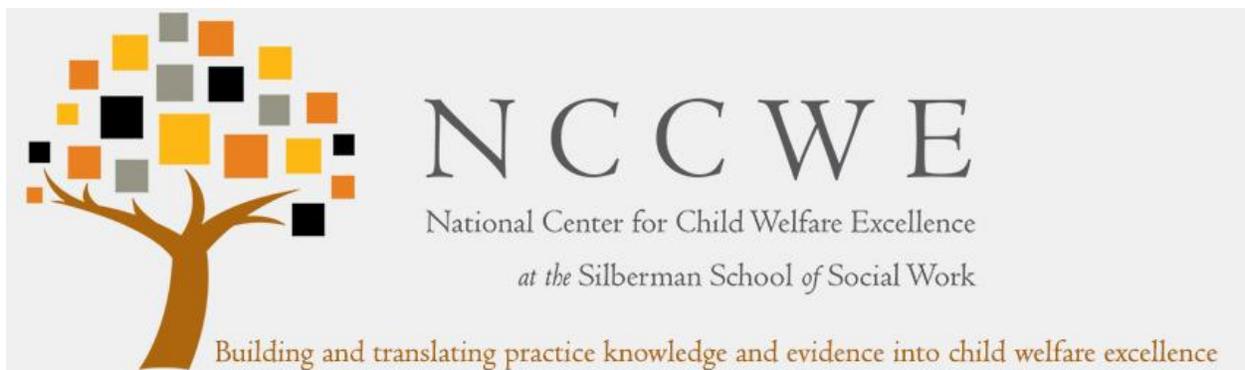


MAKING IT POSSIBLE



Permanency Pathways

For Older Youth in Care

PARTICIPANT NOTEBOOK

Handout: Stories of Our Lives

AN INTRODUCTORY INTERVIEW

What is your name? _____

Where do you work? _____

What do you do? _____

What is your first memory of truly “belonging”, of feeling a part of something bigger than yourself, of being connected and cared for?

Describe your favorite holiday tradition and how it developed? (Who began the tradition? When? How has it changed?)

What is your current sense of belonging and being connected? For example:

Who will you connect with (that gives you a sense of belonging) tonight and what might you do?

This week?

This year?

Do you have an artifact (picture, piece of jewelry, object) that says something about your connections, relationships, and/or sense of belonging?

Is there anything you have shared that you would NOT want me to share with the group?

Handout: Competencies and Objectives

Competencies:

Knows and understands federal, state, and local policies and legislation related to permanency for young people in out-of-home care.

Knows and understands the definition of youth permanency and the importance of developing permanent connections.

Knows and understands the four permanency pathways for youth in foster care.

Knows how to engage and prepare youth for permanency.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain the impact current federal, state, and local policies and legislation have on permanency practices for older youth.
- Describe the various definitions of youth permanency.
- Explain the importance of developmental readiness when exploring permanent connections.
- Explain the consequences of not developing permanent connections.
- Explain the importance of developing permanent connections.
- Explain the four pathways to permanency: reunification, kin/fictive guardianship, adoption, and APPLA.
- Compare and contrast the four permanency pathways.
- Describe specific strategies to develop permanency for each pathway.
- Explain the four permanency pathways including the preferred sequence for permanency.
- Appreciates the importance of actively engaging young people in planning for permanency.
- Describe each permanency pathway and list two strategies for engaging youth.
- Apply engagement strategies to case examples.

Handout: Child Welfare Legislation and Policies Since 1974

Viet Nam war ended in 1973.

Handout: The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act	1974	Established mandatory child abuse reporting and investigation procedures.
	1974	<i>Nixon resigns and Ford becomes president; first home video games.</i>
Indian Child Welfare Act	1978	ICWA provided guidelines for family reunification and to better ensure placement within the Native American Community
Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act	1980	Beginning of the modern child welfare system which established federal role in the administration and oversight of services, requiring reviews, timeframes on permanency, state plans, adoption assistance, and court reviews.
Family Preservation and Support Services Program Act	1993	Home-based services and increased efforts to keep children with their families were emphasized.
	1993	<i>Favorite TV shows are Seinfeld and Roseanne; Clinton becomes president.</i>
Adoption of Safe Families Act	1997	Expedite permanency decisions through establishing tighter timeframes, implementing reviews, increasing adoptions, and ensuring that child safety, permanency, and well-being were all taken into account for any child welfare decisions.
	1998	<i>J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter is published in US.</i>
Foster Care Independence Act	1999	Offered important new help to young people transitioning from foster care to young adulthood.
Child and Family Services Review	2000	Enabling the Children's Bureau of the federal government to ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements and identify what was happening with children in the child welfare system through a monitoring system.
	2001	<i>Bush becomes President; World Trade Center attacks 9/11.</i>
	2002	<i>American Idol debuts.</i>
	2007	<i>Apple's first iPhone is released.</i>
Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act	2008	Fostering Connections law promotes permanency planning and assists older youth in achieving permanence through supporting guardianship by relatives, and supporting reconnection with family members, permitting states to extend services to youth in foster care until age 21.
		<i>Obama elected President; Dancing with the Stars is most watched show.</i>

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program was created in 1999 with passage the Foster Care Independence Act. The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program replaced the Title IV-E Independent Living Initiative of 1986. Its purpose was spelled out in the legislation and had 5 initial points. A 6th purpose was added with passage of Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendment of 2001.

1. To identify youth who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age and to assist them in making the transition to self-sufficiency by providing services such as assistance in obtaining a high school diploma, career exploration, vocational training, job placement and retention, training in daily living skills.
2. To help youth who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment;
3. To help youth who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age prepare for and enter post-secondary training and education institutions;
4. To provide personal and emotional support to children aging out of foster care, through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults;
5. To provide financial, housing, counselling, employment, education and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing for and then making the transition from adolescence to adulthood; and
6. To make available vouchers for education and training, including post-secondary learning and education, to youths who have aged out of foster care.

Handout: From Legislation to Practice

The year is 1975. The child welfare laws that most directly impact youth permanency planning have not yet been enacted. In fact, the concept of permanency is just being realized. Read the following scenarios and then discuss how you feel the situation would be different now, and identify the legislation(s) that most significantly impact that difference.

Mario turns 18 years old today. His foster parents are having a dinner for him and baked a cake, but they have asked him to leave the next day. He is packing his bags. He has no place to go.

- How might this be different today?

- What legislation would impact this difference and why?

17 year old Erin is very smart and doing well in both her foster home and at her school. She would like to pursue a college education. Her foster parents even said they would be willing to let her stay there if she went to the community college, but she has been unable to save the money. She has given up on going to college and plans to move in with a friend who is a drug dealer.

- How might this be different today?

- What legislation would impact this difference and why?

17 year old Michael was placed in care two years ago and has been in eight different homes. However for the past six months he has done great with the Gavin family. The family even discussed adopting Michael, but decided they could not handle the financial obligations. His worker told the foster parents he was “too old for adoption” anyway.

Handout: State/County Definition

(Insert your state or county's definition of permanency and any relevant policy or definition of permanency for older youth/young adults.)

Handout: How are We Doing in Youth Permanency?

Facts about Permanency:

- 3999,546 children/youth in foster care
- 101,719 children and youth are waiting to be adopted
- Children and youth wait 37.3 months on average
- 52,000 children/youth are adopted annually from public agencies
- Nationally 30% of the children and youth in care are age 14 to 21 years old

Facts about Over-Representation of Children of Color in Care:

- Nationally 58% of the children and youth in care are children and youth of color.
- 26% African American
- 21% Latino
- 6% more than one race
- Indian children in many states are over-represented as well, such as in South Dakota where 3% of the population identify as Indian and 63% of the children and youth in the foster care systems are of Indian ancestry.

