

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS)

Child maltreatment is a serious problem that has grave and costly consequences for the child, his or her family and the community at-large. A child who has experienced abuse and neglect is more likely to have social, emotional and physical health problems and perform poorly in school.

Indicator

Child Abuse and Neglect Reports

Total reported incidents of suspected child abuse and neglect through the ChildLine Registry. (Number and rate per 1,000 children age 0-17)

State				
2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
26,944	29,273	40,590	44,359	47,485
9.6	10.5	14.5	15.9	17.0

% Change 2013 to 2017
76.2%

Child Abuse and Neglect Substantiations

Founded or indicated reports of child abuse and/or neglect.

12.7%	11.4%	10.4%	10.4%	10.2%
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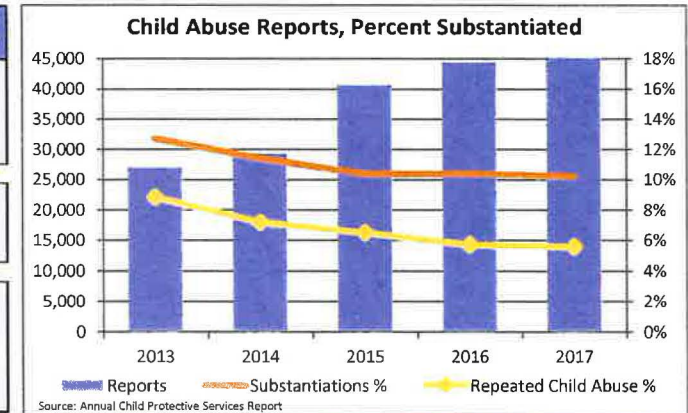
-19.9%

Repeated Child Abuse and Neglect

Children with another substantiated incident of abuse and/or neglect following the first reported incident. (Data may be overstated.)

8.8%	7.2%	6.5%	5.7%	5.6%
1 in 11	1 in 14	1 in 15	1 in 18	1 in 18

-36.9%



GENERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICES (GPS)

Reports not alleging abuse of a child are categorized as general protective services (GPS) reports. Addressing concerns related to child safety and well-being before allegations of child abuse or severe neglect are made enables children to remain safely in their own homes while services are provided to the family to mitigate the risk of potential maltreatment.

Indicator

GPS Reports

Total reported concerns of general neglect, not alleging child abuse.

State				
2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
-	-	131,953	151,087	163,852

% Change 2013 to 2017
-

Valid GPS Reports

Reports in which the allegations were found to have merit. Includes reports accepted for in-home services and reports referred out to community agencies for services.

-	-	18.4%	20.9%	22.8%
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Children with Valid Allegations

Number of children with a valid GPS allegation by valid report. Children may be counted more than once if more than one report was found to have merit.

-	-	32,364	43,702	53,319
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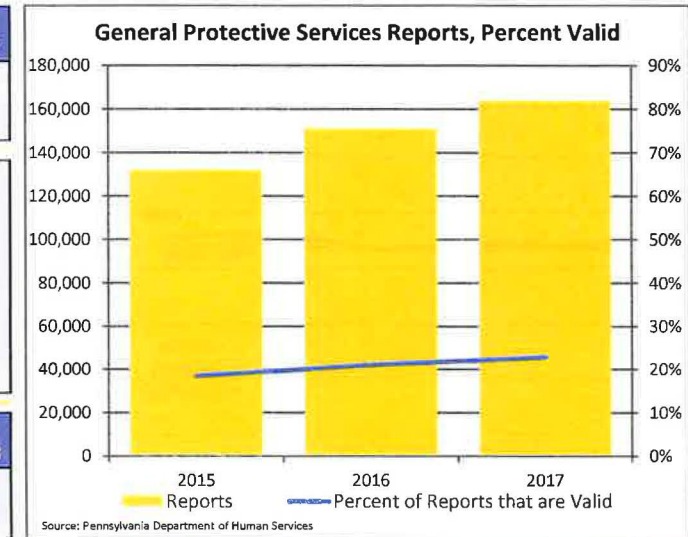
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Unduplicated Number of Children Served

Children who received in-home services along with parents to address concerns related to child safety and well-being.

State				
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
167,582	181,371	190,413	186,855	194,761

% Change 2014 to 2018
16.2%



Statewide Findings

- Child abuse referrals are the highest recorded to date.
- General Protective Service referrals continue to steadily increase, with the rate of substantiation also increasing.
- The need for in-home services to allow children to remain safely at home continues to rise, with over 27,000 more children and their families being served.

FOSTER CARE - SERVED

Foster care is meant to be a temporary intervention to assure the safety and well-being of a child. A child who spends long periods in foster care is more likely than other children to drop out of school, have mental health challenges, and experience unemployment and/or homeless as an adult. The following shows the past five years of data regarding children served in foster care during each federal fiscal year.

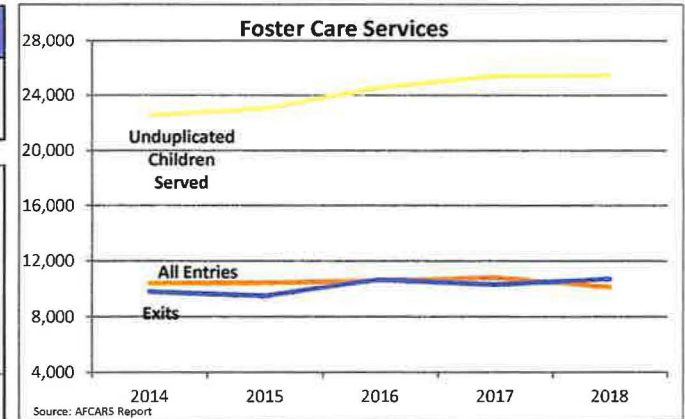
Indicator

Unduplicated Number of Children Served

All Children in Foster Care During the Year
(Rate per 1,000 children age 0-20)

State					% Change 2014 to 2018
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
22,510	22,980	24,543	25,381	25,441	13.0%
6.7	6.8	7.3	7.5	7.5	

% Change 2014 to 2018
13.0%



By Age

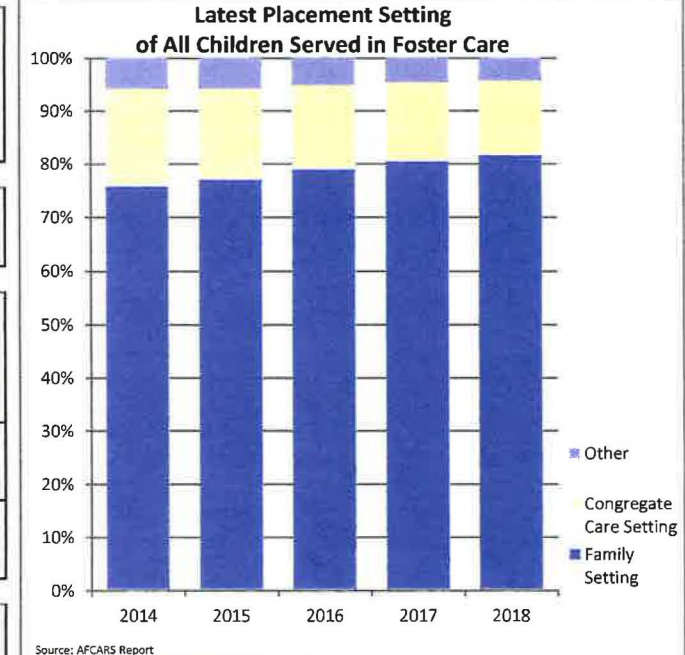
Age Group	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2014 to 2018
0-2	19.4%	19.9%	20.2%	20.3%	20.2%	3.7%
3-5	16.8%	17.1%	17.0%	17.4%	17.9%	6.6%
6-8	12.3%	12.9%	13.0%	13.3%	13.4%	9.1%
9-11	9.5%	10.0%	11.0%	11.4%	11.8%	24.6%
12-14	10.9%	11.4%	11.2%	11.6%	11.8%	7.6%
15-17	21.4%	20.4%	19.6%	18.6%	18.7%	-12.4%
18-20	9.8%	8.3%	7.9%	7.4%	6.3%	-35.2%
Infants (age 0-1)	12.5%	12.8%	12.8%	12.7%	12.7%	1.7%
Youth (age 13+)	38.9%	36.7%	35.5%	34.0%	33.1%	-15.0%

% Change 2014 to 2018
3.7%
6.6%
9.1%
24.6%
7.6%
-12.4%
-35.2%
1.7%
-15.0%

By Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2014 to 2018
Non-Hispanic White	42.3%	40.9%	42.5%	42.9%	43.7%	3.4%
Non-Hispanic Black or African American	35.2%	34.6%	35.3%	34.9%	33.9%	-3.7%
Non-Hispanic Other Race	4.4%	5.9%	3.3%	2.9%	2.3%	-47.3%
Non-Hispanic Two or More Races	4.9%	5.3%	5.4%	6.2%	7.1%	42.6%
Hispanic or Latino	13.1%	13.4%	13.4%	13.2%	13.0%	-1.2%

% Change 2014 to 2018
3.4%
-3.7%
-47.3%
42.6%
-1.2%



By Gender

Gender	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2014 to 2018
Male	50.8%	51.0%	51.2%	51.0%	50.8%	0.1%
Female	49.2%	49.0%	48.8%	49.0%	49.2%	-0.1%

% Change 2014 to 2018
0.1%
-0.1%

By Latest Placement Setting

Placement Setting	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2014 to 2018
Family Setting	75.8%	77.1%	79.0%	80.5%	81.6%	7.6%
Pre-adoptive Home	3.5%	3.1%	4.5%	4.0%	4.5%	28.4%
Foster Family Home – Relative	29.6%	31.5%	34.1%	36.4%	37.1%	25.0%
Foster Family Home – Non-Relative	42.7%	42.5%	40.5%	40.1%	40.1%	-6.2%
Congregate Care Setting	18.3%	17.1%	15.8%	14.9%	14.0%	-23.5%
Group Home	11.6%	10.5%	9.1%	8.8%	8.5%	-26.9%
Institution	6.8%	6.6%	6.8%	6.1%	5.6%	-17.7%
Supervised Independent Living	1.9%	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	-17.2%
Runaway	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	18.3%
Trial Home Visit	2.8%	2.9%	2.2%	1.7%	1.4%	-49.5%

% Change 2014 to 2018
7.6%
28.4%
25.0%
-6.2%
-23.5%
-26.9%
-17.7%
-17.2%
18.3%
-49.5%

Children Entering Foster Care

All Entries into Foster Care During the Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2014 to 2018
	10,364	10,387	10,567	10,781	10,095	-2.6%

% Change 2014 to 2018
-2.6%

Statewide Findings

- Transition Aged Youth make up one-third of the foster care population.
- Efforts to increase placement in family-based settings continues to increase; however, almost half of those youth are placed in non-relative foster homes.
- Congregate care placement rates are the lowest in five years.

FOSTER CARE - FIRST TIME ENTRIES

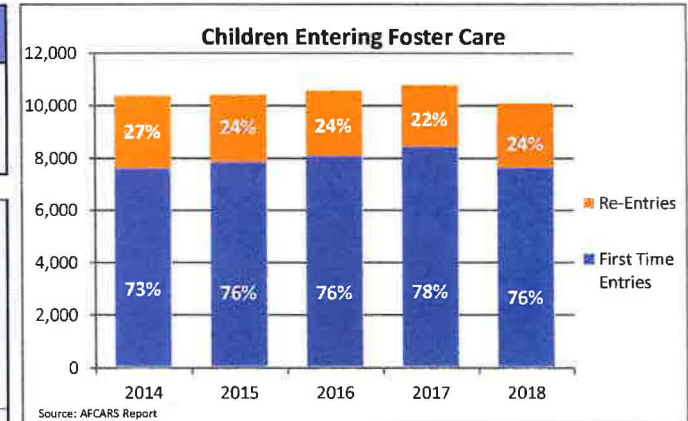
Data on first time entries provides information on children who have just begun their foster care experience during the past federal fiscal year. How the child welfare system is serving them may say something about current system practice and decision making.

Indicator

Children Entering for the First Time

	State				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
First Time Entries During the Year	7,592	7,843	8,082	8,438	7,626
(Rate per 1,000 children age 0-20)	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.3
First Time Entries as Percent of All Entries	73.3%	75.5%	76.5%	78.3%	75.5%

% Change 2014 to 2018
0.4%
3.1%



By Age

Age Group	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
0-2	32.7%	32.7%	33.3%	33.2%	34.4%
3-5	15.7%	14.6%	14.7%	15.3%	15.4%
6-8	11.5%	11.9%	12.5%	11.9%	11.5%
9-11	9.2%	9.8%	9.6%	10.1%	10.3%
12-14	12.7%	13.4%	12.6%	13.1%	12.8%
15-17	18.0%	17.4%	17.2%	16.3%	15.6%
18-20	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Infants (age 0-1)	26.3%	26.2%	26.3%	26.5%	28.0%
Youth (age 13+)	27.6%	27.5%	26.6%	26.0%	24.7%

5.4%
-1.9%
-0.4%
12.5%
0.2%
-13.7%
-90.0%
6.6%
-10.6%

By Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Non-Hispanic White	46.9%	42.7%	49.4%	47.6%	48.3%
Non-Hispanic Black or African American	29.2%	29.1%	28.6%	29.7%	29.3%
Non-Hispanic Other Race	5.1%	8.7%	4.1%	3.4%	2.7%
Non-Hispanic Two or More Races	4.9%	5.6%	5.4%	6.3%	7.7%
Hispanic or Latino	13.9%	13.4%	12.6%	13.0%	12.0%

3.1%
0.1%
-47.7%
57.2%
-13.4%

By Gender

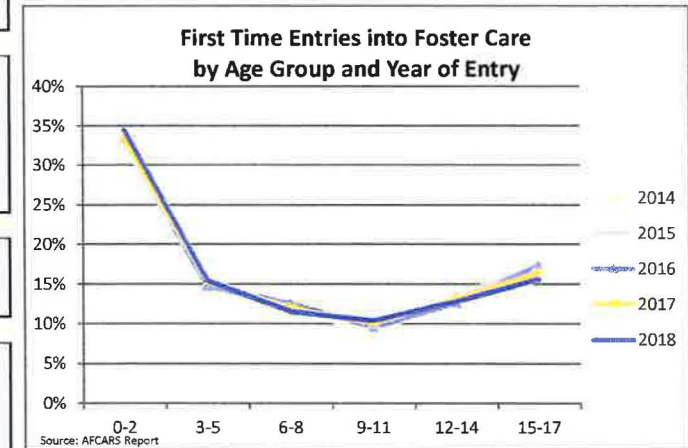
Gender	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Male	51.0%	50.8%	50.8%	51.0%	50.7%
Female	49.0%	49.2%	49.2%	49.0%	49.3%

-0.6%
0.6%

By First Placement Setting

Placement Setting	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Family Setting	80.7%	80.9%	82.3%	83.6%	83.8%
Pre-adoptive Home	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Foster Family Home – Relative	33.1%	33.6%	37.5%	39.1%	39.9%
Foster Family Home – Non-Relative	47.5%	47.2%	44.6%	44.2%	43.7%
Congregate Care Setting	17.5%	17.0%	15.9%	15.0%	14.3%
Group Home	12.1%	10.7%	9.7%	9.1%	9.4%
Institution	5.4%	6.3%	6.2%	5.9%	4.9%
Supervised Independent Living	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Runaway	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.7%
Trial Home Visit	1.2%	1.5%	1.0%	0.8%	1.1%

3.7%
-7.7%
20.5%
-7.9%
-18.4%
-22.4%
-9.5%
7.4%
53.8%
-2.7%



Statewide Findings

- In 2018, there was a significant decline in children entering foster care for the first time.
- First time entries often result in the child being placed in a family-based setting; however, more than half of those youth are placed in a non-relative family home.
- First time placement into a congregate care setting is the lowest it has been in five years.

