



## Permanency Forum

Who wouldn't want a family?

Berisha Black, Analyst  
Casey Family Programs  
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## CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS 2020 VISION

To safely reduce  
the number of  
children in foster  
care by 50% by  
the year 2020.



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## Let's Look at Some Data

A national snapshot:

2008: 500,000 children in care

2011: 424,000 children in care

Michigan State 14,995 children in care

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## Youth Aging Out of Foster Care Where are they?

- More than 28,000 do “emancipate” each year
- More then 20% become homeless from day one
- Less likely to employed or health insurance
- Higher rate of victims of crime, or criminal activity – over 270,000 American prisoners were once in foster care

From: AFCARS Data, and studies by Courtney, Walczyn, Hilop, Casey

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## Educational Outcomes

- One study (Courtney) found that 37% had not finished high school nor a GED
- Used GED to complete education at 6 times the rate of general population (NW Alumni Study, Casey Family Programs)
- Experienced 7 or more school changes
- Only 3% completed a bachelors degree

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## Permanence:

What is Permanency? –

When you think of your own family what are some things that come to mind?

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## Permanence: What is it? A Professional Perspective

“The highest level of physical, legal and emotional safety and security that can be attained for each individual child or youth within the context of a family relationship.”

Lauren Frey & 1<sup>st</sup> Stuart Permanency Convening

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## WHAT is Permanence? A Youth Perspective

- PERMANENCE is **NOT** a place ~
- Permanency is a state of mind, *not a placement*;
- That there is someone *in the middle of the night* who will answer your *collect* phone call
- Or **miss you** when you don't show up
- “Permanence, I never had it, **When Can I Get it?**”

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## Permanence: What is it? My working definition

- A parent or two – A parenting relationship with at least one adult
- Intent – a mutual understanding that this relationship is intended to last forever
- Unconditional commitment by the adult(s)
- Participation of all parties in the relationship
- Lifelong and mutual support and involvement
- Intimacy & Belonging – “My son”, “my mom”
- Status How the world views your relationships

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**Now Let's Think About Our State's Children Who Attain Permanency VS. those who don't**

- Demographics?
- Other youth-related characteristics?
- Placement or familial factors?
- What is the most important factor that determines whether a youth attains permanency?
- Why is this good news?

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**We Can, and We Must, Do Better**



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**Permanence is . . .**

- **PERMANENCE IS FOR NOW** –  
What does permanence mean for young people preparing to leave care?
- **PERMANENCE IS FOR THE FUTURE** –  
What might it mean in 5,10 or 20 years?
- **PERMANENCE IS FOR ALL YOUTH** –  
Including those who will need adult residential care, or with a permanency plan of Emancipation
- **PERMANENCE CAN BE CREATED**

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## Permanence: WHO NEEDS IT? Digital Stories

- Berisha
- Johnny
- Danielle

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## Talking With Young People

- Think about the time & place
- Talk about goals, hopes & dreams
- Present thoughts and ideas to consider in their media
- Offer multiple venues for self expression (writing, music, art, sports)
- Create opportunities for youth to interact with peers
- Help the youth understand the options and process – every step of the way
- Don't make assumptions
- Ask questions
- Listen

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## Many Doors to Permanency

- Youth are **Reunified** safely
- Youth are **Adopted**
- Youth **permanently** reside with **Legal guardians**
- Youth are connected to **Kinship**  
(or customary adoption networks esp. in Native American families)

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Identifying Resources:  
**FAMILY FINDING**

- ✓ **Accurint** (LexisNexis online database)
- ✓ **Free or low cost internet people finders**
- ✓ **High school yearbooks**
- ✓ **Church records**
- ✓ **Family ancestry chart**
- ✓ **Facebook- My Space**
- ✓ **Child support registry**

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**Engaging Fathers:**  
Fathers say “I am not involved because. . .”

- **The system is biased against men - stereotypes of “deadbeat dad”**
- System only cares about financial involvement (child support)
- **Lack of information, notice about DHR involvement, meetings, court hearings**
- *I want no contact with Mom*
- **I do not believe the child is mine**
- *I fear incarceration for nonsupport*
- **I want no contact with her current partner**
- *I did not know about this situation*

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One researcher found that “caseworkers anticipated that their ‘investment’ in working with birthmothers will yield a better ‘return’ than working with fathers.”

**How do you react to this statement?**

**Helping Dads Negotiate the System**

- Help him understand roles – yours, his and other key people
- Get his perspective and show an interest in his point-of-view (even if you don’t agree)
- Use a strengths based approach
- Report his information accurately
- Respect his right to disagree
- Include his extended family as resource
- Help him identify his needs and resources
- Keep him informed about the process

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### **Sibling Experience for Children in Foster Care**

- There are 409,000 children in foster care in the US
- 55-69% have siblings, 30% have 4 or more siblings
- 61% of children with siblings are placed with at least one sibling; **but less than half with all their siblings**

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### **Don't Believe These Myths**

The "parentified child" should be separated from younger siblings in order to give him/her a chance to be a child

Brothers and sisters should be separated to prevent sibling rivalry.

A child with special needs should be placed separately from siblings in order to receive more focused attention

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### **When Siblings Are Separated**

Write sibling visitation into case plans and provide supports families need to make those visits happen

Monthly visits for an hour are not sufficient

Educate families about importance of sibling bonds and their roles in maintaining them

When one or some of a sibling group are adopted, pursue open adoption

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## Overview of the Permanency Roundtable Process

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### Georgia PRT Outcomes Data

<b>Total # of children in permanency roundtables</b>	<b>3700</b>
<b>Total Legal Permanencies</b>	<b>2075 (56%)</b>
• 850 Adoptions	41%
• 627 Reunifications	30%
• 336 Relative Guardianships	16%
• 262 Non Relative Guardianships	12%
<b>Rates of Children &amp; Youth over the last 3 years</b>	
• Ages 0-6	84%
• Ages 7-12	77%
• Ages 13-18	36%

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### WHAT IS A PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLE?

