has been accomplished.
3. A public agency must do the difficult but necessary work of building consensus with residential care facilities who rely on filling beds to cover their costs.

**Responder: *Trish Ploehn, Los Angeles DCFS Deputy Director,***  
*ploeha@dcfs.co.la.ca.us*

LA County Dept. of Children and Family Services has made permanency a top priority and has implemented a number of systemic enhancements including the creation of two new divisions. One division, Contract Development and Monitoring, focuses on performance-based contracting with group homes/FFAs, including establishing timelines, monitoring of specific permanency planning focused deliverables, and maintaining financial accountability for meeting outcomes. Another division, Permanency Resources, is the home for two new permanency programs. The first program, Resource Family Consolidated Recruitment and Home Studies, is where all prospective foster and adoptive parents are recruited, trained, assessed and approved. The second is the Permanency Partners Program (P3), an innovative program designed to find permanent homes for older youth. The Department is also implementing a complete redesign of its Concurrent Planning processes to streamline all components of permanency for foster children and youth.

**Thursday, April 22, 2004**

**Updates from Model Programs and Agencies**

*Updates on Permanency at the Federal Level: Mary Lee Allen, Children's Defense Fund, mallen@childrensdefense.org*

At the federal level, there are new programs, new reports and initiatives, and bills pending, all of which can be used to help promote permanence for children and youth in the child welfare system. It is important that we use any attention to foster care as an opportunity to highlight the need for permanence. Current initiatives described in April include:

- Adoption Incentive Program: This program offers special incentives to states that increase the number of children adopted from foster care who are 9 years of age and older. It also rewards states that increase, over an established baseline, the number of children who have special needs who are adopted from foster care. Recommendations have been made to expand the program's incentives to include a wider focus, including children who return home from foster care and those who are permanently placed with legal guardians, as well as those who are adopted.

- Education and Training Vouchers for Youths Who Age out of Foster Care. This program provides funding to states for tuition assistance grants, up to \$5,000, for youth aging out of foster care. The tuition assistance may be used for higher education programs and for vocational education services.

- The Foster Opportunities for Success Through Higher Education Reform Act: This bill would provide grants to institutions of higher education to provide recruitment, technical assistance and support services, including mentoring, tutoring, and academic and financial aid counseling, to assist youths who have been in foster care attend and succeed in college. The support services would have to be coordinated with the Education and Training Vouchers Program. This bill responds to findings in a recent Casey Family Programs Report that two-thirds of foster youths who enter college drop out before graduation.

- Increasing federal support for subsidized guardianship. Bills are pending in both the House and the Senate that would give states the option to use their federal Title IVE dollars for subsidized guardianship programs. The experience in LA County helps to demonstrate the need for such legislation. L.A. County data show that one-third of youth in foster care are placed with relatives, 75% have siblings with them, and two-thirds have been in care for two years or more. Federal support for subsidized guardianship payments will help the county to advance permanency for these youth.

- Improving special education services for youth in foster care. A Senate bill would enhance foster children's access to special education services, ensure that they receive adequate representation in the development of their Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and promote coordination of service delivery on their behalf. (A House bill would improve early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities in the child welfare system.)

- Final Report from the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth. This report identifies youth in foster care as a special population. The need for interagency coordination on their behalf and the need for more attention to the education of foster youth were listed as primary goals.

***AdoptUSKids: Facilitating the Adoption Process: Barb Holtan, Project Director, AdoptUSKids, Baltimore, bholtan@adoptuskids.org***

Now in its second year, Adopt USKids' has developed a website ([www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org)) that features the pictures, stories, and current needs of children waiting to be adopted around the country. The website has increased the speed of the adoption process by helping parents and adoption workers avoid the laborious process of using letters and phone calls to connect families with children. Almost 3,000 children

and youth have found permanency after their profiles were posted on the site. Additional AdoptUSKids work also includes:

- Expanding the program so that all 50 states (plus Puerto Rico) can use the site for the adoption process. Originally, the site was intended only for state and county agencies; however, if private agencies wish to work with Adopt USKids, they can contract with a state agency to do so.
- Hosting the Foster/Adoption Care Summit in Washington D.C. in July, 2004, with a focus on working with communities of faith.
- Administering grants to parent groups as support to adoptive families.
- Organizing the national recruitment campaign, also sponsored by the Ad Council. Television broadcasts will begin in May/June, 2004.
- Produced “Lasting Impressions,” a guide to writing photolisting child narratives (available on website (adoptuskids.org) or from 410-933 5700)

AdoptUSKids expects to receive an overwhelming increase in phone calls and e-mail requests about adoption. Through its Baltimore office, these will be relayed to the states where the caller lives. Typically, up to 98% of these potential parents are lost after initial contact because of poor state and county follow-through. However, as counties, states and AdoptUSKids develop a more responsive system, the hope is that follow-through will increase. To accomplish this, AdoptUSKids will set up a recruitment response team for each state with the help of a 2 million dollar grant from the Children’s Bureau. Using guidelines from the “AdoptUSKids Practitioner’s Guide,” available on the website (adoptuskids.org) or on hard copy from the Baltimore office (410-933 5700), recruitment teams are committed to offering excellent customer service, answering questions, and helping potential parents plan for the next step towards adoption.

***Military Families as an Adoption/Permanency Resource: Dixie Davis, The Adoption Exchange, Inc., Colorado, dixie@adoptex.org***

An overlooked resource for permanency is military families. These families are often young and therefore more likely to be interested in adoption. Over 30% are families of color, which could provide a significant resource to serve children of color within child welfare.

Military families have a strong interest in adoption and foster care. Davis cited her experience of approaching a military community looking for foster and adoptive parents – so many families expressed interest that she was not able to offer them resources fast enough.

