



training manual

THE LIFELONG FAMILIES MODEL: IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL

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Introduction

Casey Family Services, the direct service agency of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a multiservice child welfare agency that historically delivered high-quality, long-term foster care for children and youth with complex special needs who were deemed unlikely to find families through reunification or adoption. Casey recruited a cadre of reliable foster families, many of whom parented children and youth from foster care until and often after age 18. As the Casey Foundation and agency managers shifted their aim to preventing youth from “aging out” and achieving more permanent family outcomes, they recognized that frontline practice had to change. In 2005, Casey Family Services, building on its experience, transformed its practice approach to focus on securing permanent, loving families for children and youth and a timely exit from foster care. Casey Family Services called this organizational change the Move to Greater Permanence (MGP) and the practice shifts evolved into the Lifelong Families (LF) model. Assessed along a diverse set of criteria, preliminary results from implementation of the Lifelong Families model are encouraging in terms of outcomes for children. The agency also has demonstrated efficiency in service provision and revenue generation.

Achieving these outcomes required careful planning and implementation. From the outset, Casey Family Services viewed the MGP change initiative as an opportunity to model the qualities and best practices of a learning organization. Purposeful and data-driven change management in the context of a strong incentive to act creates a perfect scenario for learning while doing. While establishing the new practice framework, a continuous and inclusive evaluation process was essential to promote change, refine supports, improve outcomes and articulate lessons learned.

The Lifelong Families Implementation Manual is the culmination of seven years of program design, practice model development, service delivery and evaluation. It is shaped by the definition of “implementation” promoted by Fixen and colleagues as “a specific set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions.”¹ The Lifelong Families model is a program of “known dimensions” and the “specific set of activities” that comprise this Model are described here in detail so that independent observers can readily detect the presence and strength of each activity. This Manual has two sections:

PART I: provides an overview of the concept of permanence for youth in foster care and Casey Family Services’ permanency practice, with specific focus on the agency’s Lifelong Families model.

PART II: describes in detail each component of the Lifelong Families model, detailing the specific set of activities that make up each component. Chapter 5 provides detailed information on permanency teaming; Chapter 6 discusses permanency-focused case management; Chapters 7A and 7B focus on permanency preparation; Chapters 8A and 8B address permanent family identification and engagement; and Chapter 9 describes permanency support planning.

PART I. CASEY FAMILY SERVICES FAMILY PERMANENCE PRACTICE

This part of the Replication Manual reviews the research and literature that focus on youth permanence, provides the foundations of Casey Family Services' permanency practice, and introduces the principles and components of the Lifelong Families model.

Chapter 1. Permanency Families for Youth in Foster Care

The Lifelong Families model responds to the critical needs of youth in foster care for permanent families. In this chapter, we review:

- The concept of permanence;
- The role of family in young people's lives and in particular, in the lives of youth in and formerly in foster care;
- The importance of focusing on family permanence for youth in foster care;
- The meaning of family permanence to young people themselves; and
- The common barriers to achieving family permanence addressed by the Lifelong Families model.

What is Permanence?

Permanence, like safety and well-being, is a legally required goal for all children and youth in foster care. Although the law does not specifically define permanence, efforts have been made to craft descriptions that capture the essence of family permanence. As defined by Casey Family Services,² permanence means having an enduring family relationship that:

- Is safe and meant to last a lifetime;
- Offers the legal right and social status of full family membership;
- Provides for physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual well-being; and
- Assures lifelong connections to extended family, siblings and other significant adults, along with family history and traditions, race, ethnicity, culture, religion and language.

The National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning and The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice,³ in their framework for permanence for young people, state that permanence is “about locating and supporting a lifetime family” that brings “physical, legal, and emotional safety and security within the context of family relationships and allows multiple relationships with a variety of caring adults.” The framework clarifies that permanence:

“ . . . is achieved with a family relationship that offers safe, stable, and committed parenting, unconditional love and lifelong support, and legal family membership status. Permanence can be the result of preservation of the family, reunification with birth family or legal guardianship or adoption by kin, fictive kin, or other caring and committed adults”.

The California Permanency for Youth Task Force⁴ describes permanence as both a process and a result that includes involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in finding a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides:

- A safe, stable and secure parenting relationship;
- Love;
- Unconditional commitment; and
- Lifelong support in the context of reunification, a legal adoption or guardianship, where possible, and in which the youth has the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons including brothers and sisters.

The Role of Family in Youth's Lives

A growing body of research and practice experience makes clear that all youth, including youth in foster care, need family. The ability to successfully develop through adolescence and into young adulthood is tied to the young person's relationships with his or her family.⁵ It is family that serves as both a physical and an emotional base of operations as the young person explores the new roles of adulthood. As a physical base for young people, parents and extended family provide a home, money and other material support. As an emotional base, parents and extended family provide guidance, wisdom and community connections.⁶ Family relationships and support play important roles in the psychological development of adolescents and young adults. Parental support affects the young person's ability to develop healthy interpersonal skills as well as their capacity to form intimate relationships.⁷ An important predictor of adolescent adjustment to adult self-sufficiency is parents' support for their children's healthy separation and individuation during adolescence.⁸

Although the nature of the relationships change over time, the continuity of family connections and a secure emotional base are crucial for healthy development of young people. As adolescents move toward independence, they continue to require stability in a home environment and a secure emotional base from which to explore and experience the world. Studies indicate that youth are more likely to achieve the developmental tasks of adolescence and adulthood when they feel connected to family, are able to discuss their problems with parents and extended family members, perceive that their parents have high expectations for them, frequently participate in shared activities with their families and have the consistent presence of their parents at the start and end of each day.⁹ Young people also need somewhere to come back to for reassurance, support and unconditional love in tough times.¹⁰

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PERMANENT FAMILIES AND LIFELONG CONNECTIONS: In the Lifelong Families model, lifelong connections are established in addition to, not in place of, a permanent parent. A lifelong connection is any other safe and caring adult committed to a relationship that is intended to exist indefinitely in the life of a youth. A lifelong connection is not an adult in a paid professional role with the youth. However, if an adult is in a paid professional role with the youth and subsequently makes a personal commitment to remain in this youth's life once he/she is no longer paid to do so, this adult may be identified as a lifelong connection.

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Why a Focus on Family Permanence for Youth in Foster Care

Over the past decade, increasing attention has been brought to the needs of youth in foster care for permanent families. National statistics show that youth remain in foster care longer and achieve permanence at lower rates than younger children.¹¹ A significant number of youth age out of foster care each year to live on their own. Since FY 2002, more than 200,000 young people left foster care without a legally sanctioned permanent family relationship to offer guidance and support as they made the gradual transition into adulthood (see Table 1).¹² Older youth entering foster care are more likely to age out of care. Eighty percent of youth who age out of care entered at age ten or older; about half were 15 years of age or older.¹³ As young people in foster care get older, they are less likely to achieve permanency and are more likely to exit on their own.¹⁴

Research on permanency outcomes for older youth in foster care is limited, but studies suggest that they are less likely than younger children to be reunited with their families and are less likely to have adoption as their permanency goal or to be adopted.¹⁵ In FY 2011, 17 percent of the 104,236 young people waiting to be adopted were ages 14 and older, but only 7 percent of those adopted from foster care in FY 2011 were in that age group.¹⁶

Studies consistently document poor outcomes for young people who age out of foster care without the benefit of a permanent family. As a group, these youth leave care without supports from their families or other caring adults and lack community connections. Chapin Hall's Midwest Evaluation of former foster

Table I: Number of Youth Aging Out and Percentage of Exits to Emancipation (Aging Out)

Year	Number of youth who emancipated	Percent of all exits from foster care that were to emancipation
1999	18,964	3.3
2000	20,172	3.7
2001	19,039	3.5
2002	20,358	3.8
2003	22,432	4.3
2004	23,121	4.5
2005	24,407	4.9
2006	26,517	5.2
2007	29,730	10
2008	29,516	10
2009	29,471	11
2010	27,854	11
2011	26,286	11

youth (all of whom had aged out of foster care) at ages 23 and 24 documents very troubling outcomes for many youth who age out of care.¹⁷ The researchers found that:

- 47.5 percent of these young adults experienced precarious economic conditions, including not having enough money to pay rent or utilities.
- 24 percent reported having been homeless since exiting foster care.
- 24 percent did not have a high school diploma or GED by age 23 or 24.
- 48 percent of the young adults were employed at the time of the interview.
- 42 percent of the young men reported having been arrested and 23 percent reported being convicted of a crime.
- 65.6 percent of the young women reported having been pregnant since leaving foster care.¹⁸

African-American youth who age out of foster care fare even more poorly economically than their white counterparts.¹⁹ Dworsky and Courtney,²⁰ for example, found that African-American young people were more likely to receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and/or food stamps after they left foster care than were their white counterparts.

Avery's work on social capital for youth in foster care focuses on the social support that parents and other significant adults provide to promote their children's success in life.²¹ She found that a permanent nuclear and extended family is the most secure, longest-lasting and strongest support for young people aging out of foster care. Additionally, her study, as well as others, verified what many child welfare professionals suspected: Young people in foster care maintain strong hopes for connection to their families of origin and many who age out return to live with their biological families.²²

The urgency of achieving permanency for young people in foster care greatly intensifies as they approach adulthood given the significant challenges that they are likely to face if they age out of care without a permanent family.²³ For some years, permanency specialist Lauren Frey has asked her workshop audiences to write down "the things that your family did for you, gave to you, taught you or passed on to you that helped you to become a successful, productive adult."²⁴ She then asked participants to select the top three "must-haves if you have to choose." She noted that people consistently prioritize qualities such as unconditional love, a sense of belonging, family traditions, a strong work ethic, a chance to make mistakes, the value of spirituality, a home, emotional support and belief in one's self. In contrast, items on a sample standardized pre-discharge checklist from child welfare agencies make no mention of these important "must-haves": Youth will have an alarm clock, a high school diploma or GED, a source of income, a hobby, a library card and a driver's license. When permanency planning is done well, child welfare agencies assure that youth have families who can offer continuity of relationships, consistent parenting and an opportunity to establish life-long family relationships.²⁵

The Meaning of Family Permanence to Youth

While research and the professional literature make a strong case for permanency for youth, the most compelling statements about the importance of family permanence come from young people themselves. Young people who have received services from Casey Family Services say the following about permanent family:

“Family means someone to cheer you on to the next step.”

“I feel like I am whole because I have a family.”

“Now I have a family that I can go to anytime.”

“The definition of family now is that even though people were not with you your whole life, they could still care for you as if they were.”

“Both my adoptive and birth parents are going to be in my life as long as I live. And, when I have kids someday, they’ll both be grandparents. It will be a regular old thing to all of us.”

“I found my ‘forever family’ and I was adopted at age 13. I wish my brother and two sisters could have had experiences like I have had.”

The California Permanency for Youth Project asked young people in foster care about their perspectives on permanence.²⁶ Their comments reflect their desire to feel connected to people whose support is genuine and unconditional. Young people said:

“There’s something inside – because of what has happened in your life – that wants the love and care that you were denied or are in need of. For me, it was having the relationship with a mother figure, a father figure, and siblings. That above all was important.”

“Permanency would make all the difference in the experience of a youth’s life in the system because of its stability. It provides a youth with the opportunity to really know what it’s like to be cared for, not just because you are a foster child, but because you’re a person.”

Many of the young people stated that they wanted legally recognized family relationships. Among their comments:

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

“Legal permanency would have been the best thing for my interests, because that is a legal commitment that you could not sit on the side. And as far as foster parents, I don’t really like that situation, because kids mess up, we’re not perfect. And if we mess up, foster parents can say, hey, I don’t want you. And get that last check. And that’s not right, that’s no actual commitment.”

The Challenges in Achieving Family Permanence for Youth

A range of challenges in achieving youth permanence has been identified.²⁷ The Lifelong Families model addresses each of these challenges, as described fully in Chapters 5 through 9:

- Potential family resources buried in the case file.
- Strong biases against a youth's birth family.
- Lack of follow-through in searching for family, particularly on the father's side.
- Staff concentrating on the immediate future rather than on the long-term well-being of the youth.
- Labeling and pathologizing of youth behaviors.
- Difficulty maintaining urgency for youth permanency over the long term.
- Lack of attention to what the young person's experience will be when he or she leaves foster care.
- Belief system that the youth does not want a family and that the youth cannot be safely reunited or is "unadoptable."

Chapter 2. The Foundation of Casey Family Services' Permanency Practice

This chapter describes the history of Casey Family Services; the organization's mission, values and overarching practice principles; the nature of the agency's permanency services; and the population of children and youth that the agency serves.

The History of Casey Family Services

Jim Casey and his siblings George, Harry and Marguerite established the Annie E. Casey Foundation, of which Casey Family Services is part, in honor of their mother, a young widow who struggled to raise them. The Foundation's history starts in 1907, when Jim Casey, at age 19, began a messenger service in Seattle, Washington, to help his family make ends meet. That small family business became the global, multibillion dollar corporation UPS. Jim Casey had no children and, by 1948, he had amassed wealth beyond his personal needs. In that year, he and his siblings established the charitable foundation, reflecting Jim's belief that children's futures depend largely on what emotional, ethical and material supports their families are able to provide. For its first 20 years, the Casey Foundation primarily funded a camp for disadvantaged children in Seattle.

In the mid-1960s, Jim Casey retired as chief executive officer of UPS and turned his attention to reshaping the focus of the Foundation. In 1966, he launched Casey Family Programs, an independent Seattle-based foundation, which provides foster care and other programs for children and families. When UPS moved its headquarters to the East Coast, Jim Casey established similar programs in New England. These programs became known as Casey Family Services, which today provides services to thousands of children and families across New England and in Maryland.

In 2003, Casey Family Services moved its headquarters to New Haven, Connecticut. Today, the agency has more than 250 employees working to better the futures of children throughout New England and in Baltimore, Maryland. In recent years, Casey Family Services has strengthened its commitment to achieving a lifetime family for every child in its care. This focus on family permanence builds on a strong track record of achieving reunification and adoption, and providing post-adoption services and supports.

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THE CASEY FAMILY SERVICES MISSION: Casey Family Services is committed to improving the lives of at-risk youth¹ and strengthening families and communities by providing high-quality, cost effective services that advance both positive practice and sound public policy.

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¹ Casey Family Services serves children and youth ranging in age from birth to age 18 and young adults up to age 23.

Casey Family Services Practice Principles

At Casey Family Services, we believe that youth are most likely to thrive and reach their fullest potential when they grow up in safe, reliable and supportive families. We also believe that all youth have a right to legal membership in a permanent family. Our permanency-focused child welfare practice model is customized to address the needs of each youth for safety, permanence and well-being within a permanent family. Based on the premise that family permanence is possible, powerful and a priority for all children and youth no matter what their age or special needs, the Casey Family Services approach to permanency planning revolves around a core set of principles and service delivery components that are customized to meet each youth's individual needs and family situation.

While each Casey Family Services division offers supports and interventions designed to build on the strengths and meet the unique needs of the community in which it is located, staff in all divisions adhere to the following eight foundational practice principles to ensure that the youth and families with whom they work receive the highest quality services.

1. OUR WORK IS FAMILY FOCUSED AND STRENGTHS BASED.

We believe that reliable, nurturing families have the power to facilitate growth and positive change in youth. We define family broadly to include birth parents and siblings; blood and legal relatives; tribal members; godparents; fictive kin; current and/or past caregivers; adoptive and foster parents or guardians; and other individuals who are important to the youth. We are committed to helping individuals and families recognize, use and build on their inherent strengths.

2. OUR WORK IS PERMANENCY FOCUSED.

We ensure that youth in or at risk of entering the child welfare system have full-time, permanent parents who provide for their safety and well-being and offer them enduring legal rights and social status of full family membership.

3. OUR WORK IS SAFETY AND WELL-BEING FOCUSED.

We serve youth and families with histories of trauma and maltreatment that put them at risk of poor outcomes in life due to mental illness, learning difficulties, developmental delays and medical problems. We help promote their safety and well-being by providing services that are evidence-based and informed by best practice in the fields of social work, child welfare, mental health, education and health care.

4. OUR WORK IS OUTCOME FOCUSED.

We work in close partnership with youth and families to help them set and achieve realistic, measurable and time-focused goals that reflect their unique strengths, challenges and needs. We evaluate our services to ensure that they are effective. Documenting successful outcomes is critical to our ethical commitment to youth and families and is crucial to our ability to replicate our services internally and share our knowledge and experience with others.

5. OUR WORK IS TIME LIMITED.

We play a time-limited role in the life of a youth or family. In family strengthening services we work on a wide variety of goals to stabilize and support families to prevent them from entering or re-entering the child welfare system. This work is often episodic, as families and individuals may need a variety of different services as their circumstances change. In permanency planning services we work toward the single goal of securing a safe, permanent, legal family for each youth. Once a youth has a family, we close the permanency planning case, although a family may return for episodic family strengthening services if necessary.

6. OUR WORK IS COMMUNITY CENTERED.

We recognize that children and families grow and develop within communities and believe that when those communities do well, so do the children and families living in them. We are committed to improving the social and economic stability of families and neighborhoods and, when youth need foster care services, to keeping them connected to their communities of origin.

7. OUR WORK IS CULTURALLY COMPETENT.

We provide services that are sensitive to the unique racial, ethnic, cultural, social and economic heritage of each child and family. We work with diverse teams and outside agencies to ensure cultural competence and diversity. We are mindful that African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American youth enter foster care in disproportionate numbers and stay in care longer than other youth. Therefore, we use our resources and best practices to reduce the racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system.

8. OUR WORK IS COLLABORATIVE.

We strive to build and maintain respectful relationships with youth, families and other service providers, knowing that collaboration is key to coordinating services and achieving positive outcomes. In permanency planning services, Casey Family Services works with youth and their legal guardians to identify important people in their life, building a team to preserve or to develop and sustain family relationships. Teams include birth parents, siblings and extended family members collaborating together with the youth, foster parents/caregivers, legal custodian or state agency, professionals and other significant adults in the youth's life to secure a permanent family for the youth.