Additional Information about How Our Youth Fare:

- Each year over 27,000 youth “age out” of foster care.
- Less than half of former foster youth are employed 2.5-4 years after leaving foster care, and only 38% have maintained employment for at least one year.
- 33% of 18-19 year olds that existed foster care receive public assistance.
- 30% of the nation’s homeless are former foster youth/children.
- Girls in foster care are six times more likely to give birth before the age of 21 than the general population.
- 60% of women who age out from foster care become parents within 2.5-4 years after exiting care.
- Parents with a history of foster care are almost twice as likely to see their own children placed in foster care or become homeless.
- Children in foster care are three to six times more likely to have emotional, behavioral, and developmental problems.
- Children and young people in foster care tend to perform poorly in school, lag behind in their education by at least one year, and have lower educational attainment than the general population.
- Youth in foster care are 44% less likely to graduate from high school and after aging out, 40 to 50% ever complete high school.

Handout: What Youth Say About Permanency

Despite the fact that society often portrays foster youth as neither being worthy of nor wanting love and affection, foster youth want to feel connected to people whose support is genuine and unconditional. (Reina Sanchez, 2004)

There's something inside because of what has happened to you that wants the love and care that you were denied or are in need of. For me, it is having a mother figure, a father figure, a siblings. That above all was important.

**If I have somebody that I know
I can depend on, that loves me and
Cares that I wake up tomorrow and
Am still breathing, I can get through
it. I can walk through it.**

I feel that I would have wanted a family that was legally responsible, somebody willing to adopt me, give me the opportunities that I never had. To be as equal as a normal child.

I went through foster care dreaming and wishing for a mother figure. What is most important is for someone to make a commitment to you, someone you could trust and feel comfortable with.

I can truly say the goal of every foster child is to live in one home with people they can call family and not have to experience a lot of emotional turmoil.

I want to know where I'm waking up who will be there, how long? That's all.

Handout: What the Grown-Ups Say about Permanency

US Department of Health and Human Services:

Permanency is a legal, permanent living arrangement, that is, reunification with the birth family, living with Relatives, guardianship or adoption.

National Resource Center for Youth Development

Permanency is a family relationship that is intended to last a lifetime. A Family Relationship provides:

The intent to endure indefinitely

- Commitment, continuity, and assumption of a common future
- A sense of belonging and emotional security, and
- Legal and family status that protects a child's or youth's legal rights and interests and transcends the societal stigma of foster care.

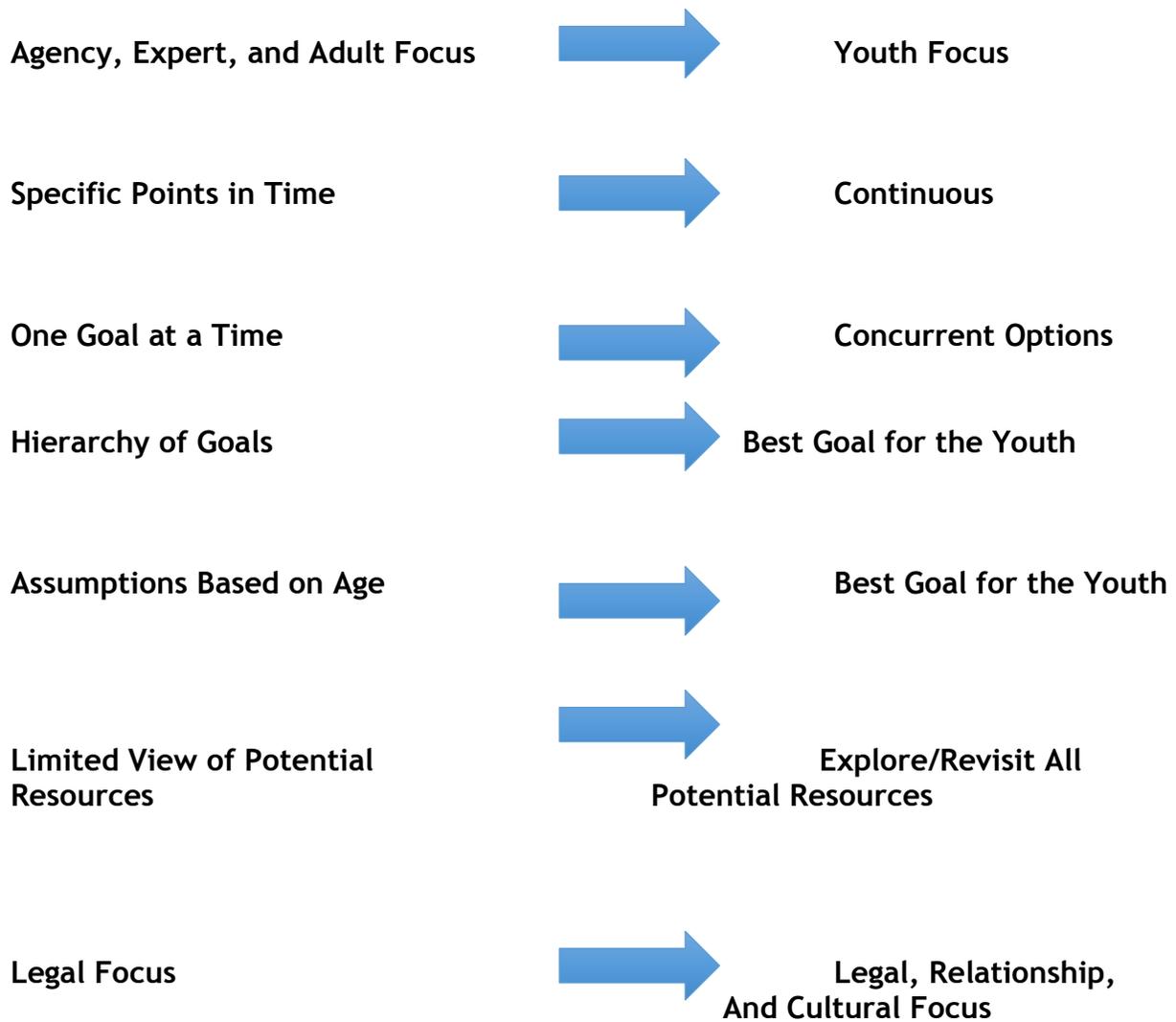
A Call to Action: Casey Family Services

Permanency is an enduring family relationship that:

- Is safe and meant to last a lifetime
- Offers the legal rights and social status of full family membership
- Provides for physical, emotional, 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: 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; and opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons including siblings.