FOSTER CARE - RE-ENTRIES

Data on re-entries provides information on children who come back into foster care because of new or continuing challenges at home. Some children experience numerous foster care episodes or cycle in and out of the system. Others can experience large spans of time between foster care episodes, which is why the age of children who re-enter is typically older.

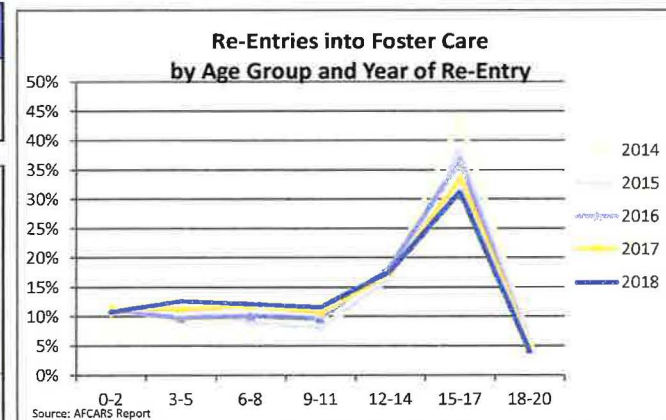
Indicator

Children Re-Entering Foster Care

Re-Entries During the Year
Re-Entries as Percent of All Entries

State				
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
2,772	2,544	2,485	2,343	2,469
26.7%	24.5%	23.5%	21.7%	24.5%

% Change 2014 to 2018
-10.9%
-8.6%



By Age

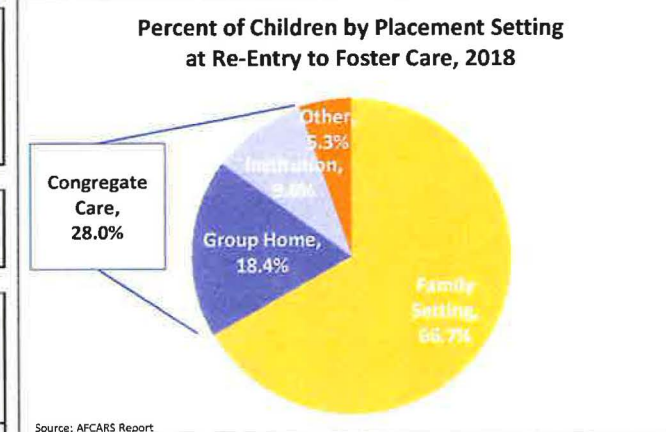
Age Group	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
0-2	8.2%	10.8%	11.2%	11.4%	10.8%
3-5	9.2%	11.4%	9.7%	11.1%	12.6%
6-8	8.8%	9.0%	10.1%	11.7%	12.1%
9-11	7.5%	7.9%	9.6%	10.6%	11.5%
12-14	17.1%	16.5%	18.5%	17.2%	17.7%
15-17	43.7%	38.2%	36.4%	33.4%	31.2%
18-20	5.7%	6.3%	4.5%	4.7%	4.2%
Infants (age 0-1)	5.2%	6.5%	7.4%	6.6%	6.4%
Youth (age 13+)	63.5%	57.9%	55.3%	51.1%	48.6%

% Change 2014 to 2018
32.1%
37.0%
38.1%
53.3%
3.3%
-28.5%
-26.3%
23.2%
-23.4%

By Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Non-Hispanic White	39.0%	35.5%	41.9%	38.6%	39.6%
Non-Hispanic Black or African American	47.2%	41.4%	42.5%	37.4%	40.5%
Non-Hispanic Other Race	4.5%	8.0%	3.3%	1.7%	1.8%
Non-Hispanic Two or More Races	5.0%	5.0%	6.1%	6.0%	7.1%
Hispanic or Latino	13.3%	12.5%	12.3%	11.3%	11.1%

% Change 2014 to 2018
1.6%
-14.2%
-60.6%
43.1%
-17.0%



By Gender

Gender	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Male	50.6%	50.5%	50.3%	49.6%	49.1%
Female	49.4%	49.5%	49.7%	50.4%	50.9%

% Change 2014 to 2018
-3.0%
3.1%

By Placement Setting at Re-Entry

Placement Setting	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Family Setting	59.0%	58.9%	65.0%	60.3%	66.7%
Pre-adoptive Home	0.2%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%
Foster Family Home – Relative	22.2%	24.7%	27.8%	29.0%	28.3%
Foster Family Home – Non-Relative	36.6%	33.6%	36.5%	30.8%	37.9%
Congregate Care Setting	44.7%	37.7%	35.9%	29.4%	28.0%
Group Home	27.2%	22.6%	20.3%	18.8%	18.4%
Institution	17.5%	15.0%	15.6%	10.7%	9.6%
Supervised Independent Living	1.8%	1.8%	1.3%	1.7%	1.8%
Runaway	3.6%	2.4%	2.6%	2.4%	2.7%
Trial Home Visit	0.8%	0.9%	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%

% Change 2014 to 2018
13.0%
85.3%
27.8%
3.6%
-37.3%
-32.6%
-44.8%
1.1%
-25.6%
-3.7%

Statewide Findings

- There was a steady decline in children re-entering care until 2018, which is now at the same proportion as 2015.
- Nearly half of the children re-entering foster care are Transition Age Youth.
- Unlike first time entries, youth re-entering care are less likely to be placed in a family-based setting.

FOSTER CARE - GOALS

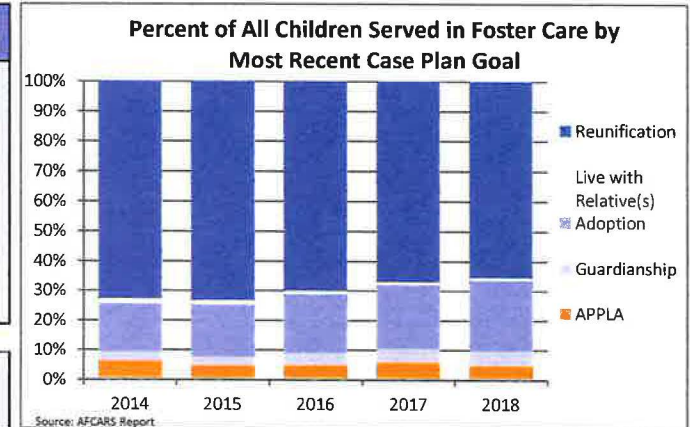
All children in foster care have a court-ordered permanency goal, which directs the efforts of the child welfare agency toward a certain family outcome for each child. In addition to the court-ordered 'primary' goal, a 'concurrent' goal is put in place to ensure permanency is achieved if for some reason the primary goal cannot be met. This data provides information on the most recent primary goal for every child served in foster care during the federal fiscal year.

Indicator

Percent of Children by Case Plan Goal

Indicator	State				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Family-Based Permanency Goals	93.6%	95.2%	95.0%	94.0%	95.1%
Reunify With Parent(s) or Principal Caretaker(s)	72.6%	73.1%	69.8%	66.7%	65.3%
Adoption	16.1%	17.4%	19.5%	21.2%	23.6%
Guardianship	3.1%	3.0%	4.3%	4.8%	5.1%
Live with Relative(s)	1.8%	1.7%	1.5%	1.3%	1.2%
Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)	6.4%	4.8%	5.0%	6.0%	4.9%
Long Term Foster Care	1.8%	1.2%	1.0%	0.7%	0.6%
Emancipation	4.6%	3.6%	4.0%	5.3%	4.3%

% Change 2014 to 2018
1.7%
-10.1%
46.8%
65.6%
-33.0%
-24.1%
-69.1%
-6.7%



APPLA By Age as % of Age Group Served

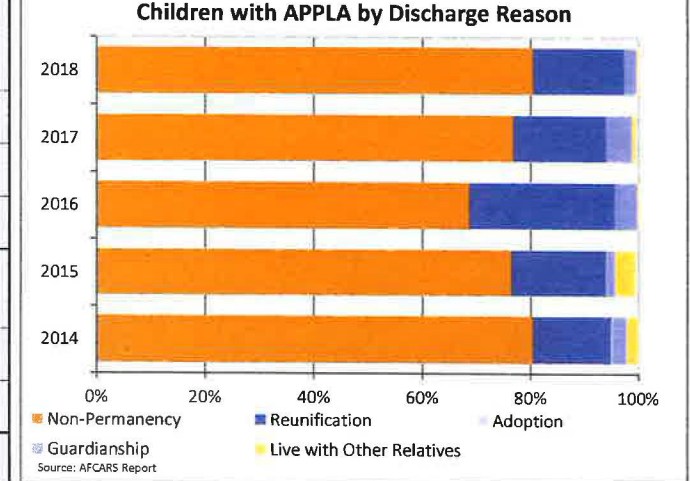
Age Group	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
0-15	0.8%	0.4%	0.2%	1.0%	1.0%
16-20	23.1%	19.4%	21.6%	25.1%	25.1%

38.3%
8.6%

APPLA By Discharge Reason

Exit to Permanent Arrangements	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Reunification	14.5%	17.6%	27.0%	17.3%	16.9%
(number of months until reunification)	36.2	27.5	30.4	11.8	18.6
Adoption	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
(number of months until adoption)	149.3	31.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Guardianship	2.5%	1.4%	4.2%	4.9%	2.3%
(number of month until guardianship)	27.8	18.0	32.0	23.6	25.6
Live with Other Relatives	2.1%	3.7%	0.9%	0.5%	0.3%
(number of months until living with relatives)	15.9	37.1	39.8	21.4	32.9
Exit to Non-Permanent Arrangements	80.4%	76.4%	68.6%	76.8%	80.5%
Emancipation	73.0%	71.7%	62.2%	66.7%	72.1%
(number of months until emancipation)	33.5	34.3	30.6	26.2	27.6
Transfer to Another Agency	5.5%	2.7%	5.0%	8.2%	5.3%
(number of months until transfer)	13.0	40.7	27.6	3.7	19.4
Runaway	1.9%	2.0%	1.4%	1.9%	3.0%
(number of months until running away)	16.3	23.4	14.1	32.0	22.4
Death of Child	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%
(number of months until death of a child)	129.8	9.0	143.7	62.6	62.6

0.6%
16.6%
-48.7%
-100.0%
-100.0%
-9.4%
-7.9%
-85.1%
106.9%
0.1%
-1.3%
-17.6%
-3.4%
49.9%
61.1%
37.4%
-100.0%
-51.8%



Statewide Findings

- While family-based permanency goal rates continue to remain high, goals of reunification decreased and adoption and guardianship increased.
- APPLA continues to be assigned as a goal for a Transition Age Youth far too often.
- Those youth with a goal of APPLA primarily leave care to non-permanent arrangements.

FOSTER CARE - EXITS

Data on foster care exits provides information on children who left foster care during the federal fiscal year, where they went when they left and how long their most recent episode of foster care was. A paramount goal of the foster care system is to ensure every child has the lifelong support of a permanent family.

Indicator

Children Exiting Foster Care

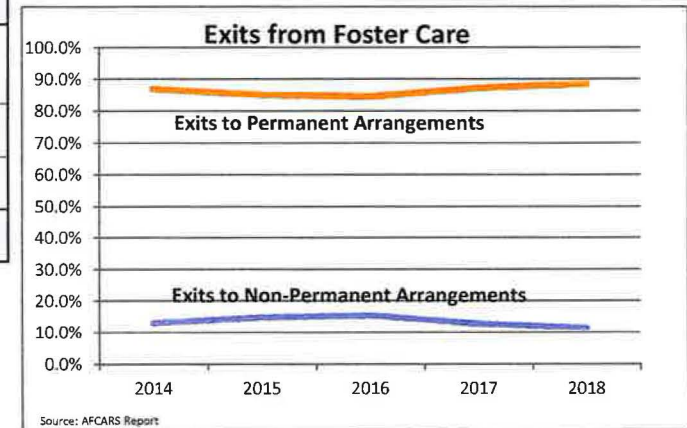
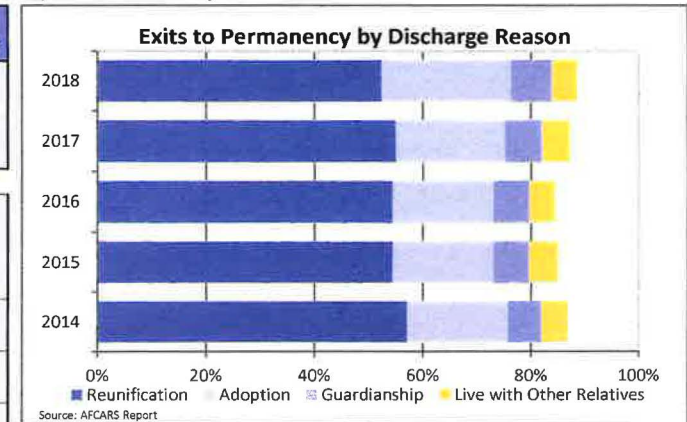
	State				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Children Leaving Foster Care	9,769	9,471	10,635	10,276	10,694
Percent of Children Leaving Foster Care (number of months until leaving)	43.4%	41.2%	43.3%	40.5%	42.0%
	10.7	11.4	11.7	11.9	13.0

% Change 2014 to 2018
9.5%
-3.1%
21.5%

By Discharge Reason

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Exit to Permanent Arrangements	86.9%	85.0%	84.5%	87.2%	88.6%
Reunification (number of months until reunification)	57.2%	54.5%	54.5%	55.1%	52.5%
	5.5	5.7	6.7	6.6	6.4
Adoption (number of months until adoption)	18.6%	18.7%	18.7%	20.2%	23.9%
	27.4	28.3	28.7	29.2	30.5
Guardianship (number of month until guardianship)	6.1%	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	7.5%
	20.8	21.1	19.4	20.1	19.4
Live with Other Relatives (number of months until living with relatives)	5.0%	5.4%	4.7%	5.1%	4.6%
	1.0	3.0	2.2	2.2	2.1
Exit to Non-Permanent Arrangements	13.0%	14.8%	15.4%	12.7%	11.4%
Emancipation (number of months until emancipation)	7.7%	7.8%	6.8%	7.9%	7.3%
	29.6	28.1	23.4	22.0	23.7
Transfer to Another Agency (number of months until transfer)	4.3%	5.8%	7.9%	4.3%	3.5%
	5.0	6.7	7.6	6.9	7.9
Runaway (number of months until running away)	1.1%	1.3%	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%
	13.2	15.5	11.2	19.4	14.0
Death of Child (number of months until death of a child)	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
	30.9	4.9	13.2	18.8	5.5

1.9%
-8.2%
16.7%
28.4%
11.2%
22.3%
-6.6%
-6.2%
106.5%
-12.7%
-5.2%
-20.1%
-18.5%
58.6%
-42.8%
6.5%
4.4%
-82.1%



Statewide Findings

- In 2018, the rate of children exiting foster care has outpaced children entering.
- While the rates of adoption continue to increase, so does the length of time that it takes to achieve permanency.
- The rates of children exiting to non-permanent arrangements is the lowest it has been in five years.

FOSTER CARE - REMAINING IN CARE

Data on children remaining in foster care provides information on children who did not leave foster care during the year but are still in foster care on the last day of the federal fiscal year. This data includes all children in foster care on September 30. Some of these children may have just entered foster care days prior to the end of the fiscal year and others may have been in foster care for many years.

