

California Permanency for Youth Project

4th National Convening on Youth Permanence San Francisco, California April 27-29, 2005

BRIEF SUMMARY

The 2005 National Convening on Youth Permanence, which met in San Francisco on April 27-29, 2005, was attended by 225 persons. The convening was hosted by the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) and supported by the following foundations: Casey Family Programs, Casey Family Services, Dave Thomas Foundation, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Peninsula Community Foundation, and Stuart Foundation. Madelyn Freundlich, Policy Director, Children's Rights, Inc., New York City, NY 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
3. To develop specific strategies for ensuring that youth permanence is a core outcome to which child-welfare systems are committed.

Participants

Because it is critically important that public child welfare agencies increase the numbers of youth who achieve permanence, the convening continued to encourage teams from public child welfare agencies to attend; with help from sponsoring foundations, the number of teams supported increased from eight (8) teams in 2004 to twenty-five (25) teams in 2005. The following public child-welfare teams attended: the states of Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, and Washington; the California counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Monterey, Nevada, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, and Stanislaus; and Cuyahoga County (Ohio), the District of Columbia, and the federal Children's Bureau, Washington, D.C.

In addition to the above, convening participants included representatives from model national programs, former foster youth and their parents, judges from eight national jurisdictions, advocacy organizations, foundations, universities, and national resource centers.

To augment the possibility of partnerships with juvenile court judges, The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges sponsored a number of juvenile court judges at the convening.

Agenda

Unique to this convening was the focus on creating and sustaining partnerships. This was the first year panels had been held on partnerships for permanency with the juvenile court and with congregate care facilities, such as group homes and residential treatment centers. In addition to these panels, the convening agenda included the following panels:

- Former foster youth and their permanent connections
- Model programs on youth permanence
- Summary of progress from states/counties that attended previous Youth Permanence Convenings
- Unique needs of specific populations
- Research on youth “aging out” of care and what makes teen permanence work
- Youth permanency and preparation for adulthood
- Post-permanency support and services

Highlights of the convening included the following:

- Four former foster youth and their permanent connections participated in panel discussions on their experiences in achieving permanency.
- Adopt Cuyahoga’s Kids, a new model program, is a project of Adoption Network, Cleveland, OH, created to deal with the backlog of children remaining in foster care without a permanent home or plan. The project uses a model of child-specific recruitment and focuses on children ages 10 and up. Key components include mentors for youth at high risk of aging out, Adoption Navigators to help potential adoptive parents through the system, and post-adoption support. The fourteen agencies participating in the project (one of which is Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services) are paid either through an upfront grant or on a payment-for-service basis.
- Three juvenile-court judges discussed how to engage the bench in a partnership on youth permanence, a panel that was welcomed by participants as the first step in the process of engaging the juvenile court as a champion for youth permanence.
- Staff from Four Oaks Residential Treatment Center (Iowa City, IA), You Gotta Believe! (New York City, NY) and Graham-Windham (New York City, NY) discussed strategies for enabling youth to move directly from congregate care to permanent homes.
- Participants addressed the extreme racial disproportionality in the population of children in foster care, particularly the large numbers of African American teens. It may be possible to reduce this disproportionality by providing culturally sensitive services at the front end, as well as by achieving greater permanence for these youth.
- Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/questioning (LGBTQ) youth face their own unique issues including being kicked out of a home because of their orientation, lack of communication with social workers about their orientation, and being at higher risk for exploitation than other youth. LGBTQ youth issues should be incorporated in all child-welfare and congregate-care trainings as a normal part of addressing the needs of youth in foster care and their providers.
- A discussion of the need for post-permanency support and services included presentations by New York Council on Adoptable Children (COAC), Kinship Center (Salinas, CA) and the North American Council on Adopted Children (NACAC, St. Paul, MN) on their post-adoption services.

A full convening summary follows with details on each presentation.

2006 National Convening on Youth Permanence

Because the California Permanency for Youth Project will concentrate on its work in California for the next several years, Casey Family Services has taken over the role of hosting the 5th National Youth Permanence Convening, which will be held in September, 2006 in Washington, D.C. Casey Family Services will also serve as a national resource for youth permanence.

Evaluations

The evaluations indicated that the convening was extremely successful; as in prior years, many reported it was one of the best national conferences they had ever attended.

The most useful presentations/panels in terms of ratings were the two sessions with former foster youth and their permanent connections; the Model Programs Panel; the Round Robin reports from counties and states who had previously attended; the panel on Unique Needs of Specific Populations; and the small group session that gave participants a chance to meet with their own state/county to plan for the future.

In answer to the question about what additional stakeholders should be included in the future, the three groups most respondents wanted to participate at the next convening were 1) Mental Health, 2) an increased number of judges and legal representatives, and 3) an increased representation from Native Americans.

One topic participants wished to see covered in more depth was funding. Many new participants said they felt their organizations left with a sense of urgency about implementing this work and mentioned that their belief system was positively affected by hearing from the former foster youth and their permanent connections. As to whether the convening would be helpful in planning and implementing youth permanence programs in participants' organizations, the evaluations were extremely positive and stated that the convening stimulated; provided specific information, ideas and models; helped the organizations assess current practice; clarified the importance of collaboration; and generated passion.

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4th National Convening on Youth Permanence
San Francisco, California
April 27-29, 2005

FULL SUMMARY

PRECONVENING: Wednesday, April 27, 2005, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

In order to provide background information, a preconvening was held for those states, counties, and other participants who had not attended one of the previous Youth Permanence Convenings. Pat Reynolds-Harris and Dennis Boyle, recently appointed Director of the California Department of Social Services, welcomed the new participants to the morning session.

Definitions of Permanency

Lauren Frey, Project Manager, The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, Casey Family Services, New Haven, CT

Frey reviewed and clarified the definitions of permanency to be used during the convening as follows:

Permanency is an enduring family relationship that

- is safe and meant to last lifetime
- offers the legal rights and social status of full family membership
- provides for physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual well-being
- assures lifelong connections to extended family, siblings, other significant adults, family history and traditions, race and ethnic heritage, culture, religion and language.

Specific elements of permanency that are important to older youth are:

- the involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in the process
- a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, lifelong support, and a legal relationship if possible
- the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons including siblings.

Contact: Lauren Frey, 203-401-6914, lfrey@caseyfamilyservices.org

Model Programs on Youth Permanence: Policy, Service, Practice, Funding

You Gotta Believe!, Brooklyn, NY

Pat O'Brien, Director

Philosophy:

Analysis shows that 40-50% of the homeless population comes directly from foster care. Therefore, You Gotta Believe! (YGB) considers itself first and foremost a homelessness-prevention program. YGB finds permanent homes for youths who would otherwise be discharged from foster care to no one but themselves.

YGB certifies families for adoption with the understanding that they are taking the youth forever and that the only time a youth may not be able to live at home would be if the youth needs therapeutic treatment outside the home, in which case director Pat O'Brien works with the family on how to do that. O'Brien gave the example of a youth who was violent, had stopped going to school or getting out of bed in the morning, and beat up his future adoptive father before the adoption finalization. The youth had never stayed longer than one year in anyone's house. Rather than obtaining the hospitalization and/or residential treatment center (RTC) placement he needed, all his former foster parents had abandoned him. Fortunately, he now had a father who functioned parentally and orchestrated not only the hospitalization, but also the best RTC the system could pay for, and the youth stabilized. When he came home from RTC on his first visit, he saw his room and said, "Everything is where I left it." Even though the future adoptive father had visited regularly and arranged for all his care, it was not until that day in the home that the youth believed he had a father.

Personnel:

YGB has hired several part-time recruiters to go to community board meetings, churches, flea markets, and anywhere else families might be found. Recruiters include YGB's adoptive families and youth, former foster children, and persons from the communities in which the two agency sites are located. The recruiters, who are experienced adoptive parents, can talk honestly about the difficult times with adopting youth, and are outstanding role models for potential adopters. Youths who have aged out, have been adopted, or still need families are invited to provide training to YGB's families. They tell families about their needs and what people should know about raising teens. The youth are paid \$25 for each appearance as a consultant.

Contact: Pat O'Brien, 718-372-3003, ygbpat@msn.com

(See Appendix I for "Top 10 Reasons to Adopt a Teenager," available on a poster, the concept of which was developed by Oklahoma's Youth Advisory Board – 2000. See also the CPYP booklet, *Model Programs for Youth Permanency*, available from www.cypyp.org.)

Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids, Cuyahoga, OH

Tami Lorkovich, Associate Director, Adoption Network Cleveland, OH

Jim Provost, Chief, Cuyahoga County Dept. of Children and Family Services, OH

Tracy Brichacek, Supervisor, Cuyahoga County Dept. of Children and Family Services, OH

Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids is an Adoption Network (AN) program created and funded by Cuyahoga County's Vision Council to deal with the tremendous backlog of children remaining in foster care without a permanent home or plan.

For the project, AN developed a practice model of child-specific recruitment with Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and fourteen partner agencies, and implemented it in January 2004. The project identified a group of 650 youth who had no one willing or able to adopt them and no permanent plan. These youth were then referred to the private agencies and DCFS. AN focused primarily on older children, especially those at risk of aging out. Now 85% of children identified for the project are ages 10 and up.

Expectations for the project are strict:

1. The agency must read the case record, interview the child about what he or she hopes for, and complete an assessment within the first 60 days of referral.
2. The agency must construct a permanency-planning team and hold a meeting to begin engaging the team members in recruiting for this child.
3. The agency must adhere to tight and strict time frames.

For the agencies involved, the process has produced a less competitive atmosphere: agencies hold monthly meetings and private agencies share families among themselves. Social workers have responded well, feel supported and successful, and children are benefiting. The goal for adoptive placements was to find 50 in the first year. Since the project started in January 2004, out of 650 youth who had no plan, 165 are in adoptive placements as of April 2005.

Key components of the Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids project include:

- Mentoring: Mentors are provided for those youth who are at highest risk of aging out. The mentor is a permanent champion who also gets involved in case conferences, planning for the future, and in recruiting an adoptive family. AN secured a grant for this component, which was created in partnerships with Big Brothers, Big Sisters, One Church One Child, and partner adoption agencies.
- Adoption Navigators: In an effort to prevent another backlog, experienced adoptive parents help potential adoptive parents navigate the system and identify barriers for children, with a special emphasis on teens. One target group was 120 foster parents who had previously not wanted to adopt. Through the efforts of the navigators, as well as meetings and trainings with DCFS social workers, these foster parents have now decided to adopt. Adoption Navigators also helped DCSF staff with mundane tasks, including getting out mailings, hosting events, and cleaning up the matching data system. In doing the last, the navigators noticed that the data system was matched from the child's point of view, and that potential adoptive parents who had approved home studies were not assigned a social worker until a child had been identified for them. The Adoption Navigators started searching the data system from the adults' point of view and found matches.