Agency workers often consider military families too mobile a group and worry that families will relocate before an agency has a chance to work with them on placement. However, with good planning, one can work within a family’s time constraints and make good matches. The guidebook, “A Passport Home,” is a good resource for social workers working with military families around adoption and foster care (available on website: www.adoptex.org). . Davis reiterated that military families epitomize what we are looking for—stable, young families deeply interested in expanding their families through adoption and foster care.

***Family Focus Adoption Services: A Twelve-Step System towards Permanency*** Maris Blechner,  
*Family Focus Adoption Services, New York City, ffasmaris@familyfocusadoption.org*

Blechner defined her organization as a “think tank with an action tank right after it.” The organization primarily consists of adoptive parents who are also social workers. Family Focus Adoption has developed a mechanism for moving teenagers into permanency that ensures an equal partnership between young people needing placement and a family wanting a child. Using a twelve-step system, the first 6 steps focus on the youth and parents growing to know each other and feel safe around each other and the second 6 steps help the youth and parents through the actual process of the adoption. At each step, it is the young person who makes the decision on when to move the process forward. Recently, the organization’s team has modified the process so that youth can more easily travel longer distances to visit potential parents for weekend visits.

Legalizing a permanent connection between youth and parents means a lot because it adds a certain measure of security, insurance and legitimacy. However, Blechner does not believe it is required; many youth choose not to complete all twelve steps with a parent but stop at an earlier step with a different form of permanency, which is also celebrated formally.

***Update on Funding: Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption: Rita Soronen, Executive Director, rita\_soronen@wendys.com***

The Foundation’s current projects focusing on youth permanency include:

- ◆ Finding Forever Families Video: This video promotes the adoption of older youth. Over 10,000 copies have been distributed free of charge in the last three years. For copies, contact 1.800.ASK DTFA or online at [www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.org](http://www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.org).
  - ◆ Funding a 3-year research project with Florida State University to discern what makes successful foster care adoptions (all ages) successful. A subset of that work is feedback from 350 teens.
  - ◆ Sole funding for the Foster Youth Intern Program of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. This program matches 15 youth, most of whom aged out of the foster care system, with Members of Congress for the summer, allowing first hand contact with the youth. Their stories, experiences in foster care and ideas for change impact the Members as they continue to look at policy affecting children and in particular, older children.
  - ◆ Piloting a program that focuses on the adoption of older youth in Minnesota, through the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network; continuing funding of You Gotta Believe!’s model of older youth adoption.
  - ◆ Featuring older youth in each of the two posters for the 2004 National Adoption Poster Campaign; these posters emphasize the joy of adopting an older child.
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***Moving from Aha! The Role of the Court in Promoting Permanence  
A Judge's Perspective.*** Judge James W. Payne, Marion County Superior Court, Juvenile Division, Indianapolis, [jpayne@mcjc.net](mailto:jpayne@mcjc.net) (For detailed description, see "Model Programs for Youth Permanency," by CPYP at [www.cpyyp.org](http://www.cpyyp.org))

On the bench since the 1980s, Judge Payne offered this advice to change the legal system to focus on permanency:

- Think of working in partnership with the courts rather than "using the courts."
- Identify stakeholders with leadership roles and create allies among them.
- Identify turf issues, then work to overcome them or diffuse them.
- Encourage local judges to increase their level of judicial involvement. It is

critical that they look at themselves, not just as judges, but as a significant force in the child welfare system. To make informed decisions that help move permanency forward for the youth, the judge must know each of the partners involved (the youth, family, social worker, case workers, etc.) as well as the laws and regulations

In Marion County, stakeholders formed a Permanency Planning Team facilitated by the Child & Adolescent Placement Project. This team meets once a month for half a day to discuss the permanency needs of the youth in the court system. This meeting offers the judge further opportunity for judicial involvement and ultimately helps him make informed decisions.

***Moving from Aha! The Role of the Court in Promoting Permanency:  
A Project Manager's Perspective,*** M.B. Lippold, Project Manager, Child and Adolescent Placement Project, Marion County Superior Court, Juvenile Division, [mblippold@mcjc.net](mailto:mblippold@mcjc.net)

Lippold, who works closely with Judge Payne, began ten years ago when the main issue at the court was not how to improve permanency, but how to cut costs for the county. These costs were increasing at approximately 30% per year due to what was identified as a broken child welfare system with an overwhelming number of youth continually returning to the courts because of placement issues.

Lippold and her partner, Brant L. Ping began their task with no committee to guide them, no other staff and no computer. Determined to consult with those most affected by the system, they traveled to surrounding institutions to obtain a better understanding of the needs of youth living there, speaking with youth, case workers, group home staff and social workers. They then developed the Intensive Family Reunification program or IFR, dedicated to placing "permanency through reunification" on the top of the county's agenda. IFR is a three phase program consisting of preparation, reunification and aftercare. Through IFR and a heavy emphasis on permanency versus congregate bed care, Marion County has significantly reduced the number of children in placement and group homes in the last two years. (Many programs in Marion county have helped reduce the number of residential placements for youth, but the focus here is on the reunification program.)

Lippold told of one youth, 16 years old, with several diagnoses including Asperger's, on multiple medications with several psychiatric placements over 5 years. The girl had experienced severe neglect by her mother and didn't want to go home.

However, she has now been home for five years, is attending college and living with her mom. She knows she needs ongoing medication and treatment. What made it work was the agency's commitment, court authorization, worker tenancy and a parent willing to stick with it.

When not enough focus is placed reunification, those youth for whom adoption is not an option have few opportunities for permanency. It seems easier to put children in supervised residential care than to reunify them, but expending the effort towards reunification has huge payoffs.

Aftercare is critical to maintain youth in the home: recent Marion County statistics show that within one year, approximately 22% of families whose youth had recently returned home received a new abuse or neglect charge.