Handout: Permanency—Then and Now



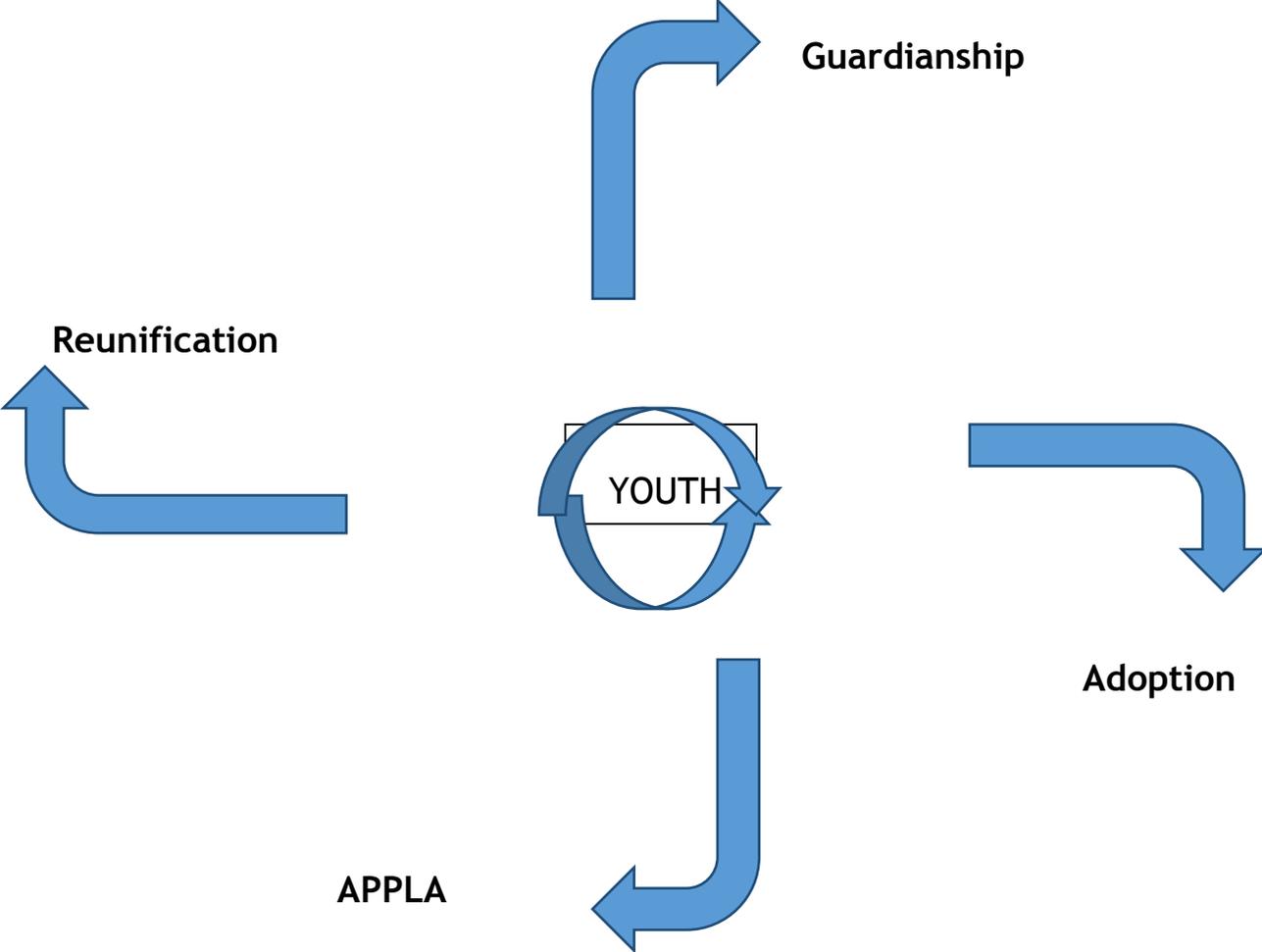
Handout: Beyond the Definition--Permanency as a Practice Framework

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections and Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, with the help of leading child welfare experts:

Permanency is best conceptualized as a framework. The framework is built upon seven key foundational principles and all programs, policies, and practices should be developed and implemented in ways that:

- 1) Recognize that every young person is entitled to a permanent family relationship and the agency is committed to working with the community to achieve that goal.
- 2) Are driven by young people themselves.
- 3) Acknowledge that permanence includes a stable, healthy, and lasting living situation within the context of a family relationship with at least one committed adult; healthy connections with birth family; and life skills.
- 4) Begin at first placement, seeking timely return home while concurrently engaged in contingency planning toward other permanency options.
- 5) Honor the cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious/spiritual backgrounds of young people and respect differences in sexual orientation.
- 6) Recognize and build upon the strengths and resilience of young people, their families, and other significant adults.
- 7) Ensure that services and supports are provided in ways that are fair, responsive, and accountable to young people and their families, and that do not stigmatize them.

Handout: Permanency Pathways



Handout: Permanency Pathways—Reunification

“It’s funny how life works out. I was taken from my mom when I was three years old . My mom had a bad drug habit and in my opinion, a bad boyfriend. I went to live with my grandmother, but she died in a car accident when I was six. I went through a lot of different foster homes. I almost got adopted once and we all moved to Tennessee. But then my adoptive parents’ marriage fell apart and I went into foster care again—this time in another state. By this time I was pretty upset with everything—the moves, the social workers, the different schools. I won’t go into all the stuff that happened then. But last year my worker asked me if I had any interest in finding my mom. I have to admit that I always had this fantasy that my mom was somewhere waiting for me. The funniest part is that I guess it wasn’t a fantasy. It took a long time, there were two states involved, a lot of meetings. But in the end I went back home to my mom. She’s gotten her life together, has been clean for over ten years, and I guess this was her fantasy too. To get me back. Imagine that. Someone really wanted me. It’s not all easy going for sure. I’m still a little mad at her for all I had to go through. But we’re a family. I even have a younger sister.” (Janell, age 17)

Decision-Making Considerations for Selecting Reunification after TPR:

- Parent(s) have made meaningful progress toward addressing issues that would prevent them from properly caring for their teen-age child;
- Parent(s) must be committed to meeting the youth’s current needs and welcoming the youth home;
- Parent(s) must have adequate housing and income, and be able to meet basic safety needs;
- Youth needs to have an established relationship with the birth parent(s) and a desire to live with the parent(s);
- Family needs to have a support system and a willingness to work together toward successful reunification.

(Adapted from Diana Riggs, *Permanence can Mean Going Home*, Adoptalk, 2006.)

How this goal meets the criteria for:

Legal Permanence—If the parent’s rights have not been terminated a return home provides the highest level of legal permanence. Eight states currently have a process for reinstating parental rights following TPR (termination of parental rights). In other states birth parents would be required to adopt the youth. But in still other states this may not be possible due to state adoption laws prohibiting adoption by anyone who has previously had a TPR. However, there is a legislative trend to authorize reinstatement of parental rights.

Relationship Permanence—This goal has the potential for high relationship permanence. Even if the relationship has to be re-established a youth desiring reunification has usually maintained a bond with the birth parent(s). However this needs to be assessed with the youth and family.

Cultural Permanence—This goal has the potential for high cultural permanence as the youth returns to his or her family, its connections, access to family history, and shared racial, cultural, and linguistic connections.

Handout: Reunification—Making it Possible for Older Youth

This is a process that requires full engagement of the youth and full participation of the family in decision-making. It is a process, and not always an easy process.

- Explore with the youth their desire to return home or to strengthen the relationship with their family. Let the youth sit in the driver's seat.
- Part of the process may involve locating the parents. In some cases parental rights may have been terminated, the youth may not have seen the parent in years, or one parent may not have been involved at the time the child was placed in care. There have been situations where a parent did not even know the child had been placed; or had found out much later but had not been able to re-establish contact.
- Explore with the family their willingness to build or strengthen a relationship with the youth. Give families the opportunity to work through a range of feelings that might include surprise, anger, being overwhelmed etc.
- Start a process of relationship building first. Through guided and supported steps you can prepare the youth and the parents for visits, re-establish contact, set up a schedule of visits, process visits with both the youth and the family, work to address barriers, and build on strengths.
- Be prepared to help all parties address what may be deep-seated feelings about all that has happened in the past. Individual therapy and/or family therapy, or intensive home-based services may be useful. Wrap-around services may be needed to support the family both before and after reunification.
- “Bridging the Gap” is the process of building and maintaining relationships and communication between foster parents and birth parents, with the goal of supporting reunification or another permanency plan. It is important to work with foster parents, keep them informed, and help them to support the goal.
- Help all parties to come to a permanency decision that will best support the youth's needs. While you want to support reunification whenever possible, it is important to remember that we are talking about “permanency pathways”. Sometimes the road to one pathway may lead to another. For example, re-establishing contact with parents may lead to contacts with other relatives who in turn are willing to adopt the youth. In other situations the youth may decide that they do not wish to return to live with the parent, but the parent is able to commit to being support for them in other ways.
- Work with your legal staff to understand the legal processes and to engage the family in legal processes to best ensure permanency.