- Funding structure: The annual cost of the project is \$2,500,000. AN receives \$1,000,000 from county commissioners for pass-through funds, which they give to the other agencies through a contract. The rest of the money is raised by AN through foundation and individual support, in-kind donations, United Way, and grants.
- Agency Financial Support: Agencies select one of two models under which they will be paid. One option is an upfront grant of \$50,000 for salary and overhead for a full-time staff member. The agency gets 80% at the start and the rest when they succeed. After a set goal is met, the agency receives a bonus for every child adopted. (Cuyahoga County DCFS chose that model and created a unit of child-centered recruitment workers. AN required that the agency use experienced people, so the county transferred existing workers to the project and hired new staff to fill in behind.) The second option is a payment-for-service model with one-third payment at each of three stages: 1) at the completion of initial assessment, 2) at placement, and 3) at finalization. Payments are based on the age of the oldest child in any group of children. The agency is paid at a much higher rate for a 17-year-old than for an 8-year-old.
- Child Preparation: “Get Real” is held monthly for youth ages 14 and up who are not already adopted or in the process of being adopted. The group is co-facilitated by young adults who aged out of care or were adopted as teens. They talk about what it means to be in foster care, what it was like for them to be on their own at age 18, and about their plans and hopes. AN also offers “Link-Up” groups, based on North American Council on Adopted Children’s (NACAC) parallel group model, to work with teens and their caregivers on a quarterly basis to address issues of grief, loss, identity, and attachment.

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Jim Provost, 216-881-4546, Jprovost@cuyahogacounty.us*

Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), New York City, NY

Lisa Parrish, Deputy Director, Los Angeles County; formerly Deputy Commissioner, New York City, ACS

Despite kin taking many children in the 1980s and younger children finding permanent homes, the number of children in New York City congregate care remained steady through the eighties and nineties. In 2002, ACS faced \$75,000,000 in budget cuts. ACS decided to concentrate on closing residential beds and to reinvest any saved money in changing the delivery model to focus on permanence for youth. To do so, they hired youth permanency consultant Bob Lewis to train staff and ACS-contracted agencies for two years. ACS also established youth permanence peer-to-peer counseling groups that met in different boroughs, and developed strong relationships with attorneys, courts, and agencies. Through these actions, ACS discovered that training helped find allies and champions. However, it wasn’t enough to effect the policy changes ACS was looking for. Therefore, ACS held a year-long public debate on policy with contracted vendors and interested stakeholders, including attorneys and advocates, some of whom ACS had had an adversarial relationship with in the past.

ACS began to require a concurrent family plan even if the young person had a plan for reunification. Most importantly, ACS developed a speakers' bureau for current and former foster youth to speak citywide about permanence. It also began to use teens, rather than the traditionally photogenic babies, in recruiting material, ads, television spots, etc.

Contact: Lisa Parrish, 213-351-5858, parril@dcfs.co.la.ca.us

(See the CPYP booklet, *Model Programs for Youth Permanency*, available from www.cypyp.org.)

Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (CCSWW), Tacoma, WA **Mary Stone-Smith, Vice-President**

Mary Stone-Smith provided a history of her agency's development into a family-permanence agency, beginning with Homebuilders. With the deinstitutionalization movement in the 1990s, it began wraparound for children with severe and chronic mental health needs. In 2000, CCSWW developed the no-reject (for referrals), no-eject (for difficult situations) policy for children. They developed the Family Assistance and Stabilization Team (FAST), an acronym that indicates the key facet of the program. FAST addresses children with severe behaviors, including failing adoptions, in-home conflict, and ejections from group homes. Its goals were safety, stability, and permanence.

Out of over 950 youth served, half were state dependents, many long disconnected from family. CCSWW has found a family connection for all but one child. CCSWW started contacting the children's biological families with a sense of medical emergency, believing that the number one cause of disruptiveness is loneliness. Soon they also began to use Internet search tools to find biological relatives.

Contact: Mary Stone-Smith, 253-225-0984, Maryss@ccsww.org

(See the CPYP booklet, *Model Programs for Youth Permanency*, available from www.cypyp.org. See also the **Research Panel Section** on p. 23.)

Conveying the Aha! Panel of Former Foster Youth and Their Permanent Connections

Panels were held in both the morning and afternoon sessions. The following youth spoke with their adult connections:

Victoria Garza and Lupe Garza, Gilroy, CA

Angela Egers and Mary Keane, New York City, NY

Richard Wilkerson and Mary Chancie, New York City, NY

Mary Lee and Scott Lee, Clarksville/Dickson, TN

Facilitator: Lauren Frey, Project Manager, The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, Casey Family Services, New Haven, CT.

Angela Egers and Mary Keane

Angela came into care early and was a quiet child who didn't cause any trouble. When she was a teen, social workers automatically assumed she would be on the independent-living track. When Angela first moved in with Mary, she thought something must be wrong because Mary didn't yell all the time as Angela's family had. Angela had never thought about permanence, but when she left foster care and moved in with Mary, she found that a permanent home meant that she could work as an intern to get experience and not have to worry about having a roof over her head. In Angela's role in her current position with You Gotta Believe!, she has run into the same lack of concern for permanence with other youth who tend to believe that, if something happens, they will just take off and leave the home.

Mary was a single lesbian in a studio apartment in Manhattan, with a two-seater Miata, when she began work as a volunteer with gay and lesbian teens. Five years ago, she turned 50 and thought she could make a difference, so she went to various foster care agencies in New York City and said she wanted to take in some lesbian teens. All the agencies said they didn't have any, but they did give her non-lesbian teenage girls.

"I didn't know what I was doing at all," she said. "They ran. The agency would say, 'They're gone; we'll get you another girl.' If the girls got in a fight, the agency said they had to go." Mary had been a traditionally prepared foster parent: "I had no clue as to how to make it work with teens," she said, "I'm embarrassed by the number of girls who came and left." Finally, she said, "Stop! Let's do it differently. We'll go to therapy." Now, the girls come and go in a more orderly way. It took four or five years before the agencies found some lesbian teens to place with her.

Previously, Angela said she didn't want to be adopted until she was 30, to show that she could make it on her own. Now, however, she wants to be adopted and Mary will be adopting her. Both Angela and Mary suggested that adults let youth take the time to figure adoption out for themselves.

Victoria and Lupe Garza

Victoria had been in and out of group homes and foster homes. She had always been connected to her family, but her behavior had been difficult and the agency thought her family was burned out. The agency's attitude was, "Let's give the family a break and not involve them until she has it more together." However, in 2003, EMQ Children and Family Services, the agency working with her while she was in care, contacted an aunt and uncle, and Victoria went to live with them. "No one had wanted to be around me," Victoria said, "but I straightened up when I went there. I knew I was really part of my family when they grounded me." When Victoria began her senior year of high school, she had only nine credits, but she started getting good grades. Then she got pregnant, which was a difficult time for everyone. When Victoria came to live with them, she was pregnant. Lupe said, "I thought, 'Oh, my God,' mainly because I had such high hopes for education and that she could be someone. After the initial shock, we became very close."

Victoria had her baby, graduated from high school, and got married. Victoria remains close within her large extended family of support. She now lives on her own with her husband, will start college classes in August, and wants to be a social worker.

Mary and Scott Lee

Mary said that she wanted what everyone wants – a family of her own. At sixteen, everyone said to her, why do a TPR (termination of parental rights)? But, she said, she wanted a family. As they were going through the process, the adoption worker and many others said, “This is so much paper work for me,” implying that Mary should let it go. Instead, Mary called the commissioner and said she wanted the legal papers to prove that she had a family. Scott and his wife had a baby and wanted another child but his wife developed lupus, so they looked at adopting. The adoption of Mary was finalized one week before Mary turned 18.

Richard Wilkerson and Mary Chancie

Richard, who will be 21 this May, said that people think it’s off the wall to be adopted at 21. Even though he had experienced six disappointments, a worker at his group home did not give up on looking for a home for him. Mary first met him when she went to adoption classes at You Gotta Believe!, where her job was to find permanent homes for teens. As Mary took Richard into her home and made a commitment to him, she learned not to see his shrugs as off-putting, but to realize instead that, from his perspective, many persons had *appeared* to be interested in the past but none of them had worked out. Coming to San Francisco for this conference is their first trip together, so they are beginning to build a history together. Richard now wants to be adopted. Mary said it’s up to him whether he wants to call her Mom. “I’ve known that I’m his parent,” Mary said. “It’s just taken Richard awhile to realize it.”

CONVENING PROPER: Wednesday, April 27, 2005, 12:00 PM – 5:15 PM

Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director of CPYP, and Teri Kook, Child Welfare Program Officer, Stuart Foundation, San Francisco, opened the convening by welcoming participants and thanking funders. (See **Acknowledgements Section**, p. 39.)

Conveying the Aha! Panel of Former Foster Youth and their Permanent Connections

(Please see Wednesday a.m.)

Definitions of Permanence

(Please see Wednesday a.m.)

Reports from States and Counties - Round Robin

“A Guide to Permanency Options for Youth” by Fredi Juni and Robin Lockett, Alameda County Social Services Agency was highlighted. Then states and counties that attended previous Youth Permanence Convenings provided a summary of their progress. Each participant chose three groups to attend for 20 minutes each. States that reported were Massachusetts and Washington. Counties that reported were Cuyahoga (Cleveland, Ohio) and California counties Los Angeles, Sacramento, Monterey, Alameda, Stanislaus, and San Mateo. (See Appendix III for state and county reports.)

Unique Needs of Specific Populations

Disproportionality and Youth Permanence

Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director, California Permanency for Youth Project, Oakland, CA

Ms. Reynolds-Harris addressed the extreme racial disproportionality that exists in the population of children in foster care, particularly the large numbers of African American teens, many of whom have been in the system for several years. Over-representation of children of color has not been dealt with at the front end of the system, where it starts. If people can be served in their own communities, by culturally sensitive agencies, it can make a big difference in reducing disproportionality.

Ms. Reynolds-Harris said we must develop strategies to achieve permanency for children of color. Were we to achieve greater permanence for African Americans and other ethnic populations of teens, it is possible that disproportionality would be less. Unless we concentrate on how to remedy this situation, they will emancipate from foster care with a troublesome future.

Contact: Pat Reynolds-Harris, 510-562-8472, patrh@sbcglobal.net

Permanency Needs of Latino Youth

Rudy Ayala, Director of Community Relations, Devereux Arizona, Scottsdale, AZ

Because of the growing number of Latino youth in foster care, we need to hire and train professionals on issues related to the Latino adoption and foster care experience. The professionals will then be able to speak to the needs of this growing population and thereby increase the number of permanent homes for them.

Contact: Rudy Ayala, 480-998-2920 x1013, rayala@devereux.org

Permanency Needs of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth

Jill Jacobs, Executive Director, Family Builders by Adoption, Oakland, CA

Jill Jacobs gave a comprehensive, insightful assessment of the issues facing LGBTQ youth and suggested possible ways to counter their problems in relation to permanency.

Population: Studies show that one-third of LGBTQ youth in foster care were kicked out of a home because they identified themselves as gay or lesbian. Gay youth, particularly transgender youth, frequently run.

Permanence: Often the first response to finding that a foster youth is gay or lesbian is removal from the foster home and placement in a “gay group home.” The assumption in child welfare has been that this protects the youth, but the result can be that the youth is programmed out of permanence. LGBTQ youth are as various in their preferences as other youth. They do not necessarily prefer a lesbian or gay parent, sometimes preferring placement with a heterosexual

foster parent who accepts them and is comfortable if they are questioning. It is incorrect to assume that because a group home specializes in serving LGBTQ youth, it is ideal. It is better for us to work on making all group homes LGBTQ-friendly than to create special group homes for certain youth. Some of the same issues relate to foster care settings, which also need to be made safe for LGBTQ youth.

Sometimes the youth want to go home. Although birth parents may have been tremendously disturbed and perhaps abusive when finding out about their child's orientation, social workers should still explore the possibility of reunification. "One can unlearn homophobia," Jill said. Some youth may not require that the parents accept their gayness; youth do need a place that is safe. Social service agencies must provide resources to support these youth and their families.