Certainly challenges remain in Marion County. The number of youth referred to foster care has been rising steadily for the last five years, in part because Indiana case workers have been indicted for failing to remove children from abusive homes. For this reason, many youth remain in placement. IFR program representatives, however, work to reunify them with their family, often placing in kin care before community foster care, thereby keeping a connection with family.

***Moving from Aha! Implementing Practice:***

***A. Finding Permanence for Youth in High Level Group Care, A Public/Private Partnership: Sacramento County: The Wrap-Around Program, "30 x 30":*** Geri Wilson, Division Manager, Sacramento County, [Wilson@saccounty.net](mailto:Wilson@saccounty.net) and Lyn Farr, Program Manager, EMQ Children & Family Service, [lfarr@emq.org](mailto:lfarr@emq.org). (For detailed description, see "Model Programs for Youth Permanency," [www.cyp.org](http://www.cyp.org))

This project attempts to make permanency for all youth part of the culture of Sacramento County and reinforce a focus on reconnecting youth with family and expanding the definition of family. The project's goal was to move thirty young people to permanency between January 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004; in fact, the goal was met by April 15, 2004.

Change began in 1997-98 when Sacramento County saw a large and increasing number of youth entering foster care with no plans towards permanency – at times, the number that entered the system every month was as many as would fill an entire elementary school. The county reduced these numbers significantly and now has 4,200 children in residential care, down from 6,300, still higher, however, than the state average.

The Child Protective supervisors gave excellent support to helping youth step down from residential care. In addition two major programs aid youth in higher level care to achieve permanency.

1. Destination Family, which works with older youth interested in achieving a permanent connections with adults.
2. Wrap around services. Although the Wrap-Around Program began with a solid infrastructure, the team insured that a certain amount of program flexibility was present to incorporate practice improvements. Some improvements include:

- ◆ A sharper focus on developing one streamlined plan for each youth in the program and ensuring that each provider is clearly informed and invested in this plan and that the team regularly communicates. The “single plan” rule increases the speed and momentum of the youth’s move to permanency.
- ◆ Internal changes increasing social workers’ recognition that, no matter where the youth is currently placed, they must continually search for a permanent placement for the youth.
- ◆ Social workers are asked to actively support family connections to facilitate a youth’s move to reunification or other form of permanency.

Agency Challenges affecting permanency and reunification

The guidelines regulating work can be changed, but affecting agency and social worker attitudes is more difficult.

- ◆ If collaterals aren’t invested in permanency, the youths’ ability to achieve it decreases. Some youth who are initially placed at high level care remain there out of habit.
- ◆ Because court hearings are attended only by social workers, social workers must answer to the court about another provider’s follow through or lack thereof. Social workers are reluctant to accept blame for someone else. The system must provide support for social workers to speak up for youth through the courts.

Goals for Sacramento County: Work to increase stability at home for a youth after he or she has stepped down from residential care; ensure that all partners have an equal commitment to a youth’s permanency options; and streamline the bureaucratic process to facilitate the work

***Moving from Aha! Implementing Practice:***

***B. Adolescent Connections Pilot, Project Uplift, Colorado: Hiring Sub-contractors to Seek Out Permanent Connections for Youth, Cheryl Jacobson, State of Colorado Recruitment and Retention Specialist, Cheryl.jacobson@state.co.us, (For detailed description, see “Model Programs for Youth Permanency,” www.cpyyp.org)***

Using \$81,000 that remained in an Adoption Opportunities Grant, Jacobson developed three simple guidelines based on trainings with Pat O’Brien and Bob Lewis:

- 1) All youth need permanency.
- 2) All youth deserve permanency.
- 3) If they have not achieved permanency, I have failed.

Jacobson hired 5 well-trained contracted workers at 10 hrs a week to work in several counties on permanency for youth. The Colorado team asked youth, “Whom would you like to be reconnected with?” and “What adult would you like back in your life?” The workers reviewed with the youth significant relationships in a number of settings, such as classrooms, community groups and churches. Next, the workers helped the youth contact these people and begin reconnecting.

Data: Since the program’s inception, the team has found 91 connections for the 56 youth participating. In one nine month period, four young people were adopted. At least

14 more families have indicated they will adopt the participating youth when the youth finishes his or her treatment program. This shows clearly that adults will provide permanency for youth.

Examples: When three sexual perpetrators were referred to the project, Jacobson felt apprehensive, but the project's guiding principles stated that *all* youth need and deserve permanency. Having guiding principles clarified for Jacobson that the project could not turn these youth away, difficult as it seemed it would be to work with them. In fact, one of the adoptions eventually established was for a youth from this group: the youth reconnected with an aunt who traveled to the residential treatment facility, which facilitated the relationship. The youth moved in with her upon finishing the program. Experiences such as these make clear that even youth with severe issues can be placed.

Dedicated staff was critical: a kindergarten teacher named Miss May was identified by a youth as the only person who had ever loved her. Initial phone calls to the school produced no contact information, but staff was determined and attended a school staff meeting to ask teachers if they recognized the teacher's name. One teacher remembered Miss May and contacted her former colleague, who had changed her name after marriage and moved. In the end, Miss May remembered the youth well and began to establish a relationship with the hope of a permanent connection.

Recommendations:

- Use non-county workers: Many relatives expressed anger at the child welfare system because it had disrupted their lives. It was a great advantage to have contract workers, who were less connected to the child welfare system and able to play a neutral role between families and county. They could 1) help families process their anger, and 2) help them move forward to aid the youth involved.

- ◆ Give youth the final say in the placement. If a youth does not wish to make a connection with a particular adult, they should never have to do so.
- ◆ Find out a youth's true wants around permanency and explore those. Case workers who rely on case files and paperwork will not help youth find permanency as effectively as those who actively engage with youth on a regular basis. The most important predictor of success is how much time a case worker spends with the youth and the resources.

