

Court Adoption and Permanency Resource Guide

A Handbook for California Courts
Highlighting Adoption and Permanency
Programs



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS

CENTER FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN
& THE COURTS





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Acknowledgments

The project team wishes to acknowledge and thank members of the Judicial Council of California and the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee for their continued attention to issues involving children in the foster care system in California and for their dedication to highlighting Court Adoption and Permanency Month each November with a resolution promoting adoption and permanency solutions for children. In addition, we are also grateful for the resolution in June 2005 supporting the report of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care. This formal resolution by the council may help to implement the commission's recommendations while furthering its operational plan. The new California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care will also help provide recommendations to the Judicial Council on the ways in which the courts and their partners can improve permanency for children in foster care.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the California Legislature and Governor for their support over the years in passing similar resolutions in support of Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

We particularly express our admiration and thanks to the superior courts of California that schedule events or otherwise promote Court Adoption and Permanency Month during November or throughout the year. We commemorate all courts, government agencies, nonprofit agencies, and individuals as they strive to reach the goal of adoption or permanency for every child in the foster care system, which should include lifelong connections to caring and committed adults for every child.

In addition, we acknowledge and thank the project team, including Stacey Mangni, Kelly Beck, Audrey Fancy, and Jennifer Walter. We also thank the Editing and Graphics Group and the production team in the Administrative Services Unit for their skills.

Foreword

On behalf of the Judicial Council of California and the Administrative Office of the Courts' Center for Families, Children & the Courts, I am pleased to offer this year's Court Adoption and Permanency Resource Guide for courts to use in preparation for Court Adoption and Permanency Month in California this November. This guide is designed to provide courts in California with ideas and best practice approaches for collaborating with their court and community stakeholders, not only to expedite permanency for children in our foster care system but also to raise our community awareness of the absolute necessity for safe and permanent homes for all foster children.



Over the last several years, California has been an active participant in National Adoption month, which has highlighted the goal of permanency for foster children throughout the nation. In 2005, more than 200 communities in 45 states participated in National Adoption Day, resulting in more than 3,400 completed adoptions from our nation's foster care system.

While the number of foster children in California has declined, the need for permanency remains. Our courts must continue to make permanency a priority for our state's foster children, but they can only successfully accomplish this goal with the help of others. This guide highlights some of the great work that has been done in that regard by many of our California courts over the past few years.

We are very fortunate in California to have a Judicial Council, led by Chief Justice Ronald M. George that supports our courts' efforts to achieve permanency for foster children by both word and action. This guide is only one example of the support that we in California have come to appreciate and expect.

I thank all of you for your wonderful work on behalf of our state's at-risk children and their families, and wish you well in whatever activities you choose to support during this November's Adoption and Permanency Month.

Michael Nash
Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court
Superior Court of California, Los Angeles County
Member of Judicial Council, 2003–2006

Introduction

Adoption and Permanency Guide—Goals and Scope

More than ever before, court system participants must come together to find permanency for every child in foster care. Permanency, as defined by foster care youth, includes having and maintaining a lifelong connection to family members and other caring adults. What is understood as permanency and how to achieve it today reflects this human need to connect and belong. Virtually every child welfare and juvenile justice reform relating to permanency, both nationally and in California, embraces these concepts. One such reform is for the system whenever possible to engage children and their families in all aspects of the decision-making process.

This guide is a compilation of many state and national programs that have been developed and designed to promote permanency for foster care children. Many of the program descriptions and resources found in this guide address the specific challenges to permanency that local courts have identified.

Examples of Court Identified Permanency Challenges

- Finding relatives and other important contacts for the child
- Determining reasonable efforts
- Assessing relatives early
- Engaging youth in decision making
- Participating in concurrent planning
- Resolving disputes through mediation
- Ensuring that long term foster care is not a permanency option
- Recruiting and retaining adoptive parents
- Expediting adoption finalizations
- Making independent living skills meaningful

2005–2006 Permanency Project Judicial Interviews

How to Use This Guide

The guide has been updated this year to include many state and national promising practices and model programs that courts and agencies have used successfully to promote permanency for children, as well as to address identified obstacles to permanency. Many of these programs are collaborative and involve local courts, public and private agencies, CASA, as well as other service providers. The guide has been reorganized to highlight specific themes and programs and to provide an easy reference for each local court system.

We hope you will use this guide to:

- Hold an Adoption Saturday in the month of November.
- Plan and schedule several permanency events throughout the year, such as providing a child with a commemorative item, for example a teddy bear, at the finalization of his or her adoption or setting a time in the morning that will allow anyone wanting to finalize an adoption to take priority on the court calendar.
- Coordinate a working group of practitioners to strategize about how to launch any of the innovative, permanency-based model programs in this guide that are not being used in your local county.
- Convene a stakeholders meeting to develop and bring about complete systemic change in the area of permanency.
- Serve as a resource as issues arise.

Adoption and Permanency Guide Background

The first guide was published and distributed in 1999. Since then, a nationwide effort has been under way to assist courts and other stakeholders in redefining and understanding what permanency means to foster care youth. These efforts were, in part, a result of the Children and Families Service Reviews conducted by the United States Department of Health & Human Services and the passage of Assembly Bill 636, the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act, in 2001.

Both the federal review and the AB 636 efforts in California, among other things, led to our state's focus on improving permanency outcomes for youth. Many of the programs in this guide have evaluation components and have demonstrated their effectiveness in improving permanency outcomes for children.

Materials Provided

I. Resolutions

This section contains a copy of the 2006 Judicial Council Resolution proclaiming November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month. It includes copies of resolutions and letters of support from the Legislature, Governor Schwarzenegger, and two California counties, as well as advice on passing a resolution in your own court or county.

II. Court Outreach to the Public

This section contains information about programs that the court can use when highlighting either Adoption Month or other displays of permanency-related projects.

III. Court Outreach to the Media

This section contains information to help guide the court and court personnel when dealing with the media, in their effort to bring attention to any permanency, related programs.

IV. Maintaining Birth Family Relationships and Finding Lifelong Connections

This section contains new technological advances in finding family members for youth:

- Additional programs included in this section focus on engaging youth in finding important connections; and
- Strategies are offered for engaging youth in finding permanence

Foster Care Youth Identify the Elements of Their definition of Permanence

- At least one adult
- A safe, stable, and secure parenting relationship
- Love
- Unconditional commitment
- Lifelong support
- Involvement of youth as a participant, perhaps even as a leader, in the process
- Unless the child is not free, a legal arrangement wherever possible
- The opportunity to maintain contact with important persons, including siblings

* Model Programs For Youth Permanency, Meredith J. Lousell, California Permanency for Youth Project

V. Collaborative Permanency Programs

This section contains many programs that focus on engaging both the youths and families in permanency planning. The programs emphasize developing collaborative relationships among youths, families, social workers, and service providers, rather than tolerating adversarial relationships.

Role of Court and Practitioners in Permanency

Court

- Set the statutory mandated time limits
- Inquire about details of reasonable efforts
- Determine paternity at the early stages of the case
- Inquire about search efforts for family members

Practitioners

- Ask the right questions of your clients
- Ensure youth is brought to court, whenever possible
- Listening to youth, rather than a typical “client interview”
- Explain and explore Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) options, when appropriate

VI. Adoptive Families: Training, Recruitment, and Support

This section contains information about collaborating with private agencies to recruit adoptive parents as well as programs designed to help train and support adoptive parents before placement.

VII. Open Adoption for Children in Care

This section outlines information about why open adoption should be made available in certain dependency cases as well as information about how to work with families to develop a post adoption contact agreement.

VIII. Celebrating Adoption Finalizations

This section describes the history of Adoption Saturdays from their beginning in Los Angeles—and their spread throughout the state and the nation—as well as advice and contacts to plan an event in your court.

IX. Web Sites, Trainings, and Other Useful Resources

This section provides a list of Web site addresses to be used to download information and also how to contact specific programs including those that provide training and technical assistance. Resources include court check sheets that are helpful during adoption and permanency hearings as well as several others. Trainings materials include those available from the Center for Families, Children & the Courts and a sample agenda from the annual National Convening on Youth Permanence.

Inside Folder—Resource CD and list of contents: The inside cover contains the original resource binder materials, now on CD-Rom, which was developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts, Center for Families Children and the Courts, Permanency Project. This CD contains a collection of additional resource materials and programs that relate to permanency.

Strategies that have aided in the success of CPYP permanency model programs

- Involve current and former foster youth to a greater degree
- Put current and former foster youth on your advisory board
- Use current and former foster youth as speakers and trainers
- Hire great staff—don't waste time on those not convinced
- Hire staff who understand the target system
- Spend time on accountability
- Use your resources well
- Keep track of data
- Start small, don't overplan every potential problem, but just try one case
- Build connections with everyone and then use them
- Do public relations all the time; give credit to everyone
- Implement systemwide: It's never enough to just train staff.
- Develop policy and provide administrative leadership

*Model Programs for Youth Permanency; California Permanency for Youth Project, Meredith J. Louisell

Final Notes and Comments

Permanency is everyone’s job. As professionals in this system—whose very goal and role is to support and maintain children with their families, if possible, and to ensure that every child has a stable, permanent, and safe home—we should continue to implement strategies that improve permanency outcomes for children.

Permanency is an attainable goal. We can achieve permanency when we work together involving the child and his or her family to develop and implement permanency options. Those options, whether the child is ultimately reunified or adopted, must include lifelong connections as well as sense of belonging.

We hope the program descriptions and resources in this guide will be helpful to you in your work to improve permanency outcomes for children in foster care. If you have a local program that you would like to share statewide, we encourage you to describe it on the form at the back of this guide and send it to us; we will include it in future publications.

Thank you.

I. Resolutions

in Support of Court Adoption and Permanency Month

Resolutions

A resolution is a great way to show widespread support in your court and in your community for adoption and permanency. Each year, the Judicial Council and the state Legislature pass a resolution declaring November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month. The Governor also either passes a resolution or writes a letter of support.

We recommend that each county encourage its courts and board of supervisors to also issue a resolution declaring November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month. The county board of supervisors in both Ventura County and Alameda County pass resolutions every year (a copy of both 2005 resolutions are included in this section). Other counties' board of supervisors that have passed resolutions include Orange County and Yuba County. The resolutions have helped increase public awareness of the need for greater community involvement in the adoption and permanency process and of the court's commitment to finding safe and permanent homes for children in the county.

How to Get a Resolution Passed in Your County

- Step 1:** Draft a resolution borrowing language from the Judicial Council resolution. Insert county-specific facts where available. County-level statistics similar to those used in the Judicial Council resolution are available from the Child Welfare Research Center Web site. Statewide and county-level statistics relating to adoption and permanency are also accessible in the Center for Families, Children & the Courts' *California Juvenile Statistical Abstract*, which may be found on the Center's Web site. (A copy of the Judicial Council resolution follows; see Section X of the guide for Web site addresses.)
- Step 2:** Contact the local board of supervisors by letter or by any other means. Explain the importance of local support of government agencies throughout Court Adoption and Permanency Month.
- Step 3:** Once the local board of supervisors agrees to sign the resolution, consider holding an event where the board can sign the resolution and speak to the importance of a countywide investment in adoption and permanency. Invite local media to cover the event. This event could be a good photo opportunity. Consider having children who have been adopted or need to be adopted at the event and developing a colorful banner for a backdrop. See Section III, "Court Outreach to the Media," for more information about planning and holding a media event.
- Contacts:** Alameda County: Vicki Ward, Trial Court Administrator, Superior Court of California, County of Alameda, 510-268-4104
- Ventura County: Patti Morua-Widdows, Court Manager, Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, 805-981-5938

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA



RESOLUTION

Whereas consistent with its commitment to improving the lives of children and their families, since 1999 the Judicial Council has annually recognized November as Court Adoption and Permanency Month;

Whereas each year in California nearly 500,000 reports are made of child abuse and neglect and some 29,000 children enter foster care;

Whereas about 79,000 children in California live apart from their families in child welfare-supervised out-of-home care;

Whereas 32 percent of the children in foster care in California have been away from their families in out-of-home care for four or more years;

Whereas of the nearly 36,000 children leaving foster care between January and December 2005, 54 percent were reunited with their families and 21 percent were adopted;

Whereas the Judicial Council is committed to working with the Governor, the Legislature, and local courts and communities to achieve permanency for children who have been abused or neglected; and

Whereas local courts and communities throughout California have created programs promoting adoption and permanency that have resulted in a decrease in the number of children waiting for permanent, safe homes;

Now, therefore, I, Richard D. Huffman, on behalf of the Judicial Council of California, do hereby proclaim November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month, during which the courts and their local communities are encouraged to join in activities to expedite permanency.

In witness whereof

I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of October, 2006.

RICHARD D. HUFFMAN

Justice of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District
and Acting Chair of the Judicial Council of California

Attest:

WILLIAM C. VICKREY

Secretary, Judicial Council of California, and
Administrative Director of the Courts

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 166

Introduced by Assembly Members Leno and Bass

August 14, 2006

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 166—Relative to Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 166, as introduced, Leno. Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

This measure would declare November 2006, as Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, Each year in California, there are nearly 500,000
2 reports of child abuse and neglect. In addition, approximately
3 29,000 children enter foster care; and

4 WHEREAS, About 79,000 children in California are living
5 apart from their families in out-of-home care; and

6 WHEREAS, Thirty-two percent of the children in foster care
7 in California have been away from their families in out-of-home
8 care for four or more years; and

9 WHEREAS, Of the more than 36,000 children exiting foster
10 care between January and December 2005, 54 percent reunited
11 with their families and 21 percent were adopted; and

12 WHEREAS, The Judicial Council is committed to working
13 with the Governor, the Legislature, and local courts and
14 communities to bring about permanency for children who have
15 been abused and neglected; and

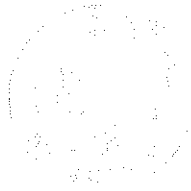
1 WHEREAS, Local courts and communities throughout
2 California have created programs promoting adoption and
3 permanency that have resulted in a decrease in the number of
4 children waiting for permanent, safe homes; and

5 WHEREAS, The Assembly and Senate are committed to
6 working together to improve outcomes for children in the child
7 welfare system; now, therefore, be it

8 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
9 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature hereby declares
10 November 2006, as Court Adoption and Permanency Month, and
11 encourages the courts and their local communities to join
12 together in activities to expedite permanency; and be it further

13 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit
14 copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

O



GOVERNOR ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

November 2005

***California Court Adoption and
Permanency Month***

I am pleased to extend greetings on the occasion of *California Court Adoption and Permanency Month*.

Last year, more than 93,000 youth received child welfare supervised foster care, and 8,400 young Californians were adopted. I commend our judges, attorneys, social workers and community leaders for working tirelessly to place at-risk and abused children in safe homes and nurturing environments.

During California Court Adoption and Permanency Month, I urge all citizens to recognize the efforts of the individuals who work on behalf of young people in need.

Please accept my best wishes for every continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Arnold Schwarzenegger'.

Arnold Schwarzenegger

Proclamation

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF ALAMEDA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

* * * * *

"COURT ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY MONTH" NOVEMBER 2005

WHEREAS, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors declares **NOVEMBER 2005** as "**COURT ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY MONTH**" to call attention to and increase awareness of adoption and the vital role that permanency plays in a child's life; and

WHEREAS, each year in California there are more than 493,299 reports of child abuse and neglect, and more than 37,064 court filings alleging child abuse or neglect; and

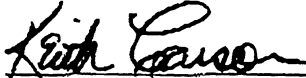
WHEREAS, in Alameda County there are approximately 3,850 abused and neglected children in foster care; and

WHEREAS, adoption provides children with greater security and stability, gives them a brighter future and brings joy to the adoptive parents, and every child deserves a loving, nurturing, and permanent home; and

WHEREAS, the Judicial Council of California and the California Legislature have proclaimed the month of November to be "**COURT ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY MONTH**"; and

WHEREAS, children waiting for adoptive parents, and families who have adopted these children require and deserve community and public agency support.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that this Board of Supervisors, County of Alameda, State of California does hereby proclaim **NOVEMBER 2005** as "**COURT ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY MONTH**" in Alameda County and encourages all County residents to participate in this important event.



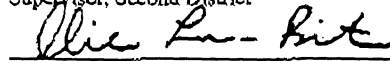
KEITH CARSON
Supervisor, Fifth District



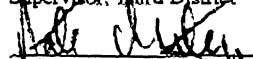
SCOTT HAGGERTY
Supervisor, First District



GAIL STEELE
Supervisor, Second District



ALICE LAI-BITKER
Supervisor, Third District



NATE MILEY
Supervisor, Fourth District



**RESOLUTION
OF THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

WHEREAS each year in California, there are more than 490,000 reports of child abuse and neglect and approximately 27,000 children in foster care; and

WHEREAS almost 96,000 children in California are living apart from their families in out-of-home care; and

WHEREAS 34 percent of the children in foster care in California have been away from their families in out-of-home care for four or more years; and

WHEREAS of the more than 35,000 children exiting foster care between January and December 2004, 52 percent were reunited with their families and 20 percent were adopted; and

WHEREAS the Judicial Council is committed to working with the Governor, the Legislature, and local courts and communities to bring about permanency for children who have been abused, neglected; and

WHEREAS local courts and communities throughout California have created programs promoting adoption and permanency that have resulted in a decrease in the number of children waiting for permanent, safe homes;

WHEREAS the Ventura Superior Court intends to place a high priority on adoptions and permanency during the month of November with special emphasis on adoptions on November 4, 2005. Additionally, an Adoption and Permanency Information Fair will be held on November 12, 2005. Various organizations will participate and provide information about services and resources available to adoptive families.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors does proclaim November as "Court Adoption and Permanency Month."

Chair of the Board of Supervisors

II. Court Outreach to the Public

A. Programs

- Adoption Family Tree Display
- Heart Galleries
- Open Courthouse to Educate the Public
- Volunteer or Mentor Attorney Program

Adoption Family Tree Display

What is it?

An Adoption Family Tree is a large artistic display of all the children being adopted that day, week, or year, depending on the size of the court and the number of adoptions that take place. Typically, the newly adopted children contribute their name to the tree on Court Adoption and Permanency Day as part of a local celebration, and then it is left up for several weeks or a month after that. It may be a smaller-scale project made with construction paper or a more elaborate one with other materials. Local merchants or staff may be willing to donate materials, or small funds may be available in the local budget. Participants may include volunteers, court officials, community members, and of course the children being adopted.

Why do this?

The tree is a fun and beautiful representation of how the foster children joining their new families are a part of something larger—the need for all children to have the love and commitment found in a permanent home.

What goal does this program address?

The display may have additional materials next to it with information to help educate the community about adoption and to raise awareness about the need for more foster parents and adoptive parents.

During the adoption proceedings, the presiding judge or a judge can explain the history of the tree and what each item represents. In addition to placing their leaf or other item on the tree, each adopted child may also be given a copy with their name on it to take home with them.

How can you start this program in your county?

Tulare County received the idea for a tree with children's names on the branches from another court that had done a small, temporary display with paper. Tulare County took that idea and had one of its older children being adopted that year make the pattern for the tree trunk and the greenery. Staff liked the idea so much they decided on a more permanent tree made of felt. The cost of the materials is about \$50 per year. The court has paid some of the cost, and two of the clerks have donated some of the materials.

In 2002, the first names were placed on child handprints that make up the leaves of the tree as part of their Adoption Saturday Celebration. In 2003 they added apples that contained the names

of children for that year's event, and in 2004 they added butterflies. In 2005 they added ladybugs. They say, "Our Family Tree is growing beautifully each year and the surrounding nature abounds. The tree is proudly displayed in our Jury Assembly Room for the month of November. During the event each family is escorted by their assigned court volunteer to the courtroom for their adoption proceeding and the finalization of the legal document processing." A copy of the tree from 2004 was on the front cover of this technical assistance package.

Contacts:

Tulare County: Michelle Hineman, Court Manager, Superior Court of California, County of Tulare, 559-733-6561, ext. 191

Heart Gallery

Photographic Display of Children Available for Adoption

What is it?

A Heart Gallery is a photographic display in a public place of children in foster care who are waiting for permanent adoptive homes. It is a moving tribute to the need for more families for these children. The preparations for this display often involve the courts, county adoption agency/department of social services, local foundations, other adoption or foster care-related organizations, and professional photographers.

Why do this?

A moving public display of the children's pictures heightens awareness of the need for adoptive homes throughout a large area. It also helps to bring positive attention to the adoption process and to encourage those who are thinking about adopting to start the process. It demonstrates the need for children of all ages to find permanent, adoptive homes.

What goal does this program address?

This program is mainly aimed at public outreach and exposure for individual children by placing a face on an individual child who needs the love of a family. However, as a direct result, families may also be recruited for any of the children waiting for permanent homes. The photographs personalize the selection process for parents in a way that a description alone never could.

How can you start this program in your county?

Before the children's pictures may be taken, an agreement must be reached, containing specific rules for all those involved, to alleviate any privacy or other concerns. Set up the Heart Gallery display in local places that receive lots of visitors. Government buildings, libraries, shopping malls, art galleries, or many other options may be available. Try to make it also available on weekends or during evening hours. Inform your local media of the dates, location (or if the display will be shown in multiple locations), times, scheduled events such as a grand opening or a closing ceremony for the display, and why it is important.

New Heart Galleries in California are added every year. Currently, San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, and a coalition of several counties in the Bay Area have Heart Galleries. Many of these programs emphasize the need to recruit suitable foster parents and the critical

importance of establishing permanent lifelong connections for older youth when adoption is not an option.

The programs may entail a “gallery” of photos on their Web site, as well as the traditional public display of photographs at varying times of the year. Descriptions and handouts are included in the resources division of this section.

Contacts:

Bay Area Heart Gallery Web site: www.bayareaheartgallery.com/

Los Angeles Heart Gallery Web Site: www.annabellaimagery.com/HeartGallery/HEARTGALLERYMAIN.htm

Orange County Heart Gallery Web site: www.heartgalleryoc.org/

Sacramento County Heart Gallery Web site: www.sacheartgallery.org

San Diego County Heart Gallery Web site: www.iadoptu.org/images/gallery_pics/index.html

Shasta County Heart Gallery Web site: www.co.shasta.ca.us/Departments/SocialServices/CFS/heartgallery.htm

Open Courthouse to Educate the Public

What is it?

An Open Courthouse is a day or set of days when the court opens its doors to the general public for an event similar to a school's "open house." This program includes judges, attorneys, social workers, CASAs, clerks, and all others involved in the adoption process.

Two new types of "Open Courthouses" have arrived with the use of the latest technology. Several courts around the country and here in California open their doors to the public in innovative new ways—24 hours a day—on the Internet. Virtual courthouse tours and "Day in the Life of the Courts" allow the public to see inside the courthouse and view some of the things that typically happen there every day. Although virtual tours and the photographs showing a day in the life typically do not address adoption in particular, they do allow the public to become more familiar with the people and building prior to the day they may need to attend a hearing.

Why do this?

Having an educational day in court for the public helps raise public awareness and educate the local community on how the adoption process works and what is necessary to make the system operate efficiently. These sorts of programs may also help in finding potential adoptive parents by exposing them to the system and the children within the system. Internet-based programs such as virtual courthouses and Day in the Life photographs can also help outreach to the public through providing similar information about the adoption process, and can be a good starting point for providing contacts within the courts.

What goal does this program address?

These programs are mainly aimed at public education; however, as a direct result of this effort, community members will be encouraged to donate their time and energy to the system. Such donations could take the form of hands-on help or of lobbying local representatives to ensure that adoptions are a priority of local government.

How can you start this program in your county?

Set up the Open Courthouse program on weekends or during evening hours if necessary. Have attorneys, judges, social workers, or clerks give tours of the courthouse while answering questions, explaining the system, and pointing out its strengths and weaknesses. Each county can customize its tour to highlight its own strengths while stressing where it needs help from the public. Alert local media of the dates, times, scheduled events, and why it is important.

You can also work with technology or information services staff in your court to encourage more content and information on the court Web site about adoption and permanency issues during Court Adoption and Permanency month. It is also a good idea to have specific contact information and e-mail addresses for the juvenile department or more specific areas relating to adoption and permanency in larger courts.

Contacts:

The main Web site for California's courts is: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/. Web sites for each of California's superior courts often already provide contact information through which you may find out more about adoption and permanency issues in you court and community . The Web site for California superior courts is: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/trial/.

Virtual Tours of California Courts:

Superior Court of California, County of Contra Costa:
www.cc-courthelp.org/tours/index.php

Superior Court of California, County of Plumas:
www.plumascourt.ca.gov/court_history.aspx

Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento:
www.saccourt.com/geninfo/public_educ/Virtual_Courthouse/virtCourtHome.asp

Day in the Life of the Courts:

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/

Courts Included:

- Superior Court of Alameda
- Superior Court of Butte
- Superior Court of El Dorado County
- Superior Court of Fresno County
- Superior Court of Orange County
- Superior Court of Riverside County

Volunteer or Mentor Attorney Program

What is it?

There are several different ways to encourage more interest in current or prospective attorneys working on adoption and permanency issues. One way is to solicit private adoption attorneys (either through the local bar or through the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys and California Adoption Attorneys) to mentor other attorneys and teach them to handle simple adoptions.

Another option is organizing a mentor program through the local bar associations for new or pending bar results attorneys, or for students in local law schools with a family law curriculum. The students or new attorneys could participate in workshops for prospective adoptive parents and help with the final documents for the final hearings.

Why do this?

This will encourage more current or prospective attorneys to work in the adoption and permanency field and provides networking opportunities for participants to share their hard work, concerns, and ideas with others in their field. Attorneys also could earn their mandatory pro bono hours through the program.

What goal does this program address?

Mentoring is a wonderful way to reach those attorneys already interested in adoption or to recruit prospective ones. It can serve as a means to raise new solutions to difficult issues through collaboration around this important issue.

How can you start this program in your county?

Contact your local bar association, or the other organizations listed below, and ask about mentoring programs they may already have. Work with adoption attorneys you may know to recruit mentors as well. Also contact any local law schools and ask for their internship or volunteer coordinator to let them know of the opportunity.

Contacts:

Local Bar Organizations: *American Bar Association, Division of Bar Services, State and Local Bar Association Directory for California* Web site: www.abanet.org/barserv/map/ca.html

American Academy of Adoption Attorneys: 202-832-2222

Web site: www.adoptionattorneys.org/

California Adoption Attorneys: *Academy of California Adoption Lawyers and the Academy of California Family Formation Lawyers*: 818-501-8355

Web site: <http://acal.org/>

(Many other Web sites also list attorneys specializing in adoption in California.)

B. Resources

- Adoption Family Tree Display (Sample Cover from 2005 Court Adoption and Permanency Guide)
- The Adoption Pathway: Questions and Answers (Kinship Center Brochure)
- Heart Galleries:
 - Bay Area
 - Orange County
 - Sacramento County
 - San Diego County Fact Sheet and Agreement
 - Shasta County



Court Adoption & Permanency Month

Technical Assistance Package



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS

CENTER FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN
& THE COURTS

Photograph courtesy of the Superior Court of California, County of Tulare's Adoption "Family Tree"



Design your own adoption plan—selecting those features that are important to you—it's your choice.

- Choose the adoptive family, who have been thoroughly screened and prepared for parenthood, from family descriptions and photos they have provided.
- Meet the adoptive family, and exchange full identifying information.
- Receive financial assistance for medical and living expenses. Be guaranteed that the baby will be placed with the family you select.
- Spend time with your baby before the placement.
- Arrange for your baby to go home with the adoptive family directly from the hospital.
- Exchange photos and letters with the adoptive family as your child grows.
- Visit with the family and baby following the adoption and develop an ongoing relationship.

Kinship Center recognizes that adoption is a life-long process, so we will always be available for you, for your child and for the adoptive parents.



KINnections A Program of KINSHIP CENTER®



At Kinship Center we offer the following:

- Free services
- A personal relationship with a social worker who cares about you and your needs.
- Full and accurate information about your legal rights.
- Experience and knowledge to help you through every step of your decision-making, as well as the adoption itself.
- Support groups for young women and men who are faced with similar issues.
- Adoptive families who have been thoroughly screened and prepared for parenthood.

*1520 Brookhollow Dr., Ste. 41
Santa Ana, CA 92705
(714) 979-2365 Fax: (714) 979-8135*

*Statewide: 1-800-4-KINSHIP
Email: kinship@redshift.com
www.kinshipcenter.org*

II-17

Lic. # 275201360 Adoption
Lic. # 2752013559 Foster Care
Santa Ana Foster Care Lic. # 106000620

The Adoption Pathway: Questions & Answers



***KINnections**
"An open adoption journey"*

Tel: (714) 979-2365



A Program of
KINSHIP CENTER®



Why do people choose adoption?

An unplanned pregnancy can cause confusion. Every birth parent that places a child with an adoptive family has different reasons. A mother may want her baby to have two parents, or may feel she's too young, or doesn't have enough money to raise a child. She may want to complete her education or start a career. Sometimes people who already have children feel they just can't care for another.

If I do place my baby for adoption, will the sad feelings ever go away?

You'll never forget your child - you wouldn't want to. And there may always be some sadness. But knowing you've given your baby the best possible start in life, with the love and security of a good family, can make you feel better. You will feel relieved and secure by seeing your child grow up in a home and family that you have created for your child.

What if my family and friends are critical about adoption?

People will have their opinions. This is your decision that you make for your child and the best decisions are made by getting all the information possible. It is easy for others to pass judgment when they don't understand all the facts and feelings. Adoption can be and is a loving choice.

I'm having a hard time with my own feelings, especially when I think about giving up my baby. I am sad and scared, both. Do other mothers feel this way?

Nearly Always. Important decisions are often hard decisions. But when you look first at what's best for your child, and then what's best for you, it will help you clear away the confusion and make the right decisions.

How can I be sure my baby will be placed with a good family?

By choosing a family that has been carefully screened and prepared for parenting. At Kinship Center, we get to know a couple very well before we approve them to be adoptive parents. We want to know that they have a solid marriage and are financially responsible. We discuss their reasons for wanting to adopt, and we get to know their interests, their lifestyle, and their medical history. We even get a fingerprint check and verify that they have no record of criminal activity or child abuse. We provide workshops on adoption and parenting which they must attend. The final decision is yours. You will be able to build a relationship with the family and be secure in your choice of parents for your baby.

What will my child be told about me and about the adoption?

Since, you and the adoptive family will be sharing information about yourselves and your families' history directly with each other, your child will learn about you in a personal and loving way. This is what open adoption is all about.

Can I be involved in choosing the family for my baby and is my choice guaranteed?

Yes, you can be as involved as you want to be. You select your baby's new parents and be guaranteed placement with them. You have these choices through what we call "open adoption," and you decide how "open" your adoption will be. Kinship Center will help you and the family build and nurture a new and ongoing relationship that will benefit your child.

What if I want to place my child with a family I already know? Can I still come to Kinship Center?

Absolutely, we can work with you and the adoptive family you have chosen. You'll get the assurance that the family is evaluated and prepared before the adoption. And you'll be able to talk over your own feelings and plans before you make your decision.

Can I get any help from Kinship Center during the pregnancy - like money for expenses?

If you need financial assistance, Kinship Center has adoptive families who can help with your medical care, living expenses, or other costs related to the pregnancy. Kinship Center will also help you apply for any public assistance or insurance benefits to which you are entitled. Referrals for a safe, confidential living situation can also be made for you, if necessary.

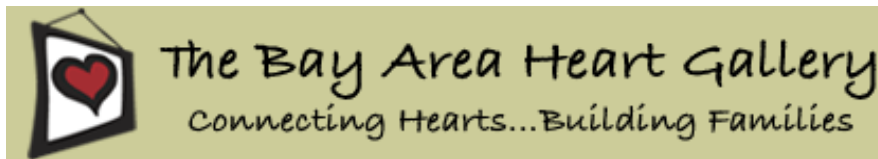
After the adoption can I know how my baby's getting along?

Kinship Center can help you decide what type of relationship works best for you, your child, and the adoptive family. You and the adoptive family may agree to stay in touch personally and develop an ongoing relationship. We help prepare everybody for the feelings that lie ahead.

If I choose adoption, when is my decision final?

Under California law, you do not have to decide about the adoption until after your baby is born. It's a good idea to think about your plans as early in your pregnancy as possible, especially if you'd like your baby to go home with the adoptive family directly from the hospital, but Kinship Center will never pressure you to make a decision until you are ready. Once you decide to place your baby for adoption, however, and sign the necessary papers, your decision is permanent. Your baby will legally become a member of the adoptive family and will begin a lifetime relationship with them. This decision affects many people and Kinship Center is available to meet with you and your family.





What is The Bay Area Heart Gallery?

- ❖ It is a professional “traveling” photography exhibit featuring children and youth in foster care who are in need of an adoptive home or a permanent lifelong connection to a committed adult.
- ❖ We are a partnership of 22 public and private agencies serving children and youth in foster care throughout the Bay Area.
- ❖ Alameda County Social Services Agency is the lead Agency for this project.
- ❖ Co-Chairs: Robin Fryday, Professional Photographer and Fredi Juni, Alameda County Social Services Agency
- ❖ The two Co-chairs envisioned, founded and organized the BAGH. They provide ongoing coordination and leadership to the project.
- ❖ We are working together with community volunteers that include professional photographers, businesses and artists.
- ❖ It is a stunning exhibit of over 50 photographs of children, youth and families accompanied by their compelling stories.
- ❖ Over 50 professional photographers have donated their talents and time to put a real face on the children and youth living in foster care in the Bay Area.
- ❖ New photographs of children and youth will be added throughout the year.

The Bay Area Heart Gallery is Unique

- ❖ There have been over 80 Heart Galleries across the country primarily focusing on children in foster care in need of adoption. The Bay Area Heart Gallery is focuses not only on adoption but also recruits foster parents and permanent lifelong connections for older youth when adoption is not an option.
- ❖ The exhibit includes portraits of diverse families from across the Bay Area, seeking to inspire all different types of community members to come forward and get involved with children and youth in foster care.
- ❖ Resource information is available at the exhibits to educate the community about the needs of children and youth living in foster care about and how to get involved with foster youth when foster care or adoption is not an option (as advocate, friend, mentor, extended family, in arts projects, etc.)

Goals of the Bay Area Heart Gallery

- ❖ To raise community awareness about the needs of children and youth in foster care
- ❖ To recruit adoptive parents, foster parents and committed adults to build lifelong relationships and families.

Calendar/Contact

- ❖ In San Francisco –from June 5-June 30 at One Market, at 1 Market St. in downtown San Francisco
- ❖ The Exhibit will travel across eight bay area counties throughout the year (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Sonoma.)
- ❖ Please check our website for calendar of ongoing venues throughout the year
www.bayareaheartgallery.com
- ❖ Contact us at 1-888-HRT-GLRY

Foster Care Data

- ❖ Over 10,000 in foster care in the Bay Area
- ❖ Over 83,000 in foster care in CA
- ❖ Over 500,000 in foster care across the country
- ❖ 54% reunified with families
- ❖ More children of color in foster care than general US population
- ❖ Nearly half of the children in foster care are over 10; the average is 10.2 years old

Frequently Asked Questions about The Bay Area Heart Gallery

Why a Heart Gallery

- ❖ A picture does say a thousand words. Heart Galleries gives a human face to what too often are just foster care statistics. The Heart Gallery is an opportunity to take foster children out of the shadows, from invisibility into a presentation of what they truly are -- alive and vibrant human beings who need families, as we all do.
- ❖ It is a hugely successful child specific recruitment strategy. Over 300 children have been adopted in just six heart galleries across the country.
- ❖ The average person in our communities knows little to nothing about children and youth that live in foster care.
- ❖ In California 4000 youth “age out” annually – most without a lifelong connection
 - 25-44% have experienced homelessness
 - Only 54% have earned their H.S. diploma
 - 62% were not able to support themselves
 - 38% were coping with serious emotion problems
- ❖ Many of these youth age out feeling alone and insolated and suffer from anxiety and depression. As such, they are primed for situations such as alcohol and drug abuse, homelessness and incarceration.
- ❖ People are inspired by the pictures to consider becoming foster or adoptive parent.
- ❖ The Heart Gallery plants a seed.

How did you get Photographers involved?

- ❖ Primarily through word of mouth, many local photographers have come forward.
- ❖ Robin Fryday, a Professional Photographer and one of Project Co-Chairs, reached out to photographers across the region.
- ❖ Some photographers have contacted us and come from across the country, including a few who have volunteered for other Heart Galleries.

Who is featured in the Gallery?

- ❖ Children and youth waiting for adoption or older youth who want a permanent relationship with a committed adult.
- ❖ Children of all ages, including older youth and sibling groups that have waited longest for an adoptive family.

How are children and youth selected?

- ❖ Social Workers from 8 Bay Area Counties refer children and youth that are in need of child specific recruitment and older children and youth who are open to this method of public recruitment for adoption and permanent connections.

Why adopt an older child?

- ❖ Most youth who age out of the system say they wish they had been adopted
- ❖ Many children and youth have an incredible resiliency and do well
- ❖ Studies have shown that if a child has 1 committed and loving adult in their lives, this can make the all the difference

What help is needed?

- ❖ Financial Sponsorship of our Heart Gallery (Funds/Sponsorship, in-kind donations to support exhibit, including film, photo printing, frames, displays, food/drink for receptions, database management, printing of brochures, flyers, posters, other resource materials).
- ❖ Venues
- ❖ Volunteers with skills in graphic design, photography, marketing, fundraising, child welfare services, etc.
- ❖ Visit our Website for more information www.bayareaheartgallery.com



[About Us](#) · [Gallery](#) · [Events](#) · [Sponsors & Partners](#) · [How to Help](#) · [Press](#) · [Contact Us](#)



About the orange county Heart Gallery Chapter

The Heart Gallery of Orange County is a unique and stirring photographic exhibit of legally adoptable children and sibling groups in state custody who dream of having a "forever family". Award-winning photographers donate their time to capture the special spirit of each child. Since its inception in Santa Fe in 2001, The Heart Gallery message has spread to other states, where it has been successful in putting a face on adoption and finding homes for many waiting children. It has been featured on CBS, NPR and in CameraArts magazine, Women's World, Parade, and the New York Times. Following its opening, each Heart Gallery exhibit tours the state to bring awareness about the need for adoptive families to all corners of the country.

The mission of the Heart Gallery of Orange County is to inspire Southern Californians who otherwise might never see themselves as potential adoptive and foster parents.

The Heart Gallery of Orange County seeks qualified and willing people willing to become adoptive and foster families to children whose families cannot or will not care for them.

For more information email us at: oc4kids@ssa.ocgov.com

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Facts about the Heart Gallery of Sacramento:

Sacramento Heart Gallery Board

*Rosemary Papa
Beverly Austin
Hunter Austin
Joel Ayres
Marco Martinez
Rebecca Radding
Leah Santos

SCASA: Sacramento Court Appointed Special Advocates

*Heather C. Corfee, *Executive Director*

Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services: Child Protective Services Division

*Mary Tarro, *Program Manager*
Stephanie Lynch, *Program Manager*
Helen Barber, *Adoption Program Specialist*
Terry Kessler, *Adoption Supervisor*
Laurie Slothower, *Public Information Officer*
Theresa Thurmond, *Program Manager*

Sierra Adoption Services

*Kim Rhinehelder, *Development Officer*
Jennifer Highley, *Adoption Supervisor*

Lilliput Children's Services

*Karen Seebach, *Social Worker*

Photographers

*Marco Martinez
Brandon Abell
Blue Flame Design
(*Kyle Shorts*)
(*Jessica Papa-Shorts*)
Jayson Carpenter
Alan Fishleder
Stacey Kennedy
Laura Niznik
Kathleen Noonan
Rosemary Papa
Sam Parsons
Mary Reddick
Catalina Rivas
Delmar Tompkins
Nichole Jackson-Young
*Key Contact Persons

The Sacramento Heart Gallery features children ages six to fifteen, sibling sets and those with special needs to help them get adopted. The Sacramento exhibit will be shown from October 19 through November 17, 2006 at the Library Gallery of CSU-Sacramento, with a grand opening and public invitation taking place Saturday, October 28, 2006. The Heart Gallery of Sacramento is a collaboration between volunteers from Sacramento State University, Sacramento County Child Protective Services, the California Department of Social Services, Sierra Adoption Services, Lilliput Children's Services, and Court Appointed Special Advocates of Sacramento and friends.

Photographs will highlight children in the "CapKIDS Are Waiting" program, a collaboration between Sacramento County and Sierra Adoption Services to find homes for foster children with disabilities, and "Destination: Family," a collaboration between Sacramento and Nevada counties and Sierra Adoption Services.

Funding for the Heart Gallery of Sacramento comes entirely from private donors. We are affiliated with SCASA-Sacramento Court Appointed Special Advocates.

Adoption:

Children available to be adopted in Sacramento County are those who have been abused or neglected or had parents who were unable to care for them.

To adopt a child in Sacramento County, you must first be a licensed foster parent.

About 8,000 children are adopted in California every year.

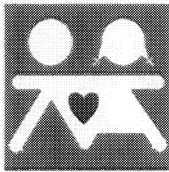
About 400 children are adopted in Sacramento County every year.

How many children need adoptive homes? About 700 children are in the Sacramento County Adoption program, although homes have been found for many of them. Another 1,100 children in long-term foster care will need adoptive or guardianship homes.

There are negligible adoption costs.

Note: The first Heart Gallery opened in Santa Fe., N.M. in 2001. Diane Granito, an adoptions recruiter for the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, organized a group of amateur and professional photographers to take pictures of children needing adoptive homes. Granito wanted photos that stood from the normal photos shown to prospective parents, capturing each child's unique spirit and personality. About 15 cities in a dozen states will have Heart Gallery exhibits this year.

For More Information: Please contact us at [info @ sacheartgallery.org](mailto:info@sacheartgallery.org)



Heart Gallery 2005

FACT SHEET

The 2005 Heart Gallery: Photographs Making a Difference

WHAT: In keeping with the adage that “a picture is worth a thousand words; the San Diego County Adoptions Program has teamed with The Child Abuse Prevention Foundation, local community leaders and top San Diego photographers to host San Diego’s first Heart Gallery – a photographic event to make a difference in the lives of local children awaiting adoption. Inspired by the article highlighting the successful events across the nation in *Parade Magazine*, local leaders hope to raise awareness about the need of permanent homes for local youth of all ages in San Diego County.

WHEN: **Heart Gallery Opening – The Prado, Ballroom, Balboa Park**
The Heart Gallery will make its debut on November 2nd, in 2005 as part of National Adoption Awareness month, hosted by David and Leslie Cohn at the Prado Restaurant Ballroom in Balboa Park. The gallery will then move to different prominent locations throughout San Diego County. These additional locations will be announced leading up to the grand opening event in November.

WHERE: **The Prado Restaurant Ballroom, Balboa Park (Additional Locations TBA)**

WHY: There is no greater joy than being a parent and giving a child the gift of a family. There are many children in our community who need us to provide the guidance and security that only a family can give through adoption. Together we can help to raise awareness about the need for adoptive families, and most importantly, find “forever homes” for the many children awaiting adoption through the San Diego County Adoptions program. Remember, a child in San Diego is waiting. For more information about how you can help with the Heart Gallery project, or to visit one of the galleries, go to www.iadoptu.org, or contact 1-877-423-6788.

About San Diego County Adoptions

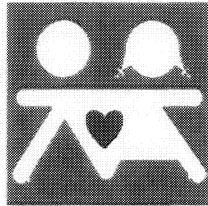
San Diego County Adoptions is a public adoption agency licensed by the State Dept. of Health, serving three groups – biological parents, available children, and adults wishing to build their families through adoption. For more information, please visit www.iadoptu.org, or call 1-877-423-6788.

About the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation

Founded in 1981, the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation (CAPF) is a nonprofit organization, dedicated to breaking the cycle of child abuse through prevention, education, advocacy and funding. The Foundation has raised more than \$20 million in the fight against child abuse in San Diego. For more information please call (858) 278-4400, or visit www.capfsd.org.

CONTACT: **Jamie Rivas**
San Diego County Adoptions
(858)694-5345
Email: johnsjz@cws.state.ca.us

Leona Sublett
Child Abuse Prevention Foundation
(858) 278-4400 ext. 19
Email: Leona@capfsd.org



Heart Gallery Agreement

June 13, 2005

1. Photographer can select his/her own final photo for display in the Heart Gallery and how he/she will be identified.
2. Photographer to determine location site for shoot. Photographer should also recommend attire they hope to have child wearing for the shoot. If a site is needed, the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation office can be made available at no charge (9440 Ruffin Court, Suite 2, San Diego, 92123).
3. A county social worker will be with the child during the photo shoot.
4. It is possible that the photo shoot might be of a sibling set, not just one child.
5. County social workers will be responsible for obtaining permission from the Superior Court to allow the children to participate in the photo shoot.
6. Photographer may provide brochures and/or professional materials to handout at all venues.
7. Photographers consent to donate his/her time, talent, equipment, supplies to the 2005 Heart Gallery project in collaboration with the donated services of the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation.
8. In the event that a child is adopted prior to the opening of the Heart Gallery, the parents of that child would decide whether that child will be part of the Heart Gallery Exhibit.
9. All photographs, digital files, hard copies, and negatives will be donated for the purposes of helping to get children adopted. These photos, files, and/ or negatives will be the property of the County and the newly adopting parent(s).
10. Photographer can use a photograph for his/her own publicity only after obtaining permission from the County and/or the newly adopting parent(s).
11. On occasion, the County might need to quickly crop or reprint a child's photograph for an adoption recruitment meeting other than the Heart Gallery.
12. Publicity for the Heart Gallery will be donated and arranged by the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation and the County.
13. Our hope is that each photographer will be able to provide one completed photograph, either black and white or color, of one child at least 11 X 16 inches, framed in whatever manner the photographer feels will capture the child's spirit and personality.

The ultimate goal of the Heart Gallery is to give abused children a chance to have a loving family for the rest of their life; we cannot erase their past nor pain, but we can offer them a better life for their future. It is with this goal in mind that we ask for your help and are grateful for the contribution that you can make in an effort to help our city's children.

CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES (CFS)

SERVICES

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The Heart Gallery of Shasta County

The Heart Gallery is here in Shasta County! Our opening date was Nov. 3, 2005, at Turtle Bay Museum. The mission of the Heart Gallery is to inspire people who otherwise might never see themselves as potential adoptive and foster parents.

We have decided to expand our Gallery to not only recruit adoptive families for our children but also to recruit foster families for those children who do not want to be adopted but need a family to commit to them and help transition them to independence and hopefully be a resource for them after they "age out." The Gallery seeks qualified people willing to become adoptive and foster families to children whose families cannot or will not care for them. The goals of the Gallery are:

1. To expose these waiting children to a great number of the general public, in anticipation of locating their adoptive family (or long-term foster family).
2. To provide the public with a greater understanding of Shasta County's adoptive and foster care needs.
3. To provide an attractive brochure that will have all the contact information necessary to begin the foster care - adoptive process.

For those of you who haven't heard about the Heart Gallery:

Photographers donate their time to take photographs of our children that capture their personality. These photographs are then displayed in various settings. We have also chosen to have pictures of a variety of types of families who have adopted.

The idea for the Heart Gallery project started

[Domestic Violence Prevention Services](#)

Any questions or comments on this area of the web site please contact the Web Coordinator @ [Web Coordinator](#)

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as a means to raise awareness about adoption and find homes for older children and sibling groups in protective custody with the New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department (CYFD). Former recruitment supervisor Ellie Ortiz thought beautiful portraits of the children would place a much needed positive focus on Special Needs Adoption. The project was implemented by CYFD recruiter Diane Granito when she was hired as a grassroots recruiter for Santa Fe and eight other New Mexico counties. Since funds were limited, it was necessary to obtain donations of many of the necessary goods and services. As a first time project, organizing and implementing the exhibit was a hands-on learning experience. Diane's first step, after naming the project, was to approach the Gerald Peters Gallery, where Lisa Bronowicz gave Diane an enthusiastic "yes" to hosting the event. The energy and generosity of the community (photographers, framers, media, etc.) created an impetus which resulted in an opening in March 2001 with over 1,000 people attending.

Subsequent Heart Galleries have opened across the country. It has proven to be an extremely effective recruitment tool and a great many children have found families through it.

Thanks for taking the time to read this, and for considering the permanency needs of our children.

[See the current children in our Heart Gallery here in Shasta County!](#)

[Parade magazine article about Heart Gallery projects across the country](#)

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III. Court Outreach to the Media

A. Programs

- Ideas for Media Outreach
- Press Releases and Media Coverage
- How to Create a Media Contact List
- Tips for Working With the Media

Ideas for Media Outreach

The news media are important means for educating the public and increasing their awareness of the issues around adoption and permanency. Most people get their information from the news—whether it be traditional means such as print, radio, or television ads, or increasingly through online sources—so developing strategies to use the media to influence public opinion is a critical part of any public awareness effort.

There are many opportunities to involve the media with Court Adoption and Permanency Month. Involving the local media is a useful and cost-effective way of shedding light on the obstacles within the foster care system, while at the same time illuminating the successes of the juvenile courts and other collaborators in dealing with these examples.

Print Media

Be sure to alert all area print media to any events you plan for the month, including Adoption Saturday, the signing of a resolution, and any other court or community events you have planned. Ideas for working with local print media include:

- **Op-ed article:** Write an op-ed article to be signed by a judge that highlights Court Adoption and Permanency Month. Submit it to the local paper's op-ed editor with a cover note explaining why the paper should publish it. Be sure to mention that November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month. An example of an op-ed article written by the Presiding Judge of Inyo Superior Court, Dean T. Stout, which was published in the *Inyo County Register*, follows in the resources section.
- **Opinion article/commentary:** Most newspapers also have space in their editorial section for longer opinion articles or commentaries. Write a letter to the editor explaining the importance of the need for children to find permanence, and a sample of your article. Provide all of your contact information and ask when it would be convenient to contact information and be sure to note that November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month.
- **Letter to the editor/meeting with editorial board:** Write letters to newspapers with a widespread readership and also to local community newspapers. Another idea is to send a letter to the local newspaper's editorial board editor to arrange a meeting between a judge, a family that went through the adoption process, the head of a local agency, or anyone else who might make sense in your locality, and your local newspaper's editorial board. At the meeting, ask the editorial board to write an editorial stressing the importance of adoption and permanency. Bring fact sheets on foster children, adoption, and other child welfare issues.
- **Open your court to newspapers:** Invite the newspaper reporters to attend your adoption calendar so that they can see and report on the good work your court is doing. Be sure to get the permission of the parents and the children before inviting the media.

- **Develop a court newsletter** or work with other community agencies and partners that often have their own newsletters. Advertising earlier in the fall can encourage volunteers to help with events, and afterward makes a great story to promote further events and planning throughout the year. A sample from Santa Clara County Post-Adoption Services is included in the resources section.
- **A weekly profile during the month:** of a child waiting for adoption or a feel-good story about a successful adoption or reunification with birth parents.
- **A hard news story:** on the adoption process and the court's role in expediting adoptions.
- **A feature story:** highlighting a local adoption program or other programs that help teens or special needs children in foster care.
- **A "Did you know"** feature with facts about adoption.
- **A "day in the life"** type story in which the reporter spends a day with a juvenile judge dealing with adoption and permanency issues, and then writes a story about it.
- **Send a letter to a columnist** for your local newspaper who covers community issues, asking him or her to write a column on adoption. Be sure to note that November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month, and use local facts to illustrate the scope of the problem.

Radio and Television Media

Similar to print media, alerting local radio and television media can be a positive way to reach out to the public, with the added benefit of adding voices and faces to the story. Some ideas include:

- **Develop a televised forum on adoption:** Many local cable television stations have scheduled time for community programming, as well as the necessary equipment and technological expertise to help you get started. A broadcast forum is a good way to spread the message about the need for adoptive parents and foster parents. This type of program can bring together people with different perspectives on adoption and can speak to many different audiences. Cable stations also will often rerun the program several times, increasing its reach.
- **Arrange a meeting with the news director** of one of your local television stations or radio news stations. Suggest a weekly feature for the evening newscast that features kids who need to be adopted.
- **Arrange for interviews of a judge** on local radio and television news programs, to address the issues around adoption and permanency. Call the news director at a local radio station, tell him or her that November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month, and suggest a news segment on the issue.

- **Develop a 30-second public service announcement (PSA)** about the need for continued commitment to adoption and permanency. Submit the PSA to local radio stations with a letter explaining the need for increased public awareness of adoption and permanency issues.

Other Ideas for Media Outreach

- **Reach out to your community:** There are many ways to reach the public with messages about Court Adoption and Permanency Month. Posting information about the month on your court's Web site, writing a newsletter article for a church newsletter, a court newsletter, or any other community newsletter, or asking your judge make speeches at community meetings can all increase awareness during the month of November or during other times of the year. A small budget can also go a long way towards spreading the message through an ad campaign or other means.
- **Heart galleries:** These projects receive much positive media attention and result in finding permanent homes for many children. Sacramento County, for example, has received much positive publicity for their project. See the materials in the Court Outreach to the Public section for more information. Handouts from several of the current projects also provide many tips and advice for working with the media.
- **Develop new technologies:** be sure to watch for any opportunities that this may provide to "get the word out" about adoption and permanency issues.
- **Open your courthouse to educate the public:** Invite the media to an event similar to a school's "open house." This program includes judges, attorneys, social workers, CASAs, clerks, and all others involved in the adoption process.
- **Adoption excellence awards:** These honor those states, agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals that have demonstrated excellence in providing stable, permanent homes for our nation's children in foster care. Each year the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families accepts nominations for those that demonstrate this commitment to rebuild the lives of the 518,000 children in foster care around the country and to achieve permanency for the 118,000 who are waiting for adoption. Several California individuals and agencies have been nominated and awarded these prestigious awards. The local county newsletter included the following resources honors one such individual in Santa Clara County.

Press Releases and Media Coverage

The news media—television, radio, and both daily and community newspapers—can be a powerful means of spreading the good-news message of Adoption Saturday to the rest of the community. Many counties use press releases, video releases, or other contacts to invite the media to cover their events on this special day. For example, Sacramento County, Ventura County, and many others have worked with local media through press releases. Both local and national media also cover Adoption Saturday events. CNN has covered Alameda County’s Adoption Saturday in the past.

This year Ventura County and San Diego County will be covered by local media, as will other counties around the state. Several examples of press releases from recent years follow.

How to Create a Media Contact List

If you do not already have an updated media list for your area, spend some time in September and October developing one. Use the yellow pages or the Internet to compile a list of reporters and media outlets that might be interested in covering any events you may hold. Or call your reference librarian, who may have a media list compiled.

Be sure to include the news directors at local news radio stations and television stations and the reporters at local newspapers (include daily, weekly, ethnic, alternative, and community newspapers on your list) who cover children's issues and court issues.

For each entry, include the name, title, media outlet, address, phone number, fax number, and e-mail address.

It is also a good idea to keep an open file to add notes throughout the year when you have any ideas for next November, or that can be used any time of the year. Another option is to use the "notes" feature in most e-mail and electronic calendar programs.

Tips for Working With the Media

- **Give advance notice.**
 - Give any media outlet plenty of notice in writing about an upcoming event.
 - Always follow up with a phone call.
- **Repeat yourself.**
 - Use consistent and easy-to-understand language in all media materials.
 - When giving an interview, repeat your main messages two or three times so that the listener will walk away from the interview remembering your main messages.
- **Remember your audience.**
 - The media is merely a portal to your main audiences: the public and opinion-makers. When giving an interview, be sure to use messages that will resonate with those audiences, not just the reporter.
- **Be aware of privacy issues.**
 - Give the media clear guidelines about their access to the courtroom. Los Angeles County developed the following media coverage conditions:
 1. Media are permitted to have cameras in designated areas of the courthouse hallways to obtain footage and conduct interviews of consenting adopting families.
 2. Families who do not wish to participate in interviews, be on camera, or have their photographs taken will be encouraged to wait in an area of the hallway where cameras are not present.
 3. Media are instructed to refrain from photographing, filming, or interviewing any adopting families who have not given their consent to be photographed, filmed, or interviewed.
 4. Media are instructed to refrain from taking sweeping shots of the hallway area where nonconsenting families are gathered.
 5. Designated media areas will be clearly identified with signs.
 6. The waiting area for families who do not wish to be photographed, filmed, or interviewed will be clearly identified by signs.
 7. Prepare families and children thoroughly for each interview.
- **The North American Council on Adoptable Children provides the following advice:**
 - Once you have chosen a family, let them know more about the interview, and give them an opportunity to consider the potential benefits and risks before agreeing. On the positive side, interviews can highlight family strengths, influence policymakers' perceptions, and provide information or inspiration to other families in similar situations.

- Families should also consider these points before agreeing to participate in an interview:
 1. Children may be teased by schoolmates and friends who see the interview.
 2. Parents should consider how their co-workers or their children's teachers might react to hearing about the family's personal history.
 3. When a family goes public, the public may respond. The family may get unwelcome phone calls or visits from strangers.
 4. Most newspapers and television shows do not let interviewees review or make changes to an edited story before it goes to press or is broadcast. As a result, interview participants take the risk of being misquoted or having their view misrepresented. Retractions and corrections can be printed and aired, but they may not reach everyone who saw the original story.

- After a family agrees to the interview, and before they talk to the reporter, thoroughly prepare each family member for the event:
 1. Share everything you know about the interview, the reporter, and the story.
 2. Let the family read or view similar stories that the reporter or the station has covered recently.
 3. Give the family some idea of the reporter's possible line of inquiry. Suggest likely questions, and have the family practice responding.
 4. If at all possible, be present during the interview, and supportive.
 5. Remind the family that they cannot control what the reporter chooses to include in the story. The family does, however, have the right to disclose only as much as they choose, and to share only that which they do not mind seeing in print, hearing on the radio, or watching on television.

- **Remember there is no such thing as "off the record."**

- **Be helpful.**
 - Reporters will look to you as the expert. Be prepared to provide the reporter with accurate and current facts about adoption and permanency.
 - Reporters are often working under a deadline. Be available for reporters and be sure to call them back in a timely manner.