Working with LGBTQ youth: These youth rarely tell a social worker that they are gay or lesbian. Many social workers are uncomfortable raising the issue; in addition, the overall acceptance and visibility of the issue are low in many social services agencies and foster care settings, so youth have no way of knowing whether a social worker will be sympathetic to their situation. Jill suggested that agencies consider such statements as putting up posters that show the agency is a hate-free zone (as some agencies have done), and also that social workers not assume that a youth is heterosexual, but instead routinely refer to other options as possibilities in their conversations with youth.

Systems: Paying attention to LGBTQ youth is especially difficult in large group-care facilities because of separation by gender. Facilities with coed units are more flexible about gender. Community licensing, legislation, state regulations, family-to-family staff, training, group homes, and Residential Treatment Centers must strengthen their awareness of and make visible their commitment to these youth. We need a culture of valuing difference, not just tolerating it.

Recruitment/Retention: In some cases, gay or lesbian couples who apply to be foster parents are told they must take gay or lesbian youth and when LGBTQ youth have an adult gay or lesbian connection, that connection is scrutinized much more thoroughly than other connections. (However, one should be aware that LGBTQ youth are more at risk for exploitation; precautions for all potential predators should be universal.) When it appears that a foster family might not be sympathetic to an LGBTQ youth, the social worker needs to look for signs of abuse and/or attempts to change the youth's orientation.

Training: LGBTQ youth issues should be incorporated in all child welfare trainings as a normal part of addressing the needs of youth in foster care and their providers. It should be expected that a social worker and supervisor consider the possibility that a foster youth may be LGBTQ. One should develop and maintain skills in this area, just as in any other area.

Related Projects:

- California statute prohibits discrimination in foster care against LGBTQ youth. “Queer and Trans Youth in California Foster Care have Rights! A Know Your Rights Guide” can be obtained at 415-392-6257.
- The Model Standards Project, a joint project between Legal Services for Children and The National Center for Lesbian Rights, is developing professional standards for youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- LAMBDA (non-profit community service agency serving the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender population) and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) completed a 3-year project using listening forums to get baseline data on what is happening in foster care with LGBTQ youth. In early summer, 2005, CWLA will publish the recommendations from the model project Standards for Best Practices.
- Children’s Rights Project has a task force to end homophobia.
- Cesar Chavez Institute, San Francisco State University, has done the Family Acceptance Research Project, which examined the effects of family on outcomes for the GLBTQ youth. One area that has changed is the coming-out age. In the 1970s, youth came out at the age of 20; now they self-identify between the ages of 10 and 12, and come out at the age of 14.

Contact: Jill Jacobs, 510-272-0204, jjacobs@familybuilders.org

Permanency Needs of Teen Mothers

Pat O'Brien, Director, You Gotta Believe!, Brooklyn, NY

We must recruit people who want to provide a home for teens and help teach them how to take care of their own babies. O’Brien said that he has never met a young woman who gave birth to a child while she was in foster care who was returning home to anyone. There are all kinds of mother/baby services available, but none of them involves getting the teenage mother a permanent home where she can take care of her baby. At the very time in a teen's life where she might be more receptive to living in a family, the system programs her out of permanency.

Contact: Pat O’Brien, 718-372-3003, ygbpat@msn.com

CONVENING PROPER: Thursday, April 28, 2005, 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Partnerships: The Juvenile Court as a Partner:

Honorable Leonard Edwards, Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court, CA

Honorable James Payne, Commissioner, State of Indiana, former juvenile court judge,

Marion County, Indianapolis, IN

Honorable Carl Bryan, Judge, Nevada County, CA

Facilitator: Elizabeth Barnes, JD, Model Court Liaison, Permanency Planning for Children

Department, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), Reno, NV

The panel discussed how to engage the bench in a partnership on youth permanency, without interfering with judicial ethics.

Judge Edwards

Connecting with significant others is important to children in out-of-home care. We need to identify the people to whom children are related by love, blood, spirit, and mind. The court needs to look at the whole child and the whole family.

The role of juvenile court

The juvenile court has a mandate to accomplish three goals: to keep children safe, to give parents a fair chance to reunify with children who have been removed from their care, and to ensure timely permanency for children under the court's jurisdiction. "Permanency" means return to a parent, adoption, guardianship, or placement with a relative; foster care or group care is not permanent and is the last choice. "Timely" means within one year or, in some cases, within six months. In light of judicial ethics, judges cannot be "partners" with anyone, but they can be "collaborators."

The role of the social worker involves deciding:

- Whether to remove a child from parental care
- What services could prevent removal
- Where a child should be placed after removal
- What services parents should be offered in order to regain custody of the child
- Whether the child can safely be returned to parental care
- What the permanent plan should be for a child who cannot return to parental care

The role of the judge involves:

- Reviewing all the social worker's actions and decisions
- Ensuring that parents and child receive due process of law
- Inquiring about paternity, relatives, and Indian heritage
- Ensuring that all decisions are made in a timely fashion – e.g., treat each case as an emergency, review a child's case more frequently than the statutes require, restrict continuance requests by all parties.

Santa Clara County, CA

People in the whole child welfare system meet several times a month to address court systems issues, permanency planning issues, and educational issues facing foster children. The child advocates have meetings with all the players in the system. In addition, there is monthly cross-systems training.

The commitment to finding permanency has led to the development of new attitudes and practices, including: family finding, wraparound services, team decision-making, and joint response of law enforcement and social workers.

Family finding

Family members are willing to “go the extra mile” for a child whose DNA they share.

Obstacles to finding families:

- Typical social-work practice stops at the immediate biological family.
- Judges, attorneys, and guardians ad litem don't ask about family.
- The assumption is made that the family of a parent in prison can't be a resource for the child

Family-finding search tools include:

- child welfare record review
- family ancestry chart
- Social Security death index
- prison locator services
- American Red Cross
- Indian Child Welfare Act
- Inter-State Compact for the Placement of Children
- International Social Services (410-230-2730)
- Internet resources (See Appendix II)

About three years ago, EMQ Children and Family Services found families for the ten most acting-out youth in the children's shelter. Once the children felt they belonged somewhere, their angry behavior subsided. Now Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services has created the Relative Finding Assessment Unit, which deals exclusively with finding relatives. The unit supervisor is Leiam Rodarte, (408) 975-5148, Rodartel@cws.co.santa-clara.ca.us

These practices must be taken statewide. AB 880 (Cohn), proposed legislation based on Washington State law, would require relative search in every case, and would require the state to take a leadership role in developing relative-finding technology.

Recommendations:

- The best results will come from leadership within the child services agency.
- Judges must take a leadership role in monitoring permanency for children.
- Organize a monthly meeting of representatives from all parties in the dependency system, to address permanency issues. The judge should convene the meeting. The agenda would be open, but should include permanency issues, the adoption process, emancipation issues, and connecting foster children with educational opportunities.
- CASAs (Court Appointed Special Advocates) are the court's best connection with the community. CASAs are meaningful persons who will be in the children's lives for a long time. One panel of foster children who had aged out of the system said to a person that their CASA was the most important person in their lives.
- Timely permanency will only be achieved if your jurisdiction makes it a priority. Persuade your leaders to meet regularly about permanency, and improvement will follow.

Contact: Honorable Leonard Edwards, 408-491-4748, Ledwards@scscourt.org

Judge Bryan

Judges must be involved in collaborative and permanency efforts. People are more likely to attend meetings called by a judge. If all players are not present, meetings often fail to achieve their objective. A committed judge will see that the issue of permanency is raised early and throughout the process.

Some judges don't want to hear dependency cases:

- Every case brings with it the possibility that the media will quickly try to assign blame for the death or serious injury of a child.
- Judges lack education, training, and experience in the areas of social work, psychology, and family matters.
- The child welfare system seems disorganized and confusing to judges. Staff feel uncomfortable in the court system, especially when the adversarial process aligns them against the families they are supposed to be helping. Families feel alone and unconnected when they must deal with a number of different workers in the system.
- The adversarial nature of the process leads to the attorneys focusing on whether the social worker has made reasonable efforts, rather than focusing on what the parents have or haven't done or on what the child needs.

Judicial ethics require that judges refrain from discussing facts, cases, and reasons for decisions, except for appropriate occasions when counsel to all parties are present.

Judges are concerned about interagency bickering, burnout, budget cuts, and bureaucratic justifications for inaction. They want to know how to recruit, cultivate, and care for agency directors and caseworkers who can achieve good communication and collaboration.

Agencies and judges must do the same three things:

1. Respect each other and communicate frequently.
2. Cooperate and collaborate. This must be actively encouraged, broadly inclusive, and incorporated from management down to the caseworker. One example is staffing, in which the judge meets with everyone involved in the case, before the case is called. This is critical to the effective handling of dependency and delinquency cases because:
 - a. It is a way to build agreements, facilitate resolution, and discourage conflict and adversarialism.
 - b. It can help identify cases where mediation can be effective, and help focus the mediation process by identifying key players and issues.
 - c. It can promote training and co-education. As an example, through staffing, Nevada County (CA) was able to identify the exportation of children out of their community and school districts as a primary obstacle to achieving permanency. Staffing and collaboration also sped up the process of mediation.
3. Institutionalize the compliment. Judges, caseworkers and Court Appointed Special Advocates should compliment parents and children when reunification or adoption occurs. Agencies could give awards for staff.

Change is possible, and is relatively easy. Some changes will require collaboration and risk sharing among judges, social workers, and public and nonprofit agencies. Other changes, such as combining or separating court calendars and time-specific calendars, can be expeditiously effected.

Contact: Honorable Carl Bryan, 530-265-1476, jmccalligan@nevadacountycourts.com

Judge Payne

Who makes the permanency decision?

- The judge makes the decision, which depends on many factors, including the interest of the judge, the age of the case and the child, changes in the parties (case managers, attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates), and prior efforts.
- The child welfare agency makes a recommendation. The judge often tends to go along with it, without asking the really hard questions.

When is the decision made?

- Under federal law, the court is supposed to ask at the first hearing whether there are reasonable efforts toward a plan for permanency.
- Start engaging the court immediately. Force the judge to think about the plan, not just accept recommendations without question.

Issues involved in the decision:

Agency culture, worker attitude, worker caseload and turnover, training and experience of workers, age and behavior of the youth, and attitude of parents

Suggestions for getting the judge involved in the decision:

- Meet regularly with the judges. Be aggressive in asking for meetings. Include in the meetings youth who have been through the system.
- Have the youth in court. If that is not possible or appropriate, show a video of the child or have the child available to talk to the judge.
- Have the judge on a training panel with caseworkers and foster children who have aged out of the system.
- Have a conference on permanency and invite the media.
- Arrange judicial training.
- Invite the judge to speak at independent living programs.

Collaboration

Many states today confront declining budgets. This issue is not a reason to have less collaboration; it is the very reason to have more collaboration. So, too, collaboration is not competition for budget dollars; it is presenting a united front.

Contact: Honorable James Payne, 317-234-1391, james.payne@fssa.in.gov

The panel members agreed on the importance of involving children in the court hearing. They stressed that adequate staffing, planning, services, and communication among the parties are essential for creating a comfortable climate for the children.