***Moving from Aha! Legislating Practice: California AB 408: Passage of a Permanence Bill, Panel Discussion: Jim Brown, Consultant, CPYP, jimbrown@attbi.com; Alice Bussiere, Youth Law Center, abussiere@youthlawcenter.com, Jennifer Rodriguez, CYC, jennar22@hotmail.com; Teri Kook, Child Welfare Program Officer, Stuart Foundation, tkook@stuartfoundation.org.***

AB 408 went into effect January 1, 2004. Key principles of the bill include assuring that youth are central in the permanency process; that when court hearings are necessary, youth will be heard; that those who emancipate from the system are supported; that foster youth have the opportunity to engage in normal youth activities, such as sleepovers, proms, outings with friends, etc. It is the responsibility of each individual county to implement the bill's policies.

Issues that the bill attempts to correct are:

- ◆ Staff who work directly with youth do not discuss permanency options with youth.
- ◆ Many foster youth are not aware of their right to go to court and how court hearings affect their search for permanency.
- ◆ Social workers focus on permanent legal relationships whereas what is more important to some youth are permanent emotional relationships.
- ◆ Liability issues often limit a foster youth's ability to have a normal life, e.g., youth not allowed to cook unless supervised, not allowed on school field trips.

#### Developing the Bill:

Issues that arose among stakeholders as the bill was being developed included the cost of implementing the bill, the wisdom of legislating a non-funded mandate, whether legislation was an effective way to change county practice, the desirability of mandating county social workers, and what role non-public agencies should play. Despite disagreements in discussion, the bill's priority of listening to the needs and wants of foster youth remained consistent. Arguments were made that this was not the right time for this bill due to difficult state finances. Others pointed to the overwhelming need for a focus on permanency within the child welfare system immediately.

#### Financial consequences

The bill was passed and financial consequences had to be faced. County child welfare systems agreed with the premise of the bill, but were not provided with additional funding to implement it. Therefore the mandate may lack follow through by those who support it and may be ignored by those who do not support it. Others noted that lack of funding does not excuse implementation of the law.

Some of the costs associated with the bill included:

- Additional staff time and resources needed to find relationships with the potential for permanency
- Criminal background checks on those adults youth identify as possible permanent relationships
- Additional time and resources (such as transportation) to help youth create connections with new families
- Total costs as calculated by the counties are 11 to 13 extra hours per youth, although some people disagree that the costs are this high. This calculation does not include the costs incurred by group homes and foster family agencies.

#### Current Challenges to the Bill's Passage and Implementation

- 1) State budget problems limited the Bill's target: The bill was scaled back and limited only to those foster youth living in group homes.
- 2) Current political climate limits implementation: The legislature wants to put a moratorium on new regulations or mandates due to fears of increased costs and increased bureaucracy.
- 3) California's budget crisis has meant major cutbacks in services. This limits the system's ability to implement the bill due to lack of staff and resources.

- 4) Child Welfare and Foster Care System culture: Some persons worry that this culture may be too entrenched and that, even after its passage, the Bill may not be implemented.

For a complete outline of the bill, please see [http://info.sen.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill\\_number=ab\\_408&sess=CUR&house=B&site=sen](http://info.sen.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=ab_408&sess=CUR&house=B&site=sen)  
[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill\\_number=ab\\_408&sess=CUR&house=B&author=steinberg](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=ab_408&sess=CUR&house=B&author=steinberg)

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***Moving from Foster Care to Permanency:*** *Richard and Dominick Freeman and Justin Williams, New York City; Kathleen, Curt and Jennifer Davis, Salinas, CA; Jennifer Lee Slocum, Monterey County Adoptions Specialist, leejh@cws.state.ca.us; Moderator: Pat O'Brien, Director, You Gotta Believe, New York City, ygbpat@msn.com*

***The Freeman Family:***

Richard Freeman, adopted son Dominick Freeman, and (soon to be adopted) son Justin Williams talked about how they became a family. Richard first thought about adopting a five year old. Dominick was then a high school intern with Richard and once Dominick found out that Richard was interested in adopting, he wondered, why not me? Eventually Richard agreed and the two went through the adoption process, which took a year and gave them time to be certain. Richard was later asked to do respite care for a few days for Justin. As Justin stayed longer, the family decided that Richard should legally adopt Justin as well.

“I never could have imagined myself adopting two young men even two years ago,” Richard said. For Richard, adopting older teens was desirable because they had more opportunities to relate to each other. However, he cautioned that raising older youth requires negotiation, flexibility and patience, due to the problems the youth’s have. Richard, who is gay, said one of the most difficult things for him before the adoption was telling Dominick he was gay but it was not an issue for either Dominick or Justin.

Dominick, age 16, told about abuse from his first foster family, mental abuse from residential treatment facilities, and difficulty of the long adoption process. Today, he likes being a 16 year old with a single dad and appreciates his new last name, Freeman, which he sees as a metaphor for his situation, being a “free man” and out of the foster care system.

Justin, age 16, has been in six foster care homes since he was three years old, many of which were mentally and physically abusive. He had been adopted by a cousin, who abused him for years. Having spent time with Richard and seen him behave as a responsible parent, and living with Dominick, he decided he is open to trying adoption again.

***The Davis Family***

Kathleen Davis and her husband Curtis recently adopted their daughter Jennifer Davis, age 13. The Davises have also adopted three boys. Jennifer met the Davises when she and her sister were placed with them in foster care. Jennifer was interested in being

adopted by the Davises but wanted to meet her biological father before making a commitment to them. Over six months, she had a difficult time deciding, torn between her birth family and the Davises. Afraid of leaving her biological family behind, she began to wonder if she wanted to be adopted. Kathleen assured Jennifer she could stay with them in their home and be a part of their family even if she didn't want to be adopted, encouraged Jennifer to keep connections with her birth family through visits and frequent contacts, and helped her talk about her confusion over having two families. Eventually, the adoption occurred. Jennifer's adoptive mother Kathleen supports her in keeping in contact with her birth family.