Handout: Permanency Pathways—Guardianship with Kin/Fictive Kin

“My younger brother and I live with my grandmother because my mother has a drug problem. My mom has been in several drug programs but drops out before she finishes. We always hope this time will be the time, but it never is. My grandmother is a great lady and takes great care of us. When we go to court she tells the judge she is willing to keep us but she would feel guilty about adopting us. The judge asked to meet with us and asked what we thought about adoption. We told her we wanted to stay with our grandmother and not be adopted—she is already our family. My grandmother got custody of us through legal guardianship—meaning we can stay with her forever—and that’s what works best for us.”

Definition: Legal guardianship is a judicially-created relationship between child and guardian, is intended to be permanent and transfers to the guardian certain parental rights (protection, education, care and custody, and decision-making). (ASFA)

Decision-Making Considerations for Selecting Legal Guardianship

- There is a relative or a person close to the youth (this can be someone considered “fictive kin”) who the youth expresses a desire to live with and have an enduring relationship;
- The relative or “fictive kin” is committed to meeting the youth’s needs on a permanent basis and meets all requirements for foster care or relative care (or may already be a foster parent or a relative providing care);
- When the parents’ rights have not been terminated, it is determined that the youth cannot be reunified with the family, and the parents are willing to agree to the guardianship;
- In situations where the parents’ rights have been terminated, and the goal of adoption has been explored in depth and on multiple occasions with all parties and been ruled out as an option.

How this goal meets the criteria for:

Legal Permanence—Guardianship is more permanent than either foster care or relative care as it is legally binding until age 18, and it allows the guardian full control over care for the youth without child welfare agency involvement. It is often a good choice in relative care as it provides a secure long-term plan, but without termination of parental rights.

Relationship Permanence—This goal has the potential for high relationship permanence, especially if the relationship is with a relative or with “fictive kin” who have been a positive and nurturing part of the youth’s life over time. There is less a sense of relationship permanence if the relative has been identified through “family finding” or if the potential guardian has recently been connected to the youth.

Cultural Permanence—If the guardian is a family member this goal has the potential for high cultural permanence as the youth remains a part of the extended family, its connections, access to family history, and shared racial, cultural, and linguistic connections. If the guardian is not a family member, the cultural permanence would not be as strong. However many non-relative guardians are able to promote a sense of cultural permanence and connections.

Handout: Legal Guardianship—Making it Possible for Older Youth

- Explore with the youth their feelings about permanency. Let the youth sit in the driver's seat. Provide good information about the permanency options and discuss on an ongoing basis.
- Explore with the potential guardian their feelings about permanency, the legal differences, and how different permanency options would impact their family.
- If the parents' rights have not been terminated, have ongoing conversations about the youth's need for permanency and ensure that the birth parents are in agreement with guardianship before proceeding.
- If the parents' rights have been terminated, ensure that adoption as a permanent plan is explored in depth and at different points in the permanency process, with both the youth and the potential guardian. Having the conversation one time is not enough. People develop a growing understanding that may change over time.
- Help relative caregivers address family issues that are likely to arise from a long term placement. Help relative caregivers obtain support and counseling if needed from providers who understand the issues in relative caregiving.
- If the youth has no potential person to serve as legal guardian, use family finding and other assessment processes to help the youth identify potential permanency resources. Sometimes this involves aggressive efforts to find a good potential guardian or adoptive resource; this resource must then be assessed and developed over time.
- Assist the potential guardian in the application process for guardianship subsidy.
- Work with legal staff to assist the potential guardian with legal aspects of obtaining guardianship.

Handout: Permanency Pathways—Adoption

“I always thought I was adoptable even though I was 16 years old, but my social worker kept saying I was too old every time I asked him about it. I worked after school at a hardware store and the guy who owned it was so kind to me. He was such a good guy and I always talked to him. I never told him I was in foster care, but one day when we got to talking he started to ask me a lot of questions about my family and about my life in foster care. I invited him to my case conference because my social worker said I could invite anyone I wanted to, and at that point he asked about adoption. I was shocked at first, but it made sense. We finalized my adoption three months ago. That was the happiest day of my life.”

Definition: The Child Welfare information Gateway defines adoption as “the social, emotional, and legal process where children not raised by birth parents become full and legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family.”

Decision-Making Considerations for Selecting Adoption

- Parental rights have been terminated or are in the process of being terminated.
- The youth indicates a willingness to explore adoption. However, it is important to realize that many youth will initially indicate they do not wish to be adopted. In these situations the issue needs to be addressed over time. Saying no one time does not constitute a true effort to explore the adoption pathway. The issue needs to be revisited along with all the permanency goals.
- As youth explore the guardianship pathway, they may find themselves becoming more open to the concept of adoption due to its legal permanence.
- Identification of a family that is willing and able to meet the child’s needs and meets all legal requirements for adoption.

How this goal meets the criteria for:

Legal Permanence—Adoption provides a high level of legal permanence. Adoption maintains legal permanence even after the child turns 18 and moves into adulthood. Adoption is afforded the same legal permanence as birth parenting

Relationship Permanence—Adoption can afford a high level of relationship permanence. However, this needs to be assessed and the youth and adoptive parents need to be actively involved in the assessment process. There may be attachment and relationship challenges that if not addressed may disrupt the youth’s sense of relationship permanence.

Cultural Permanence—May vary depending on the adoptive family, the degree to which the adoptive family supports continued family connections and helps the youth to identify with the youth’s history, culture, and family.

Handout: Adoption—Making it Possible for Older Youth

- Believe that adoption is a viable option for older youth. Look at positive case studies, talk with foster parents who have adopted older youth, talk with workers who have successfully worked with an older youth to achieve adoption—whatever it takes for you to truly buy-in and understand the difference adoption can make in an older youth’s life.
- Take a leadership role in promoting adoption as a positive option for older youth—this encourages foster parents, family resource staff, supervisors, administrators, judges, teachers, and other professionals to shift their view in a positive direction.
- Have ongoing discussions with the youth about permanency options and the advantages of adoption. Help the youth to consider the option of lifetime connections by helping to reframe the initial “no” into a “yes”, or at least into a “I’ll think about it.” or “I want to learn more.”
- Involve youth in their own recruitment efforts and help them identify potential resources from past and present supports (extended family, godparents, foster parents, former neighbors, teachers, parents of close friends, church members, group home staff, coaches, attorneys, guardians, or family friends).
- Carefully consider foster parents and others known to the youth including former foster parents, group home staff, child care staff, legal personnel, teachers—anyone with whom the youth relates having a positive relationship.
- Provide information about permanency to the youth and the youth’s birth family. Many youth say no to adoption because of concerns for their birth family or of losing what remaining ties they have with their family. By helping establish what type of ongoing contact the youth will have with the family, the youth and family may both feel more accepting of adoption.
- Conduct meetings with potential resources to determine their commitment and ability to meet the youth’s needs.
- Support potential resources through the home-study process.
- Work with legal staff to help prepare the family for the legal aspects of adoption.
- Assist the family in making application for adoption subsidy.
- Plan ongoing post-permanency services to help ensure stability.