Indicator

Children Remaining in Foster Care

Children in Foster Care on Last Day
(number of months children have been in care)

State				
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
14,162	14,859	15,382	16,381	16,074
12.6	12.5	13.2	13.4	14.2

% Change 2014 to 2018
13.5%
13.1%

By Age

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
0-2	20.0%	21.0%	21.3%	21.5%	21.0%
3-5	16.7%	16.7%	17.0%	17.5%	17.5%
6-8	12.4%	12.9%	13.2%	13.7%	13.6%
9-11	9.6%	10.7%	11.6%	11.8%	12.2%
12-14	11.5%	11.7%	12.0%	12.1%	12.3%
15-17	21.1%	20.2%	19.6%	18.2%	18.3%
18-20	8.4%	6.8%	5.3%	5.3%	5.2%
Infants (age 0-1)	13.2%	13.9%	13.8%	13.8%	13.7%
Youth (age 13+)	37.8%	35.2%	33.5%	31.9%	31.9%

% Change 2014 to 2018
4.8%
4.5%
9.0%
26.1%
6.3%
-13.5%
-38.3%
3.5%
-15.5%

By Race and Ethnicity

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Non-Hispanic White	40.1%	37.9%	41.0%	42.1%	42.2%
Non-Hispanic Black or African American	38.3%	36.9%	37.0%	35.8%	35.4%
Non-Hispanic Other Race	3.9%	6.0%	2.9%	2.7%	2.3%
Non-Hispanic Two or More Races	4.7%	4.9%	5.5%	6.1%	7.1%
Hispanic or Latino	13.0%	14.3%	13.6%	13.2%	13.0%

% Change 2014 to 2018
5.4%
-7.5%
-42.1%
52.4%
-0.6%

By Gender

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Male	50.9%	51.3%	51.2%	51.2%	50.9%
Female	49.1%	48.7%	48.8%	48.8%	49.1%

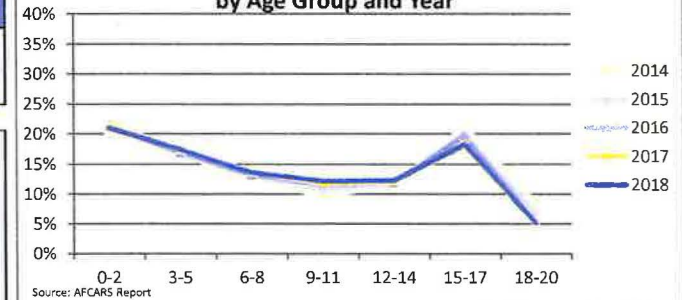
% Change 2014 to 2018
0.0%
0.0%

By Latest Placement Setting

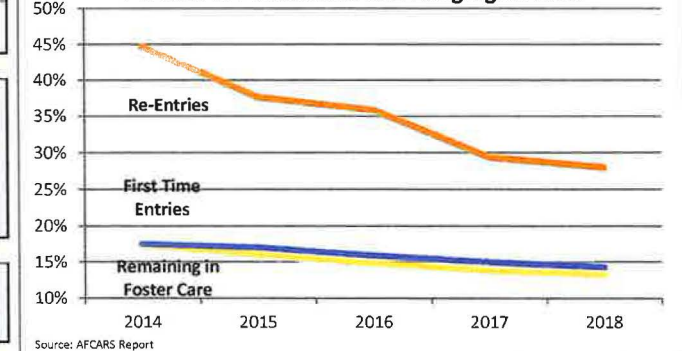
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Family Setting	79.0%	80.6%	82.5%	83.4%	84.0%
Pre-adoptive Home	3.9%	3.2%	5.3%	4.1%	4.0%
Foster Family Home – Relative	30.0%	32.8%	35.1%	37.9%	37.8%
Foster Family Home – Non-Relative	45.1%	44.5%	42.1%	41.4%	42.2%
Congregate Care Setting	17.3%	16.0%	14.7%	13.7%	13.2%
Group Home	10.6%	9.0%	8.4%	8.2%	7.9%
Institution	6.7%	7.0%	6.3%	5.5%	5.3%
Supervised Independent Living	1.7%	1.4%	1.3%	1.5%	1.5%
Runaway	1.1%	1.1%	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%
Trial Home Visit	0.8%	1.0%	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%

% Change 2014 to 2018
6.3%
1.1%
25.9%
-6.4%
-23.9%
-25.6%
-21.3%
-12.1%
-19.4%
-49.1%

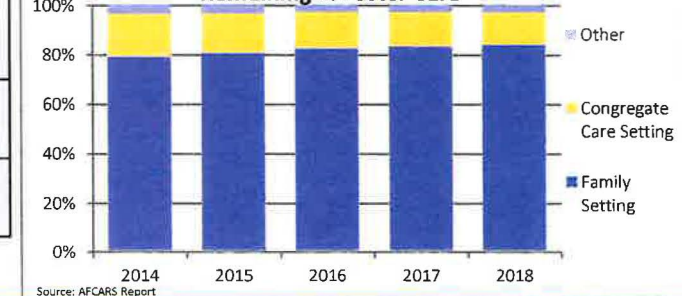
Children in Foster Care on September 30
by Age Group and Year



Percent of Placements into Congregate Care



Latest Placement Setting of Children
Remaining in Foster Care



Statewide Findings

- The length of time children have been in foster care continues to increase.
- The proportion of children remaining in care who are Transition Age Youth has steadily decreased since 2014, but remained stagnant over the past year.
- Children remaining in care have high rates of being in family-based settings, but too often are in non-relative foster care.

FOSTER CARE - STABILITY

Every time a child moves, the trauma caused by separation and lack of continuity grows. A child who faces multiple placements may struggle to build and maintain healthy relationships and confront academic challenges due to school changes.

Indicator

Foster Care Placement Stability

Children who were in foster care for 12 to 23 months and had three or more placement settings.

State					% Change 2014 to 2018
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
32.7%	32.8%	33.6%	32.2%	31.2%	-4.6%

Statewide Findings

- The stability rate for children in foster is the best it has been over the past five years.

FOSTER CARE - TIMELY REUNIFICATION

A child's separation from his or her parents or relatives is traumatic for all involved. Minimizing the time a child spends in foster care without compromising safety is key to healthy child development.

Indicator

Timely Reunification with Parents or Relatives

Children who entered foster care for the first time who were reunified with their parents or discharged to relatives within the next 12 months.

State					% Change 2014 to 2018
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
39.7%	39.0%	36.0%	39.2%	37.4%	-5.6%

Statewide Findings

- The percentage of children reunified with their parents or relatives within 12 months of entering foster care continued to fluctuate over the past 5 years.

FOSTER CARE - FAILED REUNIFICATION

A child re-entering foster care following a return to his or her family signals a breakdown in the family and a potential failure on the part of the child welfare system to appropriately address family needs.

Indicator

Failed 1-Year Reunification (Re-entry)

Children who re-entered foster care in fewer than 12 months following reunification with parents or relatives. (Data may be overstated.)

State					% Change 2014 to 2018
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
26.9%	24.1%	24.8%	23.0%	21.4%	-20.4%

Statewide Findings

- The rate of failed reunification is the lowest recorded to date.



PPC is part of a network coordinated and supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation

We gratefully acknowledge the support of The Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Project, The Heinz Endowments and PNC Financial Services Group.



Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
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Harrisburg, PA 17101-1589
papartnerships.org
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2019 State of Child Welfare – Executive Summary

Collaboration. Partnerships. Advocacy. Shared goals. These are just a few of the thoughts that come to mind when reflecting on the historical advancement of the *State of Child Welfare* in the Commonwealth and the organizations working together to improve our child welfare system, which is intended to ensure that children are protected and free from abuse and neglect, and that if a child must be removed from their natural environment, they are placed in the most family-like setting while permanency is sought. As well intentioned as these efforts may be, sometimes there are unintended consequences or implementation does not occur in ways that best impact and improve the lives of the children and families involved. It is only through collaborative relationships, strong advocacy and systematic policy reform that the lives of children, youth and families can be improved through interaction with the child welfare system.

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC) is pleased to share the 10th annual *State of Child Welfare* report, which provides a 5-year analysis of how Pennsylvania fares with practices around child safety, placement and permanency. The analysis is our contribution to improving Pennsylvania's child welfare system, not only providing county-level data, but also statewide and geographic trends. Our goal is for this data and research to be used to inform advocacy efforts and support initiatives that better serve children and families.

The *State of Child Welfare* allows everyone to be part of the conversation about outcomes of these efforts, as we all have a role in keeping children safe and families intact.

Public Awareness Helps Increase Referrals

Five years ago, the Commonwealth implemented several changes to the Child Protective Services Law due to heightened public awareness of failures and flaws in the system. This comprehensive package of nearly two dozen pieces of legislation was implemented by the Office of Children, Youth, and Families and further through local child welfare agencies. The rates of referrals have soared as a result of this increase in public awareness of child abuse and neglect and positive improvements in mandated and permissive reporter requirements.

- Between 2013 and 2017, the state saw a 76 percent increase in child protective services referrals and is showing no signs of slowing down.
- The state has seen a 24 percent increase in reports since the state began capturing general protective services referrals in 2015.
- In-home service rates have increased by 16 percent since 2014.

A core mission of child welfare agencies is to preserve families whenever possible by offering supports and services. As a result of increased referrals, there is additionally an increased need for services to alleviate safety and risk factors by keeping families intact.

Federal Law Sparks Focus on Prevention

More recently, the Bipartisan Budget Act was signed into law in 2018 creating the largest child welfare financing reform in 25 years. Also known as the Family First Prevention Services Act, federal funding shifts will occur focusing on reimbursement for front-end services, when historically financing has been for back-end placement services. The law offers states new resources to use evidence-based programs to keep families safely together in the effort to prevent the need for out-of-home placement. The law also dictates new standards of appropriateness and quality for any foster care placement that is not with a family, so that children do not languish in low-quality group care; and when group care is necessary, that it is either in a specialized setting or a Qualified Residential Treatment Program.

With the continued increase in child abuse and neglect referrals, and counties focusing on ways to best support families in their natural communities, the state is well positioned to utilize this stream of funding to be creative in improving service options and focusing on programs that serve children and families further upstream. Relative to prevention services and the reimbursement opportunity, the federal government has set high standards for services that will qualify. Specifically, the service must be a mental health, substance abuse treatment, or in-home parenting program that scientifically meets evidence-based standards and defined as either “supported, well supported, or a promising practice.” Additionally, the approved service must be rated and placed on the health and human services evidence-based clearinghouse. Lastly, the child must qualify as a “candidate for foster care” as an initial criterion, as defined through a prevention plan. While states have the option to capitalize on this opportunity starting October 2019, there are only 12 programs currently under review, and no programs have yet been placed on the clearinghouse to draw down funding. Due to the multiple complicated layers that currently exist regarding seamless implementation, the Office of Children, Youth, and Families decided to delay implementation until October 2020.

With the option to draw down federal funding for prevention services also means that the state must be working to reshape the use of congregate care. Congregate care rates in the state are the lowest in 5 years, indicating that counties have been strong in refining internal practices. However, more than 3,570 children who were placed in a group or institutional setting last year, proves that work still needs to be done to evaluate appropriateness of those placements and be creative in developing ways to service them in the most family-like setting. Under Family First, reimbursable programs will include those

for pregnant and parenting youth, supervised independent living for youth over the age of 18, as well as Qualified Residential Treatment Programs. Currently, no Qualified Residential Treatment Programs exist in Pennsylvania, and due to the definitions of the specialized settings, much work needs to be done to ensure that these providers are making adequate changes; concurrently, caseworkers, providers and the courts need high-quality training to understand the process for utilizing these settings. This is an additional layer that reinforced the state's decision to delay until October 2020.

Family First creates a new opportunity to reshape child welfare practices and move towards improving the lives of children and families. It should not only be viewed as an opportunity to draw down new funding only, but a way to enhance current practices.

Children Do Best with Family

Child placement is always a difficult decision for child welfare agencies, but when it is truly necessary, it is important that children are placed in the most family-like setting.

- Since 2014, the rate of children served in foster care has increased by 13 percent, however, from 2017 to 2018, the rate per 1,000 children has remained the same.
- Approximately 84 percent of the foster care population is either in a non-relative, adoptive or kinship home; additionally, upon a child's first placement, 83 percent enter such a setting initially.

State and county efforts to place children have been positive, as the rates have increased over the past five years. However, work still needs to be done, as less than half of children placed in a family-based setting are placed with a relative. We know that children thrive when they are with someone they know, trust and have a well-established connection with, and so further policy changes should be aimed at refining current practices for identifying, connecting and supporting kinship caretakers.

PPC championed Act 89 of 2018 establishing the Kinship Navigator Program in Pennsylvania, which will allow kin to safely and competently care for children without the need for formal child welfare intervention. The program will establish a website, toll-free hotline, and have specially trained kinship navigators who will assist kin with navigating the state and county level services and programs to adequately care for the children in their care. The Office of Children, Youth, and Families spared no time in issuing a request for application, seeking bids from providers interested in implementing this program. The program will be implemented later this year, and it is our hope that the rates of children entering formal foster care will decrease as kin will get help understanding the services, legal options, and county welfare assistance available to them.

Considering the Needs of Older Foster Youth

While children under the age of 11 primarily make up the foster care population, it is important to highlight that one-third of the foster care population are 13 and older. This population are often classified as transition to successful adulthood. Transition age youth

are often the most difficult population to place in a family-based setting, and, more frequently, reside in less-than-ideal group settings.

- While rates of older youth entering care have decreased, they make up almost 49 percent of re-entry into foster care, which means they return home and re-enter the system within one year.
- 80 percent of youth with a goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) exit foster care without adoption, guardianship or a family connection.
- 25 percent of older youth have a goal of APPLA.

Far too often, APPLA is still utilized as a goal for this age group, which means poorer outcomes. Pursuant to Act 94 of 2015, an APPLA workgroup was convened to study and review the population of youth with such a goal and make recommendations to improve outcomes. While the data supports that some progress has been made, it also supports that the state has not been successful in achieving the goals that have been identified. We must ensure we are preparing older youth for successful adulthood. That starts the moment they enter the system and continues through adulthood.

In Conclusion

We challenge child welfare advocates to utilize the *State of Child Welfare* to build upon strengths identified and to further refine the work towards achieving optimal results. Areas of deficiency are not failures but a call to action to improve outcomes for children and families, because child abuse and neglect is not a state or county issue, it is a community issue, which we all have a role in helping to improve. PPC's hope is that the *State of Child Welfare* will be a catalyst for engaging in those conversations.



2018 PENNSYLVANIA PROFILE

TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a pivotal developmental stage as young people learn the skills needed to be healthy and productive adults. This process can be complicated for youth with foster care experience. Here's what we know about the experiences of these youth in Pennsylvania.



