

## Challenging the Myths about Older Children and Youth

Characteristics of youth that make permanence unlikely or impossible?

1. What are the issues and challenges?
  - They are set in their ways...they are going to take over
  - No ambition, no sense of direction, floating not caring
  - Wild, scary, out of control, sex, drugs, hip-hop music
  - They don't listen
  - At 18 they are ready and want independence
  - They can't form attachments...it's too late
  - You have to stabilize their behavior...you have to control them before you can find them a family
  - They're too fragile, we don't want to set them up for disappointment
  - They are on entertainment, media overload...they have grandiose ideas that they pick up from media, instant gratification, lack of patience
  - They are seen as too disrespectful of adults
  - They are dangerous to other children
  - Their behaviors are not considered as "normal."
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## 2. How do these issues/challenges play out in your work?

- We don't place youth with families...but residential facilities. We also overmedicate (fragileness...who are we really protecting?)
- We get stuck with the "status quo."
- If you don't have the expectation that youth can have permanence, then you live up to that expectation
- You don't involve them in the process of decision making because you don't think they understand
- Self fulfilling prophecy when you are convinced that there are not families for these children
- Short sighted about our youths lives...we just want to get them to the age of 18
- Youth may not see themselves as having a voice...especially with court personnel
- Thoughts that youth in group homes are just "bad."
- Thoughts that if youth are in foster care they "deserved it." Existing stereo-types about what youth are like.
- Labeling/diagnoses...its only as good as the information given
- We become deficit focused versus strength focused
- We don't challenge negative stereotypes...such as being fragile
- We don't provide youth opportunities to have their voice heard
- People attach stereotypes and ideas to those who are called "foster youth."

3. What are the implications for older children and youth in care? Did not answer directly

4. What are some of the solutions for addressing these issues/challenges:

a. solutions that already exist

- connect youth with existing networks that coincide with their interests/hobbies/talents
- Look at the wording that we use such as "emancipation, kids, etc." These words differentiate them from other young people.
- Looking at youth as people
- Providing info/training on adolescent development to resource families, social workers, court personnel
- Look at training on how to prepare resource families involving young people as trainers
- With case notes start with the positive
- Have high expectations for the youth
- Use resource families who have success in fostering young people to recruit others who are willing to foster young people
- Have resource family support groups which help identify community supports
- Allow young people to be able to grieve

b. solutions that need to be developed? (Did not have time to answer)