Handout: Permanency Pathways—APPLA

“My life? You don’t wanna know. I’m not even sure what happened to me. My mom left me at the side of the road at a rest area when I was four years old. I was sexually abused there and they found me huddled in a bathroom stall. I don’t remember any of that but I guess I was almost dead. I had thirty-three foster care placements and two families adopted me but gave me back. Damaged goods I guess. When I was 15 I went to Josepha’s house. I didn’t even want to hear the word adoption. Josepha thought I was a handful and I don’t think she wanted to make any forever promises. But she stuck with me. Said I could stay. Even after I got picked up all those times by the cops. I’m 19 now and in prison. I got hot headed out on the streets, messed up an old man during a robbery. Josepha visits me every week, brings me those cookies. I get out in three months. She’s setting up a lot of rules with my parole officer but she says I can come back to her house. At least I have someone that cares.”

Definition: Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is a plan for a stable, secure living arrangement that includes relationships with significant adults in the youth’s life that will continue beyond foster care.

Decision-Making Considerations for Selecting APPLA

- Every effort has been made to realize one of the more preferred permanency goals (reunification, adoption, guardianship).
- The youth is at least 14 years old.
- The foster parents or relative caregivers are willing to commit to care for the youth until the youth’s case is closed, which in some situations is beyond age 18 if the youth continues to be engaged in services. The foster parents sign an agreement attesting to their intentions.

How this goal meets the criteria for:

Legal Permanence—This goal provides no legal permanence. The agreement the foster parent or relative caregiver signs is not legally binding.

Relationship Permanence—This goal can support high relationship permanence. In relative or kinship situations the youth may have had a long standing relationship with the caregiver. If the caregiver is a foster parent the youth may have been in care for a period of time or even been placed with the foster parent repeatedly over the years. Since this goal provides so little legal permanence, it is critically important that there be a strong relationship or at least the potential to develop a strong relationship.

Cultural Permanence—As with relationship permanence, the potential exists for high cultural permanence. In kinship situations the youth maintains ties to extended family, cultural and linguistic identity, and family history. In non-kinship situations the cultural permanence would need to be assessed. Some foster parents are very supportive of family and cultural ties, and promote the child’s familial identity. Other foster parents struggle with this critical task. Again, as there is no legal permanence, the importance of cultural permanence is heightened.

Handout: APPLA—Making it Work for Older Youth

- Ensure that every effort has been made to realize one of the more preferred permanency goals and that these efforts have been revisited over time.
- Ensure that the youth is in agreement with the APPLA pathway, and encourage the youth's voice throughout the APPLA planning process.
- Assess the degree to which there is relationship permanence and what needs to be done to promote greater relationship permanence. Determine what supports and services can help promote a more positive relationship, and what needs to be in place to support the placement over time.
- Assess the degree to which there is cultural permanence and what needs to be done to promote greater cultural permanence. Help foster parents in “bridging the gap” and communicating with birth families. Help foster parents to manage birth parent issues and concerns, and to promote the youth's identity with the birth family. Assist kinship caregivers to deal with familial issues that may interfere with the youth's stability.
- Help youth to identify strategies and steps that will make them feel secure and stable within the family. Help the youth to bring these issues to the family and negotiate how the family will be able to follow through. Likewise, help the family to identify strategies and steps that they feel will promote a stronger sense of family and help negotiate these expectations with the youth.
- Assist the family and youth in developing a foster care and youth agreement that commits them to one another and promotes a sense of belonging and connectedness that will carry through time.
- Assist the youth and family in developing a ritual that will honor their agreement and serves to make them feel more connected as a family. (A family dinner, a ceremony, a signing of the agreement with the agency's lawyer or another representative, a recognition service by the family minister or at church etc.)
- Ensure continued services to support the placement and the intended commitments.

Handout: How Permanent is a Permanency Goal?

There are three components of permanency related to each Permanency Pathway—legal, relationship, and cultural. If one component is very low, then it is important that other components be high. Sometimes one component is more important to a youth than another component. Assessing the degree of permanency can help you in the decision making process. Consider the following examples of the degree of permanency each pathway would afford from 0-3 with 0-- none, 1--a little, 2-- some permanence with the opportunity to strengthen and 3—a high degree of permanence :

Kylie, 16, has been in foster care for two years with the Donis family. They have repeatedly stated that they do not wish to make any type of commitment to Kylie’s long term care, yet they express great concern whenever it is suggested that Kylie’s mother be contacted to explore if she is interested in caring for Kylie. Kylie loves the Donis family and has expressed a desire to be adopted by them. Kylie’s mother’s parental rights were terminated when Kylie was 9 years old. Kylie’s mother was living with an abusive man at that time who physically abused both Kylie and her mother. Kylie’s mother was also severely depressed and she was unable to follow through with a restraining order or means to keep the boyfriend away. Kylie’s mother has been trying to re-establish contact with her for the past four years. Kylie has good memories of her mother and feels the issues were related primarily to the boyfriend. Kylie’s mother has received mental health treatment for depression, as well as completing a Victims of Domestic Violence Group after the boyfriend was arrested for running over her foot with the car.

PATHWAY	Legal (0-4)	Relationship (0-4)	Cultural (0-4)
Reunification with mother			
Legal Guardianship by Donis family			
Adoption by Donis family			
APPLA with Donis family			

What pathway(s) would you select and why?

DeMarco, 14, recently left the group home and was placed with his Aunt Demeris. He has been in care since age 10 due to serious physical abuse by his grandmother. His mother died of AIDS and his birth certificate does not identify a father. DeMarco has been through multiple foster homes but states he has no good memories of these homes. He remembered staying with his Auntie Demeris (mother's sister) when he was small. His worker contacted his aunt and after several positive meetings decided to place DeMarco with her. The aunt is unable to commit to anything other than a foster care placement at this time. Meanwhile the worker has been talking to DeMarco about adoption, but he states he wants to stay with his aunt.

PATHWAY	Legal (0-4)	Relationship (0-4)	Cultural (0-4)
Reunification			
Legal Guardianship With aunt			
Adoption by adoptive family to be identified			
Adoption by Aunt			
APPLA (with aunt)			

What pathway(s) would you select?

Handout: Developmental Considerations that May Impact Permanency for Older Youth

- a. Older youth are seeking to establish identify and may be testing out who they are and how they portray themselves. Thus, older youth may present differently at different times and to different people, may have different personas, may “try out” different modes of fashion, may “over-express” their identify in what adults may perceive as extreme fashion, make-up, hair styles etc. Family identity, religion, beliefs, sexual identify, and racial and ethnic identity may all become very important to the youth, and youth may be very focused on exploring these different aspects of their identity.

How does this impact how we work with the youth toward permanency?

- b. Older youth are seeking to belong—to friends, gangs, peer groups, special interest groups etc. While younger teens are extremely influenced by the peer group, older youth tend to seek not just acceptance, but genuine relationships with those they share interests.

How does this impact how we work with the youth toward permanency?

- c. Older youth are typically beginning the process of separating from their families and developing a sense of independence. The process is often complicated as the youth seeks to separate, but then circles back for continuing nurturance and support. This phase may also be accompanied with anger and frustration, as youth discover they are not equipped either practically or emotionally for the independent life they desire. In addition parents and caregivers may struggle with the youth’s efforts toward independence, increasing the sense of conflict.

How does this impact how we work with the youth toward permanency?

- d. Youth are rebellious by nature and may tend to reject what adults present to them.

How does this impact how we work with the youth toward permanency?

Handout: Youth Engagement—Making Permanency Possible

Planning must genuinely be guided by each youth's wishes, hopes and dreams and must respectfully honor their feelings about past and current relationships. For that reason, a core component of youth permanency practice is the active engagement of young people in:

- The permanency process
- The identification of key individuals who can play significant roles in their lives, including as team members in planning and as a permanent parent or lifelong family connections
- Active recruitment for a permanent parent when the youth cannot safely return to birth or legal parents or extended family
- The process of preparation and readiness for permanency

To get youth to engage in these processes it is important to:

- Spend time with the youth
- Use creative tools and processes to encourage their input and participation
- Provide education and information about permanency options
- Invite them to attend team planning meetings
- Prepare them to participate in the team meetings
- Revisit permanency discussions over time.