171,162 or 25%
of United States' foster care population is ages 14+

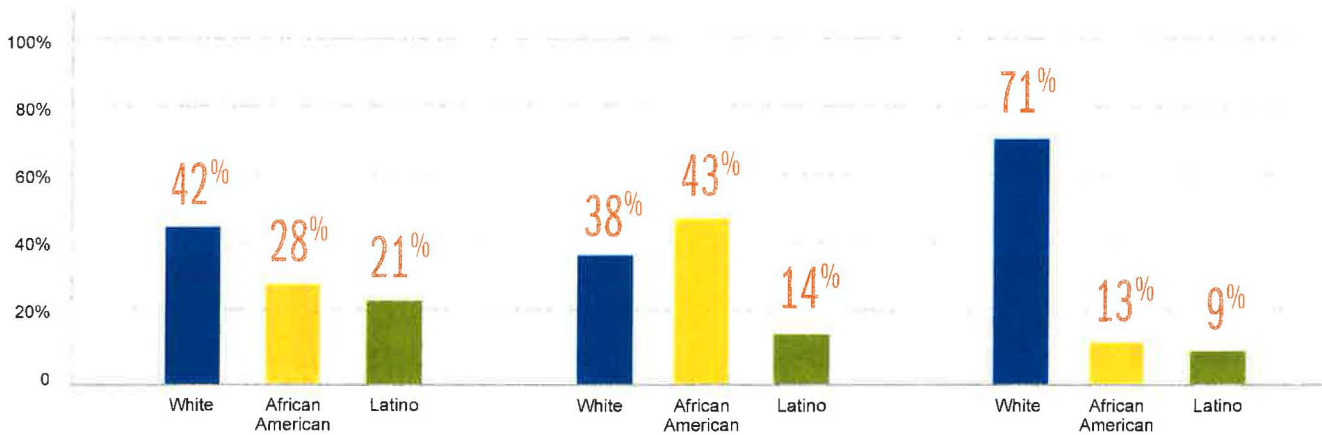


8,639 or 33%
of Pennsylvania's foster care population is ages 14+

United States
Foster Care Population

Pennsylvania
Foster Care Population

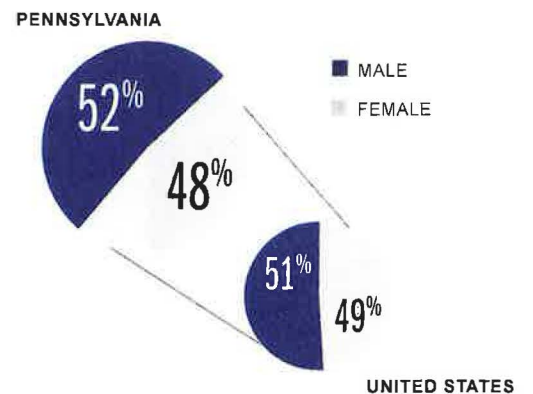
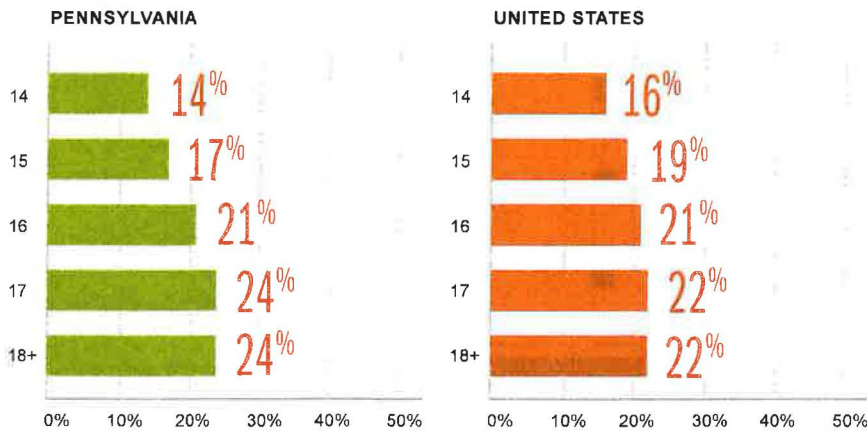
Pennsylvania
General Population



Above charts are based on the three largest racial and ethnic groups in this state for foster care. For additional data, please visit the KIDS COUNT Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

Youth in Foster Care by Age

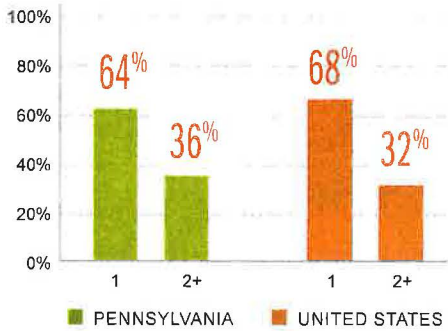
Youth in Foster Care by Sex*



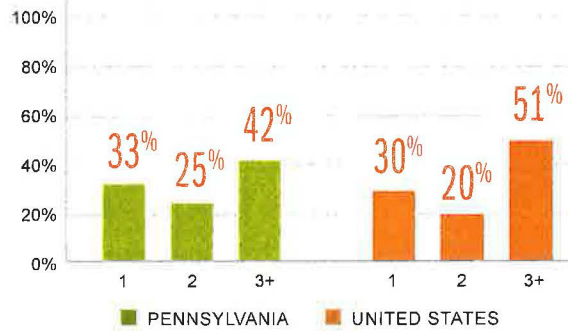
* Sex is based on gender at birth.

In addition to the trauma of abuse or neglect that resulted in being removed from their homes and placed in the foster care system, experiences while in foster care — including frequent moves — can lead to worse outcomes for youth. Looking at these indicators helps us understand how youth with foster care experience in Pennsylvania are faring and provides insight into the changes needed to improve the lives of these young people.

Episodes in the Foster Care System



Number of Placements During Most Recent Foster Care Episode



PENNSYLVANIA 2+ Foster Care Episodes



PENNSYLVANIA 3+ Foster Care Placements



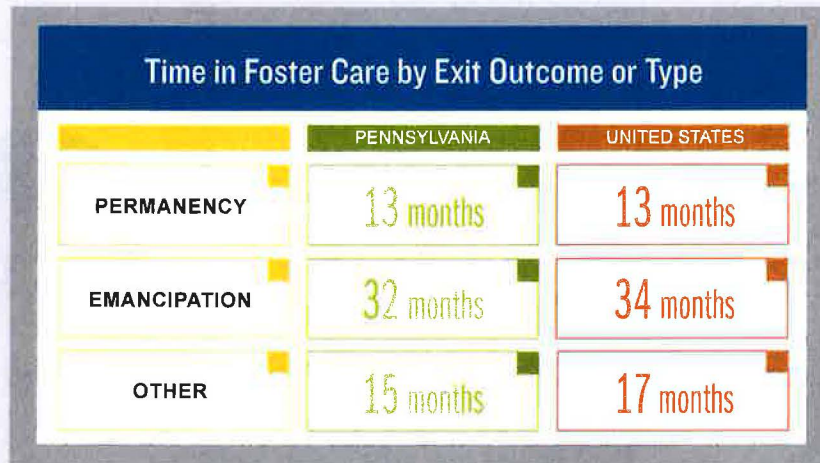
UNITED STATES 2+ Foster Care Episodes



UNITED STATES 3+ Foster Care Placements



The percentage of young people in each racial and ethnic group who have experienced multiple foster care episodes and placements



Placement Type

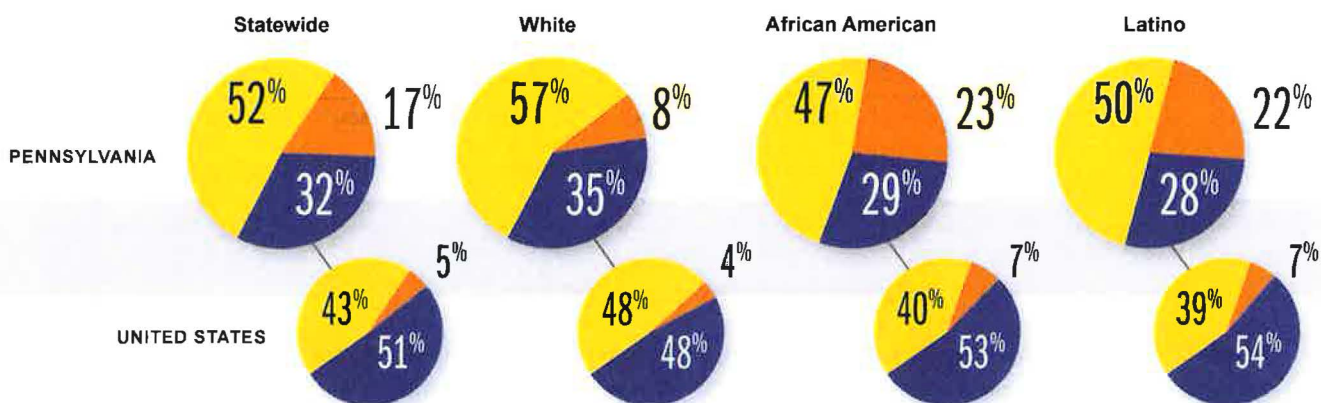
■ PENNSYLVANIA ■ UNITED STATES



Reasons for Leaving Foster Care

Lingering in foster care, experiencing unstable placement settings while in foster care and leaving foster care without a permanent, legal connection to family are important indicators of how youth in Pennsylvania are faring.

■ PERMANENCE ■ EMANCIPATION/ AGE-OUT (NON-PERMANENCY) ■ OTHER



Due to rounding some charts may not equal 100%

Percentage of Youth Who Emancipated by Race – Pennsylvania



Number of Young People in Care on Their 18th and 19th Birthdays

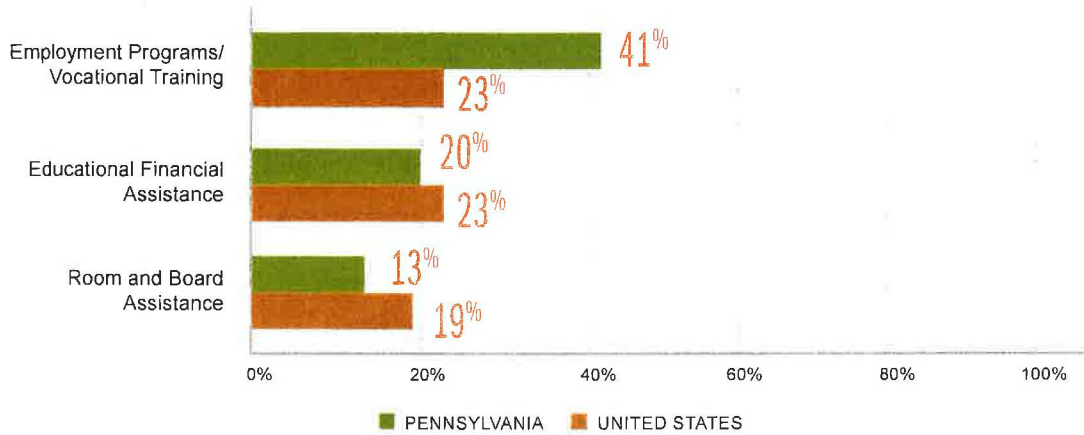
	18TH	19TH		18TH	19TH
PENNSYLVANIA	1,216	324		UNITED STATES	24,797
					6,489

Percentage Still in Care on Their 19th Birthday

	WHITE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	LATINO		WHITE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	LATINO
PENNSYLVANIA	28%	26%	19%		UNITED STATES	17%	29%
						37%	

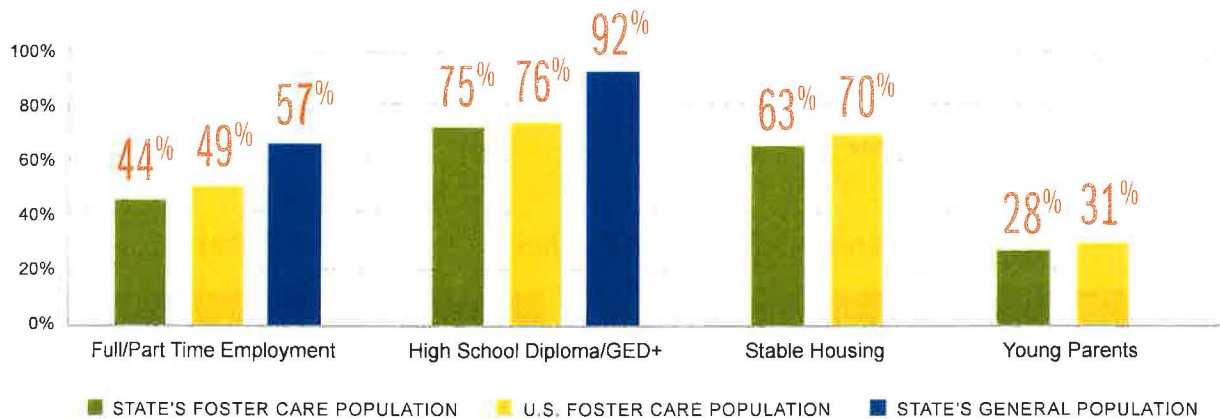
Services

Transition services, such as vocational training and housing assistance, are designed to help young people with foster care experience transition to adulthood. Participation in federally funded transition services provides a window into how well young people are being equipped for employment, education and housing.



Young Adult Outcomes by Age 21

Research shows that young adults who experienced foster care have worse outcomes than their peers in the general population across a variety of spectrums — from education to employment to housing to early parenthood. Examining data on these outcomes in Pennsylvania is important as we strive to improve the practices, programs and policies that help ensure these young people have the relationships, resources and opportunities they need for well-being and success.





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Far too often, APPLA is still utilized as a goal for this age group, which means poorer outcomes. Pursuant to Act 94 of 2015, an APPLA workgroup was convened to study and review the population of youth with such a goal and make recommendations to improve outcomes. While the data supports that some progress has been made, it also supports that the state has not been successful in achieving the goals that have been identified. We must ensure we are preparing older youth for successful adulthood. That starts the moment they enter the system and continues through adulthood.

In Conclusion

We challenge child welfare advocates to utilize the *State of Child Welfare* to build upon strengths identified and to further refine the work towards achieving optimal results. Areas of deficiency are not failures but a call to action to improve outcomes for children and families, because child abuse and neglect is not a state or county issue, it is a community issue, which we all have a role in helping to improve. PPC's hope is that the *State of Child Welfare* will be a catalyst for engaging in those conversations.



2018 PENNSYLVANIA PROFILE

TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a pivotal developmental stage as young people learn the skills needed to be healthy and productive adults. This process can be complicated for youth with foster care experience. Here's what we know about the experiences of these youth in Pennsylvania.



171,162 or 25%
of United States' foster care population is ages 14+

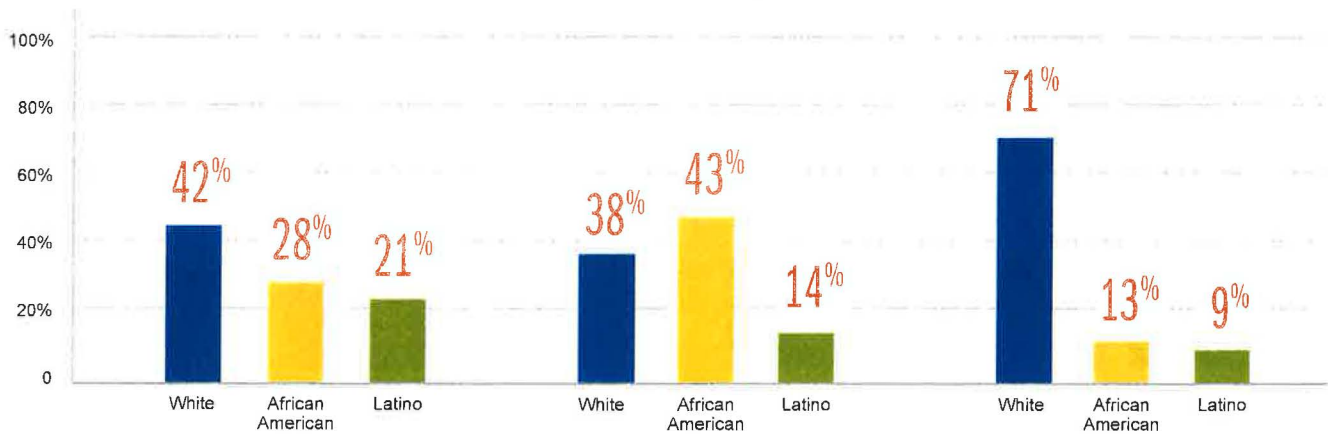


8,639 or 33%
of Pennsylvania's foster care population is ages 14+

United States Foster Care Population

Pennsylvania Foster Care Population

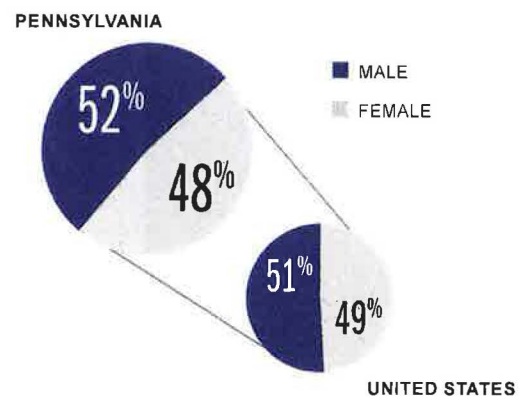
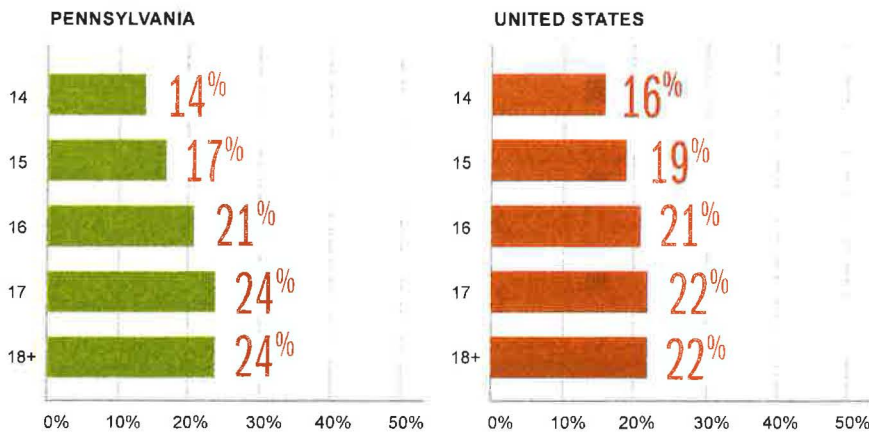
Pennsylvania General Population



Above charts are based on the three largest racial and ethnic groups in this state for foster care. For additional data, please visit the KIDS COUNT Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>

Youth in Foster Care by Age

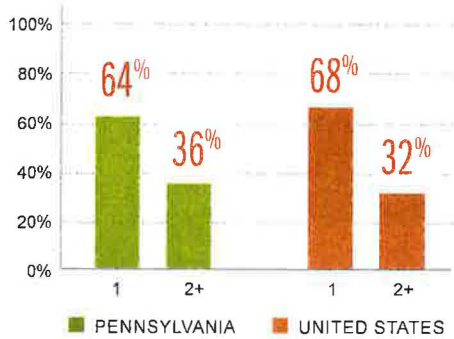
Youth in Foster Care by Sex*



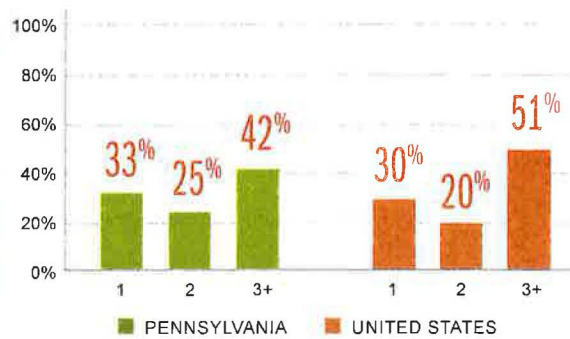
* Sex is based on gender at birth.