Permanency Planning Services

In permanency planning services, Casey Family Services provides services to youth in out-of-home placements, making every effort to reunify birth families safely, expeditiously and within the time frames stipulated by the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act. When birth families cannot provide safety, permanence and well-being, Casey social workers help youth identify and build relationships with other adults who can become lifelong, legal parents through adoption or guardianship. Services help youth have safe, enduring relationships with their birth parents, siblings, extended family and other reliable adults. Regardless of the youth's custody status, Casey Family Services includes birth parents to the fullest extent possible and encourages them to be involved in decision making.

Population Served

The target population is youth ages birth to 18 who are in out-of-home placements. The agency serves those youth for whom a permanent family has not yet been identified, and those youth for whom a permanent family has been identified, but where barriers to achieving permanency exist. Casey Family Services also serves young adults in the agency's foster care program to age 23. The youth include those who:

- Are in the custody of a state child protective service agency;
- Require a foster care placement that meets the youth's needs for safety, permanence and well-being; and
- Are in a state foster home and would benefit from permanency planning.

Casey Family Services accepts referrals of youth with state permanency plans of independent living, long-term foster care, or an alternative planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA); however, using case advocacy, the agency works with youth, families and state agencies to revise these plans, with the goal of helping youth achieve a permanent legal family relationship.

Chapter 3. Overview of the Lifelong Families Model

The Lifelong Families model is a collaborative approach to permanency planning for youth in foster care or at risk of entering the foster care system. The model is composed of five principles and five domains as shown in the Lifelong Families logic model in Figure 1.

The Five Principles of the Lifelong Families Model

Urgency: creating momentum to ensure a youth's timely exit to reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. From case opening, the social worker diligently focuses the team on achieving the primary or concurrent permanency goals and removing all agency-, family- and child-related barriers to legal permanence.

Placement in foster care is not an end, but a means to an end. Placement is a tool to assure the youth's safety and well-being until achieving permanence. The Lifelong Families model values the youth's needs for stability – in behavior, emotional functioning, education, living situation and family relationships – while guarding against settling for stability as the goal of foster care. The Lifelong Families model recognizes that advancing progress toward permanency requires taking calculated risks, and therefore, increasing the potential for temporary instability in one or more of these areas of youth need. The Lifelong Families model is designed to facilitate permanency planning and decision making in order to assure that each youth leaves foster care to reunification, adoption or legal guardianship in a timely way.

Advocacy: 1) advocating at all levels for youth to leave foster care with safe, legally permanent parents – either by reunifying with birth parents, legal guardianship with relatives or adoption; 2) advocating for appropriate and accessible services to achieve, support and/or sustain permanency with birth parents, relative guardians and adoptive parents; and 3) advocating with professionals, caregivers, birth or extended family members and other significant adults in a youth's life to advance progress toward permanence.

Lifelong Families staff consistently practice case advocacy by informing and educating other team members about the range of permanency options or about the youth's specific legal permanency needs. Case advocacy may be needed when the agency perceives that the position taken by the legal custodian or state child welfare agency or other team members is not in the best interest of the youth and the involved parties are not able to resolve the conflict within the context of the team. Casey social workers may advocate for:

- Changing the youth's state permanency goal (e.g., changing an APPLA or independent living goal to one that offers legal family membership: reunification, adoption or guardianship).

- Safely including birth parents, family members and/or other significant adults to the youth in the teaming process who in the past may have posed a safety risk.
- Maintaining a sense of urgency and forward momentum in the teaming process.

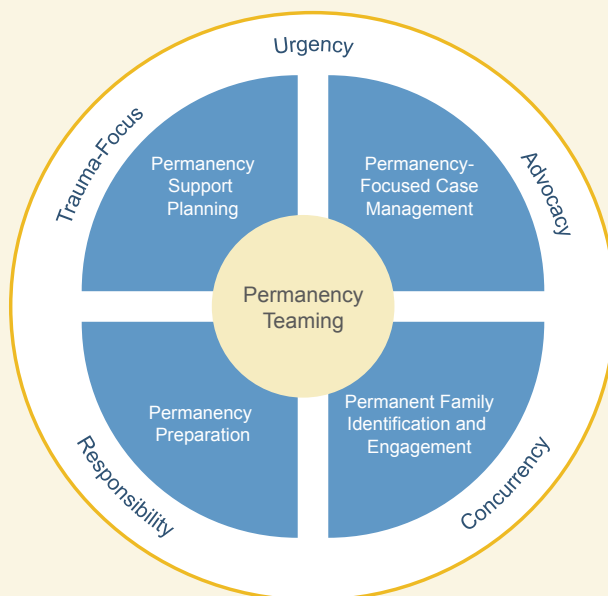
Case advocacy necessitates:

- Building, maintaining and strategically using professional relationships with state partners at all staff levels – upper management, supervisors and social workers – as the basis for case-specific advocacy.
- Initiating conversations that underscore each youth’s right to a safe and legally permanent family regardless of age, race or special needs and the risk of poor adult outcomes (e.g., homelessness, unemployment, incarceration, victimization and early unplanned pregnancy) for youth who age out of foster care.
- Intervening, as needed, by management at increasingly higher levels of the child welfare system to remove barriers and advance progress toward legal permanency for the youth.

Concurrency: assuring that every youth’s permanency plan includes a primary parent as well as a back-up parent able and willing to provide safe parenting and a legal family relationship. Facilitating parallel casework activities at all times to maintain momentum and ensure timely exit for youth to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship.

Developing two parenting options is called “concurrent planning” because the work to ensure permanency is done concurrently (at the same time), not sequentially (one after the other). Every youth’s permanency

Figure I: Lifelong Families Logic Model



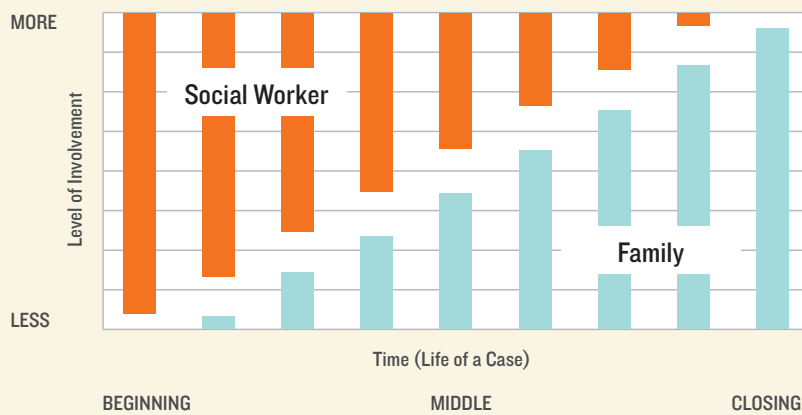
plan includes both a primary parent and a back-up parent able and willing to provide a safe, legal family relationship. Concurrent planning is based on the philosophy that adults, rather than children/youth, should assume the emotional risk of foster care. Concurrent planning assumes that adults are better able to manage the ambiguity of relationships and the uncertainty of an unknown future than are youth. This approach is designed to promote safety, permanency, well-being of youth; achieve timely permanency; reduce the number of moves for youth; and continue significant relationships in the youth's life.

Responsibility: increasing the responsibilities of permanent parents in all aspects of parenting and decision making, while decreasing responsibilities of the agency as a substitute parent. Preparing extended family, team members and community resources to support the youth and permanent parent(s) in sustaining permanency after the youth leaves foster care.

The Lifelong Families model is based on an understanding that as permanency planning proceeds, the social worker begins to release some of the responsibility for making decisions for and “parenting” the youth as permanent parents or prospective parents take on increasing levels of responsibility. As Figure 2 below illustrates, this gradual process of shifting responsibility concludes at the time of a case closing with the social worker having released all responsibility and the parent taking full responsibility for parenting the youth.

Trauma Focus: understanding the impact of traumatic events and experiences on the development, behavior and relationships of youth and their parents and family members. Preparing and supporting parents and family members as primary partners in healing the youth's past trauma and sustaining an unconditional and lifelong commitment.

Figure 2: Level of Responsibility Over the Life of the Case



The Lifelong Families model is utilized within the broader context of child-centered, family-focused permanency practice. Each of the model's five components is discussed in depth in Part II of this Implementation Manual. Briefly, the components are:

1. PERMANENCY TEAMING

Permanency teaming forms the core of the Lifelong Families model. As a collaborative approach to permanency planning for youth in foster care or at risk of entering foster care, permanency teaming is designed to identify a legal parent and achieve legal permanence for each youth. Permanency teaming informs and enhances assessment, service planning, service delivery and case closing.

This central component of the Lifelong Families model incorporates:

- Convening a youth-centered, family-focused team that includes birth parents, relatives and extended family, foster, adoptive and guardian parents, caregivers, significant adults and professionals.
- Involving a youth's birth parents or family members in team planning and decision making.
- Building consensus with the legal custodian regarding the primary and concurrent permanency goal for the youth.
- Developing and implementing a plan for the youth's safety, well-being and legal permanency.

2. PERMANENCY-FOCUSED CASE MANAGEMENT

This component consists of:

- Providing and coordinating time-limited foster placement plus therapeutic and concrete services to youth and parents to achieve and sustain family relationships that assure the youth's safety and well-being.
- Accessing evidence-based treatment, when appropriate, to help manage and heal the youth's trauma while supporting birth parents, relative guardians and adoptive parents in sustaining positive and therapeutic parenting approaches.

3. PERMANENCY PREPARATION

This component involves the social worker's work in:

- Helping a youth and/or family clarify life events, integrate family relationships and achieve legal permanence. Preparing birth parents, relative guardians and adoptive parents to provide safe parenting and make and sustain a lifetime commitment or give permission for another permanent parent to raise the youth.

4. PERMANENT FAMILY IDENTIFICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

In this component, the social worker and team members are:

- Identifying and locating disengaged birth parents, relatives and extended family members for reunification or reconnection with youth as well as resolution of grief, loss, attachment and identity issues.

- Exploring all relatives and other adults known to the youth (e.g., teachers, coaches, former foster families), while facilitating general, targeted and youth-specific recruitment to identify adoptive or guardian families for youth who cannot be reunified with birth family.

5. PERMANENCY SUPPORT PLANNING

In this final component of the Lifelong Families model, the family and team are:

- Developing a plan for voluntary agency services and community supports to sustain permanence with birth, relative guardian or adoptive families.

Comparison of the Lifelong Families Permanency Teaming Approach to Other Teaming Models

The Lifelong Families Permanency Teaming approach differs from the three other major teaming models – Family Group Decision Making, Family Team Conferencing Meetings and Team Decision Making in a number of ways:

- Lifelong Families Permanency Teaming uses a combination of safety parameters discussions, individual meetings, joint meetings and large team meetings throughout the case compared to other models that principally focus on large team meetings only.
- Full use is made of individual and joint meetings to prepare all team members for large team meetings compared to other models that may involve other types of preparation approaches.
- Regularly scheduled large team meetings are usually held every 4 to 6 weeks compared to other models in which they are held when requested by a team member.
- The child's/youth's voice is a central element of the approach compared to other models that encourage child/youth involvement.
- There is review and revision at each large team meeting of the action plans from the prior meeting compared to other models that focus on the social worker or facilitator tracking progress as the primary post-meeting tracking strategy.

The Role of the Social Worker in Lifelong Families

In the Lifelong Families model, the social worker's job is to find a permanent family for the youth. The social worker has 10 key roles, all of which relate to the key components of the Model:

Permanency Teaming

1. To develop and facilitate the youth's permanency team

Permanency-Focused Case Management

2. To integrate preparation for adulthood with permanency planning

Permanency Preparation

3. To assess and prepare the youth for permanency
4. To prepare a permanent parent
5. To strengthen permanent family relationships and integrate the youth's network of family
6. To support the transition of the youth to the permanent family

Permanent Family Identification and Engagement

7. To identify a permanent parent
8. To engage and assess potential permanent parents and lifelong connections

Permanency Support Planning

9. To assist the state agency in the legal finalization of reunification, adoption or guardianship
10. To support the family and team in developing a plan for permanency support

The Role of Foster Parents

Foster parents play an essential role in the Lifelong Families model by providing safe and stable care for youth while assisting in reunification efforts with parents or placement with kin through legal guardianship. If a youth cannot be reunified with parents or kin, they may be considered as an adoptive family for the youth or as a “bridge” family to help the youth transition to a new adoptive family. Foster parents are encouraged to – and very often, do – nurture and maintain lifelong connections with youth who have been reunified, placed with kin or adopted by another family. Because foster families play a major role in helping youth achieve permanence, they serve as pivotal members of the youth's permanency team.

The Lifelong Families model is grounded on the permanent parent making an unconditional commitment to the youth. The model defines “unconditional commitment” as:

An unconditional commitment is an unbreakable moral bond in which a parent pledges to remain as a youth's parent regardless of any future circumstances, events or behavior the youth may exhibit. A parent who has made an unconditional commitment continues to function as a parent even when the youth needs out-of-home treatment, engages in self-destructive behavior and/or makes poor life choices which make it impossible for him or her to live with the parent for some period of time.

For a foster parent, unconditional commitment is defined by this being the youth's last foster placement until the youth reaches legal permanence through reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. For a parent identified as the youth's permanent parent, unconditional commitment also includes providing the youth with a legal family relationship. This parent will become the legal parent of the youth as soon as: 1) the court reinstates their legal rights as the birth parent; 2) the court terminates parental rights to allow the adoption of the youth; or 3) an older youth agrees to a legal family relationship with the parent.

Once youth are placed with foster parents, the social worker meets with them and the youth weekly during the first month. Contacts then occur at least once a month although in most cases more frequent contacts are needed. During the visits, the social worker:

- Continues to share all relevant and legally permissible information about the youth.
- Meets alone with the youth and evaluates safety and well-being.
- Assesses the home for compliance with licensing and regulations including seeing the youth's bedroom.
- Monitors service delivery and progress toward service plan goals.
- Encourages the foster parents to participate in the development of the youth's permanency plan.
- Helps the foster parents assess the youth's needs for skills that will prepare the youth for adulthood and supports the parents in teaching the youth those skills.

When a youth will not be reunified with parents or kin, foster families are valued as potential adoptive families for the youth in their care. When foster parents are considering or have decided to legalize a youth's membership in their family, or if a youth states that he/she wants the resource parents to adopt them or assume legal guardianship, the Casey social worker engages all parties in conversation about their readiness for this transition and commitment to permanence. If the foster family decides to adopt or become the youth's legal guardian, the social worker coordinates closely with the state child welfare agency to help the family meet all state requirements to become a permanent legal family. The social worker also reviews with the family the post-permanency and financial assistance that may be available through Casey Family Services.

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LIFELONG FAMILIES RESOURCES: [The Casey Family Service Supervisory Tool for Permanency Practice \(Appendix A\)](#), [The Casey Family Services Permanency Case Consultation Outline \(Appendix B\)](#), [The Casey Family Services Permanency Case Planning Tool \(Appendix C\)](#)

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PART II. PERMANENCY SERVICES

This section of the Implementation Manual consists of chapters on each of the five components of the Lifelong Families model. Each chapter is organized similarly to facilitate access to needed information.

Each chapter begins with a short description of the component and a table that briefly sets forth the key activities for the component and for each activity, the time frame for implementation and the goals. A case example is introduced at the beginning of each chapter. The case is further developed throughout the chapter, illustrating how the activities described in that chapter are implemented in the work with a particular youth. For each activity, there is a description of the activity, the time frame for implementation, the goals, and the specific steps that are taken to ensure that the activity is conducted in accordance with best practice.

Chapter 4. Facilitators and Challenges in Implementing the Lifelong Families Model

The factors that either facilitate or present challenges to implementing the Lifelong Families model can be organized into two major categories: factors at the organizational level, involving both agency-level and systems-level factors; and factors at the individual case level, involving child factors, birth parent factors, foster/adoptive/kinship family factors and social worker factors. These factors are consistent with the implementation component model developed by Fixen and colleagues (see Figure 3).²⁸

Implementation at the Organizational Level

Agency-Level Factors

1. Leadership at the top levels of management regarding the philosophy, practice principles and day-to-day implementation of the model;
2. Supportiveness of supervisors and managers;
3. Availability of consultation and coaching;
4. Agency policies regarding time frames for achieving permanency ;
5. Agency policies regarding caseworkers' time commitments and caseloads; and
6. Material resources available to assist youth and families.

Systems-Level Factors

1. Administrative policies of state child agencies;
2. State agency caseworkers' beliefs and expectations;
3. Policies and practices of other public systems affecting the youth and his/her family: the court; education; health care; mental health service system; substance abuse treatment system;
4. Policies and practices of other agencies or personnel involved with the youth, such as a therapist or residential facility; and
5. Access of the youth and/or family to public benefits.

Agency-Level Factors

An agency's internal administrative structures and policies play key roles in either supporting or undermining the development and implementation of any program or practice model. Likewise, they are critical factors in the implementation of the Lifelong Families model.