B. Resources

- Santa Clara County Post-Adoption Services Newsletter
- Sacramento County News: Heart Gallery of Sacramento Exhibit on Display at County Administration Building
- Inyo County Register: November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month (Op-Ed Article by Supervising Superior Court Judge Dean Stout)
- Court Press Releases:
 - Alameda County 2004
 - Los Angeles County 2005
 - Sacramento County 2005
 - Ventura County 2005
- Juvenile Court Administrative Deskbook: Media Relations Plan for the Juvenile Court
- Trust and Confidence in the California Courts 2005: A Survey of the Public and Attorneys: Introduction and Executive Survey

Santa Clara County Post-Adoption Services The Gazette

November 2003
Volume 1, Issue IV

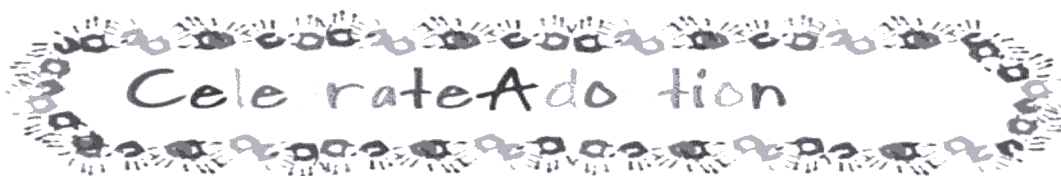
History of National Adoption Month

National Adoption Month has been observed throughout the United States for more than a decade. Its roots can be traced back more than 25 years. In 1976, the governor of Massachusetts first proclaimed Adoption Week and, later that year, President Gerald Ford made it official. It eventually became a tradition to celebrate Adoption Week in November. As awareness and participation grew, so did the number of states proclaiming the observance.



National Adoption Week became National Adoption Month in 1990. Today, National Adoption Month is celebrated during the month of November throughout the United States. Its purpose is to provide national awareness, celebrate children and families, and call the nation to action to ensure safety, permanency and well-being for all of our children.

This article was taken from the Adopt Us Kids National Adoption Month November 2003 Campaign Marketing Kit. For more information refer to their website at www.adoptuskids.org



Congratulations!

To all 300 children who found families that opened their hearts and homes during the past year.

Special points of interest:

- *History of National Adoption Month*
- *Congratulations on National Adoption Award*
- *Camp PAKK*
- *Dear Joan*

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MSW

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Somala Ang,
Management Aide

Congratulations! Adoption Bureau Manager Receives a National Adoption Award!

Congratulations to our Social Services Program Manager III, Frances Lewis Johnese. She was selected to receive an Adoption Excellence Award in the category of Individual Contributions. She is being recognized for extraordinary contributions she has made in providing adoption and other permanency outcomes for children in foster care.



The United States Department of Health and Human Services established the Adoption Excellence Awards program in 1997 to recognize outstanding accomplishments in achieving permanency for America's children waiting in foster care. These awards honor States, child welfare agencies, organizations, courts, businesses, individuals and families.

This year, the Adoption Excellence Awards will be presented to 30 recipients during the National Adoption Recruitment Summit at a ceremony held November 6, 2003 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington D.C. At the ceremony, Mrs. Johnese will be presented with a beautiful engraved award.

Camp PAKK (Parents Adopting Kids Kamp)

Adoption Social Worker Carole Klassen contributed to this article.

Camp PAKK was held this past August 8th-10th at Robert Louis Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, CA. The campus is situated on many beautiful acres of plush land on the Monterey Peninsula. The word "camp" is hardly a word which describes the experience had by those who attended. In total, 18 families and 48 children were in attendance. The weather was wonderful and perfect for camping. The accommodations consisted of private and semi-private dormitories, with bathroom and shower facilities available. Meals and snacks were provided and are always a hit at Camp PAKK, because meals are served in a bright and cheery cafeteria, consisting of a delicious menu that catered to vegetarians and meat-eaters alike.



Aside from the wonderful accommodations, great food and lush landscape, Camp PAKK offered an educational and enlightening experience. Camp PAKK is a special time for families and the people important to the adopted child and family, to come together to increase their family communication skills and enhance closeness. These goals are accomplished through a variety of activities. The parents had an opportunity to attend sessions that covered a range of topics. The topics included: discipline issues and dealing with anger, parenting through adoption, and what it is like growing up adopted. Let us not forget the children campers who also spent the day with their peers in a group setting. The children learned about identity building, how to answer tough adoptions questions from friends, family and those in the community, as well as participating in fun and self-esteem building activities. When the families were brought together with the staff, the activities for all consisted of games, art projects, nature walks, dance and sports, closing circles and songs, and adoption celebration.

Here are some of the responses and comments received by our adoptive families who attended Camp PAKK:

- ♥ “Wise-Up training made us (parents) see the importance of helping our daughter deal with adoptions questions out in the world.”
- ♥ “It was beneficial to meet exceptional youth who were foster and adopted children that also worked at the camp”
- ♥ “Listening to other parent’s experiences has helped us to understand and process our own experience”
- ♥ “I met another family who lives nearby that I plan to continue to meet/talk with”
- ♥ “We better appreciate the different temperaments of our children”
- ♥ “We better understand R.A.D.” (Reactive Attachment Disorder)
- ♥ “We learned techniques to discipline children with R.A.D.”
- ♥ “I learned that it is us parents that need to adjust to our kids”
- ♥ “The camp has really helped to keep our family together”
- ♥ “This might have been the “saving” of our marriage”
- ♥ “Best thing for our family– even better than Disneyland”
- ♥ “Camp PAKK helped our biological son understand adoption”



Save the Date!

Next year, Camp PAKK will be held on August 6th to 8th, 2004.

Who may attend: Any family who has adopted or will be adopting children placed through Santa Clara County Adoptions program is welcome to attend. Children ages 5 and above are welcome. There are no provisions for children under five to attend the camp.



Robert Louis Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, CA

Dear Joan:



If you have AAP or Post-Adoption Services questions for Dear Joan, please send them to:



Santa Clara County
Post-Adoption Services News-
letter
333 W. Julian Street
San Jose, CA 95110
Or
Post Adoption email address:
pasaba@cws.co.santa-clara.us

Visit our website at:
www.santaclaraadoption.org

**Post-Adoption
Services Staff:**

Main Number:
(408) 975-5119

Irene Peoples, MSW
Lori Manning, MSW
Sharon Cruz, MSW
Carol Aldridge, Intake

Dear Joan,

My child is NOT graduating from high school on time. May I extend the AAP benefit beyond his 18th birthday, since he is not graduating?

- You may only extend the benefit if your child has a documented mental or physical disability from a licensed professional. You must notify our agency and submit this document to the agency 60 days prior to your child's 18th birthday, along with new AAP forms.

Dear Joan,

I'm planning to relocate. Whom should I contact with an address change?

- You can provide address changes to the Post Adoption Social Worker at 408-975-5119.

Dear Joan,

It is inconvenient for me to cash the AAP checks every month due to my handicap. Is direct deposit available?

- Yes, you can request a direct deposit form from your eligibility worker, who is listed on the upper right corner of your Notice of Action. If you do not know who your eligibility worker is, you can request to have him/her identified by calling 408-975-5760.

Dear Joan,

At what age(s) is my child eligible for an age-related increase?

You may contact the agency for an age-related increase when your child reaches the following ages: 5,9,12, and 15 years of age. You must notify our agency of this increase by telephone or in writing. Information about the age related increase is contained in Section one of the Adoption Assistance Agreement.

Dear Joan,

When I move out of the state of California, whom do I contact to change Medi-Cal over to Medicaid?

- You must notify your eligibility worker with Santa Clara County who will provide you with the instructions on who to contact in the new state of residence to initiate the process.

If you have any questions, be sure to contact us at 408-975-5119 or e-mail us at pasaba@cws.co.santa-clara.ca.us



Heart Gallery of Sacramento exhibit on display at County Administration Building

The first Heart Gallery of Sacramento exhibit, currently on display in the County Administration Building at 700 H St., has been extended through March 31. The exhibit, located in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, lobby, and on the second and seventh floors, features photos of Sacramento County foster children ages 2 to 15 in need of adoptive homes. The breathtaking photos were taken by community volunteers and highlight each child's unique personality.

The Heart Gallery of Sacramento is collaboration between Sacramento County Child Protective Services, California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), Sierra Adoption Services, Lilliput Children's Services, and CASA of Sacramento. The first Heart Gallery of Sacramento exhibit took place at CSUS in November and was featured in the [Sacramento Bee](#).

Tune in to KVIE Public Television's ViewFinder at 7 p.m. on March 8 to see a special segment on the Heart Gallery (videotaped in the County Administration Building), featuring Rosemary Papa, an adoptive parent and professor and director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at CSUS, who led this project.

For more information or to find out how you can help, call 875-5543 (875-5KID) or go to DHHS' [foster care](#) and [adoption](#) websites. Visit the [Countywide Services Agency](#) website to see the Heart Gallery of Sacramento photographs.

Tuesday, November 4th, 2003



Nov. is Court Adoption and Permanency Month

By Dean T. Stout

As a Superior Court judge, I look forward to presiding over adoption proceedings. Adoption cases are one of the few types of matters coming before the court which evoke joy and celebration on the part of everyone in the courtroom.

During adoption hearings, the use of cameras in the courtroom is not only allowed but encouraged. Adoption hearings are so important that they are given priority and special settings on the court's calendar.

Finalizing an adoption is a very special moment for the family. The occasion is intensely personal. The court strives to conduct adoption proceedings in a dignified manner, so to emphasize and respect the importance of the new legal relationship, yet casual enough to allow for the expression of emotions that are often overwhelming. The joyous courtroom experience is not possible however, without the commitment of adoptive parents.

To the end of providing needed permanency for children, the court recognizes the need and importance of recruiting suitable adoptive parents. The need for adoptive parents is especially critical for children who are older; siblings who want to be adopted together, children from minority cultures; and, children who are physically or mentally challenged.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption estimates that there are more than 100,000 children in the public child welfare system who are waiting for homes and families. More than 105,000 children in California are living apart from their families in out-of-home care. Recent Adoption and Foster Care statistics reflect that 25 percent of California's children in foster care had spent five or more years in foster homes. Many times children are frequently moved from one foster home or placement to another. Recognizing the need for permanency, the California Judicial Council and California Legislature have declared November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

From time to time, we have cases here in Inyo County where parental rights have been terminated due to proven abuse or neglect, and notwithstanding extraordinary efforts and services, reunification has not been possible. These children then require a stable and permanent home which can provide them the love and care they desperately need and deserve.

By agreement, adoption services in Inyo County are provided by Kern County Department of Human Services-Adoptions in Bakersfield. Should you be interested in exploring the possibility of becoming an adoptive parent, please telephone Mr. Jon Roberson at Kern County Adoptions at (661)868-8933 or (661)868-8900. Mr. Roberson visits Inyo County on a regular basis.

Inyo County Child Protective Services makes available for viewing or loans out a 13-minute video for prospective adoptive parents. To borrow the video or obtain more information on becoming an adoptive parent or foster care provider, please contact Ms. Cathy Rose at Inyo County Child Protective Services by calling (760)872-1727.

Thank you for your consideration.

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www.inyocourt.ca.gov



Superior Court of California
County of Alameda

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 10, 2004

COURTS DESIGNATE “ADOPTION DAY” TO EXPEDITE ADOPTIONS

- WHO:** 60 adoptive children of all ages and their prospective adoptive parents, Alameda County Judges and Commissioners, Social Workers, and court personnel.
- WHAT:** “Adoption Day” – Saturday, November 20, 2004. – Adoptions for 60 foster children and their prospective parents will be finalized. Judges, Commissioners, social workers, and court personnel will work on Saturday to expedite the hearings. The fifth annual “Adoption Day” is a collaboration between the Alameda County Department of Social Services Adoptions Program and the Juvenile Court of Alameda County.
- WHEN:** Saturday, November 20, 2004
9:00 a.m. - Opening Remarks and Presentations
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 pm - Adoption Finalizations
- WHERE:** Wiley W. Manuel Courthouse
661 Washington Street
Oakland, CA 94607
- CONTACT:** Sylvia A. Myles; Communications and Media Relations Officer,
Social Services Agency (510) 267-9434

In recognition of the event, Philanthropic Ventures, Waldron Consulting, Target Stores and Fiesta Toys will provide gifts for all adoptees and siblings. Staff from MOCHA (Museum of Children’s Art) will also be on hand to provide entertainment for the children and their families. The Probation Department and Social Services will provide refreshments. Reporters are welcome to talk to consenting families about their adoption experiences.



DAVID SANDERS, PH.D.
Director

County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 11, 2005

Contact: Louise Grasmehr or Stu Riskin
DCFS Office of Public Affairs
(213) 351-5886

Board of Supervisors
GLORIA MOLINA
First District
YVONNE B. BURKE
Second District
ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District
DON KNABE
Fourth District
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

PRESS RELEASE

Los Angeles County Celebrates National Adoption Month in November *Variety of Events Seek to Increase Awareness and Recruit Families for Hundreds of Children*

To raise awareness about the hundreds of children under the supervision of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) who are awaiting adoptive homes, DCFS will hold a series of events aimed at celebrating adoptions and recruiting more adoptive families. The events will be held throughout November as part of Los Angeles County's celebration of National Adoption Month. Many of the children awaiting adoption are older youth and sibling groups. Some have special medical or developmental needs.

"There are more than 22,000 children in our County's foster care system. Hundreds are in need of adoption – especially our older children who may be emancipated without the love, security and support of a family," said Fifth District Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich. "Every child deserves a loving and safe home. Adopting a child creates a family – and a future."

"The need for permanent families for these children is great," added DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders. "We hope this month of special activities will highlight these wonderful children and encourage the community to consider adoption."

As part of a public awareness campaign, DCFS has created a special poster highlighting the need for families and dispelling common myths of who can adopt. The department will distribute the poster to business and community organizations throughout the County in November. The public awareness campaign will also include a bumper sticker campaign, sponsored by Supervisor Antonovich. Five-thousand bumper stickers featuring the DCFS Adoptions Information Line (1-888-811-1121) will be handed out to the community, County employees and featured on County vehicles.

The department will also continue its efforts to reach out to the faith-based community in November. Two DCFS faith-based adoption programs will launch during the month including “Church Families for Waiting Children,” which will enlist churches in helping find families for African-American children by featuring their photos in church bulletins and promoting and supporting adoptions in their church. In addition, the “Church Mentor Program” is designed to connect specific waiting children with church members who will involve them in their congregation and help them develop permanent connections.

Additional Los Angeles County Adoption Month activities include:

- A breakfast sponsored by Supervisor Antonovich on Thursday, November 3rd at The Arboretum in Pasadena, which will include faith-based leaders in the County’s Fifth District. Clergy will meet to discuss ways to recruit prospective adoptive families for waiting foster children.
- Actor Henry Winkler is one of the photographers featured in the Heart Gallery Los Angeles, which will kick-off on Saturday, November 5th, at the Highlands in Hollywood. This portable exhibit will feature fine art portraits of children awaiting adoption. Professional photographers donated their time to take the photographs. The exhibit will also be displayed at shopping malls in Los Angeles County to help raise adoption awareness and find families for the children featured.
- “Adoption Day” will be held on Saturday, November 19th at the Edmund D. Edelman Children’s Court in Monterey Park. Lawyers who donate their time and services to this event will finalize hundred of adoptions this day.
- A Latino Outreach Breakfast will be held in mid-November for leaders in the Latino community. The breakfast will engage them in helping find families for Latino children awaiting adoption.
- A variety of media will help promote adoption in November. Christine Devine, Fox 11 news anchor and host of “Wednesday’s Child,” is part of a special promotional push for National Adoption Month and the Heart Gallery. In addition, a major radio campaign with KLVE, the BEAT and KJLH will promote adoption awareness and help recruit families.

For more information about adopting through Los Angeles County, call 1-888-811-1221, or log on to the DCFS web site at <http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us> and click on to the Adoptions link at the top of the page.

####

Superior Court of California County of Sacramento



Release date:
November 15, 2005

NEWS RELEASE

FROM: Honorable Michael G. Virga
Presiding Judge

CONTACT: Pam Reynolds
Public Information Officer
(916) 591-0050
reynolp@saccourt.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SACRAMENTO SUPERIOR COURT ADOPTION DAY - SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2005

The Sacramento Superior Court will celebrate National Adoption Day on Saturday, November 19, 2005. This special event will be held at the William R. Ridgeway Family Relations Courthouse located at 3341 Power Inn Road, Sacramento. Activities will begin at 9:00 am and conclude at 1:00 pm. Festivities include scheduled adoption proceedings, refreshments and activities for children including clowns, face painting, art, and much, much more.

Adoption Day for Sacramento County is a collaborative effort with agencies including the Sacramento Superior Court Judiciary and staff, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Sheriff's Department, Probation Department, Lilliput Children's Services, and Soroptimist International of Greater Sacramento.

We expect to have approximately 90 children adopted during this year's Adoption Day event. This effort focuses on informing the public about the adoption process, and raises awareness of the need for adoptive parents in our community. Some adoptive families in the past events have interviewed with the media to inform the public of this special cause.

The media is welcome to join us for this event and witness first-hand the volunteer efforts that aims at uniting children, whose lives have been difficult at best, with permanent families through adoption. This event is truly a cause for celebration. Please join us!

For more information on National Adoption Day, visit www.nationaladoptionday.org.



Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF VENTURA
Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Michael D. Planet
*Executive Officer/Clerk
And Jury Commissioner*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 4, 2005

Contact: Cheryl Kanatzar
Court Senior Program Manager
(805) 981-5938

VENTURA SUPERIOR COURT CELEBRATES COURT ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY MONTH

The Ventura Superior Court will celebrate "Court Adoption and Permanency Month" during a special adoption calendar beginning at 1:30 p.m. today in Courtroom J1 at the Juvenile Courthouse in El Rio. Adoptions will be finalized for several children and Certificates of Family Membership will be presented. The Juvenile Courthouse is located at the Juvenile Justice Complex, 4333 Vineyard Avenue in El Rio. The event is open to the public.

On behalf of the Judicial Council of California, California Supreme Court Justice Ronald M. George proclaimed November as a month dedicated to further improving administration of justice for proceedings involving children and families.

To promote Court Adoption and Permanency Month, the Ventura Superior Court will place a stronger emphasis on permanency planning and adoptions throughout the month of November.

In addition to the special adoption calendar on November 4, an Adoption and Permanency Information Fair will be held at the Pacific View Mall in Ventura on November 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Members of the community are invited to attend and speak with representatives from organizations that provide services and support to foster and adoptive parents.

Each year in California, there are more than 490,000 reports of child abuse and neglect, approximately 27,000 children enter foster care, and almost 96,000 children are living apart from their families in out-of-home care. Thirty-four percent of the children in foster care in California have been away from their families in out-of-home care for four years or more, and of the more than 35,000 children existing in foster care between January and December 2004, 52 percent were reunited with their families and 20 percent were adopted.

Individuals interested in obtaining more information on adoptions should call the Human Services Agency at (805) 240-2759 and ask for the Adoptions Officer of the Day.

Juvenile Court Administrative Deskbook

(Chapter 9 from the deskbook)

A Media Relations Plan for the Juvenile Court

Courts serving children and families are facing increasing scrutiny by the press and public. News stories about sensational juvenile crimes have captured the nation's attention, elevating public criticism of the courts and general concern about juvenile crime.

To encourage public confidence in the juvenile court system, it is important that each presiding judge of a juvenile court have a well-formulated plan to develop or enhance relations with local media.

National studies show that a large segment of the public gets most of its information about the courts from the news media, so developing strategies for using the media to influence public opinion is a critical part of any community outreach effort. The media can be the court's ally in educating the public and increasing public awareness of the complexity of juvenile court cases.

PROACTIVE STRATEGIES

The historic role of the media is to investigate and report on government institutions. As newspapers, television, and radio have competed for readers and viewers, media commercialism has increased, and there has been a trend toward sensationalizing the news.

Proactive media strategies are more important than ever before because (1) some members of the press tend to always write stories that focus on unusual or controversial issues; (2) reporters typically have little time to investigate and write news stories; (3) confidentiality requirements limit the court's ability to tell all the details about pending cases; and (4) the crisis-driven nature of the court's day-to-day operations hampers its ability to communicate with the press. Following are some strategies to consider for your court.

Develop a Media Policy

The first step in creating a media plan for your court is to develop a media policy that is supported by the presiding judge. This policy can be only a few sentences, but it should include a clear statement about how the court will officially communicate with the press. Some examples follow:

1. "The Juvenile Court will answer all incoming press calls on a timely basis and will convey accurate information on court proceedings, within the rules of confidentiality that govern court proceedings."

2. “The presiding judge is the official spokesperson for the juvenile court” *or* “The presiding judge designates [name] to serve as the official spokesperson for the court.”
3. “The court may provide only the following information about court proceedings:” *(list whatever details can be provided without comprising confidentiality)*.
4. “The court will develop fact sheets for the media that will clearly explain the purpose, function, and history of the juvenile court and the proceedings that are under its jurisdiction. Confidentiality rules will be explained.”
5. “The court will provide orientation sessions for new reporters who cover the juvenile courts, to educate them on the juvenile court system.”

Create a Media Contact List

Develop an up-to-date media list for your area. Use the telephone book or the Internet to compile a list of reporters and media outlets that may be interested in covering stories involving children and families. Ask the public information officer of the Judicial Council if you need assistance in finding resource documents.

Be sure to include the legal affairs reporters of daily and weekly newspapers, including legal publications and ethnic, alternative, and community newspapers. For each entry, include the name, title, media outlet, address, phone number, fax number, and e-mail address. Since reporters’ beats regularly change, it is important for the court (the juvenile court presiding judge, the court executive, or another juvenile court judicial officer) to develop relationships with individual reporters and those on the assignment desk so that when changes in reporter staffing occur, you will know. Also include the news directors and reporters of local news radio stations and television stations. When creating the list, call media outlets directly and ask who covers legal affairs and who the feature writers on children and family issues are.

Designate Media Spokespersons

Courts have found that designating one or more media spokespersons can be very helpful in developing positive relationships with a wide range of media representatives. First, it ensures that the court maintains uniformity and accuracy in the information it provides to the press. Second, it allows reporters to deal with a media liaison who officially speaks for the court. Third, courts have found that such spokespersons can be very effective in managing the numerous calls from media that occur during high-profile cases and in providing accurate information to the media so that they can write balanced stories.

The media find it helpful, and the court’s management of media calls may benefit, if the court designates two or more spokespersons that will be called on to address particular subjects—for example, Court Appointed Special Advocates, court-appointed counsel, dependency mediation, Indian Child Welfare Act proceedings, and so forth.

Open the Courtroom

Although in California juvenile court proceedings are closed and confidential, there are still ways in which the court can open its doors to the media.¹

With the informed consent of the parties and carefully drafted orders on the preservation of confidentiality, some juvenile courts have opened their courtrooms in certain cases. By giving access to media, these juvenile courts have been rewarded with well-balanced stories on the work of juvenile courts and have forged personal relationships with reporters that can be used for future stories.

In addition, there are opportunities to involve the media with special events such as Court Adoption and Permanency Month, celebrated in November. Some courts have invited the media to attend their adoption calendars so that they can see first-hand the court's good work. For example, the juvenile court in El Dorado County opens its courtroom on the last Friday of every month, when it hears only adoptions. Children receive certificates of adoption, treats from court personnel and local businesses, and balloon animals made by the court commissioner. When the families give their permission, the local newspaper covers the event and sometimes profiles a new family in a story with photos.

Write Op-Ed Pieces and Commentary

As experts on juvenile law, you and others in the juvenile court system are in a unique position to submit op-ed pieces or other commentary to your local newspaper. This will help you establish a relationship with the newspaper's editorial board and will allow you to deliver your message in your own words and often on your own timeline.

Consider writing a regular educational column for your local newspaper. Call your local editor to discuss your ideas.

Give Interviews With Radio or Television

Local radio and television stations may be interested in interviewing juvenile court judges on general topics, if the court notifies them that judges are available for this. Remember to make it clear that, as a judge, you are not able to discuss the details of any pending juvenile court cases. Many reporters are not aware of the ethical constraints on judges in regard to commenting on cases.

Make Public Service Announcements

Another strategy for improving publicity about the juvenile court is to make public service announcements (PSAs). Ways to approach this include (1) finding a corporate sponsor—consider those that might need positive press in the wake of negative publicity; (2) piggybacking on events that are already in the public eye, such as Mother's Day and

¹ See Welf. and Inst. Code, §§ 346, 827.

Father's Day; and (3) making a PSA a news item—for example, obtaining a declaration from the board of supervisors and reading relevant portions of it in a PSA.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO REPORTERS

A reporter's first responsibility is to the public's right to know, but this is often in direct conflict with the court's requirement to maintain confidentiality in juvenile proceedings. There are still ways, however, that courts can be helpful to reporters as they prepare their stories. Here are some tips:

1. Be responsive by calling back reporters promptly, since they are often on tight daily deadlines.
2. Be clear whether you are talking on or off the record. If you are not sure of the reporter's knowledge of this distinction, tell him or her what you mean by talking "off the record," and ask the reporter if he or she understands.
3. Be succinct, and use language that your audience will understand.
4. Provide background information that is accurate and current.
5. Direct the reporter to other sources who can talk on the record, such as law school professors, attorneys, or bar association spokespersons.
6. When you cannot talk about a specific case because of confidentiality constraints, talk to the reporter about similar cases.
7. Describe relevant policies and procedures.
8. If the story is national or from another county, offer a local angle or perspective.
9. Be careful, though, when a reporter asks you to speculate. It's all right to answer "I don't know" and call the reporter back if you find the information and are able to share it with the reporter.

Developing Rapport

1. Notice bylines and initiate contact with reporters who have an interest in children and families and who appear to understand the complexity of the issues.
2. Call reporters to discuss their work.
3. Invite them to lunch to educate them on your work.
4. Invite them to system meetings to introduce them to participants and educate them on agenda topics.
5. Collaborate with court-connected service providers—such as mediators, court-appointed counsel, local bar associations, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and foster care associations—to develop ongoing relationships with the press.

6. Collaborate with executive branch agencies—such as social services and probation departments—to do the same.

CONCLUSION

The credibility and effectiveness of a juvenile court depends in large measure on public confidence. Inaccurate reporting or unjust criticism of judges, courts, or the juvenile court system by the news media erodes public confidence and can be easily prevented. With some time and attention to media outreach, even a closed, confidential system such as a juvenile court can influence public opinion and contribute to more accurate and fair reporting of the issues.

RESOURCES

AOC Staff

Lynn Holton
Executive Office Programs
Office of Communication
415-865-7726
lynn.holton@jud.ca.gov

Web Sites

PINetwork-Media Relations

<http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/pin/media.htm>

This is the media relations site in the PINetwork, the knowledge and resource sharing tool for court staff maintained by the AOC's Office of Communications. It includes tips, communications plans, and related resources from court public information offices across the state as well as links to other sites, including that of the National Center for Courts and the Media.

California Courts' Online Press Center

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/presscenter

The site is designed to assist journalists in covering the courts by providing news and background materials about California's judicial branch. There are also links to other media-related Web sites, including those for the First Amendment Project's *Guide to the Courts and Court Records* and the Freedom Forum's Justice and Journalism Program.

Trust and Confidence in the California Courts

A Survey of the Public and Attorneys

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David B. Rottman, Ph.D., Author

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This report, *Part I: Findings and Recommendations*, written by Dr. Rottman, outlines the main findings and offers recommendations for policy and for further research.

Part II: Executive Summary of Methodology with Survey Instruments, produced by John Rogers and Diane Godard, presents an overview of the survey methodology, as well as the questions included in the public and attorney surveys.

Parts I and II can be downloaded at:
http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4_37pubtrust.htm

This report was produced for the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts. For additional information, please contact:

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The design, implementation, and interpretation of the statistical analysis presented in this report were undertaken in collaboration with John Rogers, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Public Research Institute of San Francisco State University. I gratefully acknowledge the contribution made by his insights and expertise, while retaining for myself all responsibility for the accuracy and reasonableness of the report's contents. The report's visual appeal and ease of use exemplify the data presentation strategies of Neal Kauder, VisualResearch, Inc. I also gratefully acknowledge the comments, suggestions, and encouragement offered by staff from the California Administrative Office of the Courts and by my National Center colleagues. Bill Vickrey, Administrative Director of the Courts, provided the initial vision of what a policy-relevant opinion survey on the courts would look like and supported the effort from start to finish with perceptive comments and a keen eye to what is useful rather than merely interesting.

Special thanks are due to the Foundation of the State Bar of California for a \$10,000 grant to the Judicial Council of California in support of the attorney survey, and to the State Bar of California for participating in the development of both survey instruments, and for its overall support of the project. The National Center for State Courts, recognizing the national significance of California's innovative effort, donated some of the staff time devoted to this project.

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Why survey?

What the public thinks about California's courts matters. Respect for the law depends upon public confidence in the integrity of the justice system. Compliance with court orders is influenced by the sense of fairness people have about how courts render decisions. Whether disputes are brought to the courts for resolution or decided elsewhere depends in part on the perceived fairness and efficiency of the courts. Votes in referendums designed to improve court resources are swayed by perceptions of courts.

Perceptions of the courts are forged through a mixture of information, ranging from personal experience as a juror to the latest episode of *Law and Order*. Opinion surveys shed light on how those perceptions are formed and, to some degree, on how those opinions might be changed by policies that address the public's legitimate expectations of courts and expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of what courts do.

Opinion surveys describe patterns in how people use the courts that cannot be derived from court records and establish the perceived barriers and incentives that underlie such patterns. The same potential extends to the activities and concerns of key constituents of the courts, such as practicing attorneys.

In these and other ways, opinion surveys contribute to strategic planning efforts and complement the many other sources of research on the work and accomplishments of the state courts available to the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The last comprehensive statewide survey of opinion on the California courts was in 1992 (*Surveying the Future: Californians' Attitudes on the Court System*). The intervening years were momentous for the courts: trial courts were unified, funding shifted to the state, and initiatives like court and community collaboration made their mark. A new survey was overdue, one linked to the issues and concerns now before the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

How was the survey conducted?

Between November 2004 and February 2005 over 2,400 California adults were surveyed regarding their:

- knowledge about the courts and the sources of that knowledge
- perceived and experienced barriers to court access
- experiences as jurors, litigants, or consumers of court information
- expectations for what the courts should be doing
- sense of the accessibility, fairness, and efficiency of the courts

Particular care was taken to ensure that the perceptions and experiences of all Californians were given equal weight. Extra efforts were made to interview minority group members and non-English speakers and to capture the range of opinion across the state's geography.

At the same time, over 500 randomly selected practicing attorneys were interviewed for their views on topics covered in the public survey and on issues basic to their conduct of business with the state's trial and appellate courts.

The second part of this report, *Part II: Executive Summary of Methodology with Survey Instruments*, by John Rogers and Diane Godard presents an overview of the survey methodology, as well as the questions included in the two surveys.

What is in this report?

This report highlights findings from the public and attorney surveys and draws out implications for policymakers. Specific recommendations are offered at the end of each section of the report. The final section offers thoughts on how opinion surveys can best fit within the repertoire of information-gathering methods available to the Judicial Council.

Several questions from the survey relevant to an important aspect of public opinion, such as the fairness of court procedures, are combined into multi-item scales. Measurements based on scales are desirable because they rely less on the wording of a single question and can reflect the multiple aspects of concepts like "approval" or "fairness" (see scales in right column).

In addition to reporting standard percentages for individual questions and averages for scales, this report uses multivariate statistical techniques to look at the influence of several factors simultaneously on people's opinions. Multivariate analysis allows us to predict, for example, the influence of prior court experience on approval of the courts after taking into account (or "controlling for") other factors such as age, gender, educational credentials, income, or racial or ethnic group identity that might also influence an individual's view of California's courts. It is possible to measure how well the factors we selected can predict approval of the courts or any other criterion of interest (on a scale of zero to 100 percent). The list that follows shows the three categories of factors used in multivariate analysis.

1. What are we trying to explain?

- Overall approval of the California courts (four-item scale)
- Confidence in the California court system
- Confidence in the courts in your county
- Job performance of the California court system
- Job performance of the courts in your county

2. What are the main non-demographic influences on approval and confidence?

- Perceived fairness of court procedures (four-item scale)
- Perceived fairness of court outcomes
- Prior court experience
- Specific aspects of court performance (e.g., protects constitutional rights, reports to public)
- Perceived barriers to court access
- Sources of information about the courts
- Unmet expectations of the courts
- Confidence in other public institutions

3. What demographic factors are taken into consideration?

- Race and ethnicity, age, gender, education, income
- Urban or rural resident
- Political orientation
- Recent immigrants, primary language

Variables included in overall approval and procedural fairness scales

The questions used to measure overall approval and procedural fairness were derived from previous surveys of opinion about the state courts. The resulting multi-item scales meet the conventional standard for reliability, which provides assurance that the questions all measure aspects of the same phenomenon. The scales can range from a low of one to a high of four.

Overall approval:

1. In general, how would you rate your confidence in the California court system?
2. In general, how would you rate your confidence in the courts in your county? *very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, not at all confident*
3. Now overall, what is your opinion of the California court system? *excellent, very good, good, fair, poor*
4. Still thinking of just the courts in your county, what is your opinion of the overall job they are doing? *very good, good, fair, poor, very poor*

Procedural fairness:

Do you agree or disagree that the courts in your county:

1. Are unbiased in their case decisions?
2. Treat people with dignity and respect?
3. Listen carefully to what people have to say?
4. Take the needs of people into account? *strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree*

Overview of Public and Attorney Opinion: Then and Now

- Confidence in the California courts is substantially higher now than when the last comparable statewide survey was conducted in 1992.
- The public and attorneys today are moderately positive about their courts. Attorneys tend to be the most positive.
- Local courts attract greater public confidence than the overall state court system.

1. The Judicial Council and the State Bar should meet to reflect on the substantial proportion of practicing attorneys who disagree that judges follow the rules and juries represent communities.
2. Communications from the Judicial Council and Administrative Office of the Courts should speak to the public about their local courts rather than the more abstract state court system.

3. Given that uneasiness about going to court among the general population is linked to one's access to resources, immigration status, and other important indicators of life circumstance, the courts must move beyond addressing such unease simply as a public relations issue. Rather, community outreach efforts may have to be paired with the provision of court services that both inform and empower all

Recommendations

4. The Judicial Council should adopt a schedule of surveying the public at either five- or ten-year intervals.
 5. Surveys of the public gain value if comparable questions are asked of groups like attorneys who have a professional involvement with the courts.
- members of the public to seek the courts' assistance when necessary.

Receiving and Seeking Court Information

- Self-rated familiarity with the California courts is low for the public, unchanged since 1992.
- Knowledge of the courts increases with exposure to court information in newspapers, the Internet, televised trials, and, most importantly, the court itself.
- Exposure to fictional representations of how the courts work is associated with lower self-ratings of familiarity with the courts by members of the public.
- Members of the public and attorneys accessing information from the courts via the Internet are very satisfied with the service.

1. Newspapers and the Internet are the most efficient ways to get the courts' message to the public.
2. The courts should make use of ethnic media, print and electronic, in disseminating information about the courts to the public.
3. Large-scale investment in the Internet's potential for the courts is warranted.

4. The Judicial Council should identify and disseminate aggressively the essential information the public needs to protect their rights and use the courts appropriately.
5. Programs that bring judges and court staff as educators into the classroom and before civic organizations should be expanded.

6. Courts need to consider outreach efforts to make the less affluent, and less well educated aware of the kinds of information that can be obtained from courthouse personnel.
7. Extra efforts are needed to understand why Asian-Americans and Latinos report contacting the courts for information less frequently than other groups.

Recommendations

Experience in a Court Case: Incidence and Consequences

- The majority of Californians (56 percent) have been involved in a case that brought them to a courthouse, mainly through responding to a jury summons or serving as a juror. The incidence of court experience varies among racial and ethnic groups and increases markedly with level of education.
- Only service as a jury member increases average approval of the courts. Otherwise, court experience tends to be associated with a slightly lower level of approval.
- Defendants in traffic cases and litigants and attorneys in family or juvenile cases are less approving of the California courts.

1. The jury is the prime audience for the state courts, and the best available mechanism for disseminating positive information on the courts by word of mouth. Specific policies and programs should be directed at maximizing this potential.
2. A focus on the elements of procedural fairness, discussed later in the report, can take the benefits of staff education on customer service to a higher level.
3. High-volume, low-stakes court dockets like traffic and small claims spread ill will for the courts and leave litigants dissatisfied with their day in court. In large and many medium-sized courts the way such cases are processed needs to be redesigned to incorporate procedural fairness criteria.
4. The effectiveness of procedural-fairness-driven reforms should be monitored by "exit surveys" of court users to fine-tune the changes as they are introduced and periodically thereafter.

Recommendations

5. Joint action by the Judicial Council and State Bar is needed to address as a matter of priority the reasons for the perceived unfairness in family and juvenile proceedings.
6. The apparent underrepresentation of Asian-Americans and Latinos on juries needs to be examined to see if factors other than eligibility are active.

Barriers to Taking a Case to Court

- The cost of hiring an attorney, regardless of the respondent's income level, is the most commonly stated barrier to taking a case to court.
- Barriers include lack of childcare, distance to be traveled, time away from work, and unease about what might happen if one became involved in a court case.
- Recent immigrants appear to be poorly informed about formal alternatives to court as a way of resolving disputes.

1. The State Bar and the Judicial Council should adopt parallel strategies to re-think the role of self-help centers and similar services in light of the widespread perception that attorney fees are a barrier to going to court.
2. Awareness of alternatives to court adjudication needs to be made more widely known among immigrants and people with less than a college education.
3. Court interpretation programs should recognize that many non-native English speakers who are comfortable using English in many settings may still feel the need for an interpreter in court.
4. Establishing childcare facilities in courthouses is an important component of policies seeking greater access to the courts among the less affluent and, perhaps, especially recent immigrants.

Recommendations

5. Providing remote locations at which basic court business can be conducted is one way to lower the barrier of geography for the less affluent, immigrants generally, and members of the public living in rural areas.

Diversity and the Needs of a Diverse Population

- The diversity of the public served by California's courts is striking: 31 percent of all respondents were born outside of the United States.
- Immigrants, especially recent immigrants, tend to hold highly positive views of the California courts but have low levels of contact with the courts.
- The positive opinions of immigrants do not appear to fade away, remaining overall strong after ten, twenty, or more years in the United States.
- Language difficulties appear to be more formidable in court than in other settings: immigrants resident in the United States for more than 10 years typically chose to be interviewed in English but many expressed concern that language would be a barrier to their taking a case to court.

Recommendations

1. The courts should be attentive to the distinctive needs of immigrant groups in accessing the courts, a need only partially met by addressing language issues.
2. Practical aspects of court operations, such as hours of operation and difficult-to-reach courthouses, need to be addressed to ensure access for recent immigrants, as well as others for whom these are barriers.
3. The availability and appropriate use of alternative methods of dispute resolution need to be made more widely known among immigrant populations.
4. The court-related opinions and experiences of the U.S.-born children of immigrants merit study to determine if they will continue their parents' positive views of the California courts.

Fairness in Procedures and Outcomes: The Core Concern

- Having a sense that court decisions are made through processes that are fair is the strongest predictor by far of whether members of the public approve of or have confidence in California courts.
- Californians rate their courts highest on the "respect and dignity" element of procedural fairness and lowest on the "participation" ("listen carefully") element.
- For attorneys, outcome fairness is more important than procedural fairness when predicting approval of the courts.
- Litigants in family and juvenile cases and defendants in traffic cases perceive less procedural fairness than do litigants in other kinds of cases.
- Attorneys practicing family law rate procedural fairness lower than do other attorneys.
- Californians consider that outcome fairness is least for people with low incomes and non-English speakers.
- African-Americans tend to perceive the highest level of outcome unfairness for Latino/Hispanic Americans, African-Americans, and low-income people. They are only slightly less likely than Latinos and more likely than Asian-Americans to perceive unfair outcomes for non-English speakers.

1. Judges and court staff should be educated in the criteria of procedural fairness.
2. Education on procedural fairness is not enough. Initiatives are needed to ensure that all cases are processed in a manner consistent with a sense of fairness in court procedures.
3. There is particular urgency in improving the processing of traffic and similar high-volume dockets in ways that meet the criteria of procedural fairness.
4. There is equal or greater urgency to improving procedural fairness in family and juvenile cases, to improve

Recommendations

- confidence in the process both for litigants and their attorneys. Court resources need to be reallocated to improve the way family and juvenile cases are handled.
5. High-volume, low-stakes cases need to be redesigned so that litigants are afforded an opportunity to express their point of view.
6. Programs that promote procedural fairness are also the ones that will reduce the gap separating approval of the California courts by African-Americans with that by other racial and ethnic groups.

Expectations and Performance

- Generally the public perceives a high level of job performance by the California courts.
- Protecting constitutional rights, ensuring public safety, and concluding cases in a timely manner are among the responsibilities regarded as most important on which to spend resources.
- Reporting regularly to the public on court job performance is viewed as important by a majority of the survey respondents. That responsibility also emerged as the greatest unmet expectation of the courts.
- The greatest concerns were expressed about politics influencing court decisions, proceedings that cannot be understood, and uneasiness about becoming involved with the courts.

1. The public's greatest unmet expectation for the courts is that they report on their job performance. This suggests that Judicial Council and Administrative Office of the Courts establish initiatives to help trial courts measure their procedural fairness, efficiency, and effectiveness.
2. Programs to promote timeliness in case dispositions continue to be relevant.

Recommendations

3. The hours of court operation should be reconsidered in light of the expectation that courts should be open at convenient hours and the barrier to the courts that current hours appear to represent.
4. The courts should give prominence to their successes in the civil justice arena.

Next Steps: Survey Findings as a Guide to Policy

- Policies that promote procedural fairness offer the vehicle with the greatest potential for changing how the public views the state courts.
- People who believe that the California court system protects constitutional rights and makes sure judges follow the rules are likely to rate procedural fairness high, as are those who feel that judges are honest and fair and that courts are in touch with the community.
- The fairness of procedures used for traffic and other high-volume, low-stakes court cases should be studied to understand what, specifically, contributes to the low sense of fairness they promote.

1. The Judicial Council should give renewed emphasis to programs of court and community collaboration.
2. Adhering to principles of procedural fairness is the best approach to reducing the reluctance the majority of people feel about going to court because of unease about what might happen to them.

3. The often negative view African-Americans have of the California courts needs to be addressed in cooperation with law schools and the Bar through community forums, outreach, and a commitment to diversity on the bench and among court staff.
4. The Judicial Council should make a concerted effort to explain to the public and opinion leaders the processes for ensuring that

Recommendations

5. The need for reporting regularly to the public on the job performance of the courts is clearly indicated by the survey results. Further research is needed to clarify what kinds of information in what formats will meet this expressed public expectation.

Data Needs: A Proposed Program of Research

- Some findings from the 2005 survey point to specific policy initiatives and actions that the Judicial Council might wish to pursue. Other findings are suggestive rather than directive, requiring clarification before the appropriate policy implications can be drawn.
- The Judicial Council should adopt a schedule of surveying the public at either five- or ten- year intervals. Such comprehensive surveys should be supplemented by placement of specific questions in ongoing surveys carried out by university survey centers and similar institutions. The questions should combine a few "tracking"

items from the 2005 survey to monitor trends annually or every 18 months with new questions relevant to emerging policy issues demanding the attention of the Judicial Council.

- The 2005 attorney and public surveys should be supplemented this year and next by a series of focus groups, directed at key findings that require further exploration before policies can be constructed. Focus groups can help define what the public has in mind in terms of 1) reporting on court performance and 2) what underlies the sense of unease the majority of the public has when contemplating going to court.

- "Exit surveys" of litigants and others leaving the courtroom provide feedback that can enhance procedural fairness in the actions of judges, court staff, and court procedures. Such surveys should be institutionalized into the ongoing operations of courts statewide.
- A well-rounded research program must solicit the opinions of insiders—judges, subordinate judicial officers, and court staff.
- Research techniques like deliberative polling augment telephone and Internet opinion surveys by providing participants with information, access to experts, and opportunities for discussion.

IV. Maintaining Birth Family Relationships and Finding Life-long Connections

A. Programs

- California Permanency for Youth Project: Model Programs Update
- Group Home Step-Up Project
- Lighting the Fire of Urgency
- Permanency Partners Project—P[M]
- Using Funds for Permanence Project

California Permanency for Youth Project Model Programs Update

What are they?

The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) is funded in part by the Stuart Foundation, whose vision it is to focus on varying approaches to achieving permanency for older children and youth in California.

Why do this?

Several programs are piloted through the CPYP that increase awareness of the urgent need of older children and youth for permanency, that influence public policies to promote permanency, and that assist pilot counties and private agencies in implementing new practices to achieve the program goals.

What goal does this program address?

To achieve permanency for older children and youth in California and several other states, so that no youth leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a caring adult.

How can you start this program in your county?

Several programs are mentioned in the following CPYP resources and model programs update. There are additional identified programs that are located in other states. Contact information for each separate program is provided in the update for easy reference.

Contacts:

Pat Reynolds Harris
California Permanency for Youth Project
510-268-0038

Group Home Step-up Project

What is it?

Together with the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), and the Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Program, Alameda County, used this model approach to search for relatives and important connections for its foster youth who remained in group home care longer than was initially contemplated.

Why do this?

To find permanent, long connections for youth in group home care, in an effort to improve outcomes for this population.

What goal does this program address?

The program works toward improving outcomes for youth living in group homes, specifically to ensure that at the time of their emancipation they will have a life long connection to a caring adult. Another goal is to reexamine the continued need for each youth to remain in the group home setting and, if not, to reexamine what other placement options are available.

How can you start this program in your county?

Contact CPYP to gather more information about how to structure additional funding, if necessary, and visit its Website or either of the contacts below for written materials.

Contacts:

Randy Morris, Program Manager
Alameda County Social Services
510-780-8833
morris@acgov.orgs

California Permanency for Youth Project
www.cyp.org

Lighting the Fire of Urgency

What is it?

This model program engages agencies to develop family-finding programs within their organizations to search for relatives of children and youth who may otherwise exit the foster care system without a permanent, lifelong connection to a caring adult. This program uses advancements in modern technology to find relatives and other connections to children in care.

Why do this?

This program can be used at the initial stages of a dependency case to find fit and willing relatives for each child coming into care. These relatives can be considered as a placement option as well as a lifelong connection. Additionally, this program can be implemented at any stage of the dependency case, especially for children who have been in care for several years without contact from relatives.

What goal does this program address?

To ensure that children are raised within their families, and to reconnect children with their known or unknown family members.

How can you start this program in your county?

Several counties have piloted this project in California, including Alameda, Sacramento, Orange, and Santa Clara. Other counties have also adopted this program and continue to develop their own. Training of staff is the key to successful implementation of this program. Contacting Kevin Campbell at the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning (NRCFCPPP), the California Permanency for Youth Project, or any county named above to coordinate training efforts would be recommended when starting this type of program.

Contacts:

CPYP
www.cypyp.org
510 -68-0038

NRCFCPPP
www.nrcfcppp.org

Permanency Partners Project—P[3]

What is it?

P[3] is a partnership of public and private organizations coming together to work with foster care youth, ages 12 and up, who have been in care for 24 months or more and who have no current, permanent living plan. A mediator works with the youth to identify and facilitate a connection or reconnection with significant adults in the youth's life.

Why do this?

To find permanent, lifelong connections for youth in care who would otherwise have no relationship with an adult mentor.

What goal does this program address?

To ensure that no youth will leave the program without a connection to a committed, caring adult, to mentor the youth into adulthood.

How can you start this program in your county?

Contact CPYP to gather more information about how to structure additional funding, if necessary, and visit its Web site and any of the contacts below for written materials. There are many articles and information about this program available through the AOC permanency project as well.

Contacts:

Kate Cleary
Executive Director of Consortium for Children
415-458-5076
kate@consortforkids.org

Trish Ploehn
Deputy Director, Los Angeles Department of Children and
Family Service
562-903-5122
ploeha@dcfs.co.la.ca.us

California Permanency for Youth Project
www.cyp.org

Using Funds for Permanence Project

What is it?

San Luis Obispo County contracted with its Independent Living Project (ILP) agency to identify and engage family connections for foster care youth.

Why do this?

To incorporate a system already in place to address additional goals for foster care youth. By developing this type of program, it is likely that no additional funding will be required.

What goal does this program address?

To ensure that no youth will emancipate without lifetime permanence as well as to find and maintain relationships for foster care youth and their family members or other important individuals.

How can you start this program in your county?

Begin by contacting San Luis Obispo County to determine how best to approach the development of this program. Discuss with your local Independent Living Skills program on what additional services can be provided and whether it is economically feasible.

Contacts:

Debby Jeter, Director, Child Welfare Services
San Luis Obispo County
805-781-1840

California Permanency for Youth Project
www.cpyy.org

B. Resources

- Finding Foster Kid’s Families Must Become Our Mandate
- California Permanency for Youth Project— Description, Declaration, and Model Programs Update
- Lighting the Fire of Urgency
- Kinship Practices in Washington State: A View From the Field
- Group Home StepUp Project: Moving Up & Out of Congregate Care
- Robert G. Lewis Programs:
- Preparing Everyone, An Interactive Workshop
- Youth Centered Family Group Conference: “Engaging Caring Adults”
- Tips for Successful Family Team Conferences
- Remembered People Chart
- Families for Teens (ACS, NYC): Looking for Connections With Teens
- Talking With Teens Interactive Workshop: Communication Tips and Chart

FINDING *FOSTER* KIDS' FAMILIES MUST BECOME OUR MANDATE

Published: Thursday, April 14, 2005 Edition: Morning Final Section: Editorial Page: 7B
Memo: LEONARD *EDWARDS*, a Santa Clara County juvenile court judge, is the recipient of the 2004 William H. Rehnquist Award for judicial excellence. He wrote this article for the Mercury News.
RELATED STORY: page 6B.

Source: BY LEONARD *EDWARDS*

Michael has been in *foster* care for nine years. He has moved from home to home and had lost contact with any family members. Last month while in a group home, he attempted to commit suicide. Life was simply not worth living: He didn't feel he belonged anywhere and he had no connections with family. He was lost. A staff member at the group home intervened just in time and saved Michael's life.

Enter Kevin Campbell and US Search. Campbell has been a pioneer in finding families for *foster* children. Starting in the state of Washington and working with Catholic Charities, Campbell's idea of finding families for *foster* children became state law there years ago. The Washington law requires social workers, the courts and all professionals to ask about a child's family in an effort to identify and locate family members at every stage of a *foster*-care case. It also requires the state to establish a working group to identify best practices for family-finding.

The law has been successful. After two years the number of children in relative placement as opposed to *foster* care has nearly doubled (from 19 percent to 37 percent). And the results keep getting better.

Campbell went to work on Michael's case. In less than an hour, using the technology that has been developed by US Search, he had identified relatives and contacted several. One of Michael's grandmothers responded within hours and wrote him a letter that arrived a couple of days later. In her contacts she told him how much she loved and missed him and inquired how she could become a part of his life again. His other grandmother responded two days later. That same week, an aunt came to visit him. His family in the Midwest invited him to their family reunion this summer. His family wants him to rejoin them.

Michael's story is familiar. It reminded me of the movie "Antwone Fisher." The outcome of finding and reuniting families can and will be retold countless times if we get serious about family-finding. AB 880, by Assemblywoman Rebecca Cohn, D-Campbell, is pending before the Legislature. This bill would require social workers, judges and other professionals to ask about family and to utilize technology to find family for *foster* children. It would result in more significant family connections for children who cannot return to their parents. It would change the *foster*-care system.

Some counties are taking family-finding seriously even without this legislation. The Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services has created a unit of social workers dedicated to finding families. For those who worry about the future of our *foster* children, family-finding provides great hope. It now becomes our task to ensure that these technological tools are utilized on behalf of *foster* children everywhere.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), a project of the [Public Health Institute](#), started in January 2003 as a result of a five-year grant awarded by the [Stuart Foundation](#). This grant has since been extended through 2009.

Project Vision:

To achieve permanency for older children and youth in California so that no youth leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a caring adult.

Project Objectives:

1. To increase awareness among the child welfare agencies and staff, legislators and judicial officers in the state of the urgent need that older children and youth have for permanency
2. To influence public policy and administrative practices so that they promote permanency
3. To assist fourteen specific counties and the private agencies with which they work to implement new practices to achieve permanency for older children and youth

Project Activities:

The Permanency for Youth Task Force

The Task Force is a statewide group with broad representation, including public and private organizations, youth and founders. Task Force objectives are:

1. To facilitate collaborations between public and private agencies to achieve permanent lifelong connections for youth in the system
2. To create opportunities for key stakeholders (who affect outcomes for youth in the system):
 - a) To realize the need for permanent lifelong connections for youth
 - b) To understand that it is possible to achieve these connections

3. To identify and overcome structural barriers (within the system affecting youth) that prevent achieving permanent lifelong connections
4. To promote public relations, education and advocacy efforts that will address the needs of youth for permanent lifelong connections.

In November 2003, CPYP received a grant from the [Walter S. Johnson Foundation](#) to pursue the partnership objectives of the Task Force. The grant supported the work of three workgroups addressing issues of partnership between public child welfare agencies and a) the juvenile courts, b) group homes, and c) adoption/foster family agencies. The groups completed their work in September, 2005. A summary report with their recommendations on how effective partnerships can accomplish improved permanency outcomes for foster youth will be available in 2006.

Technical Assistance to Counties

The project has been working with four counties, San Mateo, Alameda, Stanislaus, and Monterey, to develop programs to achieve permanency for more youth. The project has been providing these counties with technical assistance over two and a half years to help them develop youth permanency practice in their counties and currently is documenting significant lessons about implementation useful to the field. Each county has developed a youth permanence plan that includes the following target areas: administrative practices, permanency practice, identification of the project target group, staff development, partnerships, involvement of youth in finding their own permanency, and integration with other initiatives.

Now that these four counties are finding permanent connections for an increasing number of their young people, CPYP has begun assisting ten more counties. This work started in the spring of 2005 and will continue through 2007. The new counties are: Contra Costa, Fresno, Humboldt, Kern, Los Angeles (metro North region), Orange, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo and Sonoma.

Emancipated Youth Connections Project (EYCP)

In 2005, funding was obtained from the [Stuart](#) and [Zellerbach Family Foundations](#) to develop a model program to seek and sustain permanent lifelong connections for older youth who have already emancipated from foster care without a permanent

connection to a caring adult. Service is being provided to twenty young adults who have emancipated from the child welfare system and who have been instrumental in promoting the idea that permanence for foster youth is critical. These young people have helped advance legislation, made digital stories, participated in the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) Task Force or Advisory Committee, or become trainers in the YOUTH Training Project. However, these young people do not have permanent connections themselves. This project will use lessons learned from other U.S. programs that have been successful in establishing permanency connections for youth *before* they left the child welfare system. EYCP will adapt these lessons in order to develop a model of service to young adults who have now *left* the child welfare system. It is expected that it will be necessary to make significant changes to existing models in order to address the current developmental stage of this young adult population. Also, methods of obtaining old child welfare files and of locating connections that have been lost for longer periods of time will have to be developed. All of this new methodology will lead to the creation of a new model which will be made available to "After Care" programs and to others who are interested in providing service to this population group.

Training

With the support of the [Zellerbach Family Foundation](#), a curriculum called "Preparing Youth for Permanent Family Connections" has been developed for use by California counties. It has been available since April 2005 to all public child welfare agencies and their partners through the Child Welfare Training Academies around the state. The [Bay Area Academy](#) offered the first youth permanence training in Santa Clara County on December 15, 2005.

In conjunction with the [California Youth Connection](#) (CYC) and the Bay Area Academy, the project supported the development of "[Digital Stories](#)" on permanency by current and former foster youth. These videos are available from CPYP and can be used in training.

Convenings

As a part of the development of CPYP, a national convening was held in April 2002 to explore the issues of permanency for youth. Subsequently, national convenings have been held in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Plans are underway for 2006. [Reports](#) of

the convenings are available here on the CPYP website.

Documents

To increase awareness of the issue, the project has developed four documents:

1. [Model Programs for Youth Permanency](#). A report on nine exemplary permanency programs throughout the U.S. and explanation of the critical elements of such programs.
2. [Youth Perspectives on Permanency](#). An exploration of youths' perspectives on permanency through a focus group process in partnership with the California Youth Connection (CYC).
3. [A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood](#). A joint publication with Casey Family Services, this document addresses the complex needs unique to adolescents in foster care.
4. [Agency Self-Assessment Tool on Youth Permanence](#). This tool is designed as a way for an agency or state to reflect on youth permanency. We have designed the questions a) to help assess current work and b) to trigger thinking about people, organizations and methods that could be tapped to strengthen family permanency for youth in the future.

Evaluation

To measure results, CPYP is gathering data over time from workers in each county on the young people being targeted for youth permanency services. In addition, the project is doing a formative evaluation of each county's implementation process that will inform the child welfare field of strategies for implementation and change.



DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO PERMANENT LIFELONG CONNECTIONS FOR FOSTER YOUTH

As members of the Child Welfare community in California, we recognize the crisis that exists for youth in foster care, particularly those between the ages of 11-18, who lack a permanent connection with an adult or family. We hereby declare our commitment to support and achieve permanent lifelong connections (permanency) for all children and youth, and that:

We are deeply concerned that approximately 80,000 foster children are in care in California, many of whom are unable to return to their families, and who thus rely on the foster care system to provide them with a family and a sense of permanent belonging; and

Youth in foster care need the same permanent connections to a committed adult or family as youth in the general population; and

A committed adult is one who provides a safe, stable and secure type of parenting relationship; love; unconditional commitment; and lifelong support in the context of family reunification, legal adoption, guardianship or some other form of committed lifelong relationship; and

Many foster youth have no relationships with adults other than the professionals who assist them in foster care and many leave care without a single lasting relationship or connection with any adult; and

Approximately 4,000 foster youth "age out" of the foster care system each year in California when they turn 18 to face daunting odds including high rates of homelessness, school drop-out and unemployment; and

Many negative outcomes experienced by foster youth are a result of having no one to turn to for help and support once they exit the foster care system; and

Former foster youth repeatedly state that a lifelong connection and a relationship with a supportive and committed adult, related by blood or not, is one of the key factors associated with their resilience and the

single greatest impact on their ability to navigate the transition to adulthood; and

We commend the innovative work of many in the child welfare community who are adopting and implementing new practices to secure permanent connections for foster children including involvement of the youth as key participants in the process of defining and securing permanent relationships; and

We acknowledge that public and private child welfare professionals must work in partnership with the youth in defining lifelong connections that are permanent, secure and healthy; and

We commend the leadership role of the California Permanency for Youth Project in acting as a resource to public and private child welfare agencies, providing training, inspiration and support to obtain lifelong relationships for teens in foster care; and

We acknowledge that the current resources devoted to achieving permanence for foster youth are not commensurate with the magnitude of the need; so therefore

We commit to work within our organizations, agencies, and communities and through the growing permanency for foster youth movement to support and promote these objectives by doing the following:

Promote recognition of and respect for the urgent need to ensure every foster youth has at least one lifelong permanent relationship;

Educate all we come into contact with about the need, urgency, and promising practices for achieving permanence for foster youth;

Support local and statewide projects and efforts to raise awareness, recommend policy changes, increase funding for and provide assistance to improve older youths' opportunities to develop a lifelong connection with a committed adult before leaving foster care;

Initiate change within our own organizations to support youth permanence and lifelong connections.