Following the panel's presentation, comments from the audience included:

- Nona Lou Etsitty of the Navajo Nation Department of Justice stated that what the participants at this convening are trying to do is what has always been culturally appropriate for Native Americans. For years, Native Americans have been fighting for, and trying to enforce, wraparound services for their families.
- Patricia Maxwell, Erie County (Buffalo, NY) Family Court judge, talked about the importance of keeping children's cases with one judge. Children's cases stay with her, whether they involve delinquency or dependency. Because of this, she knows the history of the family, what troubles the children have had, and the history of multiple placements. This is one of the practices that National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) advocates and trains other judges to do.

Facilitated Small Group Discussions

A. Achieving Permanency for Children and Youth of Color

Facilitator: Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director, California Permanency for Youth Project, Oakland, CA

Many children of color are being treated or warehoused in group homes and are not achieving permanency.

Recommendations:

1. Make permanency part of group homes' charge; the child welfare agency must direct them in this effort.
2. Leadership must fight the racism that operates throughout the system.
3. Use team decision-making to counter each other's biases.
4. Do wider and deeper searches for families. Provide families with more support in their first contacts so they can, if possible, remain out of the system.
5. Adjust licensing requirements that prevent placing children with family.
6. Involve youth over the age of 14, as well as birth parents, in permanence planning.

B. Achieving Permanency for Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning Youth

Facilitator: Jill Jacobs, Family Builders by Adoption, Oakland, CA

Suggestions for getting discussions going about Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning (GLBTQ) youth in the child welfare community included sponsoring a brown-bag lunch series, producing or showing digital stories of GLBTQ youth, and looking at resources in the community beyond child welfare, such as gay and lesbian centers. It is not always safe for the GLBTQ person on the agency staff to come out and take charge of this effort, so it is helpful when an ally steps forward to say that this is a discussion we need to have.

C. Curriculum and Training Opportunities for Staff

Facilitators: *Bob Lewis, Consultant, Gloucester, MA*
Maureen Heffernan, Consultant, Kent, OH

We must develop policies and programs that effect permanency throughout the system; training flows from that. We need to bring together people who work on placement with those who work on life skills and independent living. There is a need for training and development that promotes competency for everyone, without making people feel incompetent about the ways in which they've been trying to help children previously. There is a lack of knowledge nationwide about what is available in terms of training. We need a method for sharing that information.

D. Group Homes, Residential Treatment Centers, and Youth Permanency

Facilitator: *Doris Laurenceau, Supervisor, Graham Windham, Hastings, NY*

We must partner with parents from the beginning and help them see that there is a place for them and their input in residential treatment centers.

Youth on probation in residential treatment centers also need permanency. What can we do for them in the face of constantly changing judges and shifting attitudes?

E. Guidelines for Involved Professionals Who Want to Adopt Adolescents

Facilitator: *Pat O'Brien, Director, You Gotta Believe!, Brooklyn, NY*

Proposed guidelines:

1. The professional discusses the matter with his or her supervisor; the matter should not be brought up with the adolescent at this time.
2. The professional or the supervisor writes a letter to a person in authority, expressing interest in the adolescent.
3. An outside agency completes a home study.
4. If the professional is approved, the agency presents the home study to the adolescent's case manager or treatment team.
5. The agency talks to the adolescent about the interested professional.
6. If everyone is in agreement, the regular transition process begins.
7. An outside agency supervises the placement.

Some states have a policy barring professionals from adopting adolescents they are involved with. Factors to consider when considering granting a waiver include:

1. Whether the child is legally free for adoption
2. Whether the child's parents support the adoption
3. Whether the parents can be found
4. Whether other relatives are available
5. Whether a child with the goal of independent living would consider adoption as a possibility

F. Models for Funding

Facilitator: Lisa Parrish, Deputy Director, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Los Angeles, CA, formerly Deputy Commissioner, New York City Administration for Children's Services

The group discussed how to bank and redirect projected savings from system reform, and what financing mechanisms could create a fund for long-term post-permanency placement needs. In many ways, the system is a disincentive to permanency because state and federal funding streams are barriers to reinvestment strategies. Some agencies are moving from a per-diem system to an outcome-based system with financial incentives attached.

Funding streams available to everyone include:

- 484B
- Medicaid
- EPSDT
- Workforce investment funds.

Funding Advocacy Needs:

- Tell policy makers what staff resources are needed to make proposed programs effective.
- It is important to understand the federal budget process, the reconciliation process, and how it affects our programs.
- Find out what funding cuts are being proposed in our states and get to the legislators before these proposals get on the table.

G. Permanency and Kin

Facilitator: Karin Gunderson, University of Washington School of Social Work, Seattle, WA

The group defined “family” as everyone related by blood to the child and “kin” as everyone who is not related by blood, but has a long-term relationship with the child.

In many ways, federal policy and funding streams make it difficult to achieve permanency for children with their biological families. Although adoption is the federal definition of permanency, relatives often don't see why they should have to adopt the child. Legal definitions of permanence often don't fit the less formal family system. If relatives become licensed as foster parents, they are caught up in a system that often runs counter to their wishes. Many funding streams don't adequately support relative placements. All of these factors result in moves for the children.

We need to start challenging these things on a national level. Families must be brought into this conversation because they can help resolve these issues; they think outside the box because they *are* outside the box. We also need to challenge the underlying assumptions about fathers – that they don't get involved, that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, etc.

There are different types of permanency – legal, relationship, and placement permanency. We shouldn't turn our backs on relatives just because they can't be a placement resource. Even if children end up in a non-relative setting, we can achieve relationship permanence for them by opening pathways for their families to nurture them in other ways.

H. Policy Development and Structural Changes

Facilitator: Trish Ploehn, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Santa Fe Springs, CA

We need to change funding streams so that they are congruent with the programs we set up, rather than adapting our programs to the funding stream. The whole service delivery system needs to be changed so that we are not creating youth who need permanence; the focus on permanence must start on day one. For the children in the system whom we have already failed, we need to come up with plans to move them into permanency immediately; many of them are getting ready to emancipate, without permanency.

Strategies for accomplishing these goals include reduction in the use of congregate care, increased wraparound services, frequent use of team decision-making, more frequent reviews, insistence that social workers come to court with a plan for permanency, and involvement of youth in all planning.

Independent living programs should be used as a support service for a child and family already in a permanent situation, rather than simply as a tool for emancipation out of the system.

I. Public-Private Partnerships Using a Consultant

Facilitator: Gail Johnson, Executive Director, Sierra Adoption Services, Nevada City, CA

One reason that it is difficult to make public-private partnerships work is that unspoken and unconscious emotions are involved. Workers wonder: Will I lose my job? Will they do it better? Am I competent?

Sierra Adoption Services had a wonderful experience using Stuart Levine, a Bay Area consultant. Levine had the workers tell their own personal stories. During the process, the workers discovered that they had a shared vision. When they dropped their fears and defensiveness, it turned into a stunning collaboration. Every year, this small private agency, in collaboration with public agencies, is now placing 50 or 60 children who had been considered unadoptable. It took the consultant to help the workers at both public and private agencies realize that they were part of the problem.

J. Team Planning and Decision Making that Engage and Empower Youth

Facilitator: Lauren Frey, Project Manager, The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, Casey Family Services, New Haven, CT

In considering team planning, one must realize that large team meetings are not the biggest piece of the process. Individual and joint preparation sessions prior to the larger meetings are what can make or break the meeting. Team planning meetings must address all the dimensions of safety, permanency, and well being for the youth.

Core components of team planning and decision-making models that would be most effective in achieving permanency for older youth include:

- Put youth at the center to guide the entire decision-making process.
- Involve power brokers in the process, people who could be significant in achieving a successful outcome or could derail the process if they weren't involved in the planning and didn't agree with the plan.
- Have teaming be "business as usual," not something that is done only when there is a need for a placement decision or some sort of crisis.
- Continue to use the team as a tool until permanency is achieved.

Characteristics of facilitators who can best achieve permanency outcomes:

- Neutral or equally partial
- Ability to co-facilitate with youth and keep centered on the youth's needs
- Ability to talk about permanency with youth, caregivers, and other significant adults and professionals

K. Working Through Counter-transference to Achieve Youth Permanence

Facilitators:

Lyn Farr, Regional Director, EMQ Children and Family Services, Sacramento, CA

Harry Spence, Massachusetts Department of Social Services, Boston, MA

The group discussed the role of counter-transference – the ways in which the generally unconscious emotional life of all staff affects decision-making.

How can we talk about the emotional dimensions of interaction between staff and families when caseloads are high, the hierarchy insists on meeting numerical targets, there is an endless shift back and forth in the dichotomy between safety and family preservation, and staff develop a hard shell in an attempt to be safe in an organization that doesn't provide any safety?

The emotional dimensions of the dynamics between staff and families will never be compelling as long as the emotional life of the organization is a prohibited topic for discussion. Although supervisors deal with this, people at higher levels in the organization do not. As long as that is the case, training around counter-transference is unlikely to take hold in the culture of the organization.

There is a parallel process between the organization's feeling too overwhelmed to take care of children as well as it would like to, and the families' being too overwhelmed to take care of the children as well as they should. This makes for dysfunctional and destructive interactions between the organization and the families. Therefore, it is important to break the culture of compliance and punitive response and to move beyond the feeling of being overwhelmed. People at every level of the organization need to find ways to recapture resiliency out of this morass. On the unit level, one step would be conversations among staff about making sense out of the craziness and finding a sense of their ability to do the work. If staff could talk about their own feelings of frustration, despair, and being overwhelmed, they could then begin to address the elements of counter-transference that so profoundly affect their work with families.

Research Panel

Facilitator: Madelyn Freundlich, Policy Director, Children's Rights, New York City

**A. Chapin Hall's Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth,
*Amy Dworsky, Senior Researcher, Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of
Chicago, Chicago, IL***

The purpose of this study is to gather information about the provision of independent living services to youth in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin, to evaluate their self-sufficiency after they age out of foster care, and to provide guidance to the states in their work with the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999.

Baseline interviews were completed with 736 foster youth in 2002-2003. All of the youth were in out-of-home care at age 17, had been in care since at least their sixteenth birthday, and had been placed in care because of abuse or neglect. The presentation focused on the first wave of survey data and included information about the placement history of the youth, satisfaction with their foster care experience, mental health, substance abuse, education, employment, criminal justice system involvement, and optimism about the future.

A second wave of data was collected in 2004 when the youth were 19 years old. The report based on these data had not been released at the time of this convening, so the presenter could not discuss it, other than to say that many of the youth in the study are not faring well. That report was released on 5/19/05 and is available on Chapin Hall's website, www.chapinhall.org.

Implications: Youth who age out of care face a variety of challenges because of educational deficits and significant psychosocial problems. Child welfare agencies must do a better job of preparing youth for these challenges if the youth are to make a successful transition to early adulthood. In particular, child welfare agencies must provide the right independent living services and/or subsidies to the right youth.

Contact: Amy Dworsky, 773-256-5164, adworsky@chapinhall.org

B. What Makes Teen Permanence Work

1. *Finding Extended Family,*

Mary Stone-Smith, Catholic Community Services of Western Washington, (CCSWW), Tacoma, WA

Catholic Community Services provides wraparound services and intensive in-home family preservation services (FAST). CCSWW has no research projects going on currently, but it does collect outcome data.

About 50% of children referred for FAST services are at risk of imminent hospitalization. With wraparound services, FAST has been able to prevent almost all of those hospitalizations. Another reason for referral to the program is stabilization of the child to prevent moves to another foster home or into group care. In the past five years, about 85% of the children receiving these services ended up living with family or relatives.

Families report high satisfaction and perceived benefits from these services. About half of the youth served are not in school at the time of referral, but 95% of them are enrolled in school when they finish the program.