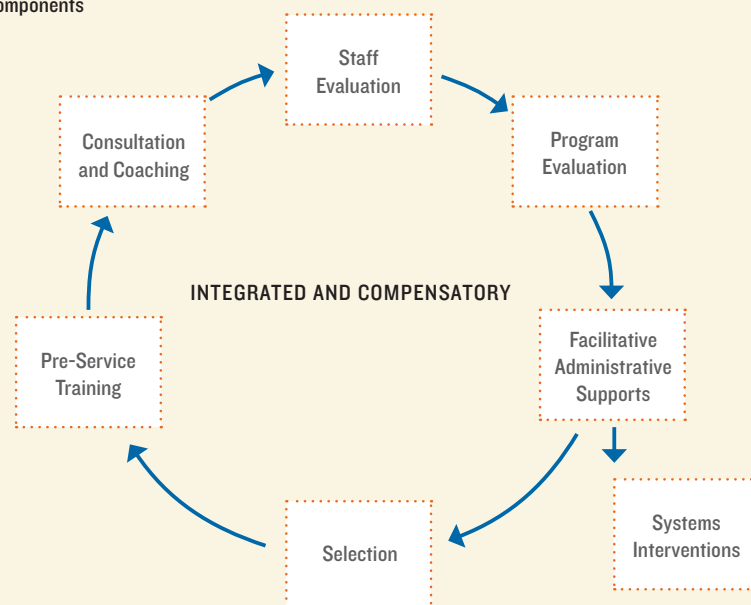
Agency-level factors include the following:

I. LEADERSHIP AT THE TOP LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT REGARDING THE PHILOSOPHY, PRACTICE PRINCIPLES AND DAY-TO-DAY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODEL

Top management support has been identified as essential to effective implementation of an organizational change initiative.²⁹ Top management must maintain the agency's focus on the philosophy, practice principles and the day-to-day implementation of a new practice model when it is being introduced and throughout the implementation process.³⁰ Studies have documented that the commitment of top leadership to the implementation process needs to take many forms:

- Initiating and shepherding the organization through the complex change process.³¹
- Setting explicit goals, communicating them clearly throughout the organization, resolving conflicts with other goals and reinforcing persistence.³²
- Helping create the activities, processes and tasks in order to operationalize the implementation policies.³³
- Inspiring, guiding and providing direction.³⁴
- Recruiting, selecting, training, advancing, promoting or dismissing staff to realize the aims of the implementation policies.³⁵

Figure 3: Core Implementation Components



When top leadership actively undertakes these roles, the implementation of a new practice model will be facilitated; when top leadership fails to embrace these roles or wavers in its commitment, the prospects for effective implementation significantly diminish.

2. SUPPORTIVENESS OF SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS

Gaining middle management support is essential to the effective implementation of organizational change in the form of a new practice model.³⁶ Supervision provides the base from which front line practitioners:

- Apply knowledge and refine their skills in working with children, youth and families.
- Put the agency's practice model's policies and procedures into practice.
- Receive guidance and feedback on their implementation of the agency's case practice model.
- Remain motivated in performing their jobs well.
- Develop critical thinking skills in child welfare decision making.³⁷

Studies show that supervisors play a key role in promoting a focus on client outcomes as defined by the agency's practice model.³⁸ Child welfare supervisors have been described as the "standard bearers for good practice."³⁹ They play a pivotal role in assuring that the agency's practice model is implemented and in meeting organizational demands for accountability and effectiveness.⁴⁰ Supervisors' and managers' support for the full implementation of a new practice model is critical to success; their lack of support or ambivalence will present significant challenges.

3. AVAILABILITY OF CONSULTATION AND COACHING

Fixen and colleagues, as well as other implementation scientists, identify consultation and coaching as a core implementation component. Implementation scientists have concluded that implementation depends on the training of field staff and on-the-spot expert coaching⁴¹ and that formal knowledge must be supplemented with craft knowledge so that practitioners can learn the relevance of what they have learned to the situation at hand.⁴² Coaching must be work-based, opportunistic, readily available and reflective through debriefing discussions and other mechanisms.⁴³ Implementation science suggests that the four main roles of a coach in implementation efforts are to supervise, teach while engaged in practice activities, assess and give feedback, and provide emotional support.⁴⁴ Consultation and coaching are seen as critical activities in light of the realities that newly learned behavior is crude compared to performance by a master practitioner; newly learned behavior is fragile and needs to be supported in the face of reactions from consumers, and others in the service setting; and newly learned behavior is incomplete and will need to be shared to be most functional in a service setting.⁴⁵ The implementation of the Lifelong Families model fully incorporated coaching by master youth permanency coaches who assumed the four roles that implementation science has identified as critical.

4. AGENCY POLICIES REGARDING TIME FRAMES FOR ACHIEVING PERMANENCY

An agency's permanency work must be grounded in a sense of urgency to achieve permanence for each youth in the agency's care. To that end, policies must specify time frames within which permanence is to be achieved and permanency practice must conform to those time frames. The implementation of effective permanency practice and, specifically, the Lifelong Families model is supported by policy time frames that are consistent with federal law and that are reinforced through:

- Staff training that emphasizes the role of urgency in achieving permanence for each youth.
- Supervision that prioritizes family permanence among the multiple demands on the social worker's time.
- Supervision that ensures that family permanence is achieved within agency timeframes.
- Staff accountability for fully implementing the agency's permanency practice model, including the specified timeframes and benchmarks.
- The use of concurrent planning so that if reunification or another primary goal is unsuccessful, a specific family permanency plan exists other than Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) or long term foster care.⁴⁶

5. AGENCY POLICIES REGARDING CASEWORKERS' TIME COMMITMENTS AND CASELOADS

Large caseloads and excessive workloads make it difficult for child welfare social workers to effectively achieve permanence for children and youth.⁴⁷ For that reason, the Child Welfare League of America⁴⁸ recommends that the foster care caseload be no more than 17 active cases per social worker and no more than one new case assigned for every six open cases. The Council on Accreditation (COA) standards state that caseloads are not to exceed 18 children or 8 children with special therapeutic needs and that case complexity should take into account the intensity of child and family needs, size of the family, and the goal of the case.⁴⁹

Studies show that when child welfare caseloads and workloads are appropriately managed, social workers:

- *Are more likely to remain in their positions.* Heavy caseloads and excessive workloads repeatedly have been cited as key reasons that social workers leave the child welfare workforce.⁵⁰ Studies show that worker turnover results in delays in permanency planning and decision making.⁵¹ One study found that as the number of social workers assigned to a child increases, the chance of achieving permanence significantly declines. In that study, 74.5 percent of the children with only one social worker left foster care to permanent families; 17.5 percent of children with two social workers left care to permanent families; and only 0.1 percent of children with 6 and 7 social workers achieved permanency.⁵²
- *Are more likely to deliver quality permanency services.* Studies show that large caseloads have a negative impact on the timeliness of permanency services, the continuity of permanency planning and decision making and the quality of the permanency services provided by social workers.⁵³

- *Are able to more fully engage families and build relationships.* Achieving family permanence involves time intensive processes including the engagement of families, building relationships, comprehensively assessing the strengths and needs of youth and families, and permanency planning. Heavy caseloads and workloads reduce the amount of time that social workers have to engage in these processes critical to permanence.⁵⁴

When the child welfare agency develops and implements policies that support reasonable caseloads and workloads (through setting caseload standards based on the time that social workers need to fulfill all of their job responsibilities under the new practice model and managing work expectations), the prospects for the successful implementation significantly increase.

6. MATERIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO ASSIST YOUTH AND FAMILIES

To successfully achieve family permanence for youth in foster care, material resources are often necessary. When reunification is the permanency plan, families may need a range of concrete supports: housing supports; transportation; clothing and household items; access to community resources; home management assistance; free or low-cost medical care; and available and affordable child care.⁵⁵ Adoptive families often need financial assistance through the adoption subsidy program and access to post-adoption services. When guardianship is the permanency plan, relatives frequently need financial and other concrete supports.

Systems-Level Factors

Factors in the broader environment also impact the implementation of programs such as the Lifelong Families model. Policies, structures and/or practices operating outside of the family and agency affect the development and implementation of any permanency program model. These systems-level factors include:

1. ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES OF STATE CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

State child agency policies play a powerful role in the implementation of Lifelong Families or any other permanency practice model. Among the administrative policies of state child welfare agencies that can facilitate or, alternatively, challenge successful implementation are:

- Policies promoting the use of concurrent planning versus policies that fail to address this practice.
- Policies that set guidelines regarding active family engagement versus policies that either set only minimal expectations regarding engaging families or that fail to address this issue altogether.
- Policies that support early decision making while strengthening services to parents versus policies that either solely direct planning based on federal timeframes or, alternatively, expedite permanency planning without attention to the needs of parents.
- Policies that require individualized assessments and case planning versus policies that reference assessment and case planning without clarifying the need to customize these processes for each child and family.

- Policies that allow families to be dually licensed as both foster/resource and adoptive parents versus policies that either do not address dual licensing or prohibit it.
- Policies that clearly state the dual needs of youth for permanency and preparation for adulthood versus policies that provide for dual tracks – permanency or preparation for adulthood.⁵⁶

2. STATE AGENCY CASEWORKERS' BELIEFS AND EXPECTATIONS

State agency caseworkers' beliefs, expectations, and their practice approaches can support or, alternatively, hinder the successful implementation of the Lifelong Families model. Lifelong Families is solidly grounded in a child-centered, family focused and culturally responsive approach. State agency caseworkers may or may not share this practice framework, which involves:

- *An ecological perspective* that conceptualizes human behavior and social functioning within an environmental context and considers how personal, family and environmental factors interact with one another to influence the family.
- *A strengths-based perspective* that draws upon the strengths of children, families and communities and focuses assessment on the complex interplays of risks and strengths related to the individual family members, the family as a unit, and the broader neighborhood and community.
- *A developmental perspective* that views individual growth and development and family development from a lifespan perspective, and examines individuals and families interacting with their environments over the course of time.
- *A permanency planning orientation* based in the belief that all children have the right to a permanent family.
- *A cultural competence perspective* that focuses on understanding the perspectives of clients or peers who may come from culturally diverse background and adapts child welfare practice accordingly.⁵⁷

The full engagement of youth and families in the Lifelong Families model can be undermined when state agency caseworkers employ a deficit approach or feel threatened by the participation of youth and families in making and improving decisions.⁵⁸ State agency caseworkers may view youth and families as lacking the knowledge and wisdom to make good decisions, believing that their own decisions are more objective.⁵⁹

Some studies have found that caseworkers' attitudes toward birth parents impact their level of activity in supporting safe reunification.⁶⁰ A study of intensive family reunification programs found that the success or failure of their programs hinged, to a large extent, on the quality of their staff. Essential to success was staff with an accepting attitude toward clients and their lifestyles; ethnic and cultural competence; compassion; and residence or knowledge of the community in which clients live.⁶¹

Studies have shown that caseworkers' attitudes and beliefs about adoption are particularly powerful. In one study of New York State caseworkers, 35 percent of the caseworkers believed that placement in a single parent home would not be suitable.⁶² Other caseworker beliefs have the power to impact timely adoptions: beliefs concerning gay/lesbian individuals or couples, adoptive parents of differing ethnicity or

adoptive parents who live in other counties or states.⁶³ Studies also have shown that caseworkers' beliefs play critical roles in assessing a child's adoptability⁶⁴ and in determining that a youth, instead, should have a permanency goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.⁶⁵

3. POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF OTHER PUBLIC SYSTEMS AFFECTING THE YOUTH AND HIS/HER FAMILY: THE COURT, HEALTH CARE, THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE SYSTEM AND THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SYSTEM

Youth and families involved with the child welfare systems are usually involved with multiple other systems, including the court. The policies and practices of the court system have a significant impact on achieving permanence for youth in foster care. The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care surveyed judges about the factors that can present hurdles to permanence for young people which they reported as: overcrowded court dockets, lack of specialized training for judges who hear child abuse and neglect cases and the lack of available services for youth and families.⁶⁶ Some courts have developed policies and practices that support the timely achievement of permanence for youth in foster care – including more efficient docketing systems, on site drug and alcohol assessments and paternity screening, and data systems that track each case's compliance with federal and state statutory deadlines.⁶⁷ In some states, such as Minnesota, courts have developed checklists of “Critical Questions for Judges on Permanency” that provide judges with questions to ask both caseworkers and youth about permanency planning.⁶⁸

The policies and practices of other systems – particularly, health, mental health and substance abuse treatment services – also impact the implementation of permanency planning models such as Lifelong Families. Children in foster care are more likely than their non-foster care peers to have physical challenges which often combine with mental health and substance abuse conditions.⁶⁹ Access to health care services to meet the physical, mental health and substance abuse treatment needs of children and youth in foster care largely rests on the state's Medicaid policies. These include the array of optional services that the state has chosen to include in or exclude from its Medicaid plan; the rate of reimbursement for physicians and dentists, which can significantly impact providers' willingness to participate in the program and serve Medicaid eligible children; and the extent to which policies support children's and youth's continuing Medicaid coverage when they return home to parents.

Studies consistently document the high rates of mental health challenges among children in foster care⁷⁰ and the high incidence of mental health problems among the parents of children who enter the foster care system.⁷¹ Research further demonstrates that children and parents involved with the child welfare – and particularly African-American children and families – often lack access to quality mental health services.⁷² When public mental health systems are underfunded and understaffed and their clinicians lack knowledge and skills in working with families involved with the child welfare system, the prospects of addressing the mental health challenges that can stand in the way of permanence – through safe return home, adoption or legal guardianship – are negatively affected. Studies show that children with significant mental health challenges are less likely to reunify with their families.⁷³ Permanency planning through Lifelong Families or other permanency planning approaches can be undermined when parents with mental health problems lack insurance and must rely on overstretched public mental health systems, lack eligibility for public mental health services, face lengthy waiting lists or find that the services they need are not available.⁷⁴

Likewise, policies and practices in the field of substance abuse treatment play significant roles in the implementation of the Lifelong Families model or another permanency planning. Difficulties in serving children and families affected by parental substance use disorders include inadequate funds for services and/or dependence on client insurance coverage, insufficient service availability or scope of services to meet existing needs, conflicts in the time required for sufficient progress in substance abuse recovery to develop adequate parenting potential, legislative requirements regarding child permanency and the developmental needs of children.⁷⁵ The timeframes imposed by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) may not coincide with substance abuse treatment. In addition, relapse is often part of the recovery process for parents undergoing treatment, especially in the early phases, so it is especially important that parents access treatment quickly. Custodial parents who require residential treatment may face an additional barrier since many of these programs do not allow children to live in the facility.⁷⁶

4. POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF OTHER AGENCIES OR PERSONNEL INVOLVED WITH THE YOUTH, SUCH AS A THERAPIST OR RESIDENTIAL FACILITY

In addition to the policies and practices of public agencies, the policies and practices of other agencies or personnel who work with the youth can facilitate or challenge the implementation of Lifelong Families. Individual therapists may support permanency planning or alternatively, may counsel foster parents and caseworkers that the child is “too disturbed” at present for permanency to be seriously considered. Therapists may advise prospective adoptive parents that before they make a commitment to the child, they wait for the child’s behavior to improve. If a youth is placed in a residential facility, the facility staff may play important supportive roles as members of the youth’s permanency team. Alternatively, the facility may have policies of denying the youth telephone calls or visits with family members as a disciplinary action.

5. ACCESS OF THE YOUTH AND/OR FAMILY TO PUBLIC BENEFITS

Access to public benefits can play a critical role in supporting or undermining the successful implementation of the Lifelong Families Model with a family. A parent may be able to safely resume full- time parenting of her child only with the support of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid. She may need subsidized housing to provide her child with a safe home. Adoptive parents and legal guardians may need access to adoption/guardianship assistance to meet their children’s range of special needs. The youth in foster care may also need access to public benefits upon leaving foster care to a permanent family, including, as examples, Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). If these benefits are available, critical resource issues for youth and families can be addressed; if they are not available, families may not be able to move forward with the permanency plan.

Implementation at the Individual Case Level

1. Child factors
2. Birth family factors
3. Foster/adoptive/kinship family factors
4. Social worker factors

A range of factors at the individual case level can facilitate or challenge the implementation of Lifelong Families. Those factors can be categorized as child factors, birth family factors, factors associated with foster/adoptive/kinship families, and social worker factors.

Child Factors

Factors intrinsic to the youth and/or the circumstances that brought the youth into care affect the implementation of Lifelong Families for the youth. These factors include the youth's:

- Age and developmental status and needs
- Views about family and legal permanence
- Physical health status and needs
- Mental health status or history
- Substance abuse
- Trauma history
- Educational history and needs

Birth Family Factors

Characteristics and/or circumstances confronted by the youth's parents and members of the extended birth family affect the implementation of Lifelong Families for the youth. These factors include the birth family's:

- Mental health challenges;
- Substance abuse challenges;
- Family violence history;
- Financial situation;
- Housing situation;
- Attitudes toward the youth;
- Attitudes toward the youth's resource parent(s); and
- Capacity to engage in the permanency planning process.

Foster/Adoptive/Kinship Family Factors

Characteristics of and/or circumstances of members of the youth's foster/adoptive/kinship placement family also can affect the implementation of Lifelong Families for the youth. These factors include these individuals':

- Attitudes toward the youth's birth family; their willingness and ability to work with the birth parents toward safe reunification;
- Housing situation;
- Immediate family configuration;

- Attitudes toward legal permanency plan; and
- Attitudes toward and ability and willingness to work toward the primary and concurrent planning goals.

Social Worker Factors

The implementation of Lifelong Families in a youth's case can be facilitated or challenged by certain factors associated with the social worker. These factors include the social workers':

- Level of understanding of the importance and urgency of legal permanence.
- Ability to work collaboratively with the state child welfare agency and with other systems and community partners.
- Ability to prepare youth, family members and others for active participation in the teaming process.
- Ability to effectively facilitate large team meetings.
- Ability to engage in permanency-focused case management that support timely achievement of the permanency plan.
- Ability to prepare youth and family for legal family permanent relationships.
- Ability to identify and engage family members and, when needed, to recruit new families for youth in foster care.
- Ability to support families and their teams in developing sound permanency support plans.

Chapter 5. Permanency Teaming

Permanency teaming is a collaborative approach to achieving permanence for youth in foster care that involves sharing responsibility among members for planning and decision making. It is permanency teaming that provides the coordination and accountability for all other Lifelong Families components.

In permanency teaming, the youth, along with his/her parents,ⁱⁱ birth/extended and foster family members,ⁱⁱⁱ legal custodian, significant others and key professionals are brought together to develop and implement a plan for the youth's safety, well-being and permanence. Permanency teaming is a case planning and decision-making process that includes a blend of individual, joint and large team meetings for the purpose of achieving and sustaining permanence.