In addition to the trauma of abuse or neglect that resulted in being removed from their homes and placed in the foster care system, experiences while in foster care — including frequent moves — can lead to worse outcomes for youth. Looking at these indicators helps us understand how youth with foster care experience in Pennsylvania are faring and provides insight into the changes needed to improve the lives of these young people.

Episodes in the Foster Care System



Number of Placements During Most Recent Foster Care Episode



PENNSYLVANIA 2+ Foster Care Episodes



PENNSYLVANIA 3+ Foster Care Placements



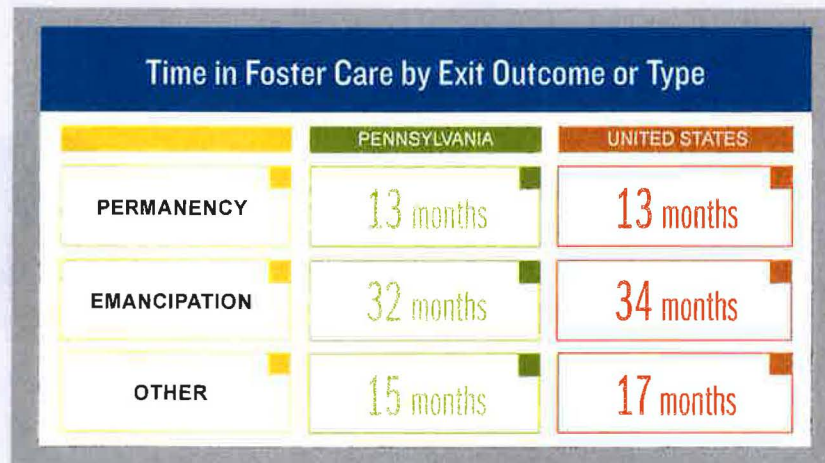
UNITED STATES 2+ Foster Care Episodes



UNITED STATES 3+ Foster Care Placements



The percentage of young people in each racial and ethnic group who have experienced multiple foster care episodes and placements.



Placement Type

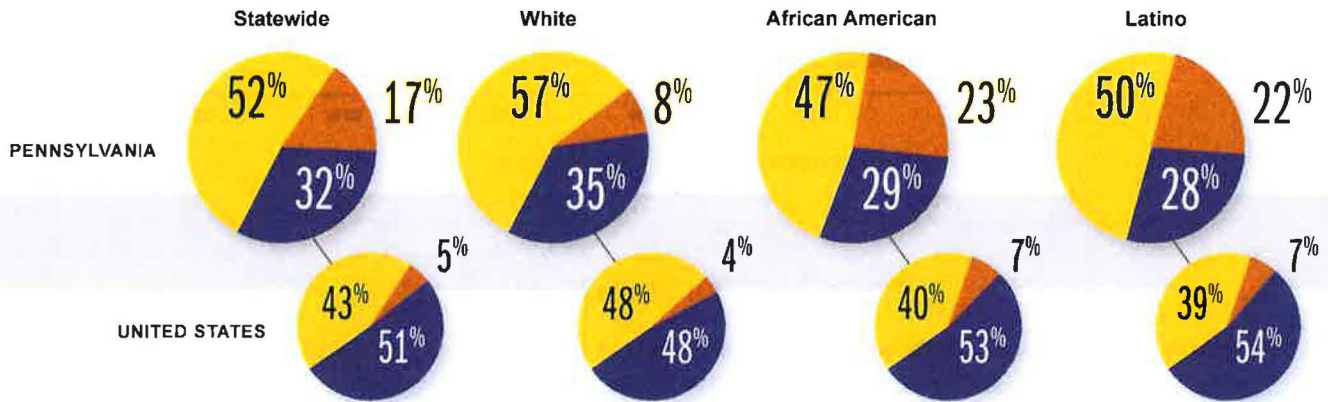
■ PENNSYLVANIA ■ UNITED STATES



Reasons for Leaving Foster Care

Lingering in foster care, experiencing unstable placement settings while in foster care and leaving foster care without a permanent, legal connection to family are important indicators of how youth in Pennsylvania are faring.

■ PERMANENCE ■ EMANCIPATION/ AGE-OUT (NON-PERMANENCY) ■ OTHER



Due to rounding some charts may not equal 100%

Percentage of Youth Who Emancipated by Race - Pennsylvania



Number of Young People in Care on Their 18th and 19th Birthdays

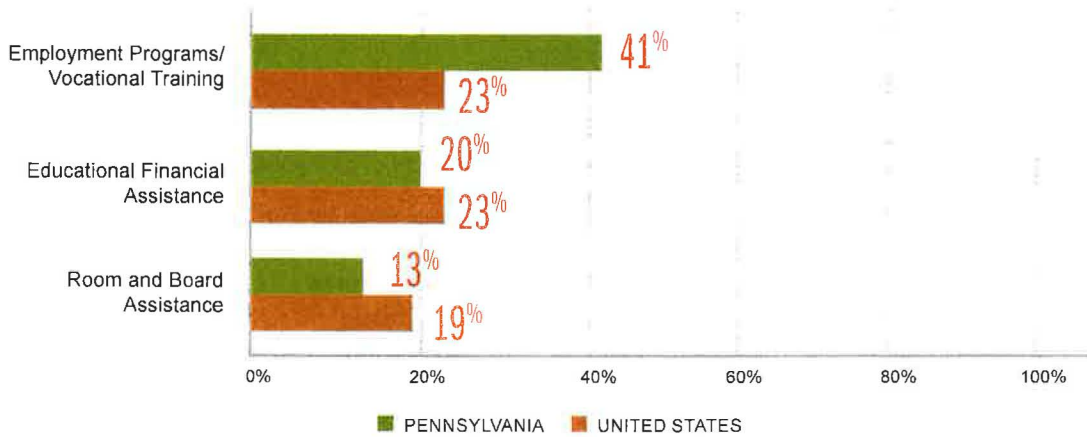
	18TH	19TH		18TH	19TH
PENNSYLVANIA	1,216	324		UNITED STATES	24,797
					6,489

Percentage Still in Care on Their 19th Birthday

	WHITE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	LATINO		WHITE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	LATINO
PENNSYLVANIA	28%	26%	19%		UNITED STATES	17%	29%
						37%	

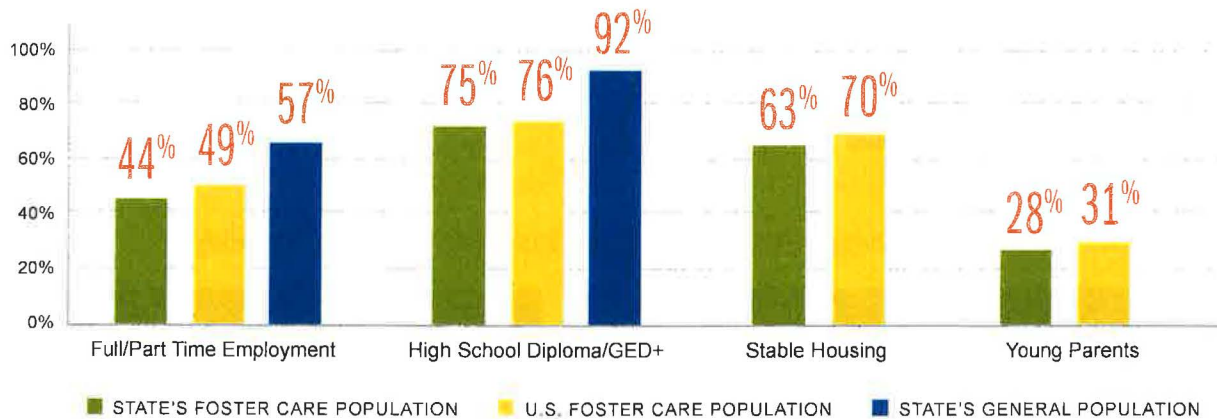
Services

Transition services, such as vocational training and housing assistance, are designed to help young people with foster care experience transition to adulthood. Participation in federally funded transition services provides a window into how well young people are being equipped for employment, education and housing.



Young Adult Outcomes by Age 21

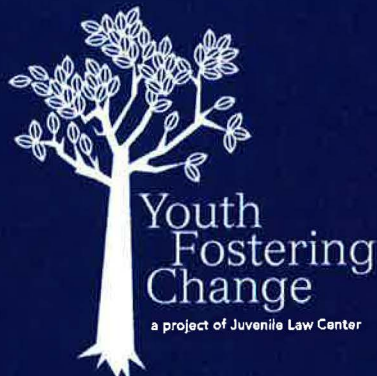
Research shows that young adults who experienced foster care have worse outcomes than their peers in the general population across a variety of spectrums — from education to employment to housing to early parenthood. Examining data on these outcomes in Pennsylvania is important as we strive to improve the practices, programs and policies that help ensure these young people have the relationships, resources and opportunities they need for well-being and success.





TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

**A Toolkit for Child Welfare Professionals
to Achieve Permanency and Stability
for Youth in Foster Care**



Juvenile
Law Center

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

A Toolkit for Child Welfare Professionals to Achieve Permanency & Stability for Youth in Foster Care

A publication of Youth Fostering Change, created during the 2017-2018 Youth Advocacy Program year, in collaboration with Juvenile Law Center staff.

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Juvenile Law Center advocates for rights, dignity, equity and opportunity for youth in the foster care and justice systems.

Founded in 1975, Juvenile Law Center is the first non-profit, public interest law firm for children in the country. We fight for youth through litigation, appellate advocacy and submission of amicus (friend-of-the-court) briefs, policy reform, public education, training, consulting, and strategic communications. Widely published and internationally recognized as leaders in the field, Juvenile Law Center has substantially shaped the development of law and policy on behalf of youth. We strive to ensure that laws, policies, and practices affecting youth advance racial and economic equity and are rooted in research, consistent with children's unique developmental characteristics, and reflective of international human rights values. For more information about Juvenile Law Center's work, visit www.jlc.org.

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ABOUT YOUTH FOSTERING CHANGE

Youth Fostering Change (YFC) is an advocacy program for youth who are currently or formerly involved in the child welfare system. Each year, YFC researches issues affecting youth in foster care and analyzes current advocacy strategies. Youth advocates then determine a strategy to address the issue, including developing policy recommendations and a campaign to raise awareness of the issue and YFC's work.

We believe in the power of youth voice. Young people are experts on their own lives, and their lived experiences should inform policies that affect them. Since 2008, Juvenile Law Center's Youth Advocacy Program has prepared young people ages 15-22 to lead advocacy and policy reform efforts in their local communities and beyond. Youth advocates develop leadership skills, political knowledge, communication and storytelling skills, and a sense of community. By sharing their personal experiences, youth advocates affect policy change through advocacy, media outreach, and public education.

SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to thank the Department of Human Services in Philadelphia for supporting our projects each year and the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) for meeting with us and supporting our project. Thanks to Juvenile Law Center staff for constantly working alongside us to uplift our stories and create projects to help better the system for ALL youth.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Background

Across the country, over 20,000 youth age out of care each year without permanent family connections and stability. Within 18 months of aging out, 40-50% of former foster youth become homeless.

In Pennsylvania, 8,639 (33%) of the state's foster care population are between ages 14 and 21, generally referred to as "transition age youth." Almost half (49%) of Pennsylvania's transition age youth age out without being reunified or connected to a permanent family. This means thousands of young people are leaving the state's care without adequate support, a loving family, or the resources and people necessary for them to grow into thriving adults.

What's in This Toolkit?

Many of us aged out without family or supportive connections, or we are about to leave the system without gaining permanency and are uncertain about our lives after foster care. We believe all youth deserve permanency and supportive adult connections—both are essential to success in adulthood.

Based on what we know about our own stories and those of our peers in foster care, we created a toolkit and recommendations to improve permanency outcomes for children in foster care, regardless of circumstances or age. This publication identifies some of the challenges we faced or are still facing as older youth in care.

This toolkit is for social workers, advocates, case workers, and other professionals to support youth in care to achieve permanency. This toolkit includes the definition and legal obligations for permanency planning, as well as tools and best practices for working with youth to achieve permanency. We developed these materials based on our experiences in care and with aging out of the system.

We want you to understand that youth want permanency and family—and we need your help to achieve it! No matter our age, permanency should be continuously sought. We need you to believe that we deserve permanency and to work creatively alongside us to make it a reality. We hope this guide is useful for you to better connect with youth and support youth in foster care to find family.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the country, over 20,000 youth age out of foster care annually without permanent family connections or stability. Within 18 months of aging out, 40-50% of former foster youth become homeless.

In Pennsylvania, 8,639 (33%) of the state's foster care population are between ages 14 and 21, generally referred to as "transition age youth." Almost half (49%) of Pennsylvania's transition age youth age out without being reunified or connected to a permanent family. This means thousands of young people are leaving the state's care without adequate support, a loving family, or the resources and people necessary for them to grow into thriving adults.

Many members of Youth Fostering Change aged out without family or supportive connections. Some of us are about to leave the system without permanency. We are uncertain about our lives and futures. Our goal is to improve permanency outcomes for children in foster care, regardless of circumstances or age.

We believe all youth in foster care deserve permanency and supportive adult connections—both are essential to success in adulthood. This toolkit is based on our own experiences in care and with aging out. This toolkit is for social workers, advocates, case workers, and other child welfare professionals to further support their work to achieve meaningful legal permanency and relational permanency. It includes the definition and obligations for legal permanency planning, as well as tools and best practices for working with youth to achieve permanency.

We want to help child welfare professionals enhance permanency planning and improve outcomes for all youth in foster care. We recommend using this toolkit as a guide before client meetings as well as throughout the duration of a case in order to fully leverage the tools, tips, and best practices. We believe that using these tools will strengthen your advocacy and will allow you to build relationships for youth and reach the best permanency outcome.

We hope this guide is useful for you to better connect with and support youth. As alumni and current youth in the system, we need professionals to understand that youth want permanency and family—and we need your help to achieve it! We know you believe that youth of any age deserve permanency, and we want you to keep working creatively with us to make it a reality for ALL youth in foster care.

The following summary of our recommendations are based on our experiences and are explained in more detail in the toolkit.

1. Communicate the Importance of Permanency

Youth deserve respect: make sure to explain what permanency is and why it's important, and listen to their views and concerns. In addition, be mindful of trauma and adolescent development when communicating about a youth's case planning and when building relationships with supportive adults.

2. Meaningfully Engage Youth in Their Permanency Planning

To be successful in permanency planning, youth need to be on board, invested, and clear about their permanency goals. Engaging youth starts with including them in discussions and preparing them for planning meetings. Think about how meetings are planned, including the logistics for youth to attend and fully participate.

3. Facilitate Placement Stability

Youth need to feel safe in placements. They deserve stable living arrangements where they are secure, treated with respect, cared for, and loved. Youth need to know about their new placement or placement changes in advance, including the location, when they will arrive, with whom they will stay, and the placement type.

4. Cultivate Youth's Connections with Kin

Youth need help staying connected with family. Research shows that many youth who age out turn to family for support. Family separation causes trauma and grief, and maintaining family connections is important for emotional health and well-being. Consider reunification, and if it isn't an option, youth may still want those relationships.

5. Focus on Relational Permanency and Legal Permanency

Youth want legal permanency when possible, but having a network of consistent, supportive relationships that last past aging-out of care is just as important. Most people don't have just one person who provides all the support they will ever need. If youth have the option of multiple supportive adults, then youth can have all the support that they need.

6. Follow the Family Finding Requirements

Family finding is a great way to identify people who can provide different types of support for youth to achieve permanency. State law requires annual family finding work; ideally this process starts early and increasingly involves youth as they age. Work with youth during family finding, so they can identify supportive connections and develop a plan for how to involve and reach out to the adult.

7. Ensure a Comprehensive Transition Plan Is in Place, Including Direct Connections to Services and Resources

Regardless of a youth's permanency goal, transition plans are vital to youth entering adulthood. Without a solid plan, youth tend to focus on short-term rather than long-term goals. Developing a transition plan with youth that includes connections to people, skill-building, and resources is essential for their stability.


TRANSITION AGE YOUTH in Pennsylvania

THE FACTS

BY AGE 21...

33% of PA's foster youth are transition age youth

8,639 YOUTH




37% experience homelessness or unstable housing



47% of transition age youth are in group homes or institutions

49% age out of care, instead of being connected to family



Just 44% of transition age youth have full or part-time employment




25% of transition age youth have been in 2+ placements while in care

42% of have been in 3+ placements



Only 75% earn a GED or high school diploma, compared to 92% of their peers



**WE HAVE THE TOOLS TO
CHANGE THE STORY FOR
TRANSITION AGE YOUTH.**



COMPONENTS OF PERMANENCY

What is “Permanency”?

The term “permanency” is often used to refer to the final legal outcome of a dependency case, such as reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship.

The concept of permanency, however, is actually much broader, including both “legal permanency” (a permanent family relationship recognized by the law) and “relational permanency,” or lifelong relationships that support physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Put simply, “permanency” refers to enduring family relationships that are supportive, legally recognized, and meant to last a lifetime.

We need you to believe we deserve permanency, especially if we lose hope that it can be achieved.

HOW YOUTH FOSTERING CHANGE DEFINES PERMANENCY:

We believe permanency and the process to achieve permanency should actively include youth, recognize adolescent development, and include best practices for every youth’s plan.

We define permanency as having supportive adult connections, not just a place to live. Permanency provides youth a series of relationships that:

- Provide the same support that family members would provide,
- Provide emotional support and guidance,
- Provide unconditional love,
- Help youth build and learn skills,
- Encourage skills, talents, and potential for the future, and
- Provide a home and help youth with resources, like help to make ends meet, a place to stay for holidays or emergencies, or just someone to call.

Components of Permanency Planning Process to Support Youth Development:

- Start the process to identify permanent supportive adults as soon as youth enter care.
- Help us learn how to be thriving young adults and receive support from our team.
- Involve us in every step of the permanency planning process; help us understand what is going on in our case, even if it might upset us, and let us have input in goal-setting.
- Search our case files and help us think about our history so we can identify caring adults.
- Help us understand concurrent planning so we can try to develop multiple plans and back-up plans all at the same time.
- Follow up and follow through with the steps established in meetings. It helps us trust you and believe in the plan we are working on together.
- Do not give up on us! For many of us, APPLA was overused when case workers gave up on finding us homes because of our behavior or because we were deemed “too old.”
- Believe we deserve family, and tell us that we deserve family—even if we act like we do not believe you!

Permanency is a relationship that will last even when you are out of foster care—one that will stick by you in good and bad times.



KEY POINTS: LEGAL OBLIGATIONS TO ACHIEVE PERMANENCY

While each child and professional may think about permanency differently, there are certain requirements that professionals must meet when assisting youth in the planning process. One such requirement is following a permanency hierarchy. For young people, permanency isn't just a word on a case plan—it is our lives.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of legal rights for youth in the child welfare system in the United States or in Pennsylvania. This toolkit includes other legal obligations listed throughout the publication.

Limitations on APPLA

APPLA stands for “Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.” It is the least preferred plan. In the past, it has been overused for older youth and usually means youth will age out without achieving permanency. Recent changes in federal law greatly reduce the use of APPLA. The law now prohibits the use of APPLA as a permanency plan for youth under age 16. 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(5)(C)(i). For youth age 16 or older, the child welfare agency must meet many requirements before it can select the permanency goal of APPLA to ensure it is used rarely. To select or maintain the plan of APPLA, the court must make specific findings that:

- The agency has documented the intensive, ongoing, unsuccessful efforts to achieve reunification, adoption, guardianship, or placement with a fit and willing relative;
- APPLA is the best permanency plan for the child and there is a compelling reason it is not in the best interest of the youth to return home, be placed for adoption, enter a guardianship agreement, or be placed with a fit and willing relative;
- Both the agency and the court have asked the youth about his or her desired permanency outcome; and
- The agency is taking steps to ensure that the reasonable and prudent parent standard is being exercised and that the child has regular and ongoing opportunities to engage in age- or developmentally-appropriate activities. 42 U.S.C.A. § 675a(a).

Permanency hearings must continue every six months even after a goal of APPLA is assigned. Pennsylvania law goes beyond the federal requirements, mandating that, for youth with a goal of APPLA, the county agency must identify at least one significant connection with a supportive adult willing to be involved in the child's life as the child transitions to adulthood, or document that efforts have been made to identify a supportive adult. The court must also make findings that the significant connection is identified in the permanency plan or that efforts have been made to identify a supportive adult, if no one is currently identified. 42 Pa. C.S.A. § 6351(f.1)(5).

Connecting Youth with Family

Federal and state law support placement with family and kin. Reunification is the most preferred permanency plan, and placement with kin is preferred if a youth does enter the child welfare system.

Federal law requires reasonable efforts to place siblings together and to provide for frequent visitation when siblings are not jointly placed. 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(31). Pennsylvania law goes even further, requiring that siblings be placed together unless it is contrary to the safety or well-being of either sibling. If siblings cannot be placed together, Pennsylvania law requires visitation be provided at least two times per month. 42 Pa. C.S.A. § 6351(b)(5) & (b.1).

Involvement of Youth in Permanency Planning


Beginning at age 14, the youth must be consulted in the development of the case plan and must be allowed to involve two individuals in case planning who are not a foster parent or part of the casework staff. 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(5)(C)(iv).

Reasonable Efforts to Finalize the Permanency Plan

The court must make a finding at least once a year that reasonable efforts are being made to finalize the child's permanency plan. 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(15). In Pennsylvania, youth have permanency hearings at least twice per year. At each hearing, the court must review the permanency plan and the progress that is being made to achieve it. 42 Pa. C.S.A. § 6351(e).

Least Restrictive Placement

States must ensure each child in the custody of the child welfare system has a case plan designed to achieve placement in a safe setting that is the least restrictive (most family-like) and most appropriate setting available. 42 U.S.C. § 675(5)(A)(1). This means youth should be in family settings in the community—not in group homes or institutional care.



TOOLS FOR IMPROVING PERMANENCY OUTCOMES FOR OLDER YOUTH

Tool 1: Talking about Permanency with Youth

GOAL: HAVE CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT PERMANENCY

It's important to speak directly with youth to learn what they want and need in a family. If a young person appears to reject the idea of permanency, explore why they may be hesitant about it rather than ending the conversation.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Youth need to be understood on their own terms and be talked to in a way that is respectful and considerate of how they understand their situations, their histories, and their ability to process information as a young adult.

Try to understand the youth's unique, individual experience and why they may be unwilling to trust adults at first. Always strive to have good relationships with youth; communicate patiently and in ways that build their understanding of permanency and the planning process. When professionals develop trusting relationships with youth, it is easier to work together on achieving permanency.

OUR EXPERIENCES

- Feeling that our presence at meetings wasn't acknowledged.
- Our team didn't follow up or action steps were unclear.
- Not communicating in a youth-friendly way about how we were doing.
- Having our comments disregarded or ignored.
- Feeling disrespected.
- Not feeling heard or feeling our attempts to speak up were futile.
- Struggling to trust or love adults, making positive communication a challenge for us.

Most of us did not understand what permanency was or the purpose of the meetings.

We were left in the dark about what permanency is and the process to achieve it.

BEST PRACTICES

- Build a relationship based on trust to ensure there is open communication between you and the young person.
- Have a conversation with youth about the meaning of permanency and the planning process. Explain concepts in a youth-friendly way and use examples.
- Talk to youth about the importance of their participation in permanency planning.
- If youth have concerns or questions, answer in a meaningful way and make time to answer their questions.
- Work with the young person to develop incentives for participation, such as a reward system to recognize and acknowledge their participation in the meetings. Encourage youth to consistently attend meetings.

DID YOU KNOW

The court should consult with the child in an age-appropriate manner regarding the proposed permanency and transition plans. 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(5)(C)(iii).

Youth age 14 and over must be provided with a list of rights regarding education, health, visitation, and court participation; the right to discharge documents; and the right to stay safe and avoid exploitation. 42 U.S.C.A. § 675a(b)(1) & (b)(2).

Tool 2: Engaging Youth in Permanency Planning Meetings and Dependency Court Hearings

GOAL: ACTIVELY AND CONTINUOUSLY ENGAGE YOUTH IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

This includes scheduling meetings that work with the youth's schedule and ensuring youth can attend and are fully engaged during the meetings. Always follow up with youth after each permanency planning meeting.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Youth deserve to understand the structure and purpose of their permanency meetings. This includes knowing who will attend, informing youth they can bring supportive adults, and giving youth many opportunities to share their preferred permanency goals. Youth deserve to understand and be fully engaged throughout the process because of its immeasurable impact on their lives and futures.

OUR EXPERIENCES

- Meetings were scheduled without our consideration.
- There were a lot of meetings, and we sometimes had to miss school to attend.
- The meeting's purpose wasn't always clearly explained to us.
- No prep from our team before the meetings, so we couldn't meaningfully participate.
- Transportation wasn't reliable or available for us to get to the meetings.
- The meeting outcomes didn't reflect what we want or need.
- We did not know who would attend, and this affected our willingness to participate.

BEST PRACTICES

- Make sure youth know they can bring people they care about to the planning meetings, and help youth identify these individuals.
- Create a plan to ensure youth can attend permanency meetings, including regularly reminding youth about upcoming meetings. It's important to speak directly with the youth to remind them about a meeting.
- Ask if youth want help preparing for meetings and debrief with them after meetings.
- Give youth advance notice of who will attend and participate (including biological parents), and explain each person's role in the meeting.

If we attended our permanency meetings, we did not feel engaged, and our desires and concerns were not addressed. Many meetings were scheduled without us, and we did not understand everyone's role in the meeting.

- Ensure all meetings begin with positive updates about the youth.
- Set a youth-friendly agenda that ensures youth understand the discussion and goals of the meeting (for example, talk slowly and avoid jargon).
- If specific action steps are brought up during the meeting, highlight them at the end of the meeting and then follow up.

FOR DEPENDENCY COURT HEARINGS:

- Meaningfully engage youth in their hearings and make sure they have opportunities to speak in court.
- Give youth multiple opportunities to prepare for court, including meeting with their attorney and case manager to discuss what to expect; this should be done in a way youth understand.

DID YOU KNOW

Transportation is often a challenge for youth to attend meetings. Professionals should arrange adequate transportation so that youth can attend meetings.

YFC developed tools to help youth prepare for court with their attorney and understand their rights in court in P.A. To learn more go to:
<https://at.jlc.org/YFC-youthincourt>.

Tool 3: Facilitating Placement Stability to Gain Permanency

GOAL: SUPPORT YOUTH TO MAINTAIN PLACEMENT STABILITY

To achieve placement stability, youth need caseworkers who listen to them, help them problem solve when things are not going well, and respond when a youth is not being treated appropriately in a placement.

Speak with youth directly to learn what they want and need in a family, and if youth appear to reject the idea of permanency, explore why youth may be hesitant instead of ending the conversation.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Placement stability allows youth time to develop relationships with people in their community. Communicate with youth about how they feel about their placement, and identify and follow up with youth about any challenges—both are key to building rapport and achieving placement stability.

Youth have a better chance at gaining permanency when they are in a consistent placement where they are respected, listened to, and provided with necessary resources.

OUR EXPERIENCES

- Feeling unsafe in placements.
- Placement conditions were not appropriate for us.
- Running away from placements due to harsh conditions or to see biological family and other kin.
- Trouble connecting with adults in placements.
- Being placed in residential treatment facilities and group homes for too long—we should have been in homes.
- Placement changes without explanation.
- Being removed from a placement instead of getting help with problem-solving or conflict resolution.
- Not feeling believed when we revealed poor treatment in placements.
- Fearing the next placement would be worse and not disclosing poor treatment at our current placement.

BEST PRACTICES

- Understand and be attentive to youth who identify challenges in placements and work with them to resolve the challenges.
- Match youth in homes that better fit them and their identified goals.
- Have an introduction with youth and the families before placing them, even if this must happen the first day of placement.
- Use the “Teen Success Agreement” to set house rules and resolve disagreements.
- Train caregivers and facility staff on understanding trauma, foster care, and adolescent development.
- Actively engage foster parents in the permanency planning process with youth to build connections between the youth and family.
- Work with the family and youth on de-escalation and constructive communication.
- Consistently tell youth that you want to know if they are being treated badly, and respond when they raise concerns.
- Communicate that youth deserve to be treated well, and that it is unacceptable when a youth says a placement is “not that bad!”

Feeling unsafe or not connecting with foster families led to more placement disruptions.

Some of us experienced unsafe conditions and abusive foster families or group homes.

We lost trust and hope for finding a loving, family or supportive adults.

Tool 4: Cultivating Connections with Biological Family

GOAL: MAINTAIN FAMILY AND KIN CONNECTIONS

Another key to achieving permanency is maintaining a youth's established permanent connections with biologically family and kin. Prioritize these relationships when youth enter care, and support youth to communicate and engage with family.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Entering care can be traumatic. Youth can be separated from their siblings, family, and kin—experiencing grief and losing family connections. Youth care about their family members even if they may not be able to provide for the young person.

Cultivating these family relationships while a youth is in care is essential to their mental, physical, and emotional health and well-being.

Maintaining these connections helps young people feel a sense of community and can lead to a better chance of leaving care with multiple supportive connections.

OUR EXPERIENCES

- We lost connections with our siblings and weren't supported to maintain the relationships.
- No assistance maintaining relationships with our relatives who couldn't provide placement.
- No support for relationships with relatives who were important to us because the agency did not think they were a good influence.
- Running away and going to our biological parents or families' homes.
- Losing relationships if we or our siblings were adopted.
- Feeling anger, grief, and loss from family separation and struggling to adjust, even in supportive placements.



During our time in care, our workers didn't acknowledge our existing family. Specifically, we felt that if identified kin couldn't provide certain things for us—like placement—we didn't get support to build or maintain those connections.

BEST PRACTICES

- Work with youth to identify, connect with, and maintain relationships with biological family and extended kin and relatives.
- At minimum, support youth to reach out and connect to biological family and kin.
- Assist youth with maintaining these connections, including providing transportation and support for how to stay connected with family.
- Arrange sibling visits more frequently than Pennsylvania's minimum legal requirement (twice a month). This helps youth to maintain sibling relationships.
- Use the SWAN Child Profile to help youth learn about their biological families and history so they can better understand and identify other family connections. The SWAN Child Profile is an in-depth summary of the child's life history.

DID YOU KNOW

Federal law requires reasonable efforts to place siblings together and to provide for frequent visitation when siblings are not jointly placed. 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(31).

Pennsylvania law goes even further, requiring that siblings be placed together unless it is contrary to the safety or well-being of either sibling. If siblings cannot be placed together, Pennsylvania law requires that visitation be provided at least two times per month. 42 Pa. C.S.A. § 6351(b)(5) & (b.1).

Tool 5: Identifying, Initiating, and Maintaining Relationships with Supportive Adults and Kin

GOAL: SUPPORT YOUTH TO IDENTIFY AND MAINTAIN CONNECTIONS WITH SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

Youth in care should also have connections with supportive adults in their lives. These include relatives and people who the young person identifies as important to them (kin) as well as relationships that professionals help youth develop through permanency services such as child-specific recruitment.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

When youth have a network of supportive adults, they have access to more people who can support them in different ways. It is vital that youth have people in their lives who they can count on and go to when things get hard. Youth need people who can help them grow into successful adults, and they need support from their child welfare team to develop and maintain these relationships. This work grows the young person's network and also contributes to their success after foster care.

OUR EXPERIENCES

- We lost connections with supportive adults who were in our lives before care.
- Constantly moving placements caused us to lose contact or limited our ability to build lasting relationships.
- We struggled to build and maintain connections with supportive adults due to mistrusting others because of our experiences.
- We didn't get the emotional or logistical support to connect to supportive adults.
- We didn't always know who the supportive adults were in our lives or how they could help us.
- We aged out of care without any supportive adult connections.
- When we had help building and maintaining connections with supportive adults, it helped us grow and created opportunities for us.

If placement or legal permanency was not an option, it was as if the relationship was not worth building.

We did not feel we had much say in identifying and building connections and lost opportunities to build our networks of support and family.

BEST PRACTICES

- Identify supportive adults and talk about the importance of this support throughout a youth's time in care.
- Use the youth's case file and family finding technology to identify connections.
- Ask youth about adults who are important to them.
- Explain that youth can be connected to supportive adults in different ways, and ask youth about the types of relationships they would like to have. Remind them that not all connections have to be placements.
- Ask what you can do to help youth connect to supportive adults and to maintain those relationships, including with family.
- Ask what skills youth need to develop to maintain positive connections and to learn how to recognize healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Respect the relationships that are important to youth. If you think these relationships are unhealthy, help youth understand why.

When we received support to build and maintain connections with supportive adults, either while in care or after we left, we saw the tangible benefits of having them in our lives.

They are there for us and provide support when we need it.

Tool 6: Meaningfully Engaging Youth in Family Finding

GOAL: BETTER ENGAGE YOUTH IN THE FAMILY FINDING PROCESS

Youth should be actively engaged in the family finding process, including deciding who is contacted and how, and getting support to build and maintain these connections.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Family finding is a powerful way to identify potential connections and can provide a supportive network for youth as they enter adulthood. Youth need to understand the process and what can happen once connections are identified. They need to have opportunities to talk through their feelings and options. When youth don't have this information or are not engaged in the process, they may not be open to participating, resulting in missed opportunities for important connections.

OUR EXPERIENCES

- Some of us never participated in family finding during our time in care.
- We were unaware of family finding or that it was an option for us.
- We did not understand what family finding was; we thought it meant finding siblings who were adopted—even after we were told about the process and engaged in it.
- When we were engaged in the family finding process, we felt more emphasis was put on connecting to adults who could provide stable housing and less on people who could support us in other ways.
- We were not provided with emotional or logistical support to connect with relatives who were identified during the process.
- We did not receive emotional support to maintain these connections.

Many of us are aging out or have aged out of care without any supportive adults in our lives.

We were not supported to build or maintain connections with adults, especially not with people who could not provide placement or legal permanency.

BEST PRACTICES

- Engage in family finding the moment a child enters care and at least once a year to ensure youth have supportive, life-long connections with family and kin.
- Explain the purpose of family finding and how it fits with locating other resources, including kin.
- Explain the types of actions that can be taken once family or kin are identified.
- Work with youth to make a list of people who are important to them and revisit and add to this list frequently.
- Assist youth with contacting kin who they say are important to them.
- Take advantage of technology to locate family and kin.
- Help youth make good decisions about the relationships they develop with family and kin, and help them identify healthy relationships.
- Help youth develop a strong network of several supportive adults. Be supportive of youth who develop relationships with kin and family, even if they do not lead to placement or legal permanency.

The appendix includes scenarios and prompts that show what family finding can look like for a family finding social worker and a youth working together.

DID YOU KNOW

The Affordable Care Act made youth who were in foster care at age 18 or older eligible for Medicaid until age 26. Learn more at <https://at.jlc.org/medicaid-FAQ>.

The law requires the agency to work with the youth to develop a transition plan before they leave care at age 18 or older. This should at least include plans for housing, employment, education, health, and connections with supportive adults. The plan must be approved by the court before discharge.

When leaving care at age 18 or older, youth must be provided with the following documents: birth certificate, social security card, state identification card/driver's license, health insurance information, medical record, and documentation of the time youth spent in foster care. 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(5)(I).

Tool 7: Creating a Comprehensive Transition Plan That Includes Connections with Services and Resources

ALL youth need supports to transition into adulthood successfully. One of the most crucial supports are caring adults who provide moral and other resource support. However, when youth do not have some of their most basic needs met, it is hard for them to maintain supportive relationships and to work on goals because their time is consumed surviving and making ends meet.

Making sure we have the items and services listed below before we leave care will help us be successful.

I. Mental Health Services

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Young people need to have access to comprehensive mental health support. Many of us have experienced trauma and need support to address it. Our experience with treatment was sometimes difficult, but many of us need help finding treatment and being supported during treatment. When we need treatment and do not receive it, we struggle to achieve many of our goals, including forming supportive connections. By helping us access treatment, you will be helping us get ready for permanency.

BEST PRACTICES

- Talk to youth about the importance and value of treatment.
- Connect them to comprehensive mental health treatment.
- Help them understand and manage their emotional and mental health.
- Help them explore non-traditional ways of addressing emotions, like getting involved in activities and hobbies or learning meditation.
- Teach youth about their prescriptions and how to manage and administer them.
- While developing a plan with youth, teach them how to schedule, find, and access mental health services.

Many of us have aged out—or are close to aging out—and did not have access to some of these supports, which include people and resources and are important to our ability to make it when we transition out of care.

- Teach youth about their right to services, including confidentiality and HIPPA
- Help youth find the therapist and treatment that are a good match for us, even if it's not the right fit on the first try.
- Look past behavior and understand that sometimes youth act certain ways because of being hurt.

II. Health Insurance Coverage

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Having health insurance is important for youth to access important services for physical, mental, and emotional health. When youth are healthy, they are better positioned to talk about permanency and maintain supportive relationships.

BEST PRACTICES

- Help youth understand that they are eligible for Medicaid until age 26 if they were in foster care at age 18 and that they should be enrolled in Medicaid as a former foster youth before aging out of care.
- if youth left foster care before reaching age 18, help them get assistance to apply for Medicaid or other health insurance as part of their transition plan.
- Assist youth to secure and maintain any public benefits they may be eligible for, such as SSI and food stamps, prior to exiting care—those will help meet their basic needs and maintain their health.

III. A Comprehensive Housing Plan

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Too many young people become homeless when they age out of care, and this gets in the way of building a successful future. If youth do not have a safe place to live, it is hard for them to have stability. Having a detailed and realistic housing plan will prevent youth from becoming homeless. Having stable housing is an essential element of achieving permanency.

BEST PRACTICES

- Work with youth as early as possible to develop a transition plan with several housing options.
- Help youth understand and be realistic about all the costs involved in living on their own.
- Help youth develop skills and credentials so that they have the income they need

to maintain and afford stable housing when they leave care. If they are making minimum wage, it may be hard for them to afford rent in most cities.

- If youth are attending college, make sure they have a plan for housing during breaks or between semesters.
- Work with youth to understand different options for stable housing, like roommates or living with family.
- Teach and work with youth to review and understand leases and tenant's rights.
- Refer youth to programs to help pay rent or make housing affordable.
- Help youth to understand the realities of affordable housing, including how public housing and other subsidy programs work.
- Assist youth in developing and learning daily living skills to manage their apartment or housing.
- Make sure youth are aware of extended foster care and aftercare and how it can help with meeting housing needs.
- Help youth to build a good transition plan and make sure that no youth leaves care and becomes homeless.

DID YOU KNOW

The Permanency Pact is a tool that can be used by youth in foster care and supportive adults to help establish permanency and a support network. It provides a way to formalize the relationship and identify expectations. Read more at <http://bit.ly/2E2F7jk>.

Youth are already looking for family, so professionals need to get up to speed. Include youth in the process of connecting with family, kin, and caring adults so youth understand the processes and feel comfortable with the steps being taken.

Pennsylvania law requires that family finding be conducted annually until a youth leaves care. If APPLA is the goal, agency must document its efforts to utilize search technology to find biological family members for the child. 62 P.S. § 1302.1 & 42 Pa. C.S.A. 6351 (f.1)(5).

IV. Vital Records

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Having vital records (birth certificate, state ID and driver's license, social security card, and proof of valid citizenship status) is essential to access education, physical and mental healthcare, employment, and more. Physically having these documents in care and as they transition out, better equips youth to secure employment and other essentials for a successful transition into adulthood.

BEST PRACTICES

- Make sure youth understand the child welfare agency's obligation to provide vital documents before they leave care at age 18 or older; and help them raise this issue in planning meetings and in court.
- Teach youth the importance of these documents and how to request them if they are needed in the future.
- Make sure youth and their children have a safe place to store documents, including electronically.

APPENDIX: FAMILY FINDING SCENARIOS

Introduction

Family Finding is not always easy—sometimes youth need assistance identifying supportive adults and help maintaining connections with those adults. Tool 6: Meaningfully Engaging Youth in Family Finding, explains some of the challenges we faced during our own Family Finding processes and outlines best practices for engaging youth in that process.

Family Finding should be a collaborative process with youth and caseworkers (or the person designated to complete family finding); and youth should be involved at every step.

The following scenarios show how youth should be engaged in the process, and how the case worker and youth can work together to come up with the best possible outreach plan. These scenarios were also designed to help youth understand the process, to foster collaboration between the youth and case worker, and ensure the process is based on the youth's interests.

Use the scenarios and prompts when you are working with a youth to reach out to a supportive adult or family member. The goal is to create the ideal situation for reaching out. Create a script, including as many steps and details as possible, and role play the best scenario. We suggest doing these at the beginning of the Family Finding process or at the specific stages when these scenarios are most relevant.

Scenario 1: Adult Family Member, Frank

Frank is the youth's uncle on their mother's side and lives in Ohio. How would you work with the youth to reach out to Frank?

PHASE 1: REACHING OUT TO FRANK

Ask the youth:

- Should we call Frank, or if provided, send him an email?
- Who should complete the first call? Would you like to and is that the best plan?
- Should I (the caseworker) to make the first call or point of contact?
- If I called, how would you like me to describe why I am calling?
- Do you want me (the caseworker) to leave Frank a voicemail?
- Should the first contact be a brief introduction?

PHASE 2: FRANK IS INTERESTED IN AN INITIAL CONNECTION

Ask the youth:

- If Frank is interested in connecting, how do you want to proceed with him?
- Should I (the caseworker) ask what he can provide?
- Should I ask Frank if you can live with him?
- Would you like me to set up in-person meetings or additional calls so you can get to know Frank better?
- Do you want to set up these meetings and calls yourself?

PHASE 3: MAINTAINING THE CONNECTION

What Frank can do to support the youth affects how you both will proceed with maintaining the connection with him.

Ask the youth:

- How do you want to proceed in maintaining a connection to Frank? Please be as detailed as possible. For example, do you want me to set up virtual or in-person meetings?
- How do you want to define what the relationship with Frank is?
- If you can live with Frank, how can they begin to build the relationship before the youth leaves to stay with them?
- If you cannot live with Frank, do you want to build a relationship with Frank so that he can be a support for you?
- What would you like me to do to help you build a relationship?

Alternative Scenario: If Frank is not interested in connecting, how should we proceed?

As the case worker, consider how the youth will feel and the best way to share this information.

Scenario 2: Older Sibling, Iman

Iman (identify sibling's pronouns) is the youth's older sibling. They live in Delaware county, and the youth has not seen them since they were separated as children. How would you work with the youth to reach out to Iman?

PHASE 1: REACHING OUT TO IMAN

Ask the youth:

- Would you like me (the caseworker) to call Iman, or if provided, send an email or message on Facebook?
- Should I leave a voicemail?
- Or, if you would like to call, how would you describe why you all are calling?
- Would this just be a brief introduction?

PHASE 2: IMAN IS INTERESTED IN AN INITIAL CONNECTION

Ask the youth:

- What is the best way for you to connect with Iman?
- How do you want to proceed with getting to knowing your sibling?
- Should you be the one to call the next time?
- Would you like me to set up meetings or additional calls to get to know Iman better again? Or, do you want to set up meetings and calls yourself?
- Should we ask what Iman can provide?
- Should one of us ask if youth can live with Iman?

PHASE 3: MAINTAINING THE CONNECTION

What Iman can do to support the youth affects how youth both will proceed in maintaining the connection.

Ask the youth:

- How do you want to proceed in maintaining a connection to Iman? Please be as detailed as possible. For example, do you want me to set up virtual and in-person meetings?
- How do you want to define what the relationship is?
- If the you can live with Iman, how do you want to build the relationship before you stay with Iman?
- If you cannot live with Iman, do you want to build a relationship so that they can be a a support for you?
- What would you like me to do to help you build a relationship?

Alternative Scenario: If Iman is not interested in connecting further, how should we proceed next?

As the case worker consider how the youth will feel and the best way to share this information.

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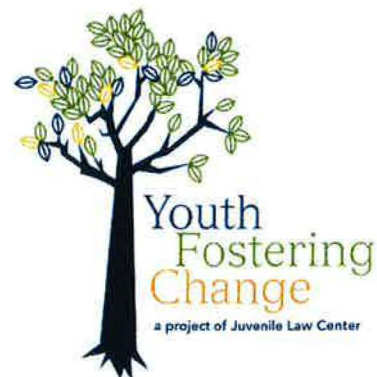


OLDER YOUTH PERMANENCY HEARING

May 2019



Juvenile
Law Center



TRANSITION AGE YOUTH in Pennsylvania

THE FACTS

33% of PA's
foster youth are
transition age
youth

8,639 YOUTH



47% of transition age
youth are in group
homes or institutions

49% age out of care,
instead of being
connected to family

25% of transition age youth
have been in 2+ placements
while in care

42% of have been
in 3+ placements



BY AGE 21...



37% experience
homelessness or
unstable housing

Just 44% of
transition age
youth have full
or part-time
employment



Only 75% earn a
GED or high
school diploma,
compared to 92%
of their peers

**WE HAVE THE TOOLS TO
CHANGE THE STORY FOR
TRANSITION AGE YOUTH.**

WHAT CHANGES IN LAW AND POLICY WILL PROMOTE PERMANENCY FOR OLDER YOUTH?

While portions of existing law offer powerful tools for achieving permanency for older youth, Pennsylvania lacks both specificity in its mandates and accountability in the delivery of services and outcomes. To prioritize achieving permanency and family for older youth, laws and policies must be clear about expectations, and there must be accountability.

We recommend five actions Pennsylvania can take to show that all youth deserve family:

I. Increase the number of family and kin able to provide permanency and support to youth by creating more accountability in finding family.

- Amend the law and provide guidance to require that the child welfare agency explain family finding to youth and engage them throughout the process.
- Provide guidance to set standards for family finding to ensure that state-of-the-art technology is used and the highest standards of practice are set.

II. Increase the capacity of caregivers and kin to provide lasting permanency by enhancing support to relatives, kin, and all permanency resources.

- Continue to invest state funds in a kinship navigator program and implement evidence-based programs so the state can maximize its use of federal funds.
- Invest state funds in providing kinship care subsidies to unlicensed kin.
- Re-enact provisions of Act 80 to provide adoption and guardianship subsidies until age 21 for youth who are adopted or enter guardianships at age 13 or older.
- Take the option under the Family First Prevention and Services Act to extend Chafee aftercare services to youth until age 23, and extend eligibility for the Education and Training Grant until age 26.
- Amend the state IV-E plan so that IV-E funds can be used to provide adoption subsidies to families until age 21 to youth who have

disabilities or special needs. This option is permissible under 42 U.S.C.A. 673 (a)(4)(A).

III. Ensure effective permanency services are provided to older youth by amending the law to require that agencies document and the court make findings as to the specific permanency services that are provided to older youth in the following areas:

- Identifying permanency resources
- Preparing youth for permanency
- Strengthening identified supportive connections and permanency resources
- Maintaining and strengthening sibling connections

IV. Provide system accountability and successful transitions to adulthood for older youth by amending the law to ensure that transition/discharge planning requirements are being followed and to prohibit the discharge of older youth from the child welfare system into homelessness.

V. Ensure system accountability and successful transitions for older youth by amending the law to require the reporting of data related to permanency and older youth outcomes to the legislature, and impose consequences when outcomes do not reach established standards.

Collection of data and outcomes should include the number of transition aged youth who leave the child welfare system and who:

- Have the permanency plan of APPLA
- Have achieved family-based permanency plans
- Have a high quality transition plan
- Have stable housing and income
- Have at least one supportive adult connection
- Have been enrolled in Medicaid as a former foster youth
- Have their vital documents

Learn more at www.jlc.org.

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

Almost half (49%) of Pennsylvania's transition age youth age out without being reunified or connected to a permanent family. This means thousands of young people are leaving the state's care without adequate support, a loving family, or the resources and people necessary for them to grow into thriving adults.

Many members of [Youth Fostering Change](#) aged out without family or supportive connections. Some of us are about to leave the system without permanency. We are uncertain about our lives and futures. Our goal is to improve permanency outcomes for children in foster care, regardless of circumstances or age.

The following summary of our recommendations are based on our experiences and are explained in more detail in our Tools for Success toolkit. Download the toolkit at www.jlc.org.

1. Communicate the Importance of Permanency

Youth deserve respect: make sure to explain what permanency is and why it's important, and listen to their views and concerns. In addition, be mindful of trauma and adolescent development when communicating about a youth's case planning and when building relationships with supportive adults.

2. Meaningfully Engage Youth in Their Permanency Planning

To be successful in permanency planning, youth need to be on board, invested, and clear about their permanency goals. Engaging youth starts with including them in discussions and preparing them for planning meetings. Think about how meetings are planned, including the logistics for youth to attend and fully participate.

3. Facilitate Placement Stability

Youth need to feel safe in placements. They deserve stable living arrangements where they are secure, treated with respect, cared for, and loved. Youth need to know about their new placement or placement changes in advance, including the location, when they will arrive, with whom they will stay, and the placement type.

4. Cultivate Youth's Connections with Kin

Youth need help staying connected with family. Research shows that many youth who age out turn to family for support. Family separation causes trauma and grief, and maintaining family connections is important for emotional health and well-being. Consider reunification, and if it isn't an option, youth may still want those relationships.

5. Focus on Relational Permanency and Legal Permanency

Youth want legal permanency when possible, but having a network of consistent, supportive relationships that last past aging-out of care is just as important. Most people don't have just one person who provides all the support they will ever need. If youth have the option of multiple supportive adults, then youth can have all the support that they need.

6. Follow the Family Finding Requirements

Family finding is a great way to identify people who can provide different types of support for youth to achieve permanency.

State law requires annual family finding work; ideally this process starts early and increasingly involves youth as they age. Work with youth during family finding, so they can identify supportive connections and develop a plan for how to involve and reach out to the adult.

7. Ensure a Comprehensive Transition Plan Is in Place, Including Direct Connections to Services and Resources

Regardless of a youth's permanency goal, transition plans are vital to youth entering adulthood. Without a solid plan, youth tend to focus on short-term rather than long-term goals. Developing a transition plan with youth that includes connections to people, skill-building, and resources is essential for their stability.



FOSTERING SUCCESSFUL YOUTH TRANSITIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Laying the Groundwork for Change
through Law and Policy Reform

Juvenile Fighting for the rights
and well-being of youth
Law Center



FOSTERING SUCCESSFUL YOUTH TRANSITIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Laying the Groundwork for Change through Law and Policy Reform

This FAQ is part of a series of resources on fostering successful transitions, made in collaboration with Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. Visit www.jlc.org/resources for related resources in this series.

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC) is a strong, effective and trusted voice to improve the health, education and well-being of children and youth in the commonwealth. Since 1992 its public policy victories have helped countless children learn, thrive and succeed, regardless of circumstances. PPC is statewide, independent, non-partisan and non-profit. Learn more at papartnerships.org.

Juvenile Law Center advocates for rights, dignity, equity and opportunity for youth in the child welfare and justice systems. We strive to ensure that laws, policies, and practices affecting youth advance racial and economic equity and are rooted in research, consistent with children's unique developmental characteristics, and reflective of international human rights values. For more information about Juvenile Law Center's work, visit www.jlc.org.

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WHAT DOES “AGING OUT” MEAN?

Aging out refers to the time when a young adult leaves the child welfare system without being returned home or being placed with family through adoption or guardianship. When a youth ages out they are being discharged on their own.

HOW DOES AGING OUT WITHOUT FINDING PERMANENCY IMPACT ADULT OUTCOMES? WHY IS THAT A PROBLEM?

Youth need the support of family, community, resources, and opportunities to grow into thriving and successful adults. Youth receive significant emotional and financial support from family as they enter adulthood, and most do not make this transition until their mid-twenties.

Family support helps youth set and meet their goals, and provides a safety net when they face challenges. Family provides guidance, support, nurture, and unconditional love. It also provides connections to resources and people that are valuable to young adults who are finding their way in the world.

When youth age out on their own, they often do not have connections to people and resources to be successful—putting them at high risk for poor outcomes like homelessness, reliance on public benefits, and entering the criminal justice system. Aging out creates substantial barriers to success for young people and results in costly outcomes for society.

WHAT IS PERMANENCY PLANNING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Permanency means family or the establishment of nurturing, long-lasting family relationships that endure throughout an individual's life time. Family is central to healthy child and adolescent development, and young people greatly rely on the moral and financial support of family as they transition into adulthood.

The goal of the child welfare system is to provide a child with permanency by returning them home or establishing a new family for the child. This obligation lasts until the child exits the system.

The hierarchy of permanency plans is:

- reunification,
- adoption,
- guardianship,
- placement with a relative, and
- another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA).

TRANSITION AGE YOUTH in Pennsylvania

THE FACTS

BY AGE 21...

33% of PA's
foster youth are
transition age
youth



37% experience
homelessness or
unstable housing



47% of transition age
youth are in group
homes or institutions

49% age out of care,
instead of being
connected to family

Just 44% of
transition age
youth have full
or part-time
employment



25% of transition age youth
have been in 2+ placements
while in care

42% of have been
in 3+ placements



Only 75% earn a
GED or high
school diploma,
compared to 92%
of their peers

**WE HAVE THE TOOLS TO
CHANGE THE STORY FOR
TRANSITION AGE YOUTH.**

APPLA stands for “Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.” It is the least preferred permanency plan. APPLA has been overused for older youth and usually means youth will age out without achieving permanency.

Recent changes in federal and state law should greatly reduce the use of APPLA and increase chances for permanency. However, positive results are yet to be seen, and APPLA remains a short hand for aging out. 42 Pa. C.S.A. 6351 (f.1)(5).

Permanency Planning begins as soon as a child enters the foster care system and is the process by which services and supports are selected and provided to help re-establish family connections or establish new ones. Children find permanency through the establishment of strong, long-lasting relationships with people who play the role of parents. Usually these relationships are formalized through law, such as adoption or guardianship.

Permanency is also enhanced by extended family and a strong support network that can be provided by mentors, kin, and even peers. This is sometimes referred to as “relational permanency.”

WHAT IS TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD PLANNING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Transition to adulthood planning is the planning for service delivery and supports that will aid youth in acquiring the skills and competencies to prepare them for adulthood. This can include:

- providing support around education and higher education planning;
- life skills instruction, support, and practice;
- budgeting and financial planning; and
- self care.

This planning should be driven by the youth, involve real world practice, and include developing goals and monitoring outcomes.

Transition to adulthood planning must begin at age 14—at the latest—and should continue throughout the life of the case. 42 Pa. C.S.A. 6351 (f)(8); Juvenile Court Rules 1608 (D)(k).

Transition Planning should also complement Permanency Planning. Like Permanency Planning, Transition Planning is important because it guides service delivery and helps establish accountability. The law requires that the youth have a high quality transition plan, that the court make findings that this plan exists, and that the youth is making progress to meet his or her goals. 42 Pa. C.S.A. 6351 (f)(8), (f)(8.2); Juvenile Court Rules 1631 (E)(2).

Before a young person leaves the child welfare system at age 18 or older, they must also have a transition plan that ensures their needs are met and that they are able to thrive as adults. Under Pennsylvania law, the court should not discharge a youth

without a transition/discharge plan that includes specifics in the following areas:

- housing,
- income,
- education and training goals,
- employment,
- health insurance and any continued health or behavioral health needs,
- vital documents, and
- proof of former foster care status.

HOW ARE PERMANENCY SERVICES PROVIDED IN PA? WHAT IS THE STATEWIDE ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY NETWORK (SWAN)?

The purpose of the child welfare system is to return youth home or place them with family, and the law does require that reasonable efforts are made to finalize—or achieve—a permanency plan. However, the law does not mandate specific permanency services.

County child welfare agencies provide permanency services in many ways, and good casework is one of the most powerful supports for permanency. For example, most cases have the goal of reunification, and county agencies work hard to provide services to the youth and family to support reunification.

An important way Pennsylvania provides services to help children and youth achieve permanency is through [SWAN](#) and their contracted agencies throughout the state. The services provided include: child profile, child preparation, child-specific recruitment, family profile, child placement, adoption finalization, and post-permanency services. These services help find and support permanency resources, including kin, in addition to supporting youth so they can be open to and prepared for permanency.

Family finding is another example of a permanency service that is required annually under state law. Behavioral health services to help youth deal with loss and trauma so that they can prepare for permanency can also be considered permanency services.

Older youth are the least likely age group to be placed in family settings. Youth of color are the least likely of all youth to be placed in family settings.

Keeping Kids in Families: Trends in U.S. Foster Care Placement (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2019).

ARE OLDER YOUTH RECEIVING PERMANENCY SERVICES?

Youth of all ages should receive permanency services, but it is not clear that older youth are receiving services with the same intensity as younger children. This puts them at a severe disadvantage for finding family. Older youth are eligible for SWAN services, but many are not receiving them.

For example, it was reported that of the youth who were age 16 or older and had a permanency plan of APPLA, only 7.3% received a child profile, 6.5% received child preparation, and 3.7% received child specific recruitment. [Report of the Recommendations of the APPLA Workgroup to the General Assembly 20](#) (PA Department of Human Services April 2016).

Feedback from youth reveals similar patterns indicating that finding family is not prioritized as youth get older. Why this occurs is not completely clear, but misconceptions that youth do not want permanency and decisions to focus solely on preparing youth for adulthood are partly responsible.

No matter the reason, this trend must change: youth **do** want permanency and need family, as well as skills, to make a successful transition to adulthood.

WHAT DO YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS RECOMMEND TO IMPROVE THEIR CHANCES FOR PERMANENCY?

Youth want permanency. They need the system to respect their existing family ties and understand the impact of their experiences on their ability to trust and be ready to connect with caring adults.

[Youth Fostering Change](#), one of Juvenile Law Center's advocacy programs for youth with child welfare experience, recommend the following in their publication, *Tools for Success*:

1. **Communicate and explain the importance of permanency to youth in terms that make sense to them.** Youth cannot be invested in plans they do not understand and are not active participants in creating.
2. **Facilitate placement stability.** Multiple placements and being in placements where youth feel unsafe or unwelcome prevent youth from connecting with their community and developing lasting bonds.
3. **Cultivate youth's connections with kin, and take the family finding requirements seriously.** Youth care about and feel connected with their family, even if they cannot return home. Failing to acknowledge or cultivate these connections leave youth with too much to deal with on their own and may block opportunities for healing.

4. **Focus on relational and legal permanency.** Youth want relationships they can count on. Legal ties are important, but the strength and enduring nature of a lasting connection is paramount.
5. **Make sure youth have transition plans in place that connect them to services, resources, and people.** It's difficult for youth to focus on permanency when they are worried about their future or aging out. Poor Transition Planning can interfere with permanency, while excellent Transition Planning always includes Permanency Planning.

WHAT CHANGES IN LAW AND POLICY WILL PROMOTE PERMANENCY FOR OLDER YOUTH?

While there are portions of existing law that offer powerful tools for achieving permanency for older youth, Pennsylvania lacks both specificity in its mandates and accountability in the delivery of services and outcomes. To prioritize achieving permanency and family for older youth, laws and policies must be clear about expectations, and there must be accountability.

We recommend five actions Pennsylvania can take to show that all youth deserve family:

I. Increase the number of family and kin able to provide permanency and support to youth by creating more accountability in finding family.

- Amend the law and provide guidance to require that the child welfare agency explain family finding to youth and engage them throughout the process.
- Provide guidance to set standards for family finding to ensure that state-of-the-art technology is used and the highest standards of practice are set.

II. Increase the capacity of caregivers and kin to provide lasting permanency by enhancing support to relatives, kin, and all permanency resources.

- Continue to invest state funds in a kinship navigator program and implement evidence-based programs so the state can maximize its use of federal funds.

- Invest state funds in providing kinship care subsidies to unlicensed kin.
- Re-enact provisions of Act 80 to provide adoption and guardianship subsidies until age 21 for youth who are adopted or enter guardianships at age 13 or older.
- Take the option under the Family First Prevention and Services Act to extend Chafee aftercare services to youth until age 23, and extend eligibility for the Education and Training Grant until age 26.
- Amend the state IV-E plan so that IV-E funds can be used to provide adoption subsidies to families until age 21 to youth who have disabilities or special needs. This option is permissible under 42 U.S.C.A. 673 (a)(4)(A).

III. Ensure effective permanency services are provided to older youth by amending the law to require that agencies document and the court make findings as to the specific permanency services that are provided to older youth in the following areas:

- Identifying permanency resources
- Preparing youth for permanency
- Strengthening identified supportive connections and permanency resources
- Maintaining and strengthening sibling connections

IV. Provide system accountability and successful transitions to adulthood for older youth by amending the law to ensure that transition/discharge planning requirements are being followed and to prohibit the discharge of older youth from the child welfare system into homelessness.

V. Ensure system accountability and successful transitions for older youth by amending the law to require the reporting of data related to permanency and older youth outcomes to the legislature, and impose consequences when outcomes do not reach established standards. Collection of data and outcomes should include the number of transition aged youth who leave the child welfare system and who:

- Have the permanency plan of APPLA
- Have achieved family-based permanency plans
- Have a high quality transition plan
- Have stable housing and income
- Have at least one supportive adult connection
- Have been enrolled in Medicaid as a former foster youth
- Have their vital documents