CCSWW has learned many effective intervention strategies over the years:

- A strengths-based approach that acknowledges what the families have done right is important in engaging them in every step of the process.
- Family members need to be involved, regardless of their situations, unless there is a court order forbidding any connection, because parents can often tell us what is best for their children, whether or not they're involved with the children at the time.
- A sense of urgency is critical. Once children are meaningfully connected with family, they begin to stabilize. There are fewer moves, fewer runaways, and less involvement with law enforcement.
- Funders must be invested in the outcomes.

Contact: Mary Stone-Smith, 253-225-0984, Maryss@ccsww.org

2. *Teen Adoption*

Cynthia Flynn, Center for Child and Family Studies, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

Successful Adolescent Adoptions, an exploratory study with recruited volunteers, focused on families who had successfully adopted adolescents. Because this was not a random sample, the researchers cannot make causation statements. What they can say is what worked for these families. Adolescents can be adopted successfully, and adoption went much more smoothly when kinship care or adoption by relatives was considered first.

The adolescents and their adoptive parents talked about three different dimensions of what it meant for them to be successful: just being a family, quality of life in the present, and quality of

life in the future. From their perspective, the primary components of success were: commitment on the part of both teens and parents, having enough information to decide whether to consider the adoption, and having the supports to make it work.

Some of the challenges faced by the adolescents included: the adjustment to being a family, fearing they would not be able to see their relatives, the length of the process, and feeling that they weren't asked soon enough about adoption and didn't get placed soon enough. This highlights the importance of adolescents as partners in the process. Several things can be done to make it easier for them:

- Talk about permanency early and often
- Provide them with information about their legal status
- Discuss their options and ask for their input as they go through the process
- Help them come to terms with their biological families
- Move as quickly as possible once they have decided to consider adoption

About 40% of the adopters had no plan to adopt at the time they decided to adopt this child. They needed a person to attach to before they would consider adoption. Typical recruitment methods won't work for these people. We need to get adolescents into more community activities so that they meet more adults who might want to attach to them.

Some people don't make it through the adoption process because there are so many obstacles that they drop out. Many of them might make good parents, but they're just not good at going through the lengthy process.

The full report is on the Center for Child and Family Studies website, www.sc.edu/ccfs/research.html.

Contact: Cynthia Flynn, 866-300-9328, cynthia.flynn@sc.edu

3. Post-Permanency Issues,

Madelyn Freundlich, Policy Director, Children's Rights, Inc., New York City, NY

Seeking Permanency Solutions is a recently completed qualitative study on permanency planning and permanency outcomes for children and youth in the New York City foster care system.

The researchers used a participatory action design in which the subjects of the research were partners throughout the project: they helped formulate the questions that were asked, they were trained and involved as interviewers, and they were actively involved in the analysis of the findings. Those interviewed included birth parents of children currently in foster care, birth parents of children previously in foster care who were subsequently reunited with them or placed with relatives, young adults who were formerly in foster care, and adoptive parents.

Of the 30 young adults who participated in the study, most had been under the age of 10 when they entered foster care, and had been in foster care anywhere from two to more than fifteen years. 60% had been in a group home and 40% had been in a residential treatment center. More

than half had aged out or signed themselves out of foster care; six returned to their parents; three went to live with relatives; and three were adopted, one by a relative. In some instances, their permanency plan changed many times while they were in foster care. Some of them had no idea what their permanency goal was.

About one-third of the young adults were pleased with their lives since leaving foster care; they tended to be the ones who were reunified with their families, placed with relatives, or adopted. About eight of them had mixed experiences since leaving foster care, and about one-third reported very negative experiences.

The young adults reported a variety of experiences regarding the support they received from adults in their lives. Some said they had no one to help them and in some cases they did not trust anyone to help them. Others received support from family members. Two said they could turn to an agency staff member with whom they had connected while they were in foster care.

The researchers identified several key themes:

- Funding is a major barrier to the development of post-permanency services.
- Post-permanency services need to be available to youth for longer periods of time.
- We must integrate independent living services and permanency services, especially employment skills training programs such as the Casey-UPS initiative, in which UPS employs youth who are in care.

Child welfare professionals who were asked to respond to these themes agreed that we need to do much more in terms of the development and implementation of post-permanency services and supports. They emphasized the need not only for post-adoption services, but particularly for post-reunification services.

Contact: Madelyn Freundlich, 212-683-2210, mfreundlich@childrensrights.org

Addendum to Research Discussion

It is important that researchers use controlled study designs, where treatment groups are compared to non-treatment groups. It would also be beneficial to include the following in study designs: the impact of the foster care experience on youth beyond the age of 18 or 21; psychological feelings of permanency; youth in the juvenile-justice system; and a “social networks” model, where the concept of “interdependence” replaces the concept of “independence.”

Specific areas of future research suggested by participants include: disproportionality; youth-permanency training for judges and others in the juvenile-court system and its role in determining outcomes for youth in care; the Residential Treatment Center referral process; and consequences of substance abuse for youth permanency.

Partnerships: Congregate Care/County/State Partnerships on Youth Permanence

Kelli Malone, Vice-President, Community Based Services, Four Oaks Residential Treatment Center, Iowa City, IA

Mary Keane, Family Permanency Advocate, You Gotta Believe!-New York City, NY Partnership

Angela Egers, Teen Permanency Advocate, You Gotta Believe!-New York City, NY Partnership

Doris Laurenceau, Supervisor, Permanence Department, Graham Windham, Hastings, NY

Kelli Malone, Four Oaks, REPARE

REPARE was a three-year demonstration project, using a family-centered model, designed to reduce the length of stay for children in residential treatment. The primary objectives were to facilitate permanency for the children, to actively work with the families while the children were in residential care, and to provide extensive community-based aftercare services. The project was conducted in a psychiatric medical institute for children (PMIC), the highest level of care in Iowa. Half the children in the PMIC were in the project group and the other half acted as a control group.

Family involvement was increased in assessment, service planning, care reviews, and discharge processes and an open visitation policy for families was initiated. Services were added that had not typically been offered to families in residential treatment, including transportation, housing, child care, employment, family preservation, parenting education, and in-home aftercare services.

The average length of stay was reduced from about 15 months to about 7_ months. The number of children who went directly home from residential care increased – compared with the control group, 30% more children in the REPARE project went directly. Permanency and stability were increased – twelve months after discharge from the REPARE project, 75% of the children were still in permanent and/or stable placements.

Much of this was accomplished due to the flexible funding of the grant. However, after the project ended, Fair Oaks staff learned that there were still many services they could provide without the grant money:

- Continuation of the family focus in residential treatment, including open visits, involvement of parents in on-unit activities, and family events at the treatment center
- Establishment of a consumer involvement group, where families help design policies and procedures in a family-focused way
- Extension of child treatment into the home and the community
- Conducting satisfaction surveys of families 30 days after treatment, with follow-up after a year.

Recommendations:

1. All organizations should do self-assessments.
2. Develop a learning culture where improvement doesn't mean that what you're doing now is inadequate or inefficient; it just means that you want to be better at what you're doing.
3. Shift from a child-centered to a family-centered approach and philosophy.
4. Residential treatment centers need to shape their programs based on the needs of children and families, as well as on the needs of the community.
5. Administrators should have a vision from the top down about what staff should be doing.
6. Collaboration, partnership, and family and youth involvement are critical.

Contact: Kelli Malone, 319-337-4523, kmalone@fouroaks.org

Mary Keane, You Gotta Believe!

You Gotta Believe! is a homelessness-prevention agency. Last year, it was awarded a four-year federal contract to place staff in group homes, residential treatment centers, and the Office of Youth Development. It is committed to placing 100 youth from congregate care facilities over the course of the contract. The out-stationed staff work with programs to identify youth whose plan is to be discharged to no one but themselves, to work with these youth to find families for them, to certify the families, and eventually to place the youth with the families.

You Gotta Believe! offers several types of training:

- Training for congregate care and residential care programs on how to work with children, identify permanent families, and train families.
- A-OKAY, a four-week class focused on foster parents who have teens in the home but have not yet made a commitment to keep them
- Working with youth in independent living groups to encourage them to think about permanent families.

Children often don't deal with the pain and loss they have experienced until they meet a family that wants them. At that point, it is important for these children to start seeing a therapist so that when they hit a crisis they have someone to talk to. Therapists can also help agency staff with issues that come up when children are going through the process of finding a family and starting visits.

Contact: Mary Keane, 914-378-1899, marytkeane@aol.com

Angela Egers, You Gotta Believe!

Steps to finding permanent homes for teens:

1. Educate the social workers or permanency planners about identifying youth without permanency and making referrals to a permanency project.
2. Talk to residence staff, who can be helpful in identifying people who might become permanent resources.

3. Talk to the teens, educating and re-educating them about family and permanency, and finding out which adults are important in their lives.
4. Locate those adults, talk to them, and educate them about the importance of permanency for adolescents.
5. If the adults are interested in being a permanent resource, refer them for certification training. Even if they're not interested, they often know of someone who would like to be a resource.
6. Stop looking at what went wrong before and do something about it now.

Contact: Angela Egers, 914-378-1899, angelaegers@aol.com

Doris Laurenceau, Graham Windham

Graham Windham has made a commitment that within four or five years, every youth leaving their residential treatment center will have a permanent connection. To that end, they established the program Project Impact. Project staff include a supervisor, two intake/discharge workers, who partner with the parent at the beginning, an aftercare worker, and permanency planners.

Youth can't be expected to know what they want in terms of permanency unless they know what their options are, so Project Impact staff explore this with the youth and the family. They collaborate with You Gotta Believe! and the Youth Advocacy Center in helping families become permanent foster parents, and in facilitating reunification with birth families.

Contact: Doris Laurenceau, 914-478-1100 x227, dlaurenceau@yahoo.com

Addendum:

One issue that needs to be addressed is the over-diagnosis and over-medication of youth in the foster care system. In fact, homelessness and hopelessness are often turned into mental health issues, when they are in fact a need for permanence.

Partnerships Panel: Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood

Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director, California Permanency for Youth Project, Oakland, CA

Miryam Choca, Director, California Strategies, Casey Family Programs, San Diego, CA

Rita Powell, Consultant, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Buda, TX

Sarah Greenblatt, Director, The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, New Haven, CT

Lauren Frey, Project Manager, The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, New Haven, CT

A collaboration among the above organizations resulted in *A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood* (available at www.cpy.org).

Children need and deserve both permanency and preparation for adulthood. When they grow up in a family, the family is the major vehicle for preparing them for adulthood. This is not the case for many children in foster care.

We need sound definitions of permanency and preparation, as well as definable, measurable outcomes. The integration of permanency and preparation needs to happen at a variety of levels. We also need to blend our team-planning processes, so that they are not parallel efforts that make no sense to the youth.

The proper system would:

- Act with urgency to assure a safe, secure, and legally permanent family as early in the youth's life as possible
- Provide comprehensive and continuous preparation for adulthood for each youth in care
- Strategically blend funding, policy, and practice
- Provide post-permanency services that are equal, adequate, and accessible to all youth, regardless of their permanency outcome
- Ensure reunification, adoption, guardianship, or other planned permanent living arrangement that results in not only a place, but also a person who makes a permanent commitment to the youth.