Permanency teaming helps form and solidify a network of people who will assist in planning with and identifying a permanent parent for the youth; widens the pool of potential permanency resources; supports the youth now and in the future; and re-establishes and preserves lifelong healthy and safe connections with the youth's important relationships. The team is the primary vehicle for decision making throughout the permanency planning process. The youth's team meets continually, recognizing the urgency of achieving permanence for the youth, until legal permanency is achieved through reunification, adoption or legal guardianship.

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PERMANENCY TEAMING: The process through which the permanency team develops and implements a permanency plan for a youth that will ensure the youth's safety, well-being, and membership in a legally secure family. The process involves:

- Convening a youth-centered, family-focused team that includes birth parents, relatives and extended family, foster, adoptive and guardian parents, caregivers, significant adults and professionals.
 - Involving a youth's birth parents or family members in team planning and decision making.
 - Building consensus with the legal custodian regarding the primary and concurrent permanency goal for the youth.
 - Developing and implementing a plan for the youth's safety, well-being and legal permanency.
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ⁱⁱ In this manual, the term "parents" refers to birth, adoptive and legal guardianship parents.

ⁱⁱⁱ In this manual, the term "foster parents" is used and carries the same meaning as "resource parents."

The Key Activities

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #1 Review complete state agency record for placement history, reasons for separations and moves, family and medical history, caregiver relationships and trauma history.	At the beginning of the teaming process and regularly throughout the case planning process. This activity may take several hours depending on the time that the youth has been in foster care.	To ensure that the social worker has important background information about the youth.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a summary of the youth's history, including trauma and attachment history; • Identifies key people and obtains contact information.
ACTIVITY #2 Hold safety parameters discussions with the legal custodian.	Held at the beginning of the team process; continue to be held as needed when there is any change in case circumstances or in the assigned agency or state social worker or supervisor. Initial safety parameters discussion takes approximately 1 hour; preparation time takes 45 minutes. Subsequent meetings may be briefer.	To build consensus with the youth's legal custodian (state partners or parents) on the permanency goals and next steps in the teaming process and to develop and nurture positive working relationships with the legal custodian.	Initial safety parameters discussion The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces the teaming approach; • Provides agency brochure; • Gathers relevant assessment information on youth, including the permanency goal and the youth's permanency needs; • Confirms plans for facilitation of large team meetings; • Identifies potential adult team members and any safety concerns; • Identifies potential barriers to permanency; • Makes a plan to review the youth's state agency case record; and • Establishes ongoing communication with the legal custodian. Subsequent meetings The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrates newly assigned social workers or supervisors; • Builds consensus between the legal custodian and agency staff; • Maintains the momentum toward achieving legal permanence; • Models teamwork and collaborative decision making; and • Discusses any safety concerns about new team members that are identified.
ACTIVITY #3 Identify and engage potential team members.	Ongoing throughout teaming process. Time intensity varies; initial phone or in-person contacts may take up to 1.5 hour for each person; subsequent contacts may require less time.	To identify and engage as many potential team members as possible.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains the teaming process to the youth and assists the youth in identifying important adults to include as team members; • Explains the teaming process to parents and family members and help them understand their important role in planning; • Identifies key professionals with power to determine team decisions and explain the teaming process and their important role in planning; and • Provides agency brochure to youth, parents and professionals.

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #4 Involve youth and parents in preparing, planning and participating in team meetings.	Ongoing, ending only when legal permanency is achieved or sustained. Time intensity depends on the youth's comfort level with the process; may require 30-60 minutes prior to the team meeting and 30 minutes to debrief with the youth after the meeting.	To engage and prepare youth and parents for active team participation.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages the youth and parent so that they understand the importance of their full participation in team meetings; Prepares youth and parents to be active team members, including identifying topics for the agenda and providing supports to increase their successful team participation
ACTIVITY #5 Have individual meetings with youth, parents, caregivers, the legal custodian, core team members and individuals with decision-making authority	Begin immediately after the safety parameters discussion and continue until a legal permanency outcome is reached. Time intensity varies; may take 1-2 hours.	To fully engage members of the youth's team on a one-on-one basis for permanency teaming.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathers and shares information; Prepares for large team meetings and debrief after large team meetings; Explores permanency options; Confronts challenges and explores solutions to achieving permanency; and Includes important adults in the youth's life as part of the teaming process even when they are unable to participate in large team meetings.
ACTIVITY #6 Have joint meetings between two or more team members.	After conducting individual sessions with the team members and throughout the life of the case as needed. Time intensity varies; may take 1-2 hours.	To bring together two or more team members to build/strengthen relationships and their work together.	The social worker uses joint meetings to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolve conflict; Build and strengthen relationships among key people in the youth's life; and Build consensus.
ACTIVITY #7 Hold large team meetings and track progress using the service plan and team meeting summaries.	First large team meeting occurs approximately 8 weeks after the case is referred; and approximately every 4-6 weeks throughout the life of the case, as needed. Preparing team members takes as much as 1 hour per person, both before and after the team meetings; meetings last approximately 2 hours.	To create and sustain an active team that fully supports progress toward permanence.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages all team members in planning and decision making; Balances the decision-making power between family members and professionals; Maintains the momentum toward achieving legal permanence; Develops ongoing team relationships and natural networks of support for the youth and family; and Makes collaborative decisions regarding the youth's safety, well-being and permanence.

The activities that comprise the Permanency Teaming component are provided in Figure 4.

The youth's permanency team may include the youth, birth parents, siblings, extended family members, foster parents, other caregivers, legal custodian/state agency, involved professionals and other significant adults willing to help develop and implement a permanency plan for a youth which offers the optimal level of membership in a legal family. A blend of individual, joint and large team meetings are used to engage a youth's permanency team members in planning for safety, permanency and well-being. The permanency team plays important roles throughout the planning process (see Figure 5).

In this chapter, we illustrate the activities of the Permanency Team using the case of Mealea as an example.

Mealea is a 14-year-old female of Cambodian descent. She is bright, engaging and a good student. She was referred to Casey Family Services for foster care with a permanency goal of adoption. Mealea was originally placed in foster care at the age of 10. Neighbors had found her at home alone on multiple occasions with no food in the house which the neighbors explained as the mom "out getting high again." At the time of referral to Casey Family Services, Mealea was living in the home of an unrelated foster mother. She hoped to return to live with her mother, Chan, but their relationship was strained. Chan blamed Mealea for the involvement of child protection authorities and tried to turn the family against her. After her third foster home placement, Mealea began to worry that she would never return to her mother. She ran away from her foster home, going to the home of a previous foster mother, Dorothy, who helped her return safely to her current foster home.

During her first meeting with Mealea, the social worker explained how Casey would work with her, her family and other important adults from her past or who are currently in her life to plan for her future. The social worker explained that the work would

Figure 4: Permanency Teaming Component - Key Activities

- ACTIVITY #1. Review the entire agency record for placement history, reasons for separation and moves, family and medical history, caregiver relationships and trauma history.
- ACTIVITY #2. Hold safety parameters discussions with the legal custodian.
- ACTIVITY #3. Identify and engage potential team members.
- ACTIVITY #4. Involve youth and parents in preparing, planning and participating in team meetings.
- ACTIVITY #5. Have individual meetings with youth, parents, caregivers, the legal custodian, core team members and individuals with decision-making authority.
- ACTIVITY #6. Have joint meetings between two or more team members.
- ACTIVITY #7. Hold large team meetings and track progress using the service plan and team meeting summaries.

involve individual and joint meetings with members of Mealea's team and large team meetings where planning for her future would occur. The social worker explained that Mealea would be asked to identify who she wanted to participate on her team and that she would play a central role in her planning. Mealea appeared interested and relieved to hear that she would "finally" have a say in what would happen to her.

ACTIVITY #1. REVIEW THE COMPLETE STATE AGENCY CASE RECORD FOR PLACEMENT HISTORY, REASONS FOR SEPARATION/MOVES, FAMILY AND MEDICAL HISTORY, CAREGIVER RELATIONSHIPS AND TRAUMA HISTORY.

The case record review is an "absolute must" for a social worker assigned to a case. The social worker must review the case record for placement history, reasons for separation/moves, family and medical history, caregiver relationships and trauma history. He or she must review this information with an eye to all current and past relationships that could become permanent parents or permanency team members, or could help the youth heal from past trauma. Foster parents and potential permanent parents should be given access to the case record and the youth's history should be fully disclosed to them.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to review the case record?

Figure 5: The Roles of the Permanency Team

The Role of the Permanency Team in Assessment:

- Engage all team members in informing the assessment through the information gathered.

The Role of the Permanency Team in Service Planning:

- Revise and expand service plan goals and tasks with team input.
- Actively engage team members in task assignment and completion.
- Continually review and update the service plan as needed in large team meetings.

The Role of the Permanency Team in Service Delivery:

- Promote the birth family, resource family and other team members working together to identify a permanent parent, facilitate permanence and build and maintain relationships with each other that support the youth's positive adjustment.

- Develop a network of informal and formal supports and resources for the youth and family.
- Engage key education, legal, and mental health professionals together with the youth and family members in the teaming process.
- Work together to ensure completion of and accountability for service plan goals and tasks.

The Role of the Permanency Team at Case Closure:

- Assist in the youth and parent(s) development of a plan for both formal and informal supports to sustain permanence after the agency's case is closed and the youth exits the child welfare system.
- Provide opportunities for youth and parents to voluntarily continue ongoing supportive relationships with team members and the youth's lifelong family connections.

The social worker reads the entire case record just after case assignment and reviews it throughout the case planning process as needed. The time needed to review the case record will vary, depending on the time that the youth has been in out-of-home care.

What is the goal of the case record review?

The goal of the case record review is to ensure that the social worker has important background information about the youth.

What are the principal tasks of the social worker?

The social worker conducts the case record review to:

- Develop an accurate accounting of the youth's placement history, reasons for removal and permanency planning efforts;
- Develop a coherent picture of the youth's trauma and attachment history; and
- Identify people with whom the youth had relationships and obtain their contact information.

What is the process for the review of the youth's case record?

The social worker:

- Reads the entire case record;
- Records the dates of each formal or informal placement, the reasons for starting and ending each placement, names of caregivers for each placement and significant experiences or events that occur during each placement;
- Makes note of birth and extended family members and circumstances of initial placement and reunification attempts;
- Documents the youth's trauma history prior to and following placement;
- Identifies primary parenting figures, significant others, and community or neighborhood connections with whom the youth has or had relationships;
- Documents the youth's attachment history and the quality of relationships;
- Pays attention to strengths, positive characteristics and/or comments by and about the youth;
- Notes shared qualities or experiences that help link the youth to others, such as common interests, talents and physical appearance; and
- Notes treatment recommendations and implementation of those recommendations.

Reviewing the State Record

The Casey social worker makes an appointment with the state social worker to review Mealea's state agency record the following day. The Casey social worker travels to the state agency and the state social worker provides Mealea's case record and a private office for the Casey social worker to review the record. Based on the case review, the Casey social worker develops a clear understanding of the losses, separations and trauma that Mealea experienced prior to and after entering foster care. She makes notes about Mealea's early caregiving, her attachment history and the quality of her relationships. She develops a timeline of Mealea's placements and includes details about each placement and each move. She identifies key adults in Mealea's life, including her mother (Chan), father (Veasna) and former caregivers who have remained in touch with her. She notes the permanency efforts that have been made to date, including reunification attempts with Chan and the current plan of adoption. She searches the record for indications of Mealea's interests, hobbies and talents. Finally, she notes the history of treatment services, particularly mental health treatment and success of these treatments.

ACTIVITY #2. HOLD SAFETY PARAMETERS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEGAL CUSTODIAN.^{iv}

Safety parameters discussions are used to build consensus with state partners or parents on the goals and next steps in the teaming process and to develop and nurture positive working relationships with the youth's legal custodian.

What is the timing of the safety parameters discussion and how much time is involved?

The initial safety parameters discussion is held with the legal custodian at the beginning of the team process, as soon as possible after the social worker is assigned the case. Additional safety parameters discussions are held as needed throughout the teaming process to nurture relationships with the legal custodian and to ensure agreement with concurrent planning and decision making. These meetings are held when there is any change in case circumstances or a new staff person – either a new social worker or new supervisor – is assigned. Safety parameters discussions continue as needed throughout the life of the case and are used to ensure that the legal custodian concurs in planning and decision making and to strengthen a collaborative relationship between the agency and the state.

The initial safety parameters discussion takes approximately one hour. Preparation for this meeting may take up to 45 minutes and may be combined with other concerns for discussion with the legal custodian. Subsequent meetings may be briefer depending on the issues discussed.

What are the goals of the initial safety parameters discussion?

The goals of the initial safety parameters discussion are to build consensus with the youth's legal custodian (the state partner or parents) regarding the youth's primary and concurrent permanency goals and the next steps in the teaming process, and to develop and nurture positive working relationships with the youth's legal custodian.

^{iv}The term "legal custodian" refers to the state agency or to the parent (birth, adoptive or legal guardian parent) who has legal custody of the youth.

What are principal tasks of this discussion?

The initial safety parameters discussion is held to achieve the following:

- Develop positive working relationships with the legal custodian to collaborate in achieving legal family permanence for the youth.
- Introduce Casey Family Services' Lifelong Families model, explain the nature of team planning and decision making, communicate enthusiasm about collaborating on behalf of this youth and introduce the Lifelong Families brochure.
- Explain the importance of the legal custodian's role on the team and communicate a desire to work collaboratively with the legal custodian to achieve and maintain the youth's safety, permanence and well-being.
- Gather relevant assessment information regarding:
 - The youth's primary and concurrent permanency goal, current circumstances related to those goals and the state's perspective regarding the goals; and
 - Youth's primary needs for physical and emotional safety, permanency and well-being.
- Work with the legal custodian to reach agreement on a goal that results in a legally permanent family relationship even when the youth's current goal is Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (APPLA)/long-term foster care.
- Encourage the legal custodian to commit to the continuity of youth's relationships with important family members, significant adults and other individuals in the teaming process, even if they cannot be placement resources, when it is safe to do so.
- Confirm plans for facilitation of the large team meetings.
 - The social worker facilitates large team meetings unless state mandates require that the state social worker co-facilitate these meetings.
- Discuss names of adults that the youth has identified or is expected to identify for the permanency team and explore any safety concerns regarding their participation. If a state agency staff person raises safety concerns regarding these adults, the social worker discusses how to maintain safety while respecting the youth's need for continuing these important relationships. The social worker explores with the state agency what structures or supports would be necessary to safely do the following:

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THE ADVOCACY PRINCIPLE: It is important to explore in the initial safety parameters discussion the specific reasons that an identified individual should not be contacted. Objections to contacting an individual should not be taken at face value.

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- Meet and gather information from this adult;
 - Involve this adult in the planning team;
 - Facilitate contact between this adult and the youth; and
 - Consider this adult as a permanent family resource for this youth.
- Identify potential barriers to permanency, such as state policies, practices or other teaming approaches that may interfere or compromise permanency teaming. Examples of barriers might include a residential treatment program that prohibits family contact when the youth is on a particular “level;” a state agency protocol that prohibits contact with birth parents whose parental rights have been terminated; or a licensing issue related to a potential permanent family resource.
 - Review, or set a subsequent appointment to review, the youth’s complete state agency case record if not previously done.
 - Set a time to follow up with the legal custodian to demonstrate ongoing communication and partnership in permanency planning on behalf of this youth.

The Initial Safety Parameters Discussion

The Casey social worker holds the initial safety parameters discussion regarding Mealea with the state child welfare social worker and supervisor to provide an overview of permanency teaming, address safety concerns and discuss permanency options, particularly the goal of Mealea’s reunification with her mother, Chan. The state agency social worker describes the case history and outlines her concerns regarding Mealea’s physical and psychological safety. She states that she will give consideration to re-exploring reunification at the initial large team meeting concurrently with efforts toward adoption, which is currently the agency’s goal for Mealea because past reunification attempts had not been successful. The state agency social worker agrees to speak with her supervisor about Mealea’s strong feelings about returning home and not being adopted.

When are additional safety parameters discussions held?

Additional safety parameters discussions are held when there are additions of family or natural network members, or changes in the CFS social worker or state social worker.

What are the goals of safety parameters discussions held after the initial meeting?

The goals of subsequent safety parameters discussions are to strengthen the consensus between Casey Family Services and the legal custodian, particularly when key professional participants have changed, and to maintain the momentum toward permanence, recognizing the youth’s urgent need for a permanent family.

What are the principal tasks of subsequent safety parameters discussions?

Safety parameters discussions held throughout the case are designed to build upon the initial safety parameters discussion and to accomplish the following:

- Enhance and support a collaborative working relationship with the state social worker/other legal custodian to achieve legal permanency on behalf of this youth;
- Integrate newly assigned Casey Family Services and state social workers or supervisors into the team;
- Strengthen relationships and/or build consensus between the state agency/other legal custodian and Casey Family Services staff about key decisions, including changes in the primary and concurrent planning goals and/or the direction of team planning ;
- Model teamwork and collaborative decision making in times of crisis; and
- Discuss any safety concerns about new team members that are identified.

Subsequent Safety Parameters Discussions

Because of the lack of consensus regarding the initial permanency goal for Mealea, the Casey social worker holds another safety parameters discussion with the state agency social worker and her supervisor. The state social worker previously notified the Casey social worker that the state would not consider reunifying Mealea with Chan. The state agency is concerned about Chan's choice in partners and believes that Mealea may not be physically safe with her. The social worker and supervisor state that Mealea's mother's and relatives' rejection may place Mealea at psychological risk. They believe that efforts toward reunification have already been made with Chan and she at no time fulfilled the service plan requirements. The Casey social worker suggests that they work together with Mealea's team – including Mealea and Chan – to develop safeguards and a concrete plan to address Mealea's physical safety. She notes that putting these safeguards and plans into place may help the state agency determine whether Chan can make the necessary changes to ensure Mealea's safety. The state social worker and supervisor reluctantly agree to explore reunification but are clear that the permanency goal of adoption will not be changed with the court. The Casey social worker explains that Veasna, Mealea's father, has been located and has expressed interest in becoming re-involved in her life. The state social worker and supervisor state that more time is needed to consider Veasna as a potential team member, especially the impact on Mealea's safety and well-being of any renewed contact with Veasna.