Jennifer Lee Slocum, Monterey County Adoptions Specialist and the social worker for Jennifer, said it was important for social workers to build good relationships with foster families. If foster families have a good experience with the social worker, they tell other families and encourage them to get involved. A positive reciprocal relationship between a foster family and a social worker is one of the key elements to recruitment and retention of good foster families.

***After the Aha! Finding Funding:** Don Schmid, Casey Family Services Consultant, dschmid@btinet.net, Doug Crandall, State of Washington Mental Health Division, DCRANDA@co.pierce.wa.us, (see Appendix 1 for details of Schmid's funding analysis.)*

**Doug Crandall: State of Washington**

Doug Crandall discussed a creative blending of funding sources in a collaboration between Child Welfare, Mental Health and Catholic Community Services. (See Model Programs booklet for full description of program, cyp.org) The history of this collaboration includes:

- In Washington State, Child Welfare is a county-run agency while Mental Health is state administered, a difference that caused communication and logistical difficulties. In the past, there had been little opportunity for interaction.
- To remedy this situation, MH developed a centralized program using a unique intergovernmental arrangement where one agency (CW) contracted with the other (MH).
- The team developed a treatment model based on the total number of youth in placement, the number of youth projected to need mental health services, and the length of time these youth were projected to need services (with a 90 day maximum).
- The team developed a rate for each youth, half of which Mental Health paid, the other half of which Child Welfare paid (through a contract to Mental Health). Local funds, some flexible block grant monies, and Title 19 funds were also used to cover these expenses. The rate structure developed was built as a 50B waiver site based on capitated care.
- The team estimated they could serve 55 youth and families at one time.

In the coming years, limited budget allocations for social services at the state level and changes in the way in which Medicaid funding can be used will provide challenges to mental health funding for Child Welfare. In the past, providers could be creative in the services they recommended for clients, allowing what makes sense for each client.

However, both a recent balanced budget act passed in Washington State and scheduled waiver renewals lower the limit the state is willing to reimburse providers for services. They will be reimbursed for certain services under a fee for service model. These changes allow for less flexibility in interpreting services that will be covered and may limit a client's ability to use Medicaid to cover mental health services. This funding discourages mental health providers from finding creative services to best meet the needs of the foster youth they are serving. State plans may be amended but lack of cooperation with the federal government has limited advocates' ability to make these changes.

Another challenge comes from new HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) guidelines. Medical coding technology does not fit behavioral health well so there is a limit to what services providers may offer and bill as an accountable service. Mental Health has a history of providing services that don't match normal medical codes.

***Don Schmid, Consultant, Casey Family Services (See Appendix I for handouts and details of Schmid's presentation)***

Don Schmid provided information on the following.

A. IV-E Eligibility for Foster Care: including AFDC relatedness and language for court orders.

B. Title IV-E Administration: an open ended state entitlement. Schmid provided examples of IV-E allowable activities and said that the FFP is 50%, costs must be allocated based on IV-E foster care and/or adoption assistance penetration rate, and it may be provided by IV-E agency staff or contractors.

C. Title XIX Medicaid: an open ended individual entitlement that should be used whenever possible because of its "open ended" status. It provides a broad range of mandated and optional medical services based on each states unique plan. Access is through EPSDT (mandated service for eligible children). All IV-E eligible foster and special needs adopted children have categorical eligibility; optional coverage for non IV-E eligible children

Schmid provided a grid on "Financing Post Adoption Services: Matching Services with Funding Sources," developed for Casey Family Services, Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice,

***Research Updates and Needs:***

***A. Overview of Chapin Hall's 2004 Study, "Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth : conditions of youth preparing to leave state care," Madelyn Freundlich, Children's Rights, Inc. New York City, mfreundlich@childrensrights.org. (For full report, see www.chapinhall.uchicago.edu)***

This study reports on findings of the first of three waves of data collection from the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (Midwest Study). The Midwest Study is a collaborative effort of the state public child welfare agencies in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, and the University of Wisconsin Survey Center, to gather information about services provided to selected foster youth in participating states and to report on adult self

sufficiency outcomes achieved. All data contained in this report came from the youth through in-person interviews. The study follows the progress of a number of foster youth in the participating states through age 21. These youth had all reached the age of 17 years while placed in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect and had been in care for at least 1 year prior to their seventeenth birthday. This report presents data on youth's status with respect to family history and current family relations, experiences while in out-of-home care, health, mental health, social support, delinquency, substance abuse, education, and employment. The project will provide guidance to states in their efforts to meet the overall purpose of the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and provide the first comprehensive look since the enactment of the Chafee Act at how former foster youth fare during the transition to adulthood. Website:

[http://www.chapinhall.org/PDFDownload\\_new.asp?tk=1031661&ar=1355&L2=61&L3=131](http://www.chapinhall.org/PDFDownload_new.asp?tk=1031661&ar=1355&L2=61&L3=131)

***Research Updates and Needs:***

***B. Collaboration for Adopt USKids Research:*** Ruth McRoy, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Research at the University of Texas School of Social Work, [r.mcroy@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:r.mcroy@mail.utexas.edu)

As a part of the larger *AdoptUSKids* initiative, McRoy leads a research team which is conducting two adoption research studies: Study 1: to 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 Study 2: 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. To accomplish these objectives a variety of types of data will be collected and analyzed, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

For Study One (Barriers), a nationwide, purposive sample of 300 families from public and private agencies in 26 states, who are seeking to adopt children with special needs from the public child welfare system, will be followed from initial inquiry through placement. Data are being collected and analyzed to assess reasons why families do or do not follow through with their plans for adoption. In addition, agency staff are being surveyed to assess their opinions about barriers to adoption and to identify suggestions for change. In Study Two (Success Factors), a 4-5 year prospective examination is being conducted using a nationwide sample of 150 families who have adopted children with special needs. Agency staff are also being surveyed to identify the factors leading to adoption success. The results of all data analysis will be contextualized within a comprehensive framework of knowledge regarding research in the area of special needs adoption and literature on practice, policy, and legal issues.