Contacts Pat Reynolds-Harris, 510-562-8472, patrh@sbcglobal.net

Miryam Choca, 619-671-9515, mchoca@casey.org

Rita Powell, 512-295-2684, ritapowell@austin.rr.com

Sarah Greenblatt, 203-401-6917, sgreenblatt@caseyfamilyservices.org

Lauren Frey, 203-401-6914, lfrey@caseyfamilyservices.org

CONVENING PROPER: Friday, April 29, 2005, 9:15 AM – 11:30 AM

Post-Permanency Support and Services

Post-permanency support and services have been decidedly deficient. It is important to note that it is not just post-adoption families who need support and services. Parents who reunify and relatives who provide permanent connections also need them. Even permanent, life-long connections who do not have legal standing may need support. Significant research has shown exactly which kinds of support are needed. What often has not been determined is how to get the support to those who need it.

New York Council on Adoptable Children (COAC)

Barbara Rincon, Program Director, New York City, NY

COAC was founded in 1970 by a group of adoptive parents who were alarmed at the time it took to adopt a child out of the foster care system. It has grown into a multiple-service adoption agency that provides services citywide, free of charge. COAC offers all services in both English and Spanish, and also has some Creole- and French-speaking staff. Its most recent publication is a white paper issued in 2004, *Forging Connections: Challenges and Opportunities for Older Caregivers Raising Children*.

The New York City Adoption Resource Center (NYCARC) started by COAC offers post-adoption services to avoid dissolution and improve family functioning. These services are provided to *any family* that has ever adopted (not only those adopted through COAC) or that has a pre-adoptive child placed in the home. Of the families served, 85% have adolescent children. Three post-adoption support groups, with free babysitting, comprise a key component of NYCARC services:

1. Parent groups. Topics include attachment and bonding, special education, therapy and medication, and parenting children with ADHD.
2. Parent-child groups. These groups allow parents and children to talk about their concerns in a neutral and non-threatening environment. The topics are similar to those of the parent-support groups.
3. Adolescent groups. These provide a venue for youth to discuss issues that they don't share with the rest of their peers in the larger community. Topics include identity issues, loss, grief, juvenile crime, at-risk behavior, drugs, sex, school, attitude and appearance, parental rules, preparing for job interviews, and anger management. There is also a recreational component, which enables the adolescents to connect and develop relationships in a more relaxed setting as well as in the therapeutic group setting.

Additional post-adoption services offered by NYCARC include: individual counseling for parents and children; crisis intervention for parents who are seriously considering the return of their adopted children to foster care; the Warm Line for crisis-oriented calls from parents and children; information and referral for services (including respite) to prevent the return of adopted children to foster care; and an Advisory Board comprised of adoptive parents and adoption professionals.

Two other major efforts of COAC are:

1. The AIDS Orphan Program, which works with AIDS-afflicted parents to make permanency plans for their children
2. The AdoptUSKids campaign – COAC is one of three agencies in New York City receiving referrals from the English-speaking campaign, and is the first responder for the Spanish-language campaign.

Referrals: Most people learn about COAC from the adoption agency they used and from the NYC Administration for Children's Services Subsidy Unit. (Due to lack of funding, there are no formal post-adoption services at the vast majority of foster care agencies in New York City.) In April 2004, COAC's telephone number started to appear on the New York City subsidy check envelopes. This generated many proactive calls from families wanting to find out about services before they came into crisis, and it has turned out to be the most effective means of getting information out about COAC and post-adoption services in general.

Funding Sources: For three years COAC has received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for the NYCARC's post-adoption services. Because there is no specific provision for these services in the state budget, COAC and the other New York State TANF grantees must go to Albany every year to lobby and educate the legislators about the importance of the services and the necessity of TANF funding for them. In addition to TANF, funding sources include corporate and foundation grants.

Service Population:

- Kin: Approximately 44% of the TANF families in the COAC program are grandparents or other older relatives who have adopted their grandchildren and/or are parenting non-adopted kin.
- Ethnicity: COAC is a bilingual and bi-culturally proficient agency and has more Hispanic families than the other two recruitment agencies in New York City. As a result, more Hispanic children are referred to COAC for recruitment and follow-up. The majority of children in foster care in New York City are African American and Hispanic.
- Results: COAC's non-dissolution rate is almost 100%. Last year only one family had to place a child in a Residential Treatment Center.

Contact: Barbara Rincon, 212-475-0222 x222, brincon@coac.org

Adoption Clinical Training

Carol Biddle, Executive Director, Kinship Center®, Salinas, CA

In 1992, Kinship Center developed Adoption Clinical Training (ACT), a curriculum to help mental health professionals gain adoption knowledge and competency. Sharon Roszia, Annette Baran, and Deborah Silverstein developed the original core curriculum and adoptive parents have subsequently informed curriculum content.

The ACT curriculum addresses policy and practice challenges for adoption and core clinical issues, including the lifelong and intergenerational impact of adoption for birth and adoptive families, adoptees, and siblings by birth and adoption. "Permanent families" in the ACT curriculum include adoptive couples, single parents, permanent relative caregivers and gay/lesbian families.

ACT requires a commitment to the eight-session program, in which each session consists of six hours of training. The curriculum is provided to public and private agency adoption professionals, as well as to clinical staff of group homes and residential treatment facilities and to community adoption professionals. A core training can be honed to meet the needs of a particular audience. For groups of clinicians, the curriculum focuses on skills application. For social work child-placement practitioners, the focus is on knowledge and skills acquisition.

A facilitator's guide has been developed and is being disseminated nationally. The guide includes a Power Point presentation for each session. Kinship Center has its own recording studio and has developed professionally produced video panels and lectures by permanency and adoption experts, to be included in the facilitators' package.

The Stuart Foundation and US Department of Health and Human Services - Children's Bureau have funded this project intermittently since 1992. More than 3500 professionals and therapists have been trained in CA.

Contact: Organizations interested in receiving or sponsoring ACT training in their states or communities may contact: Carol Biddle, Executive Director, Kinship Center, 124 River Rd., Salinas, CA 93908, 831-455-4701, or cbiddle@kinshipcenter.org.

North American Council on Adopted Children (NACAC)
Joe Kroll, Executive Director, St. Paul, MN

NACAC's Minnesota Adoption Support and Preservation (MNASAP) is a parent-to-parent post-adoption support program. It has three components: (1) a clearinghouse, which includes the website www.mnasap.org, a newsletter, fact sheets on specific topics, and a toll-free number, (2) parent and worker training, and (3) parent liaisons and support groups.

The liaisons are adoptive parents of special needs children who take calls from others who have adopted a special needs child. They are on duty only 12-20 hours a week, but they return calls within 24 hours. There are 12 liaisons statewide, including two African Americans and two Native Americans. Because there has been a problem over time with burnout, NACAC provides quarterly group meetings with a mental health professional, for the liaisons to talk through issues. The liaisons support the parents without getting overly involved in the cases. Their goal is to give parents factual information and referrals and then help the parents move into an advocacy role on their own behalf.

The entire MNASAP program is funded through Title IV-E Part 2 funds. The only category of new funding available to states is adoption incentive money. Agencies need to track increases in adoption numbers and get proposals in before the incentive awards are made, so that states can move quickly to allocate the new funds for post-adoption services.

Contact: Joe Kroll, 651-644-3036, joekroll@aol.com

Addendum

Advocacy: Children's Defense Fund
Mary Lee Allen, Washington, DC

Many children are being diverted to the homes of their grandparents. This is an amazing opportunity for permanency, but not many programs are funded to support these families.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) is a powerful ally, and we need to involve them in policy legislation. A great opportunity to educate Congress about the needs of grandparents and other relatives who are raising children is the GrandRally, which will be held in Washington, D.C. on 9/14/05. The rally is co-sponsored by Children's Defense Fund, AARP, Child Welfare League of America, Generations United, and the National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights. Website: www.grandrally.org.

Contact: Mary Lee Allen, 202-628-8787, mlallen@childrensdefense.org

Working With the Media Around Youth Permanency

Erin Saberi, Casey Family Programs, Sacramento, CA

Jane Morgan, Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC

Honorable James W. Payne, Commissioner, Indiana Department of Child Services, Indianapolis, IN

Using Broad Messages to Promote Permanency

Erin Saberi, Casey Family Programs

Telling the permanency story to the media is easier than one might think – in fact, it's the best untold story in child welfare. It's compelling because the child welfare system has great depth and substance. For these reasons, the media are very receptive to it

To tell the story, one can put youth permanency within a larger framework. For example, this year the National Foster Care Month message has been broadened not only to acknowledge the great work foster parents do, but also to call for year-round activism. Casey Family Programs (CFP) has adapted that message and organized a National Foster Care Month (May) event at the California capitol that focused on youth permanency. Casey has, in effect, taken the national message and used it as an opportunity to highlight youth permanence. To do so, CFP highlighted the public-private partnership model by honoring four county teams who have come together to help youth attain permanency. In addition, CFP honored the work of CPYP and Pat Reynolds-Harris. CFP will use these four events – honoring the four county teams, highlighting CPYP, Foster Care Month, and the National Convening on Youth Permanence – to build a story for the media and the public about the excellent work that is being done on youth permanency.

Contact: Erin Saberi, 916-646-3646 x3007, esaberi@casey.org

Public Service Announcement (PSA) Campaign

Jane Morgan, Children's Bureau

In July, 2004 the Children's Bureau, in collaboration with AdoptUSKids and the Ad Council, launched the first-ever national adoption public service announcement (PSA) campaign, focused on older children and youth. The first round of PSAs featured children ages 7 to 12; the second round will feature teenagers. The Bureau also created recruitment response teams in every state. In April, 2005 the Spanish language component of the campaign began, which also includes PSAs, print ads, and media efforts. The response to this three-year campaign project, both from the media and from inquiring families, has been tremendous.

Contact: Jane Morgan, 202-205-8807, jmorgan@acf.hhs.gov

Using the Media as a Tool for Accountability

James W. Payne, Indiana Department of Child Services

The media are open and available. They know that children are important and that there are leaders who support the work we do with children. However, they also need to know that there are leaders who don't follow through on their commitments.

Use the media as allies. Judge Payne (currently Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Child Services), local county directors, guardians ad litem, and judges did this by going to the print and broadcast media around the State of Indiana. First, Judge Payne and his entourage spoke about the agency's commitment, its plans, and how it intends to improve. Then they asked the media to revisit the issues in a year and hold the leaders and the system accountable, to give credit where the job has been done and blame where it has not. The stories that have come out of these efforts have been very supportive.

Contact: Honorable James W. Payne, 317-234-1391, james.payne@fssa.in.gov

Related Issues Raised by Participants

Children in the juvenile justice system

These children need our services as much as or more than dependent/neglected children. They are released from the system to as much poverty and homelessness as the other children.

Children with disabilities

In New York, adult custodial care is the permanency goal for children with disabilities. This is the most frustrating goal, because many social workers really don't believe these children can function well in a family. Sometimes this isn't true, but even when it is, parents can be involved as permanent resources for activities like holiday visits.

After youth have aged out of care

We must keep reaching out for permanency for these youth, even after they've left the system.

Family finding

We have discussed finding families and connections for youth on the back end, but we also need to ask those questions at the very beginning, when children are at risk for coming into the system.

Integration of service systems

There are many systems providing services in our communities for children and families, but often we're either working at cross-purposes or duplicating efforts. We have talked about the court, education, and mental health systems, but we also need to consider integrating systems such as housing, health care for children with special needs, maternal and child health, and recreation.