Fortify our common commitment to the permanence of foster youth as an obligation of the entire child welfare and human community to the children in our foster care system.

Signed by

Name	Title	Organization	Date

Name (authorized signer for)	Organization	Date	

List of Signatories

Declaration Signatories (Received through 05/18/06):

- A Home Within**, Toni Vaughn Heineman, Executive Director
- Adolescent Counseling Services**, Joy Reeve, Program Director
- Agape Villages Foster Family Agency**, Janet Kleyn, President & CEO
- Alameda County Social Services Agency**, Chet Hewitt, Director
- Aldea Children and Family Services**, Allen Ewig, Executive Director
- Alpine County Health and Human Services**, Cindy Hannah, Director
- Alternative Family Services**, Jay Berlin, Executive Director
- Aviva Family and Children's Services**, Andrew Diamond, President & CEO
- Bay Area Youth Centers**, Josh Leonard, Executive Director
- Bienvenidos Children's Center**, Lorraine Castro, CEO
- Butte County Department of Employment and Social Services**, Cathi Grams, Director
- Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency**, Mary Sawicki, Director
- California Alliance of Child and Family Services**, Silvia Orlando, President
- California Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association**, Denis Loiseau, Board President; Robin Allen, Executive Director
- California Department of Social Services**, Mary Ault, Deputy Director
- Canyon Acres Children and Family Services**, Clete Menke, Executive Director
- CASA for Riverside County, Inc.**, Marilynn Yeates, Executive Director
- CASA of Contra Costa County**, Keith Archuleta, Executive Director
- CASA of El Dorado County**, Michael Rex, President
- CASA of Fresno and Madera Counties**, Karen Chao-Bushoven, Executive Director
- CASA of Imperial County**, Nancie Lee Rhodes, Executive Director
- CASA of Los Angeles**, Brian Borys, Executive Director
- CASA of Monterey County**, Siobhan M. Greene, Executive Director
- CASA of Santa Cruz County**, Nancy Sherrod, Executive Director
- CASA of Solano County**, Maria Moses, Executive Director
- CASA of Sonoma County**, Millie Gilson, Executive Director
- CASA of Tulare County**, Marilyn Barr, Executive Director
- Casa Pacifica**, Steven E. Elson, CEO
- CASA, A Voice for Children**, Lola Chester, Executive Director
- Casey Family Programs**, Miryam J. Choca, California Strategic Director
- Central California Public School Services Training Academy**, David J. Foster, Project Director
- Child Abuse Prevention Council of Placer County**, DeAnne Thornton, Executive Director

Child Advocates of San Bernardino County, Jenna Colborn, Executive Director
Child Welfare League of America, Cheryl Gully, Regional Director
Children Are Our Future, Inc., Michael B. Linquata, Executive Director
Children's Bureau, Alex Morales, President & CEO
Children's Institute, Inc., Mary M. Emmons, President & CEO
Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento, Rani H. Pettis, President
Colusa County Department of Health and Human Services, Philip S. Reinheimer, Director
Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Organization, Danna Fabella,
 Interim Director
Crittenton Services for Children and Families, Joyce Capelle, CEO
Crossroads Treatment Center, Laynee Kuhn, Executive Director
David and Margaret Home, Georgia Shannon, Board President
Del Norte County Department of Health and Social Services, Gary R. Blatnick,
 Director/Public Guardian
Edgewood Center for Children and Families, Nancy Rubin, CEO
El Dorado County Department of Human Services, John Litwinovich, Director
EMQ Children and Family Services, Darrell Evora, President & CEO
Ettie Lee Youth and Family Services, Clayton L. Downey, President & CEO
Families First, Walter Grubbs, President & CEO
Family Builders by Adoption, Jill Jacobs, Executive Director
Family Care Network, Inc., James W. Roberts, CEO
Five Acres, Robert Ketch, Executive Director
Fred Finch Youth Center, John F. Steinfirsh, President & CEO
Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services, Gary Zomalt, Director
Girls and Boys Town of Southern California, Keith E. Deiderich, President & CEO
Glenn County Human Resource Agency, Kim W. Gaghagen, Director
Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services, William P. Martone, President & CEO
Health Care Dual Diagnosis, Edna Miller, President
Hillside, John M. Hitchcock, Executive Director
Human Services Network, Don Joaquin Shelton, Executive Director
Human Services Projects, Inc., Marti Fredericks, Executive Director
Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, Beverly Morgan Lewis,
 Director, Social Services Branch
Imperial County Department of Social Services, James Semmes, Director
Inner Circle Foster Care and Adoption Services, Diane Furubotten, Executive Director
Inyo County Department of Health and Human Services, Jean Dickinson, Director
Kern Bridges Youth Homes, John Bacon, Executive Director
Kids First Foundation, Jana A. Trew, Executive Director/Assistant Vice President
Kings County Human Services Agency, Peggy Montgomery, Director
Kinship Center, Amanda Gourley, Board President; Carol Biddle, Executive Director
L.A.S.T. Transition House, Linda Turner, President & CEO
LeRoy Haynes Center, Darrell Paulk, CEO
Lincoln Child Center, Christine Stoner-Mertz, President
Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, David Sanders,
 Director
Madera County Department of Social Services, Hubert Walsh, Director
Marin County Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Social Services,
 Charlotte Reid, Director
Mariposa County Department of Human Services, Cheryle Rutherford-Kelly, Director
Martin's Achievement Place, James R. Martin, Assistant Executive Director
Maryvale, Sister Betty Marie Dunkel, Executive Director
Masonic Homes of California at Covina, Marissa Espinoza, Director of Children's Services
Mathiot Group Homes, Randall Beaida, Executive Director
Mendocino Department of Social Services, Steve Prochter, Deputy Director

Merced County Human Services Agency, Ana Pagan, Director
Milhous Children's Services, Mike Stine, Executive Director
Modoc County Social Services Organization, Pauline Cravens, Director
Mono County Department of Social Services, G. Edward Zylman, Director
Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services, Elliott Robinson,
 Director
Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services, Silvio John Orlando, Executive Director
Orange County Social Services Agency, Ingrid Harita, Director
Paradise Oaks Youth Services, Frank Schellhous, CEO
Peacock Acres, Ernest Howard, CEO
Penny Lane Centers, Ivelise Markovits, CEO
Plumas County Social Services, Elliott Smart, Director
Plumas Rural Services, Michele Lynn Piller, Executive Director
Rebekah Children's Services, Michael R. McGraft, Interim Executive Director/COO
Riverside County Department of Public Social Services, Jennie Pettett, Deputy Director
Rosemary Children's Services, Selwyn Brereton, President
Sacramento Children's Home, Nick Clevenger, Board President; Roy Alexander, CEO
Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, Leland Tom, Deputy
 Director
San Diego Center for Children, Mary Giffin, Executive Director
San Francisco City and County Department of Human Services, Trent Rhorer, Director
San Joaquin County Human Services Agency, Joseph E. Chelli, Director
San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services, Leland W. Collins, Director
San Mateo County Human Services Agency, Glen Brooks, Director
Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services, Kathy Gallagher, Director
Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, Will Lightbourne, Director
Seneca Center, Ken Berrick, CEO
Share Homes Adoption and Foster Care Agency, Doug Clark, Deputy Director
Shasta County Department of Social Services, Sher Huss, Director
Sierra Adoption Services, Gail Johnson, Executive Director
Sierra Vista Child and Family Services, Judy Kindle, Executive Director
Siskiyou County Human Services, Nadine M. Della Bitta, Director
Solano County, John M. Vasquez, Chair, Solano County Board of Supervisors
Sonoma County Human Services Department, Carol Bauer, Director, Family, Youth &
 Children's Division
Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency, Sylvia Fogelman, CEO
St. Andrew's Residential Programs/STAR, Steuart R. Samuels, Executive Director
St. Anne's, Allison Simpson, Chair, Program Committee
St. Francis Home for Children, Michael Carey, Director
St. Patrick's Home for Children, Michael Kiernan, Executive Director
Stanford Home for Children, Erik Sternad, Executive Director
Stanislaus County Community Services Agency, Ken R. Patterson, Deputy Director
Star View Children and Family Services, Mary Jane Gross, President
Starlight Adolescent Center, Lori Williams, Board President
Stars Behavioral Health Group, Mary Jane Gross, President
Success in Recovery, Inc., Carol McNabb, Board President; Michelle Weintz, CEO
Summitview Child Treatment Center, Carla L. Wills, Executive Director
Sunny Hills Services, Julie McMillan, Board President; Joseph M. Costa, CEO
Sweeney Youth Homes, Sharon Sweeney, Executive Director
Tahoe Turning Point, Rich Barma, Executive Director
Tehama County Department of Social Services, Christine C. Applegate, Director
THMA, Tracy Langwood, ILP Program Manager
Triad Family Services, Dean Cowan, CEO
Trinity County Health and Human Services Department, Linda Wright, Director

Trinity Youth Services, John Neiuber, CEO
UC Berkeley Center on Weight and Health, Joanne Ikeda, Founding Director
Unity Care, André Chapman, President & CEO
Valley Teen Ranch, Connie Clendenan, CEO
Ventura County Human Services Agency, Ted Myers, Director
Victor Treatment Centers, David C. Favor, CEO
Vista del Mar Child and Family Services, Elias Lefferman, President & CEO
Voices for Children, CASA of San Diego, Sharon M. Lawrence, Executive Director
Wide Horizons Ranch, Bruce Wendt, President
Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services, Pamela S. Miller, Director
Youth for Change, Keith Robbins, Board President
Youth Law Center, Carole Shauffer, Executive Director
Zellerbach Family Foundation, Ellen Walker, Program Executive



2005 National Convening on Youth Permanence

Model Programs Update*¹

Site: California: Alameda County Social Services, Oakland, CA
Program: STEP UP

Program Description:

Many foster youth reside in youth home care that do not offer any permanence and are therefore deprived of their permanent connections in their life. Alameda County made a commitment to work for 6 months on relative search for permanence through a CPYP contract with Catholic Community Services of Western Washington.

Target Group: Youth, ages 11-18 in group home care for a significant length of time.

Staff: 6 child welfare workers, 1 person on loan from Casey Family Services, Oakland.

Program Duration: 6 months. Started: January 18, 2005; ends July 15.

Success:

At midpoint March 2005: From a total of 57 youth:
7 are with family,
3 are with next of kin
6 have family member identified to whom they will move
8 are continuing to look at extended family members.

Budget:

\$2500 California Permanency for Youth (CPYP) mini-grant.
Casey Family Services funding for 1 staff person on loan from CFS
Technical Assistant Funds for assistance in searching for children's relatives.
\$2500 from CPYP
\$2000 from other sources
Cost of 6 child welfare workers: \$500,000 per year.

¹ This brief update is a 2005 addendum to *Model Programs for Youth Permanence* by Mardith J. Louisell, available on the CPYP website (www.cpy.org) or through the CPYP office, 510-268-0038.

Contact: Randy Morris, Program Manager, Alameda County Social Services
(510) 780-8833
morrir@acgov.org

Site: California, County of Los Angeles
Program: P3 - Permanency Partners Program

Program Description:

P3 is a public private partnership designed for foster youth ages 12 and up who have been in care 24 months or more and who have no current permanent living plan. The mediator, working with youth on a one on one basis, identifies significant adults in the youth's life and helps facilitate a connection or reconnection to these adults with the focus being on the youth exiting the foster care system to a permanent home through reunification with a biological family member, adoption or legal guardianship. . At a minimum, no child will leave the program without a connection to a committed caring adult to mentor them into adulthood. Success is attributed to dedicated mediators and social workers. All mediators have a strong background in adoption and know how to talk to youth. A case is open until permanence is achieved. There is no such thing as "no outcome." The Program lets the youth take the lead and helps them develop their own answers.

Target Group: Youth, ages 12-18.

Staff:

30 mediators for 1 regional office for 50 youth. Department-wide expansion begins shortly, utilizing 44 part time staff(county retirees) in combination with a contract for a public private partnership.

Program Duration: Started October 13th, 2004-ongoing

Success: Out of 50 youth randomly picked, the pilot currently reflects a 52% success rate in identifying a permanent connection for the child, with the ultimate goal of returning home, adoption or legal guardianship.

Budget: Funded by the State of California with \$60,000 allocation from an existing contract with Consortium for Children. Department expansion begins in April with a one million dollar allocation.

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Executive Director of Consortium for Children
(415) 458-5076 email: kate@consortforkids.org

Trish Ploehn:
Deputy Director of Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family
Services (562) 903-5122 email: ploeha@dcfs.co.la.ca.us

Site: California, Counties of Sacramento, Nevada, and Placer with Sierra
Adoption, Nevada City, CA

Program: Destination Family Youth Permanence Project

Program Description:

This project is a collaboration with the county and family alliance, focused on a whole family approach. Support groups are held for Bridge families which are temporary homes where a youth practices living in a home environment with a family. Sometimes, the Bridge family and the youth decide to make this a permanent commitment. The program provides supportive therapeutic services. Goal: By the end of 5 year period no youth will emancipate without lifetime permanence.

Target Group:

Youth ages 11-18 who come from larger urban communities that have an over-represented number of youth and from small rural communities with a smaller number of youth. The project will compare results using the same methodology in both communities.

Staff: 2.5 dedicated social workers. The project will add a "people finder" to help locate permanent connections

Program Duration: October 2003-September 2008

Success:

Out of 56 total youth from Sacramento and Nevada county, 30 were placed or connected , 7 in adoption, 1 in guardianship, and 2 in bridge practice families, 7 have a lifetime commitment contract, and 9 reconnections have been made.

Budget:

\$350-400,00 year from a 5 year Federal Adoption Opportunity Administrative Grant.

Contact: Bob Herne, MSW
Email: bherne@sierraadoption.org Phone: (916)
368-5114 ext. 256

Site: California. 5 Acres, The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Los Angeles County, Pasadena

Program: Permanency Initiative

Program Description:

The vision is that there will be a permanent, safe and empowered family member for every youth by 2007 and that family and family principals will be utilized in all of the programs. The program is in the early stages at 6 months old. The impetus for the program was the renewed awareness that children need lasting connections and 5 Acres staff, no matter how committed, are not enough. The plan is to train all clinicians and conveners in team decision making. The program will get youth involved and connected with different groups in the community, including karate, drug awareness, music, sports etc. and help teens identify a permanent person in their life. The staff first interview the youth to identify people in their history and to look into sibling connections. Five Acres is working in partnership with Los Angeles County to recruit. However, because there are many 17 year olds who do not have permanence, if 5 Acres doesn't find permanence for these youth, then 5 Acres will make the commitment to provide them with support, money and relationship.

Five Acres is an RTC for youth 6-13 years old and a group home for youth 12-18 years old, which provides independent living support and follow up counseling and financial support. It also has a foster care program, adoption program, and community based services and programs.

Target Group: 98 youth of which 40 are in foster care

Staff: No additional staff.

Program Duration: October 2004. Ongoing.

Success: There has been a great deal of success in the child interviews and reconnecting the youth to family and in working with L. A. County.

Budget:

Resources of staff. Staff were sent to trainings sponsored by Annie E. Casey Family to Family and California Permanency for Youth Project. Program will apply for funding through private sources and contracts that are available.

Contact: Robert Ketch, Executive Director
Rketch@5acres.org
(626) 798-6793 ext. 248

Site: California, County of San Luis Obispo
Program: Using funds for permanence

Program Description:

San Luis Obispo County has contracted with the same agency with which it contracts for ILP services to seek family connections for foster youth.

Staff: Contracted agency

Program Duration: Contract began in late 2004

Success: NA

Budget:

San Luis Obispo county is a California Cohort 1 CWS Improvement County and the county is using this money to fund the contract.

Contact: Debby Jeter, Director, Child Welfare Services
San Luis Obispo County
805-781-1840
djeter@co.slo.ca.us, cmaclean@co.slo.ca.us (admin. asst.)

Site: Connecticut, State of
Program: ACTR

Program Description:

The program works with youth who are in placement where barriers to adoption exist. By working with the youth AND the families, the program tries to work through these barriers to adoption.

Target Youth: Youth, ages 9-16

Program Duration: Five year program starting April, 2004.

Success: N/A

Challenges:

The program has been difficult because families have cared for the children for a long time and now have pressure to adopt. From the family's perspective they are already committed to the youth and do not see the need for this further service.

Budget: Five year grant to several states; Maine is the lead.

Contact: Dianne Del Vecchio, Program Supervisor
Connecticut Department of Children and Families
Office of Foster and Adoptive Services
860-550-6461
dianne.delvecchio@po.state.ct.us

Site: Connecticut, State of
Program: Lifelong Family Ties

Program Description:

The youth is part of team in formulating a permanency plan that draws upon natural support systems. Staff meet with the youth to identify a person in their life and consider all options, looking thoroughly into the background to see if anyone had been overlooked. The program received technical assistance from Casey Family Services, CT.

Target Group: Twenty (20) youth 13 years or older, who have been in care at least a year and where reunification has been deemed no longer an option, or who have been in care most of their lives. Program hopes to double the target number of youth to forty (40).

Staff: 2 Social Workers with caseload of 10 each; 1 supervisor.

Program Duration: Program began February, 2004 and continues

Success: 4 youth placed with mentors, extended family and foster homes that are working towards permanency with a formalized support system. Eight (8) youth have identified family members and made contact.

Budget: 2004: \$200,000 from grant funding .
2005: State funding

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Site: Illinois, State of
Program: Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program

Project Description:

Contrary to what the name implies, The *Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program* extends benefits to youth who are adopted as well as who enter subsidized guardianship after the age of 14, as well as to any siblings who achieve permanency at the same time. Benefits include monthly support for youth in college or in employment training, currently available only to youth who remain in foster care in Illinois, and a big stumbling block to teen permanency. The reason this is necessary is because the GALs advise foster parents and youth not to go to permanency because they will lose these benefits. Benefits are restricted to a small pilot group for 5 years! Training will include a piece on permanency for all staff who participate in the demonstration or control group at the 3 sites.

Target Group: See Fact Sheet below

Staff: No new staff.

Program Duration: Begins July 1, 2005

Success: NA

Funding: The original five year title IV-E waiver authorizing the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration Program officially ended in the spring of 2002, but the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services granted Illinois an extension of the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration until December 31, 2008. The extension allows for the following:

- 1) The continuation of the Standard Subsidized Guardianship Program.
- 2) The creation of the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program

FACT SHEET

The original five year title IV-E waiver authorizing the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration Program officially ended in the spring of 2002, but the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services granted Illinois an extension of the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration until December 31, 2008.

The Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration Extension will soon include a new Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program. The program is designed to test the impact of offering transition services to youth on the achievement of permanency.

1. **Site Eligibility:** The enhanced program is ONLY available to children whose cases are assigned to the Cook Central, East St. Louis Sub-Region and the Peoria Sub-Region and who meet eligibility for BOTH the Standard Subsidized Guardianship Program and the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program.

THIS IS NOT A STATEWIDE PROGRAM AND SERVES A LIMITED POPULATION.

2. **Age Eligibility:** Eligibility will not be determined until children reach age 14. As they reach that age, children will randomly be assigned to either the demonstration/eligible group or the control/ineligible group. In order to be eligible for the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program, a child must first be eligible for the Standard Subsidized Guardianship Program.^{2*}
3. **Enhanced Service Package:** The program makes available a limited package of transition services to a child who goes to guardianship or is adopted at 14 years of age or older. The enhanced service package being offered as part of the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program includes youth in college, youth in employment, housing cash assistance and life skills training. Currently, these services are only available to youth who are being transitioned to independence from the foster care system. Education and training vouchers, currently available to youth who go to guardianship or are adopted at age 16 or above will be available under the waiver at age 14. The enhanced service package does not include transitional or independent living placement programs.
4. **Control Group:** Youth assigned to the control group of the Enhanced program continue to be eligible for the Standard Subsidized Guardianship Program, but they will not have access to the enhanced service package if they are adopted or go to guardianship.

The Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program will be implemented July 1, 2005, and will continue through December 2008.

Illinois Standard Subsidized Guardianship Eligibility Criteria

- Each child must have been in DCFS custody for one continuous year (there is no sibling group exception to this and no possibility of a ‘waiver’);
- Each child must have been in the home of the caregiver for one continuous year
Exception: if a child is a member of a sibling group in a home, only one of the children needs to have been in the home for one year, but no ‘waiver’ is available
- If the child is in a non-relative home, the child must be 12 or older --
Exception: *with sibling groups going to Subsidized Guardianship (SG), only the oldest child has to be 12 or older*
- If the child is in a non-relative home and no child in the home going to SG is 12 or over, the caseworker may seek a waiver from the DCFS Guardianship Administrator
- The proposed guardian/s may not have any felony convictions
No exceptions or waivers are possible
- In order to be eligible for Standard Subsidized Guardianship, the child cannot be in the control group. Generally, no new children are being added to the Standard Subsidized Guardianship control group at this time. For children already assigned to

² *To be eligible for Standard Subsidized Guardianship, which is available statewide, a child must meet the criteria listed on the reverse side of this sheet.

the control group, it will continue to exist through December of 2008, when the program will end.

Exception:

1) If a child originally assigned to the control group moves into a home with an experimental group assignment, the recently moved siblings will be considered to be eligible after the child or the child's sibling has been living in the home for one year. Before guardianship is legally established, the child will be assigned to the experimental group.

2) If siblings have received two different assignments while living in different homes, and they move into the same new home where no children have previously received a group assignment, then all children will be eligible for a guardianship subsidy after they have been living in the home for one year. Before guardianship is legally established, all of the children will be assigned to the experimental group.

Contact: Peggy Slater,
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Chicago, IL 60601
312-814-6861
pslater@idcfs.state.il.us
peggyslater@msn.com

Site: Illinois, State of
Program: Legacy Project, Update.

Program Sustainability:

Over the past year, the Legacy Project (see *Model Programs* booklet) added a relative search program for youth 16-20 focused on support contacts intended to sustain until the youth ages out and beyond. The Legacy Project was a federally funded grant, but the State of Illinois provided the dollars for the relative search component. This money included a contract with Catholic Community Services of Western Washington for technical assistance on relative searches and an extension of the Legacy Project director's salary beyond the original project time period. Both The Legacy Project and the Intensive Relative Search Project are completed. However, the director continues to work to integrate the relative search into Illinois's transitional living and independent living programs for older youth (18+) as well as into a program under formation for youth with a history of running away.

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Site: Iowa, Four Oaks, Iowa City
Program: Adoption Pilot Project

Program Description:

The project will target youth when parental rights have been terminated. An Adoption Specialist will complete an assessment of the youth on permanence. Group work will be done with attachment disorder youth. The project will educate youth in the kind of skills that the youth needs to function in a family. The project will collect data to look at outcomes and will attempt systems improvements so that both the state and Four Oaks work towards similar outcomes. Then practices will be readjusted to align with new outcome goals.

Target Group: Youth in Four Oaks where parental rights have been terminated.

Staff:

Program Duration: July 2005 – July 2006

Success: N/A

Budget: The budget for working with these youth comes from the per diem that the facility charges.

Contact: Kelly Malone,
Vice President of Community-Based Services
(319) 337-4523
kmalone@fouroaks.org

Site: Iowa, Four Oaks, Iowa City,
Program: REPARE – Follow-up

Target Group: 75 youth, ages 5-12

History REPARE was a pilot program between 1993-1995 that had a 75% success in achieving permanent outcomes. Even though the program created great cost savings and results, it could not continue because of lack of funding. Once the pilot program was finished Four Oaks didn't have funding to continue the program.

What has been sustained after the pilot:

- * The importance of engaging families and getting the family involved in the treatment and understanding the treatment process
- * Meetings to involve consumer families once a month to develop a family friendly practice and policy.
- * A quarterly newsletter in which every program in 4 Oaks submits an article to keep families abreast of news items and new programs and services.
- * All Four Oaks congregate care programs must have a certain amount of family events.
- * Intake Process. Four Oaks revised the entire intake process to focus immediately on the barriers that prevent the child from getting back to the family and how the agency can involve the family in this process. Instead of keeping the youth for 18 months in an RTC, Four Oaks tries to shorten the stay and get the youth back to the family and community. One of the challenges was getting the staff to focus on barriers that keep the child from returning to the family. RTC staff were reluctant because it required changing their practice and their goals.

Contact: Kelly Malone,
Vice President of Community-Based Services
(319) 337-4523
kmalone@fouroaks.org

Site: Minnesota, MARN (Minnesota Adoption Resource Network)
Program: The Homecoming Project

Program Description:

The Homecoming Project is a Minnesota Department of Human Services project to increase the number of adoptions of adolescents who are under state guardianship in Minnesota and to strengthen participating youths' connectedness to caring adults and the larger community. The Minnesota Department of Human Services contracts with the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network (MARN) to provide these services.

Why: Teenagers 13-17 years old are **22%** of the waiting children in Minnesota and were only **7%** of adoptions Minnesota waiting children in 2002

The project is grounded in the principles of positive youth development. By using strategies that are age and developmentally appropriate, the project engages adolescents in identifying and achieving their individualized permanency outcomes. Not only are adolescents able to participate in cultivating their own recruitment plans, developmentally they *must* participate in order to mature into healthy adults. Anecdotal evidence from similar programs nationally suggests that teens who have been a partner in the recruitment process will be more prepared to join adoptive families.

Participation in the project makes available many of the activities and opportunities of “Our Voices Matter,” a foster and adopted youth self-advocacy and leadership group where youth have the opportunity to educate adults on what would help make foster care and adoption better for youth.

Target Group: The project works with adolescents who are under state guardianship, are 11-18 years of age, have a permanency plan of adoption, have no identified adoptive family and had a termination of parental rights court ordered more than one year ago. The project includes 42 youth. Youth have been waiting an average of 4 years since termination of parental rights and are, by and large, Minnesota's longest waiting youth.

Staff: 5 FTE Recruitment Specialists;
1 Supervisor with a .5 case load;
.25 Support Person
Outside Evaluator.

Program Duration: Federal Adoption Opportunities and Activities Grant:
October 2003-September 2008

Success: As of April 2005, two youth were living in permanent (adoptive) families, one as moving in shortly, and three were in the process of visits. Additionally, the project is working to assure that youth have a support network of adults committed for the long term. Some of these people will be adoptive resources, some will not. More than half of the youth have established, or re-established contacts with significant people from their families and/or their past.

Budget: \$430,000 per year; \$350,000 from a Federal Adoption Opportunities and Activities Grant; \$80,000 from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

Contact: Michelle Chalmers, MSW, LISW
Project Coordinator, The Homecoming Project
Minnesota Adoption Resource Network (MARN)
430 Oak Grove St., Suite 404
Minneapolis, MN 55403
612.746.5121- direct line
612.861.7112 fax
www.mnadopt.org

Site: New York City, Graham Windham
Program: Project Impact

Program Description:

The goal is to return youth to family more quickly and to have no youth in RTC more than a year. A second goal is to change the agency culture so that permanence is its mission and permeates the agency staff, including social workers, child care workers, clinical and medical personnel, teachers, and maintenance workers.

Project Impact includes families in the initial intake; project staff make a home visit within 3 days of initial intake. Staff immediately discuss the youth's potential discharge to family; family is an integral part of planning and decision-making. Family are invited to the facility to create the discharge service plan, which addresses time and service needs of youth and service needs of parents.

What the project also needs to succeed: Wrap around services; case loads smaller than 20; and therapists who will go to the home.

Target Group: 165 youth who reside in Graham Windham RTC

Staff: 1 Intake Discharge Supervisor and three Intensive Discharge Staff.
Eleven (11) permanency planners each work with a cottage that houses 16 youth on the campus.

Program Duration: September 2004. Ongoing

Success: Success on permanency: discharges were up last year. Early returns are very good.

Program Evaluation: : G-W tracks the number of youth entering and how quickly an assessment is completed, how quickly staff visit the family home and how quickly they begin action towards getting the youth out of RTC.

Budget: \$250,000 which pays some of the Supervisor's salary and the three intensive discharge people.

Contact: Connie Kaiser, Director of Permanency Planning
(914) 478-1100 ext.223
ckaiser@graham-windham.org

Site: New York City, Harlem Dowling, Harlem,
Program: Adoption Options for Teens

Program Description:

Harlem Dowling is a foster care agency. The goal of the program is to help youth in foster care, ages 14-21, to explore all permanency options including reunification with birth parents, relatives, custody, guardianship, legal adoption, and "informal adoption" when legal adoption is not possible. Every child deserves a family and should not opt for independent living or "aging out" as a goal.

Target Group: Youth ages 14-21.

Staff: 1 adolescent permanency specialist and 1 MSW intern who work collaboratively with existing caseworkers and supervisors. The distinguishing characteristics are the Adolescent Permanency Specialist and the Adoption Mentoring Program. The mentors are all adult adoptees.

Program duration: 2003. Ongoing

Success: Out of 130 youth ages 14-21, 31 expressed the desire to be adopted. 19 were placed and 8 were finalized. Five (5) are informal adoptions (not legally adopted but committed to each other). Thirteen (13) youth are open to being recruited. Five of the youth are now recruiters.

Budget: The program uses existing dollars from the normal budget but focuses the efforts on permanency. H-D has received \$25,000 in the first year and \$50,000 in the 2nd year from the Dave Thomas Foundation for the salary and benefits of the Adolescent Permanency Specialist. If you include the cost of clinicians, the program budget would be larger. The percentage of time that the director puts toward this program is the major personnel cost. After initial costs, the mindset of permanency for teens can become part of the agency culture and the present staff at any agency can achieve permanency for teens without a huge influx of dollars. Of course targeted money to help focus on the issue will expedite the process

Needs: Strong post adoption services are needed as some of the more challenging permanency situations will not make it without post permanency services. G-W would like to have "adoption competent" therapists and more funding would expand in this area.

Contact: Barry Chaffkin, Director of Foster Care and Adoption
Harlem Dowling: (212)749-3656 ext.365 (631)
821-7396(home)
Email: thechaffkins@earthlink.net

Site: New York City, You Gotta Believe!
Program: Various

Program Description:

YGB employees 3 Family Permanency Advocates and 2 Teen Permanence Advocates and out-stations them at 6 New York City licensed group homes and 8 New York City licensed residential treatment centers 1/2 day a week to meet with youth and follow up leads for permanency. Outreach and action is grass roots and their mere presence at congregate care facilities is significant because the youth can talk to them about connections while the YGB staff is at the RTC or group home. New York City ACS chose the RTCs with which YGB works. Because there are not many youth in ACS-run group homes, the collaboration is in the process of re-looking at the choice of group homes. New York City has recently established an AWOL unit and YGB may be able to assign one of their group home slots to the AWOL unit.

Target Group: Youth in selected congregate care facilities in New York City area.

Staff: 16 full-time and 12 part-time staff.
6 new staff through the Adoption Opportunity Grant including:
3 Family Permanency Advocates
2 Teen Permanence Advocates
1 Assistant Project Director for the Federal Grant.

Program Duration: 2002-2007

Success: At the end of 2004, the 3rd year of the grant, YGB has placed 40 youth.

Resources Developed: "The Adopting Teens & Tweens" cable access show can be viewed live stream at www.bcat.tv/bcat. YGB also has a live radio program "The Adopting Teens& Tweens" Radio Forum, which airs every Sunday PM from 8-9 and can be heard at www.am1240wgbb.com Web site for agency is www.yougottabelieve.org

Budget: \$400,000/year Federal Adoption Opportunity Grant which began September 2004 to place 100 teens from congregate care over the next four years. New York City provides \$331,500 a year.

Contact: You Gotta Believe!
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Site: Ohio, County of Cuyahoga with Adoption Network, Cleveland
Program: Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids

Program Description:

Impetus for Program: Cuyahoga County DCFS contacted the Vision Council, a group of community leaders who deal with the County's crises in permanence. Vision Council chose Adoption Network as the lead agency to identify and address barriers to adoption through the public system. The original focus of the Vision Council wasn't specifically "youth," but Adoption Network and Cuyahoga County moved the focus to youth.

AN contracts with 15 adoption agencies including Cuyahoga County to find homes. AN has strict expectations for the contracted agencies. The agencies must:

1. Read the record and complete an assessment within the first 90 days of referral which includes an agency interview with the child in which he/she is asked what they hope for.
2. Establish a permanent planning team and hold a team meeting to begin engaging the team members in recruiting for this child.
3. Conform to tight, strict time frames in a more rigid accountability than agencies have had before. (However, staff and agencies are responding and, by and large, meeting expectations). Included is a great deal of data tracking and reporting on a monthly and quarterly basis.
4. Private and DCFS agencies are on the same footing. Some private agencies are doing well but DCFS social workers are leading the pack in terms of quality and quantity of work.

The project requires child centered recruitment. A unique component is the "permanency champion mentor role" for those at highest risk of aging out. Funding was obtained, and partnerships with Big Brothers, Big Sisters, One Church One Child and partner adoption agencies were established to implement a permanency champion role for each child – someone to whom the child is connected becomes a mentor but also gets involved in case conferences, planning for the future and recruiting an adoptive family.

Target Group: Parental Rights had been terminated for 1500 youth as of January 2004. Of the 1500 youth, 650 had no plan and no one willing or able to adopt them. 85% are 10 years old and up. These 650 are youth who will be referred to the private agencies and DCFS to work with AN's model of child centered recruitment.

Staff: (See "Payment" section below for more information on staff.) Cuyahoga County DCFS, one of the agencies on the project, created a unit of child centered recruitment workers. The AN model insists that participating agencies must use experienced people so DCFS transferred existing workers and hired new staff to fill in behind.

The project also includes Adoption Navigators, experienced adoptive parents, who work for Adoption Network and help parents navigate and identify barriers for all kids, so that future backlog can be avoided. Navigators have a special emphasis on teens.

Adoption Navigators are primarily full time. They have a set place and time they spend on the county site. The supervisor who hired the navigators had been a county administrator, well liked at the county. This helped ease issues of territoriality. Even so much relationship building was required. The Navigators helped DCFS in any way they could, getting out mailings,

helping with events and with DCFS's matching data system. In doing so, they noticed that the potential adoptive parents with approved home studies had no social worker assigned to them until a child was identified for them and so the parents were just waiting. The Navigators started doing matches from the adults' point of view and found matches. As a result of the relationship building, the county staff has come to see the Navigators as a valuable aid. However, the Navigators still raise some defensiveness because staff wonder, "What am I not doing that you need to assign a navigator?"

Program Duration: Implemented, January 2004.

Success: Out of 650 youth with no plan, 275 were referred to agencies. The goal was for 50 youth to have adoptive placements in the first 12 months. Instead, during that time, 171 have found adoptive placements, more than three times the initial goal.

Social workers on the project feel supported and successful. The project has created a learning community where all staff who are doing this work attend a monthly training meeting to problem solve on cases and share successes. For the first time, private agencies are sharing families with each other and many youth get placed.

Budget: Total cost of project: 2.5 Million. Adoption Network receives 1 million from county commissioners for pass-through funds, which they give to other agencies in contracts. Vision Council provides \$300,000 a year. AN raises the rest of the money through foundation support, individual support, and in-kind donations. (Almost the entire computer system is an in-kind donation.) The program received a Federal Adoption Opportunities Grant October, 2004. United Way funds the project at \$100,000 per year.

Payment Models: Two different models exist from which the participating agencies select one.

- A) Receive \$52,500 for a full time staff member for salary and overhead. The agency receives 80% at the start and the 20% bonus when they succeed. After a certain goal is met, the agency receives bonuses for each additional youth placed. Cuyahoga County DCFS and 4 other agencies have chosen this model.
- B) Payment for service models: One third of the money at each of the following three points:
 - a) at completion of initial assessment;
 - b) at placement, and
 - c) at finalization.Payments depend on the age of the oldest child in any group of children. If the oldest is a 17 year old, the agency gets paid at a much higher rate than if it places an 8 year old.

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LIGHTING THE FIRE OF URGENCY



Kevin Campbell, a consultant to the NRCFCPPP, presented his “family finding” work in a Webcast on June 14, 2005. The webcast itself, as well as handout materials, are archived on our website at <http://event.netbriefings.com/event/nrcfcpp/Archives/hunternrcfcpp7/>. This model engages agencies in projects to find relatives for children and youth who may otherwise exit the foster care system without permanent connections to caring adults. The projects have proved very successful in a number of sites in connecting youth to 15 to 50 concerned family members. After the presentation, Gary Mallon, Executive Director of the NRCFCPPP interviewed Kevin. Since then, Kevin has helped the state of Louisiana in locating families of children separated from them by Hurricane Katrina in September, 2005.

GM: In your presentation, you talk about “Family Finding, Lighting the Fire of Urgency”, why do you think this issue is so urgent?

KC: Many children and young people who live in foster care and other residential settings like long-term in-patient psychiatric hospitals and juvenile facilities are growing up without consistent and essential relationships with adults. The loss that they experience is definable; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has studied the quality of affection that children living in America receive from their mothers and fathers. They reported that children between birth and 13 years of age are told that they are loved every day according to more than 80% of mothers and nearly 80% of fathers. I worked on behalf of hundreds of young people in residential care to locate connections. They had not heard those words constantly in a decade or more of moving from foster home to residential facility to juvenile facility.

This is an urgent enough reason to be concerned. However, once family finding activities begin public and private agency social workers were able to find and engage at least several adult family members who would have loved most of the young people in the project everyday but were never called.

They did this in an average of five and a half hours of work for each relative, over six months. Surely we can find the time and resources in our agencies to make this possible for every child and young person.

The young people in America’s child welfare system, their families and tax payers cannot afford the consequences or costs of

raising children in temporary care who had willing relatives who would have helped if we had called them. For the vast majority of the young people served by these projects the family was out there every day. The most heard comment from them was, “If you could call now, why didn’t you call us 10 years ago?” The answer is, “We didn’t have the tools then, but we’re calling now.”

GM: You explained during your presentation that you tried different combinations of public child welfare and private non-profit staff during your projects. Which arrangements were most effective?

KC: All of the projects, regardless of design, were able to extensively identify family members for young people. But the most effective designs were those that combined public agency social workers with private non-profit staff as partners. Without exception the child welfare, child mental health and juvenile probations systems that are most effective are those that collaborate with at least one shared belief - that children must grow up in families.

Private non-profit organizations add tremendous value to community systems of care when they truly work as system partners with accountability and shared commitments. Pierce and Clark Counties in Washington State are excellent long-term examples of this as are Santa Clara, Orange and Sacramento Counties in California. All of these communities have something in common - a collaboration of systems and key non-profit organizations working together with a wraparound philosophy, values and principles.

Not every community based organization needs to provide truly unconditional acceptance and care to families in a community, but there must at least be one working with every jurisdiction. In our projects we included those organizations; it is one of the best decisions I have ever made.

I want to mention San Mateo County’s use of volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates. I am very excited about the possibility of shaping the role of court advocates to become more focused on the basic needs of children, like having a true sense of lifelong belonging in a family and less on advocating for special “treatments” and placements. It just makes sense to me that these volunteers can be the voice of the child in the process emphasizing their need for a forever family. Better yet, let’s

include them in helping in the search. I am very pleased to be helping California CASA to write a curriculum for this and provide access to search information so that they can join public child welfare in working for the same valued outcomes.

GM: How were you able to consistently achieve success in finding and engaging so many relatives for young people?

KC: Finding the parents and relatives turned out to be easy in most situations. There was enough information in most child welfare records to get started. The file review and/or US Search reports usually lead us to at least one relative, usually several. It is the interview with the family member that finds the family. Asking question such as, "I understand that you don't have the contact information for your second cousin who plans the family reunions, but can you and I call someone else now who does?" can be extremely productive and garner immediate results.

This is followed up by "let's call your sister right now." Doing it now conveys the importance of this activity more than any other approach. Once you have engaged the family, you must also involve them in a planning meeting as quickly as possible. Action tells the story here; you are either concerned and acting on your concern, or you are saying that you're concerned and doing business as usual. Business as usual isn't working.

GM: How do you think access to such powerful information systems to find parents and relatives will change the practice of child welfare agencies?

KC: The information to locate addresses and phone numbers for most Americans living in the United States and US Territories has been available for years. Data base systems have address information on most of us that goes back to 1983.

The due diligence tools used by child welfare agencies can provide some help. My perspective is that form follows function. We use due diligence tools to prove we tried to find a parent, not to find them. Largely they are not used to find relatives. Frankly, because of the institutional beliefs that have been barriers to working with the family, there has been no reason to improve our systems to locate parents and relatives.

Today the information is available to identify literally millions of relatives for the more than 500,000 children and young people in foster care. That information is available through service providers like US Search in as little as 20 minutes.



In the past our challenges were about families coming forward and claiming their lost children. With these systems and practices it's now about us creating the time and support for social workers to go to the family and engage them in protecting and planning for their children.

GM: What is it like to call or knock on the door of family members 10 years or more after a child has left the family? How did adult family members treat social workers?

KC: The first call or visit to a parent or family member from whom the child has been separated is almost certainly the most anxiety-producing part of this work. In most of our projects it has taken three coaching sessions and sitting with social workers to make these initial contacts.

As I mentioned earlier, having thought through an engagement strategy is very important with the first contact. Also important is to write down the specific information that you want from the person. These calls are highly emotional for the family and for you.

It's very easy to be so captivated by the family member's story and grief over the loss of these young people that you will end the call or visit without getting essential information. An amazingly constant experience is how kind family members have been to us, even when they ask "If you could find us now, why didn't you come 10 years ago?"

There is nothing that is likely to happen during a first call or visit that is worse than being a young person who develops as a child without consistent love and affection while they had a fit and willing family member all along who we didn't even call.

GM: Did family members ever refuse to get involved or help?

KC: There have been situations where a family member has been unwilling to help, but it has been very rare. My sense of this is that the circumstances that lead to involvement of the child welfare system are at its core some of the most painful for individuals and families to confront. Withdrawal from connection with the family is one way individuals or family groups cope with overwhelming circumstances.

This makes the practice of engagement an essential element of social work. Before I try to contact family members and others I plan a unique engagement strategy for each person I try to speak to. What do I know about this person? What is their connection to the children I'm working for? How difficult might this phone call or visit be for them? Finally is there something I can do to leave this person feeling that they have done something to help these children today?

Language is critical, but candor and honesty must be at the center of every conversation.

... "I'm calling you today because I am worried about your niece and nephew."

... "You can imagine how a child might feel who has been through the things she has."

... "I believe that you have information that could really help her today..."

... "No one but you really knows how difficult this has been for you and your family members, but there is an opportunity for things to get better and you can really make a difference."

... "For instance, can you imagine how important knowing how many cousins you have could be? How about talents that your niece shares with someone in your family?"

... "Just for her to know that she hasn't been forgotten would mean so much."

Engagement is my responsibility as a human rights advocate for children and families. I believe that it is a part of my work that is essential and requires planning. To effectively engage family members and parents I must be committed to their well being and need for connections and their right to know. In other words, child-centeredness is a barrier to engaging family members in helping their children. We need to be concerned for each and every parent and family member we work with, now and later.

GM: What kind of changes have child welfare agencies that completed these projects made based on what they learned from the projects?

KC: The simplest change has been the willingness of social workers to call the family and ask for help. Each agency and jurisdiction has uniquely incorporated their lessons learned. A pattern seems to be emerging that the first place in their system that incorporation of the practice happens is with "emancipating" youth. I presume this is for two reasons; one is that time is short and there is a sense of urgency as the young person faces discharge to self. The second is that it seems to be the place

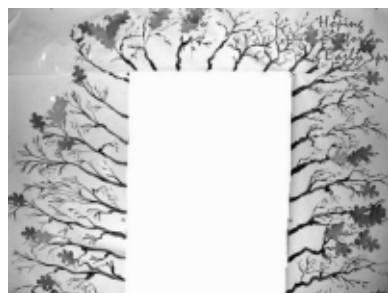
where the concern about the risk of the family to the young person is lowest. Institutional beliefs die hard.

Of course the question arises early in the project, if we can find and contact so many family members for our longest waiting what does this mean for the young children and their families we are working with? Stanislaus, Santa Clara and Pierce Counties in California are using search strategies now to help identify more relatives to support young children and their parents when the Child Protective Services and Court Workers meet families.

GM: How much does it cost to access address information for parents and relatives?

KC: It has become very inexpensive to buy these reports. In some cases you can use free web sites to get an address or phone number. The extensive reports that I use in my practice cost between \$25.00 and \$50.00 per child; of course, they often provide the identity of 15 or more relatives and family friends.

Kevin Campbell is Vice President of Strategic Planning and Service Innovation with EMQ Children and Family Services located in Campbell, California. He is also a technical assistance provider for the National Resource Center. Kevin is primary author of "Lighting the Fire of Urgency: Families Lost and Found in America's Child Welfare System" and "Who Am I? Why Family Really Matters." His projects are assisting child welfare agencies in reassessing the importance of reaching out to all available family members to achieve not only connections for youth, but permanent relative placements for children earlier in their child welfare involvement.



These four photographs graphically display the connections of 25 young people in Cook County, Illinois who have been living in out-of-home care placements an average of 10 years. In the first photo, leaves on the 25 branches represent connections known to the child welfare agency at the start of a family finding project. Each time a connection was made, a leaf was added. Photos display the results after 30, 60 and 82 days.

Kinship Practice in Washington State

A View From The Field



Introduction

One-third of the children in out of home care in Washington State are placed with relatives. Pressure on the system to expand this practice is likely to grow due to a number of factors:

- The drop in the number of licensed foster homes
- The increase in the number of children entering the system due to substance abuse related neglect
- The conflict between ASFA timelines and the time it takes parents to recover from substance abuse and mediate the effects of chronic neglect
- The disproportional numbers of children of color entering and exiting the system
- Pressure from the growing number of grandparents and organizations like AARP
- Lawsuits related to permanence and stability
- The benefits of kin involvement as a best practice in child welfare
- State and Federal policies and laws that call for locating, engaging and placing with relatives

In an attempt to understand why extended families are and are not engaged on behalf of children involved with the child welfare system, twenty confidential interviews were done with social workers around the state. Social workers and relative search specialists from each region who were identified for outstanding practice were interviewed, as were the members of a CPS and CWS unit. This paper summarizes their views on:

- Why and how social workers engage and place with relatives
- Challenges, barriers and concerns that social workers have regarding kinship involvement
- How they involve dads
- What they say is needed to support kinship practice

Noteworthy projects that engage and support kinship are briefly summarized. In addition, a list of relative search sites is included.

Why do social workers locate, engage and place with relatives?

The social workers that were interviewed said that most social workers in Washington State consider it a good day if an emergency or complicated placement needs to be done and a safe and responsible relative is available. One 17-year veteran of CPS said, "Relatives are more likely to be a permanent option, kids are more comfortable, you get a

more relaxed form of care.” He said that in his experience, parents were happier when their children were placed with relatives.

A Native American social worker commented on the connection between relative placement, culture and adult wellness. She said, “ Culture is living and breathing and eating and sleeping in your own. Eventually the child is going to grow up and if he isn’t adopted by family or fictive kin, not only will he ask ‘Why didn’t my family want me’, he will also ask, “Wasn’t there anyone among my people who wanted me?”

Social workers who had been with the system awhile cited experiences from their practice. Watching children that they had removed grow up in care without permanence was too painful for many. One CWS worker said that the angry kids she had seen as an after hours worker made a tremendous impression on her. She said that no one seemed to care about those kids and she was determined not to let that happen on her current caseload.

Effective attitudes and strategies in relative search:

A sense of urgency: Social workers who are identified by their peers as being good at relative search and placement express a sense of urgency about permanence. One CPS social worker said, “I keep the possibility of long term placement in the back of my mind at all times”. Another CPS social worker said “Once I have a case that requires a longer term placement, relative placement becomes my main focus, I put everything else aside for two days. It is a mind set, you have to keep your mind from going back to other things, it is practice, it isn’t something you just do...it’s like a habit, it takes practice.”

Rule them in before you rule them out: Relatives are seen as partners rather than problems, even when they are less than delighted to hear from the state. Ambivalence, resistance and/or hostility are not seen as immediate reasons to rule them out. There isn’t an either-or attitude, either you take this child now, or we will rule you out forever.

Consistent practice: Effective social workers weave relative search and engagement into their daily practice. Even when they might not have time to do all the things they want to do, such as a widespread Internet search, or a family group meeting, they miss no opportunity to ask “Who is related to this kid?” One social worker told a story of driving by a house with a child when the child said, “I know who lives in that house!” She said she went right up to the house and asked, “Do you know this child, do you know who is related to him?” Even if it is early in the case, they ask about the names of relatives and others who might be a resource for the child. They bring up the issue of permanence and ask who might be a permanent resource if one is needed. They document what they learn in the record so that the next worker can find it.

Search: Social workers who find relatives, look for them. They send for the archived volumes of the record and read them. They call relatives up and ask for more names, even if they are initially told that there are no other relatives. They use databases like CAMIS, ACES and they ask OSE, TANF, tribal enrollment, hospital emergency rooms, schools, churches, police and the juvenile court.

Technology: Although workers do use databases and would like access to state databases and more effective Internet search sites, more than one said that nothing beats relationship connections. A relative search specialist said, "When I first started the job, I was hot and heavy to use specialized search engines and tools, but now what I usually do is just call and say that I got their name from Aunt Lucy or whoever I got their name from. I think I get better results."

Documentation: Social workers applauded previous workers who documented relative names, addresses and availability as a permanent resource in such a way as to make the information easy to find in the record.

Effective practices in successful relative placements:

Every social worker that was interviewed expressed frustration with the time and resource constraints that affected their kinship practice. Not one social worker felt that they were able to engage in effective practice fully. To the extent possible they practiced the following:

Respect: Social workers who engage extended family effectively understand that the state can be intimidating and that offices aren't always the most welcoming. They begin initial contacts with requests for information rather than placement. They understand that many people, especially people from communities of color or poverty, are afraid of the government, especially CPS, and are ashamed that some one in their family is having this kind of trouble. A relative search specialist said, "The building is like a holding place because of security, not a friendly place, if they come in here, it is very tense." He went on, "Parents come in for a meeting and all the professionals sit on one side and the parents sit on the other. One little parent or two little parents on one side and all the professionals on the other...you just watch the parents either wilting or puffing up to kill us. He said that he tries to meet extended family away from the office.

Challenge bias and assumptions: Social workers who were interviewed reported that successful work with relatives required letting go of a number of biases and assumptions. The most common assumptions and biases mentioned were that the entire family has the same kind of problems as the parents of the child in care, that a middle class foster home is better than a less affluent relative home and that once a child is bonded to a caregiver, they will be irreversibly damaged if they are moved.

Fully inform the relative caregiver: Honesty about the nature and the degree of the child's behaviors and needs is critical. One social worker said "You have to tell them everything, otherwise they may end up having to transport the child back and forth to Seattle for some kind of treatment and eventually give up because they don't have the time, the money or a good enough car to keep it up".

Involve the relative caregiver in the process: Successful social workers try to involve the relative caregiver in the child welfare process as much as possible. Several of them had used family group conferencing (FGC) as a way to involve the family in decision

making, however even when FGC was not available, social workers invited family to staffings and tried to make sure that they had help and support throughout the process.

Assess for permanence as well as risk: Social workers who have successful relative placements do not skirt the issue of permanence and include a discussion of clinical issues like guilt, passivity and boundaries in the conversation. They report a strong commitment to looking for another relative caretaker if the current one is unable or unsuitable to keep the child in the long run. Every social worker interviewed identified good assessment of safety as a critical component and consistently noted that they could use assessment tools better designed for use with relative placements.

Support: While there was lots of frustration in this area, social workers who have successful relative placements are clear about the importance of material and emotional support in making a placement successful. To the degree that time and resources allowed, they used every means possible to identify what their relative caretakers needed and to help them find a way to get those needs met. One relative search specialist was expanding her role to develop a supportive program that included a liaison to TANF, good assessment materials, accessible information about the system and existing supports, training and orientation and a newsletter.

Barriers to effective kinship practice

Time and Workload:

By far the biggest barrier to effective kinship practice identified by social workers is the amount of time it takes to find and place with relatives. One CPS social worker described it this way. “Deadlines are a real obstacle, sometimes we can’t even find the parents and then if we find them, we have to assess them, get reports written, get med coupons, get the school file, often things are complicated by custody stuff, it’s beyond what a human being can do. All you have time for is to ask, do you have any relatives in this county? If so...great...if not...there’s no time, you have to move on so you place with a foster parent.” Another worker talked about, “the immediacy of everything, it takes so much time and foster care is just so much more accessible”.

Placing children with foster parents is administratively much easier than placing with kin. Access is relatively easy; in fact someone else will do it for you. Foster parents constitute a generic resource, which has already been assessed and trained. Funding streams and payment processes are in place. A CWS social worker said, “Of course kids are better with a relative, but at the same time it is such a relief to have them in a neutral setting with a foster mother who knows what she is doing and can carry her own weight.” Another worker said, “Foster parents have training and support, experience and someone to call, they understand the system, relatives often don’t have any of those things.”

By contrast, kinship care must be individually tailored to each child with every aspect having to be attended to with each new placement. Finding relatives in the first place is a time consuming process, often hampered by issues of trust, access and confidentiality. Each potential placement must be assessed for safety. Assessment for permanence is as complicated, if not more so than with foster homes. Clinical issues related to boundaries,

guilt, grief and anger, inherent in the nature of family placements must be attended to. A CWS social worker said, "It is a hassle, relatives quarrel with each other and get you involved, calls come in day and night, it can be very irritating."

Funding streams and payment processes are not in place for kinship care providers. The social worker has to work with each new placement to determine needs and find creative ways to meet them. A relative search specialist said, "It's hard when grandma has to catch a ride to the office or call around to everyone to see if anyone has an infant car seat. Unless a kid is placed in a foster home, the only source of placement support money is HBS and when the budget is tight, it is the first to get cut and relatives are left out there on their own". Another social worker observed, "Lots of relatives won't go through the stress and humiliation of getting TANF relative payee money, it is confusing and they feel like they aren't treated respectfully".

Training and orientation to the system, a part of the foster care licensing process, has to be attended to with each new placement. Workers talked about the fact that there is no orientation for relatives about how to work with the department. One worker said, "It takes time to educate relatives about the system and you have to do it every time." A relative search specialist said, "Not getting training is especially a problem when you have drug affected babies, the relative takes them and it isn't so bad when they are babies, you just wrap them up tight, but when they get to moving around, it gets a little more complicated. When they get a little older, that's when all the medical things start showing up, the relative thinks they can't handle them and they bring them back."

Cultural dynamics and limited English proficiency add a layer of complexity as well. A Native American social worker said, "I worry that I didn't look long enough and hard enough, that I know who will be coming and going... who comes through the house on those powwow days, those basketball tournament days, who stays in the house. Lots of times people are sleeping on the floor because they are all relatives... some real extended relatives, then something happens with one of the cousins and the grandma is so ashamed because she didn't know the cousin from Montana would do that." One CPS social worker talked about the challenge of working with Russian families because she found that so many of them were very mistrustful and afraid of the government.

Kinship care is a relational process from the first relative search call to the on-going placement process. Given the amount of time that child welfare social workers have to devote to case and data management tasks, it is a stretch to find additional hours to build trusting relationships with the relatives of children in care. One CPS social worker said, "Once you get a kid in the system, there are so many things to do, I don't think there is as much institutional or an attitudinal resistance to placing with relatives as people believe, I think it is just that you don't want to add more work."

Liability

Even social workers that support relative placements worry about liability. A CPS worker known for outstanding kinship practice, put it this way, "The line worker is ultimately responsible. If something were to happen, then they will be all over the file."

They will probably find something you didn't do...there is no way you can do everything. It is entirely possible that you may have missed something with a relative placement. With a foster home, the responsibility feels more shared."

Case Process Barriers

Social workers expressed frustration with what they saw as "dueling mandates" such as the need to place with relatives who might be out of area, conflicting with visitation or attachment needs being impacted by various process delays.

Assessment: Routine processes are either not in place or not used to assess relatives and foster parents effectively. One social worker said, "We end up having lots of assumptions that relatives have been assessed and checked out when they haven't". She also said, "We assume that the foster parents have been assessed for permanence, then we get to termination and we find out that they don't want to keep the kids."

Distance: More than one social worker interviewed said that distance was a major obstacle in relative placements. A CWS worker said, "Many of our parents are drifters, relatives are often half way across the country, how do we make relative placements when our primary obligation is reunification and visitation?" Distance related delays in relative placement caused concerns about attachment as well. Most of the social workers interviewed worried about moving children, especially young children, who had been in their placement 9 months or more.

Technology: Social workers would like to use databases to find relatives but expressed frustration with access and concerns about confidentiality. One CWS worker said, "There are so many barriers to accessing information. We should be allowed to work with all the state databases." Another said, "If we could have access to the same computer data that Support Enforcement has, we wouldn't have to call them every time we go to Court, plus the information helps you assess risk early."

Interstate Compact (ICPC): Just about every worker interviewed, identified the ICPC process as a significant and frustrating obstacle not only to early relative placement, but to subsequent placement as well. Social workers said that because ICPC delayed the move to relative placement, children attached to their foster parents, so when the go ahead was finally received, they were often reluctant to move the child.

Background clearance checks: A relative search specialist said, "Background checks take 2-4 weeks, which holds everything up, it is terrible, because we have to make people wait to get a placement. One week we had 4 babies come in...we were able to place one right away with relatives but only because the relative had recently had a background check for another child, the 2nd baby we were able to place in one week because the background check came back fast because the relative had been a cop, but we are still waiting on the other two."

Attitudinal Barriers

While most social workers interviewed were critical about attitudes and biases that kept colleagues from working with relatives, their own worries about relative placement reflected underlying concerns that might be part of why those attitudes and biases exist.

“The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree”. Worries about the ability to assess family safety and functioning effectively came up in many interviews. One relative search specialist worried that the family system would be dysfunctional but she wouldn’t have anything concrete to rule them out. Another said, “There is so much dysfunction throughout family life, they didn’t do a good job the first time; they say, ‘I’ve changed’, but it is scary to take a chance.” One worker worried about dads, boyfriends and blended families, he said, “It gets complicated as to whom you can place with, some people have a shady past.” Still another worker said, “I worry that the parents will have access to the kids and there will be a failure to protect because relatives are too passive with more dangerous parents”.

Middle class bias: One social worker said, “When it comes time to move the baby to a relative home after an emergency foster home placement... maybe some time has gone by and now it is in CWS, there is just so much difference between the homes, you are having to move the baby from a nice home, clean with everything arranged to a home that maybe isn’t so sanitary, not laid out... you practically have to rearrange the whole house to accommodate the baby... it is a really tough decision, even when you know that the relative home has all kinds of love and family around.” A relative search specialist said, “Social workers feel like a middle class home can provide more for a child. “Maybe the family is marginal but would meet the MLR so it’s like... do I really want to put this kid with family who are struggling financially and in other ways or with strangers who can give them private lessons?” A very experienced worker said, “Another reason is that lots of times the home doesn’t conform to the social workers ideas about what a good home is or what good parenting is. When I worked in the Native American unit, I learned that kids can sleep 4-5 to a bed and it can be ok. I would talk to the aunties and they would be there to keep an eye on things and make sure everyone was safe.”