This Collaboration to AdoptUSKids research project is now in its third of five years, and data collection continues to be the focus of project efforts.

***Research Updates and Needs:***

***C. Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study,*** Holly Merz, Permanency Systems Improvement Specialist, Casey Family Programs, Seattle, [hmerz@casey.org](mailto:hmerz@casey.org)

The Casey National Alumni Study posed these questions: 1) How are maltreated youth placed in Casey foster care faring as adults? Do they differ from other adults with regard to functioning status? 2) Are there key factors or program components—such as placement stability, individual mental health services, group work, employment training, and employment experience—that are linked particularly with better functioning of foster care alumni?

**Education:** The high school graduation rates and employment rates were positive for many alumni. This occurred despite many placement changes (the rate of which slowed significantly when youth were placed with Casey).

**Factors predictive of success as adults:** Although many of the general outcomes were positive, they depended on characteristics of children and services. The following characteristics together predicted the level of success of an alumnus at the time they were interviewed for the study (a composite of educational attainment, income, mental and physical health, and relationship satisfaction):

- Life skills preparation
- Completing a high school diploma or GED before leaving care
- Scholarships for college or job training
- Male gender
- Participation in clubs and organizations for youth while in foster care
- Less positive parenting by their last foster mother
- Not being homeless within a year of leaving care
- Minimized academic problems (as indicated by use of tutoring services in their last foster home)
- Minimized use of alcohol or drugs (as indicated by use of treatment services near the end of their time in foster care).

**Next steps:** Future reports will delve deeper to identify which youth are most at risk for poor outcomes and the particular groups for whom certain kinds of service are more effective.

For full report, see

<http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/NationalAlumniStudy.htm>

***Research Updates and Needs:***

***D. “Time Running Out: Teens in Foster Care,”*** Madelyn Freundlich, *Children’s Rights, Inc.* New York City, [mfreundlich@childrensrights.org](mailto:mfreundlich@childrensrights.org), [http://childrensrights.org/PDF/time\\_running\\_out.pdf](http://childrensrights.org/PDF/time_running_out.pdf)

This qualitative research project examined outcomes for youth in congregate care in New York City. The study specifically reviewed the prevalence of placements in congregate care, the appropriateness of the arrangement, services provided to youth, safety of the congregate care facility, permanency goals, youth input into decisions, and preparations for independent living. Former foster youth and professionals were interviewed about positive and negative aspects of the foster care system. Findings

indicated that congregate care failed to provide a natural home environment for the youth and that quality services, such as educational support and mental health services, were inadequate. Safety was related to the availability of trained staff. However, violence, gang activity, and theft were common. Permanency planning was limited and the facilities did not promote the contact necessary for family reunification. Youth were not consulted during planning sessions and court hearings. Finally, the youth who aged out of the system were not prepared for independent living and had difficulties with housing. Despite these systemic problems, youth reported that individual staff members helped to ensure access to services and a smooth transition to independent living. The results suggest that the New York City Administration for Children's Services should increase the use of family-based placements and restructure congregate care facilities to resemble a family-like environment. In addition, public and private agencies should be held accountable for outcomes.

***Research Updates and Needs:***

***E. Vision for a Youth Permanence Research Agenda:*** Rosemary Avery, Weiss Presidential Fellow & Professor, Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell University  
rja7@cornell.edu

Avery talked about a research agenda for the future including these six points:

1. Meta-analysis: where are we? What do we need?
2. How services delivery systems work in involving youth and incorporating their views on preparing youth for permanency?
3. How do we prepare parents for permanency?
4. Does sibling placement together result in good outcomes?
5. What about the disproportionality of minority children?
6. There is a difference between states in implementation of ASFA, FTDM and FGC: how good is each of these in shortening the time to permanency?

**Friday, April 23, 2004**

***Hesitations and Fears about the Aha! Social Workers' Perspectives on Finding Youth Permanence:*** Jennifer Lee Slocum, Monterey County Adoptions Specialist, leejh@cws.state.ca.us; Sheryl Dickson, ILP and Kinship Care Coordinator, Modesto Junior College (Former Social Worker, Stanislaus County) Dickson@yosemite.cc.ca.us; David Brownstein, Adoption Specialist, State of California Sacramento District Office, david.brownstein@dss.ca.gov

In the past, agencies have not concentrated on permanency for youth, instead concentrating on maintenance. People seemed to feel that those over thirteen were too old to be adopted and that no family would want to adopt them.

Current challenges for staff include feeling overwhelmed by caseloads and struggling to keep up with each client's need. They feel they are always running inside an enormous gerbil wheel. After the demands of paperwork and court deadlines and the

expectations of birth families, foster families, and the youth themselves, they feel they have little time and energy to do more than maintain teens in their current living situations..

Often it takes two things for a social worker to concentrate on youth permanency: 1) an Aha! that explains to social workers the need for permanency, why some youth are hesitant about it and the possibility of success; and 2) a supportive supervisor. Without support from supervisors, social workers will not have time nor impetus to spend on permanency issues and will consistently resist working on youth permanency.