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FIDELITY FOCUS: Structured Collaboration with the State Social Worker

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| • Access to the full case record by the agency social worker is granted prior to or during the initial safety parameters discussion. | • The Lifelong Families brochure is distributed. |
| • The initial safety parameters discussion occurs following case assignment to the CFS social worker and before first large team meeting. | • Primary (state) and concurrent (CFS) goals are discussed and tasks are listed to support legal permanence for the youth. |
| • The safety parameters discussion is revisited following these changes in team composition: 1) additions of family or natural network members; and 2) changes in CFS social worker or state social worker. | • Additional discussions with the state social worker are initiated by the CFS social worker to 1) strengthen their relationship, resolve conflict, reach consensus and/or remove barriers to advance progress toward permanence; and 2) discuss the safety of new or existing team members regarding contact with the youth and participation on the team. |
| • Facilitator(s) of the teaming process and meetings is the case-carrying social worker. The facilitator is identified. | |
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ACTIVITY #3. IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE POTENTIAL TEAM MEMBERS

Building the team begins in the assessment phase and continues throughout service delivery. Team membership may evolve and change over time. The team's responsibility is to work collaboratively to plan for the youth's safety, permanency and well-being. Each team is customized but a youth's permanency team usually consists of:

- The youth;
- Birth parents, birth family member, and older siblings;
- Foster parent or caregiver;
- Other significant adults identified by the youth, such as former foster parents, mentors, coaches, teachers, godparents and family friends;
- Other adults not previously identified by the youth who may be resources to permanency planning, such as the foster/adoptive parents of the youth's sibling(s), church members, respite families, and neighbors of the foster family;
- Professionals such as the youth's attorney, Guardian ad litem (GAL), Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), therapist, clinician and school personnel;
- Legal custodian/public agency social worker and/or supervisor; and
- Casey Family Services social worker(s), team leader and/or family support specialist.

What is the timing of, and how much time is needed for, identifying and engaging potential team members?

The time to identify and engage potential team members varies. Initial phone or in-person contacts may take up to 1.5 hours for each person. Subsequent contacts may require less time when the state is the legal guardian. Beginning at referral, the social worker identifies and engages known team members and invites them to a large team meeting which is held approximately six to eight weeks after referral. Identifying and engaging potential team members occurs throughout the teaming process until legal permanency is achieved.

What are the goals of identifying and engaging team members?

The goal is to identify and engage as many potential team members as possible, ensuring that 1) the youth, parents and adults who will be most affected by team decisions are involved in making them; and 2) the chances of achieving and sustaining legal permanence are increased.

What are the principal tasks with this activity?

The social worker's principal tasks are to:

- Involve as many adults as possible who are identified by the youth as important to him or her or who have otherwise been identified through the case record review or other means; and
- Include key professionals who hold the power to determine team decisions.

What are the steps in identifying and engaging potential team members?

The social worker:

- Explains the teaming process to the youth.
- Talks to the youth and the parents about who they think are important people in the youth's life who can be team members.
- Mines the youth's case record for family members and individuals who were important to or who have had connections with the youth.
- Uses internet search tools such as Accurant to locate people who might be potential team members (see Appendix F for more information on Accurant).
- Contacts potential team members to inform them of the youth's current situation and the need to plan for safety, permanence and well-being.
- Explains the teaming process to parents and family members.
- Helps potential team members establish their roles on the team and in the youth's life.
- Identifies key professionals with the power to determine team decisions.
- Meets with professionals to explain the teaming process and to engage them as team members.
- Provides the agency brochure to youth, parents and professionals.
- Continues outreach throughout the case to identify, engage or re-engage team members.

Building the Team

The Casey social worker uses separate individual sessions to explain permanency teaming to Mealea and Chan. She also meets with Mealea's current foster parents, Carl and Marta, to explain permanency teaming. Mealea quickly identifies the following potential team members in addition to her mother: Dorothy, the former foster mother with whom she kept in touch over the past two years and who helped her return to her current foster home after running away; her therapist; her attorney; her state social worker; and her Casey social worker. Chan identifies her best friend Alana to join the team with her. Dorothy becomes actively engaged as a team member and Dorothy's niece, Polly, also joins the team. The social worker holds two individual sessions with Veasna, Mealea's father, and two joint sessions with Mealea and Veasna together to explore his ongoing role in her life. Veasna states that

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THE URGENCY PRINCIPLE: Reaching out to and engaging potential team members should begin immediately. Gathering team members together must take the youth's urgent needs for permanency into account.

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he has many chronic medical conditions. He never participates in team meetings, even after the team offers to meet at his home. Veasna continues to tell Mealea that he wants her to live with him and wants her to be more involved with his family.

How does the social worker engage youth in conversations about who is important in his or her life? The social worker asks the youth about family members and significant adults, choosing questions from the Youth Interview (see Appendix: Permanency Resources) to help the youth think about who is important. Questions include:

- Who would you call in an emergency?
- Who would you call to share good news?
- To whom do you always want to stay connected?
- To whom do you want to be re-connected?
- Who do you care about?
- Who cares about you?

The social worker also chooses questions from the Youth Interview to help understand what, and who, the youth sees in his or her future. Questions include:

- What does your life look like in the future?
- What do you want to achieve in your life?
- What or who do you need in your life in order to achieve it?
- Who or what would you like to have in your life in one year or in five years?

ACTIVITY #4. INVOLVE THE YOUTH AND PARENTS IN PREPARING, PLANNING AND PARTICIPATING IN TEAM MEETINGS.

The social worker takes the lead in engaging the youth's parents in the teaming process and preparing them prior to team meetings. The social worker also supports their participation during meetings and debriefs them after meetings. Debriefing occurs after the actual day of the meeting. All team members, however, have a responsibility to ensure that the youth's and parent's voices are heard. For younger children who do not attend the large team meetings, preparation time is used to understand what the youth wants to communicate to his/her team, and to help the youth understand in a developmentally appropriate way what the team will be discussing and deciding. The social worker, in collaboration with team members, assesses the youth's level of comfort and his or her relationships with various team members. Other team members who know the youth best assist the social worker in preparing and supporting him or her during team meetings.

How much time does it take to involve the youth and parent(s) in preparing, planning and participating in team meetings and when does this work take place?

The time intensity depends on the youth's and parent's comfort level with the process. Preparing the youth and parent may require 30 to 60 minutes prior to the team meeting and debriefing after the meeting may require 30 minutes. This preparation happens during individual or joint meetings prior to or after the actual day of the large team meeting, not immediately before or after the actual large team meeting. Some youth and parents may require extra support and preparation. Preparation, planning and youth and parent participation in team meetings is ongoing, ending only when legal permanency is achieved.

What is the goal of involving the youth and parent(s) in preparing, planning and participating in team meetings?

The goal is to ensure that the youth and parents are fully prepared for team participation and ready to actively participate in team planning.

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THE RESPONSIBILITY PRINCIPLE: *Actively engaging parents in preparing, planning and participating in team meetings at the outset sets the stage for parents to take on increasing responsibility for the youth over time.*

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What are the principal tasks in this activity?

The social worker's principal tasks are to:

- Engage the youth and parent so that they understand the importance of their full participation in team meetings.
- Prepare youth and parents to be active team members, including having them identify topics for the team meeting agendas and providing supports to increase their team participation.
- Ensure that youth and parents understand that the work focuses on ensuring that the youth has a legal permanent parent that will provide day-to-day care giving and that the youth's need for a permanent family is urgent.

What are the steps in involving youth and parent(s) in preparing, planning and participating in team meetings?

The social worker:

1. Ensures that youth and parent(s) understand that they have a voice in the process and that their involvement is vital. Youth of all ages are included in the permanency planning process through individual meetings. Youth age 12 or older attend large team meetings. Youth under the age of 12 are included in large team meetings when developmentally appropriate; in cases when they are not present in the meeting, the social worker brings the child's voice to the meeting in other ways. Parents are actively engaged in all permanency planning and participate in large team meetings.

2. Discusses with the youth and parent(s) what happens in the teaming process. Explains that although they have a critical voice, there are team decisions (and occasionally, external decisions by the agency or state) that they may not like.
3. Works with the youth and parents to create agendas for the meetings. In preparing for large team meetings, the social worker has face-to-face contact with the youth and parent to prepare a meeting agenda and to discuss how the youth and parent will participate and what support they may need.
4. Plans meeting logistics (time, place, invitations and food) to increase investment in the process.
5. Helps the youth and parent(s) manage their expectations and apprehension regarding meetings and asks what it will take to support their active participation.
6. Determines with the youth and parent(s) the meeting structure such as duration of their participation, where they wish to sit, how many breaks may be needed. Role plays or practices team meetings as needed with parents and youth.
7. Prepares the youth and parent(s) to meet any team members whom they have not previously met.
8. Conducts individual and/or joint meetings in advance of or between team meetings to discuss any concerns the youth and/or parent may have.
9. Should the youth or parent state an unwillingness to participate in the large team meeting, advises the individual that the teaming process will proceed without him/her and that he/she is welcome to participate at a later time.

How does the social worker prepare a youth specifically for large team meetings?

YOUTH YOUNGER THAN AGE OF 12: The social worker, caregiver or therapist talks with children under the age of 12 in a developmentally appropriate way about the agenda for a large team meeting, asks them what they would like to share with their team, what they need their team to do to make sure they can grow up safely and have a permanent family and debriefs with them after the meetings. Their voices are represented at large team meetings by the team member(s) who know them best. These youth often provide drawings, photos or notes to communicate thoughts and feelings related to the agenda items for the large team meeting. When they are mature enough, youth under the age of 12 sometimes participate in-person, especially when a particular portion of the meeting is important to them.

YOUTH AGE 12 AND OLDER: The social worker strategically prepares and supports youth age 12 and older to participate in large team meetings by jointly developing an agenda with them, role playing their participation, and sometimes adapting the location and setting of the meeting for the youth's comfort and ease. The social worker talks with the youth about any special supports that might be necessary in order for them to participate in a large team meeting with comfort and confidence. The social worker uses individual meetings to prepare the youth and to debrief them afterwards.

Individual and Joint Meetings

In preparation for the large team meetings, the Casey social worker holds several individual and joint sessions with Mealea and the parents and parent-figures in her life. Mealea looks forward to the first large team meeting. She understands that the team will listen to her feelings about the people she feels closest to; help her figure out where and with whom she will continue growing up – who will be the parent taking care of her; and how she will remain connected with other parental figures in her life. While planning the agenda for the first large team meeting, Mealea states that she wanted the flag of Cambodia to be placed on the top of her agenda as she is becoming more strongly identified with her cultural heritage. She wants healthy snacks such as fruit at the large team meetings. Mealea shows excitement when everyone is in the same room together for a meeting. She helps co-lead the meeting with her social worker. At one point, she takes a photo of her team for her lifebook.

Chan attends one large team meeting, but she is unavailable for subsequent meetings. She does not express interest in reunifying with Mealea and initially attempts to place guilt on Mealea by criticizing her for “choosing Dorothy” whenever the topic of adoption or legal guardianship comes up. Chan has a longstanding distrust of professionals. She gives birth to a son during the early months of permanency planning with Mealea which further distances her from the process because of fears that her new baby will be removed from her. Mealea worries persistently that if Dorothy adopts her, Chan will not allow her to see her new baby brother.

A cornerstone of the planning process is the individual sessions with Dorothy as a significant mother-figure in Mealea's life. Dorothy is an active team member but initially does not think about herself as Mealea's adoptive parent or legal guardian. She wants to support Mealea in living with Chan if at all possible. This perspective proves to be both a strength and limitation during the planning process. Dorothy genuinely accepts Chan's role as Mealea's mother despite the hurt and rejection that Mealea feels as a result of Chan's behavior. At the same time, Dorothy's acceptance of Chan keeps her from initially seeing how important it is for her to claim Mealea as a legal part of her own family. Dorothy continues to support Chan's role in Mealea's life even after it becomes evident that reunification cannot happen. The social worker has multiple individual sessions with Dorothy helping her to understand Mealea's need for adoption or legal guardianship despite her testing behaviors and expressions of ambivalence.

FIDELITY FOCUS: Identifying and Initiating Contact with Family Members and Significant Adults

- Significant people (not limited to family members) in the youth's life are identified.
- Significant people (not limited to family members) in the youth's life are located.
- Contact is established with significant family members/adults in the youth's life.

ACTIVITY #5. HAVE INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH YOUTH, PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, CORE TEAM MEMBERS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY.

Individual meetings are held with one team member to prepare for a large team meeting, share information, clarify misinformation, develop and strengthen relationships, resolve conflict, reach consensus and/or to advance the permanency planning process.

When should individual meetings begin? Over what period should individual meetings take place? How much time is involved in meeting individually with team members?

Individual meetings begin immediately after the safety parameters discussion in recognition of the urgency of achieving legal permanence for the youth. Individual meetings are held with potential team members during the first four to eight weeks after referral of a case. Team members who are less central to team planning may be prepared to join the team at a later date. Individual meetings take place as needed throughout the life of the case as team membership grows or changes. Individual meetings continue until a legal permanency outcome is achieved.

Duration varies depending on the number of potential members identified, outreach involved, content of sessions and reaction to outreach and engagement. If there is resistance, conflict or distrust, the social worker may extend individual meetings or may have multiple sessions with particular team members.

What is the goal of individual meetings?

The goal of individual meetings is to fully engage members of the youth's team to prepare them for large permanency team meetings.

What are the principal tasks of this activity?

The social worker's principal tasks are to:

- Gather and share information.
- Prepare for large team meetings and debrief after large team meetings.
- Explore permanency options for the youth.
- Confront challenges and explore solutions to achieving permanence.
- Include important adults in the youth's life as part of the teaming process even when they are unable to participate in large team meetings.

Individual meetings are used to prepare team members for large team meetings, debrief after large team meetings and facilitate permanency conversations that accelerate progress toward permanence.

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THE URGENCY AND ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES: Individual meetings are key to helping team members embrace the urgency of the permanency teaming process for the youth.

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Individual Meetings

The social worker holds individual sessions with both maternal and paternal relatives of Mealea. During a visit scheduled with a maternal aunt, the aunt is not at home when the social worker arrives but her son is home and he talks fondly of his relationship with Mealea. The aunt never responds to the social worker's subsequent attempts to contact her. The process, nonetheless, is extremely helpful to Mealea. She is delighted to know that family members have been thinking of her, and she is disappointed as she comes to realize that her aunt is not willing to be more involved in her life at the time.

In the individual sessions with Veasna (Mealea's father) in his home, the social worker is immediately struck by the many photographs of Mealea and her mother in his living room. When Veasna points out Mealea's baby picture, he smiles and says, "her name means 'flower'." When the social worker later shares these things with Mealea, she begins to glow. Sessions continue with Mealea's father and more photographs are gathered for Mealea's lifebook. At one point, Mealea's father states that he wants to be her full-time parent and take her to Cambodia with him. Mealea feels overwhelmed and does not know how to respond. The social worker subsequently holds a number of individual sessions with Veasna to help him better understand Mealea's needs. He decides that he is not able to parent Mealea because of his medical conditions and advancing age. In a joint session facilitated by the social worker, Veasna shares his decision with Mealea in his own words. The joint meetings help Mealea better understand how she can stay connected to her father even if she continues growing up with Dorothy. She is most comfortable with staying in touch with him by phone, and Dorothy continues to support that contact.

Individual meetings with Mealea's therapist prove to be essential in the permanency process. The therapist has worked with Mealea for several years. She shares that Mealea is thriving in her re-connection to Dorothy and welcomes a resolution of the complicated situation with Chan. The therapist becomes a strong ally for moving the process toward a legal outcome – embracing another chance at reunification while concurrently exploring adoption or legal guardianship if reunification cannot be successful.

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FIDELITY FOCUS: Individual Youth Meetings for Teaming Preparation

- The CFS social worker explains his/her role in the youth's life and familiarizes the youth with the Lifelong Families model and the goal of legal permanence.
 - The CFS social worker and the youth develop an agenda for the large team.
 - The CFS social worker provides an overview of the teaming process.
 - The CFS social worker and the youth develop a list of questions that the youth wants answered during the meeting or by members of the team.
 - The CFS social worker consults with the youth on meeting logistics (e.g., when and where the team meeting should occur).
 - The CFS social worker debriefs with the youth items discussed or decision made at the prior large team meeting.
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What does the social worker do in individual meetings with team members?

The social worker:

- Reviews the youth's and parent(s)' needs and the purpose of the permanency teaming process.
- Helps adults become more aware of and focused on planning to meet the youth's needs.
- Addresses logistical issues, identifying what obstacles might exist to members' participation in large team meetings (e.g., work schedules, transportation).

- Clarifies the roles of each individual on the team.
- Helps individuals explore their concerns about the process and any issues that they want to address in joint sessions with other members.
- Identifies topics team members are willing or unwilling to address in the large team meetings.
- Addresses barriers such as adversarial relationships that may interfere with the teaming process and large team meetings.
- Assesses each individual's level of commitment to the youth and to the teaming process.
- Provides education, support and encouragement to help members sustain their teaming efforts.

ACTIVITY #6. HAVE JOINT MEETINGS BETWEEN TWO OR MORE TEAM MEMBERS.

Joint meetings are held with two or more team members to prepare for a large team meeting, share information, clarify misinformation, develop and strengthen relationships, resolve conflict, reach consensus and/or advance the permanency planning process.

When should joint meetings begin? Over what period of time should joint meetings take place? How much time is involved?

Joint meetings should take place as needed after the social worker conducts individual sessions with team members. Not all individuals will need to participate in joint sessions. Joint sessions continue throughout the life of the case as needed. For example, joint meetings may continue in order to strengthen and support a newly developed, vulnerable or essential relationship to the youth. Joint sessions are no longer needed when a conflict or issue has been resolved, when the two individuals are able to continue a positive working relationship on their own or when legal permanency has been achieved.