Attachment: The belief that children, especially small children who have been in a placement 9-12 months, cannot be moved without irrevocably damaging their primary attachment is very wide spread. Attachment disorder is invoked often as a reason for not moving children. While some social workers said that they believed that if a child could attach once, he or she could attach again, at least half of the other social workers interviewed felt that to disrupt a placement of 9 months or more would be too damaging to the child. A few CWS social workers felt that the move to relatives often happened too late and consequently endangered the child’s ability to make future attachments. In the words of one social worker, “How much more trauma can the kid take?”

Some comments about dads

How do you find dads?

No one interviewed had any magic ideas about finding dads. Most said that their best partner in this is the Office of Support Enforcement (OSE) and a few identified their relationship with someone in that office as critical to their success. Social workers also said that they routinely check birth certificates, and ask the mom and also all known relatives. Most social workers interviewed felt that paternity testing was a key and should be easier. One social worker suggested, "Paternity testing through our system so it is cheaper."

Why do you think we don't look harder for dads?

Social workers were candid about why fathers aren't more involved.

- "If there are multiple fathers, I tend to lean towards the maternal side of the family so I can be sure to keep the siblings together."
- "Lots of times social workers don't go looking for dads because of the old and untrue notion that dads are just there to be financially responsible and as far as parenting goes they are an afterthought."
- "I think we don't look for dads because dealing with men might be more intimidating."
- "I think we believe mom when she says dad is a rat."
- "Lack of understanding about the importance of a dad in a child's life."
- "Feel it is unsafe because you don't know their entire history."
- "You have to be careful... it can be very hurtful to a man and his family if they get all excited thinking they have a child and then after the paternity test, it turns out he isn't the father."

What do social workers think would help them locate and work with relatives?

Help with the placement process

Social workers uniformly said that kinship care takes more time because the individual social worker has to do each part of it, while with foster care, a system is already set up to facilitate and support placement. When asked what would they thought would help, every social worker interviewed said that they needed help finding relatives, training and orienting them, assessing suitability and supporting the placements.

- **Relative search specialists:** One CPS social worker said, "Finding relatives is the tough thing, a relative finding person would really help." Another said, "We need a relative search person to ask about relatives at shelter care, because trust is an issue at that point and parents have fewer issues with someone who isn't the CPS worker." A relative search specialist said, "I see the social workers as my customers and trust is extremely important...I share all my conversations with relative caregivers with the social worker and I am careful not to make social workers look bad." One social worker thought case aides might be able to do relative searches, another thought that it might be a role for a Social Worker One position.
- **Liaisons** who help relatives get the information that they need and who advocates for them within the system. One relative search specialist has developed a TANF

liaison for relatives at the CSO, but worries that if budget cuts cut her position, that connection will be lost.

- Someone to do home studies. A CPS social worker said that help with relative home studies would make a big difference. A relative search specialist said, "We do a thorough home study...we are raising the standard on foster parents, we should do the same with relatives."
- Flexible money to help relatives get what they need to support the placement. Many social workers talked about the importance of funds such as home based services. The discrepancy in payment between foster parents and kinship care providers was universally considered unfair and non-supportive. One worker interviewed said, "It costs a lot of money to feed all those kids, we need to give relatives the same courtesy we give foster parents."
- More efficient access to funding. A CWS social worker described a placement with a paternal grandparent, saying, "They are older and need day care, I have to do an exceptional cost and needs documentation as to why the child should be in day care, it is taking longer than I expected and putting stress on the placement, I worry that I am not doing enough to shore up the placement." Another CWS social worker said, "We need to be more efficient in our reimbursements, it took three months to reimburse one of my kinship caregivers for clothes and it was a financial burden for them."
- Specific training and support groups for relative caregivers because their issues and needs are different from foster parents. On the horizon in one office is a kinship caregiver support group.
- Access to trainings and groups for foster parents so they can attend if they want to. A CPS social worker said, "We need to educate relatives about the system, put information on websites...most of our clients are on the Internet." One relative search specialist currently sends out interactive training information to kinship caregivers who are on line.

Access to a wider array of technology

While several social workers noted that nothing beats being able to say that Grandma or Aunt Lucy said to call, most said that it was enormously frustrating not to have access to the data systems that other agencies had access to.

- "There are so many barriers to accessing information. We should be allowed to work with all the state databases"
- "There is a lack of contracts with agencies to use their computer systems; we have to be able to get and share information."
- "We need access to paid searches. If we had a reputable Internet search device that we had a contract for, we could find lots more relatives."
- "The attorney general's office has a process and a data bank that makes putative fathers legal fathers; we should be able to access that."
- "DCFS needs to revisit the links with employment security...we used to have a contract and now it takes so much time to get information."
- "We should be able to access the state Client Registry which cross references clients across Washington State systems."

- “We should have a flat court order that gives us permission to access information to locate and identify relatives on behalf of kids in care.”

Training

Many social workers felt that cross system training would be helpful in building a sense of urgency about permanence and placement and broadening understanding of kinship care.

- “Every one in the system needs a better understanding of the long-term needs of the child.”
- Social worker reluctance to move children and confusion about attachment suggested that training in attachment dynamics might help.
- “Court Personnel should be trained in kinship practice.”
- “How to go after funding, clinical issues in relative placements, how to use data bases, how to assess relative placements.”

Structural changes and supports

- “We should have two workers on placement cases, one to handle issues related to the child and the placement and one to work with the parent and the court.”
- “Clear policies about exactly what we can tell relatives so we don’t worry about confidentiality.”
- “Court orders that expect parents to share relative names, relative search forms attached to the dependency packet.”
- “We used to have a home support specialist, I used to be able to have her call relatives for me and that would narrow the search, then I’d make the remaining calls. She also did the second required monthly visit on in-home dependencies and that gave me some time for other things. Unfortunately, we don’t have that anymore...it would make a big difference if we did.”
- “I’ve used family group conferencing for cases where we didn’t seem to be getting anywhere and we’ve gotten movement, FGC finds relatives who are on the periphery and engages them, all of a sudden we find out that they have things to say that can help.”
- Another social worker said, “Flexibility is needed and it takes time, creativity and a willingness on the part of systems to negotiate it: I placed an African American girl with her great-great grandparents. The grandfather did not trust the state and would not sign anything. I had to work it out so that I could sign for things like med coupons. The girl has been there for 3 years now and there are backup relatives in case something happens to the ones she is with.”
- “We need to remember that while a relative might not be interested in placement in the short run, they might be interested in the long run and we need to call them back.”

Supervisory and management leadership

- Management needs to make it a priority
- Support from direct supervisor. “Supervisors should be trained in kinship practice so they can help you figure out how to access and deal with things.”

- Leadership from management. “Our region is articulating clear expectations regarding relative search and placements.”

Model Programs

FAST: Family Assessment and Stabilization Team and WRAP Services

Mary Stone Smith

Catholic Community Services, Tacoma Washington, 253-759-9544

- FAST is an intensive service program that uses a wrap around approach to serve children/youth/families with severe histories.
- Children are referred either on an emergent basis to avert a hospital or group care admission (FAST) or on a non-emergent basis to avert a long-term institutional placement (WRAP)
- The program is funded through either Mental Health or Child Welfare depending on the referral source.
- Most referrals are children 11-17 years old at risk of hospitalization or homelessness and come from DCFS. The goal is to avoid hospitalization and multiple moves.
- The program operates with the belief that every child has a family and that the single most identified variable contributing to positive outcomes for children involves unifying them with family members.
- The program does whatever it takes to connect children with relatives, develop permanent family options and assist families in meeting whatever needs they have in order that they can provide a placement for the child.
- 81% of the children served are living with parents or relatives within an average of 61 days.

A Second Chance Inc. Kinship Foster Care

Pittsburgh, Pa

www.asecondchance-kinship.com

412-6652300

- A Second Chance is a private, non-profit kinship foster care service in collaboration with the office of Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families.
- A Second Chance provides a full range of kinship foster care and support services
- Point of Contact Service: Direct services to kinship caregivers, which includes, orientation, training, monitoring and assessment, re-certification and after care assistance.
- Certification Training; A 24-hour kinship certification training
- Enrichment Workshops: 15 training hours annually for yearly re-certification
- “AfterCare” a program that provides follow-up services for approximately one year to prevent children from re-entering the system.
- Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment Program
- Traditional and emergency respite
- 24 hour confidential hot line
- Furniture assistance

Minnesota Kinship Care

Contacts

Relative Custody Assistance Program: Laurie Ruhl, Program Advisor, 651-297-3636, or laurie.ruhl@state.mn.us

Kinship Foster Care: Deborah Beske-Brown, 651-296-4309

- State policy requires that kin be considered first for an out-of-home placement
- Kinship caregivers must meet the same licensing standards and requirements and receive the same foster care payment
- Minnesota also has a Relative Custody Assistance Program that provides an ongoing permanency assistance payment to eligible children in the foster care system whose relative caregivers become their legal guardians. Adoption or a return to the child's parent must have been ruled out before a child can be eligible.

Washington State Family Decision Making Program (FDM)

Contact: Pat Dettling, Division of Children and Family Services
360-902-8065

- FDM is a process that locates and engages the extended families of children involved with the state child welfare system.
- FDM is a way to inform professionals and extended family about the bottom line concerns in the case and the long term needs of the child
- FDM is a decision making meeting where the family of the child develops a plan for the child, often involving placement
- FDM facilitates kinship placement, develops a safety network and identifies professional and family supports for the placement and the child.
- Over 600 family group conferences and family support meetings have been done in Washington State since January 1997, over 90% of the families involved developed plans accepted by the social worker responsible for the case
- There are currently FDM facilitators in each of the 6 DCFS administrative regions, some are DCFS funded and some are privately contracted.
- There are two studies of long-term Washington State FGC outcomes, one for children in the general foster care population and one for youth in the group care population. They are available by email: kgund@u.washington.edu

Family Search Tools

- www.virtualgumshoe.com
- www.whowhere.com
- www.publicdata.com
- www.anywho.com
- www.familysearch.org
- www.genealogytoday.com
- www.people-finder.com
- www.bigfoot.com
- www.people.yahoo.com
- www.switchboard.com
- www.infospace.com
- www.realwhitepages.com

- [Http://search.langenberg.com](http://search.langenberg.com)
- [Http://www.metrokc.gov/sheriff/sosch.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/sheriff/sosch.htm) (Sex offenders Search)
- <http://officialcities.com>
- Background checks: www.ussearch.com
- Washington State Dept. of Health, Center for Health Statistics Information System, type TODBTH on the command line for vital statistics
- Prison Locator Services
- International Social Services (Baltimore), 410-230-2730
- American Red Cross

Additional Resources (Mailed to DCFS with a hard copy of this report)

- Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Communities, Kinship Training Materials
- Hunter College School of Social-Work, Competency Based Curriculum
- Ohio Standards for Effective Kinship Services
- DC FS Region 5 Standards and forms for Kinship Practice
- Region 4 Family Search Guide
- Toppenish Relative Packet

**Report prepared for Families For Kids Partnership by:
Karin Gunderson, MSW**

**With thanks to the Social Workers in DCFS who generously made time to share
their thoughts**

**Northwest Institute for Children and Families, UW School of Social Work
June 16, 2003**



Family Connectedness FAQ

Defining the Need for Connectedness

Q: How do we determine the appropriate level of urgency?

A: Urgent-When the child or young person has no connections with family (i.e., parents, other family members or caring and consistent adults who provide appropriate levels of affection). Possible circumstances include:

- The child or young person is removed from a parent (or parents) and for a significant period of time has been isolated from other family members and caring adults;
- The child or young person is in a “non-permanent” foster family placement; the foster parents are not likely to be a guardianship or adoptive resource;
- The child or young person will likely be leaving the home on a planned or unplanned basis in the future

Q: What if a child is already stable in their home with their family members? How do we start this process for families where a child is not in dire need of placement?

A: In this case, the family finding process would be utilized as a means of increasing natural team members and support to further protect the stable placement

Perspective Issues

Q: How far do we push when a child, parent or foster parent is reluctant?

A: Keep revisiting the issue and focus on the connected needs of children, young people and parents. Adults suffer from loneliness and isolation also. Revisit the big unmet needs identified by the parent(s) or caregivers and discuss the value of increasing connectedness as a way to sustainably meet support and friendship needs. Continue to be frank about the limited value and sometimes harmful effects of out of home placements and the increased risks to their child’s safety and well-being in congregate care settings, including hospitals.

Q: How is it a “team” when the child is not present at a meeting to determine a family connection?

A: The child’s best interest is taken into account when determining the possibility of family connections. It is important not to give a child false hope before the possibility of future connections is finalized. Safety continues to be our highest priority. Prospective relative connections and non relative supports must be assessed for background information and suitability prior to initiating the hope of connections for the child or young person. Remember the underlying need and related urgency, the child is alone and should not be subjected to further preventable relationship losses.

- Q: How do we help parent(s) and relatives resolve past differences and troubled relationships within the family and with friends?
- A: Begin with a belief that conflict in close relationships with family members and friends is a normal part of human relationships. Consider your own experiences, what important relation do you have that has not included strong disagreements or hurt feelings at times? With your support and that of others these relationships can be healed and strengthened. Start the process with the most likely situation for success and use your training and life experience to facilitate a resolution. The initial fears of those in conflict will be greater than the reality of the conflict in most situations. This is an area of practice well suited to the skills and training of therapists, counselors and social workers. There is no reason to avoid this important work, welcome the opportunity to help with something that can lead to quick results.
- Q: How is it a “team” when we move forward with family finding even if the family doesn’t want it?
- A: If the family truly does not want family finding, it will not be forced on them. Remember that your focus should be on supporting the family to create sustainable solutions to their big unmet needs. It is suggested to revisit the issue occasionally while stressing the importance of natural connections and the essential role that safe and consistent adult relationships play in the future success of developing children, young people and adults.

Connectedness Map

- Q: Is the connectedness map a useful tool during the assessment phase?
- A: Yes – this is a tool that all CCS therapists, Care Coordinators and Facilitators will be using and an excellent way for a child, family and social worker to identify people who are important to them. This tool can also establish a visually compelling image of loneliness for young people separated from consistent adult relationships over time as a result of multiple moves in out of home care and long-term separation from family members.
- Q: Do you always have to go through the parents or social worker to do the connectedness map with a child?
- A: CCS staff will not do a connectedness map with a child without the parent’s or social worker’s permission.
- Q: In what situations might a connected map be inadvisable with a child?
- A: In rare situations children or youth may present with acute suicidality which may be aggravated by acknowledging their profound loneliness with no clear, short –term solution. Work with the child or youth to stabilize this serious condition will be required prior to assessing connectedness with them. Connected mapping can still be done with parent(s), social workers and other adult team members.

Legal Issues

- Q: What is our liability if we connect a child up with someone who is abusive or who has done negative things in the past?
- A: There is a shared risk between the entire team in situations like this. For DCFS children, a background check and home study may be required prior to the child or young person having unsupervised visits. Approval of adults who visit the child is required by parents and social workers when CCS is facilitating visitation or respite.
- Q: How do we work around legal red tape regarding reconnecting a child to natural family – i.e. a no contact order with a family member who would like to make contact or a parent whose parental rights have been terminated?
- A. Situations that involve no-contact orders or parent(s) who have had their parental rights terminated require careful assessment. Experience tells us that adults can change over-time i.e. establish sobriety and greater stability with support. Also information that can lead to no contact orders can be inaccurate or circumstances can change reducing or eliminating the original concerns behind the court order. It is essential that you consult your supervisor and the parent(s) or social worker before proceeding to create connections for the child in these situations. All court orders must be followed, it is possible for the parent(s) or social worker to request the court to modify or remove court imposed restrictions based on new information.
- Q. Should we connect or re-connect a child or young person to a relative who has harmed children or adults in the past or might pose an immanent risk to a child or young person?
- A: Children and young people **will not** be connected to adults who are known to pose an immanent risk to the child or young person's physical or emotional safety.

Revised 03/05

First Telephone Call Scripts with Relatives:

Hello, my name is Melissa, and I am a family liaison from Orange County, CA and I am calling for Patrice. Is this she? (yes) Thank you so much for leaving me a message and responding to my letter. Are you in a place where you can talk right now because I am so excited for Justin to find out more information about his family. Remember the questions from the letter that Justin had, such as who he looks like, how many cousins he has, family reunions...Your help sharing this information could really make a difference in Justin's future.

(If they don't return a call from your letter.) I am calling to follow up on the letter that I sent you a week ago. I can imagine this must be a difficult phone call to receive. Are you in a place where you can talk right now because I am so excited for Justin to learn more information about his family. Remember the questions from the letter that Justin had, such as who he looks like, how many cousins he has, family reunions...what would you like to tell me?

(Allow time for the person called to explain their situation, to tell their story about Justin.)

(If the person asks about Justin's situation.) I know that you must have questions. I really can't answer them right now. There may be a time in the future where we could talk to you and answer some of your questions. Again I realize that this is difficult but my primary concern right now is to help Justin get answers to some of his questions. Your help with this information could make such a difference in his life.

One of the things that might really help our conversation today is if you could tell me one of the things you are most proud of about

your family. A story or something someone has done in the past that was very special to you.

What about family reunions and gatherings? What are your family traditions? Do you know who plans them (reunions)? (Try to get their name and contact information. Perhaps put them on a conference call with the family member who plans the reunions or other family gatherings.)

(If they ask about how to have contact with Justin) I want to assure you that I am going to share your information and how to contact you with the rest of my team. It sounds like you're offering to help Justin more. Let me write down the things that you are willing to do and I will share that with the rest of my team.

(If they cannot have any contact with the child) This may be your one of the few opportunities you may have to do something to really help Justin. The information that you share with me could truly improve this child's life. (Default back to questions about family.)

(If person sounds upset) I can't imagine what you must be feeling right now. I am so sorry for what your family has been through. But we're asking for your help now to give some answers to Justin's questions.

You might think of some more things that are important for Justin to know over the next few days, or you might know other family members who would like to share information with Justin. Please feel free to contact me at _____. Thank you so much for sharing this important information, it is really valuable for Justin. The simple act of sharing this information may dramatically affect this child's life.

Group Home StepUp Project: Moving Up & Out of Congregate Care

Final Report



Alameda County Children & Family Services

With Assistance from
Casey Family Programs &
California Permanency for Youth Project

August 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Group Home Population

- In 2005, over 400 Alameda County foster youth reside in Group Home Care- representing from 12-15% of our total foster care population.
- Though Group Home care is intended to provide short-term treatment and structure, too many foster youth spend their entire adolescent years residing in multiple group home settings and do not return to family placements.
- Unfortunately, the majority of these youth lose family, peer, and school connections and are likely to emancipate from the system without any permanent, life-long connection.
- Outcomes for this population are amongst the worst for dependent children placed in out of home care.

The Project

- The department invested 6 CWW's, embedded in the two Group Home units.
- Casey Family Program invested 1 social worker to support the project.
- The department arranged to receive technical assistance from the CPYP initiative to add structure to project.
- The Project commitment was for 6 months (January – July 2005).
- The Project set out to answer the following questions:
 - Do all these youth need to be in Group Home care?
 - If not, are there alternative placement options?
 - If not via traditional placements- FFA, county foster home- is there family available?
 - With the investment of these staff, can we produce better outcomes for these youth?
 - Will the financial investment of additional staff be cost neutral, or produce savings?
 - If successful, should we institutionalize this practice? Are there other structural changes the department needs to make regarding our practices around group home care?

The Human Element

- The essence of this project was the human element, primarily the story of the foster youth whose future trajectories were changed forever
- Twelve detailed vignettes are included in the body of the report
- In addition to the impact this project had on foster youth, so did it move the staff involved

Project Success

- 72 youth assigned to project (60 initially, then 12 in a second wave), approximately 10 per worker at a time- as secondary support to primary Group Home CWW
- Focus on case mining and web-based search technology for family
- StepUp staff bridged new relationships, focusing not on placement, but on family connections

- After 6 months- 19 youth placed out of group home care with family, including reunifications and discovery of fathers that had been listed as “whereabouts unknown” in the children’s records
- 17 more youth slated for placement with family in the next 1 to 3 months
- Only 2 of these placement successes were achieved through traditional means, via finding FFA or county licensed foster parents. Parents, Relative and Fictive Kin are the primary placement successes
- 12 youth intentionally remain in congregate care, progressing in treatment, in large part supported by the (re)connection with family now involved in treatment and visiting youth in care
- A surprisingly high number of youth were connected with family previously unknown to the youth. Additionally, a high number of youth were re-connected with family members estranged after many years in the system

Findings

- The project was more successful than anticipated.
- Success was almost exclusively due to placement with parents, relatives, and fictive kin- not with FFA and county foster parents, as originally speculated
- There are many youth in Group Home care who don’t need to be- as there are family out there willing to make a permanent commitment to care for them
- Many of the youth’s behavioral trouble subsided when connected to family
- Not all youth were moved out of group home care, but connection to their often estranged family while in treatment was still a positive outcome
- Partnership with Group Home providers, Mental Health and other service providers is critical
- The project exposed system issues that unintentionally contribute to the number of youth that remain in group home care, and the department is developing ways to change the way we care for youth in congregate care
- A detailed financial analysis shows that continued investment in this effort is fiscally beneficial

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Our family finding success has convinced us that investing in searching for family and cultivating working relationship with these families is the key to success. Recruiting more foster parents for teenagers has been a solution touted for years as the remedy to this issue. This project shattered a myth of sorts, that due to lack of family resources, recruitment of foster parents willing to care for teens was by default the only alternative option. It is recommended that equal department attention be given to more thorough family finding efforts as a sequential first step in placement practice.
- Based on feedback from an adoption CWW, working with the project, the department should explore using family finding technologies and practices validated in the StepUp project to integrate into adoptions practice as well. It is particularly noted that the current “search” efforts for family used by the adoptions program are very limited given the new technologies and practiced methods used in the StepUp project
- Institutionalize controls for how and when children are placed in group home care as successful efforts to transition youth out of unnecessary established congregate care placements will only be back filled by new group home placements that are not necessary. Specifically, the project exposed a disturbing number of group home placements initiated many years prior as “temporary,” but then the case was lost amidst others, and years later the youth has habituated to the group home culture and was estranged from many important family connections.
- One already existing control that is difficult to enforce in the department is the “conversion” procedures. In procedure- youth placed in emergency group home placements (or any emergency placement for that matter) are not to be “converted” to court approved long-term placement status without review and consideration by Long term placement staff. Past and current efforts to control conversion practice have been ineffective.
- It is critical that the department continue its dialogue with Group Home providers. 3 separate meetings have been held with Group Home providers discussing the department’s policy direction. Many Group Homes have changed their practices in response, but some have not. A strong partnership with Group Homes is an essential element for continued success

Preparing Everyone, An Interactive Workshop

Youth Centered Family Group Conference “Engaging Caring Adults”

(Adapted From *Adolescents and Families for Life: A Toolkit for Supervisors* by Robert G. Lewis and Maureen Heffernan, used with permission)

- **Teen-Centered**

The teen must be present for the meetings and actively involved in their pre-planning. The teen’s plan is developed from what the teen identifies as hopes and wishes for the future. It is planning genuinely done *with* adolescents, not *for* them or *to* them. This process reinforces meaningful personal connections that broaden the definition of permanency to include more than placement. It uses a teen’s natural support network to find and strengthen the personal relationships that are part of a satisfying life. The process has yielded permanent family connections. At least as affirming is the self-esteem garnered from the knowledge that he or she is lovable enough that other people have been willing to come together to help in the achievement of his or her dreams.

- **Personalized**

This is not a cookie cutter approach. The process must be adapted to each teen’s unique needs and circumstances. It is a culturally sensitive process, such that the style of meeting, communication patterns, refreshments, location, and outcomes are reflective of the teen’s culture.

- **Inclusive**

All manner of individuals can be involved in these meetings, generally anyone who the teen would like to invite, with input and guidance from professionals. In addition to professional service providers, this may include current and former caregivers, birth family, teachers, coaches, neighbors, clergy, and others from the community. Each person receives a personal letter or invitation, often written and signed by the teen.

- **Holistic**

This process considers the teen’s strengths and needs in all life domains, as identified by the teen and the adults who are involved. Permanent family connections are a primary need but other areas may receive attention as well. For instance, one teen may excel academically and need assistance in applying to college; another would benefit from a part-time job. A teen might need one or two caring adults to share quality time, while another may need transportation to soccer games. A permanency family is identified among those present, but it may also mean that participants agree to help recruit a family or to provide the teen with opportunities to learn about family living. Others may commit to provide support for a newly created family. Formal agency services are part of the mix, but in a flexible way that is responsive to the needs identified in the planning process.

- **Adaptable**

This model can be used in its entirety as a specialized, personalized planning process. Pieces can also be adapted to the existing case planning and administrative review process within most agencies. For instance, the teen could be more fully involved in an agency’s current process and a greater number of persons close to the teen could be invited to participate.

- **Ongoing**

Teen-Centered Planning requires several meetings and may evolve into an informal support network that stays together indefinitely. The first meeting identifies hopes, strengths and needs. Participants begin the process of responding as individuals or collaborators. Subsequent meetings refine the teen’s profile and provide for follow-up and development of next steps.

- **Accountable**

This approach builds in accountability to the teen and to the other persons involved in the teen’s plan. Each meeting ends with the identification of specific next steps and personal commitments to a piece of the effort. At times, people may choose accountability partners with whom they will check in to ensure that they are staying on task.

Preparing Everyone, an Interactive Workshop

Tips for Successful Family Team Conferences¹

- 1) Help the family think through in advance what their goals are for the Family Team Conference.
- 2) If the family cannot think of its own formal supports for the conference, use your skills to help them think creatively about who would be a resource that could be developed.
- 3) Review the file and other records as if you know nothing about the case (there are always critical facts in the record that are forgotten and issues related to substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health are particularly important).
- 4) Assume that the team members need reminding about the ground rules, especially treating the family with respect.
- 5) Think strategically about seating arrangements. Do not seat the family so that they are the center of attention and surrounded by formal agency stakeholders.
- 6) Prepare the team members in advance to think about the family's strengths and look at the family when you affirm their assets.
- 7) Listen, and write goals and steps in the family's own words.
- 8) When families become uncomfortable with an important issue, transition to other, safer issues until it is natural to return to the issue causing stress.
- 9) Think about future transitions in the family's life when crafting the plan and encourage the family to anticipate the stresses of future events (such as new family members or losses of support).
- 10) As the plan for the individualized course of action is developed, ask the team and family, "What could go wrong with this plan?" as a form of crisis planning.
- 11) Encourage creativity among the team when brainstorming solutions. Think beyond the traditional categorical supports.
- 12) Insure that team members are clear about assignments and your intent to follow up to see that they are completed.

¹ Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group (2001) Handbook for Family Team Conferencing, Montgomery Alabama, authors.

Preparing Everyone, an Interactive Workshop

- 13) Build capacity to support the family when the team is no longer a necessity.
- 14) Don't expect to address all of the family's needs in a single meeting. A successful meeting can be one that provides new information on which to act in future meetings.
- 15) Once the team develops, you can expect that team members will want to continue to meet to assess progress, develop new strategies and to update the course of action. Depending on the purpose and outcome of the first conference, you may find it helpful to schedule the next conference at the end of that conference to address future and/or unresolved issues.
- 16) Some family team conferences require rapid follow-up. In those situations, such as when the team has created a safety plan that needs close monitoring, a quick follow-up meeting will be helpful to assess progress and identify additional supports that may be necessary.
- 17) When a family team meeting could be useful and is desired by a family member who is a victim of domestic violence, it will be helpful to suggest inviting a domestic violence specialist to be a part of the team meeting.
- 18) If it is determined that the family does not acknowledge or recognize the safety risks, it would be helpful to have the protective services worker present at the conference to ensure that safety issues are properly addressed.
- 19) The child welfare worker can look for opportunities to delegate tasks, to create a phone tree and share responsibilities with other team members before offering to do more.
- 20) POST THE PURPOSE AND THE GROUND RULES ON NEWSPRINT SO IF THE GROUP BECOMES UPSET OR DRIFTS FROM THE PURPOSE, FACILITATORS CAN ASK THE GROUP: "HOW ARE WE DOING WITH OUR AGREEMENTS FOR THIS MEETING?"

Families for Teens (ACS, NYC)

Looking for Connections with Teens

For any resource, as much of the following information as possible would be helpful: name, home phone number, work phone number, cell phone number, address. A date of birth or social security number might also be useful in certain situations if other identifying information is missing.



1. Can you tell me how we can reach:
 - a. Your mother
 - b. Your father
 - c. Aunts and uncles on your mother's side of the family
 - d. Aunts and uncles on your father's side of the family
 - e. Cousins on your mother's side of the family
 - f. Cousins on your father's side of the family
 - g. Your grandparents
 - h. Your godparents

2. Do you have older brothers or sisters? Can you tell me how we can reach them? Are any of them in foster care? Have any of them been adopted? Do you know how to reach their foster or adoptive parents?

3. Do you have younger brothers or sisters? Can you tell me how we can reach them? Are any of them in foster care? Have any of them been adopted? Do you know how to reach their foster or adoptive parents?

4. Were you ever in foster care before? Who were your foster parents? Would you like to see them again? Were you ever in a group home or residential setting before? Were there any staff members you felt close to or trusted? Do you know how to reach them?

5. Are there friends from school you are close to? Where can we reach them? Are you close to their parents? Where can we reach them?

6. Is there anyone else from school you feel close to, look up to, admire or respect: a teacher, a coach, a mentor, a guidance counselor, a staff member?

7. Are there any adults from your place of worship, your neighborhood, your job, your after-school activities you are close to or feel comfortable spending time with? Any family friends? Friends' parents? Boyfriend or girlfriend's parents?

8. Are there any other adults you close to or feel comfortable spending time with? Any adults whom you admire? Any adults whom you would turn to for advice? Any adults who compliment or praise you? Any adults who took care of you when your parents couldn't? Any adult who listens to you?

Remembered People Chart

Exercise: Making a Chart

Provide your group members with a piece of graph paper and ask them to construct a chart for a child they know well. A empty chart is shown below. For purposes of this activity, the charts do not need to be completely accurate. The point of the activity is simply to practice making a chart to gain comfort in using the tool with teens. Work through any comments, questions, and reactions while participants complete their work.

Sample Remembered People Chart

<i>Age</i>						
<i>Where I lived</i>						
<i>Who I remember</i>						
<i>What I'd like to do</i>						

Melvin

Melvin was born to a single mom who made an adoption plan for him at birth. However, he spent his first two years in a foster home until the county could place him for adoption. He stayed with his adoptive parents until he was seven years old. At that time they brought him back to the county because they said he was unmanageable. The county took a surrender and placed Melvin in a children's home where he lived for the next five years. At age 12 he was placed with a foster family where he lived for two years while his adoption worker looked for a family for him. At 14 he moved into a group home when his 73-year-old foster mother died. Although his adoption worker continued recruitment activities through the media, no family was developed. At age 15 Melvin told his worker he didn't want to be adopted. At 17, still in the group home, Melvin visits with a single man, Joe, who was a childcare worker in the first children's home. Much to the surprise of all involved, Melvin told his house staff that he still wanted to be adopted.

Remembered People Chart for Melvin

<i>Ages</i>	<i>1 mo.</i>	<i>To age 2</i>	<i>To age 7</i>	<i>To age 12</i>	<i>To age 14</i>	<i>To today</i>
<i>Where I lived</i>	Mom	Smiths	Jessups, adoptive family	Children's Home	Johnsons	Group Home
<i>Who I remember especially well</i>			Preschool teacher	Joe, staff, Dale, kid, Mrs. Green, cook, Mr. McKenzie, staff	Mr. and Mrs. Johnson	Mr. Hanson, staff, Mrs. Barnes, social worker, Ms. Bidwell, teacher
<i>What I'd like to do about them</i>	Nothing	Nothing	Ask them why. Tell them off	Keep visiting Joe. Find Dale Go back and see Mr. McKenzie	Nothing	I don't know

Remembered People Chart

Sample Remembered People Chart¹

<i>Age</i>						
<i>Where I lived</i>						
<i>Who I remember</i>						
<i>What I'd like to do</i>						
<i>Anything else</i>						

¹ Adolescents & Families For Life, R.G.Lewis & M.S.Heffernan

V. Collaborative Permanency Programs

A. Programs

- 5 Acres, The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Los Angeles County
- Destination Family Youth Project
- EMQ Children & Family Services Wraparound With Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services
- Enhanced Family Participation in Case Planning; Family Group Conferencing; Family Group Decision Making
- Team Decision Making
- You Gotta Believe Project
- Youth Involvement in Case Planning

5 Acres, The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Los Angeles County

What is it?

This is an innovative program that seeks to train all clinicians and conveners in team decision making. The program further seeks to get youth involved and connected with different groups in the community and to help teens identify a permanent person in their life.

Why do this?

The program seeks to find a permanent, safe, and empowered family member for every youth in its care.

What goal does this program address?

To increase awareness about youth, to involve family and family principals in every stage of the process and finally to ensure that each youth has a lasting connection as well as necessary life skills before being emancipated.

How can you start this program in your county?

This program is dedicated to youth who are currently in residential treatment centers and group home setting. The staff is being trained with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family to Family and the California Permanency for Youth Project. Contact either of these two organizations, or the below-named contact, to obtain further information.

Contacts:

Robert Ketch, Executive Director
626-798-6793
Rketch@5acres.org

Destination Family Youth Permanency Project

What is it?

This program is a collaborative project with county and family alliances, providing temporary homes where youth practice living in a home environment with a family. The family is known as a “bridge” family and is provided with many support services during this trial period.

Why do this?

To allow youth, ages 11 to 18, to experience living within a family and to help them build skills to develop relationships within a family.

What goal does this program address?

This program seeks to ensure that no youth will be emancipated without achieving lifetime permanence.

How can you start this program in your county?

Identify key players for a working group to begin strategizing and developing the necessary resources to begin implementation.

Contacts:

Bob Herne, M.S.W.
Sierra Adoptions
916-368-5114
bherne@sierraadoption.org

EMQ Children & Family Services Wraparound With Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services

What is it?

EMQ (aka Eastfield Ming Quong) is a provider of children's mental health, wraparound, and social services. It has been nationally recognized for innovation in family-centered, strengths-based programs for youth suffering from a variety of severe issues.

EMQ contracted with Sacramento County to provide wraparound services to CPS, mh, and probation youth in (or at risk of) high-level group care. As a wraparound provider, EMQ is responsible for achieving and supporting youth stability in a permanent family setting.

Why do this?

To support a step-down from group care as soon as the behavior that brought the youth into the group home has been addressed. To train foster families to be successful with high-need youth and to facilitate the relationship between youth and their family connections.

What goal does this program address?

The program was designed to move children from high-level group home placements to family living within a short period. This program was able to step down 30 youth from residential treatment centers during a six-month period: 19 were moved with parents or kin, and 11 went to foster families who support the continuing search for links with relative.

How can you start this program in your county?

More information can be found on this and other model program on the CPYP Web site.

Contacts:

California Permanency for Youth Project
Model Programs for Youth Permanency
www.cpyy.org
510-268-0038

EMQ
www.emq.org

Enhanced Family Participation in Case Planning; Family Group Conferencing; Family Group Decision Making

What is it?

These programs are a family-focused, culturally sensitive approach to developing permanency plans for children who are in foster care or who are at risk of entering such care. The child's immediate and extended family can begin working early with the child welfare workers and others to determine a plan for the safety of the child, for family reunification, or for other permanency options.

Why do this?

Effective family engagement in case planning and decision making helps to restore families, helps to build parents' capacity to raise their children and make sound decisions for their care, and also helps to maintain the family's culture as a source of strength for all its members.

What goal does this program address?

The goals of this program are to keep parents informed of their rights and responsibilities in the case-planning process, collaborate with them in a supportive manner to establish cooperative foundations for future relationships, and fully and actively involve them in the process of assessing family concerns, strengths, solutions, and resources, together with their case worker.

How can you start this program in your county?

Use resource materials from the Permanency and Youth Transition Workgroup. These materials include a step-by-step guide to setting up a program in your county. Other resources are also included in this guide.

Contacts:

National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning
(NRCFCPP)
www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp
212-452-7053

California Permanency for Youth Project
Permanency and Youth Transition Workgroup
www.cpyy.org

Team Decision Making

What is it?

This program is a strength-based “family to family” model that arises from the belief that a child’s well-being is best served by an inclusive collaboration of family, community, and child welfare agency rather than by a unilateral public agency decision.

Why do this?

To include the family’s perspective and involvement when making removal decisions, changing placement, and in doing permanency planning (including reunification). This program can be used as early as the time of emergency response.

What goal does this program address?

The goals of this program are to reduce the likelihood of out-of-home placements; increase relative placements, to keep siblings together and keep family connected to the community; and to increase family engagement.

How can you start this program in your county?

Use resource materials from the Permanency and Youth Transition Workgroup. These materials include a TDM Desk Guide to set up TDM staff in your county.

Contacts:

Permanency and Youth Transition Workgroup
California Permanency for Youth Project
www.cpyy.org

You Gotta Believe Project

What is it?

This program identifies and finds people who know the youths, provides training for the adults, and certifies the adults' homes.

Why do this?

Once certified under this program, the family does not take the youth unless they understand that they are taking them forever. Even if the youth later does not wish to be adopted, the family is still a permanent connection and relationship for that youth.

What goal does this program address?

The goal of this program is the prevention of homelessness for youth after emancipation from foster care.

How can you start this program in your county?

The executive director of this program, Pat O'Brien, has been conducting workshops and trainings for many different organizations in California. He has also worked with the CPYP and is listed on its Web site as one of its training consultants. His own Web site lists the sites and dates of upcoming trainings.

Contacts:

Pat O'Brien, Director
You Gotta Believe
www.yougottabelieve.org
ygbpat@msn.com
800-601-1779; 718-372-2003

California Permanency for Youth Project
www.cpy.org

Youth Involvement in Case Planning

What is it?

This program is intended to be used at various stages of the dependency case. It provides an opportunity to meet with the youth and to engage the youth in all aspects of the case plan development or restructuring.

Why do this?

To ensure that the youth is involved in establishing any and all permanency options, in addition to preparing the youth for a self-sufficient adulthood.

What goal does this program address?

Some of the goals of this program are (1) to engage youth in a collaborative and supportive manner from the first contact to establish and maintain a cooperative relationship with his or her case worker and others; And (2) to ensure that the youth is fully and actively involved, at age-appropriate levels, and conversations are held in language understandable to that youth.

How can you start this program in your county?

Use resource materials from the Permanency and Youth Transition Workgroup. These materials include a step-by-step guide to setting up a program in your county.

Contacts:

California Permanency for Youth Project
www.cpyy.org

B. Resources

- Adolescents and Families for Life
 - A Review
 - A Toolkit for Supervisors
- Child Welfare System Improvements, Permanency and Youth Transition Workshop
- Families for Teens: Asking Key Questions
- Family to Family: A Family for Every Child: Strategies to Achieve
- Permanence for Older Foster Children and Youth: Introduction and Summary
- The Annie E. Casey Family To Family Initiative
- Tools for Permanency: Family Group Decision Making
- Unconditional Commitment: The Only Love That Matters To Teens

Adolescents and Families for Life: A Review

Adolescents and Families for life: A Toolkit for Supervisors. Robert Lewis and Maureen Heffernan.

By Mary Ford, North American Council on Adoptable Children.
Adoptalk, Winter 2004 p. 13

Members of the general public and even some child welfare professionals, assume that teens are unadoptable and foster youth would rather not live in families. In *Adolescents and Families for Life: A Toolkit for Supervisors*, authors Robert Lewis and Maureen Heffernan deconstruct the notion that adolescence is a compelling reason to suspend permanency planning, and build a strong case for prioritizing lasting adult connections with youth. The guidebook — grounded in adolescent child development as well as development within the context of abuse, neglect, separation and loss — also teaches workers how to consider and discuss permanency options with teens, and then support links between youth and adult caretakers.

Adolescents and Families for Life is comprised of 27 mini-workshops that supervisors can conduct during staff or unit meetings. Each workshop comes with a CD of PowerPoint slides that can be used via computer projection or converted into overhead transparencies. Mini-workshops include short lectures, discussion, guided imagery, hand-outs and case examples.

The accompanying guidebook is divided into three sections. Themes address the importance of permanency; the impact

of the system and barriers to permanence; how to help teens prepare for permanence; finding and making connections with adults; and parenting strategies.

“The objection to permanency planning for adolescents stated by child welfare professionals on every level,” Lewis and Heffernan write, “is rooted in the fear of re-traumatizing vulnerable young adults who have been through enough.” The first section, entitled “Making the Case for Permanency,” accords teen permanence (described as care by kin, guardianship, or adoption) the same importance as routine health check-ups or school attendance -- childhood activities we view as required, not optional.

The cost of impermanence is too high, the authors assert, citing a recent large-scale study of emancipated former foster youth that found fewer than half were employed, many were victims of crime or assault, and 40 percent wished they had been adopted. Social workers are invited to ponder whether long-term foster care connections with a mentoring family, or return to a previously discounted birth family may be considered permanence.

Section two (“Choosing, Using and Developing Tools with Teens”) advises

workers to engage teens in permanency discussions by asking how they feel about having a family (versus whether they want to be adopted). The section tackles tough issues such as teen resistance, family group conferencing and birth parent mediation, openness, youth grieving, and helping youth get their emotions under control. In addition, the authors describe in detail how workers can use a child's case record as a road map for unearthing adult connections from the past.

When seeking parents for teens, the authors caution, workers must look for adults who possess unique qualities -- among them, a heightened awareness of youth development, an understanding of the youth's past trauma and past relationships, and an acceptance of the child's approach-avoidance dance as bonds develop between the parent and child. Key factors in predicting a successful placement include the family's level of commitment to a life-long relationship, the youth's sense of belonging in the family, and the legal and social status offered by the relationship.

Post-placement parenting strategies are featured in section three, where Lewis and Heffernan observe, "the real challenge for [adults who are parenting older adopted or foster children] is how to keep their own issues from becoming confused with the youngster's." One exercise, "What's the Worst" encourages parents to plan their reactions to negative behaviors. The exercise includes a list of behaviors that the youth may have witnessed and/or in which he may be likely to engage (doing drugs in front of younger kids; engaging in prostitution; stealing food from grocery stores;

dropping out of school; etc.). Parents rank the most pernicious behavior as "one" and the least offensive act as "ten." The exercise helps parents to anticipate which behaviors will trigger their strongest responses, and consciously decide how they will cope.

Section three also describes the advantages of forging permanent connections with kin, and highlights adoption issues such as the fragile attachments some teens will form with their new parents. "A critical element in the stability of adolescent adoptions is the parents' ability to make a commitment even in the face of an attachment that is less than that for which they might have hoped," say the authors.

Lewis and Heffernan wisely call for independent living skills preparation and alternative permanency planning to occur simultaneously rather than separately. But to call such work "concurrent planning," as the authors and others do, is confusing. "Dual-track youth planning" may be a better descriptor for helping youth get ready for both family and independent living.

Lewis and Heffernan's philosophy of permanency planning for teens is nicely summed up in the statement, "Teen permanence is a relationship, not a place." These days, as permanence for older foster children assumes a bigger role in child welfare practice as directed by recent federal law, *Adolescent and Families for Life* will doubtless serve as an excellent resource for agencies, social work supervisors, and their staff.

BEYOND THE BENCH XV: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

December 8–10, 2004

DoubleTree Hotel, San Jose, California

Workshop II C

Permanence and Lifelong Connections for Youth in Foster Care—Implementing Assembly Bill 408 and Other New Approaches

Contents:

- Presentation Description
- California Permanency for Youth Project
- Preserving Quality of Life for Youth in Foster Care
- Quality of Life Scenarios
- Promoting Permanence For Foster Youth (AB 408)
- San Diego County Transfer Release/Checkout Form for Foster Youth Services

Presentation Description:

IIC. Permanence and Lifelong Connections for Youth in Foster Care – Implementing Assembly Bill 408 and Other New Approaches

With the enactment of AB 408 in January of 2004, significant inroads have been made to ensure that no child will remain in, nor emancipate from our foster care system without a lifelong connection to a caring, committed adult. This workshop will explore the issues surrounding the concept of “permanence” and all the challenges that flow with implementing systems change to meet the permanence needs of youth in our care. Focus will also be on practical solutions and ideas for implementing this important legislation aimed at improving permanence for all foster youth.

California Permanency for Youth Project

Director, Pat Reynolds-Harris
Project Consultants, Mardi Louisell and Jim Brown
Program Administrator, Margot Simmons

The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) started January 2003 as a result of a three year grant awarded by the Stuart Foundation.

Project Vision: To achieve permanency for older children and youth in California so that no youth leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a caring adult.

Project Objectives:

1. To increase awareness among the child welfare agencies and staff, legislators and judicial officers in the state of the urgent need that older children and youth have for permanency;
2. To influence public policy and administrative practices so that they promote permanency
3. To assist four specific counties and the private agencies with which they work to implement new practices to achieve permanency for older children and youth.

Project Activities:

The Permanency for Youth Task Force The Task Force is a statewide group with broad representation, including public and private organizations, youth and funders, which grew out of the 2002 Convening on Youth Permanency.

Task Force objectives are:

1. To facilitate collaborations between public and private agencies to achieve permanent lifelong connections for youth in the system;
2. To create opportunities for key stakeholders (who affect outcomes for youth in the system) a. to realize the need for permanent lifelong connections for youth and b) to understand that it is possible to achieve these connections;
3. To identify and overcome structural barriers (within the system affecting youth) that prevent achieving permanent lifelong connections; and
4. To promote public relations, education and advocacy efforts that will address the needs of youth for permanent lifelong connections.

In November 2003, CPYP received a grant from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation to pursue the partnership objectives of the Task Force. The grant supports the work of three workgroups addressing issues of partnership between public child welfare agencies and a) the courts, b) group homes and c) adoption/family foster agencies. The groups will make recommendations on how effective partnerships can accomplish improved permanency outcomes for foster youth by November 2005.

Technical Assistance to Counties The project works with four counties, San Mateo, Alameda, Stanislaus, and Monterey, to develop programs to achieve permanency for

more youth. County teams include representatives from the Independent Living Skills Program, Family Reunification, Foster Care, Adoption and private agency partner(s), as well as significant youth involvement. The project a) provides counties with technical assistance over two and a half years as they strengthen their efforts and b) will document significant lessons about implementation useful to the field. Each county has developed a youth permanence plan that includes the following target areas: administrative practices, permanency practice, identification of project target group, staff development, partnerships, and integration with other initiatives.

Training An existing curriculum on Permanency for Youth is being revised for use by California counties and will be made available to all public child welfare agencies in the state in 2005. In conjunction with the California Youth Connection (CYC) and the Bay Area Academy, the project supported the development of “Digital Stories” on permanency by current and former foster youth which are available from CPYP and can be used in training. Two of these Digital Stories can be viewed on the website www.cpyyp.org and the full set of 10 are available through the CPYP office at 510-268-0038.

Convenings As a part of the development of CPYP project, a national convening was held in April 2002 to explore the issues of permanency for youth. As a follow-up a second convening was held in April 2003 and a third in April, 2004. An April 2005 convening will also be held. Please see website for summaries of 2002 and 2003 convenings, which contain information on the state of youth permanency nationally.

The project will also hold California convenings to promote partnerships to assist the state in accomplishing permanent lifelong connections for youth in its systems, i.e., group homes, mental health, foster family agencies, adoption agencies and the courts.

Documents To increase awareness of the issue, the project has developed two documents published in April 2004. Both are available on the website www.cpyyp.org and through the CPYP office at 510-268-0038.

1. **Model Program for Youth Permanency:** A report on nine exemplary permanency programs throughout the U.S. and explanation of the critical elements of such programs.
2. **Youth Perspectives on Permanency:** An exploration of youths’ perspectives on permanency through a focus group process in partnership with the California Youth Connection (CYC).

Evaluation To measure results, CPYP is gathering data over time from workers in each county on the young people being targeted for youth permanency services. In addition, the project is doing a formative evaluation of each county's implementation process that will inform the field of strategies for implementation and change.

Website The project website is www.cpyyp.org. It includes a program description, staff bios, digital stories, updates on the CPYP counties, convening reports and other interesting information.



PRESERVING QUALITY OF LIFE FOR
YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE
(Newly enacted Welfare & Institutions Code Sec. 362.05)

Assembly Bill 408, effective January 1, 2004, seeks (in part) to improve all foster children's access to age-appropriate enrichment, extracurricular and social activities.

Ultimate Goal

Ensures that **every foster child's quality of life** not be compromised simply by virtue of their foster case status. Foster children are to have access to, and be able to participate in, age-appropriate extracurricular, enrichment and social activities.

The Law

Quality of Life: Establishes the right of all foster children to live as normal a life as possible and participate in age-appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities (WIC 362.05).

- State and local regulations may not prevent or create barriers to participation in these activities
- Each state and local entity shall ensure that the private agencies providing care to foster children have policies that promote and protect the ability of children to participate in age-appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities
- Caregivers have an obligation to allow children in their care to participate in age-appropriate extracurricular, enrichment and social activities
- Caregivers are expected to make normal day-to-day parenting decisions and are to act as a prudent parent in determining whether to give permission for a child to participate in any of these activities. In particular, caregivers shall take reasonable steps to determine the appropriateness of the activity in consideration of the child's age, maturity, and developmental level.



Children's Law Center of Los Angeles

Attorneys from the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles were asked to provide specific examples, from their own cases, of the detrimental effects to a foster child's social life when he or she is denied the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities and/or socialize with peers. These examples reflect normal childhood activities that these children are being prevented from participating in, simply due to their foster child status.

- 1) A client was not allowed to attend a Thanksgiving dinner hosted by her father because the other participants had not been "live scanned" (subject to a criminal records check).
- 2) A 16-year-old living in a group home was told that his 16-year-old friend could not come over to play video games because he had not been live-scanned.
- 3) A 17-year-old client did not attend her junior prom because her social worker told her that before she could go, her escort had to show proof of insurance. She was too embarrassed to ask him, and missed the prom.
- 4) An 11-year-old client was not allowed to attend a slumber party because the parents had not been live scanned. The child was too embarrassed to reveal her foster care status and did not attend the party.
- 5) A 16-year-old client was not allowed to attend a "Battle of the Bands" event at her church because adults would be present who were not live-scanned. The attorney called the church secretary and was assured that the party was for high school students only and that it would be chaperoned by 50 adults. The CSW would still not allow the client to go, so the attorney had to walk the matter on to secure court approval for the youth's attendance at the party.
- 6) A misinformed CSW cancelled a birthday party for a relative caretaker's biological daughter because the results of all participants'

- live scans had not come back yet. The children under dependency jurisdiction felt extremely guilty about ruining their cousin's birthday party.
- 7) The FFA denied a 17-year-old girl permission to attend a school-sponsored trip to Disneyland. With enough warning, however, permission was eventually granted by the court.
 - 8) A client was ordered to participate in tutoring while in the off-track school break (May and June). Her current certificated classroom teacher offered to provide these services. Tutoring has still not yet commenced because DCFS is requiring the teacher to be live-scanned. School begins shortly, and the child has missed out on an excellent opportunity to get ahead.
 - 9) A client was only permitted to go to and from school. He was not allowed to go outside in the yard to play, not allowed to participate in sports at school, and not allowed to go to friends' homes. When the foster parent's biological children returned from all their activities (friends houses, malls, sports), they controlled what was on TV and what games were played. After the attorney spoke with the foster parents, it was learned that the FFA had rules preventing foster children, based solely on liability concerns, from going anywhere. The attorney eventually obtained a minute order stating that foster parents have the discretion to allow foster children to participate in all reasonable extracurricular activities.
 - 10) A 17 year-old client wanted to go jogging around her neighborhood. The FFA would not authorize it, with no further explanation. The teenager's attorney spoke to the CSW, the FFA, and the foster mother, to no avail. Before the attorney was able to get a court order, the girl was placed with a relative who would allow her to go jogging.
 - 11) Two teenage girls were placed in a foster home through the FFA and were given a list of calls they were allowed to make and receive in a one-week period: 2 calls to or from their mother, 1 call to or from their boyfriend, and 3 calls from siblings. No phone calls to or from

friends were allowed. One of the girls attempted to call a friend but was told to hang up. The friend called back (she had caller ID) and the foster mother told her that the girl was not allowed to talk on the phone. The attorney requested and received a minute order from the court specifying that reasonable phone calls to friends were to be permitted.

12) A 16-year-old, extremely responsible girl, was prohibited from going to the mall or to the movies with friends by her foster mother and FFA worker. No reason was given except that they could not allow it.

13) A 10-year-old client was in an FFA licensed foster home. After school let out for the summer, the foster mother wanted to place the child in softball and karate classes at a local park. The FFA refused permission citing a "blanket policy" against foster children participating in martial arts. The attorney faxed over the WIC code section to the FFA that sets out a foster child's right to participate in extracurricular activities. The FFA changed their position regarding karate classes, but refused to let the minor walk 3 blocks to the park with a very responsible 14-year-old. By the time the issue was brought up in court, signups were closed and the child could not participate in either activity.

Employing a "prudent parent standard" may be defined as: using a rational, informed, and reasonable approach in making decisions to preserve a child's optimal health, well being, and general quality of life. Elements taken into consideration when making such a decision may include, but are not limited to: the child's age and maturity, location of the activity, time of day during which the activity will take place, foster parent or caregiver's personal knowledge of the chaperones or other adult participants, and potential harm that stems from the activity.



PROMOTING PERMANENCE
FOR FOSTER YOUTH
(AB 408)

Assembly Bill 408, effective January 1, 2004 sets forth (in part) a series of reforms aimed at promoting and ensuring permanence through lifelong connections for all children in foster care.¹

I. INTENT AND GOALS OF AB 408

- Ensure that all children in foster care **retain and/or establish relationships** with **important individuals** in their lives;
- Promote permanency and stability by ensuring that no child leave the foster system without a **lifelong connection to a committed, caring adult**;
- Implement changes to the Welfare & Institutions Code by imposing **new requirements** on the court, the social workers and attorneys to assure permanence and stability for foster youth; and
- Assure that children 10 years of age or older receive **notice of** and have the **right to attend** their **court proceedings**.

II. REQUIREMENTS

To assure permanence for foster children, AB 408 imposes new requirements on social workers, the Courts and advocates.

A. The Child Welfare Agency/Social Worker

County social workers must not only **identify** “important individuals” for children, but also help **maintain and nurture** these relationships. In particular:

- The social worker shall **ask every child** who is **10 years of age or older** and **placed in a group home** to **identify** any individuals other than the child’s siblings who are important to that child.

¹ AB408 also mandates that foster children have access to age and developmentally appropriate extra-curricular, enrichment and social activities. See WIC 362.05. An outline of those provisions is available from Lisa Romero at the Children's Law Center, (323) 980-1599, romerol@clcla.org.

- The social worker **may** ask any child who is **younger than 10 years of age** the same questions as to “important individuals” and provide that information as appropriate.
- The social worker, consistent with the child’s best interests, must **make efforts to maintain and nurture those relationships**.
- The social worker must **document** efforts to **search for, identify, maintain, establish, and nurture** a foster child’s connections to important individuals.
- The social worker’s **report** submitted to court must contain information regarding the **identification of important individuals** in the child’s life, and an explanation of what **efforts** are being made to maintain these relationships.

B. The Courts

The Court must ensure that social workers are complying with AB408 and that these efforts are documented. In particular:

- The Court must determine if the placing agency (DCFS) has made **reasonable efforts to maintain a child’s relationship with individuals important to that child**.
- This requirement applies to children **10 years or older residing in group homes**.
- The “individuals” with whom relationships are to be identified, nurtured, and encouraged includes anyone **other than the child’s siblings and important to that child**.
 - Caveat: The relationship and ongoing contact must be in the **child’s best interest**.
- The Court should verify that these permanence issues are addressed in the **reports** and **TILP case plans** submitted to the court for each review hearing.
- The Court shall make **any orders necessary and appropriate** to enable the child to maintain and to facilitate these relationships with other individuals important to the child.
- The Court has the responsibility to assure that children 10 years of age or older have received **notice** of their court hearings and their **right to be present**. If a child is not present in court, the court **shall inquire** as to whether notice to the child was proper.

C. Advocates

Given the requirements and responsibilities set forth in AB408, it is incumbent upon advocates to assure that:

- The **social worker** makes the appropriate **inquiries**;
- All **court orders** necessary to nurture and maintain the child's relationships are in place; and
- Written **reports** to the Court address these issues.
 - Note: It is equally important to keep in mind that relationships change as children grow and change. It is the social worker's responsibility to **continue to inquire** and ensure that the relationships are appropriate and in place over time.

III. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE LAW

A. Termination Of Parental Rights

AB 408 amends WIC 366.26 to require the **Court** to consider the maintenance of important relationships when parental rights are terminated.

The **county welfare department** shall:

- Ensure that the **child is present** in Court unless the child does not wish to appear or the child's whereabouts are unknown and the CSW has documentation to that effect;
- Submit a **report** verifying that the information, documents, and services that pertain to ongoing relationship with these important individuals have been provided to the child;
- Continue to assist in maintaining the relationships with individuals who are important to the child based on the child's best interests;
- If the Court has identified adoption as the goal and there is no identified or available prospective adoptive parent, during the 180 days that the department is seeking adoptive parents, the CSW, to the extent possible, **shall ask** each child who is 10 years or older to **identify any individuals** who are important to the child and to identify **potential adoptive parents**;
- If a child has not been placed with a prospective adoptive parent at subsequent hearings, the **report must identify** individuals who are important to the child

and actions necessary to maintain the child's relationship with those individuals;

- The agency **shall** make efforts to **identify** any other individuals who are important to the child.

B. Legal Guardianship

If legal guardianship is identified as the permanent plan, all the provisions set forth above as to "Termination of Parental Rights" apply.

C. Termination of Jurisdiction

AB408 amends WIC 391 to require the social worker to report on efforts enabling the child to maintain important relationships when jurisdiction over a case terminates.

D. Emancipating Youth

- AB 408 requires the social worker to **provide information** to a dependent child who has reached the age of majority on maintaining relationships with individuals who are important to the child, and to verify in the **report** submitted to the court that this information has been provided;
- For a child who is 16 years of age or older, when appropriate, the **case plan** (TILP) shall include a written description of the programs and services that will help the child prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living; and
- The **TILP/case plan** shall be developed **with the child** and the **individuals identified as important to the child**, and shall include steps the agency is taking to ensure that the child has a connection to a caring adult.