As an example, only after attending a training by Pat O'Brien of You Gotta Believe did Social Worker David Brownstein consider youth permanency as a need and a possibility. Even after that, it took time for him to learn how to incorporate the training principles into his everyday work and make youth permanence a priority. When David himself provided a foster placement for a 16 year-old youth, his awareness of the difficulties and pleasures of attempting permanency for youth increased – an event that shows that youth often have a sense of what might work for them. (Youth who are assertive have the edge here, but social workers must help other youth figure out how to get their needs for permanence met.) The youth approached David, who had been his counselor, about living with him. Eventually, the youth ran but before he left, told David he would always be grateful for the stable home and asked David to give him a 30 minute lead before calling the sheriff. The youth eventually signed up for drug treatment, came to David's house to get his possessions, and after turning 18, reunited with his mother.

#### Recommendations:

- ◆ Supervisors must make permanency a priority, otherwise social workers will not. In the bureaucracy, paperwork, new mandates and meetings often take priority over listening to youth and working on permanency.
  - ◆ Agencies should examine the policy that prohibits teachers, counselors and social workers from adopting youth they know professionally. Those who work with youth are sometimes the best qualified to care for them in permanency arrangements.
  - ◆ Agencies must provide a forum for discussing social workers' fears. Acknowledging and discussing personal struggles and concerns around permanency is key to moving beyond them.
  - Social workers must advocate for themselves within this system, promote the values of permanency and stand up for clients. Advocacy means not only working to connect with youth, but also working to gain support from the courts, supervisors, community and others involved in the youth's future.
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***After the Aha! How do you do it? Making structural changes in a child welfare agency.***  
 Group discussion moderated by Jim Brown, Consultant, California Permanency for Youth Project ([jimbrown@attbi.com](mailto:jimbrown@attbi.com)) with panelists from Convening, including Judge James Payne, [jpayne@mcjc.net](mailto:jpayne@mcjc.net); M.B. Lippold, Marion County, [mblippold@mcjc.net](mailto:mblippold@mcjc.net), and Teri Kook, [tkook@stuartfoundation.org](mailto:tkook@stuartfoundation.org), Stuart Foundation

#### Helping youth and their fears regarding permanency

- ◆ Help young people define permanency for themselves and use language that feels appropriate for them. When youth hear words like “adoption, family, social worker, etc.”, it doesn’t mean the same thing as it does to someone in the system. Unclear language about permanency may increase a youth’s anxiety about the process.
- ◆ Those guiding young people through the process of achieving permanency must let go of their own agenda and work at the pace of the youth. They must face the fears they have of letting kids down when a permanency situation does not work out. Youth are more let down when we don’t ask the questions that may help them achieve permanency.
- ◆ We must encourage foster youth not to be afraid to create their own family and traditions. If a young person has not had this, it can be difficult to believe they deserve this. If we can help them believe this, however, they have more chance of getting it.

#### Helping social workers work on permanency:

Reduce caseload size.

- ◆ Unreasonable expectations led to social workers being indicted in Indiana. This encourages the scapegoating of those working within the system when what is needed is a system overhaul.
- ◆ Enlist private agencies and other partnerships to help.
- ◆ One study assessed how productive case workers could be in the face of large case loads, decreased support, and increasing amounts of paperwork. It asked case workers to document their activity every minute for a specified number of weeks and then to summarize what they were able to accomplish versus what was expected according to their job description. Results showed that the county under study would have to reduce their caseload by 50% and increase staff by 100% to allow staff members to complete the basic requirements of their jobs.
- ◆ Large caseloads are a growing problem in many counties facing severe budget cuts and financial shortfalls. Staff layoffs lead to increased caseloads for those who stay, creating staff disillusionment and difficulty in providing adequate services.

#### Helping supervisors and administrators understand what changes are needed

- ◆ Social workers can help supervisors understand the needs of foster youth for permanency
- ◆ Caseworkers can advocate in the agency, together, for their own needs and for the needs of the youth they serve.
- ◆ Caseworkers can invite administrative staff to accompany them on visits to give administrators new perspectives on the cases and their struggles. When an administrator has personal contact with foster youth, it brings the goals into

sharper focus and helps them understand the day to day difficulties facing caseworkers.

- ◆ Supervisions is key. Workers stay with good supervisors. Match workers with their interests. If someone wants to transfer, encourage them – it may help that worker avoid “burn-out” and give them fresh energy.

Helping the community respond to youth permanency needs:

- Work to dispel stereotypes and myths about foster care and adoption.
- ◆ Devise ways of engaging with and involving a community, including media education, grassroots work, word-of-mouth, advertising in local newspapers.

***Working Group Sessions and Reports:***

State/county/city groups identified strengths, barriers to implementation, and what specific commitments they will make as an agency to youth permanence for next year. These jurisdictions will report back next year on what they have achieved.

Those who didn't participate in a state/county/city group met in one of the following group: a) the 2005 convening; b) how to make youth permanence an ongoing presence in child welfare; and c) fiscal consulting with Don Schmid, Casey Family Services consultant .

***Making Youth Permanence an Ongoing Presence in Child Welfare. Pat Reynolds-Harris,***  
*Director, California Permanency for Youth Project, patrh@sbcglobal.net*

Pat Reynolds-Harris spoke about the possibility of a center on youth permanency that would function as a resource center for national youth permanence work. During the coming year, she will host discussions about this. She spent time thanking all the participants and organizers of the convening for making it so successful.

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***Evaluation:***

Evaluations were uniformly excellent. Presentations receiving the highest rankings by the largest number of persons were: “Youth Permanency, the Perspective of a 40 Year Old Adoptee (Regina Louise)” ; “Youth Perspectives on Permanency” (Digital

Stories and Youth Report); New York City's presentation on implementation of practice and policy; the panel of adopted youth, their families and social workers; the Sacramento County/EMQ project on finding permanency for youth in high level group care; social workers' perspectives on youth permanency; and Marion County's model of intensive family reunification through the court system. When asked which sessions were the most useful, nearly every session was rated as "most useful" (on a scale of 1-4): some of the sessions rated most useful by some participants were rated least useful by others, and vice versa, indicating that the convening met a variety of needs. The one dissatisfaction expressed was that the convening was tightly scheduled with presentations and information and there was not enough time for discussion and networking.