Handout: Youth Driven, Family Centered Decision Permanency Meetings

Family decision-making meetings are another key strategy for successful permanency planning identified by the Child and Family Services Reviews.

There are many different models including team Decision Making (Annie E. Casey), Family Team Conferencing (out of Alabama), Family Group decision Making (out of New Zealand), and Permanency Teaming (from the Lifelong Families Model of Casey Family Programs.)

While these models all slightly differ, they also share common strategies:

- Give voice to youth
- Give voice to families
- Identify a team to focus on permanency
- Involve team members in the permanency process
- Seek to identify both informal and formal supports for the youth and family
- Seek to get permanency issues out in the open so that they can be addressed
- Challenge previously held assumptions about permanency

Permanency work needs to be approached using a teaming process that is youth driven and family centered. Most child welfare programs utilize one of the models above and provide specific training. If your program does not utilize one of the models and has not provided training, you can advocate for this to happen. In the meanwhile you can still convene a team meeting. To do this you would:

- Explore permanency options with the youth prior to the meeting
- Discuss permanency options with the family and/or foster families prior to the meeting
- Prepare and encourage the youth to participate
- Find out from the youth and family who they would like to include in the meeting
- Work with the youth to develop an agenda focused on permanency

Handout: Three Houses

(Page 1)

Asking the youth to draw pictures, symbols or write words within a diagram containing three houses - house of good things, house of dreams/wishes, house of worries - the caseworker explores factors from the youth's point of view that offer strength and hope or present harm or danger in the permanency process.

When used with youth, the *Three Houses* tool can:

- Clarify his or her own thinking about what they want in the future regarding family
- Engage the youth through pictures, symbols and simple words, especially when talking increases anxiety or when the youth's developmental needs require accommodations

When used with parents and family members), the *Three Houses* tool can:

- Share a youth's feelings with parents or family members when conversation is difficult
- Explore a parent's or family member's own worries, wishes and dreams about family for the youth

When used in teaming, the *Three Houses* tool can:

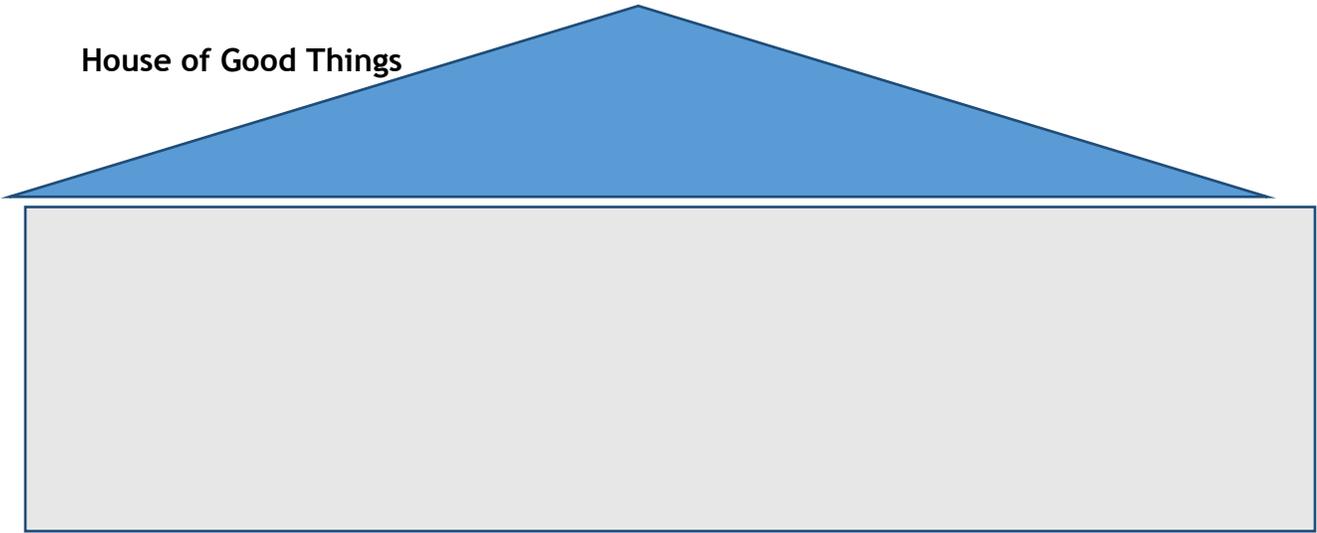
- Inform the planning so team members understand which adults a youth may be hoping to live with or worrying about living with
- Put safety and support plans in place to increase success of a permanency outcome

When used in exploring permanency options, the *Three Houses* tool can:

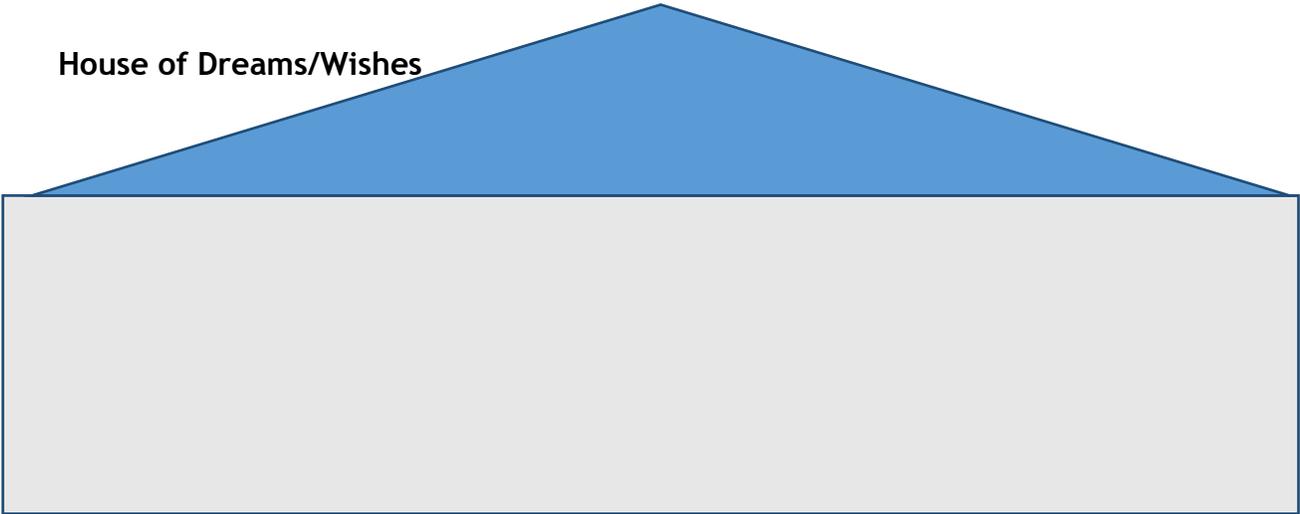
- Assess the protective factors as well as the harm and danger associated with a particular permanency option
- Give a balanced perspective for each permanency option which is rarely all positive or all negative

Handout: Three Houses (Page 2)