Time intensity varies depending on the nature of the relationships and the case circumstances. A joint session typically takes one to two hours.

What is the goal of joint meetings?

The goal of joint meetings is to bring together two or more team members to build and/or strengthen relationships and their work together.

What are the principal tasks of these meetings?

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THE ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES: Use joint meetings to help bridge understanding between team members so that they come into the large team meeting committed to the urgency of permanence for the youth.

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The social workers' principal tasks in arranging for and conducting joint meetings are to:

- Resolve conflict among team members;
- Build or strengthen relationships between team members; and
- Build consensus between two or more team members on key issues.

Joint meetings are used to prepare team members for large team meetings. Joint meetings between birth parents and caregivers are designed to build and strengthen their relationship with one another.

Joint Meetings

Veasna organizes a dinner for Mealea and his family at a local Cambodian restaurant although he cannot attend. Mealea goes to the dinner with Dorothy and meets several relatives. Some have not seen her since she was a baby, and some have never met her. She also meets a new baby nephew. Mealea is initially overwhelmed by the warm and enthusiastic greetings of family members when she and Dorothy arrive at the restaurant, especially those who are meeting her for the first time. With Dorothy's and the Casey social worker's assistance, however, Mealea is able to relax and enjoy the dinner. By observing the family gathering, the Casey social worker develops a better understanding of what she needs to do to help Mealea integrate her many family relationships, as well as help Dorothy develop and strengthen relationships with Mealea's relatives.

The social worker also facilitates a joint session between Dorothy and Chan. With the social worker's help, Chan gives permission for Mealea to become a legal member of Dorothy's family. Dorothy realizes how important it is for Mealea to see her two mothers together, both concerned for her well-being. Chan speaks very little English, but using this joint session as the foundation for their relationship, she and Dorothy gradually build a stronger relationship as Dorothy demonstrates her steadfast commitment to Mealea. At one point, Dorothy advocates with the middle school staff to provide an extra ticket to Mealea's graduation so that Chan can attend the ceremony with Dorothy. Joint session work is essential in helping Chan and Dorothy address Mealea's loyalty issues and recognize the unique roles each has in her life.

During the teaming process, Mealea's therapist constantly reminds the group of the urgency of making a permanency decision so the state does not continue to be Mealea's legal parent. The therapist has a solid relationship with Mealea and becomes a strong ally for legal permanence when state partners and the guardian ad litem hint at accepting "another planned permanent living arrangement" as an adequate permanency goal when Mealea and Dorothy become ambivalent about adoption. The social worker and therapist work together in several joint sessions with Mealea and Dorothy as ambivalence escalates in the midst of continuing discussions about adoption or legal guardianship. Mealea begins to exhibit defiant behaviors – testing limits by bringing her boyfriend to the house without permission, skipping school and staying out beyond curfew. These issues become barriers to proceeding toward legal permanence and are handled in joint sessions so that large team meetings will be productive.

The joint work with Dorothy and Mealea continues. At one meeting, Dorothy says to Mealea, "I know your mom loves you, even if she can't be the one to take care of you now. I love you too, and you're already like a daughter to me."

What steps does the social worker take in holding joint meetings with team members?

The social worker takes the following actions:

1. Reviews the reasons for the joint meeting.
2. Helps the team members find common ground in their care and concern for the youth, their wish to meet the youth's needs and their understanding of their unique roles in the youth's life.
3. Helps the team members share their history and gain mutual understanding of others' points of view and what brought them to the team.
4. Clarifies roles and expectations of all parties.
5. Identifies areas of concern or potential issues that might impede participation in permanency planning and large team meetings. Plans for and discusses how to resolve these issues.
6. Provides the opportunity for team members to discuss issues not raised in large team meetings and to enhance their ability to raise these issues during the large meetings.
7. Raises awareness and addresses sensitive topics such as the unique perspectives of team members and emotionally charged historical information (e.g., circumstances surrounding the youth's removal from the family).
8. Identifies topics team members want to raise with the large team.
9. Provides an opportunity for birth and foster parents to begin building an alliance.

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FIDELITY FOCUS: Individual and Joint Meetings with Significant Family Members, Individuals, Stakeholders and Key Decision Makers for Teaming Preparation

- The CFS social worker holds individual and joint meetings with family and/or non-family members.
 - The CFS social worker explains his/her role in the youth's life and familiarizes adults with the Lifelong Families model and the goal of legal permanence.
 - The CFS social worker provides an overview of the teaming process.
 - The Lifelong Families brochure is distributed.
 - Questions prepared by the youth are answered.
 - Logistical issues such as time, location and accessibility are addressed by the CFS social worker to maximize team participation.
 - Topics that team members want to bring into the large team are identified and added to the large team meeting agenda.
 - A plan is developed for strengthening relationships between the youth and parents and/or other family members.
 - A plan is developed for strengthening relationships with other significant adults in the youth's life.
 - The CFS social worker debriefs with team members items discussed or decisions made at the prior large team meeting.
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ACTIVITY #7. HOLD LARGE TEAM MEETINGS AND TRACK PROGRESS USING THE SERVICE PLAN AND TEAM MEETING SUMMARIES.

Large team meetings bring together all team members at a time and in a place that maximizes everyone's participation, especially the youth, parents and family members. Large team meetings help to give all team members a voice in collaborative planning and maintain momentum in decision making toward a permanent legal outcome. Large team meetings strengthen team members as the natural network of family and community support for the youth and his/her permanent family, even beyond agency exit.

Over what period of time do large team meetings take place? How much time is needed to prepare for and facilitate large team meetings?

Large team meetings last approximately one and a half to two hours. The first large team meeting occurs approximately eight weeks after case opening. Large team meetings take place approximately every four to six weeks throughout the life of the case and end when legal permanence is achieved. The social worker convenes additional large team meetings when key decisions are needed. Occasionally, the social worker expands the interval between large team meetings in order to facilitate the individual and/or joint meetings needed to enhance the effectiveness of large meetings.

Preparing team members prior to meetings and debriefing can require approximately one hour per person. Preparation is usually done during home visits with caregivers or is the reason for collateral contacts with a therapist, attorney and other professionals. Preparation for or debriefing of large team meetings is not done immediately before or after the actual meeting.

What is the goal of large team meetings?

The goal of large team meetings is to create and sustain an active team to fully support progress toward family permanence.

What are the principal tasks of these meetings?

The social worker's principal tasks in large team meetings are to:

- Bring together and engage all team members for planning and Decision making related to the youth's safety, permanence and well-being.
- Balance the decision making between family members and professionals.

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THE URGENCY PRINCIPLE: In large team meetings, members may stray from the focus on permanence. It is important for the social worker to maintain the momentum toward achieving a permanent family for the youth.

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- Maintain the momentum toward achieving legal permanence for the youth during and between large team meetings.
- Develop team relationships and natural networks of support for the youth and family after case closure and exit from the child welfare system.
- Make collaborative decisions.

The Large Team Meeting

The first large team meeting is a powerful experience for Mealea as she is joined by her mother, Chan, her former foster mother Dorothy, the state and the Casey social workers, her current foster parents (Carl and Marta), her attorney, her therapist and one of her teachers. The teaming process strengthens Mealea's ability to speak for herself, ask questions and raise concerns about the process. Team members challenge the state child welfare agency's permanency goal of adoption. Mealea states that she has never been asked if she wants to be adopted and makes clear that she wants to return to live with Chan. She believes that the process is taking too long and is frustrated by what she sees as the state agency's lack of urgency.

As the teaming process continues over the next several months, it becomes clear that reunification with Chan is not an option. Chan does not think that she can parent Mealea and after her new baby is born, she no longer attends team meetings or meets with the social worker. The state child welfare agency agrees that Chan can still visit Mealea. During a large team meeting when team members are discussing Mealea's need for a legal family, Dorothy states that she wants to adopt Mealea. Mealea gives a knowing, half-smile when she hears Dorothy make the declaration in the meeting. When the social worker turns to Mealea for her reaction, Mealea nods her head and says, "I'm more ready to think about having Dorothy as my second mom now, but as my legal guardian – nope, no adoption for me." Team members, especially Mealea's therapist, strongly support Dorothy's legal commitment. Her therapist expresses concern about Mealea's mental health if there are continued delays in achieving legal permanence for her. The team members' sense of urgency proves to be a powerful force in maintaining the momentum. Now, two years after Mealea was referred to the agency, the Casey social worker and the state agency begin processing the paperwork for a legal guardianship, while Dorothy continues to give Mealea positive messages about her wish to adopt her. With the insight from the social worker and the experiences of other experienced adoptive and guardian parents at the agency, Dorothy comes to understand how important it is that she make a commitment to adopt Mealea regardless of whether Mealea agrees with it.

FIDELITY FOCUS: Individual and Joint Meetings with Significant Family Members, Individuals, Stakeholders and Key Decision Makers for Teaming Preparation

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large team meetings occur and are attended by birth family, foster family/current caregiver, the state social worker, the youth over age 12, and another professional not from the private agency. • An agenda was used to guide the large team meeting. • The youth is encouraged to participate as previously planned. • All team members are encouraged to participate in discussion and decision making. • Primary (state and agency) and concurrent (back up) permanency goals are developed or reviewed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service planning and review occurs. • Progress is tracked on primary (state and court) and concurrent (backup) permanency goals with summaries. • A large team summary is completed that includes 1) a narrative of the meeting and 2) a "tear off" task list detailing tasks, people responsible and time frames for task completion. • The large team meeting summary "tear off" task list is distributed to all team members. • The next large team meeting is scheduled for within 4 to 6 weeks. |
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Her social worker and therapist do not pressure Mealea about adoption. However, they continue to help Mealea explore her ambivalence because adoption would be the most legally secure family relationship for her, especially after she turns 18. In the meantime, her social worker proceeds with legal guardianship, while maintaining consistent contact and positive relationships with her birth family. Dorothy remains open to an adult adoption if or when Mealea changes her mind.

What are the specific responsibilities of the social worker in facilitating large team meetings?

The Casey social worker facilitates large team meetings unless the state mandates that the state social worker co-facilitate. In facilitating large team meetings, the role of the social includes the following responsibilities:

Preparation for the Large Team Meeting

- Schedules the large team meeting in a timely manner to ensure the highest degree of participation by members.
- Prepares all team members in advance of the meeting.
- Creates a clear agenda shaped by input from all team members (especially the youth when developmentally appropriate).
- Includes all team members in planning.

The Large Team Meeting

- Leads the discussion and adheres to the agenda.
- Clarifies the purpose and structure of the meeting, and roles of team members.
- Maintains a strengths-orientation.
- Includes all team members in decision making, paying attention to the inherent power imbalance between family members and professionals.
- Ensures youth participation, contingent on the youth's strengths, personal issues and developmental ability.
- Ensures that parent(s) have a voice.
- Keeps the team discussion focused on the youth's needs for safety, permanence and well-being.
- Reviews with team members the primary and concurrent permanency goals.
- Supports the team in creating achievable goals and tasks, appropriate for the point in time of the case and teaming process, and defines clearly the specific responsibilities that team members have for completing tasks.
- Reviews progress on service plan goals, tasks, timeframes and responsible parties at each meeting.
- Moves planning forward by leveraging relationships with team members.

Following the Large Team Meeting

- If possible, copies and distributes the Team Meeting Summary action steps (what is to be done, by whom and when) before the end of the meeting. If not possible, forwards copies of the action steps to team members following the meeting. [Copy of the Team Meeting Summary Action Steps Page].
- Reviews service plan for possible inclusion of the Team Meeting Summary action steps that have emerged at the large team meeting.
- Uses appropriate tools to guide and structure the large team meeting discussion, such as an agenda, flip chart, clock or a “parking lot” for topics that are better discussed at another time.
- Sets the next team meeting date before the meeting is adjourned.
- Leaves the meeting at the same time as all other team members and does not have informal conversations with one or more individual team members, being careful not to give the impression of partiality. As described in earlier sections, preparing for or debriefing of large team meetings happens at a separate time and place and not immediately before or after the large team meeting.
- Completes the team meeting summary and tasks and sends copies to team members.

Fidelity Focus Summary: Permanency Teaming

In implementing the Permanency Teaming component of Lifelong Families, the following fidelity measures are used:

Key Construct	Indicators
Structured Collaboration with the State Social Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to full case record by CFS social worker prior to or during the initial safety parameters discussion. • Initial safety parameters discussion occurs following case assignment to the CFS social worker and before first large team meeting . • Safety parameters meeting/call is revisited following these changes in team composition: 1) additions of family or natural network members; or 2) changes in CFS social workers or state social workers. • Facilitator(s) of the teaming process and meetings is the case-carrying social worker. The facilitator is identified. • The Lifelong Families brochure is distributed. • Goals and tasks of the initial and current service plans are established and assigned. • Primary (state) and concurrent (CFS) goals are discussed and tasks are listed to support legal permanence for the youth. • Additional discussions with state social worker are initiated by the CFS social worker to 1) strengthen their relationship, resolve conflict, reach consensus and/or remove barriers to advance progress toward permanency; and 2) to discuss the safety of new or existing team members, regarding contact with the youth and participation on the team.
Identifying and Initiating Contact with Family Members and Significant Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant people [not limited to family members] in the youth's life are identified. • Significant people [not limited to family members] in the youth's life are located. • Contact is established with significant family members/adults in the youth's life.
Individual Youth Meetings for Teaming Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CFS social worker explains his/her specific role in the youth's life and familiarizes the youth with the Lifelong Families model and the goal of legal permanence. • The CFS social worker provides an overview of the teaming process. • The CFS social worker consults with the youth on meeting logistics (e.g., when and where the team meeting should occur). • The CFS social worker and the youth develop an agenda for the large team. • The CFS social worker and the youth develop a list of questions that the youth wants answered during the meeting or by members of the team. • The CFS social worker debriefs with the youth items discussed or decisions made at prior large team meetings.

Fidelity Focus Summary: Permanency Teaming cont'd

Key Construct	Indicators
<p>Individual and Joint Meetings with Significant Family Members, Individuals, Stakeholders and Key Decision Makers for Teaming Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CFS social worker holds individual and joint meetings with family and/or non-family members. • The CFS social worker familiarizes adults with the Lifelong Families model and the goal of legal permanence. • The CFS social worker provides an overview of the teaming process. • The Lifelong Families brochure is distributed. • Questions prepared by the youth are answered. • Logistical issues such as time, location and accessibility are addressed by CFS social worker to maximize team participation. • Topics that team members want to bring into the large team are identified and added to the large team meeting agenda. • A plan is developed for strengthening relationships between youth and parents and/or other family members. • A plan is developed for strengthening relationships with other significant adults in the youth's life. • The CFS social worker debriefs with team members items discussed or decisions made at prior large team meetings.
<p>Large Team Meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large team meetings occur and are attended by birth family, foster family/ current caregiver, the state social worker, the youth over 12, and another professional not from the private agency. • The agenda is used to guide the large team meeting. • The youth is encouraged to participate as previously planned. • All team members are encouraged to participate in discussion and decision making. • Primary (state and court) and concurrent (backup) permanency goals are developed or reviewed. • Service planning and review occurs. • Progress is tracked on primary (state and court) and concurrent (backup) permanency goals with summaries. • A large team meeting summary is completed that includes 1) a narrative of the meeting; and 2) a "tear off" task list detailing tasks, people responsible and time frames for task completion. • The large team meeting summary "tear off" task list is distributed to all team members. • The next large team meeting is scheduled for within four to six weeks.

Summary

Permanency teaming is a collaborative approach for youth in foster care or at risk of entering foster care.

The permanency teaming process:

- Involves a team and a facilitator.
- Is customized to fit the youth's needs.
- Is composed of at least:
 - Youth
 - Birth parents/family members
 - Current foster family/caregiver
 - The legal custodian
 - Key professionals (for example, attorneys, state social work supervisors, therapists, residential treatment staff)
- Identifies and includes other significant adults who are important to the youth (such as former foster parents, mentors) and/or supportive to the family (such as a neighbor or the family's pastor).
- Uses outreach to maximize participation of youth and family members.
- Shares responsibility for planning and decision making among team members.
- Partners with the state child welfare agency.
- Establishes, implements and reviews safety parameters.
- Addresses youth safety, permanence and well being.
- Identifies a permanent legal parent(s) for the youth to provide parenting that is safe and emotionally secure.
- Reflects a sense of urgency that is consistent with federal timelines and agency practice standards.
- Utilizes a concurrent planning framework.
- Includes a blend of individual, joint and large team meetings.
- Prioritizes relationship-building between and among team members, especially the youth, family members, caregivers and other adults significant to the youth.
- Continues as long as the youth is receiving agency services and has not achieved or sustained legal permanence.

Chapter 6. Permanency-Focused Case Management

Permanency-focused case management is more targeted and goal-directed than traditional forms of child welfare case management. Permanency-focused case management includes the provision and coordination of concrete services and case management activities selected and directed toward achieving a youth's timely exit from foster care to reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. Permanency-focused case management also strategically utilizes the casework relationship to advance progress toward permanency with all individuals involved in the youth's life and recognizes the centrality of the parent-child and extended family relationships in sustaining safety and well-being for the youth into the future.

Delivered throughout the life of a case, permanency-focused case management ensures that services are arranged, monitored and evaluated to ensure maximum involvement of youth, parents and families and empowerment in collaborating with the service systems affecting them. In permanency-focused case management, the Casey social worker develops and uses his/her relationship and skills to assist youth and families in achieving and sustaining permanence.

Permanency-focused case management integrates case management and concrete services in the areas of permanence, safety and well-being, enhancing the likelihood of positive outcomes in these areas.

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PERMANENCY-FOCUSED CASE MANAGEMENT: Providing and coordinating time-limited foster placement plus therapeutic and concrete services to youth and parents to achieve and sustain family relationships that assure the youth's safety and well-being.

When appropriate, accessing evidence-based treatment to help manage and heal the youth's trauma while supporting birth parents, relative guardians and adoptive parents in sustaining positive and therapeutic parenting approaches.