E. Notice And The Child's Right To Be Present

WIC 349 is amended and requires:

- Notice of **all hearings** be sent to children 10 years of age or older;
- That the notice state, and the child be made aware that he/she is **entitled to be present** in court for the hearing;
- That the child be represented by counsel; and
- **If the child is not present** at the hearing, the court shall determine whether the child was properly notified of his or her right to attend the hearing

F. TRAINING OF SOCIAL WORKERS

AB 408 also requires training for social workers to allow them to implement its mandates and requires specific training on:

- The **importance of maintaining relationships** with individuals who are important to a child in out-of-home placement;
- **Methods** to identify those individuals, consistent with the child's best interests;
- **How to ask** a child about individuals who are important; and
- **Ways to maintain** and **support** those relationships.



San Diego County Office of Education

San Diego County Transfer Release/Checkout Form for Foster Youth Services

Student's Name _____ DOB _____ Grade _____
 School District _____ Contact # _____ FAX # _____
 School _____ Contact # _____ FAX # _____
 Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
 Entry Date _____ Exit Date _____ Last date attended _____
 Reason for withdrawal: _____ Next school placement _____

GRADES AS OF DATE OF WITHDRAWAL

Subject	Academic Grade	Citizenship	Teacher	Signature	Hours completed	Books/ Materials Turned In (yes or no)

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY TO THE ABOVE STUDENT:

- Foster Youth Services (FYS)
- Student in homeless situation
- Immunization Records (copy attached)
- 504 accommodation plan (attached)
- Special Education (IEP attached)
- Suspension for violent offenses - Ed Code _____
- SART contract date(s) _____
- Expelled - Ed Code _____
- SARB contract date(s) _____

PLEASE HAVE THIS FORM SIGNED BY ALL THE OFFICES LISTED BELOW

Librarian _____ (Amount Due \$ _____) Administrator _____
 Counselor _____ ASB AP/Dean _____ Nurse _____
 Attendance _____ Registrar _____
 List other debts and amounts \$ _____ Reason: _____
 \$ _____ Reason: _____

Completed by:

 Name Title School Phone

- Check one: Copies of records are attached
 Records will be forwarded

Form # _____
 White - HHSA Social Worker
 Canary - Care Provider
 Pink - Foster Youth Services

Adolescents and Families for Life: A Toolkit for Supervisors[©]

by Robert G. Lewis & Maureen S. Heffernan

Adolescents and Families for Life: A Toolkit for Supervisors[©] is a unique workbook for child welfare supervisors who need to guide, train and supervise staff to ensure permanence for the adolescents in their case loads. The Toolkit provides practical information, training ideas and exercises to convince workers that teens need, want, and are able to achieve permanent family connections.

This first book in the Toolkit series is organized into three sections: Making the Case for Permanence; Choosing, Using and Developing Tools with Teens; and Supporting Permanence. The Toolkit presents these issues in 27 coordinated but short, teachable units focusing on the following:

- ◆ the importance of permanence for adolescents
- ◆ how key factors in adolescent development affect permanence work
- ◆ helping teens accept permanent family relationships
- ◆ identifying barriers within the child welfare system
- ◆ building and mending relationships and identifying permanency resources
- ◆ supporting the permanent placement
- ◆ engaging the teen in child-specific recruitment

The goal of *Adolescents and Families for Life* is to teach supervisors how to train staff in this important but difficult area of social work practice. Each unit provides training-friendly material such as overviews of key objectives, suggested group exercises, handouts, training tips, and key-ins to 110 slides provided on the CD included on the back cover.

This Toolkit was developed by Robert G. Lewis and Maureen S. Heffernan in an actual training setting in Colorado. It has been used in over 30 agencies that serve New York City teens, and in 25 states. Robert Lewis provides consulting and training to child welfare organizations with a focus on planning for permanence, policy and practice development. He is a frequent keynote speaker and is author of three books on permanence for adolescents. Maureen Heffernan is a child welfare consultant who specializes in adoption and permanency issues. She is active as a trainer for foster and adoptive parents and child welfare professionals. She is also currently an Adjunct Instructor at Case Western Reserve University where she teaches social policy and community-based practice courses. She is the author of two books on permanency work for adolescents.

This book may be ordered by using the Book Order Form or order through the online catalogue at www.thetoolkit.com.

Families For Teens

ASKING KEY QUESTIONS



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THE PROMISE

To every child who comes into care, society makes a promise to restore him/her to a stronger, healthier, more stable family than the one from which he/she is removed, either by returning the child to his or her family of origin strengthened by the intervention of child welfare, or by helping the child bond to a new family. Children and youth experience this as an urgent need.

When this promise is not fulfilled over time, young people sometimes despair of ever realizing this promise. Their disappointment and anger never exempts the professionals who work with them from fulfilling the promise, no matter how difficult that may seem.

The suggested list of casework practices aimed at securing family connections for young people is not exhaustive, and should be considered as a point of departure in working with young persons who need our assistance in finding a permanent connection to a nurturing, committed adult.

Self Test¹

1. Do I like adolescents/teens?
2. Do I believe in their ability to (re)connect with a family?
3. Do I believe that they need to be in a family?
4. Do I feel safe, emotionally and physically, around teens?
5. Can I form a caring yet professional relationship with THIS young person?
6. Can I speak honestly, directly and clearly with teens and involve them in all the decision I need to make on their behalf?
7. Can I make a mutual agreement with this young person?

¹ Adapted from "Adoption and Adolescents: A Handbook for Preparing Adolescents for Adoption" by Virginia Sturgeon
teens@rglewis.com

8. Can I have a relationship characterized by Honesty, Dependability, Predictability, Consistency and Follow Through?
9. Can I work through/with a 3rd party with whom the young person already has such a relationship?

Reflect on your answers and how they might affect your ability to work with young people. If the answer to any of these questions is an unequivocal “No”, work closely with your supervisor on any case involving a teen, or ask to be reassigned.

FINDING CONNECTIONS

1. Have you identified all the resources in the case record? Have you identified anyone who has done anything that could be construed as a parenting act, such as
 - shown up at a meeting
 - called about the youth
 - visited the youth
 - inquired about the youth in any way at any time even once.
2. Have you looked at the case record from beginning to end, including the piece that does not belong at your agency (the Field Office piece, other foster care agencies where the child was previously placed)?
3. No potential permanency resources should be ruled out at this stage, regardless of whether they have been previously deemed “inappropriate”. The search process should be inclusive and exhaustive. Don’t stop with the first resource or two.

4. Have you asked the caretakers (foster parents, group home staff, child care staff) around this youth, “Who does the youth have connections to?”

- who does the young person get calls from?
- who does the young person ask to call?
- who visits the youth?
- who does the youth go to?
- where does the young person go AWOL?
- If the answer is “friends”, are they interested in having friends’ parents involved? Have they been involved?

5. Have you talked to the youth about the people in their past whom they remember and with whom they want to be in touch? Have you asked the young person about the people presently in their lives with whom they have connections? Who do they want in their lives when they are adults?
6. Sometimes youth rule out people they want to be with for fear of the circumstances under which they were removed from the home (particularly if they were “thrown out of” a prior foster home). If truth were told, they would like to go back there, but are afraid to identify that home. Ask:
 - “Where did/do you feel most comfortable?”
 - “With whom did/do you feel most comfortable?”
 - “Can you tell me about a time when you felt most comfortable?”
 - “Can you tell me about the places you were where you felt most at home?”
 - “Can you tell me about the people with whom you feel most comfortable?”
 - “Can you tell me whom you trust?”

- If they say, “No one”, ask: “Can you tell me with whom you would like to build a trusting relationship?”
- Who do you want to be connected to in the future, next year, in 5 years or more?
- When something great happens to you, who do you feel like calling?
- When something bad happens is there an adult that seems to understand better than other people and won’t mess around in your head?
- What it would be like to try to build a family for yourself from your network of caring adults?
- Is there anyone who makes you feel useful?
- Can you think of someone who knows you’re not stupid and treats/has treated you that way?
- Who really listens to you and follows through for you?
- Ask questions about connections in the future and look for hints of hopefulness despite the risks.
- Who cared for you when your parents couldn’t?
- What adult do you know whose advice you respect (even if you don’t feel you can take it right now)?
- Who do you want to help you plan for your future?

CONTACT

1. How have you contacted these people (those identified by the youth and by your review of the case record) to see if they are willing to help plan for the child’s future? Have you asked these people if they know anyone who had a special relationship with the child in their experience? Ask questions such as:
 - “Can you see yourselves as part of this youth’s life?”
 - “What part are you willing to play in this young person’s future?”

- “What are you/others willing or able to do to support a primary relationship with the young person?”

2. Have you encouraged everyone to identify what strong bonds they have with the young person?

PREPARING THE YOUTH TO CONSIDER ADOPTION

1. What have you done to prepare a youth to consider adoption?
 - Has the youth met with other youths who have been successfully adopted and are still in touch with members of their birth family?
 - Have you asked the youth, “Where do you want to belong?” as opposed to “Do you want to be adopted?”
 - Does the youth understand that s/he can be adopted and still be loyal to their birth family?
 - Does the youth understand open adoption and how it would apply in his/her case?
 - Has the youth met (young) adults who were adopted as adolescents?
 - Has the youth had an opportunity to meet prospective adoptive parents who are interesting in adopting an adolescent?

PREPARING THE BIRTH PARENTS TO CONSIDER ADOPTION (DISARMING THE WORD ITSELF)

Although permanency work with birth parents begins before a child comes into care, before adolescence and before the 11th hour

of care, blaming the past doesn't get the job done. Permanence is an ongoing part of a child's developmental needs.

Our job is to convey that urgent need for safety and stability to parents and to help them understand that (1) holding children in unstable circumstances such as foster care is harmful to children's healthy emotional development and (2) adoption no longer means that children (especially adolescents) must be cut off from all contact with members of their birth family.

Here are some issues you might raise with a teen's parent where reunification is not a viable option:

- Talk with the birth parent(s) about how important safe stability is for the healthy emotional development children of all ages, including teens.
 - Use the universal experience of the terrible events of September 11, 2001 to illustrate how difficult it is for all us, and particularly youth in foster care, not to know what the next day will bring or what is going to happen to them next. Help parents to understand that many youth in foster care experience on a daily basis the kind of fear and uncertainty about the future that the rest of us experienced on and after September 11.
 - Tell parents that some people think that children's fears about their future are even more overwhelming because of how little they know about alternatives.
 - Ask them to help you work on this.
- Ask the parent(s) if you can work with them to provide the optimum emotional support, safety and legal security for their children.
 - Ask parents if they know what has happened to other children who have come into care.

Acknowledge that with their help in identifying and working with a safe and secure family setting, their child will be much better taken care of than children who have no one permanently able to nurture their future and their potential.

- Ask parents, "If something should happen to you, who would you hope could care for your children?"
- If a parent is unable to care for a teen because of mental illness or disability, ask, "Who, beside you, do you want to plan for your child's future in order to give your child what he/she needs to develop into a healthy adult?"
- Talk about shared parenting as a general concept. Acknowledge the fact that adoption does not necessarily change their emotional relationship with their children.
 - Remember that this will mostly likely take more than one conversation.
 - Ask parents to identify how families have shared the responsibility of child-rearing in the past.
 - Ask them if they can think of how they did this successfully in the past with their own brothers, sisters, friend.
 - Ask them if they remember adults (other than their parents) who cared for them when they were children. If their parents chose those "helpers", how did that feel?
- Use and demystify the word "adoption". Are you still inadvertently conveying to parents that adoption is a dirty word?
 - Let them know that adoption has changed – especially for teens, adoption is no longer the "replacement model" that it was 40 years ago for infants. Continuing some form of contact with the

birth family is often the norm now in many adoptions, including private infant adoptions.

- We've learned just how important maintaining family ties can be.
- We also know just how important it is for a child to feel claimed.
- Talk about openness in adoption so that it doesn't sound like a plea bargain.
 - Explain that we now have ways to reflect that openness in an adoption agreement.
 - We know that secrets whether in a family or across families have negative effects on children and so we want to build openness into families.
- Offer to introduce them to adoptive parents and birth parents who have facilitated post-adoption contacts between birth parents and their children.
 - Give parents a chance to talk with adoptive and other birth parents privately.
- Take the discussion out of the realm of "good parent/bad parent" that is driven by legal necessities, and talk instead about gifts and strengths.
 - Involve parents in a discussion about extending their parenting, not ending it.

PLANNING FOR PERMANENT FUTURE FAMILY CONNECTIONS

1. Is the planning youth-driven?
 - Has the youth identified the people and topics for the planning meeting in advance?
 - Has the youth identified their goals for the future? What do they want to achieve? Where do they want to be in 5 years? Don't rush to discourage their vision.

- Does the young person understand the critical importance of education, and its connection to permanency?

2. Have you held 3-5 planning meetings with those whom the youth identified (i.e., all the resources with whom they want to have a personal connection into the future)?

- What have you done to help the teen to prepare for these meetings?
- What came out of these meetings? Was a primary relationship identified?
- Have you talked to the contacts about the importance of a permanent family connection, explaining that everyone needs to have someone in their life as family?

BUILDING AND MENDING RELATIONSHIPS

1. Have you prepared the permanency resource(s) for the consequences of getting involved in the youth's life?

- Have you helped them understand what issues there may be?
- Have you helped them understand the youth's issues about belonging?
- Have you facilitated visits with the child?
- Have you provided the kinds of supports (through counseling and peer support groups) that will be there for this relationship afterwards?
- Did you phase it all in?

2. Did you help the permanency resource to identify a network of support?

3. Have you connected them with other primary caretakers?

AND KEEP IN MIND

In all meetings and contact, maintain a level of genuine respect for the youth and his/her choices regardless of disagreement (disagree without being disagreeable).

Third party reviewers, supervisors and case managers should consistently ask about what kind of permanency casework practice has occurred for the young person.

Remember the 4 domains of success:

- competence (work on deciding to whom one belongs for oneself and finding permanent family connections)
- usefulness (belonging implies reciprocal responsibilities)
- belonging (most securely, legally and socially)
- power (finding, identifying, deciding and acting on belonging to a family)





Family
TO
Family
TOOLS FOR
Rebuilding Foster Care

A Family for Every Child:
Strategies to Achieve Permanence for
Older Foster Children and Youth

BY THE NORTH AMERICAN COUNCIL
ON ADOPTABLE CHILDREN
FOR THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
FAMILY TO FAMILY INITIATIVE

Family TO Family

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Rebuilding Foster Care

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Many of the quotes in this paper came from the courageous young people who helped make the video entitled *We Interrupt: Waiting Teens Talk About Recruitment*, Minneapolis, Minnesota, a project of the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network.

This paper was written by Mary Ford, research associate for the North American Council on Adoptable Children, and Mary Boo, NACAC's assistant director, with help from NACAC's executive director Joe Kroll.

I N T R O D U C T I O N & S U M M A R Y

*“People say kids my age are hard to place
and that time is running out for me.
Please don’t give up on trying.
I’m already having trouble holding on to my hope.”*

– foster youth waiting for a family

Older foster children and youth have a pressing need for permanency. Almost half of the 538,801 children in out-of-home care at the end of the federal 2000 reporting period were ages 10 to 17 (Gibbs et al., 2004). As one youth explained, “Our time is almost up. We want a home, and people we can call parents.” Still, tens of thousands of foster youth emancipate from the system without connections each year. This crisis has provoked a groundswell of action by youth advocates, and a call from young people themselves to change the system.

It is not typical for youth to leave foster care and function effectively on their own. Older children need parents and the support of committed adults. Research shows that disadvantaged young people who are connected to adults do better: They relate to others with ease, take fewer risks, have better health, and overcome adversity more easily.

An emerging youth permanency philosophy is driving grassroots child welfare changes around the nation. Given the new focus on older child permanency in federal law,* it is time to stabilize the futures of foster youths and find permanent families and reliable adult connections for them as they leave the system.

A number of proactive public and private agencies have taken the lead to link older foster children and youth with families and caring adults. Other agencies and communities can now put these tested methods into practice and policy across the country to ensure that all young people have secure and stable futures.

At a recent conference a veteran child welfare leader said, “Over the years, when child welfare systems around the country have been given challenges, they’ve risen to the occasion and delivered” (Maza, 2004). This publication is one effort to help advocates rise to the occasion and successfully deliver older children and youth into permanent, loving families.

The Scope of This Publication

The best way to ensure that older children and youth remain in their community is to avoid placing them away from their homes in the first place. Many states, counties, and cities have made efforts to respond to child protection placement emergencies with alternative resources and have safely reduced the number of children placed away from their homes.

At the same time, thousands of children are already in the system, and advocates and child welfare professionals need strategies to help these children. Therefore, these

*Adoption Promotion Act of 2003 (HR3182) reauthorizes the adoption incentive program introduced in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, and focuses the child welfare community’s attention on placing for adoption children ages 1 and older.

*Let youth
assume
a major
role in
forming their
permanency
plan.*

recommended actions focus on older children who have been in out-of-home care for two years or more, are considered to be unlikely to be reunified with their birth parents, and have dim chances for joining any family. We chose to highlight strategies and creative approaches that are already working in the existing child welfare system to find families for older children and youth.

In our research for this publication, we identified successful programs, policies, and strategies that have been helping older children find permanent families. We then examined how lessons learned from each effective program or policy change could be distilled into a number of action steps that others might follow. Finally, we created a series of overall recommendations and spelled out how advocates can learn from others to create an integrated system of programs and policies that will help older children and youth find permanent families.

Summary

This tool is organized into four major sections:

- **Section I** presents the characteristics of older children and youth in care for two years or more.
- **Section II** details the problems that keep older foster children and youth from living permanently with families.
- **Section III** describes an emerging youth permanency philosophy.

□ **Section IV** makes recommendations, describes action steps for change, and suggests concrete ways to achieve permanence for youth in the following areas:

- Help lawmakers and policymakers understand the importance of permanence for older foster children and youth;
- Establish agency guidelines to help staff carry out permanency policy for youth, and train staff in the new policy;
- Help older children and youth consider permanence and adoption;
- Eliminate reliance on long-term foster care as a case plan;
- Let youth assume a major role in forming their permanency plan;
- Use performance-based contracting to achieve timely permanence for youth;
- Build partnerships between public and private agency adoption workers;
- Develop accountable youth-centered permanency planning practices and support families and youth after placement;
- Advocate for federal policy changes to allow for uniform subsidized guardianship policy and funding, and implement state or local subsidized guardianship programs;
- Use group care less and family-based care more for older children and youth;
- Recruit permanent families from the child's life and support the new families;
- Teach families that unconditional commitment is a prerequisite, and teach them to transition gradually to adoption; and
- Provide ongoing support to the permanent families.

Themes

Five themes appeared in our review of youth permanency efforts and became the basis for our recommendations:

- ❑ **Every child, including older children, should have a case plan and an action plan for permanence. The action plan should include persuading social workers, youth, and others that permanence provides benefits.**

Prioritizing permanency planning for older foster children and youth begins with accepting that young people need and deserve families. We must commit to cultivating a promise to youth permanency at every level of the child welfare system: among lawmakers, child welfare directors, managers, and workers, and among youth themselves. Effective public and private youth permanency initiatives develop a family-based care ethos and create policies that help staff attain the highest level of legal and emotional permanence possible for young people. Competent agencies work to eliminate the use of long-term foster care and cut back on the use of residential care.

- ❑ **Kinship families are an under-tapped resource to provide permanence for older children and youth.**

Youth were well served by agencies that used intensive birth family-finding efforts. These agencies, cognizant of the fact that many emancipated youth return home, undertook relative searches and turned up abundant resources, often among paternal relatives. For children who can't go home, momentum is growing for uniform subsidized guardianship policies and programs that help youth live permanently with relatives, foster parents, and other caring adults who receive financial assistance commensurate with adoption assistance. The best kinship programs support families before and after permanency with hard services such as

assistance finding adequate housing, plus counseling, advocacy, and peer support.

- ❑ **Older children and youth should be involved in their own permanency planning decisions.**

Youth must be viewed as central players in their own futures. Programs that include youth in permanency planning are more effective in finding enduring placement alternatives for young people and reap the benefits of their creative and energetic participation.

- ❑ **Children have a better chance of permanency when they live in families rather than group care facilities.**

Intensive family reunification efforts and post-placement support can stabilize older children and youth leaving long-term group care. Jurisdictions that reduce group care placements and increase family-based placements are becoming successful at achieving higher rates of youth permanency.

- ❑ **Effective recruitment techniques successfully find families for older foster children and youth, and these new families need support.**

Youth-specific targeted recruitment works well when outreach is culturally sensitive and personalized, when recruiters include young people who have found permanency and their parents, and when recruitment is followed by specialized training and support of prospective permanent parents. When we ask new parents to unconditionally commit to care for youth, we must commit to supporting them.

Every child, including older children, should have a case plan and an action plan for permanence.



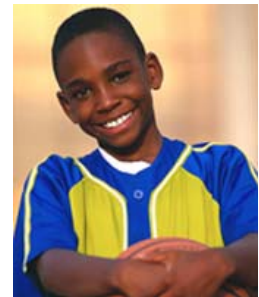
Our Work

- 1. Principles *What We Believe*
- 2. Outcomes *Results We Are Seeking*
- 3. Goals *What We Intend to Do*
- 4. Strategies *How We Achieve Our Goals*

1. Principles and Values

We believe that . . .

- A child's safety is paramount.
- Children belong in families.
- Families need strong communities.
- Public child-welfare systems need partnerships with the community and with other systems to achieve strong outcomes for children. ■



2. Outcomes for Children

We are committed to improving results for children and families in the child welfare system, with an emphasis on safety, stability, permanence, and well-being and includes . . .

- Reducing the number and rate of children placed away from their birth families.
- Among children coming into foster care, increasing the number and rate at which children are placed in their own neighborhoods or communities.
- Reducing the number of children served in institutional and group care and shifting resources from institutional and group care to kinship care, family foster care, and family-centered services.
- Decreasing lengths of stay of children in placement.
- Increasing the number and rate of children reunified with their birth families.
- Decreasing the number and rate of children re-entering placement.
- Reducing the number of placement moves children in care experience.
- Increasing the number and rate of brothers and sisters placed together.
- Reducing any disparities associated with race/ethnicity, gender, or age in each of these outcomes. ■



3. Goals for the Child Welfare System

To achieve these results, we are committed to the following changes in the child welfare system:

- Developing a network of family foster care that is focused on safety, neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive, and located primarily in communities in which children currently live.
- Ensuring that all children who come into foster care, including teens and brother-and-sister groups, are routinely placed with families.
- Increasing the number and quality of foster and kinship families to meet projected needs.



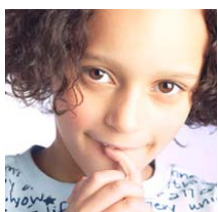
- Providing the services birth families and children need in a timely enough manner that they can be safely reunited as soon as possible.
- Screening children being considered for removal from home to determine what help their family needs to keep them safe, to make that help available when it is most needed, and to better support the children who must be placed.

- Involving birth parents, foster parents, and kinship families as team members with our agency and with one another.
- Becoming a neighborhood resource for children and families by investing in the capacity of communities where large numbers of families involved in the child welfare system live. ■



4. Strategies in Our Work

To achieve these changes in the child welfare system, we are committed to implementing four core strategies:



- **Recruiting, Developing, and Supporting Resource Families.** Finding and maintaining foster and kinship families who can support children and families in their own neighborhoods.
- **Building Community Partnerships.** Establishing relationships with a wide range of community organizations in neighborhoods where referral rates to the child welfare system are high and collaborating to create an environment that supports families involved in the child welfare system.
- **Making Decisions as a Team.** Involving not just foster parents and caseworkers but also youth, birth families and community members in all placement decisions to ensure a network of support for the children and for the adults who care for them.
- **Evaluating Results.** Collecting and using hard data about child and family outcomes to find out where we are making progress and to show where we need to change. ■



National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning

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Sarah B. Greenblatt, Director

Tools for Permanency

Tool # 2: Family Group Decision Making

The National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York is committed to the pursuit of excellence in child welfare service delivery. As a Center dedicated to action and change, our work focuses on building the capacity of child welfare agencies to meet the needs of children at risk of removal from their families and those already placed in out-of-home care. Our "Tools for Permanency" aim to promote family-centered and collaborative approaches to achieving safety, timely permanency and the overall well-being of children and families within the child welfare system.

Family Group Decision Making

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is a family focused, culturally sensitive approach to developing permanency plans for children who are in foster care or who are at risk of entering foster care due to parental abuse or neglect. With Family Group Decision Making, the child's immediate and extended family begin work early with child welfare workers and a family group coordinator in developing a plan for the safety of the child, a plan for family reunification, or deciding on another permanency option, such as: relative care, guardianship or adoption. The most commonly used models of Family Group Decision Making are: Family Group Conferencing (FGC) and Family Unity Meetings (FUM). These two models are described briefly below. In both of these models, the basic philosophy and orientation are the same: the immediate and extended family are of primary importance to the child and should be involved in making decisions about the child's well being, living arrangements, and permanency plan. Extended family could include persons who play a crucial role in the child's life, such as godparents.

Family Group Conferencing – Origins in New Zealand

Family Group Conferencing originated in New Zealand and is modeled after Maori tribal practices. A disproportionate number of Maori were in out-of-home placement and New Zealand's European-style child welfare system seemed insensitive to Maori culture. There was a push for a change in practice that would be more in keeping with tribal culture. In 1989, New Zealand enacted the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act which institutionalized the practice of family group conferencing (Hardin, 1996). Now, when there is an allegation of child abuse or neglect, the New Zealand public welfare agency looks to the family first for solutions, and in most cases limits state intervention until the family has had an opportunity to come to its own agreement and plan for how to handle the situation (Wilcox, 1991).

How Family Group Conferencing works

When there is an allegation of child abuse or neglect, the New Zealand public welfare agency conducts an investigation to determine if the child is “in need of care and protection.” If the social worker’s investigation determines that the child is in need of care and protection, he or she must contact a person who is known as a “Care and Protection Coordinator.” The Care and Protection Coordinator has the responsibility of convening family group conferences. This includes inviting and encouraging the parents, extended family members and close family friends to attend and preparing participants for the conference. If the family is Maori, tribal elders are also invited. In addition to the Coordinator, the social worker who investigated the case will be present. Other professionals who have relevant experience with the children and family may also be present, such as psychologists or teachers. If a court case is under way, an attorney for the child will be invited to the family group conference as well (Hardin, 1996).

There are generally three stages to the Family Group Conference: (1) information giving, (2) private deliberation, and (3) decision making/writing the plan. At the information giving stage, the child welfare and other professionals describe the situation to the family and the family has the opportunity to question the professionals. During the private deliberation stage, the professionals leave the room. The entire extended family that is present meets in private to make a decision as to whether the child has been abused or neglected and, if so, how the child should be protected. This care and protection plan generated by the family might include, for example, a decision that an aunt or other relative will step in and live with the family, or they may decide to move the child to the grandmother’s home or to provide day care. This family meeting usually lasts 2-3 hours but may be longer. At the end of the private deliberations, the family presents their decision to the social worker and the Coordinator (Hardin, 1996).

After everyone agrees to the plan (which may take some negotiation), the Coordinator writes up the decision and sends it to concerned parties. This agreement will include a plan for future review and possible reconvening of the family. The family group conference can also be reconvened at any time at the request of the Coordinator or any two members of the family group conference if they wish to reconsider or review the plan (Hardin, 1996). Social workers may continue to arrange services for the family, but various members of the extended family usually help with and even provide some of the specialized services (Walker, 1995). Conferences typically begin and end with culturally appropriate rituals. In addition to including tribal or clan elders, other culturally relevant actions are identified during conference planning.

Through these conferences, social workers learn much from the families and move away from a deficit-functioning perspective toward a perspective that emphasizes the families’ strengths. Indigenous Maori social work practitioners consider Family Group Conferencing to be the turn around point for the beginning of good social work practice in New Zealand (Walker, 1995). Social workers are also finding that New Zealanders of European origin agree to the benefits of this new system of family involvement in the welfare of children (Hardin, 1996).

Oregon – The Family Unity Meeting

In 1989, almost simultaneously with New Zealand, an American version of Family Group Decision Making was developing in Oregon: the Family Unity Meeting (FUM). While New Zealand’s Family Group Conference grew out of indigenous tribal practices, Oregon’s FUM evolved from social work practice, family treatment and family preservation models (Keys, 1996).

The cornerstone philosophy of the FUM model is that:

- families, communities and the government must work together to ensure children’s safety and well being, and
- extended families need to be regularly involved in making decisions about protecting and ensuring safety for their children (Merkel-Holguin, 1996).

The FUM model places an emphasis on maintaining the child's attachments to the parents and other relatives whenever possible. Family members actively collaborate and plan for the child during the Family Unity Meetings. The resulting involvement of families creates a collaborative rather than adversarial relationship with child welfare practitioners. Oregon has found that families who have made their own plans, are usually willing to carry them out (Keys, 1996).

How the Family Unity Meeting model works

The primary stages of the Family Unity Meeting are:

(1) Initial Referral

The social worker who investigates and assesses a case of child abuse or neglect refers the case to a Coordinator who decides whether to hold a meeting.

(2) Preparation and Planning

This phase can take 2-4 weeks. The worker identifies the extended family and important non-related persons in the child's life. Participants are invited to the meeting and are informed of its purpose and their role in the process.

(3) The Family Unity Model meeting

The meeting typically takes several hours and generally follows this pattern:

- introductions
- goal setting
- strengths assessment
- concerns and problems
- options and family discussion, and
- decisions (during the family discussion and decision stages, the facilitator generally stays in the room).

If the meeting is successful, consensus is reached and a plan of action is created to insure safety of the child/children. The plan is then presented to the court for approval.

(4) Planning and Follow-up

At this phase, the family's decision (or plan) must be implemented. The social worker writes up and distributes the plan. The plan is reviewed by all those who were present at the meeting. Services must be put into place and the plan's implementation must be monitored. Also a follow-up meeting may be scheduled (Merkin-Holguin, 1996).

When this model was developed in 1989, it was only used with families whose children were already in the foster care system. Since 1995, it has been expanded to child protective services and foster care intake (American Humane Association, 1997).

What are the major differences between New Zealand's Family Group Conferencing Model and Oregon's Family Unity Meetings?

Since they developed on different continents, there are bound to be numerous differences in style and practice, even if the basic philosophy remains very similar. However, there are two key differences:

(1) Exclusionary Rule or Veto Power

The FGC model discourages the practice of excluding family members from the conference because it is believed to potentially undermine families' decisions and to violate children's rights to be connected to all family members. The FUM model also strongly discourages the exclusion of family members from the

meeting, however, parents can veto the participation of any family member. Proponents of the FUM model believe that this exclusionary rule provides parents with more control (American Humane Association, 1997).

(2) Private Deliberations Stage

New Zealand's FGC model requires that families must have private deliberations time with no professionals present. Proponents of the FGC model state that families will not reveal secrets with professionals in the room and that professionals tend to dominate discussions. Although facilitators in Oregon have experimented with both private and non-private deliberations time, the FUM model generally encourages professionals to be present during the family discussion. The facilitator's role in a FUM meeting is to guide the family discussion and to provide resource information, if needed. Some Oregon facilitators find this to be a necessary role, and some prefer the private deliberation (American Humane Association, 1997).

Issues to consider before implementing a FGDM Program in your community

Implementing a FGDM program in your community is a very worthwhile project, yet it is multi-faceted and complicated. How your FGDM project is planned, developed, and put into actual practice will have an effect on the project's ultimate outcome. The American Humane Association (1997) has identified 12 factors and categories of issues for communities to consider before implementing a FGDM program model.

These are briefly outlined below:

(1) Principles and Values

Base the FGDM process on an understanding of, and respect for, the community and family culture, and provide an environment for families to focus on their strengths.

(2) Community Profile

Identify and study community characteristics.

(3) Collaboration

Strengthen community collaboration and build on other past or present community movements or initiatives for protecting children.

(4) Funding

Consider implementation costs and identify funding streams.

(5) Legal

Consider the legal framework in place to authorize the implementation of FGDM practices; review the compatibility of FGDM practices with federal child welfare law, federal privacy statutes, child abuse and neglect confidentiality laws; and assess potential agency liability for family decisions.

(6) Political

Consider the viability of FGDM in varying political circles.

(7) Agency Policies and Guidelines

Policies and guidelines should be established on:

- the type(s) of FGDM model(s) to be used,
- how cases should be referred and selected,
- locations of meetings,
- information sharing,

- the use of private family deliberation,
- whether or not the plan can be vetoed and by whom,
- how to monitor the implementation of the plan,
- how to close cases, and
- how to reimburse family costs for the FGDM meeting.

(8) Logistics and Administration

Involve other community leaders in planning, implementation, and evaluation and allocate time for planning, start-up, and coordination activities.

(9) Staffing

Develop written guidelines and explicit roles for all professionals involved in the FGDM process.

(10) Communications

The child welfare system which will be implementing FGDM should be seen as a resource and not an adversary.

(11) Training and Education

Encourage staff to adopt a community and family-strengths perspective; provide training for various professionals; provide an orientation process for families.

(12) Evaluation

Design and conduct research and evaluation on your new FGDM project.

All of these issues do not need to be settled before you begin, but at some point during the planning and implementation of your FGDM project, each point should be carefully looked at and evaluated.

The use of Family Group Decision Making is growing

The use of Family Group Decision Making is growing in the United States as well as in Australia, Canada and England. States such as: California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Washington are experimenting with their own versions of Family Group Decision Making projects. With names as various as: the Illinois Family Conference & Mediation Model and the Michigan Family & Community Compact Program, these models share a family-strengths, culturally sensitive, community-based orientation. The primary goal of these various FGDM models is permanency, stability, long-term safety, and well-being for children within their own families and their own communities (American Humane Association, 1997).

Please Note: This paper is intended to provide a brief introduction to Family Group Decision Making concepts and models. If you are interested in learning more about FGDM, please follow up with the readings noted in the References and Suggested Readings section of this paper.

Written by: Alice Boles Ott

References and Suggested Readings: Family Group Decision Making

American Humane Association. (1997). *Innovations for children's services for the 21st century: Family group decision making and Patch*. Englewood, CO: American Humane Association.

Hardin, M. (1996). *Family group conferences in child abuse and neglect cases: Learning from the experience of New Zealand*. ABA Center on Children and the Law, with support of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation: Washington, D.C.

Keys, T. (1996). Family decision making in Oregon. *Protecting Children*, Vol. 12, No. 3. American Humane Association.

Merkel-Holguin, L. (1996). Putting families back into the child protection partnership: Family Group Decision Making. *Protecting Children*, Vol. 12, No. 3. American Humane Association.

Walker, H. (1995). *Whanau, Family Decision Making: A liberating social work practice based on trust*. A paper presented for the Beyond the Bench VII Conference, Oakland, California.

Wilcox, R., Smith, D., Moore, J. Hewitt, A., Allan, G., Walker, H., Ropata, M., Monu, L., Featherstone, T. (1991). *Family Decision Making-Family Group Conferences: Practitioners' Views*. Lower Hutt, New Zealand: Practitioner's Publishing.

Note: These publications offer a good starting place for studying Family Group Decision Making. These publications are basic yet comprehensive, and should you want to learn more about Family Group Decision Making, these publications provide you with extensive bibliographies and sources for further information.

American Humane Association. (1996). *Protecting Children*, Vol. 12, No. 3. [Available from: American Humane Association, Children's Division, 63 Inverness Drive East, Englewood, Colorado 80112-5117. Tel. 303-792-9900.]

This issue of the journal, *Protecting Children*, is entirely devoted to Family Group Decision Making. There are articles from social work and legal perspectives, and from American as well as New Zealander's perspectives. There is also a Selected References on FGDM section which is very helpful.

American Humane Association. (1997). *Innovations for children's services for the 21st century: Family Group Decision Making and Patch*. Englewood, CO: American Humane Association. [Available from: American Humane Association, Children's Division, 63 Inverness Drive East, Englewood, Colorado 80112-5117. Tel. 303-792-9900.]

This is a monograph which provides a comprehensive description of the FGDM model (as well as Patch). It gives philosophical background, the principles of FGDM, how to plan for and implement a FGDM program, references for further study, and numerous program examples in various states.

Hardin, M. (1996). *Family Group Conferences in child abuse and neglect cases: Learning from the experience of New Zealand*. ABA Center on Children and the Law, with support of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation: Washington, D.C. [Available from ABA Center on Children and the Law, 740 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005-1009. Tel. (202) 662-1720. Fax (202) 662-1755.]

This book provides a description of how family group conferences are organized in New Zealand, written from the point of view of an American. This book offers a comprehensive introduction to family group conferences, its history and policy development, important practice and legal issues, as well as a comprehensive bibliography and a Where to go for more information section.

Compiled by: Alice Boles Ott

We'd like to help you get started!

Services available from the National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning (NRCFCPP) include:

- Information Services – We can connect you with child welfare agencies around the country that are now considering or implementing innovative program models. Reading materials and bibliographies are also available.
- Training and Technical Assistance – The NRCFCPP can provide consultation and/or training as you consider or plan for a new initiative. We can arrange to meet with you for a brief consultation, we can make an informational presentation at your agency or in your community, or we can work with you to develop a comprehensive in-service training program at the local or state-wide level for casework, supervisory, managerial and/or training staff, as well as attorneys and judges.

If you are interested in working with the NRCFCPP, you can start with a phone call, a brief letter or an e-mail message. Let us know what you're thinking about doing, and we'll work with you to plan the kind of help you'll need to get your project up and running. We can help you figure out how intensive your training program should be, and what costs might be involved for your agency. [Note: The NRCFCPP is funded by DHHS/ACYF/Children's Bureau. If yours is a public child welfare agency, you may be eligible for free training and/or technical assistance approved by your regional office of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families.]

Materials Available from NRCFCPP

Tools for Permanency

- Concurrent Permanency Planning – an approach to permanency planning which works toward reunification while exploring other options for the child, simultaneously rather than sequentially.
- Family Group Decision Making – outlines two models for early inclusion of a child's immediate and extended family in permanency planning decision making.
- Child Welfare Mediation – a newly emerging tool to engage families in decision making in a non-adversarial manner.
- Relative Care Options – explores the challenges involved in foster parenting by members of the child's extended family. (not yet available)

Legislative Summaries

- Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-89)
- Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272)
- Personal Responsibility & Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (Public Law 104-193)
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (Public Law 104-235)

For more information, contact us at:

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UNCONDITIONAL COMMITMENT:

The Only Love That Matters To Teens

by Pat O Brien

Having directed both foster care and adoption programs that place teenagers into permanent families, and then having founded an agency that places teenagers into permanent families, I often get asked the question "what kind of people will offer their home permanently to a teenager?" My answer is always the same. I always say "any and all kinds of people who, after a good preparation experience, are willing to unconditionally commit themselves to a child no matter what behavior that child might ultimately exhibit." Teenagers need first and foremost at least one adult who will unconditionally commit to and claim the teen as their own. Any thing less is an artificial relationship. Teenagers need unconditional commitment before anything else constructive can happen.

This country has tens-of-thousands of young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 being discharged to no one but themselves. Half the homeless population is made up of these foster care discharges. This is in spite of the fact that teenagers, as a general rule, are easier to care for and the rewards and gratification for caring for them come back a lot sooner than accepting younger children for permanent placement.

However, our child welfare culture seems to have an anti-permanency bias against caring for teenagers. Very few organizations even have the slightest expectation for the prospective parents who come forward to offer their homes to teens that the commitment they make must necessarily be unconditional for the placement to succeed. Parenting strategies and a whole variety of other skills we teach families in pre-placement preparation and training are essentially rendered useless if unconditional commitment to a child is not imbedded in the philosophy of the preparation and training we offer to these prospective families.

My working definition for "unconditional commitment" is simply that there is nothing a teenager can **do** to stop being someone's child. Unconditional commitment means that we **treat** any child's behavior with the exact same commitment we would treat a biological child's behavior who might commit the very same act. If a bio-child commits a crime in the community, that bio-child might go to jail. But that child does not lose his parents because he makes a mistake. If a bio-child becomes mentally ill that

bio-child might have to be hospitalized on a long-term basis. But that child does not lose his parents because he has an illness that needs to be treated. If a bio-child becomes heavily involved in drugs that bio-child might have to be placed in a residential treatment therapeutic community. But that child does not lose his parents because he has the disease of addiction. But most importantly, if a bio-child has a real nasty attitude a parent develops ways to deal with it. The child does not stop being that parent's child because of the attitude.

This, of course, is not the case for teens living in traditionally prepared foster homes. Simply put, what all teenagers need is unconditional commitment. They need a place they can make mistakes and not have the equivalent of a child welfare capital punishment sentence imposed on them. So many teens in foster care lose their parents simply because they do what teens do. All parents who come forward to help children they did not give birth to must be prepared in the same permanency philosophy that biological parents automatically imbed in the care-taking of their children.

I have had the privilege to orientate about 2,000 prospective foster and adoptive parents over the past three years. I always ask prospective parents why do they want to be parents to children not born to them. Generally, in a first session orientation all the answers take the form of they either love children and/or they want to help children. My second question to them is "who is coming forward to be a foster or adoptive parent to hurt hurt children?" Usually one person who wasn't paying much attention to my question raises his or her hand. All the other participants are usually baffled by the oddity of the question. Then I go up to the person who raised her hand and ask again "you really want to hurt hurt children?" At which point she immediately withdraws her raised hand. Then I asked six more similar questions to the rest of the group changing just one word. The words I substitute are as follows:

Hurt	Who wants to hurt children?
Abandon	Who wants to abandon children?
Reject	Who wants to reject children?
Traumatize	Who wants to traumatize children?
Victimize	Victimize children?
Abuse	Abuse children?
Neglect	Neglect children?

Invariably no one raises their hand for any of these seven questions. Then I point out to them every time a foster or adoptive parent attempts to return a child for a behavior that they committed we are "re-everythinging" them. We are re-abusing, re-abandoning, re-hurting, re-traumatizing, re-victimizing, re-rejecting, and re-neglecting

the child.

Every person who comes forward to help a child must come to this work with an unconditionally committed permanency mindset. For example, if they are going to be a foster parent they must commit to the child's permanency future. The number one permanency plan is for the child to return home. And until that goal is achieved that child needs one placement and one placement only. Anxious children invariably must do things that upset foster and adoptive parents. Can you even begin to imagine what it would have felt like to have someone give you up as a child every time you did something they did not approve of, particularly if your behavior occurred during the most difficult period in your childhood? This happens to teenagers in care every single day as a matter of accepted and common practice. Accepted and common practice that we professionals perpetuate and endorse both implicitly and not so implicitly.

Often a teenager in foster care is in foster care because they have no one planning for their permanency future. They may have a goal of adoption but most often they have a goal of independent living. Both goals mean if the child does not get into a permanent family before discharge from foster care they run a high risk of being alone in the world and becoming homeless after they are discharged from care. Way too many of these youths living in congregate care facilities, particularly group homes, until their discharge from care. They may be taught skills but if no one is found to unconditionally commit to them before their discharge from care their hopes for a brighter future are drastically reduced.

Very often the system takes a half-full approach to teens in foster care and attempt to find *conditionally* thinking traditionally prepared foster parents for them. Intake workers across the land make the same mistake when they called traditionally prepared foster parents for a teen. They make "the deal." *Try it and see if it works out.* The implication being that if it does not "work out" the child will be removed. Can you imagine if you had to love under those conditions when you were a teenager? Can you imagine if you had the equivalent of child welfare capital punishment inflicted on you (i.e. losing the bed you slept in last night) every time you caught an attitude, or every time you came home late, or every time you got caught smoking a cigarette, or every time you broke even the most basic of rules? I knew a teenager kicked out of his home for washing his sneakers in the washing machine. I knew another teen who got kicked out of two houses: one house because he flushed the toilet at night and the other house because he did not flush the toilet at night. The first house the father woke up at 4am and no one dared wake him up with the flush of a toilet. The other house found it very disgusting that this same teen did not flush the toilet. Both houses kicked him out for this utterly minor offense. This happens to teens time and time again because we do not imbue the unconditional commitment permanency philosophy in our preparation of these families.

We have dehumanized teenagers in our care. We have treated them like disposable garbage. And we have to stop it. Kids should not have to grow up in institutions, but they equally cannot grow up in conditional homes. *You Gotta Believe*, the agency that I founded, makes it a practice of teaching each and every one of our

families how important unconditional commitment is. We will only approve prospective families who agree to practice this form of love. Every time we place a child that child is placed forever. We support families through their hard times after kids are placed. And we are there to constantly remind our families that if this child's adolescence is handed in the right way this child will have a family for life and this family will have this young person in their family forever. And we teach each and every family to treat each child they accept as if this is the child who will bring them their last glass of water. Having practiced for over 15 years in this field, I know of at least three placements where the child that we placed was the child who brought their adoptive parent her last glass of water even over the dying parents' biological children.

We have to stop accepting that teenagers in particular are not worthy of permanency. We have to continue to recruit only unconditionally committed permanent families for every teen in our care who will be discharged to no one. If we don't we will continue to perpetuate what we did to another group of human beings in our Country's history. In an article written in the November 2000 issue of Harper's Magazine "Making the Case for Racial Reparations" there was an eerie quote in it about the condition that slaves found themselves in when they were set free:

Think about this.

In 1865 the federal government of this country freed 4 million blacks. Without a dime, with no property, nearly all illiterate, they were let loose upon the land to wander.

Willie E. Gary.

It was so eerie when I read this because here it is 137 years later and we do the exact same thing to tens-of-thousands of predominately African American and Latino children in our Country's care every year. We discharge them without a dime in their pockets; without any property; rarely with a high school diploma so they mind-as-well be illiterate. And without an unconditionally committed permanent family in their corner they are simply being "let loose upon the land to wander." We can absolutely do better for our kids. All we have to do is believe there are enough people willing to offer them unconditional commitment and then go about the good work of bringing those families into the process. It is far easier to find these families than you think. But you can only do so if you first believe it is possible. The choice is yours. Choose to believe. You gotta believe! Our children's future depends on it.

Anyone interested in contact the writer of this article, Pat O'Brien, Executive Director, of *You Gotta Believe! The Older Child Adoption & Permanency Movement, Inc.* can e-mail him at vgbpat@msn.com call him at 1-800-601-1779 or write to him at 1220 Neptune Avenue, Suite #166, Coney Island, N.Y. 11224. Pat would be very interested in sharing ideas with you about how you might go about finding homes for any teenager that is in foster care.

This article was written and copyrighted in January of 2001.

VI. Adoptive Families: Training, Recruitment, and Support

A. Programs

- Adoption and Permanency Information Fair
- Celebration for Adoptive Families
- Ceremony to Call Out the Names of Children Who Wait
- Faith-Based Outreach
- Meetings and Support Groups for Recent Adoptive Parents
- Training for Adoptive Parents and Children
- Collaborative Permanency Training and Materials

Adoption and Permanency Information Fair

What is it?

The Adoption and Permanency Information Fair brings together local nonprofit agencies that work with and provide services to foster, kinship, and adoptive parents. These agencies set up tables with information about their program, and representatives from the programs are on hand to answer questions.

Why do this?

The information fair is a low-cost, festive event that provides an opportunity for interested families to find out more about the services and resources available to adoptive families in the foster care system.

What goal does this program address?

The goal of the information fair is to address the continuing need to add to the foster parent base in the county by increasing the community's awareness of the services provided to foster, kinship, and adoptive families. In Ventura County, the court develops materials and provides public service announcements in English and Spanish in order to reach the Latino community, where there is a shortage of foster care families.

How can you start this program in your county?

In order to provide the best and most comprehensive information to families, be sure to invite all the appropriate agencies and organizations in your county. Try to have a booth with information from the courts, as well. To make the event more festive, have beverages and some activities for any children who attend. The ultimate success of this event depends on the participation of the community. Ventura County developed flyers to advertise the event. You can also advertise the event through your local newspaper's community calendar and the local television stations' community bulletin boards.

Contact:

Ventura County: Patti Morua-Widdows, Court Manager, Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, 805-981-5938

Celebration for Adoptive Families

What is it?

The Celebration for Adoptive Families is a gathering to celebrate the family's commitment to one another. This event is a good alternative to Adoption Saturdays for courts that do not have a backlog of adoptions but who want to celebrate adoption during Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

Why do this?

A celebration brings together families who have shared in the adoption process. Adopted children, who may feel alone, have an opportunity to form friendships with other adopted children. Additionally, such a celebration helps to bring positive attention to the adoption process and to encourage those who are thinking about adopting to start the process.

What goal does this program address?

A celebration provides an opportunity for the courts, the public and the media to focus on the success of the present adoption system. At the same time, it helps families and children find the post-adoption services and resources they need.

How can you start this program in your county?

In 2005, Kern County organized a celebration for families and children outside the courthouse in Bakersfield with clowns, food, crafts, and gifts. A press conference was held inside the courthouse prior to finalizing adoptions. Displays in the courthouse also provided information about how to adopt and the great need for adoptive families. Several other dinners and celebrations were planned throughout the county. In Monterey County, an adoption celebration has been held in the past on Adoption Saturday. Other counties also invite children who were adopted in previous years. Events may be held in other locations such as local parks, and include breakfasts, luncheons, and gifts for the families and children.

Contacts:

Kern County: Jana Slagle, Kern County Department of Human Services, 661-631-6892

San Bernardino County: Kim Greve, Court District Manager, Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino, 909-387-7005

Ceremony to Call Out the Names of Children Who Wait

What is it?

A ceremony can be held to remember the children who are still waiting for adoptive parents. Participants include volunteers, court officials, social service employees, community members, and adoptive families.

Why do this?

The ceremony helps to educate the community about the adoption process and to raise awareness about the need for foster parents and adoptive parents. Since California has so many waiting children, the ceremony additionally helps people understand how large and complex this issue is and how much work is needed to solve the problem.

What goal does this program address?

The goals of the program are to involve in the process people unfamiliar with adoption and to publicly recognize the children who are waiting for safe and permanent homes.

How can you start this program in your county?

Invite church leaders, media personalities, school officials, judges, social workers, political leaders, and other community members to take part in the ceremony. Have volunteers take turns reading out the names. The Black Adoption Placement and Research Center has previously organized one such event. The center invited local choirs to perform after the names were read, and concluded the evening with a candlelight vigil and litany. This event would be a good media opportunity.

Several different groups in the Sacramento area hold this type of event at the State Capitol of California. For example, Sierra Adoption Services, Aspira Foster and Family Services and the County of Sacramento-Adoption Bureau hosts prominent members of the community, adoptive parents, and former foster children to participate in a Calling Out.

Contacts:

Black Adoption Placement and Research Center, Sylvia Joyner, 510-430-3600

Sara Hanson, Sierra Adoption Services: 916-368-5114, ext. 237

Faith-Based Outreach

Working With Local Faith-Based Organizations

What is it?

Faith-based outreach is an avenue for a countywide faith-based campaign to promote the need for adoptive families. Churches, mosques, synagogues, and other congregations throughout the county receive informational packets supplied by the county adoptions agency defining the needs for permanency for foster children. The packets should include opportunities for congregations to come forward and allow the county adoptions agency or a committee of local volunteers to recruit within their congregations. The committee may comprise court staff, county adoption services staff, CASAs, and others. Congregations are invited to commit to the cause of helping those children who are waiting for a family to adopt them.

Why do this?

Faith-based outreach is often used to target recruiting families for children who may be difficult to adopt, such as multiple children in a sibling group, older children, and those with special needs. Faith-based outreach is typically targeted specifically during November, but it may take place throughout the year.

What goal does this program address?

Faith-based outreach provides an opportunity for social services, courts, other local organizations invested in foster children's need for permanency, and the many community members in local congregations to come together and help these children. Additionally, because such outreach helps to draw positive attention to the adoption process before so many people, it encourages those who may have been thinking about adopting to start the process.

How can you start this program in your county?

Make initial contacts with local leaders of congregations, through either phone calls or letters. If the leader of a particular faith community proves too difficult to reach, try contact through associate leaders, societies, or fellowships. If your county already has a committee involving all the local faith communities, this can be a good starting point.

Since 2000, San Diego County has published a calendar pairing local foster children available for adoption with local leaders of the faith community. Local professional photographers volunteer their services and take excellent portraits. They hold an unveiling ceremony for the calendar. The calendar is historically used to promote difficult-to-place children. Subsequent

calendars have also related the success stories of children happily adopted who were featured in previous calendars. San Diego also does many other forms of outreach with its faith community.

In June 2006, the Orange County Social Services Agency sponsored their first lunchtime forum for area faith communities. The meeting served several goals, including the stabilizing influence of keeping more foster children in local placements, lowering the number of placements through those more stable placements, and increasing awareness through the larger faith communities. An article from the Orange County Register about this outreach effort is included in the resources division of this section.

Contacts:

San Diego County Adoptions: 877-423-6788

Orange County Social Services: Juan Herrera, Foster and Adoptive Family Recruiter, 714-9403972

Orange County Social Services Agency main number: 1-888-871-5437

Meetings and Support Groups for Recent Adoptive Parents

What is it?

Meetings and support groups can provide information, support, and assistance to recent adoptive parents.

Why do this?

Although the adoption has been completed, the newly created family will likely need help in creating the bonds and ties that characterize many biological families. Adoptive parents may also create a support network among themselves for exchanging good advice and sharing their experiences.

What goal does this program address?

Meetings and support groups for new adoptive parents not only disseminate information but also show such parents that resources are available for them in times of trouble. This program furthers the goal of establishing families with lifelong bonds and ties as strong as those of any biological family.

How can you start this program in your county?

Meetings and workshops are usually sponsored by an agency or an organization working in adoptive services. Pick a topic of concern for newly adoptive parents and present a forum, providing guidance and help for those parents. The Kinship Center offers such programs. Other agencies are altering the support group to fit the needs of the client. Telephone “warm lines”—through which one adoptive parent experiencing difficulty can call and talk to another adoptive parent—provide a type of support group that may be more accessible to a busy parent.

The article in the following resource pages, *The Value of Adoptive Parent Groups*, provides more information on the history, value, formation, and activities of adoptive parent groups. It also contains suggestions for where to find a current group. There is also a listing of current postadoptive family events for California from the Adoptive Families Web site; see the site for the most current listing.

Contacts:

The Kinship Center: 1-800-454-6744

(Locations are available in both Northern and Southern California)

Web site: www.kinshipcenter.org/adoption_california.html

Adoptive Families listing of postadoptive family events:

Web site: www.adoptivefamilies.com/calendar.php?cal=post#CA

Training for Adoptive Parents and Children

What is it?

Training for adoptive parents can entail everything from basic parent training to training on adoptive children's special needs and more specific training focused on the exact needs of a particular child being adopted. The trainers are clinicians, such as social workers and psychologists, who themselves have been trained to help adoptive parents.

Why do this?

Training for adoptive parents and clinicians is necessary to promote permanent and enduring adoptions. Too often, adoptive parents do not know how to read the verbal and nonverbal signs of adoptive children. Clinicians must be trained to help parents interpret these signs and to know what to do.

What goal does this program address?

Training of adoptive parents and clinicians will increase the permanency rate of adoptive placement. Preparing the parent with the skills to communicate to and understand the child will help the parent build the bonds necessary to a trusting relationship.

How can you start this program in your county?

There are groups that offer many different kinds of workshops to train adoptive parents and clinicians. Most of them offer a form of postadoptive services. The Kinship Center, one such agency, provides a variety of workshops for adoptive parents in an adoption clinical training called A.F.T.E.R. They also have a support program called STAR that offers support and training to adoptive parents of children with developmental disabilities and medical, neurological and physical challenges. Both of these programs offer training and other services.

Contacts:

Santa Clara County: A.F.T.E.R. in San Jose, 408-573-8222

Monterey County: A.F.T.E.R. Training-Monterey Bay, 831-455-9965

Web site: www.afteradoption.org/

Collaborative Permanency Training and Materials

What is it?

Collaborative permanency training works with non-attorney child welfare team members to understand and implement permanency laws and regulations. It allows foster and kinship caregivers, agency staff, CASA volunteers, and service providers to understand and implement laws and regulations that affect permanency for foster children and youth. Training curricula is accompanied by legal toolkits that explain child welfare law and regulations in plain language for non-attorneys. All materials contain cites to appropriate statutes and implementation tools such as court forms, checklists, etc.

Why do this?

Non-attorneys in the child welfare system play a vital role in ensuring that legal requirements are met for foster children and youth. Practical legal training for foster and kinship families, CASA volunteers, agency staff, and service providers in the juvenile court process and how to effectively participate in it improves the quality of information provided to the court, resulting in improved judicial decision making.

What goal does the program address?

Collaborative permanency training provides an opportunity for non-attorneys to gain an understanding of how legal requirements shape child welfare practice. Information on topics that affect permanency, such as new permanency legislation, the effect of sibling relationships on permanency options, the role of the child's attorney, foster and kinship caregiver court participation, and many others are presented in the context of legal mandates. The capacity of non-attorney child welfare professionals and volunteers is enhanced by training on legal issues.

How can you start this program in your county?

Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting (LAPP) provides collaborative permanency training throughout California. Public and private child welfare agencies, community college foster and kinship care education programs, CASA organizations, or foster caregiver groups typically contact LAPP with specific training requests. Trainings can be individualized to meet the informational needs of the target population. LAPP trainers are experienced juvenile dependency attorneys who have cared for foster children in their own homes as foster, kinship, and adoptive parents.

Specific LAPP toolkits are provided to trainees during training sessions or may be purchased separately in bulk on a range of legal topics, including LAPP's 2006 Legislative Update, Personal Rights of Foster Children and Youth, Permanency for California Children in Foster Care, Prudent Parent Decision Making for California Foster and Kinship Parents and many others.

Contact Information:



Regina Deihl
Executive Director
Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting (LAPP)
3182 Campus Drive, Suite 175
San Mateo, CA 94403
Phone: (650)712-1442
Fax: (650) 712-1637
www.LAPPonline.org

B. Resources

- Faith-Based Outreach:
 - National Adoption Day: Faith Community Talking Points 2005
 - National Adoption Day: Faith Leader Announcement 2005
 - National Adoption Day: Template Letter to Faith Organizations 2005
 - Church Groups Asked to Help Foster Kids (Orange County)
- Adoption Assistance Program Brochure
- Listening to Parents: Overcoming Barriers to Adoption of Children From Foster Care
- Foster Care Adoption in the United States: An Analysis of Interest in Adoption and a Review of State Recruitment Strategies: Executive Summary
- National Adoption Information Clearinghouse: The Value of Adoptive Parent Groups
- Child Welfare Permanency Reforms: Post-Adoption Needs and Services
- Navigating the Foster Care System: A Roadmap, Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting (LAPP) Brochure
- Family Builders



Faith Community Talking Points

*Talking points for event planners to use when encouraging faith communities to participate in NAD 2005

- On Saturday, November 19th, a very special celebration is happening in our community. The [INSERT COURTHOUSE] is celebrating National Adoption Day.
- Each year, the National Adoption Day Coalition sponsors National Adoption Day to raise awareness of the need to find permanent, loving homes for the thousands of children in foster care currently available for adoption.
- At the heart of the Day are thousands of children, parents, judges, adoption professionals, volunteer lawyers and child advocates in hundreds of communities across the country who come together to finalize the adoptions of children from foster care and celebrate all families who adopt.
- This year, our community will celebrate the adoption of [INSERT NUMBER OF CHILDREN BEING ADOPTION] children into new, forever families.
- The celebration will include [LIST ADOPTION DAY ACTIVITIES, I.E. ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS, CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION, SPEECHES, GAMES, ENTERTAINMENT].
- In addition to National Adoption Day, there are many ways to show your support for adoption from foster care. Become a foster parent, mentor children in foster care, volunteer. Everything we do will help reach the goal of finding forever families for all children in foster care.
- You'll find more information on National Adoption Day and supporting foster care adoption in general at [INSERT LOCATION OF INFORMATION OR CONTACT INFORMATION].