A professional case consultation that is:

- structured
- in-depth
- non-blaming AND
- relentless

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## ROUNDTABLE GOALS

**Expedite legal permanency for the child**  
**Stimulate thinking and learning about ways to accelerate permanency**  
**Identify and address systemic barriers to expedited permanency**

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## ROUNDTABLE TEAM MEMBERS

- ❖ **Facilitator**
- ❖ **Permanency Consultants – internal and external**
- ❖ **Transcriber**
- ❖ **Caseworkers**
- ❖ **Supervisors**
- ❖ **Others**

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## ROUNDTABLE PHASES

- I. Welcome and overview**
- II. Present the case**
- III. Clarify and explore**
- IV. Brainstorm**
- V. Create permanency action plan**
- VI. Debrief roundtable process**

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## 5 KEY QUESTIONS

(See Handout)

- ❖ *What will it take?*
- ❖ *What can we try again that has been tried before?*
- ❖ *What can we do differently?*
- ❖ *What can we do concurrently?*
- ❖ *How can we engage the youth in developing & implementing the plan?*

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## Summary of Key Points

- **No child should ever grow up in foster care** ~ Permanency is vital for healthy development and well-being in all children and youth.
- **Permanency is possible and achievable** for all children and youth.
- **Meaningful, effective engagement** of the youth, parents, caregivers and other significant people is the **key to successful permanency outcomes**.
- **Using a team approach improves** engagement opportunities and permanency **outcomes**
- **There are skills, strategies and specific casework behaviors** that, when consistently applied, can enhance practice and improve outcomes.

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**If we understand the importance of permanence – why can't we achieve it for all of our children and youth?**

**“FAMILIESARENOWHERE”**

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## Permanency Forum- *Case Scenarios*

Your group is assigned one of the cases below to discuss. Consider the following questions:

- What concerns do you have?
- What additional information do you need?
- Who should be included in the meeting?
- What might permanency look like for this youth?
- How can you be an advocate for this youth and work to make permanence happen?

1. **Billy-** is a developmentally delayed 17 year old currently living in a foster home. He has been in that home for the past 2 years. His foster parent has reservations about adoption because he is concerned about financially being able to care for him long term. Billy has contact with his 21 year old sibling. His birth father is deceased and his birth mother's whereabouts are unknown.
2. **MARISA-** was 11 years old when she came to Arkansas from Puerto Rico when she was four and lived with her grandmother. Her mother lived in New Jersey but was not involved in her care. At age 5 her grandmother signed her over to foster care and returned to Puerto Rico. Marisa has speech delays and lives in a group home. There is no identified permanency resource for Marisa.
3. **KEVIN -** is 16 year old youth currently in a residential treatment center due to sexually abusing his 6 year old sister. While in treatment, Kevin admits to perpetrating on several other children. He is nearing the end of his treatment. Kevin has not had contact with birth family since being placed in treatment. There is no permanency plan for Kevin.
4. **MAYA -** is 16 years old. She is in residential treatment for mental health and anger issues. Maya came into care at age 5. Parental rights were terminated and she was placed for adoption with her sister. There was sexual acting out between the siblings and Maya was returned to foster care at age 7. The adoptive parents terminated their parental rights and she has had no contact with them. Maya has been in treatment for the past 5 years. She has no contact with any family members and no plan for permanency.
5. **RACHELLE-** is a 13 year old African American female and has been in care for 9 years. She is in special education, has behavior challenges, and has a therapist who does not believe she should move from the residential facility. She was recently seen by a relative in another state who wishes to care for her. There are differences in home study requirements and paternal TPR requirements in this state.
6. **APRIL & PJ-** April is 16 year old Caucasian female with a 6 month old baby PJ. April is developmentally delayed. There are been some domestic violence concerns with PJ's father who is 17. In care for 12 years she has continued some contact with her birth family over time. Current foster family wants to adopt PJ but not April. April wants to live independently with her baby.
7. **JORDAN-** is 14 years old and has been in care for 2 years. He was originally removed due to abuse- he was beaten by his mother's boyfriend, and lost partial vision in one eye. His mother is no longer with this boyfriend. She has just started her first job at the age of 29. Returning to his mother's home will involve changing schools and Jordan is angry about that so he is acting out. Jordan is on 6 different psychotropic meds to control his behavior.

## Permanency Forum- *Case Scenarios*

8. **LAWRENCE-** is 15 years old African American male that has unruly behavior which has caused him to be placed in residential treatment center. In the absence of a legal guardian, he is a very angry young man. The system can't locate his birth mother and his birth father is in prison.
9. **JAMES & JASMINE- are** two siblings with significant developmental delays James 14 & Jasmine 12. They are being considered for adoption by the family who adopted their younger sibling's ages 6 & 9. The children were removed as a result of neglect due to their mother's substance abuse addiction.
10. **TIFFANY-** is now 15 and a couple of years ago she came home and found her mother dead from an asthma/heart attack. She had lived from cars to shelters with her mother and younger brother Sam (9). After being in placement for a couple of years with her brother, their father, whom they had not developed a relationship with, was located and has been visiting the kids for about 6 months. Like her mother Tiffany also has asthma. They will move in with her father, his wife and two preschool children, one of whom is autistic.