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The Key Activities

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #1 Deliver foster care placement services and supports as a tool in achieving timely reunification, adoption or legal guardianship.	Begins following assessment and continues until the case is closed.	To fully utilize foster care placement services and supports in service of achieving timely permanence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranges for time-limited foster care as a means to achieving family permanency. • Provides supportive services to the youth and resource family that enhance progress toward the permanency goal. • Supports the birth family, resource family and permanent parent as key partners in achieving permanency for the youth. • Increases the permanent parent's responsibility while decreasing responsibility of the agency as a substitute parent for the youth.
ACTIVITY #2 Assess the youth's permanency needs, strengths, challenges, relationships and resources while concurrently assessing safety and well-being and the family's capacity to meet this youth's individual needs.	Assessment begins the moment the case is referred to the agency, is ongoing, and ends when the youth achieves legal permanence, the placement agency changes or the case is closed. The initial assessment is completed within 30 days but assessment continues throughout the life of the case.	To develop a comprehensive understanding of the youth's strengths and needs in order to achieve permanence in a timely manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the youth's needs. • Assess the youth's permanency strengths, challenges, relationships and resources. • Fully disclose the youth's needs to all key adults. • Match the youth with a permanent parent who can best meet this youth's individual needs.
ACTIVITY #3 Develop a service plan with both primary and concurrent permanency goals and ensure that all service plan goals and tasks support timely progress toward the permanency outcome.	The initial service plan (including a primary and concurrent permanency goal) is completed with the youth and family within 30 days of case assignment.	To support timely permanency planning through effective service planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the initial service plan based on the legal custodian/state agency's permanency goal for the youth. • Together with youth, parents and team members revise the primary permanency goal as necessary and develop a concurrent permanency goal. • Develop measureable, time-focused and individualized service plan goals and tasks all directed toward achieving the primary permanency goal. • Incorporate team members' current strengths, competencies and skills.
ACTIVITY #4 When a safety plan is necessary, assure that it sustains progress toward permanence and strengthens permanent family relationships.	Permanency planning proceeds concurrently with safety planning and stabilization even in times of crisis.	To maximize the youth's opportunities for family relationships even during times of crisis and instability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the safety plan together with the youth, caregivers and other significant family or team members. • Promote team support for building and prioritizing familial and informal resources, including new family relationships, as sources of safety for the youth. • Ensure that the safety plan focuses on the youth's and family's abilities to manage crisis.

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #4			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the team in recognizing that a crisis should not derail moving toward permanency and is an opportunity to advance progress. • Manage risk to preserve the importance of the youth's relationships while protecting the youth from harm. • Ensure that the plan to maintain safety continues to facilitate and enhance permanency planning for the youth.
ACTIVITY #5 Utilize evidence-based, trauma-informed interventions as needed to facilitate and sustain legal family permanence.	Trauma-informed interventions are identified, utilized as needed on an ongoing basis, and overseen by the permanency team until the youth achieves legal permanence. Similar interventions may continue beyond agency exit at the permanent parent's request in order to sustain legal permanence.	To promote the youth's healing from trauma as a facilitator of permanence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify youth's need for trauma informed intervention as necessary. • Advocate with the team and the legal custodian for the most appropriate and accessible resource for treatment. • Include caregiver and/or permanent parent as the key decision maker in selecting treatment resources. • Include treatment provider on youth's permanency team. • Review treatment goals and progress at large team meetings.
ACTIVITY #6 Facilitate a timely exit from foster care to a permanent legal parenting relationship.	Planning for agency case closure and the youth's exit from the child welfare system begins at intake. Momentum in permanency planning must be maintained to achieve timely exit from foster care. The youth and family are offered community-based voluntary permanency support services prior to case closure and system exit.	To achieve a permanent family for the youth that assumes full responsibility for parenting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a permanent legal parent for the youth. • Complete necessary legal documentation. • Include the youth, parents and other team members in developing a plan for transitioning the youth to the permanent home. • Monitor implementation and progress of transition at large team meetings. • Transfer primary responsibility for parenting the youth to the permanent parent, supported by family members, team members and other community resources.
ACTIVITY #7 Hold large team meetings and track progress using the service plan and team meeting summaries.	First large team meeting occurs approximately 8 weeks after the case is referred; and approximately every 4-6 weeks throughout the life of the case, as needed. Preparing team members takes as much as 1 hour per person, both before and after the team meetings; meetings last approximately 2 hours.	To create and sustain an active team that fully supports progress toward permanence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a permanent legal parent for the youth. • Complete necessary legal documentation. • Include the youth, parents and other team members in developing a plan for transitioning the youth to the permanent home. • Monitor implementation and progress of transition at large team meetings. • Transfer primary responsibility for parenting the youth to the permanent parent, supported by family members, team members and other community resources.

In this chapter, we illustrate the activities involved in Permanency-Focused Case Management using the case of Braden as an example.

Braden was thirteen when referred to Casey Family Services. He had spent the first eleven years of his life in the care of his father, Melvin. His mother, Marie, had been repeatedly hospitalized for psychiatric reasons and had had several physical altercations with neighbors and her employer. She left Braden in the care of his father Melvin when Braden was five years old. Melvin tried his best, but Braden's care became too much for him. Melvin had both physical and mental health challenges and was addicted to drugs. He lost his job and the physical condition of the home deteriorated. It became apparent that Melvin was no longer able to keep Braden safe. Neighbors found Braden wandering the streets near his home in the middle of the night and called child protective services. The agency provided in-home services for two months, but Melvin was not able to take the needed steps to keep Braden safe. At that point, Melvin identified his cousin, Marquis, and his cousin's wife, Rena, as a placement resource for Braden and the agency agreed. Marquis and Rena had cared for Braden briefly in the past. Braden lived with Marquis and Rena for a year. The agency ended the placement when it learned that they allowed Braden to visit his father unsupervised and that while with his father, he had smoked pot and then been arrested for shoplifting.

ACTIVITY #1. DELIVER FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS AS A TOOL IN ACHIEVING TIMELY REUNIFICATION, ADOPTION OR LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP.

Placement in foster care is a service provided to a youth who cannot live safely with his or her legal parent while permanency planning is facilitated. Foster care placement offers the youth an opportunity for safe and loving substitute parenting temporarily, while the youth's permanency team concurrently and urgently pursues a decision about the youth's safe return home or an alternate legal parent to raise the youth. The goal of foster care is always timely exit from foster care to a permanent family. Only service plan goals that direct the planning process toward exiting the child from the child welfare system to a legal parent are considered "permanency goals." Social workers utilize a range of skills in providing permanency planning and placement services and supports, including facilitation, relationship-building, advocacy, mediation, assessment and intervention. They facilitate a timely team planning process for each youth on their caseload and assure that each team is customized with the family members, professionals and other significant adults in a youth's life who are important to include in planning. They are responsible for focusing the planning on achieving a legal parenting relationship that will meet each youth's unique needs, now and in the future.

What is the time involved in delivering foster care placement services as a tool in achieving timely permanency?

Foster care is temporary, and placement is time-limited until a youth's family membership can be safely and permanently restored with birth family or recreated through adoption or legal guardianship. Time is of the essence in providing permanency planning and placement services and supports. Most youth referred to Casey Family Services have already been in care for longer than the federal time frames for reunification or, alternatively, the filing of a petition to terminate parental rights. Often, permanency planning has not been successful for an extended period of time. Recognizing the opportunities and challenges in planning for permanence for youth with these histories, Casey Family Services uses a maximum expected timeframe

to achieve legal permanence of 18 months from date of referral. In some cases, contracts between the state agency and the private agency specify more accelerated time frames.

What is the goal of foster care placement services and supports?

The goal is to use foster care placement services and supports in service of achieving timely permanence.

What are the key tasks of the social worker regarding foster care placement services and supports?

The social worker has the following key tasks:

- Arranges for temporary and time-limited placement service that promotes timely legal permanence.
- Assists the resource family in identifying and accessing the services that will support timely permanence for the youth.
- Supports the resource family in partnering with birth parents, family members and/or other permanent parent to transition the youth to permanence.
- Increases the permanent parent's responsibility and parental authority while decreasing the responsibility of the agency as a substitute parent (and the foster parent as the substitute caregiver when they are not the permanent parents).
- Transitions responsibility for support to permanent parents and responsibility for support to the extended family, team and other community members and resources.

What casework activities are involved in delivering foster care placement services as a tool to achieve timely permanency?

The social worker conducts the following activities:

- Provides full disclosure to the foster parents regarding the youth's comprehensive needs and family relationships.
- Trains, prepares and supports foster parents as the youth's last foster placement. Foster parents understand that the youth will not move from their home until achieving reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. Placement disruption is not an option when the youth exhibits difficult behaviors.
- Trains, prepares and supports foster parents in playing a key partnering role with birth parents and birth family members.
- Trains, prepares and supports foster parents in partnering with the youth's permanent parent to transition the youth to permanence.
- Helps foster parents develop and maintain effective working relationships with birth families and maintain the youth's ongoing relationships with his/her natural network.

- Helps foster parents make a permanent commitment to adoption if the youth cannot safely reunify with birth family or support the youth's transition to a adoptive or guardianship family;
- Increases the permanent parent's responsibility and parental authority while decreasing agency responsibility.
- Facilitates the youth's team in developing, implementing and monitoring a comprehensive plan for pre-placement visitation and transition to the permanent family.
- Collaborates with the team to make a plan for therapeutic sibling, birth parents and kinship visits.
- Helps to build and repair relationships among youth, birth family members, and individuals with whom connections had disrupted or ended.
- Provides support as needed to sibling/birth children in resource families to ensure that the youth's ongoing needs are met.
- Involves the youth's team in planning for and using respite within a youth's and family's natural network of relationships, rather than with professional or agency resources.

How does the Casey social worker assist the state social worker in transitioning the youth to the permanent family?

The social worker assists the state social worker in transitioning the youth to the permanent family by:

- Facilitating a combination of individual, joint and large team meetings with the youth, potential permanent parent(s), state agency worker and other team members to reach a decision about a permanent parent and a legally permanent family relationship.
- With the team, planning the process of introducing the youth to the potential permanent parent if they do not know each other.
- Using individual, joint and large team meetings to develop and implement a visitation and pre-placement transition plan for the youth and permanent parent(s).
- Facilitating the development of a team plan to support the youth and family during the transition to legal permanence while ensuring that the duration of the transition meets the youth's and family's needs and does not delay permanence.

How does the Casey social worker partner with the state agency in order to maintain momentum toward reunification, adoption or legal guardianship?

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THE URGENCY PRINCIPLE: It is important to remind the team consistently that until the youth has a legal parent, the state is still the parent and time is of the essence.

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In his/her partnering with the state agency, the social worker:

- Continues to help the team provide support to the youth, permanent parent(s) and other family members as necessary in their adjustment to becoming a family.
- Assists the state social worker as needed in completing documentation to finalize the reunification, adoption or legal guardianship.
- Offers to partner with the state social worker to process the legal finalization as expeditiously as possible.

Braden's Foster Care Placement

Upon removing Braden from Marquis and Rena's home, the agency referred him to Casey Family Services for foster care placement and permanency services. Casey matches Braden with a single foster mother, Donisa. The social worker provides full information to Donisa about Braden's needs and supports Donisa in committing to being Braden's last foster placement until he leaves to be reunited with Melvin or to another permanent family. She supports Donisa in her role as a partner with Melvin and maintaining effective relationships with him. At the same time, she explores with Donisa her ability to become Braden's adoptive parent should Braden not be safely reunited with Melvin. The social worker begins to assemble Braden's permanency team which includes Braden, Melvin, Marquis and Rena, and Donisa and begins providing intensive reunification services with the goal of returning Braden safely to Melvin's full-time care. The concurrent goal is for Braden to return to Marquis and Rena if his dad cannot safely parent him. The state social worker agrees to continue weekly visits between Braden and Melvin, now occurring at Donisa's home in the evening.

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FIDELITY FOCUS: Individual and Joint Meetings with Significant Family Members, Individuals, Stakeholders and Key Decision Makers for Teaming Preparation

- The Casey Family Services social worker educates foster parents that this is the youth's last foster placement before achieving reunification, adoption or legal guardianship.
 - The social worker encourage the foster parent to partner with other significant adults in the youth's life, including the birth parent/s or permanent parent/s.
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ACTIVITY #2. ASSESS THE YOUTH'S PERMANENCY NEEDS, STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES WHILE ASSESSING SAFETY AND WELL-BEING AND THE FAMILY'S CAPACITY TO MEET THE YOUTH'S NEEDS.

The assessment helps the social worker and team members understand and address a youth's needs, prepare the youth for permanent family relationship, and identify and prepare a permanent parent to meet the individual needs of the youth.

What is the timing of the assessment?

Assessment begins the moment the case is referred to the agency. It is an ongoing and dynamic process, evolving as information is added or circumstances change. The assessment ends only when the youth achieves legal permanence, the placement agency changes or the case is closed. To maintain momentum and a sense of urgency in achieving permanency, the initial assessment is completed within 30 days of case assignment.

What is the goal of the assessment?

The goal is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the youth's permanency-related strengths and needs in order for the youth to exit foster care by achieving legal family permanence in a timely way.

What are the social worker's key tasks in the permanency assessment?

The social worker's key assessment tasks are:

- Address all dimensions of the youth's safety, permanence and well being.
- Provide a detailed account of the youth's permanency strengths, challenges, relationships and resources.
- Provide full disclosure of the youth's needs to birth parents, relatives, team members or other adults identified as potential permanent parents.
- Serve as the basis for appropriately matching the youth with a permanent parent who can best meet the youth's comprehensive needs, if the youth is unable to reunify with birth parents.

What are the steps in the assessment process?

The social worker does the following, often concurrently:

Gathering and Receiving Information

- Gathers the referral packet and obtains additional information from the state agency that is needed to proceed. When gathering referral information, the social worker requests the names of relatives, past and present caregivers, key parenting figures and important adults in the youth's life.
- Gathers information from multiple sources, especially non-professionals who know the youth, and, most importantly, birth parents and family members, and the youth.
- Reviews case records, noting the youth's permanency strengths and challenges (e.g., the ability to accept parental authority, number of placements, history of attachment relationships) and the youth's permanency resources (adults interested in joining the permanency team, motivated to parent the youth, or identified by the youth as important in his/her life).

Identifying and Assessing Significant Adults

- Identifies all adults who could play a role in permanency planning for this youth as a potential team member and/or to assist in reunification, reconnection, recruitment and/or resolution of gaps in information and chronology of life events.
- When reviewing adults for potential placement, uses a strengths-based approach to screen in – rather

than screen out – candidates. The social worker applies a “what would it take” attitude to remediating barriers to permanent parenting.

- Shares relevant data from standardized measures and other evaluations with potential permanent parents to disclose the youth’s history and needs, helping potential parents understand what it would be like to parent this youth so that they can make an informed decision.
- If necessary, places the youth in a kinship or foster home during the initial assessment. When making a placement decision, the social worker prioritizes birth parents, family members, relatives, previous caregivers and other adults known to the youth before placing the youth with adults that the youth does not know.

Maintaining Momentum toward Permanence

- Ensures that both the primary and concurrent permanency goals for the youth specify the name of a permanent parent or detail the steps being taken to identify a parent
- Promotes momentum toward a permanency outcome by completing the assessment within the expected time frame and sharing it with the team.

What is the content of the assessment?

In addition to the standard content in a comprehensive youth assessment (e.g., youth demographics and legal status; reason for referral; reason for initial removal; current social, emotional, behavioral, and educational functioning; child and family medical and mental health history), a permanency-focused assessment also includes:

- Chronology of the youth’s placement history including dates, locations, caregiver names, contact information, reason for move(s), names of birth and/or foster siblings in the same placement and information about all other known significant relationships while in each placement.
- Current permanency goal, progress toward the goal, special circumstances related to achieving the goal and any pertinent information related to identifying a permanent parenting relationship and/or lifelong family connections.
- Names and relationships of parents (birth, foster and/or adoptive), siblings, family members, past and current caregivers and other significant adults in the youth’s life (such as mentors, teachers and coaches), including important information about these individuals and their relationships with the youth.
- Names and relationships of any additional potential permanency team members, including adults named by the youth as important to them and key professionals working with the youth.

Permanency strengths and challenges:

- **YOUTH-RELATED:** The youth’s interpersonal strengths and challenges, behaviors that positively or negatively affect family relationships, the youth’s ability to accept parental authority, and characteristics that develop and sustain attachment, intimacy and closeness.

- **FAMILY-RELATED:** Descriptions of early parent/child interactions, circumstances related to previous placement disruptions and/or dissolved adoptions or guardianships. Includes the nature of the commitment by the current caregiver and other adults currently interested and available as permanency resources; the potential permanent parent's formal and informal support network and how these supports contribute to the member's ability to provide permanency for the youth; and any current visitation arrangements.
- **SYSTEM-RELATED:** Policies, practices or resources that enhance or diminish the youth's achieving permanency as quickly and as safely as possible.

What is the role of the team in assessment?

As described in Chapter 4, the social worker uses the safety parameters meeting with the state child welfare agency and individual meetings with identified team members to develop trust, build relationships and gather information relevant to the assessment. Of particular importance when the state agency is the legal custodian is obtaining the state social worker's and/or supervisor's assistance in accessing the youth's public agency record. It is essential that the social worker have the opportunity to review the complete record and obtain needed information for the assessment. Subsequently, the social worker uses individual, joint and large team meetings with the youth, parents, caregivers, other significant adults in the youth's life, and key professionals to continue to refine and update the assessment.

How is the completed assessment used in ongoing permanency planning?

The Casey Family Services social worker reviews relevant assessment information with all team members, and uses it to inform team decision-making concerning the youth. In particular, information in the assessment is used to help the potential permanent parent understand what it will be like to parent this youth on a daily basis and to anticipate what it might be like in the future.