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**Appendix I: Finding Funding, Don Schmid**

<b>Casey Family Services</b>											
<b>The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice</b>											
<b>FINANCING POST-ADOPTION SERVICES: MATCHING SERVICES WITH FUNDING SOURCES</b>											
<b>Developed by Donald L. Schmid, Consultant</b>											
<b>POST-ADOPTION SERVICES</b>	<b>FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES</b>										
	<b>IV-B-1</b>	<b>IV-B-2</b>	<b>IV - E Main.</b>	<b>IV-E Admin.</b>	<b>IV-E Training</b>	<b>XIX</b>	<b>XX</b>	<b>Adoption Incentive</b>	<b>TANF/EA</b>	<b>Adoption Opportunity</b>	<b>Adoption Discretionary</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATION, CASE MANAGEMENT &amp; SERVICES/TREATMENT</b>											
Adoption Search	--	--		--				--	--		
Adoption Assistance Payment	--		--					--			
Adoption Resource Centers	--	--		--		--	--	--	--		
Case Management	--	--		--				--	--		
Chemical Abuse Treatment	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Child/Family Advocacy	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Crisis Intervention	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Day Treatment	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Information & Referral to Adoptive Family	--	--		--				--			
Educational Advocacy	--	--				--	--	--			
Eligibility Determination - IV-E & XIX				--		--					
Family Therapy	--	--				--	--	--			
Flexible Funding for Families		--						--			
Group Therapy	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Individual Therapy	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Intensive In-Home Supervision	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Medical/Physical Health Services						--		--			
Medical/Behavioral Health Services	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Mental Health Treatment	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Recreation Therapy	--	--				--	--	--	--		
Residential Treatment	--					--		--	--		
Respite Care	--	--					--	--	--		
Social Skills Training	--	--					--	--	--		
Special Camps	--	--				--		--	--		
Supplies and Equipment	--	--				--		--	--		
Support Groups	--	--		--			--	--	--		

Targeted Case Management for Adopted Children and Families	-	-					-	-	-	-		
<b>TRAINING</b>												
Adoptive Parents: Current/Prospective	-	-			-		-	-	-	-		
Community Education Regarding Needs of Adopted Children	-	-			-		-	-	-	-		
Private Agency Adoption/Case Management Staff	-	-			-		-	-	-	-		
Public Agency Adoption/Case Management Staff	-	-			-		-	-	-	-		
Providers of Services to Adoptive Families	-	-					-	-	-	-		

**Explanation of Chart** - This chart includes funding resources which are wholly or partially administered by the State Child Welfare Agency (i.e. it does not include mental health and/or substance abuse services block grants which may benefit some adopted children and their families). Adoption Opportunities and Adoption Discretionary Federal grants do not include dots (·) to match these funding sources with services, as the terms of these specific grants will define which services/programs are covered.

## **IV-E ELIGIBILITY FOR FOSTER CARE**

### **AFDC RELATEDNESS**

- Child was a recipient of or eligible for AFDC (as was in effect in the state on July 16, 1996) during the month the petition was filed with the court to remove the child (eligibility month) or the month a VPA (Voluntary Placement Agreement) is signed.
  - Family Income limit
  - Family Resource limit
- Child must have lived in the home of a parent or the home of a specified relative within six months of the eligibility month.
  - Child must have been deprived of parental support during the eligibility month by any of the following:
    - Absence of parent
    - Death of parent
    - Incapacity of a parent (physical or mental)
    - Unemployment or underemployment

### **COURT ORDER LANGUAGE**

- Continuation in their own home would be “contrary to the welfare of the child” and
- Reasonable efforts were made to prevent removal of the child from their family and
- Placement and care of the child is the responsibility of the state IV-E agency or another public agency (including a Tribe or BIA) with whom the state IV-E agency has made an Agreement which is still in effect and
- Reasonable efforts were made to address the permanency goal at 12 month permanency hearing (i.e. facilitate the return of the child)

## **Title IV-E Administration**

- **Open ended state entitlement**
- **Examples of IV-E allowable activities include:**
  - Referral to Services
  - Determination and redetermination of eligibility
  - Negotiation and review of adoption agreements
  - Post placement management of subsidy payments
  - Recruitment of foster & adoptive homes
  - Foster care home studies
  - Adoptive family home studies
  - Adoption exchanges
  - Preparation for and participation in judicial hearings
  - Placement of the child into a foster or adoptive home
  - Development of the case plan
  - Case reviews conducted during a specific preadoptive placement for children who are legally free for adoption
  - Case Management for children in foster care and unlicensed homes (i.e. relative home)
  - Case Management for “candidates for foster care”
  - Case management and supervision prior to the final decree of adoption
  - Case management performed to implement an adoption assistance agreement
  - Costs related to data collection and reporting
  - Proportionate share of related agency overhead
  - Other costs directly related only to the administration of the adoption assistance program
- FFP is 50%
- Costs must be allocated based on IV-E foster care and/or adoption assistance penetration rate
- May be provided by IV-E agency staff or contractors

## **Title XIX Medicaid**

- Open ended individual entitlement
- Use this funding source whenever possible because of “open ended” status
- Provides broad range of “mandated” and “optional “ medical services based on each states unique “plan” including:
  - Physical health
  - Behavioral health
  - Rehabilitation Services
  - Targeted Case Management (TCM) \* currently a problem area
    - Target group
    - Qualifications of providers
    - Free choice of providers
- Access through EPSDT (mandated service for eligible children)
- All IV-E eligible foster and special needs adopted children have categorical eligibility
- Optional coverage for non IV-E eligible children
- Services must be authorized by a “practitioner of the healing arts”
- FMAP is based primarily on states per capita income and ranges between 50% and 83%

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