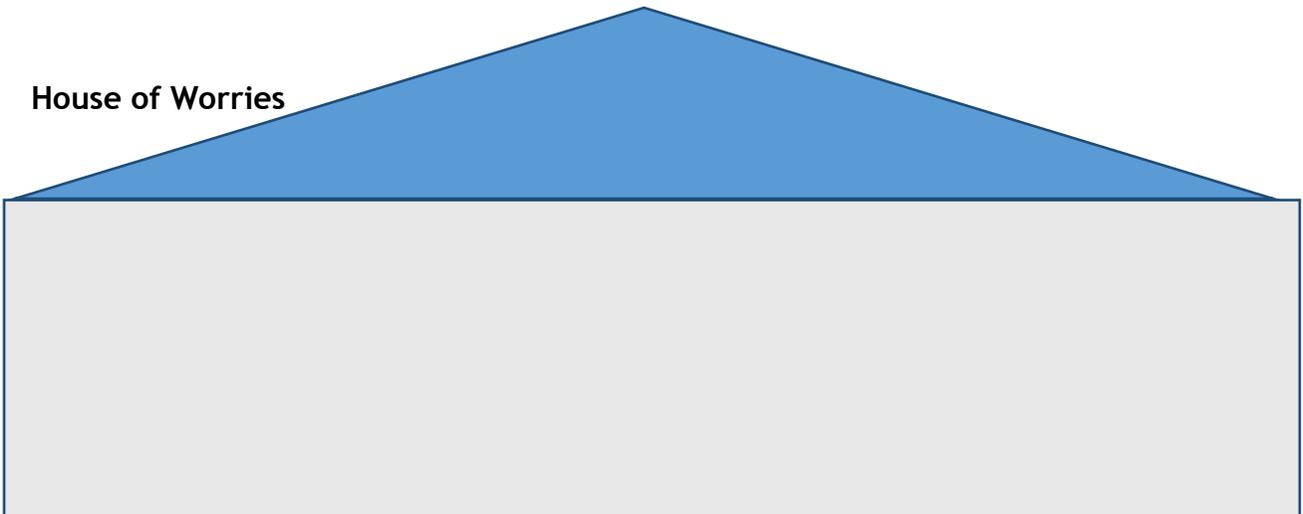
House of Good Things



House of Dreams/Wishes



House of Worries



Handout: Making Reunification Possible—Family Finding

Family Finding is a diligent process that requires patience and time. Fortunately the Internet has opened up a lot of data and information that was not previously available. But it still takes effort. You may begin to feel like a private investigator—and actually many agencies have begun to use private investigators feeling that their tools and abilities can in the long run save money and time as well as yield more results. While family finding is definitely a way to make reunification happen, it is also a good tool for finding an extended family resource for guardianship, adoption, or even APPLA. The following are tools that may help you in the process:

- **Genograms** are pictorial displays of family relationships and have traditionally been one of the first tools used by caseworkers in gathering family demographics and relatedness. In family finding the process helps the youth to identify family members he/she may have forgotten (University of Iowa). [*The Placement Genogram as a Tool for Establishing Family Connections*](#). Retrieved September 25, 2012 from www.uiowa.edu
- **Case Record Mining**, also called data mining, is an intense review of the child's file that helps identify the names and contact information of parents, relatives, caregivers and other significant adults as well as events in the child's life. Case mining is a core step in reconnecting youth to important people and key aspects of their identity as well as in locating a caring adult able to commit to being a lifelong connection.
- **Online Search** for relatives of youth in care often requires use of an online databases and search engines. At familyfinding.org you will find additional information on how to access and use online tools. The Child Trends Research brief for December 2011 can be found at this same site and gives many case examples and good tips.
- **Private Investigator** can be used in order to speed the process and increase the effectiveness of locating relatives for youth in the child welfare system. Some sites have hired a private investigator to expand and intensify family search efforts.

Finding the family is just the beginning—

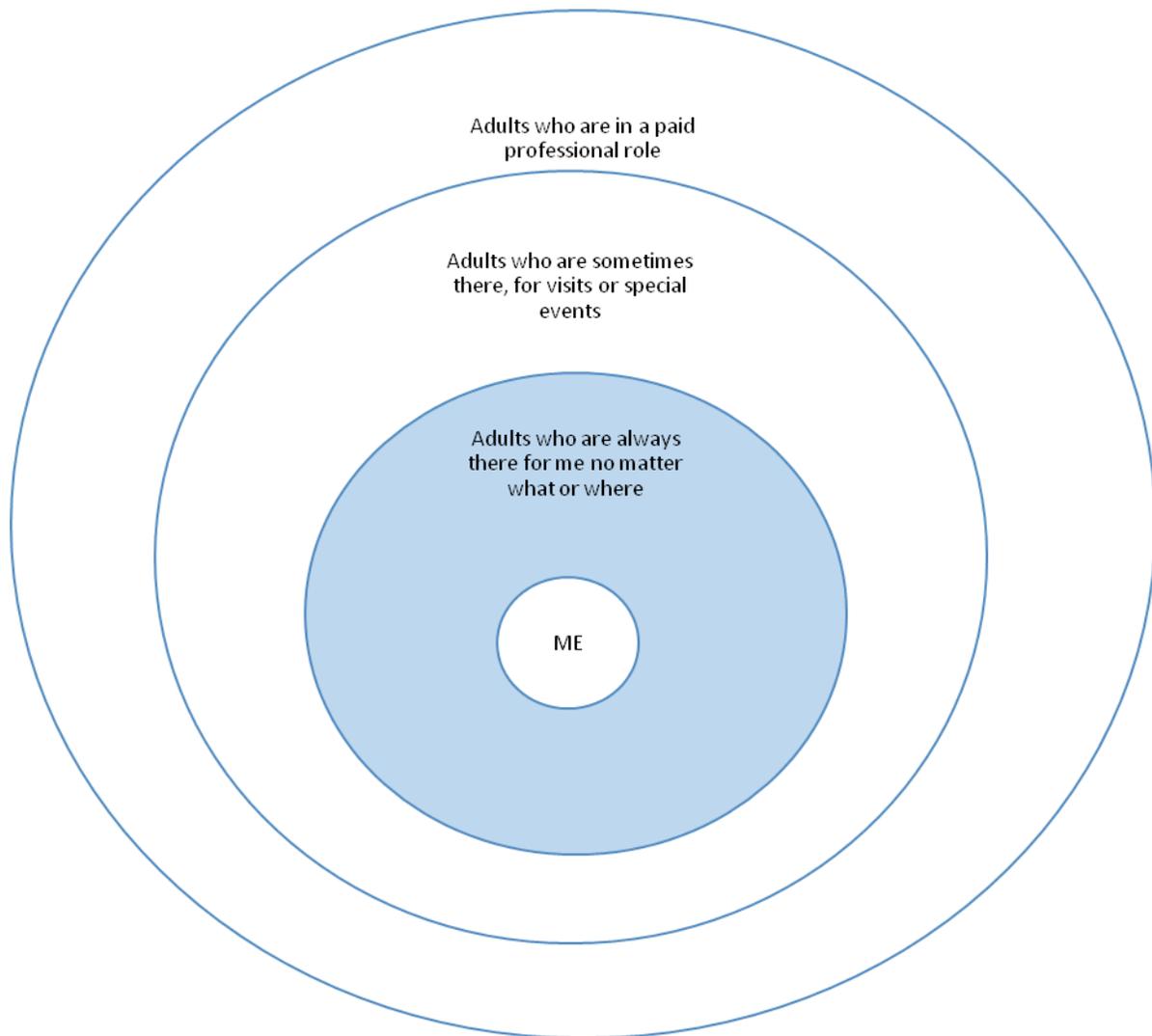
Once parents and family members have been located, family engagement is the foundation of good casework practice to achieve permanency with safety and well-being for youth in the child welfare system. The engagement of family members and other significant adults in the youth's life is a strengths-based approach to partnering with them toward achieving permanency for the youth. Engagement practice is founded on the principles of honest and open communication, persistent outreach and meeting family members on their own turf accompanied by respectful and meaningful inclusion in the planning process to make positive permanency outcomes possible.