Legislative needs

We need to refine the provision in federal law for Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement, which is really just long-term foster care revisited.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is bringing increasing numbers of children into the foster care system and will continue to do so until we start finding better services for children and families. We need an up-front commitment to increase the amount of substance abuse treatment available in the community and to improve intensive case management so that people get these services immediately. This improves reunification and adoptions as well as reducing costs.

Vocational training for youth

A number of programs are available only to the youth who are doing well. Even the Chafee funds for educational and vocational training are available only to youth with a GED or high-school diploma. Those without need vocational training even more. This would also help youth who are already homeless or incarcerated so that we can help find permanency for them as well.

Youth involvement

It is key to get youth input in our policy, practice, and training. Two ways to accomplish this are to hire former foster youth in key decision-making positions and to use current and former foster youth when providing training for staff.

Reports on County/State Plans for 2005-2006 and Small Group Discussions

State, county, and city teams met to talk about what they have learned in the course of this convening and what they plan to do next when they return home. Representatives from states that had not participated in previous convenings reported on what the state plans to do to promote youth permanency when they return home.

Arizona

Angela Cause, State of Arizona Department of Economic Security, Phoenix, AZ

- Add youth permanency to the agenda for a conference scheduled for October, 2005, and include tribal communities, mental health providers, judges, contracted foster care and adoption providers, and youth in the conference.
- Add youth permanency to the agenda for a meeting already scheduled with congregate care facilities.
- Take the issue of the need for youth permanency to a statewide committee of juvenile court judges.
- Review case demographics to identify: (1) the number of youth who have a case plan of long-term foster care, (2) which youth are in congregate care, and (3) which youth have been waiting the longest for permanency.
- Strengthen staffing.
- Improve relative searches at the front end, as well as later in the process.

- Explore technical resources for youth permanency planning . Review and modify current contracts with foster care and adoption providers.
- Review and modify current contracts with foster care and adoption providers.
- Explore post-permanency services for subsidized guardianship.
- Examine the voluntary agreements for youth who turn 18 and might age out of the system.

Contact: Angela Cause, 602-542-5499

Connecticut

Glynis Cassis, Casey Family Services, Hartford, CT

- Hold a mini-convening with representatives from both the public and the private sectors.
- With the support of the state, create a team to do permanency searches. This might be accomplished by contracting with retired state employees, who already have the expertise and could focus solely on doing these searches.

Contact: Glynis Cassis, 860-727-1030, gcassis@caseyfamilyservices.org

Georgia

Khari Hunt, Georgia Department of Human Resources, Atlanta, GA

- Intensify the message to people who work with adolescents that youth deserve families.
- Do intensive family searches, starting with the oldest youth and working down, so that every child leaves the foster care system with a permanent family.

Contact: Khari Hunt, 404-651-5980, knhunt@dhr.state.ga.us

Iowa

Kelli Malone, Four Oaks, Iowa City, IA

- Establish a new goal for Iowa that no child will leave care without a permanent family.
- Improve collaboration between public and private agencies.
- Have an Iowa convening on youth permanency with broad representation, especially from the court system.
- Improve the integration of youth into the whole permanency process

Contact: Kelli Malone, 319-337-4523, kmalone@fouroaks.org

Massachusetts

Harry Spence, Massachusetts Department of Social Services, Boston, MA

- Build a data system on older youth to provide information about their status on a regular basis to all of the state's quality-improvement teams.
- Develop a waiver process for involved staff who want to adopt youth.
- Integrate permanency into the training provided by child welfare, providers, and family institutes.
- Write a letter to all staff on the centrality of permanency to all we do.
- Hold a convening on youth permanency, involving parents and youth.
- Hold a statewide breakthrough series on adolescent permanency.
- Develop a research agenda on issues of permanency for older youth and Children In Need of Services (CHINS) reform.

Contact: Harry Spence, 617-748-2325, harry.spence@state.ma.us

Washington State

Marie Jamieson, Catalysts for Kids, Seattle, WA

- Take the permanency message to several ongoing statewide program manager meetings.
- Prepare a briefing paper for the state commission that is setting standards for adolescents in foster care, to inform them about permanency issues.
- As of 9/1/05, independent-living contracts will require work on reconciliation with parents or other important people.

Contact: Marie Jamieson, 206-695-3236, mjamieson@aol.com

Future Initiatives in Youth Permanence: CPYP and Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice

Pat Reynolds-Harris, Director, California Permanency for Youth Project, Oakland, CA
Sarah Greenblatt, Director, The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, New Haven, CT

Pat Reynolds-Harris reported that the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) has hosted these convenings for four years with significant funding from the Stuart Foundation. However, because CPYP is funded to work in California, Casey Family Services will take on the role of host for future convenings and will also serve as a national resource for youth permanence practice. The Stuart Foundation has asked CPYP to extend its work through 2009. In the immediate future, CPYP will serve ten additional counties in California, as well as the four it has been working with. CPYP will also work with the state to make more services and technical assistance available to counties around the state and to sustain and institutionalize youth permanence practices.

Sarah Greenblatt reported that through discussions among CPYP, the Stuart Foundation, and Casey Family Services (CFS), it was decided that the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice will assume leadership for coordinating the 2006 National Convening on Youth Permanence. CFS is the direct service arm of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, with a mission to improve the lives of at-risk children and to strengthen families and communities by providing high-quality and cost-effective services that advance positive practice and sound public policies. CFS has diversified over the past 29 years to provide foster care, treatment foster care, reunification, family preservation, family support, post-adoption, and family economic support services with families and children in the six New England states and Baltimore, where the foundation is located. The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice coordinates technical assistance across the country, using CFS practitioners as consultants to share what they have learned from their practice experiences, and to learn from other practitioners about promising practices. The Casey Center's initial priority area was post-adoption services. Its second priority area is permanency for youth in transition. Sarah announced that Casey Family Services and the Annie E. Casey Foundation will coordinate next year's convening in partnership with supporters and participants of current and previous convenings. She also stated that the Casey Center looks forward to helping strengthen youth permanence practice and partnerships nationally.

*Contacts: Pat Reynolds-Harris, 510-562-8472, patrh@sbcglobal.net
Sarah Greenblatt, 203-401-6917, sgreenblatt@caseyfamilyservices.org*

Acknowledgements

The California Permanency for Youth Project wishes to give special thanks to the foundations that made the convening possible: Casey Family Programs, Casey Family Services, the Dave Thomas Foundation, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Peninsula Community Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation. We also want to thank Elizabeth Whitney Barnes of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges for her coordination and support of the juvenile court judges' attendance, as well as Children's Rights, Inc. for their in-kind contributions.

Evaluations

The evaluations indicated that the convening was extremely successful; as in prior years, many reported it was one of the best national conferences they had ever attended.

The most useful presentations/panels in terms of ratings were the two sessions with former foster youth and their permanent connections; the Model Programs Panel; the Round Robin reports from counties and states who had previously attended; the panel on Unique Needs of Specific Populations; and the small group session that gave participants a chance to meet with their own state/county to plan for the future.

In answer to the question about what additional stakeholders should be included in the future, the three groups most respondents wanted to participate at the next convening were:

1. Mental Health
2. An increased number of judges and legal representatives
3. An increased representation from Native Americans.

One topic participants wished to see covered in more depth was funding.

Many new participants said they felt their organization left with a sense of urgency about implementing this work and mentioned that their belief system was positively affected by hearing from the former foster youth and their permanent connections. As to whether the convening would be helpful in planning and implementing youth permanence programs in participants' organization, the evaluations were extremely positive and stated that the convening stimulated; provided specific information, ideas and models; helped the organizations assess current practice; clarified the importance of collaboration; and generated passion.

APPENDIX I: TOP TEN REASONS TO ADOPT A TEENAGER

Top 10 Reasons to Adopt a Teenager

1. No diapers to change.
2. We sleep through the night.
3. We will be ready to move out sooner...but we can still visit.
4. You don't just get a child, you get a friend.
5. We will keep you up to date with the latest fashion.
6. No more carpools, we can drive you to places.
7. No bottles, formula or burp rags required.
8. We can help out around the house.
9. We can learn from you.
10. We can teach you how to run your computer.

“Top 10 Reasons” was drawn from a concept developed by Oklahoma’s Youth Advisory Board–2000. It is available on a poster from You Gotta Believe! Contact Pat O’Brien, 718-372-3003, ygbpat@msn.com

APPENDIX II: INTERNET RESOURCES FOR FINDING FAMILIES

Internet Resources for Finding Families

- www.familysearch.org (Mormon Church)
- www.genealogytoday.com
- www.people-finder.com
- www.ancestry.com
- www.obituary.com (information on deceased relatives)
- www.peopleprofileusa.com
- www.usatrace.com (search by name or Social Security number)
- www.people-data.com
- www.reunitetonight.com
- www.myfamily.com
- www.intelius.com
- www.death-records.net/ssdi (Social Security Death Index)
- www.ussearch.com
- www.merlin.com

APPENDIX III: REPORTS FROM STATES AND COUNTIES

Washington State Children's Administration Report 2005 Youth Permanency Convening

Washington State Children's Administration (CA) as part of their Kids Come First –Phase II established a permanency policy workgroup to address the following tasks:

1. Further develop and fully implement concurrent planning throughout the state.
2. Develop definitions of acceptable permanent plans, which include the criteria for permanent plans, and when long term foster care (non-guardianship) can be a permanent placement for children.
3. Revise guardianship policy and practice to enhance the “permanency” of our dependency guardianships.

While policy revisions are a key part of this, a permanency planning practice guide is being developed to promote consistency in casework and implementation of policy. The Adolescent Permanency Policy workgroup also developed guidelines and strategies to engage youth in permanency planning. These guidelines and strategies will be incorporated into the practice guide.

Other key changes that influence permanency are the visitation policy that is to come out in the summer, relative search policy and Child Protective Services/Child Welfare Services restructuring of the agency.

Children's Administration (CA) has also developed a Statewide Youth Advisory Board to serve in an advisory function, providing CA with input and recommendations regarding our policy and practices. The board consists of youth and young adults who have been recipients of services provided by CA. Feedback from this board will aid CA in improving our ability to effectively meet the needs of the children and adolescents we serve in order to provide more permanence in their lives.

Children's Administration, in partnership with Casey Family Programs, is providing the board with training on leadership, self-advocacy, the board's process and function, as well as its roles and responsibilities. This training, which consists of three weekend sessions, began in April and will finish in August. Once the training has been completed the Advisory Board will begin convening on a quarterly basis.

Contact: Barbara Bofinger, Washington State Children's Administration, 360-902-7986, boba300@dshs.wa.gov

**Sacramento County, California Report
2005 Youth Permanency Convening**

For the past few years, Sacramento County has been exploring ways to both realign services to families and children as well as work with community partners to achieve better permanency outcomes for older foster youth. In the past year, several collaborative, permanency planning projects have been initiated and/or expanded.

Destination Family Youth Permanence Project

Begun in October 2004, Destination Family is multi-county public/private collaboration, involving Child Protective Services (Sacramento and Nevada Counties), Sierra Adoption Services, Family Alliance Foster Family Agency and California Department of Social Services. Destination Family makes every effort to connect or re-connect referred foster youth, aged 11 – 18, to a significant adult relationships, using best practices to actively involve youth in the permanency process and placement decisions. The project is funded through an Adoptions Opportunity Grant for five years. As of March 2005, 73 youth were referred to Destination Family (56 in Sacramento County and 17 in Nevada County) and 36 youth have been placed or have found a permanent family connection.