Statistics

- There are approximately 523,000 foster care children in the United States, and 118,000 of them are available for adoption.
- Since 1987, the number of children in foster care has nearly doubled, and the average time a child remains in foster care has lengthened to nearly three years.
- Each year, approximately 20,000 children in foster care will age out of the system without ever being placed with a permanent family.





national
adoption day

www.nationaladoptionday.org

Faith Leader Announcement

*Sample text for faith leader/participant to use for an announcement before or after the mass, service, etc.

On Saturday, November 19th, a very special celebration is happening in our community. The [INSERT COURTHOUSE] is celebrating National Adoption Day. Each year, the National Adoption Day Coalition sponsors the Day to raise awareness of the need to find permanent, loving homes for the thousands of children in foster care currently available for adoption.

This year, [INSERT COMMUNITY NAME] joins hundreds of communities across the country to finalize the adoptions of children from foster care and celebrate all families who adopt.

Our celebration will include [LIST ADOPTION DAY ACTIVITIES, I.E. ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS, CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION, SPEECHES, GAMES, ENTERTAINMENT], and we invite you to become involved with this special day.

At the heart of National Adoption Day are the community members who help make the day memorable for new forever families. Lawyers, child advocates, judges, and adoption professionals volunteer their time to finalize adoptions, and community volunteers help make the day run smoothly for everyone.

In addition to National Adoption Day, there are many ways to show your support for adoption from foster care. Become a foster parent, mentor children in foster care, volunteer. Everything we do will help reach the goal of finding forever families for all children in foster care.

You'll find more information on National Adoption Day and supporting foster care adoption in general at [INSERT LOCATION OF INFORMATION OR CONTACT INFORMATION].



The Alliance for Children's Rights



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VI-23

Template Letter to Faith Organizations

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE, ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

On a special Saturday just before every Thanksgiving, the National Adoption Day Coalition sponsors National Adoption Day to raise awareness of the need to find permanent, loving homes for the thousands of children in foster care currently available for adoption. This year, on November 19th, we invite you to participate in the [INSERT COMMUNITY NAME] adoption celebration.

At the heart of National Adoption Day are thousands of children, parents, judges, adoption professionals, volunteer lawyers and child advocates and community members who come together to finalize the adoptions of children from foster care and celebrate all families who adopt. In [NAME OF COURTHOUSE], we expect to finalize [NUMBER] of adoptions on this special day.

There are many ways [INSERT NAME OF FAITH ORGANIZATION] can get involved. For example:

- You can download bulletin inserts, posters and fliers from our Web site NationalAdoptionDay.org for distribution to your faith community;
- We can work with you to add the National Adoption Day Web link to your organization's Web site;
- We can help you get involved in our National Adoption Day celebration by working directly with our planning staff and volunteers;
- You can incorporate National Adoption Day into your faith service announcements or sermons using suggested talking points from NationalAdoptionDay.org.

In addition to National Adoption Day, there are many opportunities to support adoption from foster care. Become a foster parent, mentor children in foster care, volunteer. Everything you do will help reach the goal of finding forever families for all children in foster care. We hope you will join us to make the day a great success for families and children.

Please feel free to contact me at [INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION] if you have any questions. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ORGANIZATION]



The Alliance for Children's Rights



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Thursday, June 29, 2006

Church groups asked to help foster kids

Orange County's Social Services Agency reaches out to the faith-based community to recruit and support foster and adoptive families.

By THERESA WALKER

The Orange County Register

Orange County's Social Services Agency took a leap of faith Wednesday, reaching out to congregations around the county to help find homes in the community for children in the foster care system.

About 100 members from congregations of varying faiths and sizes attended a lunchtime forum in Tustin to learn about the county's need for foster and adoptive families and to discuss ways to engage their churches, mosques and synagogues in recruitment efforts.

The forum marked the first time the Social Services Agency has reached out directly to the faith community. County officials said the effort has been in the making for more than a year and is based on a similar successful effort in Los Angeles County.

"The whole concept is fairly new," said Roylyn Burton, who does recruiting and media outreach for the agency. "We're government – it used to be taboo to even mention churches."

In recent years, the county has begun putting an emphasis on keeping children who are removed from their homes in their communities, either through placement with relatives or local foster families. Research has shown that children in foster care do better when they continue in a familiar environment.

"What we did historically is remove children from harm," said Michael Riley, the county's director of children and family services. "But removing them from everything, maybe the only thing they know, in many ways, we exacerbate their trauma – not purposely, but that's what happens."

Riley estimated that there are about 2,400 Orange County children in out-of-home care. About 400 of those children have been placed in foster homes and group homes in San Bernardino and Riverside counties because of the shortage of foster homes here, he said.

"I'd like to have those kids back here in Orange County," he told the forum participants.

While the county finalizes about 400 to 450 adoptions annually, about 200 children in the foster care system at any given are eligible for adoption. The photos of some of those children were placed throughout the room.

"We thought that the best place to go to talk about good, loving, stable families and homes is the faith-based community," Riley said. "We're willing to come to your churches, mosques, temples – whatever it may be – to talk some more."

An emancipated foster youth also addressed the gathering, providing tearful insight into the lives of children who bounce around the system.

Lauren Calandri, 19, spent 13 years in foster homes, group homes, and Orangewood Children's Home. She had been molested by her father when she was 5 and was neglected by her mother, who abused drugs and alcohol.

Calandri was molested twice more in foster homes where she was placed, and was separated from an older and younger sister who found permanent homes. She said she moved 11 times in the last 10 years.

She would ask herself, "Why does everybody get a home but me? What's wrong with me?"

When she was 9, she attended a Christian summer camp for abused children and attributes that experience to helping her find God and feel that there was a plan for her life, even though she remained in the system.

Today, Calandri attends Hope University in Fullerton on a full scholarship, works as a police cadet with the Tustin Police Department, and plans on attending the police academy. She went back to live with one of her foster families.

Calandri encouraged the members of the faith community to become more involved with children in the foster care system.

"Thank you for being here, for our kids," she said. "If you don't care about them, then God will be the only one who does."

In a breakout session at the end of the two-hour forum, participants brainstormed with social workers on ways to work together to recruit foster and adoptive families as well as help strengthen families in the community so children won't have to be removed from their homes.

When he left, Pastor Steve Beighler of Lamb of God Lutheran Church in Anaheim said the first step for him and for the church's social ministry director, Andrea Matthews, would be promoting awareness in their congregation of about 75 worshipers.

Matthews, who attended the luncheon with Beighler, is the perfect role model. She's adopted nine children over the past 25 years.

"The churches should be active in this because that's what we're here for," Matthews said.

For more information about Orange County Social Services Agency's faith-based outreach, contact Juan Herrera, foster and adoptive family recruiter, at 714-940-3972, or Joan Kaufman, Orange County outreach manager with Child SHARE, at 714-619-0247. For information on becoming a foster or adoptive parent, call 888-871-5437 or go to www.oc4kids.com.

EVAN B. DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

Listening to Parents:
Overcoming Barriers to the Adoption
of Children from Foster Care

Executive Summary

March 2005

Funded by: The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Prepared by: Jeff Katz, Senior Fellow, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute
in Collaboration with Harvard University & the Urban Institute

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Executive Summary

Each year, public and private child welfare agencies spend tens of millions of dollars to recruit families to adopt children from foster care. Historically, these recruitment efforts have been based on the goal of obtaining large-scale responses to mass-market efforts such as television programs, newspaper columns featuring waiting children, placemats in restaurants, and two-minute “Wednesday’s Child” spots on local news broadcasts.

These campaigns are generally designed to get prospective applicants to make an initial phone call to inquire about adoption. By that measure, these efforts frequently succeed in generating initial interest from prospective adoptive parents: Each year, almost a quarter of a million Americans call social service agencies for information about adopting a child from foster care.

But new research by Adoption Institute Senior Fellow Jeff Katz – in conjunction with colleagues at Harvard University and the Urban Institute – shows that prospective parents who seek information about adopting a child from foster care are often put off by a system they view as too hard to access and more focused on screening out bad candidates than welcoming good ones.

Katz and his colleagues (Julie Wilson, Senior Lecturer at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and Rob Geen, Senior Research Associate at the Urban Institute) have conducted the largest study ever undertaken of attrition among prospective adoptive parents of children from foster care. They found the vast majority of adults (78%) who call for more information about becoming adoptive parents will not fill out an application or attend an orientation meeting. Just 6% of those who call for information actually complete the adoption homestudy, which is required for all prospective parents. And many of those who do complete a homestudy end up leaving the child welfare agency without ever adopting. While people may decide not to adopt for many reasons, the bottom line is that only a fraction of those recruited to call a child welfare agency actually do adopt.

“Here at DSS I am scratching at the doors, ‘hey, I’m willing to take siblings, I want siblings!’ So here I am and I’m not asking you to break the rules, I’m just asking you to lighten up a little bit and you jump instead of me. A little bit, not a lot.”

- Massachusetts adoption applicant

Interviews and focus groups with prospective adoptive parents, as well as with agency staff members, document a range of frustrating issues and barriers that keep prospective parents from completing the process. These include differences between the kind of child prospective parents seek (or think they want) and those available; difficulty in accessing the agency or unpleasant initial contacts with it; and ongoing frustration with the agency or aspects of the process.

Since this new study shows word of mouth is one of the two primary ways people learn about adopting from foster care (media is the other), such negative experiences may be greatly amplified as frustrated applicants relate their sentiments to their friends, families and acquaintances.

For each of the 126,000 children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted, an alienating experience for a prospective parent can mean the difference between a life spent in the uncertainty of temporary homes and the loving embrace of a permanent family. The cost to these children, and to society as a whole, is incalculable.

According to this research, the most effective way to create permanent, loving homes for waiting children may not be to recruit more families. Rather, it may be to change the system in a way that

welcomes and nurtures adults who are willing, and in some cases avidly trying, to adopt a child from foster care.

Internal problems alienate many prospective parents

Researchers for this project, funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, conducted the most intensive and sophisticated effort to date to understand the experience of people who adopt children from public child welfare agencies. The project included surveys of over 40 states, analysis of data from the 1997, 1998, and 1999 federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), more than 140 case record reviews, and case studies of adoption practices in three locations – Boston, Miami and San Jose – that involved focus groups and individual interviews with parents at various stages in the process of adoption, as well as with state and private adoption workers.

"I had discouraging conversations where I ended up feeling not invited, to sum it up. 'You're not appropriate, you are too old, you are single, you're this, you're that, you want an infant, forget it.' It wasn't really any engagement about whether or not there was a match. That put me back a few months each time."

This study was conceived by Katz, then a Research Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and now a Senior Fellow at the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, which has assisted in the preparation and dissemination of the research. Katz' work on the project was informed by 10 years of experience as Executive Director of Adoption Rhode Island, a statewide agency that recruits families to adopt children from foster care. The study focused on "general applicants," defined as people who have expressed an interest in adopting a child from the foster care system whom they do not know. The project has, for the first time, documented the extent of attrition as applicants go from their initial inquiry through the adoption process, why large numbers of prospective parents are (or become) discouraged from adopting, and which aspects of the process alienate them.

Among the study's major findings were:

- **The first informational call is key.** People adopt for many reasons. For some callers, their first inquiry about adoption comes at the end of a painful journey that may include illness, infertility, degrading medical procedures, or unbearable loss. When making their first inquiry, applicants noted they wanted to obtain accurate information and to be treated well. Workers also mentioned the need for sensitivity.

"We've always wanted children and to be married 12 years and no children.... Mother's Day was so traumatic for me every year.... Then this past Mother's Day was the worst.... I couldn't imagine missing motherhood..."

- **Agencies often do not handle that first call well.** Parents reported their initial contacts with agencies were the most difficult aspect of the process for two reasons: First, callers often had difficulty reaching the right person, being sent to voice mail or transferred from one person to another. Second, agency personnel answering the first call are often clerical staff with inadequate knowledge of the process, or the focus of the initial call is to screen out "inappropriate" applicants rather than to welcome prospective adoptive parents. Applicants who made a strong initial connection with a worker were best able to tolerate the inevitable frustrations of the process. This connection was often the "make or break" factor for prospective parents.
- **The emphasis is too often on weeding out applicants rather than recruiting them.** Some agencies have procedures that are far more heavily weighted toward screening out inappropriate

applicants rather than recruiting, and supporting, good prospective parents. Two examples: multi-page questionnaires that must be filled out before callers may attend informational meetings; and informational meetings that begin with fingerprinting and focus on technical restrictions about who can adopt, rather than on the rewards and challenges of adopting a child from foster care.

- **Parents are generally satisfied with training and homestudy.** Adopting a child who has been placed in foster care because of abuse or neglect is inherently challenging. The great majority of parents who completed the adoption training process reported being pleased with the preparation they received. Although some said their trainings portrayed the children in an overly negative light, most felt they had a better understanding of, and greater sensitivity toward, the children they would be adopting.
- **The attrition rate rises sharply as prospective families go from initial call to adoption.** The research indicates states annually receive about 240,000 inquiries a year from prospective parents regarding the adoption of a child from foster care. Complications in data collection result in significant numbers of “general applicants” being classified as foster parents who adopt their foster children. However, using the state definition of general applicants, only one in 28 people who call for information about the adoption of a child from foster care eventually adopt such a child. Even under a broader definition of “general applicant,” the percentage that complete the process clearly is very small.

Primary Recommendations

Despite the impressive strides made in the wake of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, there are about 80,000 waiting children in foster care who will not be adopted this year. For these boys and girls, the 240,000 Americans who will consider adopting from foster care annually are far too valuable a resource to waste. The following recommendations are intended to increase the retention rate of prospective parents in public child welfare agencies and, thereby, to appreciably increase the number of families who adopt from foster care:

- **Answer the phone, and have qualified staff do it.** This is a critically important initial step to improve waiting children’s prospects of getting loving, permanent homes. Agencies therefore should have specialized adoption hotlines, and the phones should be answered by well-trained and friendly individuals who can assure callers of a direct and immediate response.

“My first experience was my sister calling me about a boy who had been on TV. . . I just wanted to know about this little boy and it just seems like it was a thousand phone calls and a thousand people and this one doesn't know what you are talking about and let me transfer you to somebody else....”

- **Address prospective parents’ emotional needs during initial contact.** For most prospective adoptive parents, their first contact with a public child welfare agency is a sensitive, highly charged emotional experience. The first person to speak with them therefore should be a professional staff member with a background in counseling and specialized training in adoption.
- **Emphasize recruitment at the start of the process.** During initial contact, informational meetings and orientation, the risk of alienating potentially suitable parents far outweighs that of allowing inappropriate applicants to begin training. During this stage, prospective parents should get clear, written guidelines about qualifications and grounds for being screened out.
- **Separate screening and training functions to the extent possible.** There is an inherent conflict for parents dealing with adoption workers. They are asked, and generally want, to be

open with their feelings as a necessary part of preparation – but the adoption worker also is their judge, and has the power to grant or deny placement of a child. Since applicants stress the importance of having a strong personal connection with a caseworker, agencies should try to separate screening and training, especially at the beginning of the process.

- **Listen to prospective parents.** It is critical that child welfare agencies develop ways of listening to prospective parents throughout the adoption process, then respond to their needs and concerns. Every child welfare system should therefore establish a process for soliciting and incorporating such feedback. This can be accomplished through surveys, focus groups, parent advisory boards, and other means.

Additional recommendations

- **Provide families with a clear, written roadmap of the process.** Parents in this study expressed great confusion about the adoption process – including the roles that various workers play, relationships among different agencies, and the sequential steps they have to take. Providing an explicit explanation could make a major difference in retaining applicants.
- **Provide applicants with a balanced perspective.** While agencies must present a realistic view of the challenges applicants may face, it is vital to remember that adoption is about hope. So agencies should include information about the rewards as well as the challenges, for instance by bringing satisfied adoptive parents into trainings early in the process.
- **Develop a buddy system, outside the agency, to support applicants.** For prospective parents, adoption is an emotionally intense experience. But for an overworked agency, whose focus is the child, the resources may not be available to provide the “hand-holding” applicants require. Established adoptive parents can help provide the necessary support.

Conclusion

In adoption, the paramount goal of public child welfare agencies is to find families for children, and *not* to find children for families. When private agencies charge tens of thousands of dollars to help a family adopt an infant domestically or a child from another country, the prospective adoptive parents can expect (and demand) a level of service for their money that it is difficult for public child welfare agencies to match. Although the public agencies charge no fees, their focus must always be on their primary clients: the abused and neglected children in their care. Even so, these agencies must recognize the need to support adoptive parents and treat them as the precious resource they are: the only positive outcome available for the children who can never return to their original homes. Only by listening to the people who have dealt with the system – adoptive parents and those who never became parents – can we provide the opportunity of a loving family for every child still waiting for a permanent home.

Executive Summary

On any given day in the United States, more than 100,000 foster children are waiting to be adopted by someone who can provide a permanent, loving home. While they wait, these children often live with foster parents, with relatives, or in group homes or institutions. Extensive recruitment efforts have been undertaken at the state and federal levels to identify homes for these children. Yet many children still wait a very long time for a new family.

The National Adoption Day Coalition works to draw attention to these children and celebrate loving parents that choose to adopt. The Coalition, comprised of eight partners—The Alliance for Children’s Rights, Casey Family Services, Children’s Action Network, Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption®, Freddie Mac Foundation, and Target Corporation—commissioned the Urban Institute to conduct a study to look more closely at how states find adoptive families for children in foster care.

Last year, the research report commissioned by the National Adoption Day Coalition identified primary barriers and promising approaches to move foster children into adoptive homes. Leading the list of barriers was the difficulty in finding enough interested and able families to adopt waiting children. This year’s report looks more closely at this problem. It provides a first-time national look at the state of adoption recruitment by describing: levels of interest in adoption, who takes steps toward adopting, and how interest might be channeled toward foster care adoption. In doing so, it provides needed direction to states and federal policymakers in crafting future recruitment strategies.

Key Findings

- **Women’s Interest in Adopting Increased by 38 Percent between 1995 and 2002**
Based on estimates from the National Survey of Family Growth, 18 million women reported being interested in adopting in 2002. This represents a 38 percent increase since 1995 when 13 million women reported interest. The 18 million women interested in 2002 represents a third (33 percent) of the population of women ages 18 to 44, up from about a quarter (24 percent) of women (13 million) in 1995.
- **Women’s Interest in Adopting Increased across Demographic Groups**
More women reported an interest in adopting in 2002 than in 1995 in nearly all age, race and ethnic, income, education, and religious groups. Some groups of interest to recruiters seeking homes for foster children saw notable percent increases: black women (35 percent), Hispanic women (29 percent), lower-income women (50 percent) (women with family incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level), Protestant women (41 percent), and 18- to 24-year-olds (73 percent).
- **Many Women Interested in Adopting Special Needs Children**
Of the women currently seeking to adopt in 2002, many reported a willingness to adopt children with characteristics similar to those waiting to be adopted. For example, the vast majority (97 percent) of women currently seeking to adopt would be willing to accept a minority child. Nearly a third of women (31 percent) said they would be willing to adopt a child that is 13 years old or older. Ninety percent of women reported a willingness to adopt a child with a mild disability, and 31 percent said they would accept a child with a severe disability. Seventy-five percent of women said they would be willing to accept a sibling group.
- **Women Interested In Adoption Were Less Likely to Take Steps to Adopt in 2002 than in 1995**
In 2002, 10 percent (1.9 million) of the women who reported an interest in adopting took steps toward this end. This portion represents a decline since 1995, when 16 percent (2.1 million) of the women who reported interest took steps. Declines in the portion of interested women taking steps occurred for many demographic groups. For some groups of interested women, the percentage that took steps remained fairly steady: 30- to 34-year-olds, black women, Hispanic women, unmarried women, and lower-income women.
- **States Use Multiple Types of Recruitment Strategies**
All states and the District of Columbia use child-specific recruitment as part of their recruitment strategy, and most states also incorporate general and targeted recruitment as part of their strategies. The majority of states (40) use all three types of recruitment in their strategies to recruit adoptive homes. In fact, only two states reported using just one recruitment type as part of their overall recruiting strategy.

- **States Employ Innovative Recruitment Strategies to Translate Interest Into Action**

States conduct general, child-specific, and targeted recruitment through a variety of activities. A majority of states (42) use the media to feature children. All states offer photo listings depicting their children in foster care. Over half of states (32) use faith-based recruitment. And some states use foster-adopt strategies (10), language-based initiatives (10), or word-of-mouth efforts (11). The examples of each of these strategies provided in the report reflect a greater need not to just make families aware of the need for adoptive families, but to personally engage and retain families in the recruitment process.

Recommendations

The National Adoption Day Coalition is encouraged by the dramatic increase in interest in adoption and the extensive recruitment activity occurring across the nation. However, given that interest often does not translate into action, there still is much work to be done to ensure that all children find the permanent, loving families they need and deserve. Based on this research report, the National Adoption Day Coalition recommends the following:

- **Shift in Messaging from Awareness to Taking Action**

These findings suggest significant progress has been made in generating interest and awareness around adoption. While this is an important first step, the findings also reveal that future campaigns are needed to encourage those interested and able to adopt a foster child to actually take steps toward that end. Future campaigns might shift from telling prospective parents that anyone can adopt to telling interested adopters *how* they can adopt.

- **Channel Interest toward Foster Care Adoption**

The findings in this report also suggest an opportunity to encourage the option of foster adoption in comparison to other types of adoption. Foster care adoption may be less costly than other types of adoption and often offers financial supports and post-adoption services to families that other types of adoption may not provide. Moreover, it is a means by which to help children in one's own community who need homes.

- **Use Targeted Recruitment to Focus on High-Propensity Groups**

The report identifies key groups of women for whom interest is up and levels of taking action have not declined: 30- to 34-year-olds, black and Hispanic women, unmarried women, and lower-income women. States might consider more expansive targeted efforts toward these women.

- **Encourage Individuals Not Taking Steps to Participate in Other Ways**

There are many ways to support the foster care adoption process other than by adopting. With so many individuals interested in adopting but not taking steps, the field might consider strategies to encourage these individuals to support foster care adoption in other ways.

- **Develop a Consumer-Friendly Foster Care Adoption Process**

In order to sell the foster care adoption process as a viable option to potential adopters, the process itself must be efficient and consumer-friendly. For interested families, the first call they make or the first web site they see may leave lasting impressions. Three stages of the process should be considered as part of efforts to make the process more consumer-friendly: the circumstances of the first contact interested adopters have with agencies, the navigation strategies for guiding families through the process, and the supports and services available to the adoptive family and child.

- **Use Available Resources to Develop New Recruitment Strategies**

The Federal Adoption Opportunities Program (AOP) grants might be targeted to enhance recruitment activities. Grants could be used for improving adoption web sites and responses to inquiries, developing adoption support services for families seeking to adopt, or funding positions for parent advocates.

- **Test the Effectiveness of Recruitment Strategies with Rigorous Research**

All states are conducting recruitment activities, yet there is little research indicating what works. Rigorous evaluations and better data are needed to understand the strategies that result in successful adoptions.



The Value of Adoptive Parent Groups

What Adoptive Parent Groups Can Do For You

Parenting has often been called the most complex profession. It becomes even more so when the family includes a child who has been adopted. This is true whether the child is an infant, has special needs, or is of a different race or ethnic background. Adoptive parent groups help parents share, understand, and manage these complexities. Whether it's general support, such as enduring the adoption waiting period, or specific advice, such as traveling to an unfamiliar country to receive a child, adoptive parent groups have unparalleled value.

In the following comments, prospective adoptive parents and adoptive parents attest to the wide range of benefits.

Adoptive Parent Groups Provide Educational and Social Activities

"We talked with other families and learned about topics ranging from Korean culture to sexual acting out. These sessions were not only educational, but great social get-togethers as well, with hot chocolate and popcorn. These were opportunities to get to know one another, hear each other's kids' stories, and learn of their progress."

Adoptive Parent Groups Can Lead to the Formation of a Play Group

"As each mother arrived with a child or children, there was a buzz of excitement as the mothers asked names, country of birth, and age. Standing around our darlings as they invaded the toy box, the four of us were mesmerized with the scene of commonality of the children's height, their playfulness, and their Latin American cuteness."

"Once the children were settled into playing, we chatted and chatted about so many topics all dealing with adoption, or Latin culture issues—we shared stories, our older children's conversations, and our own observations. It was like a flood of topics needing to emerge from each of us that we sometimes forgot the toddlers until there was a yell or a tugging at a toy."

Adoptive Parent Groups Can Bring Comfort in the Form of a Newsletter

"Your newsletter has been a real source of support for us. We have lived in Arizona for a year and a half now, and we still very much miss a strong, supportive parent group."



Adoptive Parent Groups Can Provide Examples of the Problems and Pleasures of Parenting a Child With Special Needs

"One thing that makes adopting a child with special needs easier is the encouragement and advice that you get from other group members whose children have experienced the same or almost similar emotional/behavior problems."

Adoptive Parent Groups Can Be Supportive to Prospective Adoptive Parents While They Wait for Their Child

"Our group is unique in many ways, but mainly because we are like a family. Our children range from infants to teenagers, and some families join us to just endure the `wait' until their child arrives."

Adoptive Parent Groups Can Provide Guidance for Prospective Adoptive Parents Planning Intercountry Adoption

"One woman we spoke with provided us with a diary of her trip, giving the sequence of steps. This was invaluable despite the minor changes we encountered. The more we learned from other adoptive parents, the better we felt about our impending trip into the unknown."

Prospective adoptive parents have much to gain from the experience of adoptive parents, who can advise them on how to deal with agencies on issues of licensure, home studies, and fees. Talking with adoptive families can expose them to the potential difficulties of parenting. It can also reveal the successes and joys.

History of Adoptive Parent Groups

The first formal adoptive parent group started in the New York City metropolitan area in 1955. The group was called Adoptive Parents Committee, and it is still active today. Not long after, in 1957, some families involved in intercountry and transracial adoption in Montreal, Canada started a group. The adoptive parents felt they needed a support group to help them deal with special issues that accompanied these kinds of adoptions. This type of networking rapidly became popular throughout Canada and the United States. By the late 1960s, parents in several cities in both countries began to form similar organizations.

Until then, adoption in the United States was almost exclusively restricted to healthy Caucasian infants. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, when adoption expanded to other kinds of children—those who were older, had developmental disabilities, and were from other countries or of mixed race—it became evident that parents needed help beyond that provided by agencies.

Even families who had adopted healthy infants found themselves needing support for several reasons. More adopted children insisted on knowing who their birth parents were; some actively searched for them. Many adoptive parents were stunned, having never imagined they would one day face a possible reunion of their adopted child and his or her birth parents. They needed help to cope—and it was parent groups to which they often turned.

Also, adoptive parents found children needing support on other fronts. In some cases, the expression of the normal adolescent need for autonomy and independence seemed more

The Value of Adoptive Parent Groups

intense for adopted children. Some parents wanted to know how other families told their children they were adopted. Or they wondered what happened when children were not told early and learned of their adoptive status later in life. Information and experiences exchanged by the parents were invaluable.

Regardless of the type of adoption, an adoptive parent group has value to the

- adoptive family
- prospective adoptive family
- child
- social worker
- waiting child
- legislative process.

Value to the Adoptive Family

Although many adoption agencies provide services to families after the adoption has been finalized, adoptive parent groups provide a different kind of environment that often feels more comfortable. The family can find a support system and friendship. Parents can relate easily to the advice and experience of those who have been there. They are able to express negative feelings about the child without fear of judgment.

Parents of young children often are interested in educational activities about general parenting skills. Once children reach the age when they become more aware of the adoption issue, the support that groups can offer parents becomes more important.

Value to the Prospective Adoptive Family

An adoptive parent group gives waiting families an in-depth understanding of adoption and enables them to hear first hand about the successes and the problems that may be encountered. They can probably meet others who have adopted children similar to the one they want to adopt. Families who have already adopted can offer advice and guidance that makes the adoption process more understandable and less threatening.

Value to the Child

Children benefit from knowing other children who have been adopted and their parents. They can share their feelings and concerns about being adopted, about their birth parents, and about their cultural heritages if they were adopted from foreign countries.

Value to the Waiting Child

Through adoptive parent groups, more people become aware of children with special needs and feel comfortable entertaining the idea of adopting such children. Through the groups, directly and indirectly, more children are adopted. Groups often include both adoptive parents and people interested but not certain they want to proceed. Being part of an adoptive parent organization often gives the knowledge and the confidence to move ahead into adoption.

Value to the Legislative Process

Parent groups have been the force behind many of the valuable changes in adoption. These changes have benefited children with special needs and allowed parents to have a stronger voice in many vital issues. For example, parent groups were instrumental in getting legislation passed in which the Federal Government agreed to provide funds to expand adoption opportunities for children. This included making subsidized adoption a reality, so that families who were qualified to adopt but could not afford it were able to do so. Parent groups have consistently testified at hearings on a variety of child welfare issues. The North American Council on Adoptable Children, a national adoption support group, developed National Adoption Awareness Month, which has brought awareness about adoption to people throughout the country.

Value to the Social Worker

Many adoption social workers were trained only in the adoption of infants. Much of what they have learned about adoption of children with special needs has come from the experiences of adoptive parents. This knowledge helps them work more effectively with prospective adoptive parents.

Formation of Groups

Adoptive parent groups are formed in different ways and around different issues. They may spin off from an agency dealing with many interested parents at the same time. They may be a collection of parents from diverse sources coming together around a common issue, such as adopting children of mixed race. Subgroups may form within a main group addressing special interest areas or child age groups.

Activities of Groups

Adoptive parent groups usually engage in social, educational, and support activities. The types of activities undertaken in each category are listed below.

Social Activities

- Parties, including those focusing on the culture and traditions of the children adopted from other countries
- Potluck suppers
- Discussion groups for older children
- Holiday celebrations
- Night on the town just for parents.

Educational Activities

- Production of newsletters about adoption issues and newly adopted children of members
- Preparation for parenting through special training
- Referrals to newsletters, books, and other resource materials
- Referrals to appropriate agency and community resources
- Providing up-to-date information on children available for adoption
- Participation in agency staff training and development
- Convening public information meetings to discuss current adoption issues

- Educating legislative groups and Government sources about child welfare issues
- Information on the foreign culture of the children adopted internationally.

Support Activities

- Postplacement support through a "buddy system," "listening ear," telephone counseling, crisis intervention, and assistance
- "While you wait" meetings for adoptive applicants
- Special groups for special circumstances; that is, single parents, parents of teenagers, parents of disabled children, parents who have adopted transracially, or divorced parents.

Where to Find a Group

The resources listed below can help parents seeking local or special interest adoptive parent support groups.

The **North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)**, a nonprofit umbrella organization of adoptive parent groups, was formed in 1974 as a coordinator for newly forming parent groups. It facilitates information sharing among groups, holds a national conference and helps new groups start. Contact NACAC at 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55114-1149, (612) 644-3036.

Adoptive Families of America (AFA) is a national parent group with chapters throughout the country promoting domestic and intercountry adoption. Contact AFA at 2309 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 535-4829 or (800) 372-3300.

Families Adopting Children Everywhere (FACE) is an adoptive parent support organization in the Maryland and Washington, D.C. areas. It gathers information about adoption resources in the whole mid-Atlantic region. Contact FACE at P.O. Box 28058 Northwood Station, Baltimore, MD 21239, (410) 488-2656.

Latin America Parents Association (LAPA) is a support group for parents who have adopted or wish to adopt children from Latin America. Contact LAPA at P.O. Box 339, Brooklyn, NY 11234, (718) 236-8689. Other chapters are located in Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland (Metropolitan Washington, DC), New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

The **Committee for Single Adoptive Parents** is an umbrella organization of single adoptive and prospective adoptive parent support groups. Its address is P.O. Box 15084, Chevy Chase, MD 20825.

The National Adoption Center (NAC) focuses on the adoption of children with special needs. Contact NAC at 1500 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, (215) 735-9988 or 1-800-TO-ADOPT.

The **National Adoption Information Clearinghouse**, 330 C Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20447, (703) 352-3488 or 1 (888) 251-0075, has a comprehensive listing of foster/adoptive parent support groups in each State in its National Adoption Directory (<http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/general/nad/index.cfm>).



Postadoption Services



It is common for adoptive families to need support and services after adoption. Postadoption services can help families with a wide range of issues. They are available for everything from learning how to explain adoption to a preschooler, to helping a child who experienced early childhood abuse, to helping with an adopted teen's search for identity. Experience with adoptive families has shown that all family members can benefit from some type of

What's Inside:

- Postadoption issues that most adoptive families encounter
- Milestones that may trigger a need for postadoption support
- Types of postadoption services
- Finding postadoption services
- Paying for postadoption services
- Resources



postadoption support. Families of children who have experienced trauma, neglect, or institutionalization may require more intensive services.

Postadoption Issues That Most Adoptive Families Encounter

Because of the lifelong impact of adoption, members of adoptive families may want or need additional support, education, and other services as their children grow. The following are some issues for which families typically seek postadoption support.

Loss and Grief

All adopted children experience loss at one or more points in their lives, and they may grieve their loss as they come to understand the role that adoption has played in their lives. They may struggle with understanding why they were placed for adoption and how that affects who they are. These feelings may change and reappear at different stages of life. Some adopted children may be confused by conflicting emotions about their birth parents—anger at having been placed for adoption or having their birth parents' rights terminated or worry about their birth parents' circumstances. All of these feelings may be acted out as hostility toward their adoptive parents.

Adoptive parents also may experience loss and grief issues of their own, often stemming from infertility issues or the stresses of the adoption experience itself. For some

adoptive parents, these issues may cause strains in their marriages.¹

Understanding Adoption

Children's understanding of adoption changes as they mature and can begin to comprehend its complex social and emotional foundations. Parents need to know how to answer children's questions at each stage of development.

Trust and Attachment

Children who have experienced abuse, neglect, or institutionalization prior to joining their adoptive families often have not known consistent love and affection and may have difficulty trusting and attaching to their new family. In fact, any child separated from birth parents has experienced a break in attachment. These children may need help to begin to make sense of their history and come to terms with what has happened in their lives.

School Problems

Children adopted from foster care often have experienced multiple placements among homes, as well as multiple moves among schools. An educational consultant or a child psychologist may be able to test for educational status and work with teachers from the child's school to ensure an appropriate education. School problems and the need for the services of an educational consultant may also be helpful for older

¹ The Federal government currently funds demonstration projects in postadoption services and marriage education in seven States (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs_fund/discretionary/2004.htm), as well as the Healthy Marriage Initiative (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage>); both of these efforts may help couples with the stresses associated with these losses.

children adopted through intercountry adoptions who already have some school experience in their former country.

Other school issues can arise around classroom assignments that are insensitive or inappropriate for adopted children, such as traditional “family tree” assignments or basic genetics lessons (e.g., identifying inherited family traits). Additionally, school is where many adopted children are first challenged to explain adoption to their peers, often as they themselves are just beginning to understand what it means. Some materials have been developed for adoptive parents and educators to use in the classroom and to educate teachers and other school personnel about adoption. Support groups may be especially helpful in pointing adoptive parents to appropriate materials.

Post Institutionalization Issues and Behaviors

Children who have spent more than a few months in an institutional setting may have missed out on important developmental activities due to a lack of stimulation and suboptimal nutrition. They may have difficulties with feeding, sleeping, and speech, as well as difficulties in forming healthy attachments.

Identity Formation

Teenagers who were adopted at any age may experience identity confusion as they confront the primary questions of adolescence—“Who am I? How am I different from my parents? Which of their values will I take as my own?” Young people who joined their families through adoption also must try to determine how these questions

relate to their birth parents, who may be unknown and even unknowable. These questions may be further complicated if the child’s race or birth culture differs from that of the adoptive family.

Birth Relative Contact

During the past decade or two, the professional adoption community has learned that many adopted children and adults desire or even need information about their birth family or to reconnect with birth relatives. This desire in no way reflects upon adoptive family relationships or the quality of parenting that adopted children received. Agency staff and private specialists can assist in providing information about birth relatives or in initiating contact, if desired, and mediating the relationships that may form.

Medical Concerns

Children who have been in multiple placements may not have received regular medical care. These children, as well as children adopted through intercountry adoptions, often have medical information that is inaccurate and/or incomplete. It is important for all children to have as complete and accurate a health history as possible. Assessment by an adoption-competent physician will provide a plan to update a child’s health and immunization status.

Racial Issues

Adults who parent children of different races or cultures need skills to prepare their children to function successfully in a race-conscious society. A survey of adults who had been adopted from Korea as infants or children found that racial discrimination was one of the most profound issues they

faced.² Parents who do not have personal experience as a target of racial prejudice must learn how to prepare their children as much as possible. (Information Gateway provides a factsheet on this topic, *Transracial and Transcultural Adoption*, available at www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_trans.cfm.)

PARENTING THE ADOPTED CHILD

Child Welfare Information Gateway (Information Gateway) has a wealth of material on parenting the adopted child. To link to these resources, visit the following Information Gateway webpage: www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/postadoption.

Milestones That May Trigger a Need for Postadoption Support

Children understand, think, and feel differently about their adoption at different developmental stages. For most adopted children most of the time, thinking about adoption and its complexities does not occupy a large amount of time and focus. They are busy with schoolwork and sports activities, religious functions, social events,

family gatherings, and squabbling with their siblings.

But there are times and events that predictably trigger adoption issues. Parents should watch for signs, such as changes in mood or eating and sleeping habits, indicating that their adopted child may need special support during these times. Children can be prepared by discussing the possibility that these triggers will cause a reaction, which a child likely cannot control. Parents should let their children know that they understand what is happening and will be there to help and find other resources as needed.

Common adoption issue triggers:

- Birthdays (of the adopted child, siblings, parents, birth parents)
- Anniversaries (of placement into foster care, an orphanage, or into the adoptive family, or the date of adoption finalization)
- Holidays (especially Mother's and Father's Days, but any holiday that involves family gatherings and sentiment, such as Christmas, Passover, or Thanksgiving)
- Entering kindergarten and first grade (which may be the first time an adopted child must explain adoption to peers; it can be the first time the child realizes that most children were not adopted into their families)
- Puberty (as children become sexually mature and able to conceive or father a baby themselves, thoughts of birth parents may arise)
- Adoptive mother's pregnancy and birth of child, or adoption of another child (may

² Freundlich, M., & Lieberthal, J. A. (2000) *A gathering of the first generation of adult Korean adoptees: Adoptees' perceptions of international adoption*. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. Retrieved August 2005 from <http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/proed/korfindings.html>

trigger doubts about the adopted child's place in the family)

- Adopted person's pregnancy and birth of child or fathering of a child (often a powerful trigger that may ignite interest in reconnecting with birth relatives, if only to obtain medical histories and updated information)

Types of Postadoption Services

The extraordinarily wide range of issues that can be addressed with postadoption services means that the services themselves must be diverse. Here are the most common types of postadoption services, including those that families have identified as most helpful.

Adoptive Parent Support Groups

In an adoptive parent support group, adoptive and prospective adoptive parents come together to offer and receive information and support from their peers. Parent groups offer their members and other participants a support system, friendships, educational programming, social interactions with other adoptive families, and advice from experienced adoptive parents. Parent groups exist throughout the country and vary extensively, from small playgroups for toddlers adopted through intercountry adoptions to large regional groups offering a range of programs and services to their members (who can number in the hundreds). Most parent groups are organized and administered by adoptive parent volunteers.

Parent groups may restrict their focus to families with children who share certain characteristics (such as having been adopted from a specific country or having been adopted through a public agency), or they may include all adoptive families in their programming. A number of national parent groups are organized into local chapters. Local adoption agencies and State adoption offices also may have information on newly formed groups. Parent groups can be located through Information Gateway's National Adoption Directory at www.childwelfare.gov/nad.

Programs and services commonly offered by parent groups include:

- Telephone warm lines
- Buddy families
- Respite care
- Lending library
- Workshops/conferences
- Pre-adoption support
- Social activities
- Children's support groups
- Ethnic heritage activities
- Newsletter
- Legislative advocacy
- Information and referral

Online Support Groups

Available 24 hours a day, Internet support groups now number in the thousands. Through participating in these groups, parents will likely find families who have experienced exactly what they are going

through and who will be able to provide helpful suggestions. Parents should remember, however, to use the same precautions with online support groups that are used for any Internet activity.

Psychological Therapy/Counseling

Members of adoptive families may at times want or need professional help as concerns or problems arise. Timely intervention by a professional skilled in adoption issues often can prevent concerns from becoming more serious problems. The type and duration of therapy will vary depending on the kinds of problems being addressed. Some families build a relationship with a therapist over years, “checking in” for help as needed. Others find they need a therapist’s help only occasionally.

There are many types of therapeutic interventions and many kinds of clinicians offering adoption therapy. For information about adoption therapy, the kinds of issues that it can address, and how to find the right mental health professional, see *Selecting and Working with an Adoption Therapist* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_therapist.cfm).

Respite Care

Sometimes parents just need to get away for a while, reframe their problems, and get some rest. Respite care is a service that offers parents a temporary break from their parenting responsibilities. It is meant for families with children who require more skilled care than babysitters can provide or for parents going through a crisis of their own. Respite care can be in-home, meaning the respite worker comes to the house and stays with the children while the parents go out. With

out-of-home respite, the parents take the children to a designated site.

Respite care may be available on a regularly scheduled or crisis basis from a State post-adoption unit or local adoption agencies, or through a local adoptive parent group.

Seminars/Conferences

Many adoptive parent support groups, adoption agencies, and postadoption service organizations offer education in adoption issues through workshops and conferences that range in length from a few hours to a few days. At an adoption conference, parents can learn about the adoption topics that are most important to them, have questions answered by the experts, socialize with other adoptive family members, and have the opportunity to purchase adoption-related books and other informative materials. Topics covered at these trainings may include how to discuss adoption with children, strategies for building attachment, parenting challenging children, dealing with adoption at school, parenting children who have been adopted transracially, search and reunion issues, supporting cultural heritage in international adoption, and much more. Adoption agencies will often offer seminars on such topics as specific types of child behavior, child development, and talking to children about adoption. (Search the Information Gateway conference calendar at www.childwelfare.gov/calendar/index.cfm.)

Scholarships are sometimes available to help with the cost of attending adoption education conferences and seminars. State postadoption funding may be available for families who adopted through public agencies. Parents can check with confer-

ence organizers regarding scholarship opportunities.

Books and Magazines

There are many helpful books on adoption for children and adults. Many of the children's books explain the "whys" of adoption and describe the process by which children are adopted. Some may help as children begin to question and discuss their own adoption story. Some of the books help parents look at the unique aspects of adoptive parenting. Others are written specifically for those who have adopted children with particular needs or who are parenting children from other cultures.

There also are a number of magazines for adoptive families, available by subscription or online. Each provides parenting information and support specifically for families formed through adoption.

Camps/Recreational Opportunities/Heritage Camps

Overnight camps or retreats are a powerful way for members of adoptive families to connect not only with others like themselves, but also with their own family members. Such events, typically weeklong, often combine adoption and ethnic heritage education and support with traditional camping activities. Family camps offer activities for all members of the family.

Other camps serve children of certain ages and/or ethnicities. Often siblings of children who have been adopted internationally are also included in heritage camp and find it enlightening to be among the minority, as their siblings frequently are. Heritage camp counselors are frequently older adopted

youth, who provide critical role models for their younger counterparts. Frequently, camp attendees form powerful friendships with other adopted children, and they provide each other ongoing support all year long. In recent years, highly specialized camping experiences have become available for siblings separated by adoption to establish, reestablish, or strengthen their relationships with each other.

Finding Postadoption Services

Details about postadoption services in a particular area are available from local, State, and national information resources. Parents should call the public and private adoption agencies in their area and ask to be placed on their mailing lists for postadoption events. While some of these may be restricted to families who adopted through the agency, many postadoption services offered by agencies will be open to all adoptive families. Adoptive parent support groups also will have information about local agencies and organizations that provide postadoption services and their upcoming events.

The following is a listing of resources for information about local postadoption services.

Public and Private Adoption Agencies. Many adoption agencies have a postadoption specialist on staff, and many larger agencies have complete postadoption services departments. Agencies may offer counseling by on-staff clinicians, or they

can refer parents to adoption-competent therapists. Among the postadoption services offered by agencies are support groups for parents and children, educational workshops and events, cultural heritage events, respite care, and support with birth family relationships.

Specialized Postadoption Services Organizations. Agencies offering postadoption services exclusively are becoming more prevalent throughout the country. They typically offer the same kinds of postadoption services as do adoption agencies, but they do not place children for adoption and may not be affiliated with any specific adoption agency.

Adoptive Parent Support Groups. Parent groups offer information about local postadoption service providers and referrals to adoption-competent therapists. Educational events, respite care, and cultural events are among the many kinds of support a parent group may offer.

State and County Adoption Offices and Postadoption Specialists. Most State and county adoption offices have identified staff who are responsible for adoption and postadoption services or adoption subsidies. Larger jurisdictions may offer services themselves, but all will have information about local postadoption services and providers.

Adoptive parents can find out if their child is eligible for these services by contacting the adoption specialist for that jurisdiction. To find contact information for all of the State Adoption Specialists, search the National Adoption Directory at www.childwelfare.gov/nad.

State Postadoption Resource Centers.

Some States now provide a resource center specifically for postadoption services. Some of these resource centers serve only those families who have adopted children through domestic foster care, while other centers may have no restrictions on who is eligible to use their services. Most offer programs and all provide information about local postadoption services and providers.

Public and Private Mental Health Service Providers.

Mental health service providers will offer counseling on issues affecting adoptive families. Parents should be sure that the provider is adoption competent (has experience and is skilled in working with adoptive families) or willing to learn about the special issues and dynamics of adoptive families. (See *Selecting and Working With an Adoption Therapist*—www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_therapist.cfm.)

Community Health Organizations. Local public health organizations provide mental health services and referrals to local clinicians. Parents should check to find out if the provider has experience with adoptive families.

Parents can find local contact information for these resources from the Information Gateway's National Adoption Directory (www.childwelfare.gov/nad).

Paying for Postadoption Services

While many postadoption services are not free of charge to adoptive families, there may be Federal and State funding to support services for families who have adopted children from a public agency. Many children adopted from public agencies qualify for adoption assistance (subsidies) and Medicaid. These benefits are often used to purchase postadoption services. An adoption assistance agreement should spell out the types of postadoption services that will be reimbursed (such as respite care or counseling). To find out about postadoption services that are paid for by adoption assistance programs in a particular State, parents can access Information Gateway's webpage on Adoption Assistance by State at www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_assistance.

If adoption assistance programs are not available, parents can check with their health insurance company or health maintenance organization regarding mental health benefits that may be applicable.

Some States may have additional funding to support families in attending seminars, conferences, and other educational events, or for other postadoption services. Parents can contact their State postadoption specialist for information on State postadoption funding, programs, and services that may be available.

Conclusion

Seeking out postadoption services is a common way for adoptive parents to find information or someone to talk to; for adoptive families who need more intensive or specialized services, there are places for them to turn. Such activities have become normal and expected for adoptive families. Clearly, there is nothing wrong (and everything right!) with a family that seeks postadoption support at any time throughout the lifelong process of adoption.

Resources

Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov) offers resources for adoptive families, including the following:

- National Adoption Directory, a database of public and private agencies, State postadoption specialists, and adoptive parent groups—www.childwelfare.gov/nad
- Database of upcoming conferences—www.childwelfare.gov/calendar/index.cfm
- The Adoption Assistance database, with information about postadoption services and funding provided by or through State agencies—www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_assistance

- Listing of national organizations providing support to adoptive family members—
www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/reslist/rl_dsp.cfm?svcID=135&rate_chno=AR-0011A
- *Selecting and Working With an Adoption Therapist* factsheet—
www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_therapist.cfm

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (www.nacac.org) provides resources for transracial families, a database of parent groups, and information on starting an adoptive parent support group.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org) offers a listing of pediatricians who specialize in adoption and foster care medicine, including international adoption clinics.

ARCH National Respite Network (www.archrespite.org) provides information about respite care and a searchable database of respite care providers.

National Adoption Magazines

- *Adoptive Families*
www.adoptivefamilies.com
- *Adoption Today*
www.adoptinfo.net
- *Rainbow Kids*
www.rainbowkids.com/index.shtml
- *Fostering Families Today*
www.fosteringfamielstoday.com

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LAPP's Mission

We encourage and support foster and adoptive parents and relatives caring for children. We provide information, tools and tips for navigating the complexities of "The System." We give hope to children and teens at risk of growing up without a safe, permanent family. We advocate for new approaches to recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive families, and seek ways to reduce barriers to permanency for children in need.



LAPP's Roadmap Through The Foster Care System

LAPP's informational website, e-mail support network, and legal-procedural "toolkits" give you practical tools and tips to fit a wide variety of situations typically encountered by foster, kinship and pre-adoptive families. Our training classes teach families about legal issues, foster care topics and the juvenile court system. Links to downloadable court forms empower families to participate directly in court proceedings. Our self-help methods will guide you in getting questions answered, advocating for a child's needs, and participating in agency and court decision-making meetings and hearings. We've been there, done it, and can help you do it too!



LAPP

Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting

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(650) 712-1637 Fax

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Visit us on the web at:

www.LAPPonline.org

Regina M. Deihl, J.D., Executive Director



Navigating the foster care system: A Roadmap



LAPP

Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting

Adoption • Guardianship • Kinship Care

Who We Are

The attorneys at Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting (LAPP) are experienced dependency lawyers who have cared for foster children in their own homes as foster, adoptive and kinship parents. LAPP attorneys were inspired by both their personal and professional experiences to create a program to ease the fostering, adoptive and kinship experience for others. LAPP was the driving force behind new laws that improve communication between agencies, courts and caregivers and has co-authored a national legal manual for caregiver families.

LAPP Successes

“Fabulous presenters with vital information...”

– Community college trainee

“When my best friend had to move out of state, she used the court form we found on your website to tell the judge how much her foster son loves me and how well I could provide for him. Happy ending!”

– John’s legal guardian

“It’s often hard to get a foster child the right services. LAPP has shown us how to do that.”

– President, Foster Parent Association



Let LAPP Help You Navigate

- Support, Information and Referral
- Training and Public Speaking
- Interactive Website
- Self-Help Legal Toolkits
- Consulting Services for Individuals, Groups, and Communities
- Legal Research and Writing
- Community College Classes
- Legislative Advocacy



VI-56

Foster and Kinship Family Facts

- There is a severe shortage of foster homes, yet cumbersome requirements deter many families from fostering or adopting.
- Of those foster children who do not return home, over half wait two years or more for a permanent family.
- One-third of foster children live with grandparents or other relatives. Thousands of relatives adopt or become permanent legal guardians.
- Both foster and kinship families can receive financial support to help reimburse the costs of caring for a child in foster care.
- Foster and kinship families are more likely than anyone else to provide a permanent home for foster children who cannot return to their parents.
- One study found 92% of parents who adopted a foster teen said they would consider adopting again.
- Studies show more Americans would consider providing a permanent home for children in foster care if they had better information and support.
- Most foster and kinship families care for more than one child and many care for siblings who need to grow up together.
- The vast majority of children in foster care report that they like who they are living with and feel like part of the family.

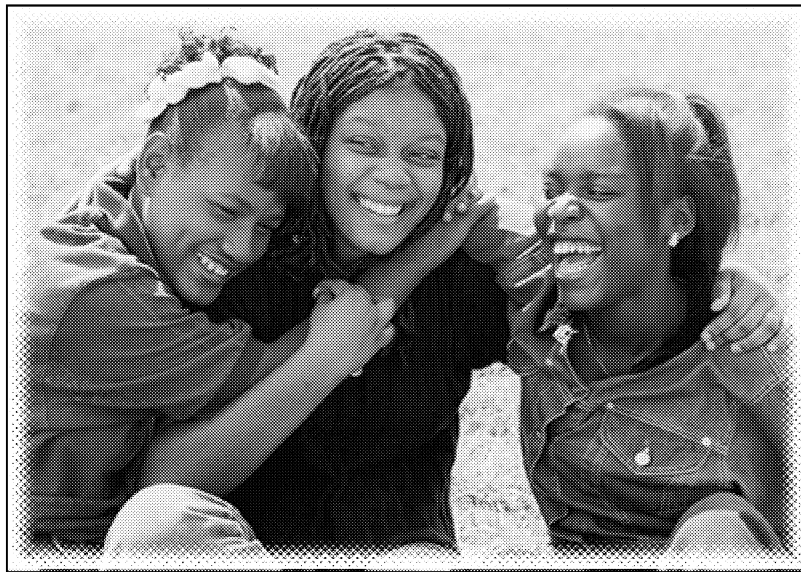


Who we are

Family Builders By Adoption was established in 1976 in Oakland, California, as part of a larger child welfare agency, to serve children with special needs. In 1984, the organization became a separate corporation and licensed, non-profit adoption and foster care agency. Over the years, the agency has remained focused on finding adoptive families for children with special needs in the California foster care system.

Our Mission

We believe that every child has the right to grow up in a permanent loving family, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, medical, physical or emotional condition. We educate the community about the needs of waiting children, advocate on their behalf, and place children with permanent, secure families through adoption.



We welcome traditional families, single parent families, gay and lesbian families, transracial and multiracial families, and all other families in the nine Bay Area counties in which we are licensed to provide services to prospective adoptive parents. These counties are: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma

We are a member of the national Family Builders Adoption Network, the Child Welfare League of America, the California Association of Adoption Agencies, and the Adoption Exchange Association and are an accredited member of the California Alliance of Child and Family Services. Our services to families are free of charge for special needs adoption.

Our Services

Family Builders By Adoption provides a full range of services to families who wish to adopt a waiting child. In addition to an orientation and pre-adoption training, we offer ongoing support services, post-adoption training, groups, community building events, and an extensive library which is available to all our families.

VII. Open Adoptions for Children in Care

A. Programs

- Child Welfare Mediation Programs
- Permanent Resource Families; Shared Parenting

Child Welfare Mediation Programs

What is it?

Mediation programs are used to engage families in decisionmaking about their children and themselves. There are several types of child welfare mediation programs, the court-based child welfare program is used most often in California. This model can be tailored to meet the needs of each court system by either training current members of its family court mediation program or hiring additional, specially trained mediators.

Why do this?

Mediation is a tool that allows families to participate in the decision-making process and thus enhance permanency planning by empowering parents, youth, and family. Mediation can be at virtually every stage of the dependency case, and almost any issue can be mediated, including ongoing contact with family members after adoption.

What goal does this program address?

To engage parents and other family members to resolve issues in a collaborative manner and to resolve issues in a nonadversarial atmosphere rather than in court at a contested hearing.

How can you start this program in your county?

Local courts can contact the mediation program at the Administrative Office of the Courts to get more information about setting up a mediation program from them. Or they can contact other courts that have model programs and request information. Your county can develop or redevelop its own mediation protocols.

Contacts:

George Ferrick, Supervising Court Services Analyst, Administrative Office of the Courts, Center for Families, Children & the Courts, 415-865-7639

Brendan Cuning, Santa Clara
408-538-5768

Permanent Resource Families; Shared Parenting

What is it?

Permanent resource families are fully trained and understand that their role is to assist the birth parent in parenting their child. They are duly prepared and licensed for both foster or temporary care and adoption, and they work with the child's birth family toward reunification. The family is also committed to have a relationship with the child and his or her family, no matter what the final permanency decision will be.

Why do this?

To ensure that both the birth family and the resource family are introduced in the beginning stages of the process so they are educated about the process and understand the purpose of the relationship.

What goal does this program address?

Some of the goals of this program are (1) to engage the birth and the resource family in a collaborative and supportive manner from the first contact to establish and maintain a cooperative relationship throughout the process; (2) to ensure that the birth family has as much support to reunify with safely parent their child; and (3) to provide a lifelong connection for the youth and a lifelong support system for the birth parents.

How can you start this program in your county?

This program works well with concurrent planning redesign, curricula has been developed and trainers have come from other states to provide trainings to social worker groups, court system groups, and foster care training workers. By connecting one of the individual listed below, you can get further information on how to begin the training process in your county.

Contacts:

National Resource Center for Family-Centered
Practice Permanency Planning, Consultants

Rose Wentz, M.P.A.

Leslie Ann Hay, M.S.W.

206-3223-4394

Rosewentz@comcast.net

Robert G. Lewis, M.Ed., M.S.W., LICW

978-281-8919

bob@rglewis.com

B. Resources

- Child Welfare Information Gateway: Openness in Adoption
- Tools for Permanency: Child Welfare Mediation
- Child Welfare Information Gateway: Postadoption Contact Agreements Between Birth and Adoptive Families
- Openness in Adoption and Post-Adoption Contact Agreements:
- Openness in Adoption: Fact Sheet
- Robert G. Lewis Biography
 - *What Do You Think?* Newsletters:
 - Shared Parenting: What Is It? (May 2006)
 - Shared Parenting: Where to Begin (June 2006)
 - Shared Parenting: Assessment (Summer 2006)
- Resource Family and Foster Family: How These Types of Caregivers Defined and Used the Concurrent Planning Model
- Sample copy of Post Adoption Contact Agreement



Openness in Adoption

Open, or fully disclosed, adoptions allow adoptive parents, and often the adopted child, to interact directly with birth parents. Open adoption falls at one end of an openness communication continuum that allows family members to interact in ways that feel most comfortable to them. In semi-open or mediated adoptions, information is relayed through a mediator (e.g., an agency caseworker or attorney) rather than through direct contact between the birth and adoptive families. In confidential adoptions, no identifying information is exchanged.