Handout: Finding Permanent Resources—Timelines

MY TIMELINE, or the **AWESOME** and marvelous and sometimes *sad* and sometimes *oVeRwHeLmIng* look at where I've been over the years. . . .

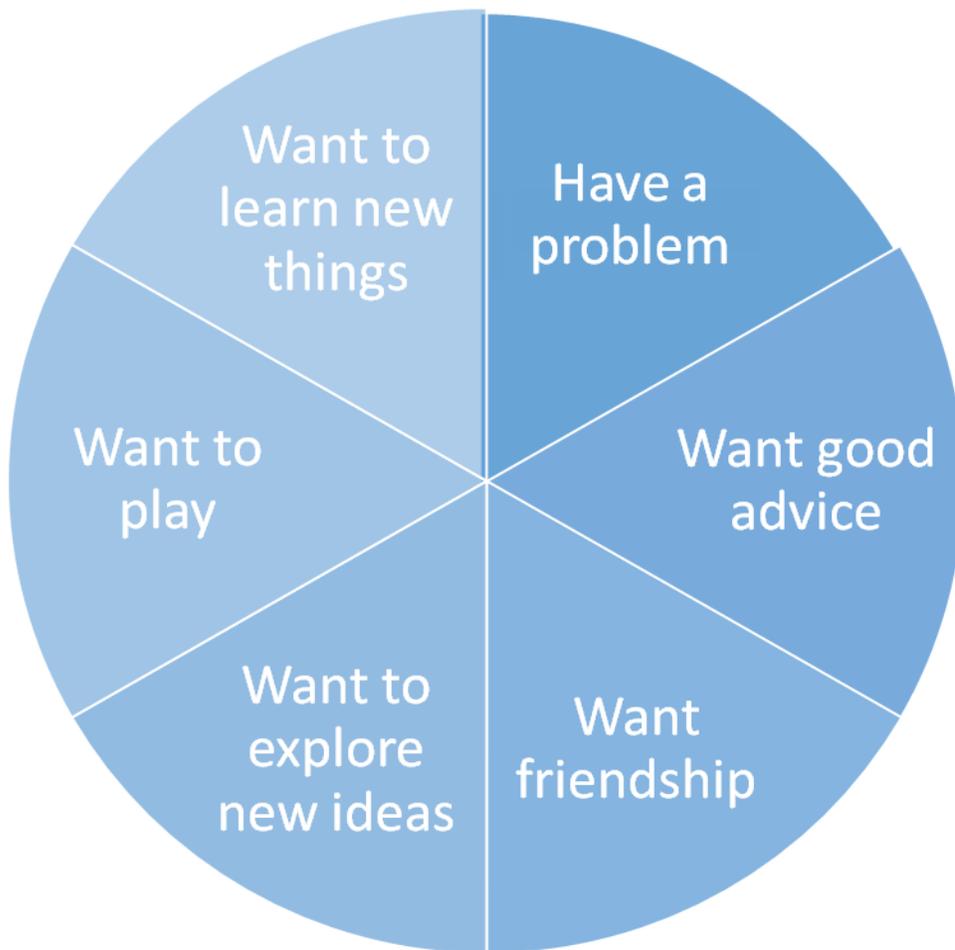
Year	I Lived With:	My best Friends(s):	Things I Did:	People Who Cared:

Handout: Finding Permanent Resources—My Social World



Handout: Finding Permanent Resources—My Support System

Who do you go to when you. . .



Handout: Getting Behind the “No”

What Youth Says:	What Youth Means:	Making “Yes” Possible:
<p>“I’ve done this before and it didn’t work.”</p> <p>“I have a lot of problems.”</p> <p>“No one can handle my behavior.”</p> <p>“People want to adopt babies.”</p>	<p>No one will want me.</p>	
<p>“I don’t want to give up on my family.”</p> <p>“I worry about my mom.”</p> <p>“I don’t think I can be a part of another family.”</p>	<p>If I commit to adoption (or any permanent plan) I will not get to go home to live.</p>	
<p>“Only babies get adopted.”</p> <p>“I belong where I am.”</p> <p>“My family is still important.</p> <p>“I want to stay in touch with my brother.”</p>	<p>I don’t understand what adoption or any of this is about. But it’s probably not good.</p>	
<p>“I can’t call someone else “Dad”.</p> <p>“My mother needs me.”</p> <p>All I have left is my name.</p>	<p>Fear of being disloyal to family or of losing whatever connections remain.</p>	
<p>“It didn’t work before.”</p> <p>“I’m okay where I am.”</p> <p>“I can’t go through any more.”</p>	<p>Fear of failure.</p>	

Handout: Preparing Makes it Possible—3-5-7

The 3-5-7 Model is based on the assumption that youth need to complete three basic tasks in order to prepare for permanency:

- Clarification of life events
- Integration of all family memberships
- Actualization in belonging to a new family

Five conceptual questions need to be addressed with the child:

- Who am I?
- What happened to me?
- Where am I going?
- How will I get there?
- When will I know I belong?

Seven critical skills are needed to prepare the youth:

- Engagement
- Listening
- Speaking the truth
- Validating the youth's story
- Creating safe space
- Going back in time
- Recognizing pain as part of the process

All of the tools we have talked about can be helpful in addressing different parts of the preparation. (For example: The Timeline and Lifebook help the youth to clarify life events, Youth Support System and My Social World helps the youth to integrate family membership; while assessment and planning help the youth think about the process of belonging to a new family.)

Handout: Case Scenarios--Making Permanency Possible

Consider all the tools and strategies discussed in this module ‘Engaging to Make it Possible’ and decide which ones might be most helpful in the following cases:

- Youth Driven, Family Centered Permanency Meetings
- My Social World
- Family Finding
- Lifebooks
- Ecomaps
- Permanency conversations with resources

- Three Houses
- My Timeline
- My Support System
- Permanency Conversations
- Genograms
- Getting behind the “no”

Kylie, 16, has been in foster care for two years with the Donis family. They have repeatedly stated that they do not wish to make any type of commitment to Kylie’s long term care, yet they express great concern whenever it is suggested that Kylie’s mother be contacted to explore if she is interested in caring for Kylie. Kylie loves the Donis family and has expressed a desire to be adopted by them. Kylie’s mother’s parental rights were terminated when Kylie was 9 years old. Kylie’s mother was living with an abusive man at that time who physically abused both Kylie and her mother. Kylie’s mother was also severely depressed and she was unable to follow through with a restraining order or means to keep the boyfriend away. Kylie’s mother has been trying to re-establish contact with her for the past four years. Kylie has good memories of her mother and feels the issues were related primarily to the boyfriend. Kylie’s mother has received mental health treatment for depression, as well as completing a Victims of Domestic Violence Group after the boyfriend was arrested for running over her foot with the car.

What tools and strategies might you use and for what purpose?

DeMarco, 14, recently left the group home and was placed with his Aunt Demeris. He has been in care since age 10 due to serious physical abuse by his grandmother. His mother died of HIV and his birth certificate does not identify a father. DeMarco has been through multiple foster homes but states he has no good memories of these homes. He remembered staying with his Auntie Demeris (mother’s sister) when he was small. His worker contacted his aunt and after several positive meetings decided to place DeMarco with her. The aunt is unable to commit to anything other than a foster care placement at this time. Meanwhile the worker has been talking to DeMarco about adoption, but he states he wants to stay with his aunt.

What tools and strategies might you use and for what purpose?

Handout: Action Plan

New Knowledge Acquired:

How will I apply the Knowledge:

Results/Review:

New Skills Acquired:

How will I apply the Skills:

Results/Review:

New Attitudes Acquired:

How I will apply the Attitudes:

Results/Review: