



Use This Video Discussion Guide to Spark Change

Young people can have some pretty strong opinions — including about family. As this video, “[Every Kid Needs a Family: A Message to Caseworkers](#),” shows, those who as teens might say family isn’t important often change their minds when they become adults. The message from these young adults who grew up in foster care is unequivocal: **Hang in there. Be gentle, but please push!** “Teens may not want family now, but in 15 years they will,” says Richard LeFebvre, who was adopted as an adult. “They’ll thank you then.”

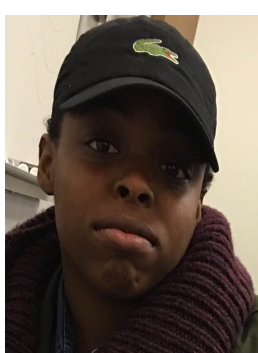
Please use this video (and its companion, “[Every Kid Needs a Family: Advice to My Younger Self](#)”) at monthly caseworker meetings, for trainings on finding family for teens or in other forums that help focus caseworkers on the critical task of making sure every young person, no matter their age, is part of a family.

Spread the message!

In conversations with your coworkers, share the stories of these young adults who grew up in foster care. Spread the message they want you and others to hear loud and clear: Every teen deserves to have a lifelong family.

Act now! Kids can’t wait.

Questions on the next page can spark discussions on why teens need family and what caseworkers can do to help. [#kidsneedfamily](#)



Zionya, Richard, Alexis and Claire (left to right) spent time in foster care. “We all come from different parts of the country, but we all have similar experiences,” says Zionya Nolan of Sacramento. “I needed to be in a home that supported who I was.” Alexis Diggs of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, says, “I was afraid of having a family. Without one, I got to a point where I wanted to give up.” Claire Linville, a social worker, aged out of foster care. Claire nods in agreement when adoptive parent Stephen McCall of New York City says, “When a teen tells a caseworker, ‘No, I don’t want a family,’ no simply cannot be the final answer.”

Discussion Questions

1. What about this video resonates with you?
2. Are the experiences described by these young people familiar to you? In what ways?
3. What can you do to connect more teens with family? What barriers do you experience?
4. What are common placement practices for teens in your location? What more could be done to make sure as many teens as possible are in family placements and are building permanent family relationships that will last a lifetime?
5. Do you need more information, training or support to help teens repair relationships with birth family and build relationships with kin, foster and adoptive families?
6. What steps can you and your unit take to ensure more teens in foster care have strong, lasting family relationships now and as adults?
7. What do you find to be effective in helping teens understand their need for family?



What Caseworkers Can Do

Are you familiar with “Unpacking the NO”? It’s a way to think about strategies for talking with teens who insist they don’t need family. Learn more at <http://www.nrcpfc.org/is/youth-permanency.html>. Talk with your colleagues and supervisors to learn more and build skills.

Share these materials!

- Video: “Every Kid Needs a Family: A Message to Caseworkers”
- Video: “Every Kid Needs a Family: Advice to My Younger Self”
- Discussion guide



Stephanie (top left) and **Jamole** say teens who clamor to age out have no idea what they are up against. “I thought I knew everything when I decided to age out at 18. Then I realized I didn’t,” says Stephanie LaPlante of Springfield, Massachusetts. “Get to know the teens on your caseload and know who they are. They are kids who need families,” she says. “The subject of adoption never came up in the six years I was in foster care,” says Jamole Callahan of Columbus, Ohio. “The most important thing I want caseworkers to know is that every teen needs that chance for a forever family.”

www.aecf.org/help-teens-find-family/