What's Inside:

- Laws regarding open adoption
- Research findings
- Implications for agency policy
- Open adoption for children in foster care
- When openness is not in the child's best interest
- Unresolved issues
- For more information



Confidential Adoption

Semi-Open/
Mediated Adoption

Fully Disclosed/
Open Adoption



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau



Child Welfare Information Gateway
Children's Bureau/ACYF
1250 Maryland Avenue, SW
Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20024
703.385.7565 or 800.394.3366
Email: info@childwelfare.gov
www.childwelfare.gov

In open adoptions, communication may include letters, e-mails, telephone calls, or visits. The frequency of contact ranges from every few years to several times a month or more, depending on the needs and wishes of all involved. The goals of open adoption are:

- To minimize the child's loss of relationships.
- To maintain and celebrate the adopted child's connections with all the important people in his or her life.
- To allow children to resolve losses with truth, rather than with fantasy.

The recent movement toward open adoption has taken place in the context of larger social change. Birth parents are now empowered to make choices: there is less stigma in raising children alone and greater access to abortion and birth control. Also, the societal movement toward less secrecy and the prizing of diversity, including a variety of family structures, has allowed for a greater acceptance of open adoption.

Laws Regarding Open Adoption

Adoptions have taken place since the beginning of human history. However, until the early 1900s they were generally informal, community-based arrangements. Confidentiality gradually became an integral part of adoption to protect birth parents and adopted children from the stigma surrounding illegitimate births.

In 1851 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts set the legal precedent for severing the relationship between an adopted child and his or her biological parents. In 1917 Minnesota

passed the first State law barring public inspection of adoption records. By 1950, most States had passed legislation sealing adoption records, even from adoptees themselves.

In response to a groundswell of adult adopted persons and birth parents returning to agencies for more information and advocating legislative changes, some States have recently changed their adoption laws. These changes initially involved the creation of mutual consent registries. A mutual consent registry is a central repository where individuals directly involved in adoptions can indicate their willingness to disclose identifying information. Approximately 23 States have some form of mutual consent registry.

Some States also have changed their laws to acknowledge "cooperative adoption," or post-adoption agreements between birth and adoptive parents. These often include some degree of openness. While no State prohibits entering into these types of agreements, they are not legally enforceable in most States. Often they are informal "good faith" agreements between birth and adoptive parents that may or may not be in writing. Even in States where postadoption contracts are enforceable, no law allows for an adoption to be overturned if either birth or adoptive parents fail to follow through on their agreement. Many of the States have also enacted laws allowing an adopted adult to petition the court for access to his or her original birth certificate. These petitions are generally granted with "good cause." A few States have also enacted laws allowing an adopted adult (18 or older) unrestricted access to his or her original birth certificate or agency records. A few other States allow the birth parents to file a consent allowing the release of the birth certificate or a non-consent blocking its release.

For more information on laws relating to cooperative adoptions, access to adoption records, and mutual consent registries, see the legal section of the Child Welfare Information Gateway website (www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/index.cfm).

Research Findings

Open adoption is a continuing source of controversy. Much of the debate, however, is based on philosophical differences rather than empirical research. In the past, research was difficult because most adoptions were confidential and, thus, “invisible.” Studying open adoptions continues to be a challenge, because no two adoptions are alike and relationships are constantly evolving. However, existing research does indicate the following:¹

Many fears regarding open adoption are based on myths.

- Parties in open (fully disclosed) adoptions are NOT confused about their parenting rights and responsibilities.
- Birth mothers do NOT attempt to “reclaim” their children.
- Children in open (fully disclosed) adoptions are NOT confused about who their parents are. They do understand the different roles of adoptive and birth parents in their lives.
- Differences in adolescent adoptive identity or degree of preoccupation with adoption

¹ Research findings are taken from the Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Project, the only longitudinal study to compare open adoption to other types of adoption. A list of publications and research findings from this longitudinal study can be found on the project’s website (<http://fsos.che.umn.edu/mtarp/default.html>).

are NOT related to the level of openness in the adoption.

- Adoptive openness does NOT appear to influence an adoptee’s self-esteem in any negative way.
- Adoptive parents in open adoptions do NOT feel less in control and, indeed, have a greater sense of permanence in their relationship with their child.
- Open adoption does NOT interfere with adoptive parents’ sense of entitlement or sense that they have the right to parent their adopted child.
- Birth mothers in open and ongoing mediated adoptions do NOT have more problems with grief resolution; indeed, they show better grief resolution than those in closed adoptions. *Researchers did find that birth mothers in time-limited mediated adoptions (where contact stopped) had more difficulty resolving grief at the first interview of the study (when the children were between 4 and 12 years old).*

The level of openness should be decided on a case-by-case basis. There is no one level of adoption openness that best fits all families. Each type of adoption has its own benefits and challenges that should be considered for each particular situation.

Adoption should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a discrete event. Open adoption is based on relationships and, like all relationships, grows and changes over time. As birth and adoptive families grow and change, the need for communication changes as well. For example, older adopted children may have more questions about their birth family than they had as toddlers. Adoptive and birth parents need to be open to the needs of children as

they get older and gain a sense of ownership over the relationship they have with their birth families.

Factors associated with increased openness:

- The birth and adoptive parents' mutual concern for the child's well being.
- An emergence of friendship or a personally satisfying relationship between the birth and adoptive parents.
- Regular flow of communication between the birth and adoptive families.

Factors associated with decreased openness:

- Parties living far away from each other.
- Major differences in life situations, interests, or values.
- Relatives or friends who discourage contact.
- Change in a birth mother's situation such as marriage or the birth of another child.
- Inability to negotiate a mutually agreed upon comfort zone of contact.
- Adoptive parents feeling that contact is becoming stressful for the child.
- Inability of agency intermediaries to keep up contact to everyone's satisfaction.

Agency staff continue to play a critical role in fully disclosed adoptions. Since the early 1990s, the work of adoption agencies has changed dramatically. More birth mothers are requesting openness. Some adoption agencies have seen an increase in placements since they began offering openness options. In the case of open adoptions, birth mothers, rather than adoptive parents, are often viewed as the agency's primary client; the initial decision making

regarding openness rests in their hands. Agency staff play a critical role in counseling birth and adoptive parents who are contemplating and negotiating these open relationships.

Adoption caseworkers participating in the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP), whose agencies moved toward greater openness, reported positive experiences with this change. In order to be effective, professionals working in adoption need to be attuned not only to their own philosophy of adoption, but also to how to work effectively with clients whose personalities and relationship histories vary greatly.

Implications for Agency Policy

Research clearly indicates that no one level of adoption openness is best for everyone. A variety of options should be made available to families. Researchers recommend that agencies present the advantages and disadvantages of openness and help birth parents and adoptive families identify the degree of openness best for them.

The shift toward openness, especially mediated openness where the agency relays information between the birth and adoptive parents, increases the workload on agency staff in an era of shrinking resources and increased demand on social service providers. From a staffing perspective, fully disclosed adoptions may be less costly in the long run than mediated adoptions because there is no need to transfer the information between parties. There will continue to be a

need, however, for postadoption counseling in these adoptions.

Open Adoption for Children in Foster Care

Children in foster care whose goal is adoption are likely to achieve better outcomes by maintaining their existing connections with extended birth family members, siblings, and other adults with whom they have significant attachments.

Systematic research, however, has not been conducted on open adoption of children from foster care. According to *the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Report #7* (www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report7.htm), published in August 2002, 82 percent of the children adopted from foster care in fiscal year 2000 were adopted by either their former foster parents (61 percent) or a relative (21 percent). These adoptions are often open either because of a relationship developed between the birth and adoptive parents when the children were in care, or because the children know their birth families, know their addresses and phone numbers, and may contact them whether or not the adoption was intended to be open. Greater use of concurrent planning² and dual licensure³ has contributed to increased numbers of adoptions by foster parents throughout the country and may increase this type of open adoption as well.

² Simultaneously identifying another permanency goal for a child (besides reunification) and documenting efforts so permanency can be achieved quickly for a child should reunification efforts not succeed.

³ Licensure resource families as both foster and adoptive parents. (Some State laws allow for dual licensure or certification. Check your State law to see if dual licensure or certification is practiced in your State).

When Openness Is Not in the Child's Best Interest

In some cases, including the child in a relationship with the birth parents may not be in his or her best interest. This may be true if:

- A birth parent is unable to maintain appropriate relationship boundaries with a child due to mental or emotional illness.
- There has been so much violence directed at a child that any contact with that parent would only result in more trauma for the child.

Even when it is not safe for the child to maintain an open relationship with a birth parent, an extended family member may be able to provide a link to the child's past without causing additional trauma. Confer with an adoption-competent mental health provider, talk to the adoptive family, and use the accompanying pro and con tables for additional assistance in making difficult choices regarding the amount of openness to include in a child's adoption.

Unresolved Issues

The professional adoption community has not yet resolved certain aspects of openness in adoption. State laws and agencies have dealt with these issues in a variety of ways depending on their philosophies and experience. Systematic research has not been conducted or is inconclusive regarding the following issues:

- What is the ongoing impact of open adoption on older children who remember their birth families?
- Is it ethical to use promises of ongoing future contact with their children as an incentive for birth parents to relinquish parental rights?
- Are cooperative adoption agreements legally enforceable?
- What is the definition of “the best interests of the child” in cooperative adoption agreements?
- How should cooperative adoption agreements be modified if parties request a change?
- How are open adoption arrangements working in independent adoptions, where they are negotiated without the involvement of agency personnel?
- How do adopted persons develop identity in open adoptions in a variety of social contexts? (MTARP examined a fairly homogeneous sample of middle class adopters of children from the United States. How might results differ with different ethnic groups or children adopted internationally?)
- **Child Welfare League of America** (www.cwla.org/programs/adoption/cwla_standards.htm)
CWLA's *Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services* provides best practice regarding openness in adoption.
- **Evan B. Donaldson Institute** (www.adoptioninstitute.org/policy/polopen1.html)
Provides outcomes of studies on openness in adoption from 1986 to 1999, research on attitudes toward and trends in postadoption contact, and literature reviews and criticism.
- **Insight: Open Adoption Resources and Support** (www.openadoptioninsight.org/)
Offers resources for professionals, adoptive parents, and birth parents considering open adoption.
- **Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project** (<http://fsos.che.umn.edu/mtarp/default.html>).
Provides information on a longitudinal study of openness in adoption since 1985. The most recent wave included a total of 720 individuals: both parents in 190 adoptive families, at least one adopted child in 171 of the families, and 169 birth mothers.
- **Postadoption Contact Agreements Between Birth and Adoptive Families** (www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/cooperative.cfm)
Provides adoption statutes for each State, compiled by Child Welfare Information Gateway.

For More Information

Useful Web Sites

- **American Association of Open Adoption Agencies** (www.openadoption.org/)
Helps families find agencies practicing open adoption. Adoptees on their mailing list respond to the question, “What do you wish your adoptive parents had known?”

Useful Books and Articles for Families

Abstracts of these books are available on the Child Welfare Information Gateway database: <http://basis.caliber.com/cwig/ws/chdocs/docs/gateway/SearchForm>

- ***Children of Open Adoption*** by Patricia Martinez Dorner and Kathleen Silber (1997, Independent Adoption Press). The topics in this book include adoption understanding, developing relationships, families with open and closed adoptions, bonding, communication, and sibling issues.
- **“The Effects of Open Adoption on Biological and Adoptive Parents and Children: The Arguments and the Evidence”** by M. Berry in *Child Welfare*, 70 (5), 637-651, 1991.
- ***How to Open an Adoption*** by Patricia Martinez Dorner (1998, R-Squared Press). A book for adoptive parents, birth parents, and adoption professionals on how to open the lines of communication and navigate more inclusive relationships.
- ***Lifegivers: Framing the Birth Parent Experience in Open Adoption*** by James L. Gritter (2000, CWLA Press). This book examines the ways birth parents are marginalized. The author makes the point that adopted children are best served when birth parents and adoptive parents work together to ensure that birth parents remain in children’s lives.
- ***The Open Adoption Experience*** by Lois Ruskai Melina and Sharon Kaplan Roszia (1993, HarperPerennial). This complete guide for adoptive and birth families touches on almost every aspect of an open adoption.
- ***The Spirit of Open Adoption*** by Jim Gritter (1997, CWLA Press). This book takes a realistic look at the joys and pains of open adoption for birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents.

- ***What is Open Adoption?*** by Brenda Romanchik (1999, R-Squared Press). Written from the perspective of a birth mother in an open adoption, this pocket guide provides concise information and resources.

Useful Books and Articles for Professionals

- **“Adopted Adolescents’ Preoccupation With Adoption: The Impact on Adoptive Family Relationships”** by Julie K. Kohler, Harold D. Grotevant, and Ruth G. McRoy in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64 (February 2002) pp. 93- 104.
- ***Adoptive Families: Longitudinal Outcomes for Adolescents: Final Report to the William T. Grant Foundation*** by Harold D. Grotevant (for grant # 95171495, April 30, 2001). (Available on the MTARP website: <http://fsos.che.umn.edu/mtarp/default.html>.)
- **“Changing Agency Practices Toward Openness in Adoption”** by Susan M. Henney, Steven Onken, Ruth McRoy, and Harold D. Grotevant in *Adoption Quarterly*, Vol. 1 #3, 1998.
- **“The Effects of Open Adoption on Biological and Adoptive Parents and Children: The Arguments and the Evidence”** by M. Berry in *Child Welfare*, 70 (5), 637-651, 1991.
- **“Enforceable Post-Adoption Contact Statutes, Part I: Adoption With Contact”** by Annette Appell (2000, Haworth Press), *Adoption Quarterly*, Vol. 4 #1, 2000.
- **“Foster Care and Adoption: A Look at Open Adoption”** by Amy L. Doherty (1997) in *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues*, (University of San Diego Law School, 2000).

- **“Openness: A Critical Component of Special Needs Adoption”** by Deborah N. Silverstein and Sharon Kaplan Roszia in *Child Welfare*, Vol. 78, #5, September/October, 1999.
- **“Openness in Adoption and the Level of Child Participation”** by G. Wrobel, S. Ayers-Lopez, H. D. Grotevant, R.G McRoy, and M. Friedrich, in *Child Development*, 67, pp. 2358-2374, 1996.
- ***Openness in Adoption: Exploring Family Connections*** by Harold D. Grotevant and Ruth McRoy (Sage Publications, 1998). Provides a summary of the Time 1 findings from the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project when the adoptees were 4 to 12 years old. (Can be ordered through the MTARP website: <http://fsos.che.umn.edu/mtarp/default.html>.)
- **“What Works in Open Adoption”** by Harold D. Grotevant in *What Works in Child Welfare*, Edited by Miriam P. Kluger, G. Alexander and P. Curtis (CWLA Press, Washington, DC, 2000). Succinct summary of research on open adoption and a table outlining various studies on openness. (Can be ordered through the CWLA: www.cwla.org/pubs/.)

PROS of Each Type of Adoption for the Involved Parties

	CONFIDENTIAL ADOPTIONS	MEDIATED (SEMI-OPEN)	OPEN ADOPTIONS
Birth Parents	<p>No contact between birth and adoptive families. No identifying information is provided.</p> <p>Only nonidentifying information (e.g., height, hair color, medical history, etc.) is provided through a third party (e.g., agency or attorney).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides real choice for birth parents when compared to open adoption. Privacy. Some feel this provides a sense of closure and ability to move on with life. 	<p>Nonidentifying contact is made (via cards, letters, pictures) through a third party (e.g., agency or attorney).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for some information transfer between birth and adoptive parents (and perhaps the child). Some privacy. 	<p>Direct interaction between birth and adoptive families. Identities are known.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased ability to deal with grief and loss. Comfort in knowing child's well-being. Sense of control over decision-making in placement. Potential for more fully defined role in child's life. Potential to develop a healthy relationship with the child as he or she grows. Less pain and guilt about the decision. May make the decision to place for adoption easier (compared to a contested termination of parental rights trial).
Adoptive Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No need to physically share the child with birth parents. No danger of birth parent interference or co-parenting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater sense of control over process. Roles may be more clearly defined than in either confidential or open options. Increased sense of entitlement compared to confidential adoptions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased sense of having the "right" to parent and increased ability for confident parenting. Potential for authentic relationship with the birth family. More understanding of children's history. Increased empathy for birth parents. Less fear of birth parents reclaiming child because they know the parent and their wishes. Delight of being "chosen" as a parent.
Adopted Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection from unstable or emotionally disturbed birth parents. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Only true when relationship is "shared" with the adopted child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genetic and birth history known. Birthparents are "real" not "fantasy." Positive adjustment is promoted in adoptee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct access to birth parents and history. Need to search is eliminated. Identity questions are answered (Who do I look like? Why was I placed?). Eases feelings of abandonment. Lessening of fantasies: birth parents are "real." Increased circle of supportive adults. Increased attachment to adoptive family (especially if the birth parents support the placement). Preservation of connections (e.g., with siblings, relatives). Lessens loyalty conflicts (according to recent research). Exposure to racial and ethnic heritage. Ability for evolving, dynamic, and developmentally appropriate account of the adoption.

CONS of Each Type of Adoption for the Involved Parties

	CONFIDENTIAL ADOPTIONS	MEDIATED (SEMI-OPEN)	OPEN ADOPTIONS
Birth Parents	<p>No contact between birth and adoptive families. No identifying information is provided.</p> <p>Only nonidentifying information (e.g., height, hair color, medical history, etc.) is provided through a third party (e.g., agency or attorney).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less grief resolution due to lack of information about the child's well-being. • May encourage denial of fact that child was born and placed with another family. 	<p>Nonidentifying contact is made (via cards, letters, pictures) through a third party (e.g., agency or attorney).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of potential for direct relationship with adoptive family (and/or child). • Increased grief in the initial years, less later. • Loss of contact if intermediary changes or leaves (i.e., staff turnover, policy changes, or agency closings). • Birth mother may feel obligated to place child due to the emotional or financial support given by the prospective adoptive parents. 	<p>Direct interaction between birth and adoptive families. Identities are known.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full responsibility for setting relationship limits and boundaries. • Potential abuse of trust (fewer safeguards). • Potential disappointment if adoptive family cannot meet all expectations or needs. • Birth mother may feel obligated to place child due to the emotional or financial support given by the prospective adoptive parents.
Adoptive Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for denial of "adopted family" or fertility status. • Increased fear, less empathy for birth parents. • No access to additional medical information about birth family. • Less control: agency controls information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of the full relationship with the birth parents. • Lack of ability to have questions answered immediately. • Potentially troubling cards, letters, or pictures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full responsibility for setting relationship limits and boundaries. • Potential pressure: accept openness or no child. • Potential difficulty with emotionally disturbed birth parents. • Potential for supporting both child and birth parents (emotionally).
Adopted Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible adolescent identity confusion (unable to compare physical and emotional traits to their birth families). • Limited access to information that others take for granted. • Potential preoccupation with adoption issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to confidential adoptions, if information not shared with the adoptee. • Potential perception that it is unsafe to interact with birth family directly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clean break for assimilation into family, which some feel is necessary. • Potential feelings of rejection if contact stops. • Difficulty explaining the relationship to peers. • Potential for playing families against each other.

National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning

Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York

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Tools for Permanency

Tool # 3: Child Welfare Mediation

The National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York is committed to the pursuit of excellence in child welfare service delivery. As a Center dedicated to action and change, our work focuses on building the capacity of child welfare agencies to meet the needs of children at risk of removal from their families and those already placed in out-of-home care. Our "Tools for Permanency" aim to promote family-centered and collaborative approaches to achieving safety, timely permanency and the overall well-being of children and families within the child welfare system.

Child Welfare Mediation...What is it?

Mediation is a newly emerging tool that child welfare practitioners may use to engage families in decision making about their children and themselves. Mediation can enhance permanency planning by reducing the parents' sense of alienation and helplessness and empowering parents by involving them in planning their children's futures.

The term mediation is used almost interchangeably with several other terms: alternate dispute resolution (ADR), collaborative negotiations, conflict resolution, and conflict intervention strategies. In family matters, mediation is best known for its use in divorce and custody disputes, and mediation has been used in many other areas such as landlord-tenant disputes, labor disputes, and to reduce violence among teen gang members. During the last decade, techniques of mediation have also been applied to child protection and child welfare situations.

Mayer defines child welfare mediation as an approach to resolving disputes in which the various parties attempt to resolve their differences through a bargaining procedure that is not adversarial in nature. Through mediation, parties engage in a mutual effort to discover solutions that will maximize the degree to which everyone's interests are met, rather than attempting to obtain their objectives by promoting their own positions, rebutting others' arguments, and threatening to bring their power to bear on each other (Mayer, 1985).

The process of mediation involves the participation of a third-party neutral (usually called a mediator) who has no decision making power and no stake in the outcome of the negotiations. The mediator guides participants into a constructive problem-solving mode and helps them to frame their proposals, consider their options, and approach other parties in a constructive manner. The mediator oversees the process of negotiations but does not advocate a particular solution (Mayer, 1985).

How is mediation used in child welfare?

Child welfare mediation is frequently used in court-based child protection proceedings. In addition, social-service based child welfare mediation is being used in the development of permanency plans for children, including cooperative adoption (Etter, 1993). Many practitioners also advocate using mediation techniques:

- to assist the CPS worker and the parent in developing treatment/service plans
- to work out disputes over supervision, placement, parental visitation, family reunification, and other permanent plans for the child
- to resolve conflicts among parents, relatives, and other extended family members concerning intra-familial cooperation among them and child welfare authorities, and
- to resolve conflicts among foster care providers and children's court-appointed advocates concerning the needs of children while they are in placement (Davidson, 1997).

Social-Service Based Child Welfare Mediation

Perhaps the most established and successful social-service based child welfare mediation program in the U.S. is being offered in Oregon. Oregon has been using mediation in child welfare cases as a permanency tool since 1992. Their mediation program originates from the State of Oregon's Children's Services Division, and it has been developed in conjunction with a private-sector mediation program called Teamwork for Children. Oregon has primarily used child welfare mediation as an alternative to contested termination of parental rights (TPR) cases and as a means of developing cooperative adoption plans (Etter & Roberts, 1996).

Oregon's Cooperative Adoption Mediation Project (CAMP)

In 1992, Oregon's Children's Services Division (CSD) was looking for a way to involve parents in forming permanent plans for children in cases where the prognosis for reunification with biological parents was poor. CSD identified specialized child welfare mediation as a way to form cooperative relationships and avoid court terminations of parental rights. In conjunction with Teamwork for Children, Oregon began a two-year pilot project involving 36 cases, and called it the "Cooperative Adoption Mediation Project" or CAMP (Etter & Roberts, 1996).

The aims of the CAMP pilot were to:

- empower parents to make cooperative permanent plans for their children
- reduce the necessity for termination of parental rights litigation and the expenditure of state dollars, and
- reduce the time children spend in foster care awaiting permanent homes (Etter & Roberts, 1996).

CAMP mediation took place in two phases. *Phase One* was mediation between the parent and the agency. Families were interviewed by CSD and asked if they were interested in participating in the CAMP program. If they were interested, the mediator contacted the parents' lawyer and asked permission to meet with the parent. At the initial meeting, the mediator talked with the parent about the mediation process and its voluntary nature. Parents were assured they could end mediation at any time without information from the sessions being used in a trial. Parents were helped to recognize that their children needed permanent homes. Several sessions could be held to be sure that the parent understood and was comfortable with the process and was ready to proceed to *Phase Two* (Etter & Roberts, 1996).

In *Phase Two*, if the plan was not "return home," potential adoptive parents were engaged in a discussion about their willingness to work cooperatively with the birth parent(s). If all agreed, joint mediation sessions were held with prospective adoptive parents and the birth parents. The focus of the sessions was to build relationships between birth and adoptive parents in order to meet the child's need for connection with relatives, rather than a focus on negotiating a settlement between adversaries. When all participants felt ready, the mediator solidified a

simple, written post-adoption communication agreement which formed the basis for a cooperative adoption with ongoing communication between birth and adoptive parents (Etter & Roberts, 1996).

Permanency mediation was particularly effective with parents in prison, in drug treatment programs, parents with legal problems, and parents with mental disabilities. The shuttle mediation format allowed for extensive individualized work, meeting the parents on their own ground. No birth parents to date have violated the terms of their cooperative agreements. Only 2% of the children have come back into the system since the project began in 1992, over 400 cases later (Jeanne Etter, Director, Teamwork for Children, interview, February 20, 1998). Parent Empowerment Process workbooks (Etter, 1997) were used advantageously to address critical issues; these workbooks were especially effective in moving parents from resistance to positive planning for their children's futures, often resulting in cooperative adoptions.

Results of the Oregon CAMP Pilot

Of the 36 CAMP cases entering mediation, 31 cases (86%) were resolved cooperatively and avoided contested trials. Of the five cases that were unresolved: two clients withdrew from mediation, the attorney terminated mediation in two cases, and CSD terminated the mediation in one case. Of the 31 cases resolved by mediation, permanent cooperative plans for the children included:

- Cooperative adoptions - 90% (28 cases)
- Return home plans - 7% (2 cases)
- Long-term foster care - 3% (1 case)

The CAMP pilot demonstrated sizeable cost savings: the average contested TPR trial costs \$22,000. The average CAMP mediation cost \$3,500. Further, the CAMP pilot freed and placed children for adoption quickly. The average time between referral to mediation and being freed for adoption was 3.7 months. The average time from referral to adoptive placement was 5 months (Etter & Roberts, 1996).

Oregon has continued to expand its use of specialized child welfare mediation since the successful completion of the CAMP project. In addition, Idaho replicated the CAMP project two years later, found the program quite successful, and is working to continue funding for mediation prior to TPR trials. A number of other states are piloting similar projects using the social-services based mediation model to achieve cooperative permanency plans for children in foster care (Jeanne Etter, Director, Teamwork for Children, interview, February 20, 1998).

Court-Based Mediation in Child Protection Proceedings

Court-based child protection mediation was developed in response to growing demands on the juvenile court. Formal mediation in child abuse/neglect cases was first used in the Los Angeles County Dependency Court in 1983. Connecticut courts followed a year later. In 1987, Orange County, California implemented a mediation service within its juvenile court (Center for Policy Research, 1992), in 1994 the state of Florida began a court-based child protection mediation program (Firestone, 1996) and many other localities around the country are implementing or planning to implement child protection mediation projects (Firestone, 1997). Child protection mediation programs are also developing in other countries, especially Canada (Maresca, 1995).

Child protection mediation is somewhat controversial

Although mediation in child protection cases is in keeping with the historically non-adversarial nature of juvenile court, it remains a somewhat controversial practice. Those opposed to using mediation in child protection cases raise the following concerns:

- the mediation process cannot simultaneously develop compromises and protect children
- parents cannot fully participate in the negotiations
- protection of parental rights is not ensured, and
- most issues in child maltreatment are not negotiable present (Center for Policy Research, 1992).

Those in favor of using mediation in child protection cases counter that:

- Mediation can protect children – In every system, most child protection cases are resolved without resorting to a contested hearing. Mediation simply formalizes the process, moving it from hallway exchanges between a few parties to sessions with all relevant parties present.
- Parents are not at a disadvantage in mediation – The parent’s attorney will be present during the mediation. Mediators can help the less powerful party by giving this person an opportunity to speak, rephrasing points, or stopping exchanges that are angry and unproductive.
- Parents are more likely to be involved in mediation than in other negotiating forums – It offers a chance to explain to the parents, sometimes for the first time, what is transpiring and what they will need to do to have their children returned home (Center for Policy Research, 1992).

Some issues are suitable for negotiation in child protection cases...and some are not

Davidson (1997) suggests that there is consensus among those opposed to and those in favor of child protection mediation that some issues are not suitable for mediation. Whether a child actually was or was not abused or neglected is not negotiable. Whether to remove children from the home who have been severely injured or who are at risk of serious harm is rarely appropriate for negotiation. However, he also suggests that numerous other child protection decisions usually are negotiable, such as:

- the plan for where the children will be placed
- the scope of agency involvement with the family when children are not removed from their homes
- the contacts parents, children and siblings will have during placement
- the treatment interventions that will be used to address the alleged parental behaviors
- the therapeutic services children will receive
- the actions by parents that will be a precondition to a child’s return from placement
- the permanent plan that will be followed when the case is closed (Davidson, 1997).

A closer look at one court-based child protection mediation program

Although the states that are currently using court-based child protection mediation have differences, they also are similar. We thought it would be helpful to take a closer look at one state program to illustrate how, in practice, a court-based child protection mediation program works. We decided to highlight Connecticut’s Case Status Conference. (This does not mean that Connecticut’s program is any better than the other programs, this was a random selection for purposes of illustration only.)

Connecticut’s Child Protection Mediation Process: the Case Status Conference

Connecticut defines its Case Status Conference as a judicially sanctioned process which utilizes mediation techniques to provide a formalized vehicle whereby all parties involved in litigation have a neutral forum in which to discuss both the social services and legal issues that affect the case. The outcome is the formulation of a written plan which details the agreement that was reached. The agreement is then presented to the court for the judge’s final approval (Giovannucci, 1994).

Goals of Connecticut’s Case Status Conference:

- to provide an alternative to time consuming litigation
- to promote settlements with input of all parties
- to develop plans which safeguard well being of the children

- to empower parents to participate in the court process
- to develop plans which are judicially sound, and
- to protect legal rights and interests of all involved (Giovannucci, 1994)

How do the Case Status Conferences proceed?

The Case Status Conferences take about one hour, and subsequent conferences may be held. The Conference has several stages, and the mediator (in Connecticut, the mediator is called the Court Services Officer or CSO) must move participants through each stage:

- understanding the problem
- understanding the legalities
- reconfirming the legal situation
- understanding the social service needs, and
- summarizing the agreements.

The parameters of confidentiality which must be adhered to during the mediation are defined and agreed to by all participants at the start of the session (Giovannucci, 1994).

Participants in the Case Status Conference

In addition to the CSO, there are nine other possible participants:

1. Social worker from the Division of Children & Youth Services (DCYS)
2. Assistant Attorney General (AAG). The AAG represents DCYS
3. Attorney for parent(s)
4. Attorney for child
5. Parent(s) or legal guardian(s)
6. Child(ren)
7. Guardian ad litem (GAL) for child
8. GAL for parent(s)
9. Children-in-Placement/CASA monitor (Shaw & Phear, 1991)

Who calls for a Case Status Conference?

The judge can direct parties to meet in a Case Status Conference; or the conference may be held at the request of Child Protective Services, any party or counsel for any party to the case, or at the request of the CSO (Giovannucci, 1994).

Case management benefits

Case Status Conference procedures have case management benefits: a timetable is agreed upon by all parties and the court is presented with a well-thought-out agreement, or at minimum, a clearly developed case (Shaw & Phear, 1991). For those cases that do not result in mediated agreement — the process helps identify and narrow issues that will be taken up at trial. For example, issues which might have resulted in the filing of numerous pre-trial motions are often avoided by the agreed upon exchange of information. In addition, the CSO is able to schedule trials in a more timely manner with adequate time set aside to hear the case in its entirety (Giovannucci, 1994).

Summary

Several studies have shown that provided safeguards are built in (such as: correcting for possible imbalances of power), mediation in child welfare and child protection cases offers improvement over traditional child welfare practice and traditional litigation of child maltreatment cases:

- In 1994, Oregon's CAMP pilot was independently evaluated by the Oregon Council on Crime and Delinquency and they concluded that using child welfare mediators is a cost-effective means for freeing children for adoption who cannot return home. Savings were found in the areas of reduced foster care and court costs, overhead, and caseworker time, as well as reduced emotional trauma for children and families (Etter & Roberts, 1996).
- In 1995, the Denver-based Center for Policy Research did a study of five California Dependency Courts using mediation in child protection proceedings. The Center found that:
 - mediation was effective in producing settlements
 - ◆ mediated plans were more detailed and creative than litigated plans and often allowed more parental visitation than comparable adjudicated plans
 - ◆ mediation reduced the need for full trials and helped avoid repeated hearings on the same case
 - ◆ children in the mediation group spent less time in out-of-home placements, and those children who remained in placement were more likely to be placed in relative foster care
 - ◆ mediation was most useful when it maximized parental involvement
 - ◆ the majority of professionals who took part in mediation were satisfied with the process parents were very satisfied with their mediation experiences – they felt “heard” in mediation.

Further, in comparing mediated plans to non-mediated plans, the Center found that the families were more likely to receive multiple services, especially counseling, through a mediated agreement (Thoennes & Pearson, Nov.1995).

Child Welfare Mediation, along with Family Group Decision Making and Concurrent Permanency Planning, is a tool to respectfully engage families in decision making about their children and themselves.

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Compiled by: Alice Boles Ott

We'd like to help you get started!

Services available from the National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning (NRCFCPP) include:

- Information Services – We can connect you with child welfare agencies around the country that are now considering or implementing innovative program models. Reading materials and bibliographies are also available.
- Training Technical Assistance – The NRCFCPP can provide consultation and/or training as you consider or plan for a new initiative. We can arrange to meet with you for a brief consultation, we can make an informational presentation at your agency or in your community, or we can work with you to develop a comprehensive in-service training program at the local or state-wide level for casework, supervisory, managerial and/or training staff, as well as attorneys and judges.

If you are interested in working with the NRCFCPP, you can start with a phone call, a brief letter or an e-mail message. Let us know what you're thinking about doing, and we'll work with you to plan the kind of help you'll need to get your project up and running. We can help you figure out how intensive your training program should be, and what costs might be involved for your agency. [Note: The NRCFCPP is funded by DHHS/ACYF/Children's Bureau. If yours is a public child welfare agency, you may be eligible for free training and/or technical assistance approved by your regional office of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families.]

Materials Available from NRCFCPP

Tools for Permanency

- Concurrent Permanency Planning – an approach to permanency planning which works toward reunification while exploring other options for the child, simultaneously rather than sequentially.
- Family Group Decision Making – outlines two models for early inclusion of a child's immediate and extended family in permanency planning decision making.
- Child Welfare Mediation – a newly emerging tool to engage families in decision making in a non-adversarial manner.
- Relative Care Options – explores the challenges involved in foster parenting by members of the child's extended family. (not yet available)

Legislative Summaries

- Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-89)
- Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272)
- Personal Responsibility & Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (Public Law 104-193)
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (Public Law 104-235)

For more information, contact us at:

National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning (NRCFCPP)

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Revised 9/30/98



Postadoption Contact Agreements Between Birth and Adoptive Families

Postadoption contact agreements, sometimes referred to as cooperative adoption or open adoption agreements, are arrangements that allow some kind of contact between a child's adoptive family and members of the child's birth family after the child's adoption has been finalized. These arrangements can range from informal, mutual understandings between the birth and adoptive families to written, formal contracts.

Agreements for postadoption contact or communication have become more prevalent in recent years, due to several factors:

- There is wider recognition of the rights of birth parents to make choices for their children.

Electronic copies of this publication may be downloaded at www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/cooperative.cfm

To find statute information for a particular State, go to www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/search/index.cfm

To find information on all the States and territories, order a copy of the full-length PDF by calling 800.394.3366 or 703.385.7565, or download it at www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/cooperativeall.pdf

States With Enforceable Contract Agreements

- Many adoptions involve older children, such as stepchildren and children adopted from foster care; these children frequently have attachments to one or more birth relatives with whom ongoing contact may be desirable and beneficial.
- Contact or communication with birth relatives can be a resource to adoptive parents for information about their child's medical, social, and cultural history.¹

In general, State law does not prohibit postadoption contact or communication. Since adoptive parents have the right to decide who may have contact with their adopted child, they can allow any amount of contact with birth family members, and such contacts often are arranged by mutual understanding without any formal agreement.

A written contractual agreement between the parties to an adoption can clarify the type and frequency of the contact or communication and can provide a mechanism for enforcement of the agreement. Approximately 22 States currently have statutes that allow written and enforceable contact agreements.² The written agreements specify the type and frequency of contact and are signed by the parties to an adoption prior to finalization.³

The modes of contact can range from an exchange of information about the child between adoptive and birth parents; to the exchange of cards, letters, and photos; to personal visits with the child by birth family members.

¹ For more information on the issue of postadoption contact, see the Information Gateway publications *Openness in Adoption: A Bulletin for Professionals*, available online at www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_openadoptbulletin.cfm and *Openness in Adoption: A Factsheet for Families*, at www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_openadopt.cfm.

² The word *approximately* is used to stress the fact that States frequently amend their laws; this information is current only through December 2005. The States that permit enforceable contracts include Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana (for children over age 2), Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont (stepparent adoptions only), Washington, and West Virginia.

³ The phrase "parties to an adoption" generally refers to the birth parents (or other person placing the child for adoption) and the adoptive parents.

Who May Be a Party to an Agreement?

In most States that permit enforceable agreements, an agreement for adoption with contact can be permitted for any adoptive child as long as the type and frequency of contact is deemed to be in the child's best interests and is designed to protect the safety of the child and all the parties to the agreement. Connecticut and Nebraska limit the application of agreements to children who have been adopted while in foster care. Indiana limits enforceable contact agreements to children ages 2 and older. For children under age 2, nonenforceable agreements are permitted as long as the type of contact does not include visitation.

Most statutes permit postadoption contact or communication for birth parents. Some States also allow other birth relatives who have significant emotional ties to the child to be included in the agreement, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings. Minnesota permits foster parents to petition for contact privileges. In California, Minnesota, and Oklahoma, when the case involves an Indian child, members of the child's tribe are included among the eligible birth relatives. California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, and Maryland have provisions for sibling participation in an agreement.

The Court's Role in Establishing or Enforcing Agreements

For the agreements to be enforceable, they must be approved by the court that has jurisdiction over the adoption. All parties wishing to be included in the agreements must agree in writing to all terms of the agreement prior to the adoption finalization. The court may approve the agreement only if all parties, including a child over the age of 12, agree on its provisions, and the court finds the agreement is in the best interests of the child.

Disputes over compliance and requests for modification of the terms must also be brought before the court. Any party to the agreement may petition the court to modify, order compliance with, or void the agreement. The court may do so only if the parties agree or circumstances have changed, and the action is determined to be in the best interests of the child.

When Are States Using Mediation?

Nine States require the parties to participate in mediation before petitions for enforcement or modification of an agreement are brought before the court.⁴ In no case can disputes over the postadoption agreement be used as grounds for setting aside an adoption or relinquishment of parental rights. In Florida and Maryland, the court, at its discretion, may refer the parties to mediation. Any party seeking to enforce an agreement may voluntarily choose mediation in Massachusetts.

Laws in States Without Enforceable Agreements

In most States without enforceable agreements, the statutes are silent about the issue of postadoption contact or communication. Approximately eight other States address the issue but do not provide for enforceable agreements. For example, Alaska's statute states that contact agreements are not prohibited. In Vermont, agreements for contact are enforceable only in cases involving stepparent adoptions. North Carolina also permits agreements by mutual consent, but specifies that they are not enforceable, and failure to comply is not grounds to invalidate consent to the adoption. Ohio, South Carolina, and South Dakota specifically state that mutual agreements for contact are nonbinding and nonenforceable. Missouri and Tennessee leave decisions about contact and visitation with birth relatives to the sole discretion of the adoptive parents.

This publication is a product of the State Statutes Series prepared by Child Welfare Information Gateway. While every attempt has been made to be complete, additional information on these topics may be in other sections of a State's code as well as in agency regulations, case law, and informal practices and procedures.

⁴ Arizona, California, Connecticut, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Texas.

Thursday, Aug. 24, 2006

Openness in Adoption: Fact Sheet

Open, or fully disclosed, adoptions allow adoptive parents, and often the adopted child, to interact directly with birth parents. Family members interact in ways that feel most comfortable to them. Communication may include letters, e-mails, telephone calls, or visits. The frequency of contact is negotiated and can range from every few years to several times a month or more. Contact often changes as a child grows and has more questions about his or her adoption or as families' needs change. It is important to note that even in an open adoption, the legal relationship between a birth parent and child is severed. The adoptive parents are the *legal* parents of an adopted child.

The goals of open adoption are:

- To minimize the child's loss of relationships.
- To maintain and celebrate the adopted child's connections with all the important people in his or her life.
- To allow the child to resolve losses with truth, rather than the fantasy adopted children often create when no information or contact with their birth family is available.

Is Open Adoption Right for Your Family?

Open adoption is just one of several openness options available to families, ranging from confidential, to semi-open (or mediated), to fully open adoption. In semi-open or mediated adoptions, contact between birth and adoptive families is made through a mediator (e.g., an agency caseworker or attorney) rather than directly. In confidential adoptions no contact takes place and no identifying information is exchanged.

Making an open adoption work requires flexibility and a commitment to ongoing relationships, despite their ups and downs. While this type of adoption is not right for every family, open adoption can work well if everyone wants it and if there is good communication, flexibility, commitment to the process, respect for all parties involved, and commitment to the child's needs above all.

What Questions Should Your Family Consider in Open Adoption

In open adoptions, families need to consider *when* and *how much* to tell a child about his or her birth family, and then *if* and *how* to involve him or her in that relationship. An

adoption professional can help you address some of these issues. Some of the questions you may want to consider include:

- At what age should a child be included in contact with his or her birth family?
- What happens if one party decides to break off all contact?
- What will the birth parents' role be in the child's life?
- How will your child explain his or her relationship with birth relatives to his or her peers?
- How will you handle other adopted siblings who have different levels of openness in their adoptions?

From the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)

ROBERT G. LEWIS

Program Consultation and Training on Resource Families

As a consultant/trainer, I work on several levels that will be useful to you in enhancing your “resource family” program(s). As a strategic thinker I help to re-examine programs in a framework of permanence as well as family support and retention.. I work in consultation with middle managers and supervisors to develop themselves and their workers in these same areas. And I work with all staff as a consultant/trainer to improve their skills.. First and finally I work with individual families and youth both to assess their particular challenges and opportunities and to model the work that staff can be trained to do.

Beginning with your families, the best recruitment and retention strategy is support for families. Effective supports include responsiveness, engagement and training. As the executive director of an adoption agency for older children, I worked on these areas for many years. Since then, a wide variety of consulting, training and public speaking has enhanced and developed my understanding and skills. Both parents and youth are very interested in information on the links among behavior, loss and adolescent development. The connections within and among families are crucial as well. I work on recruitment as well, but recommend work on support first. What enhancement to your program’s family support services might be most useful for your families?

I work with management staff at every level to review their programs. We look at staff deployment, training, and support along with the program’s accessibility from the outside and the inside. Since every agency and often every program develops its own culture and pattern of practice, it is helpful to look at each program with a specific goal, such as permanence enhancement, shared parenting, family support, etc. in mind. What will it take for your program?

Managers complain that “My staff don’t know how to talk with teens.” This is an area where I work intensively with staff on engagement skills, adolescents development issues, family support and communication, as well as family groupwork. By doing specific case consultation and direct work with families and young people, I identify the most pressing needs for staff development and model effective engagement and the use of the concepts underscored in training.. What are your staff’s most pressing needs?

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Exploring and developing our promise of a permanent family for every child.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? ABOUT SHARED PARENTING

MAY 2006 VOLUME 5 ISSUE II

TOPIC: Shared Parenting: What is it?

IDEAS: You can make it happen. Simply, shared parenting is several adults taking responsibility for child(ren). The definition that is becoming codified refers to the court's recognition of separated parents sharing fully in raising their children. It is also multiple adults providing a wide range of care for children as a personal commitment. And it is children involuntarily removed from their homes, being parented by strangers, agencies, governments. Shared parenting refers to the recognition by individuals and society of two or more adults taking responsibility for children, regardless of blood relationships. Shared parenting is doing it on purpose, regardless of the accidents of birth or family status.

DISCUSSION: Shared parenting is getting past decrying the evils of divorce and working to mitigate the effects of separation on the children affected by it. Going from broken families to shared parenting is turning it around to the child's point of view. Regardless of how the family "broke", both parents remain a real influence in a child's development. We know this well from our experience of adoption where the birth parents are so completely removed (from the adults and legal point of view). Yet they remain a part of a child's life and psyche. Shared Parenting recognizes that a child needs all their parents; they need them when they need them, not just on schedule. It is two parents, parenting fully, each 100% responsible, each recognizing that the other is also 100% responsible. It has negotiated rules and it has to be flexible.

Perhaps we can think of shared parenting as more constructed than extended family. Extended family conjures a Norman Rockwell image of family members in one neighborhood or town. Even "village" suggests an in accessible past experience not available to today's children and families. The nationally or internationally mobile families around us construct family connections through purchased parenting, friends, unrelated neighbors and children's friends and activities. It is adults who care what happens to children and stay involved, even when things are challenging or uncomfortable. Child – adult (undrelated) connections today sometimes start with suspicion from primary caregivers. Jealousy of affections are a challenge. But our best working, constructed families are flexible and fully engaged.

In many ways our child welfare systems are fragmented shared parenting. But parenting is shared. Foster or adoptive parents who begin as strangers have a lot of catch up to do. They are always sharing even when they don't want to. And the more they can learn to connect with birth parents early and often, the more whole the experience for the child(ren). Birth parents are always part of a child's life. Shared parenting requires flexibility, and 100% commitment. Agencies and governments by their natures are not as flexible or even as fully engaged as families. Shared parenting inevitably works with an evolving, flexible set of agreed upon rules and practices. The challenge for us in the system is establishing just such practices to make it possible for the families we engage to be able to share. It is what children expect and have been devastated without.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



BOB LEWIS (www.rglewis.com)

Linking safety & permanence in a shared vision for every child.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? ABOUT SHARED PARENTING

JUNE 2006

VOLUME 5

ISSUE 3

TOPIC: SHARED PARENTING: WHERE TO BEGIN?

IDEAS: How do we get to sharing? The hesitation about shared parenting in child welfare is about getting from a forced, involuntary, usually hostile environment to a place of cooperation without compromising safety. Beginning where we do with issues of addictions, violence, neglect and behavior problems, constructive, cooperative parenting can seem hopeless, leaving us feeling helpless. Overcoming those odds and getting from crisis to collaboration requires some basics. Cooperative parenting is a process with specific goals of safety, permanence and healthy child development. In this process the child(ren)'s point of view is at the center of our focus. And the process has certain principles, rules and procedures that shape this work.

DISCUSSION: Although children's safety, permanence and healthy development are the goals, they are always just *getting there*. It's a process. A child is never "safe, once and for all"; likewise permanence and well-being. Holding, shaping and envisioning the idea of where we're going is essential to the process of collaboration among the adults who care for children. Our job is finding, strengthening and supporting a natural helping network that will hold this process. We have seen it done: the *incredible* foster-birth-adoptive families who have worked out a wonderful relationship of cooperation and sharing. It is just such a possibility that we need to envision together as we begin. We do not get there without the belief and vision of the possibility of true collaboration. It is challenging work, to see beyond the tragedy of the current to the goal of effective shared parenting. When child protection gets involved whether in an investigation or a removal, we professionals take family executive power. Cooperation is about sharing. How are we going to share? Obviously if families must "have it all together" before the collaboration process can begin, we will never get there. To get started, we can focus on strengths we find, the agreements we can achieve, and on the adults' desire to be successful at parenting.

The child's point of view is more than just what a child needs, more than what s/he wants. What do children experience with our involvement? What's it like for them? Is it *The folks from the county/city/state came in and started hurting my family*? Going to "Ms. Wilson-Jones from church" because my family has a problem is very different from being taken to a stranger's home (regardless of how kindly). We need to integrate what a child needs along with their experience of what's happening. Always come back to the child's point of view. In the words of Melissa Thomas step parent article in Newsweek "...we all feel those complications in our relationships. Love'em one day, despise them the next. Success in a [shared parent family] is accepting that the complications are on the surface." If protective service is to be truly protective, our interventions have to be as child focused as possible. We know from the literature that "shared parenting" is better for children of divorce. It's a simple, enormous leap to the children in our care as well.

We need to begin working on shared parenting wherever we meet the child in the process (from prevention to aftercare). It's never too late, certainly not too early. So let's use the structure already built and proven in Shared Parenting. It is a process outlined by Edward Kruk in the Journal of Family Therapy. Although he disagrees with its applicability to child welfare families, his structure is useable. He makes it a 5 step (not just linear) model of Assessment, Education, Advocacy, Facilitation of negotiations and Continuing support & trouble shooting. We know how to do this, despite how challenging. We just need to begin.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In responding to your question about shared parenting: Where to begin is very challenging to say the least however, it is essential for all team players to thoroughly and therapeutically understand their respective role. It is like a divorce couple the relationship has to be positive in order to share in the role of effective parenting. Moreover, it is most important that the child receive that both parents are equally on the same footage with being visible in their life and also is responsible for their well being.

Please bear in mind Bob that this is to be considered on a case by case basis and that there will be some challenges with regards to roles and boundaries. There have to be clear distinctive boundaries for both sides. This will of course promote and maintain a healthy working relationship. I hope my comments will be found helpful in compiling and developing a comprehensive training Manual for staff, foster parents and bio-parents. MK, NYC

good issue...enjoyed reading it. PP, Boston

Bob- What do you mean by " the child's point of view," in conjunction with cooperative parenting? During many of the meetings that I have attended, the birth parent expresses that they may not want the child to return home for many different reasons-lack of physical space, fear of continued "bad" behavior patterns, interference with current life situations or plain inability. Many familial and non-familial resources decline responsibility or often change their minds about previous offers of assistance. Sometimes the kids want to return home and sometimes the kids do not want to return home.

Also, we are now learning that the brains of teenagers, especially males, undergo profound changes that may cause poor judgment decisions or immature and inappropriate reactions to events. Wouldn't this affect the "child's point of view?" HN, NYC



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WHAT DO YOU THINK? ABOUT SHARED PARENTING

SUMMER 2006 VOLUME 5 ISSUE 4

TOPIC: SHARED PARENTING: ASSESSMENT

IDEAS: Shared parenting is a vessel that holds the process of raising children together. It is the eyes, ears and hands of safety; the personal connections of permanence; and the nurturing of development and well-being. It's both our tool and our product when we intervene in a family's life. It is a messy, human process, but a process. In repairing or creating that vessel we begin by looking at how well it is holding the process. We begin with an assessment. Who is within range of this family and how available are they for partnerships of any kind? How well can the family members, or individual youth, identify the positive network of connections? It's got to be a positive process that looks for strengths, minimizes risks and reframes misdirected energies.

DISCUSSION: Who is in the circle that surrounds this family/youth and is available to them? Is there someone, anyone who might step forward and add their strength to this youth/family right from the start? When placement is an issue, we get so focused on "who will take these kids" that we overlook or reject resources and connections that may be vital to that very process. Someone who cannot house the children or youth, may know someone who can. We get fixed on the "first live one". Yet the folks who have something to offer, may have stepped back from the youth or family because "officials" have stepped in. When we begin this assessment with a family, looking for those who can contribute to the vessel of shared parenting, we are looking for involvement not full responsibility; sharing some responsibility even just a little.

How able is the family to identify the resources of their own network? Does the family even know or are they blinded by addiction, illness or other things? Are they strained by the distance of relocation or loneliness of emotional isolation? Do they know and are they willing to say? Dare they tell the very people who have come crashing into their lives? Sometimes young people and adults are so focused on escaping from the present predicament and so untrusting of us and other professional helpers that they can't say. Some misperceive who and what is available. Sometimes awareness is blocked by fear, anger, hurt and experience. Assessing a family for shared parenting means figuring this out.

Assessing the elements of a family's shared parenting vessel has to include reframing some behavior that is not getting them what they want, minimizing risk, and maximizing strengths. Anger doesn't relieve the hurt any more than addictions, except in the briefest of moments. Often, those who have distanced themselves from a family or youth have done so for their own protection. How might their former love and concern be nurtured while they themselves are protected? What have others loved about this family or young person? How well have these others been able to see the world from the child(ren)'s point of view? Who has recognized what positives there are despite the overwhelming negatives all around? Who will start to build or mend the vessel of shared parenting? Who will continue? What can they offer?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Resource Family and Foster Family: How these types of caregivers defined and use in the Concurrent Planning Model

By Rose Marie Wentz and Leslie Ann Hay

Glossary

Resource Family:

- This is the term used to identify caregivers that have been dually prepared and licensed for both foster or temporary care and adoption.
- These families are prepared to work reunification with birth parents and to provide a permanent adoptive home if reunification fails.

Resource Family:

This is the term used to identify caregivers that have been dually prepared and licensed for both foster or temporary care and adoption. These families are prepared to work reunification with birth parents and to provide a permanent adoptive home if reunification fails.

Talking Points:

Resource Family – Other terms used for this type of caregiving family are: Permanency Planning families, Concurrent Planning Families, Flexible Families. The term Fost/Adopt is NOT exactly the same as a Resource Family (RF). Los Angeles DCFS would prefer that Fost/Adopt NOT be used as a term anymore

The goal of the new DCFS CP policy is for each child who is in care for more than a few months to live with a Resource Family rather than a foster family. A

Resource Family makes a commitment to the child AND the birth family to support reunification efforts. RF are involved in the case planning team decision making process. RF would have contact with the child if the child is reunified with his/her birth parents. RF would support the child to have contact with his/her birth family after an adoption or guardianship. Families who ONLY want to “save” a child from his/her birth family and do not want to have any contact with the birth family would not be appropriate as a RF. There will be NO “adoption only” families in the child welfare system. ALL children should be placed in a RF prior to the time the court decides to Terminate Parental Rights which is the time the system traditionally located and placed a child in an adoptive family. (At this time there are still some adoption only cases occurring in DCFS due to “mission definition by the County Board of Supervisors. So families can be accepted into the system as adoption only. In the best practice model of CP there will be few children available to adopt by the time the child is legally free. DCFS currently has thousands of legally free children who need adoption. Thereby we still need adoptive families.)

The Permanency Resource Division (PRU) is currently beginning to dually license all new families as RF. RF will need ongoing support and training to be able to support the child and family during this time of uncertain permanency outcome. Current foster parents will be given the option to become RF in the future. If a CSW has a current case where the foster family wants to become a RF that family should be referred to the PRU for an adoptive home study as soon as possible.

The CSW and the case planning team should first locate a RF by researching for people who already have an emotional connection with the child. Examples: Extended family, godparents, teachers, neighbors, friends, church members, current foster family where an emotional bond between the child & family exists, etc. The current foster family should be offered the choice to become the child's RF. The CSW is required by policy to ask the caregiver if he/she would be willing

to consider adopting the child if reunification fails. This should occur at least two times. Once before the Jursi/Dispo report is written and the second time when writing the 6 month review report. This should be documented on the CPPPAA form. A child should not remain in a foster home who is not willing to become a RF as that will set up a situation where the child can gain emotional permanency without having legal permanency.

We must consider two types of cases. The first are new cases in the system. If we have done our work correctly it should be rare that a child is NOT placed early in the case in a RF home. Thereby emotional and legal permanency can occur with the same family. And we often will use a family that already has an emotional connection with the child as the RF. The second type of cases are ones already in the system. When a child and foster family have developed an emotional attachment yet the child or family are not willing to complete legal permanency. The CSW and case team should work with the family and child to understand what barriers might be why they are refusing legal permanency. Many of the barriers can be addressed; i.e. finances, need for services, loyalty binds, or fear of commitment. This may take some time and resources to address the barriers. The CSW should actively work on this rather than move the child. The WIC says

If the barriers cannot be addressed the CSW should work with the family and child to ensure a strong emotional permanency. In some cases the emotional permanency may be provided by a non-caregiver. Examples: Older siblings who cannot become a caregiver, teachers, coaches, or church members. The key is to give the child emotional permanency in ALL cases. Moving a child to a new home to gain legal permanency when that would break or destroy an emotional attachment should be considered with great caution.

In other agencies that have been using this model for several years they have found that most RF come from the above group of people. Most RF commit to

only one child or sibling group and do not take new referrals once the child is reunified or adopted.

If the case planning team cannot locate a potential RF among the child's connections than the child is referred, no later than 30 days prior to the first status review hearing (this means the child is referred by the 5th month in care), to the PRU as an "unattached child". The PRU will then match the child to a resource family.

Conundrum:

The profession and law agree that using family members or people with a strong connection with the child, is beneficial to most children. In recent years CA has increased the requirements these families must meet to be licensed or pass the relative home study (called ASFA Homestudy by DCFS). These two things can be in conflict. Example: A low income family where it is normal for the children to sleep in a bed with several siblings and/or sleep in a room where an adult also sleeps. This child's grandmother has a similar sleeping arrangement. It would seem normal to the child to sleep this way. Yet the grandmother's home would not pass the current home study requirements. Additionally, the length of time it takes for these home studies to be completed requires a child to remain in non-related foster care for weeks to months.

If a relative cannot pass the ASFA homestudy the following should occur:

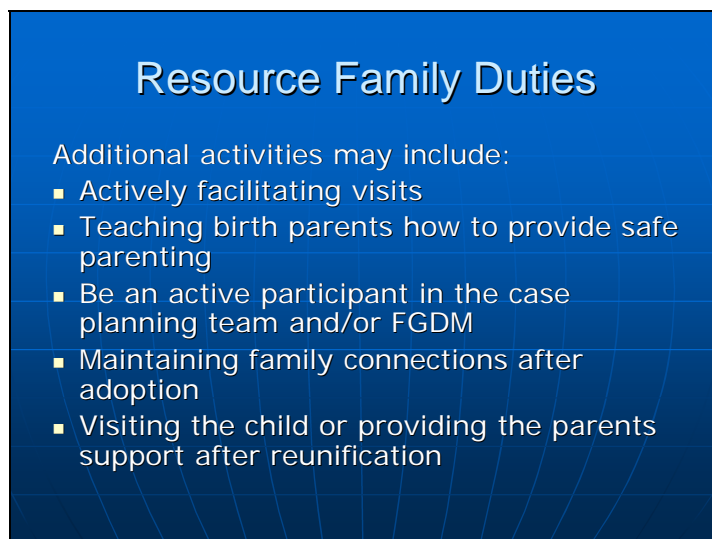
Do not place a child in the home until the homestudy is approved

If the child is already in the home

- Help the person make the changes or get the resources to pass the homestudy
- Ask if there are other family/friends who might be able to care for the child and who could pass the homestudy

- Make sure that visitations occur with the person/family so the child can maintain that connection even if he/she cannot be placed or remain in that home.
- Remember if there is no ASFA homestudy approval, the family will not be eligible for Title IV-E foster care funds.
- In rare cases there can be waivers for some ASFA homestudy requirements so the CSW should review the case with supervision.

See article in Resource section for more details on RF. “Specific Recruitment, Screening, Training and Support for Concurrent Placements.” “Dual Licensure”



Resource Family Duties

Additional activities may include:

- Actively facilitating visits
- Teaching birth parents how to provide safe parenting
- Be an active participant in the case planning team and/or FGDM
- Maintaining family connections after adoption
- Visiting the child or providing the parents support after reunification

Talking Points:

- **These are some examples of activities that RF would be required to do.**
- **This does not mean that foster parents could not do these activities or should not be encouraged to do these activities.**

Glossary

Foster Family :

- A family that is willing and able to care for children on a short term basis in order to provide the child safety.
- Children are returned to their biological family or placed in a Resource family as soon as possible.
- Foster care should not last longer than a few months.