Intensive Relative Search Project

The Intensive Relative Search Project is a family-finding initiative sponsored by Sacramento County Child Protective Services (CPS) in cooperation with EMQ Children and Family Services, River Oak Center for Children, Stanford Home and the Sacramento Children's Home. This intensive family-finding model combines high-tech search tools with old-fashioned collaboration and was pioneered by Catholic Community Services of Western Washington. The process involves a private-public partnership between CPS and partner agencies looking for extended family or friends of the family who may be willing to connect with the child and has identified 62 youth who have been in care anywhere from 7-17 years to receive these relative search services.

WRAP

WRAP services (Sacramento County (CPS and Mental Health) and EMQ) has expanded target populations to include children and youth in Level 10 and Level 11 group home/residential placements. The project has also increased flexibility around the length of service beyond 18 months if needed.

Quality Assurance - Permanency Plan Review

Sacramento County Adoption management and supervisory staff regularly review permanency plans for children and youth, 11 and older, when plan of adoption is no longer the permanent plan. Prior to transfer of these cases, efforts are made to assess additional permanency options, including but not limited to stabilization of current placement, transfer to guardianship, and additional child specific recruitment.

Team Building Project – Group Homes and DHHS Group Home Social Workers

Sacramento County worked with Staff Development to craft training to enhance team building between community group home staff and Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) Group Home social workers. The intent of the team building project was to assist in stepping

APPENDIX III: REPORTS FROM STATES AND COUNTIES

down children/youth with an understanding that residential care was only temporary. From day one, the team could work together to stabilize the placement while maintaining a focus on future permanency planning.

CWS/CMS Generated Group Home Monthly Report

A monthly management report was developed with the assistance of management and Group Home supervisors to assist social workers to make informed decisions around “step down” for children/youth in group home placements. Additionally, the report serves to inform supervisors and managers of on-going progress toward permanency for children/youth in residential care.

Family Fairs

The Adoption program, in conjunction with the State and several community-based adoption agencies, has developed an event to facilitate the introduction of home studied families to placement social workers. This has provided additional opportunity for social workers to present, and for families to explore the possibility of permanency for older children/youth.

Permanency & Youth Committee – Redesign

Sacramento County has elicited a two-year commitment from a wide spectrum of community partners to attend regular redesign committee meetings with the purpose of developing permanency strategies for children/youth. Partner involvement is organized through a Permanency & Youth Committee that includes three sub-committees: Permanency, Youth, and Recruitment.

Family 2 Family

Sacramento County has become a Family 2 Family (F2F) county. F2F serves as a tremendous resource for development of permanency strategies, with peer support and technical assistance.

Shared Leadership – Parent Advocates and Mentors

Parent leaders have been added to Administrative Review panels. This serves to increase and validate the parent voice in the process of case planning and permanency for older children/youth.

Foster Family Agency (FFA) MOU

As a result of a 3 year undertaking, Sacramento County has just finalized a Memo of Understanding (MOU) with community FFAs with a focus on clarifying everyone’s role around service delivery, case planning and permanency for children/youth placed out-of-home.

Contact: Mary Tarro, Sacramento County: 916-875-4519, tarrom@saccounty.net

Cuyahoga County, Ohio
Department of Children & Family Services Report
2005 Youth Permanency Convening

This past year, Cuyahoga County has focused on finding permanent homes for our older waiting children. We have partnered with the County's Vision Council, a group of community leaders, to address the crisis of our waiting children. Out of this collaboration a new program was developed and named the Adopt Cuyahoga Kids Initiative. This initiative has been developed with Adoption Network Cleveland, Cuyahoga County and 15 private adoption agencies to find homes for children through Child Centered Recruitment.

As one of the agencies working on the initiative, Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services has developed a unit of six social workers that specifically work on child centered recruitment activities. Each social worker has 10 children with whom they work. They do not perform any case management functions but focus strictly on recruitment for these children.

Our agency has worked on expanding our post adoption services unit over the last year and has been developing tracking systems for services and adoption disruptions.

We have also begun to develop teen specialists, social workers who work with teens in permanent custody on permanency issues, independent living skills and mentoring. We have changed our focus so that independent living is a life skill set and not a permanency goal.

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Stanislaus County, California Report 2005 Youth Permanency Convening

Stanislaus County's Youth Permanency Project has been integrating the vision of permanency and lifelong connections into our social work practices as children enter the dependency system. Our Permanency Specialist social worker, who began her work mining files, engaging older youth, and working with permanent placement social workers, is now working extensively with our emergency response, court and team decision meeting staff to ensure lifelong connections are



identified as soon as a child is removed from their home. We are also streamlining our forms and processes to integrate a permanency focus into due diligence searches for parents, relative/lifelong connections search and evaluation, removal and placement decision meetings and staffings, and all concurrent and permanency planning efforts.

During the past year we have continued our work with our Youth Advisory Council. They are helping us to refine team decision meeting protocols developed for permanency planning with older youth. These "Connected for Life" meetings provide a forum to formalize permanency commitments and identify activities and support that will be provided to transition-aged youth.

Our Children's System of Care partners continue to be fully involved in our project. They provide counseling for youth (up to age 21) referred by county child welfare or adoptions staff. Referred foster youth may be struggling with or exploring permanency issues, or may be youth who have exited foster care to adoptions or guardianship and are in need of counseling support at critical times.

We have been working to sustain all appropriate relationships and connections to help youth develop safe, stable, natural networks of support which maximize their permanency options and resources.

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**Monterey County, California
Family and Children's Services Report
2005 Youth Permanency Convening**

Over the last year in Monterey County, we have focused on institutionalizing and integrating permanency philosophy and practices for older youth throughout our system and community. We implemented a policy directive that requires all dependency cases to be staffed and strategized prior to sending to long term foster care. The intent is to keep a focus on reunification despite the time limits of child welfare services and also maintain a goal of adoption or guardianship despite the reluctance of caregivers. We are developing new language to consistently and formally address permanency in court reports. We are using our strong Wraparound Program to support the return home of children who have been drifting in long term foster care for many years. To increase relative placements and connections, we are supporting transportation of youth around the country to visit relatives over the holidays and school breaks. We have flown social workers out-of-state to meet relatives and assess placement possibilities.

We have increased specialized permanency training for our supervisors, recognizing they are the key to best practice. The Family Reunification Supervisor participated in the California Permanency for Youth Training for Trainers on Youth Permanence. Our Court Intake Supervisor has been reassigned to the Permanent Placement Unit for six months affording her a chance to experience the far end of the child welfare continuum and the importance of permanency planning early in the Dependency process. Supervisors and staff received technical assistance and training from Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (Tacoma) on how to search for relatives and how to approach relatives for more information. Staff attended targeted recruitment training with Denise Goodman and an individualized training with Lauren Frey around permanency core concepts and tools.

Our outreach efforts have involved development of a five-minute video highlighting the need for permanent homes for older children utilizing local youth and families. In June of 2004, we held a mini-convening "Partners for Permanence" with a host of community partners, including group home and foster family agency providers. Our Independent Living Plan Advisory Board has been reconfigured and expanded to incorporate the needs of youth to grow up in a safe home, supportive community with life-long connections and nurturing relationships.

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**Alameda County, California
Social Services Agency Report
2005 Youth Permanence Convening**

Alameda County's major focus during the past year has continued to be on integrating permanency into all aspects of our work with youth, and this effort has merged across the three divisions in our department. We have continued to see training as a priority, and we have set up forums where staff, providers, caregivers, and community members are brought together to all hear the same information about the needs of youth. These trainings include the development of a monthly Brown Bag Lunch Series and collaborative training with the local Community Colleges.

We have also partnered with two local private agencies to create two different youth connection projects. The Dumisha Jamaa Project is a partnership with Family Builders by Adoption. Dumisha Jamaa is a Swahili phrase that means "sustaining family." It started small, working with nine youth. With foundation grant funding, the project is about to expand to identify permanent lifelong connections for 30 additional youth. Our Group Home StepUp Project, a collaboration with Casey Family Services, is working with its first wave of 57 youth. This project's goal is to step youth up out of congregate care into family placements, and to identify and build permanent family connections for them in the process.

Alameda County also developed A Guide to Permanency Options For Youth. The Guide serves as a new tool for staff, resource families, youth, providers, and the community. It shares information on all permanency options, and explains the needs for youth involvement in the process. The Guide includes comparison charts on the financial, legal, and psychosocial issues regarding Adoption, Legal Guardianship, (including Kin-Gap), and Long Term Foster Care. The Youth Law Center assisted us in clarifying, checking, and citing laws and regulations that support this document. The Guide addresses frequently asked questions regarding Independent Living Skills Program eligibility, college funding issues, and other financial questions that are commonly raised for families who are considering making permanent commitments to youth in care.

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**San Mateo County, California Report
2005 Youth Permanency Convening**

San Mateo County has been a CPYP Permanence County for two years, beginning in April, 2003. As a result of the Permanence Project, the Adolescent Services unit was formed to unite the Child Welfare Placement Workers of youth ages fourteen and older with staff assisting with Independent Living Plans; the Aftercare Worker, a worker who looks for lost connections; and two self-sufficiency specialists. All of the multidisciplinary team works on permanency issues. The Permanency efforts for the past nine months have been primarily in conjunction with Kevin Campbell, Catholic Community Services of Western Washington

The Permanency Project works with the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Juvenile Probation agencies as equal partners in the quest for permanence for our youth. We meet monthly to search for lost connections and work toward permanence for ten youth. Other efforts include the prominent placement of permanence as one third of the agency's System Improvement Plan. This year, efforts to recruit additional homes for adolescents also has resulted in the development of Digital Stories and our own "Ten Reasons to Adopt a Teen" poster.

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**Los Angeles County, California
Department of Children and Family Service
2005 Youth Permanency Convening**

Permanency Partners Program (P3)

In Los Angeles County, approximately 8,000 youth ages 12-18 are currently residing in long-term foster care placements that are not categorized as "legally permanent." In an effort to assist workers in finding legally permanent homes and adult connections for these older youth, the department has implemented the Permanency Partners Program (P3) pilot.

Begun in October 2004, P3 pairs a Permanency Partner (a specially trained permanency specialist) with a youth, to identify one or more adult connections - often times someone the youth knows or knew in the past - with the goal of reunifying the youth with his family or moving the child out of long term foster care and into adoption or legal guardianship. At minimum, P3 strives to provide all youth with an adult connection and/or mentor.

The process begins with the Permanency Partner and youth meeting, talking and establishing a trusting relationship, then moving on to identify important people in the youth's life, current or in the past. The Partner "mines" the case record - thoroughly scouring the case cover to cover - to identify any possible adults that might be able to become a resource for this youth. The adults are contacted and the youth is discussed with them. If the adult and youth are amenable, the Permanency Partner, working in conjunction with the social worker, youth, and adult, will develop a written agreement to help define the relationship, (reunification, adoption, legal guardianship or mentor) and ascertain services that will assist the youth in making that connection.

The initial P3 pilot began in October 2004 as a public-private partnership between the Department of Children and Family Services and the Consortium for Children (a non-profit organization). Fifty youth from the Lakewood office have been identified to participate in the program.

The Department has received hiring authority to appoint 44 retirees to 120 day contracts to expand this pilot. The retirees are scheduled to begin April 1, 2005 and will be assigned to the following eight offices: Belvedere, Compton, Covina, Lancaster, Pomona, Santa Fe Springs, Torrance and Wateridge. Each retiree will be assigned to one of these pilot offices and will report to the administration within each office. Department wide implementation is scheduled for fiscal year 2005/2006.

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