Foster Family homes:

Some families will only provide short term care. Their focus will be similar to what most foster families have traditionally provided. They will provide for the direct care of the child and may have limited involvement with the child's family or with case planning activities.

Talking Points:

- **This is a family that is willing and able to care for children on a short term basis in order to provide the child safety. (Short means days to weeks. Not months and definitively not waiting until it is clear if TPR will occur.)**
- **These families are used for children who will be returned to their biological family within a few weeks or as a placement while the worker identifies the Resource Family who will be the Alternative Permanent Home. This type of care should not last longer than a few months.**
- In the CP model there will still be a need for foster families. These families will primarily be used when a child must be placed in care and a relative cannot be approved the day the child is removed from his/her family home. Children should be placed with a RF as soon as possible in order to meet a child's need for emotional and legal permanency and to have a family that is willing to actively support reunification. Foster

families, by definition, are families that are not willing to meet ALL of the requirements of a RF. No family should be expected to become a RF if they are not able or willing to adopt a child and support reunification.

- The role of the this type family in the CP model is to provide short term care, to help a child transition into the foster care and then transition either back home to the birth family or to the Resource Family. Many of the current duties such as helping to get the child into a new school or transported to his current school, obtaining medical care, reporting on the child's transition to the agency worker and helping with transportation for visits will continue as duties for these families in this model.
- If the child has no extended family member or family with prior emotional connections to the child, that is willing to be a RF, the agency worker should ask the current Foster Family if they would consider being a RF. If the family is interested they should receive the necessary training and support to be an effective permanent RF.

ADOPT-310

Contact After Adoption Agreement

Original Change

Clerk stamps below when form is filed.

Court name and street address:

Superior Court of California, County of

Case Number:

1 Your name(s) (adopting parent(s)):

- a. _____
b. _____

Relationship to child: _____

Your address (skip this if you have a lawyer):

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Your phone #: (____) _____

Your lawyer (if you have one): (Name, address, phone #, and State Bar #):

2 Information about the child:

- a. Child's name (after adoption): _____
b. Date of birth: _____ Age: _____
c. Is the child a dependent of Juvenile Court? No Yes

If yes, Juvenile Court and Juvenile Case number:

County: _____ Case #: _____

d. If the child has a lawyer, fill out below. If Item 2c is yes, child must have a lawyer (Fam. Code, § 8714.7).

Name of child's lawyer: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: (____) _____ State Bar #: _____

3 The people below agree with the parent(s) in **1** about contact with the child after adoption. If the agreement is confidential, write "Confidential" instead of the person's name.

If other relatives, attach a sheet of paper. Write "ADOPT-310, Item 3—Other Relatives" at the top.

Type of Contact (circle all that apply):

- Telephone Letter Visits
 Share Info E-mail Other*

Name	Relationship to Child						<input type="checkbox"/>
a.							<input type="checkbox"/>
b.							<input type="checkbox"/>
c.							<input type="checkbox"/>
d.							<input type="checkbox"/>
e.							<input type="checkbox"/>
f.							<input type="checkbox"/>
g.							<input type="checkbox"/>

*Explain type of contact on a sheet of paper. Write "ADOPT-310, Item 3—Other Types of Contact" at the top.

Number of pages attached: _____

Case Number: _____

Your name(s): _____

- 4 If you have a signed, written agreement about Contact After Adoption, attach a copy.
Number of pages attached: _____
- 5 The parties have discussed the reasons for the continued contact between the child and the specified relatives in view of the best interest of the child.


Notice


After the judge grants the Adoption Request and approves this agreement, the adoption is still valid. It can never be canceled or changed even if one of the people signing this agreement:


- Does not follow this agreement *and/or*
- Files ADOPT-315 (to change, end, or enforce this agreement)


When the adopted child turns 18, he or she can undo all or part of this agreement.


6 Everyone involved in this agreement must sign below (including the child, if 12 or older, and the child's attorney).


Date: _____ *Type or print your name and relationship to child*  _____ *Sign your name*

Date: _____ *Type or print your name and relationship to child*  _____ *Sign your name*

Date: _____ *Type or print your name and relationship to child*  _____ *Sign your name*

Date: _____ *Type or print your name and relationship to child*  _____ *Sign your name*

Date: _____ *Type or print your name and relationship to child*  _____ *Sign your name*

Date: _____ *Type or print your name and relationship to child*  _____ *Sign your name*

If more relatives need to sign, attach a sheet of paper. Write "ADOPT-310, Item 6—Signatures of Other Relatives," at the top.
Number of pages attached: _____

Date: _____  _____
Judge (or Judicial Officer)

VIII. Celebrating Adoption Finalizations

A. Programs

- Adoption Saturdays
- Dedication of a Court Calendar to Adoptions
- Commemorative Item for Adopted Child or Whole Family

Adoption Saturdays

What are they?

Adoption Saturdays are a collaborative effort by attorneys, judges, and court staff to give children a permanent home while clearing up backlogs in the adoption process. Pending adoptions are finalized on a Saturday, with judges, clerks, attorneys, and volunteers on hand to work only on these finalizations.

Why do this?

Adoption Saturdays have proven to be an effective tool for helping families sort through the large amount of paperwork that must be filed to complete an adoption. It also lightens the juvenile court's heavy caseload. Los Angeles County has held 23 Adoption Saturdays since 1998. On these days, more than 7,000 adoptions have been finalized.

What goal does this program address?

In Los Angeles County, Alameda County, and other counties throughout the state, an Adoption Saturday program was implemented to expedite the adoption and permanency process and to clear a backlog. Some counties have no backlog but still hold Adoption Saturday as part of a day-long celebration.

How can you start this program in your county?

Los Angeles County will hold its 24th Adoption Saturday on November 18, 2006. The event that originated in Los Angeles has spread throughout the United States. As recently as 2005, 45 states and the District of Columbia participated in an Adoption Saturday program, completing the adoptions of 3,400 children. The number continues to grow every year as many other cities throughout California and nationwide join Los Angeles in holding Adoption Saturdays on the same day. While not overwhelming, the preparation does include a goodly amount of front-end work. Los Angeles has made this process much smoother by involving local nonprofits, law firms, and attorneys in the project. Los Angeles works closely with the Alliance for Children's Rights, a nonprofit organization that is helping to coordinate Adoption Saturdays around the state and the country.

Ideally, many attorneys and judges will be eager to volunteer. Alameda County will hold its 7th annual Adoption Saturday this year, when many judges volunteer to finalize adoptions and participants can enjoy many other fun activities planned for them throughout the day. In 2005, as many as 20 judges volunteered their time on Adoption Saturday, as did hundreds of others from

social services and other agencies and other helpful volunteers (a schedule of events from last year follows). These events and others continue to garner great participation.

For bailiffs and clerks who are not volunteering, paying overtime is possible, since this event incorporates direct court work. Additionally, assistance may be requested from Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), who can be very helpful in waiting rooms.

Though the event listed here is called Adoption Saturday, some courts choose to hold the event during the week on a specific day to allow the event to take place during normal work hours. For example, San Bernardino Superior Court, Juvenile District and the Department of Social Services will hold its 9th annual Adoption Celebration event where they anticipate finalizing the adoption of 75 children. The event is held at a local convention center due to the large size of the event and the number of participants. In addition to the finalization hearings, festivities are held for the children and families participating. Other counties such as San Diego and Ventura also celebrate events on days other than Saturday.

For suggestions on how to coordinate these ideas with the media, see section III, Court Outreach to the Media.

Contacts:

Alameda County: Fredi Juni, Management Analyst, Alameda County Social Services Agency, County of Alameda, 510-268-2422

Los Angeles County: Hon. Michael Nash, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, 323-536-6377

San Bernardino County: Kim Greve, Court District Manager, Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino, 909-387-7005

San Diego County: Jamie Rivas, Adoption Support Services Supervisor, San Diego County Adoptions, 858-694-5345

Tulare County: Michelle Hineman, Court Manager, Superior Court of California, County of Tulare, 559-733-6374, ext. 191

Ventura County: Patti Morua-Widdows, Court Manager, Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, 805-981-5938

Statewide: Laura Streimer, Legal Director, Alliance for Children's Rights, 213-368-6010

Dedication of a Court Calendar to Adoption

What is it?

This program is an action by the court to make pending adoptions a priority, usually by setting aside specific time.

Why do this?

Dedicating a certain amount of the court's time exclusively to adoptions ensures that a child will not wait for an adoption while the system catches up with a backlog.

What goal does this program address?

Dedication of the court calendar gives the court an exclusive opportunity to finalize adoption proceedings. This should help eliminate any backlog, because cases do not accumulate as quickly. Ultimately, a court that dedicates its calendar is making a statement that children are a priority and finalization is important.

How can you start this program in your county?

There are many ways of making adoptions a priority on a court calendar. El Dorado County, for example, has previously dedicated the last Friday of each month to adoption proceedings. By dedicating a specific amount of time to adoptions, the court was able to make these proceedings a special event. The commissioner made animal balloons for the children, each child received a certificate of adoption, a local apple grower donated goody bags, and court personnel made treats such as brownies and cookies. When the families agreed to it, the local newspaper even covered the proceedings. In Contra Costa County, adoption matters were heard daily before any other matter was heard. At the 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. calendars, the judge asked if there were any adoptions pending. If there were, they were heard first, and if not, the judge moved on to other matters.

Contacts:

Contra Costa County: Superior Court of California, County of Contra Costa, 925-646-2960

El Dorado County: Rosalie Tucker, Court Manager, Superior Court of California, County of El Dorado, 530-621-6718

San Luis Obispo County: Superior Court of California, County of San Luis Obispo, 805-781-5420

Commemorative Item for Adopted Child or Whole Family

What is it?

In another simple program, the courts award new adoptive families, primarily the children, with a commemorative item, such as a teddy bear or other small gift. It helps acknowledge the significance of the event.

Why do this?

This is yet another innovative program in which counties attempting to improve the adoption process have shown that even the smallest of efforts recognizes the joys and uniqueness of becoming a family through adoption. Courts should join in with the family to commemorate and celebrate their commitments to one another.

What goal does this program address?

Often it seems that children in and out of the system feel that the adoption process is working against them. The children need to feel more comfortable with the process. They need to feel that the process is rewarding them rather than taking something from them. Furthermore, this program helps build the self-esteem of the newly adopted child as that child begins a new life as a member of a family. The use of teddy bears has also been used when permanency has been established with a caring relative or other adult, or when permanency has been reestablished with a parent or parents.

How can you start this in your county?

Many counties are currently handing out a small gift to each newly adopted child. Some courts give out teddy bears or other stuffed animals, stickers, candy, or other items to the adopted children and their new siblings. In Ventura County, these gifts help celebrate and acknowledge the day's significance and further memorialize the family's commitment to one another. Nevada County celebrates after each adoption through its Teddy Bear Program, where court clerks and other personnel donate teddy bears, which are then given to newly adopted children. Toys may also be donated by local businesses or larger foundations or charities. San Bernardino County also gives away teddy bears donated by the San Bernardino County Children's Fund, both at their annual adoption celebration event and throughout the year.

Another commemorative item that Nevada County offers to adoptive families is the child's handprint created in a tile on the day the adoption is finalized. The tiles are displayed in the courthouse for a period of time, and then rotated as new adoptions (and new tiles) are finalized. Once a child's tile has been displayed for a certain period of time, the family is then offered the

tile. The tiles offer an attractive display for the courthouse walls, as well as publicity for the need for more adoptive parents.

Contacts:

Nevada County: Jennifer McCalligan, Judicial Secretary, Family Law Department, Superior Court of California, County of Nevada, 530-265-1476

San Bernardino County: Kim Greve, Court District Manager, Juvenile Dependency Court, Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino

Ventura County: Patti Morua-Widdows, Court Manager, Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, 805-981-5938

B. Resources

- Adoption Saturdays:
 - History of Adoption Day in Los Angeles
 - Photograph From Los Angeles' 1999 Adoption Saturday With Chief Justice Ronald M. George and Adopted Children
 - Connect for Kids: Great Idea, Great Results
 - Home at Last: 22 Children's Permanent Placement With Families is Cemented at Adoption Ceremony
 - Bay Area's 6th Annual Adoption Day!

History of Adoption Saturday in Los Angeles

Saturday, April 25, 1998, was a day of celebration for 130 families in Los Angeles County. On that day, the Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court in Los Angeles County opened its doors to hold adoption completion hearings for 130 children who had initially entered the child protection system as victims of child abuse and/or neglect. No one could have predicted on that day that Adoption Saturday would grow into a national program benefiting thousands of children throughout the United States.

Adoption Saturday was the most visible part of a project that began in Los Angeles in 1998 to process the adoptions of children freed in the dependency system in a more expeditious manner. It was part of a unique collaboration between the Los Angeles Juvenile Court, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the volunteer legal community that was recruited, organized, and trained by two wonderful legal organizations, the Alliance for Children's Rights and Public Counsel Law Center. Many of the volunteer attorneys came from some of the larger and more prestigious law firms in Los Angeles. Indeed, Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher alone has handled over 2,000 adoptions since 1998.

Since 1998, Los Angeles has completed almost 19,000 adoptions from its foster care system. Over 7,000 adoptions have been completed on 23 Saturdays. Adoption Saturdays have ranged from 130 adoptions on the first one to more than 600 on November 18, 2000.

One of the noteworthy aspects of Adoption Saturday is that all the judicial officers who sit are volunteers from all over the court system. In Los Angeles, over 200 judicial officers have actually served on Adoption Saturday, with many volunteers being turned away. The most notable volunteers have included Chief Justice Ronald M. George, who assigned himself to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County in 1999 (a photograph of the chief justice with some of the children adopted that morning follows), and Judge Leonard Edwards of Santa Clara, who volunteered during his term as president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Needless to say, other jurisdictions throughout California and the United States have joined the celebration. November 2005 saw more than 200 communities in 45 states open their doors for the completion of 3,400 adoptions on the sixth annual National Adoption Day.

Why is Adoption Saturday so popular? The reasons are obvious. Children and families are receiving more immediate attention so that they can move on with their lives. Attorneys in the legal community are given the opportunity to donate their time and energy to a joyful cause for children on a day when they are less busy. The court and Children's Services are able to more expeditiously complete a process that lowers their caseloads. The community's confidence level toward the court, the child welfare system, and the legal community grows with the knowledge that so many people are positively affected by their efforts. National and local interest in adoption of foster children has grown with the program.

Last but not least, who can think of a happier way to spend a Saturday!





Connect for Kids

Great Idea, Great Results

Published: November 15, 2004

by: Cecilia Garcia

Judge Michael Nash

For several years now, one Saturday in November has been designated National Adoption Day. On that day, court personnel, social workers and attorneys open up courthouses nationwide for just one purpose: finalizing adoptions for thousands of children.

It started small, with one jurisdiction taking a hard look at the number of children waiting for final processing of their adoptions. In 1997, Los Angeles County undertook an evaluation to determine the size of the backlog of children who had been freed for adoption by the dependency courts, but whose final paperwork had not been processed by the overburdened court system. It turned out that the backlog amounted to about 6,000 cases.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Michael Nash says the backlog was caused by a number of factors which amounted, in his view, to “institutional neglect.”

ConnectforKids: *Can you talk about how Adoption Saturday started?*

Nash: We sought to develop a private/public partnership that would help us with this issue (of backlogged adoptions). Specifically we aligned ourselves with two advocacy groups, the Public Council Law Center and the Alliance for Children’s Rights, here in Los Angeles. Those groups agreed to recruit, organize and train attorneys from throughout the city to handle these cases of children waiting to have their adoptions completed and they were going to do it on a pro bono basis.

ConnectforKids: *Were the 6,000 children in some phase of the adoption process?*

Nash: They had all been freed for adoption through the dependency courts and were in an adoptive plan in varying stages of the completion process. So the Alliance and Public Council agreed to provide the attorneys. Our court agreed to provide

unlimited court access to handle these cases, and the department agreed to provide additional resources as well for their staff.

As we were beginning this process, a pro bono attorney by the name of Steve Meiers, with the law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, which had agreed to handle the pro bono cases, approached me with the thought that perhaps we could create some sort of an assembly line process here. One where the attorneys would meet with their clients on a Saturday, handle paperwork and then march them over to the courthouse to complete the adoptions. It was interesting idea, but obviously, to do all that in one day would not work.

So I suggested, perhaps, you folks could do your own paperwork day on a Saturday, and then on a future Saturday we can try opening our courts and see how that works.

In April 1998, Judge Nash and his colleagues conducted their first Adoption Saturday. They opened up five of the 24 available courts and processed 130 adoptions. Everyone, from the judges to the children and families, had, in Judge Nash's word, "a blast."

Nash: ..It really went well. Also, the department found out that because of the media coverage, there were more people calling to inquire about adoptions. So all around it was really a good thing and with all of that, at least for one day, it shined a positive spotlight on the foster care system, which as you probably know doesn't always get a positive spotlight or focus from the media or the community as a whole.

So after that we said, "Well, let's do it again." And we've done this two or three times a year since April of 1998. We've done as many as 600, around 650 in one day to as few as somewhere 200 in a day since then. And over that period of time, here in Los Angeles, we have completed pretty close to 7,000 adoptions, just on Saturdays alone.

ConnectforKids: *So it went from being an idea that began in Los Angeles County and now it's national. How did that happen?*

Nash: I started talking about it to my colleagues around the state and a few thought it would be a good idea and tried it. And then also I began talking about it with my colleagues involved with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and was asked to do several presentations at National Council events across the country. And courts sort of started to jump on the bandwagon, if you will.

At the same time, the Alliance for Children's Rights here in Los Angeles began an active program to recruit courts around the country and work with organizations to help spread the idea. And so, through the confluence of all those efforts, we now see... hundreds of courts participating in or doing Adoption Saturdays, most of them doing at least one in November as part of National Adoption Saturday. And the reason that it has spread like wildfire is that everybody's experience is the same as Los Angeles'...It's a tremendous experience for the judicial officers who volunteer, the attorneys who work with the families, the families. And of course the system, as I say, gets this positive spotlight that it doesn't normally get. It's a "can't lose" proposition.

In 2003, 38 states and the District of Columbia participated, with more than 120 jurisdictions completing the adoptions of 3,100 children. National Adoption Day is Saturday, November 20th.

National Adoption Day Resources

- [Alliance for Children's Rights](#)
- [National Adoption Day](#)
- [Public Council Law](#)

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Home at last

22 children's permanent placement with families is cemented at adoption ceremony

By Paula Sheil

Record Staff Writer

Published Sunday, November 21, 2004

STOCKTON -- Sleeping babes, toddlers by the hand, and boys and girls in their party best filled the courtroom of Judge Robin Appel on Saturday morning at the San Joaquin County Courthouse. Their happy adoptive parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and former foster parents joined them to celebrate the permanent placement of these already loved children.

Wade and Jeannie Wisegarver of Venture made the long trip with their daughter, Erica, 13, to participate in the sixth annual Adoption Saturday for 22 children ranging in age from infant to 11.

Infants have always enjoyed the highest rate of successful adoptions, but more parents are recognizing the need for siblings and children with special needs to find homes.

The Wisegarvers adopted siblings -- ages 3, 5 and 6 -- who already endured four foster homes and two shelter placements. Their only-child family became an instant kindergarten.

"We wanted young children, and you have to widen your scope," said Jeannie Wisegarver. "We decided to open up to the numbers."

Throughout November, hundreds of communities across California are holding similar events in honor of Adoption Awareness Month.

In 2003-04, the San Joaquin County Human Services Agency averaged 982 children in foster care. Only 150 children were adopted, said Dave Erb, deputy director of the San Joaquin County Human Services Agency.

More than 90 percent of the adoptions in California are done through the foster care system, according to Aspira, a nonprofit foster care and adoption agency in Stockton.

Judge Appel acknowledged the crowd with thanks and applauded the many parents who also served as foster placements for anywhere from a few months to several years. She drew knowing laughs from the audience when she said that now, "It's forever and ever, no matter how good or bad the kids are."

While each family was taken to the judge's podium and parents given corsages and boutonnieres, social workers piled tables with crayons, puzzles and Legos to keep the others children busy. Balloons bopped on strings tied to teddy bears, and outside the courtroom, a table laden with cookies and punch lent a birthday flair. Then a young mother rushed past.

"I have to change an exploding diaper," she said.

In a calmer mood, Edward and Virginia Luna of Stockton filled two rows with 22 family members to celebrate their permanent bond with Mariah. They had nearly finished the child-raising business with seven children ages 9 to 26. But caring for eight grandchildren made it easy for them to add the 20-month-old, brown-haired beauty.

She twirled in her pink skirt covered in black lace but never spun far from her father's knee.

"We are grateful his grandmother let us know it's a congenital disease that runs in her side of the family," he said.

In an overflow courtroom, Stefanie Martinez cradled an armload of day lilies for one of three social workers who helped her to adopt relatives Christofer, 6, and Cierra, 5. She and husband Steven have three children of their own and another foster son, who is 12.

"I think we'll keep doing it," Stefanie Martinez said. "We'll expand the house. I don't know what I'd do without the chaos. I think we just thrive on all the noise."

To reach reporter Paula Sheil, phone (209) 546-8257 or e-mail psheil@recordnet.com

<http://online.recordnet.com/articlelink/112104/news/articles/112104-gn-7.php#>

SATURDAY 11/19/05
NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY
Welcome to Alameda County's 6th Annual Adoption Day!

Please read the following information about our Adoption Day.
Information is available at the Family Check-In and Information Counter.
Please don't hesitate to ask anyone wearing a "Volunteer Staff" nametag for assistance.

The activities for the day are being held on the **3rd floor**, in the Jury Assembly Room. The actual Adoption Finalization Hearings with Judges and the filing of documents following the Hearing will occur on the **4th floor, in Departments 104, 105, 106, and 107**. We will be escorting families and guests around the Courthouse, for security purposes.

- **FAMILY CHECK-IN**

- II **Families, please make sure to officially check-in at the counter in the Jury Assembly Room on the 3rd floor at least ½ hour before your scheduled Finalization.** Each family will receive a packet of information and gifts at that time. (NOTE: if your appointment is at 10 a.m.. or 10:15, you have been asked to check in early so as to not conflict with the Opening Remarks, which begin at 9:15 a.m.. All other families should please check in before or after the Opening Remarks)
- II **Families, please meet at the elevators on the 3rd floor, 15 minutes prior to your scheduled Finalization.** At that time, you will be escorted to the 4th floor Courtrooms.

- **ADOPTION DAY ACTIVITIES**

- The day begin with Opening Remarks at 9:15 a.m.. Please refer to your Program for names of speakers and presentations being made.
- Following the morning Presentations, Brunch will be served, and will be available all day.
- There are 4 rooms off the main Jury Assembly Room. They include:
 - An Art Activities Room with activities led by volunteer artists from MOCHA (The Museum of Children's Art)
 - An Adoption Library Room, with displays of adoption related literature for children and books for adoptive parents. Stories will be read to children throughout the day beginning at 10:15
 - A Video Room where you can learn about plans for The Bay Area Heart Gallery and view a segment about Heart Galleries from across the country
 - A Family Photography Room, where volunteer photographers will be taking pictures of families and printing them out for families to take with them today.

- **ADOPTION FINALIZATION HEARINGS**

- II 15 minutes prior to scheduled Finalizations, families and their guests will be escorted from the 3rd floor to the 4th floor of the Courthouse.
- II On the 4th floor, families will be directed to the Courtroom where their Finalization Hearing is scheduled.
- II A Court Clerk will review paperwork with families that have been filed with the Court by Alameda County Adoptions. The clerk will Swear-In the family, and direct them to the Judge's Chambers for their Hearing. The Finalization Hearing takes approximately 15 minutes. Documents will be signed with the Judge, and the Judge will sign the Order of Adoption. Families and guests are free to take photographs or film in Chambers.
- II Following the Hearing, family will be directed to the Court Clerk where they will file their documents, and sign additional documents. Certified copies of your Adoption Decree may be obtained at that time. After the filing of documents, families and guests may return to the 3rd floor and participate in the activities, or are free to leave.

- **MEDIA COVERAGE**

We expect local and national media to be present at the event throughout the day. Media Representatives should not be contacting you for photographs, filming, comments or information without your consent or agreement.

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES!

IX. Web Sites, Trainings, and Other Useful Resources

A. Web Sites

- **General Information**
- **Adoption and Foster Care**
- **Court Adoption and Permanency Month**
- **Permanency**
- **Recruitment and Support for Foster/Adoptive Parents**

A. Web Sites

Although there are thousands of Web sites related to adoption, foster care, and permanency, listed below are some of the most helpful in providing general information, tips and toolkits, statistics, and other aids for learning more about adoption and permanency, or specifically about Court Adoption and Permanency Month. Both national and California Web sites are included.

General Information

California Administrative Office of the Courts, Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC): Our own Web site contains information on many different topics, including program descriptions, research, technical assistance, and resources. Updated information on adoption and permanency will be added in fall 2005.

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc

California Courts Online Self-Help Center: This useful site includes a section on adoption, with a Q&A section, all forms related to adoption, and links to other Web sites. It is available in both English and Spanish.

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/family/adoption/

California Department of Social Services, Children and Family Services Division: Provides information specific to California on adoptions, child abuse prevention and how to report it, foster care and help for foster youth, statistics, and other services.

www.childsworld.ca.gov

Child Welfare Research Center: Child Welfare Services CWS/CMS reports are available with statistics on foster care in California.

<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/childwelfare>

Juvenile Law Center: A site for judges, attorneys, social workers, health-care workers, and childcare professionals. It is a broad-based organization for all areas of children's rights nationwide, but it does contain many useful publications about child welfare. Much of its focus is on Pennsylvania since it is based in Philadelphia.

www.jlc.org/home/publications

United States Census 2000 Special Report—Adopted Children and Stepchildren 2000: Special report issued in October 2003 about the number of adopted children and stepchildren in U.S. households. This is the first time that the census asked a specific question related to adoption on the census.

www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-6.pdf

Adoption and Foster Care

Adoption.org: National-based organization devoted to relaying information both for those adopting and those who may consider placing their child for adoption. It does have some information specific to California. It has links to many other sites specific to adoption. See below for a section on National Adoption Awareness Month.

www.adoption.org

AFTER Adoption Resources: Though their services are for residents living in Santa Clara, Monterey, and San Mateo Counties, the Web site also has a library and research center.

www.afteradoption.org

Alliance for Children's Rights: The mission of the Alliance for Children's Rights is protecting the rights and futures of abused and impoverished children throughout Los Angeles County, in hopes of creating a world in which all children are able to have a safe and permanent family, a quality education, and all of the support and services they rightfully deserve. Their Adoption Program helps streamline the system and create tools to expedite adoptions of children from foster care.

www.kids-alliance.org/default.asp

California Kids Connection: A collaborative effort between the California Department of Social Services and Family Builders by Adoption. The site provides a photo listing of California's children who are available for adoption (with the birth parent(s)'s or court's permission to publicize).

www.CAKidsConnection.com

Casey Family Programs: Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care. Established by United Parcel Service founder Jim Casey, they are a Seattle-based national operating foundation that has served children, youth, and families in the child welfare system since 1966. They have local offices in both the Bay Area and in Los Angeles.

www.casey.org/home

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute: The Congressional Coalition on Adoption (CCA) was created in 1985 as a bicameral, bipartisan caucus of members of Congress dedicated to improving adoption policy and practice, and to focusing public attention on the advantages of adoption. In 2001, the CCA's active co-chairs created the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) to more effectively raise Congressional and public awareness about the issue of adoption. One of the programs they support is National Adoption Day.

www.ccaainstitute.org/index.php

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption: A nonprofit 501(c)(3) public charity dedicated to increasing the adoptions of the more than 150,000 children in North America's foster care system.

www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.org/index.asp

Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute: Founded in 1996, a national nonprofit organization devoted to improving adoption policy and practice. The Adoption Institute is a reliable, unbiased, and respected voice for ethical adoption practices that respect all people touched by adoption.

www.adoptioninstitute.org/howe/intro.html

Family Builders by Adoption: The agency focuses on finding adoptive families for children with special needs in the California foster care system, and is based in Oakland, California.

www.familybuilders.org

National Adoption Information Clearinghouse: This site includes an online toolkit with suggestions for planning events, working with the media, recruitment, and other ways for encouraging adoption of children from foster care. Their campaign theme for 2005 was “Answering the Call: You Don’t Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent.” The site also includes other helpful information such as statistics, suggestions on how to adopt, and tips for professionals, prospective families, parents, and teachers.

<http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/general/adoptmonth/index.cfm>

Toolkit: *http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/general/adoptmonth/adopt_toolkit.cfm*

North American Council on Adoptable Children: Includes many resources on adoption, including the National Adoption Awareness Month Guide.

www.nacac.org

Perspectives Press: Provides books, articles, and workshops for consumers and professionals on adoption, fostering, and other family choices.

www.perspectivespress.com/

Sierra Adoption Services: An agency that serves 12 North-Central California counties whose mission is to transform the lives of foster children by finding and nurturing permanent adoptive families.

www.sierraadoption.org

Court Adoption and Permanency Month Information

Adoption.org: National Adoption Awareness Month: Listing of resources relating to National Adoption Awareness Month in November. The site also includes many ideas for events, celebrations, and other ways to heighten awareness of the need for permanent homes for children awaiting adoption.

www.adoption.org/adopt/national-adoption-awareness-month.php

National Adoption Month: A site that celebrates the “collective national effort to raise awareness about the 118,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families . . . National Adoption Day has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys, and advocates to finalize their adoptions into permanent families and to celebrate adoption.” The site contains multiple resources, a listing of all events nationwide (you can register your own events at this site), toolkits, and ways to work with the media.

www.nationaladoptionday.org/2005/index.asp

Permanency

California Permanency for Youth Project: The project works to ensure that all children who “age out” of the foster care system have a permanent, lifelong connection with a caring adult. The site “provides information on programs and strategies for accomplishing permanency for foster youth, including: 1. Best Youth Permanency Practices; 2. Identified barriers to permanency for youth; 3. Updates on four California counties that are working to improve permanency outcomes for youth; 4. Updates on the California Task Force for Youth Permanency; 5. Summaries of 2002, 2003 & 2004 National Youth Permanency meetings.”

www.cpy.org

California Youth Connection: An organization made up of current and former foster youth who use their experiences with the child welfare system to improve foster care, educate the public and policy makers about their unique needs, and change the negative stereotypes many people have of foster youth. The site includes publications relating to older foster youth and permanency.

www.cal-youthconn.org/site/cyc

A Guide To Permanency Options For Youth: The Alameda County Social Services Agency and the California Permanency for Youth Project produced this guide to serve as a tool for all those that work towards finding permanent connections for youth in foster care.

http://acfya.com/documents/Guide.pdf

National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning: It provides training and technical assistance and distributes information that “focuses on increasing the capacity and resources of State, Tribal, and other publicly supported child welfare agencies to promote family-centered practices that contribute to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children while meeting the needs of their families.” It also publishes a biannual newsletter with online archives dating back to 1999 available for download on the site. The list of topics in each of these newsletters is included in the Supplemental Materials section.

www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/about-us.html

Newsletters: *www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/newsletters.html*

Kevin Campbell: This California Permanency for Youth Project site provides information about family finding and the use of new technology to find family members. This site also allows the viewer to review a slide presentation as well as a link to view a Webcast.

www.cpy.org/reports.htm#fire

www.cpy.org/consultants

Robert G. Lewis: Mr. Lewis provides consultations and trainings in the area of permanency for foster care youth. You will find handouts, charts and a wealth of information to help with communication techniques for all members of a birth family as well as resource families working with youth in care.

www.rglewis.com

You Gotta Believe: The Older Adoption and Permanency Movement, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation that places children and youth. They are a homeless prevention program that seeks to prevent homelessness by finding permanent moral and legal adoptive homes for teens and preteen children in foster care. They provide training for social workers and other professionals as well as pre and post adoption support for parents.
www.yougottabelieve.org

Recruitment and Support for Foster/Adoptive Parents

Kinship Center: This agency supports adoptive families by creating programs that offer education, counseling and many other post-placement services to nurture success in children and families. They have offices located in Salinas, San Jose, Santa Ana, Pasadena and Redlands, California.

www.kinshipcenter.org

Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting: An organization providing legal information, training, referral, and support for foster parents, relatives raising children, and adoptive families and their child. They support policies that ensure that every child in foster care finds a permanent, loving family.

www.lapponline.org

Post Adoption Center for Education and Research: Helps families to better understand that adoption is a lifelong process and an intergenerational journey. PACER serves all members of the adoption triad (adoptees, birthparents, and adoptive parents) by providing comprehensive information and ongoing emotional support. PACER encourages truth and openness among all participants in the adoption process.

www.pacer-adoption.org

Tapestry Books: This Web site is a complete source for adoption books. The list of publications on this site range from preadoption to adoptive parenting for children, foster parents, adoptees/birthparents, and professionals. The Web site is continually updated and lets you order publications directly on the site.

www.tapestrybooks.com

B. Training Materials and Information

- Judicial Review and Technical Assistance (JRTA)
Project Permanency Fact Sheet
- Annual National Convening on Youth Permanence,
Sample Agenda and Press Release From 2006
Conference

***Please also see Section VI. Adoptive Families: Training, Recruitment, and Support for many other training-related resources.**



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FACT SHEET

September 2006

Judicial Review and Technical Assistance (JRTA) Project—Permanency

The permanency project is an initiative that provides judicial education and technical assistance at a limited number of courts on expanding approaches to permanency for dependent children and their families.

Collaborative Workshops

Workshops, lasting from a few hours to half a day, are offered in the 11 largest counties in California. Judicial officers from each local court identify issues and challenges to permanency, and these serve as topics for workshop agendas. All members of the juvenile dependency court system are invited to attend.

The workshops are collaborative in nature. In coordination with the presiding juvenile court judge, local court and county participants are invited to shape the agenda and present. Presenters have included judicial officers, social workers, mediators, foster care youth, attorneys, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)s. The purpose of these workshops is to share information on local and national permanency programs. Participants come together at these workshops to learn and strategize about the development, utilization, and strengthening of these programs.

Participating Counties

The counties that have held collaborative workshops include: Fresno, Kern, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara.

Topics Covered

- Roles of Each Participant in Permanency Planning
- Objectives—Permanency Is Everyone’s Job
- Expanding Approaches and Definitions Relating to Permanency
- Relative Assessments
- Initial Hearings—Reasonable Efforts, Services, Visitation
- Case Plan Development
- Finding Relatives and Connections for Youth
- Concurrent Planning
- Engaging Youth in the Decision-Making Process
- Placement Assessments
- Expanding Mediation in Dependency Cases
- Aging Out of Care—Independent Living Programs
- Adoption—Openness and Focus on Older Youth

Upcoming Trainings

Los Angeles County

Two collaborative workshops are scheduled in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Partnership Conference on October 5, 2006: (1) “Promising Practices in Permanency Programs”—an overview of some of the permanency improvement goals in the *Los Angeles System Improvement Plan* and local practices to implement the plan, such as the use of resource families, concurrent planning, and the permanency partners program, as well as other promising practices from around the state and nation; and (2) “Finding Permanency for Teens—Changing the Odds,” which will be conducted with Mr. Pat O’Brien from You Gotta Believe! This is an interactive workshop designed to explore and addresses the crisis faced by teenagers languishing in long-term foster care as well as the issues of teens aging out of foster care without a permanent connection to a caring adult.

Alameda County

The collaborative workshop in Alameda County is scheduled for November 15, 2006. The workshop will cover such promising practices as their innovative program in finding lifelong connections for youth, sponsored by the California Permanency for Youth Project.

JRTA Project—Permanency

Contacts:

Jennifer Walter, Supervising Attorney, jennifer.walter@jud.ca.gov or 415-865-7687
Kelly Beck, Attorney, kelly.beck@jud.ca.gov or 415-865-8011

Additional resources:

Training materials and other permanency resources are available on the Center for Families, Children & the Courts Web site at:

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/programs/description/jrta.htm.

A two-part DVD set produced by the Administrative Office of the Courts, entitled *Permanency With Bob Lewis*, is available upon request.

U.S. Newswire

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National Convening on Youth Permanence Addresses Needs of Older Children and Youth in Foster Care; Sept 14-15

9/14/2006 5:30:00 AM

To: Assignment Desk, Daybook Editor

Contact: Roye Anastasio-Bourke of Casey Family Services, 203-530-8402; Marci Bransdorf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 301-257-7348; Nicole Tidwell of CCMC, 202-715-0385

News Advisory:

Close to 400 child welfare commissioners, legislators, attorneys, judges, researchers, professionals, families, and youth from 41 states, Native American tribal nations, and the District of Columbia will take a close look at the barriers to finding permanent families for youth in foster care. The 2006 National Convening on Youth Permanence is set for September 14- 15, 2006 in Washington, D.C. at the Renaissance Washington Hotel (999 Ninth Street, NW). The conference will look at the serious challenges to finding and maintaining permanent family connections for the more than 255,000 young people who are 11 or older and in foster care.

"Family permanence and strengthening reunification efforts for youth in care and their families is important to us at the Casey Foundation," says Douglas W. Nelson, president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "It reflects our history and commitment to stability and family permanence for all children. In addition, we see the benefits of public/private partnerships in this area and community collaborations that make a difference for the children and youth in our care."

At the National Convening on Thursday, Sept. 14 and Friday, Sept. 15, there will be numerous sessions addressing the needs of older children and youth in foster care:

Thursday, Sept. 14:

9:30 a.m. -- Telling the Story: Youth Perspectives on Permanence - Plenary Session

Panelists: Lauren Frey, Project Manager, the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, Casey Family Services, New Haven, CT; Daniel Knapp, Conference Director and Youth Communication Coordinator, FosterClub, Seaside, OR; Nancy O'Reilly, young adult, Modesto, CA; and Nadege Mardy Breeden, young adult, Norwalk, CT.

10:45 a.m. -- There will be a series of small group sessions. The sessions open to the media are:

- o Leadership to Implement the Vision of Youth Permanence

Moderator: Allen Casad, Massachusetts Division Director, Casey Family Services.

Panelists: Harry Spence, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Social Services; and Mary Gambon, Assistant Commissioner for Adoption and Foster Care Services, Massachusetts Department of Social Services.

o Teaming Strategies: Building Lifelong Family Relationships for Older Children and Youth in Residential Care

Moderator: Isabel Morales, Senior Project Associate, Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, Casey Family Services, New Haven, CT.

Presenters: James Beougher, Director, Maine Bureau of Child and Family Services, Department of Health and Human Services; and Heather Stephenson, Team Leader, Maine Division, Casey Family Services.

o The Impact of Youth Permanence Initiatives on Reducing Racial Disproportionality and Disparities

Moderator: Carlyne Rodriguez, Texas State Strategy Director, Casey Family Programs.

Panelists: Joyce James, Child Protective Services Assistant Commissioner, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services; Debra Emerson, Director of Policy and Programs, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services; and Vickie Coffee-Fletcher, Division Administrator, Family Focus, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Friday, Sept. 15:

8:30 a.m. -- Reflections on Lessons Learned

Raymond L. Torres, Executive Director, Casey Family Services, New Haven, CT

o Reports from the 2006 National Convening on Youth Permanence

Research Roundtable and Policy Briefing

Sania A. Metzger, Director of Policy, Casey Family Services, New Haven, CT; and Ben Kerman, Director of Research, Casey Family Services, New Haven, CT.

9 a.m. -- Telling the Story: Effective Court and Legal Partnerships to Achieve Permanence for Older Children and Youth - Plenary Session

Moderator: Gary Stangler, Executive Director, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.

Panelists: The Honorable William Thorne, Jr., Utah Court of Appeals; Robert Harris, Public Guardian, Cook County Illinois Public Guardian's Office; Elizabeth Fassler, Litigation Supervisor, Center for Family Representation, Inc.; and Jennifer Rodriguez, Legislative and Policy Coordinator, California Youth Connection

10:15 a.m. -- Telling the Story: Working with the Media

Moderated by Judy Woodruff, Special Correspondent, the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer

According to the most recent (2004) federal data on youth in care:

-- Nearly 50 percent (255,364) were age 11 or older;

-- Twenty percent were not living with families;

-- Fifty-eight percent were minorities, with African Americans comprising 34 percent, Hispanics 18 percent, Native Americans 2 percent and Asians 1 percent;

-- Service plans for many called for long-term foster care and emancipation rather than family reunification, guardianship placement, or adoption; and

-- More than 20,000 will be left on their own with no meaningful connection to a family member or caring adult when they reach the age of majority.

More than 25,000 foster youth "age out" of state care or run away every year before authorities can reunite them with their parents, place them permanently with relatives, or secure an adoptive family. These vulnerable youth lack ongoing connections to family members or caring adults. Without a lifelong committed family relationship, these young people are at high risk for negative outcomes including homelessness, unemployment and criminal activity.

Outcomes for youth who have "aged out" of care continue to be poor:

-- In one study, 46 percent had not completed high school; 50 percent were unemployed; and 25 percent had experienced homelessness four years after leaving care.

-- Eighty percent of youths did not earn enough to be fully self-supporting four years after leaving care.

-- In another study, more than 20 percent had been arrested since leaving care and 90 percent were earning less than \$10,000 a year, according to a survey of 19-year-old former foster youth from Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin.

"This Convening is an important opportunity to share ideas and articulate ways to implement new strategies that will change the way this country cares for the more than a half-million children in foster care," said Ray Torres, executive director of Casey Family Services. "Through research and on-the-ground work, we will show that family permanence for older children and youth in foster care is possible, powerful and must become a national priority."

The Annie E. Casey Foundation of Baltimore, MD and its direct-service agency, Casey Family Services of New Haven, CT, longtime innovators in the field of child welfare policy and practice, are lead sponsors for the policy briefing and the National Convening, with support from The Freddie Mac Foundation, The Dave Thomas Foundation For Adoption, Casey Family Programs, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, The Hite Foundation, The Stuart Foundation and 37 other nationally known organizations.

On-site registration is available for the media at the event location, the Renaissance Washington Hotel at 999 Ninth Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

For more information on the policy briefing including agendas and fact sheets, please visit the News and Resources section on <http://www.CaseyFamilyServices.org>.

<http://www.usnewswire.com/>

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C. Other Resources

- Judicial Check Sheets
 - Completion of adoption hearing
 - Completion of adoptive parent(s) homestudy
 - Planning for permanency (all hearings)
 - Identifying connections for youth
 - Planning for permanency: handout for judicial officers
 - Parentage/paternity inquiry
 - Planning for permanency (removal hearings)
- **Comment Form (We Welcome Your Suggestions)**

COMPLETION OF ADOPTION HEARING

(For use at any permanency hearing where adoption is a permanent plan)

FREED FOR ADOPTION																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Relinquishment date (mother) _____▪ Relinquishment date (father) _____▪ Termination of Parental Rights date: _____▪ Date appeal expires: _____ (60 days from entry of order) <small>(Welf. & Inst. Code § 366.26(b)(1) and California Rule of Court, Rule 37(d))</small>																																	
ADOPTIVE HOME IDENTIFIED																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Date home identified: _____▪ Foster/Adoption Home? _____▪ Date child began residing in home: _____▪ Date Adoption Placement Agreement (APA) signed: _____▪ Date 6 months of supervision expires: _____▪ What is the earliest date the Adoption Petition can be filed? _____																																	
HOMESTUDY OF ADOPTIVE PARENT(S)																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Date homestudy began: _____▪ Is this an abbreviated homestudy? _____ (Family Code § 8730)▪ What is outstanding: <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"><thead><tr><th style="text-align: left;">Today's date: _____</th><th style="text-align: left;">To be completed by: _____</th><th style="text-align: left;">Done</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>2. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>3. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>4. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>5. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>6. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>7. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>8. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>9. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>10. _____</td><td>_____</td><td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr></tbody></table>▪ Homestudy completed (date): _____	Today's date: _____	To be completed by: _____	Done	1. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
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ADOPTION PETITION (Family Code, §§ 8704; 8714; Welf. & Inst. Code, § 366.26(e))																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Adoption petition filed on _____▪ Filed in juvenile court? _____▪ Post-adoption contact agreement desired? _____ Filed: _____▪ Filed in other court? _____ Name: _____ Place: _____																																	
COURT REPORT (Family Code, § 8715; Cal. Code of Regs., § 35211)																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Court report to be filed by: _____▪ Date set for final hearing: _____ Place: _____																																	
CHECKLIST FOR FINAL HEARING																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Report filed by Department of Social Services (or other agency) with court<input type="checkbox"/> Court Report of Adoption (VS-44 – birth record info.) filed with court<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing date set for: _____<input type="checkbox"/> Final documents to be prepared by: _____																																	

COMPLETION OF ADOPTIVE PARENT(S) HOMESTUDY

[Cal. Code of Regs., Title 22, Div.2., Part 2, Sub.4, Chapt.3, Sub.5, Art.11, §§ 35180–35211; Family Code, §§ 8604–8607, 8730; 8714.7, Welf. & Inst. Codes, §§ 366.26, 16000–16601]

DESCRIPTION OF ADOPTIVE PARENT HOMESTUDY ITEMS NEEDED (FAM. CODE, § 8715)	Date to be completed by:
FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT WITH EACH APPLICANT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> First face-to-face contact with each applicant (in home interview) <input type="checkbox"/> Second face-to-face contact with each applicant (separately with each applicant) <input type="checkbox"/> Third face-to-face contact with each applicant (joint interview if necessary?) <input type="checkbox"/> Additional interviews if necessary? Why? 	
IDENTIFYING INFORMATION (AGENCY SHALL OBTAIN AT LEAST ALL OF THE FOLLOWING):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying information received (full name, aliases, maiden name, current address and telephone number, date of birth and gender) <input type="checkbox"/> Blood relationship to child, if any <input type="checkbox"/> Race and ethnic background information <input type="checkbox"/> Religion, if any <input type="checkbox"/> Verification of employment or income <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage certificate, if married <input type="checkbox"/> Verification of termination of prior marriages <input type="checkbox"/> Names, date of birth, general information for other people in home and personal or biological relationship to applicant <input type="checkbox"/> Names, dates of birth, and location of minor child of applicant not living in applicant’s home <input type="checkbox"/> Report of medical examination of each applicant (by licensed physician or nurse practitioner) <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute health questionnaire (as determined by social worker) for medical report if both: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant is current caregiver or relative, and Completed questionnaire does not, in social worker’s judgment, require further evaluation or report <input type="checkbox"/> A certificate, for each adult in home, stating each is free from communicable tuberculosis <input type="checkbox"/> Names of three references <input type="checkbox"/> Agency received written references <input type="checkbox"/> Results of screening for criminal record (arrests, convictions, diversion) of applicant and other adults in the home <input type="checkbox"/> Results of screening for FBI criminal record if required by California Code of Regulations § 35184(e) (cf. foster care license requires FBI and DOJ clearance) <input type="checkbox"/> Results of screening for prior referrals for child abuse and neglect <input type="checkbox"/> Authorization for information for additional sources, as necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Authorization for adoption agency to release copy of written assessment to other adoption agencies 	

<p>AGENCY SHALL CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACTORS OF APPLICANT, CHILDREN AND OTHER ADULTS IN HOUSEHOLD</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Social history ❑ Determination of applicant’s commitment and capability to meet BASIC needs of child ❑ Determination of applicant’s commitment and capability to meet SPECIFIC needs of child ❑ Applicant’s understanding of the legal and financial rights and responsibilities in adoption ❑ Applicant’s modification for seeking adoption and ability and willingness to assume permanent responsibility for care, guidance, and protection of child through adoption ❑ Adequacy of housing ❑ Social support system ❑ Financial stability ❑ General characteristics ❑ Preparation or plan of applicant for care of minor in event of death or incapacity of adoptive parent(s) ❑ Ability of applicant to work with the Department of Social Services in support of case plan for dependent child ❑ Whether applicant is willing and able to be a permanency planning family 	
<p>IF RELATIVE, AGENCY SHALL CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Nature of relationship applicant has with birth parent or extended family members ❑ Whether applicant would like to enter into kinship adoption agreement and if so: ❑ What kind of post-adoption contact applicant would like to have with birth parent or other family members? ❑ What training has been given on post-adoption contact? 	
<p>IF ADOPTIVE APPLICANT IS A BIRTH PARENT, THE FOLLOWING FACTOR SHALL ALSO BE CONSIDERED:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>If child was a dependent, whether the conditions which led to the child’s removal from parent still exist</i> 	
<p>AGENCY SHALL IDENTIFY ANY RESOURCES, SERVICES, OR TRAINING NEEDED TO FACILITATE THE ADOPTIVE APPLICANT’S ABILITY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD.</p>	
<p>List resources and services offered:</p>	
<p>ABBREVIATED HOMESTUDY (FAM. CODE, § 8730) UNDER ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Applicant is current caregiver and is licensed or certified foster family home and has cared for the child, under supervision of an adoption or child welfare agency for at least six months ❑ Applicant is an existing relative caregiver, who was assessed under Welfare and Institutions Code, § 361.3, and written documentation of the assessment is available to the adoption agency ❑ Applicant has successfully completed a prior agency, independent, or intercountry adoption in California within the last five years and both conditions exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An approved written assessment as required by § 35180 (agency), § 35081 (independent), or § 35257 (intercountry) and Written assessment is available to the agency completing the current assessment 	

PLANNING FOR PERMANENCY (ALL HEARINGS)

PRIMARY PERMANENT PLAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Return Home <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Guardianship <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent placement with _____, a fit and willing relative <input type="checkbox"/> Placement with _____, and a specific goal of _____. <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Provide the name of the placement and select as a goal one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return home • Adoption • Legal guardianship • Placement with a relative • A less restrictive foster setting or • Independent living with identification of a caring adult to serve as a lifelong connection for the youth

CONCURRENT PERMANENT PLAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Return Home <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Guardianship <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent placement with _____, a fit and willing relative <input type="checkbox"/> Placement with _____, and a specific goal of _____. <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Provide the name of the placement and select as a goal one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return home • Adoption • Legal guardianship • Placement with a relative • A less restrictive foster setting or • Independent living with identification of a caring adult to serve as a lifelong connection for the youth

SERVICES (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 319(d)(2), 366, 366.21(f))	VISITATION (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 362.1, 366)
<p>What issue is each service to address?</p> <p>Is service realistic to overcome the specific issue?</p> <p>Do services address safety concerns?</p> <p>Does each service address primary concerns?</p> <p>Does each service address secondary concerns?</p> <p>Do services promote primary plan?</p> <p>Do services promote the concurrent plan?</p> <p>Do we need to change any of the services?</p> <p>Indication of additional services necessary?</p> <p>Indication of removing services?</p>	<p>How often?</p> <p>Visitation adequate to meet FR deadline?</p> <p>Who is to participate in visitation?</p> <p>Where will visits take place?</p> <p>Who will supervise visitation?</p> <p>Problem with transportation?</p> <p>When is first visit?</p> <p>Are siblings visiting separate? Why?</p>

IDENTIFYING CONNECTIONS FOR YOUTH

PARENTAGE	Name of Person	Located	Contacted	Interviewed	Placement	If no placement provide reason	Does child wish to Maintain contact?
Mother							
Presumed Father							
Alleged Father(s)							
Step-parent							
Guardian							
Other							
MATERNAL RELATIVES							
Grandmother							
Grandfather							
Aunt(s)							
Uncle(s)							
Siblings							
Extended Family Member							
PATERNAL RELATIVES							
Grandmother							
Grandfather							
Aunt(s)							
Uncle(s)							
Siblings							
Extended Family Member							
RELATIONSHIPS							
Godparent							
Neighbor							
Neighbor							
Prior Foster Parent							
Teacher							
Teacher							
Coach							
Friend's Parents							
Other							

PLANNING FOR PERMANENCY

HANDOUT FOR JUDICIAL OFFICERS

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Judicial Officer's Role in Permanency
 - 1. Leadership
 - 2. Timely Justice
 - 3. Effective and Efficient Proceedings
- B. Objectives for This Training
- C. Expanding Approaches and Definitions Relating to Permanency
 - 1. Permanence
 - 2. Concurrent Planning
 - 3. Personal Connections
 - 4. Identified Placement With a Specific Goal
 - 5. Termination of Parental Rights
 - 6. Youth-Driven Decision Making

II. FIRST OPPORTUNITIES TO CONSIDER PERMANENT PLAN AND CONCURRENT PERMANENT PLAN

- A. Initial Hearings
 - 1. Findings
 - 2. Services
 - 3. Connections – Parentage
 - 4. Visitation
 - 5. Timelines
- B. Engaging Youth and Family
- C. First Opportunity to Exit the System

III. Concurrent Planning

- A. Under 3
- B. 4–10/12 Latent Youth
- C. Older Youth

IV. ENGAGING YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

- A. Contact With Social Worker, Attorney, CASA, Service Providers
- B. Opportunity to be Heard
- C. Education/Extracurricular Activities
- D. Meaningful Relationships
- E. Independent Living Skills

V. PERMANENCY HEARINGS

- A. Identify Permanent Plan
- B. Timelines/Notice
- C. Termination of Parental Rights/No Termination of Parental Rights
- D. Adoption/Homestudy Process
- E. Kinship Placements
- F. Identified Placement With Specific Goal

VI. POSTPERMANENCY HEARINGS

- A. Revisit Permanent Plan
- B. Meaningful Relationships
- C. Identified Placement With Specific Goal (Concurrent Plan)
- D. Adoption Finalization
- E. Revisit Family Reunification

VII. OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS IN PERMANENCY

- A. Private Agencies
- B. Dependency Court Mediation
- C. Family Conferencing
- D. Open Adoption
- E. Guardianship With Visitation/Contact
- F. Older Youth
- G. Adoption Month
- H. Permanency Partners Project [P3]

PARENTAGE/PATERNITY INQUIRY

(Welfare and Institutions Code §316.2; Cal. Rules of Court Rule 1413)

PRESUMED FATHER STATUS – Marriage or Birth Certificate

- Mother married and living with husband (Family Code §§ 7540,7611)
- Name of husband: _____ *or*
- Name of father on birth certificate and child born after 1/1/95 (Family Code §§ 7570, 7611)
- Name of child: _____ Date of birth: _____
- Order copy of birth certificate
- Copy of birth certificate in court file:

PRESUMED FATHER STATUS – Voir Dire of Parent(s) and Others

- Father and mother are or have been married and child born during the marriage; (or within 300 days after marriage terminated) (Family Code § 7611(a)); *or*
- Before birth of child, father and mother attempted to marry (and attempted marriage is or could be declared invalid), and each of the following are true:
 1. If terminated by court order (death, invalidity, annulment, divorce), child born during attempted marriage or within 300 days after its termination; and
 2. If marriage invalid without court order, child born within 300 days after termination of cohabitation. (Family Code § 7611(b)); *or*
- After child's birth father and mother have married or attempted to marry, though marriage is or could be Declared invalid and either (Family Code § 7611(c)):
 1. With his consent, father is named on birth certificate; or
 2. He is obligated to support child under written voluntary promise or court order

LEGAL FATHER STATUS

- Another court finding of paternity Name of Court: _____
- Another court ordered child support Name of Court: _____
- Paternity blood test conducted Results: _____
- Copy of any of above to court file

ALLEGED FATHER – Man Identified and Present in Court (Voir Dire)

- Name of father: _____
- Asked presumed father questions above
- No presumed father status found
- Court orders blood test
- Asked legal father status questions above
- No legal father status found

ALLEGED FATHER – Man Not Present in Court - Information Sought to Identify and Locate (Voir Dire)

- Mother names father in court Name provided: _____
- Date of his birth: _____ Place of birth: _____
- Present address or whereabouts: _____
- Employer: _____ Type of employment: _____
- School attending: _____
- Armed forces Yes No ; Name of Branch: _____ Place where stationed: _____
- Where did you meet father: _____ Does he know of pregnancy? Yes No
- Names of friends or relatives: _____
- Did you tell him that he is the child's father?
- Has he provided money or items to help with pregnancy or support?

COURT ORDERED INQUIRIES

- Paternity Inquiry – JV-500 ordered to child support division
- Results of inquiry _____
- Blood test ordered Results: _____

PLANNING FOR PERMANENCY – (REMOVAL HEARINGS)

Part One

CAN CHILD BE RETURNED HOME IF COURT ORDERS SERVICES

(Welf. and Inst., Code §§ 306(b)(1)(2)(3), 306.5, 309(a), California Rules of Court, Rule 1445(b))

- Before taking child into custody, social worker shall consider whether child can remain safely at home
 - ❑ Are there reasonable services available, which would eliminate need for removal?
 - ❑ Will a referral to public assistance eliminate need for temporary custody?
 - ❑ Can non-offending caregiver provide for and protect the child?
- Social worker shall place the child with siblings or half-siblings also detained, if practical and appropriate (document).

REASONABLE EFFORTS DETERMINATION (Welf. and Inst., Code § 319(d)(a); Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 1446(b)(c))

- Whether reasonable efforts were made to prevent or eliminate the removal from his or her home, **AND**
- Whether there are available services that would prevent the need for further detention, such as:
 - ❑ case management
 - ❑ counseling
 - ❑ emergency shelter care
 - ❑ emergency in-home caretakers
 - ❑ out-of-home respite care
 - ❑ teaching and demonstrating homemakers
 - ❑ parenting training
 - ❑ transportation
 - ❑ any other child welfare services
 - ❑ public assistance services

DETENTION ALTERNATIVES (Welf. and Inst., Code § 319(f); Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 1446(e))

- Approved home of relative
- Emergency shelter
- Another suitable licensed home/facility
- A place exempt from licensure if specifically designated by the court, or
- Approved home of a non-relative extended family member (Welf. and Inst., Code § 362.7)
 - ❑ Court must consider social worker recommendation, based on the approval of relative or non-relative home, including results of criminal records or prior reports of abuse

Administrative Office of the Courts,
Center for Families, Children & the Courts

Court Adoption and Permanency Month Guide

We Welcome Your Comments and Suggestions

Comments can be submitted by either faxing or e-mailing the form below, or by calling the Center for Families, Children & the Courts:

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You can obtain more information and find a copy of the Guide on our Web site:
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2006 brought many changes and a redesign of the guide. Have you ever received a Court Adoption and Permanency Month Guide in the past? Did you use it in planning any events or as a resource tool for finding permanent connections for youth?

The guide has been reorganized to highlight specific themes and programs and to provide an easy reference for each local court system. Are there any new changes to the design that you would find more helpful?

Continued

Permanency continues to be redefined and understood in a new way. Each section in the guide focuses on different ways in which families, the courts, practitioners, and the children themselves may work together to achieve permanency. Are there any other resources you would like added? Any new programs?

Is there anything you feel we could improve about the guide? Are there any materials for which there is more current information available to replace an outdated resource?

How can we involve more local courts, public and private agencies, CASA, as well as other service providers with this guide, and also for more ideas and resources?

Any other comments or suggestions?

Name: _____ **Title:** _____

Court/Organization: _____

Phone: _____ **Fax:** _____ **E-mail:** _____

Thank You!