The Permanency Assessment

The assessment of Braden reveals a number of youth-related permanency strengths and challenges. Among his permanency strengths are his strong 11-year history of living with his father with only a few brief months living with relatives. Braden loves and has a fierce loyalty to his father. His quick wit and endearing and charming personality draw adults easily to him. Braden loves to tell silly jokes and although seemingly shy when first meeting someone, it is clear that Braden is just "sizing up" the person, taking his time in deciding whether to trust that individual. Braden is sometimes able to admit that his dad has a hard time providing for him and making safe choices for their life. Although Marquis and Rena's home felt more predictable than his father's, there were five other children in the home, ages 10 to 3. He immediately begins to thrive in the safety and calm of Donisa's home without the worry of crime or violence in the neighborhood or the unpredictability of home life when his dad was high. Braden also talks about his friend, JuJu who lives with Braden's Uncle Max a few blocks from Melvin's home. He tells his social worker that JuJu often took him to youth group at church on Sunday evenings. When the social worker spoke with Uncle Max, he said that Braden was "a good kid" and hated to see him "get mixed up with the wrong crowd." While he was living with Marquis and Rena, Braden was only able to see JuJu and Uncle Max occasionally.

Braden was not strong academically when he entered foster care but because he is highly motivated to learn, he quickly caught up to grade level. When he was living with his father, Braden assaulted a teacher and had to appear in court. He reportedly became frustrated in class and threw a chair in the direction of the teacher, striking the teacher in the back of the legs. The school filed charges. Braden is anxious about the outcome of the court proceedings which have continued for more than nine months because of court delays. Braden's attorney in the criminal matter is in close contact with Braden's care and protection appointed attorney, Mary Genser, who is an extremely strong and vocal advocate for Braden. Donisa has become a strong advocate for Braden's educational needs and behavioral supports and includes Melvin in school meetings, modeling the kind of parental advocacy that Braden will continue to need once he is reunified.

Family-related permanency strengths include Melvin's desire to provide a safe home for Braden and his willingness to participate in in-home services to strengthen his ability to parent his son. Melvin's cousin and cousin's wife, Marquis and Rena, love Braden and get along well with Melvin. They, however, do not condone his substance use. They state that they felt a bit overwhelmed trying to parent Braden in addition to their five children. Melvin has a small extended family that lives about one hour away and although he maintains contact, he does not want to ask them for assistance in raising Braden.

At this time, Braden's mother's whereabouts are unknown. Melvin states that when he last received information about her, she was actively using substances and was homeless. Although her relatives are supportive of Braden, Melvin is not willing to allow him to have contact with his maternal relatives because he has observed domestic violence in their homes.

System-related permanency challenges include the tasks for Melvin that the state agency has identified. It is not clear what Melvin must do to demonstrate his ability to safely parent Braden and the date for the permanent custody hearing has not been set. Braden's attorney does not support reunification with Melvin. She supports extended foster care because she believes that Braden will have more opportunities for education and extracurricular activities if he lives with Donisa. Another system-related permanency challenge is that the state agency will not allow overnight visits because of the marijuana smoking and shoplifting incident. This decision has significantly limited Melvin's ability to show that he can safely parent Braden. Braden has been given freedom to decide whether he wants to visit with his father, although he frequently shortens visits because he says that it feels "weird" to have to visit in the foster home.

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FIDELITY FOCUS: The formal permanency planning assessment document is completed within 30 days.

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ACTIVITY #3. DEVELOP A SERVICE PLAN THAT INCLUDES BOTH A PRIMARY AND CONCURRENT PERMANENCY GOAL AND INSURE THAT ALL OTHER SERVICE PLAN GOALS AND TASKS SUPPORT TIMELY PROGRESS TOWARD PERMANENCY.

The service plan is a road map to reaching a permanency destination for each youth in foster care. It is the bridge between assessment and intervention. It evolves over time and is developed in a collaborative process that leverages the strengths and contributions of team members in meeting the youth's needs for safety, permanency, and well-being.

What is the purpose of the primary and concurrent permanency goals, when are they developed and how are they updated as the work progresses?

The primary permanency goal (often referred to as Plan A) is the court-approved permanency goal provided by the state agency at the time of referral (when the state agency is the legal custodian). If this permanency goal is not reunification, adoption or legal guardianship, the private agency social worker advocates for one of those three permanency outcomes to ensure that the youth exits the child welfare system to a legal family. The concurrent permanency goal is the back-up/contingency plan (Plan B), meaning that if the primary permanency goal cannot be achieved, the concurrent option becomes the primary goal. Plan B also must be a family permanence goal: reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. Having a contingency plan ensures timely momentum in reaching a legal permanency outcome. As the permanency teaming progresses, the goals are updated to reflect changes as needed.

In addition to identifying primary and concurrent permanency goals, it is essential to name the person who will be the permanent parent. If a youth has a primary permanency goal of reunification, for example, it is essential to identify whether he or she will be reunified with the birth mother, birth father or both.

What is the goal of service planning?

The goal is to support timely permanency outcome through effective concurrent planning.

What are the social worker's key service planning tasks?

The social worker, working with the youth's team:

- Develops an initial service plan with input from the youth, parents, and other family and team members that includes a primary and concurrent permanency goal.
- Develops measurable, time-focused and individualized service plan goals with a particular emphasis on how each goal relates to achieving legal permanency and how it meets the youth's needs for safety and well-being.
- Incorporates current strengths, competencies and skills of team members in meeting the youth's need for a permanent parent and/or lifelong family connections.

How do other service plan goals of safety and well-being support timely progress toward permanency?

All safety (physical and psychological) and well-being (mental health, education, interpersonal functioning) goals provide opportunities to achieve and strengthen permanent family relationships. The current and past caregivers and other members of the youth's permanency team are often in the best position to become or to identify and recruit a permanent legal parent for the youth when reunification with parents is not possible.

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THE CONCURRENCY PRINCIPLE: The concurrent plan must name a back-up parent, not just a back-up plan!

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What is the process for identifying the primary and concurrent permanency goals and other service plan tasks and goals?

To identify the primary and concurrent permanency goals and other service plan tasks and goals, the social worker takes the following steps:

1. The state social worker provides the court-approved permanency goal at the time of referral (when the state is the legal custodian) and the social worker guides the team in identifying a concurrent permanent goal.
2. The social worker synthesizes assessment information provided by the youth, parent(s) and other team members and discusses whether the primary permanency goal best meets the youth's current need to exit the child welfare system to a permanent, legal family.
3. If the primary permanency goal does not meet the youth's needs for timely exit from foster care with legal permanency, the social worker recommends changing the goal to the concurrent permanency goal. Once the concurrent goal becomes the primary permanency goal, the team develops a new concurrent goal with an identified individual (Plan B).
4. The social worker develops and reviews the other service plan goals and tasks with the youth, parents and team members, insuring that the goals support timely progress to legal permanence and that they involve the adults that are most likely to become the permanent legal parent.
5. The social worker comes to the first team meeting with the initial service plan or the first service plan (if the large meeting takes place after 30 days of referral). If, as in a small number of cases, a large team meeting occurs within a few days of referral and the initial service plan is not complete, the social worker and legal custodian discuss the potential goals and tasks to be included in the initial service plan.
6. The social worker shares the initial service plan with the youth, parents and team members, getting feedback on important additions or changes.
7. The social worker gathers information from the youth, parents and team members (at individual, joint and/or large team meetings) to revise the goals and tasks for the service plan review each 90 days.
8. Members of the team review progress toward the primary and concurrent permanency goals as well as other service plan goals and tasks at all large team meetings.
9. The youth, birth parent and/or permanent parent, caregiver, social worker and supervisor sign each service plan.
10. The social worker revises the service plan every 90 days to reflect team decisions.

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THE URGENCY PRINCIPLE: When the potential permanent parent expresses ambivalence, those feelings are to be respected but not at the cost of the child's best interest. The clock is ticking!

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Braden's Initial Service Plan

The Casey social worker holds individual meetings with Melvin, Braden, Donisa (Braden's foster mom), and then with Marquis and Rena, the relatives with whom he was most recently living. She explains to each the reasons for developing a service plan, the importance of their input in designing tasks that would best help Melvin safely parent Braden, and the important role that each plays in participating on the team and supporting Braden's plan. The social worker facilitates several joint meetings between Donisa and Melvin to develop and strengthen their relationship. Prior to including everyone in a large team meeting together, she also facilitates a joint session with Marquis, Rena and Melvin and a second joint session with Marquis, Rena and Donisa.

The initial service plan permanency goal is reunification with Melvin. The state social worker identifies the following tasks for Melvin: participate in weekly visits with Braden at Donisa's home, attend NA groups weekly, partner with Donisa to advocate with the school and court on Braden's behalf and locate employment. Braden has the following service plan tasks: help his social worker plan the agenda and participate in large team meetings, take his prescribed medications, use weekly therapy to develop skills to talk about his feelings and decrease aggressive behavior, and attend an Ala-Teen group. The principal task of the state social worker is to further clarify the tasks necessary to reunify Braden with his father in a timely manner. Marquis and Rena are asked to contribute ideas for providing a safe structure for Braden in light of his dad's drug and alcohol use. Both the state social worker and Donisa are tasked with identifying safety issues for Braden and Melvin during visits.

Reviewing and Updating Braden's Service Plan

Braden, his social worker, Melvin, Donisa, Marquis and Rena review the service plan with the permanency team at three month intervals to update and change goals and tasks as needed in planning for Braden's safety, permanency and well-being. They help Braden identify after-school activities of interest to him, and they support Melvin in attending school events. Melvin and the social worker explore school choices in Melvin's community as Braden is not allowed to return to his original school where the assault took place. The social worker networks with paternal family members and, with the state social worker's and Melvin's permission, reaches out to Melvin's extended family. She works collaboratively with the state social worker and her supervisor in developing ways that these family members can assist Melvin in parenting Braden full time again. The social worker talks with Melvin about involving the maternal side of the family to assist him in parenting, but he remains steadfast in his objections to doing so. The social worker states that she respects his position but that permanency work requires reaching out to as many people as possible who care about Braden. She says that she wants him to understand that she will reach out to them to explore the possible roles that they can play in Braden's life.

After the first service plan review, the team agrees to allow Braden to visit Melvin on the weekends and stay over on Saturday nights. Following the last of several successful overnight visits, Braden returns home with a joint in his overnight bag. He tells Donisa that his dad "had a few friends over" and "things got kind of loud and crazy." Melvin reports that he has become increasingly discouraged as he cannot find work. He states that he is thinking that he might need to give up his apartment and move in with a friend. He begins to express fear that he will not be able to parent Braden full time. He says that there are simply too many tasks assigned to him, and he worries that he would not be able to keep Braden safe and "out of trouble" in the neighborhood. The social worker explores Melvin's doubts and asks him "what would it take?" to parent Braden safely and permanently. He replies, "I just don't know anymore." She also asks him who would be the best parent for Braden if he is not able to parent him. Melvin's first response is Marquis and Rena, but he adds that Donisa also cares about him and he's doing good there. Following the second service plan review, Donisa reports that Braden's behavior has become increasingly oppositional and angry and that she is struggling to help him stay in control. He flies into rages when visited by his in-home therapist and now has refused to meet with him. Donisa begins to wonder if she can keep him safe and expresses ambivalence about caring for Braden, although she had made the commitment to "see him through to reunification."

The team discusses how Braden's well-being is suffering with delays in setting an exact date for reunification. Although he initially settled well into Donisa's home, not having a decision made about his future is destabilizing. He also senses that his father may not be able to provide the structure and safety he needs, although it's hard for him to talk about it. The expected reunification date has been changed twice over the past 10 months because of the overnight visit involving pot and Melvin's ambivalence about full-time parenting. Team discussions focus on further exploring the potential for Marquis and Rena to parent Braden and discontinuing Braden's overnight visits with Melvin.

The service plan is revised to include several important tasks: more involvement of Melvin's natural network of family and supports to help him parent full time; Donisa helping Braden and Melvin feel more comfortable during visits in the home; increasing the permanency preparation work with Braden on his life book and timeline; and working with Melvin to allow assistance from individuals within his natural support network so that neither he nor Braden become overwhelmed by day-to-day parenting and family life.

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FIDELITY FOCUS: The initial service plan is completed within 30 days of disposition.

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ACTIVITY #4. WHEN A SAFETY PLAN IS NECESSARY, ENSURE THAT IT SUSTAINS PROGRESS TOWARD PERMANENCE AND STRENGTHENS PERMANENT FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.

What is the timing of safety planning?

Safety planning occurs whenever there is a concern about the youth's safety as a result of high-risk behaviors. Permanency planning proceeds concurrently with safety planning even during times of crisis and instability.

What is the goal of safety planning?

The goal of safety planning is to minimize the risk of youth engaging in high-risk behavior and to maximize the opportunity for safe and healthy family relationships during crisis and instability.

What are the social workers key tasks in ensuring that the safety plan sustains progress toward permanence and strengthens permanent relationships?

To ensure that a safety plan sustains progress toward permanence while strengthening permanent relationships, the social worker:

- Develops the safety plan together with the youth, caregivers and other significant family or team members.
- Supports the team in prioritizing familial and informal resources as sources of safety for the youth with professionals playing a supporting role.

- Ensures that the safety plan focuses on the youth's and family's abilities to manage crisis.
- Supports the team in recognizing that a crisis should not derail moving toward permanence and is an opportunity to advance progress.
- Promotes team support for building new family relationships that can ensure the youth's safety;
- Manages risk to preserve the importance of the youth's relationship while protecting the youth from harm, ensuring safety and maintaining connections.
- Ensures that the plan to maintain safety continues to facilitate and enhance permanency planning for the youth. The safety plan must provide for safety while preserving the youth's significant relationships and meaningful contact with parents, siblings, family members and other significant adults. The plan must reinforce the emotional security of the youth's relationships while ensuring physical safety.

Safety Planning

Braden's oppositional and defiant behaviors continue in the foster home. He makes a suicide threat, yelling in a rage that he is going to take a bottle of pills that he found on his way to school. Donisa worries about keeping him safe. The social worker meets with Braden and with Donisa and Melvin to develop a safety plan. The plan includes a referral for an updated medication evaluation; a referral for time-limited trauma work with a clinician who specializes in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT); and increased behavioral intervention by a Casey family support specialist. Marquis and Rena, when contacted about the safety plan, offer to provide a few respite weekends so that Donisa has an occasional break from parenting Braden and he can spend time with his cousins. This respite plan provides Marquis and Rena an opportunity to explore how they can best support Melvin and Braden in the reunification plan. Melvin agrees to call Braden every day after school to "check in" on how his day has gone. He also agrees to attend Braden's robotics club activities on Saturdays so Braden does not have to choose between seeing his dad or being part of a fun activity at which he excels and where he has made new friends. Donisa asks Melvin to come for Friday night dinners as Braden does not have homework then and Fridays are usually "make your own pizza night."

The Legal Outcome Decision

At the 12-month mark in planning for Braden's permanence, Melvin has found full-time employment although it is early morning work. He has found a small apartment within walking distance to the home of Marquis and Rena. Braden spends the morning at their house before school. Melvin attends NA meetings more regularly and has a sponsor who works closely with him. He admits that it is still a struggle for him to stay clean but he has maintained sobriety for six months. He feels able to parent Braden full time with the additional support of Marquis and Rena, and he states that Braden deserves to have a life in one place. Marquis and Rena have Braden over for dinner regularly and take him occasionally on weekend nights when all agree that a break is needed. Braden returns to Donisa's house after school on Monday afternoons. Braden is happy to spend time with his cousins again. Donisa has helped Marquis and Rena learn some structure and behavior strategies that work well in keeping Braden calm and focused. There have been no further incidents with Braden using marijuana or shoplifting. Braden's friend JuJu is in his robotics club. JuJu's dad, Uncle Max, offers to bring Braden home whenever needed. Because Melvin also attends the club meetings on Saturdays to watch Braden, he and Max have renewed their connection. Melvin decides to bring Max to meet Marquis and Rena. Max officially becomes part of Braden's "team".

THE ADVOCACY PRINCIPLE: Advocacy may be needed to ensure that a safety plan maintains the youth's contact with important people and prevents cut-offs.

The Casey social worker facilitates another large team meeting with Braden, Melvin, Donisa, Marquis, Rena, Max, the state social worker, Braden's attorney and Melvin's NA sponsor. Braden's TF-CBT therapist joins by phone. Braden tells all present what his weekly schedule looks like, based on the two-month calendar of activities and routines that he and his Casey social worker prepared for discussion at the team meeting. All agree that every adult providing care for Braden loves him and wants the best for him; everyone agrees that it only takes a phone call to make a slight change in plans and that they are all on each other's speed dial list! Braden is relaxed knowing that so many adults care for him and are willing to support his dad in raising him.

ACTIVITY #5. UTILIZE EVIDENCE-BASED, TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVENTIONS AS NEEDED TO FACILITATE AND SUSTAIN LEGAL FAMILY PERMANENCE.

Trauma-informed interventions are therapeutic activities and strategies that mitigate and manage the effects of abuse and neglect experienced by the youth prior to and as a result of placement in foster care. Approaches should be evidence-based or supported with sufficient evidence to be a promising practice. Preferred approaches involve youth, parents, caregivers, family members and other important people in the youth's life (including individuals from the community, school and group home if the youth resides there). These interventions improve the youth's psychological, behavioral and emotional health while enhancing the stability of family relationships and increasing opportunities for family permanence.

What is the time involved in providing trauma-informed interventions to facilitate and sustain legal permanence?

When trauma-informed interventions are indicated, these services are initiated at the beginning of case management and continue as long as is needed. In some cases, it may be important to assist the youth's permanent parent in continuing needed trauma-informed clinical services after permanence is achieved.

What is the goal of providing trauma-informed interventions?

The goal is to promote the youth's healing from trauma to facilitate permanence.

What are the social worker's key tasks in ensuring that youth have needed trauma-informed services?

The social worker's key tasks are to help youth and the youth's parents, caregivers and family members:

- Identify the youth's need for trauma-informed interventions as necessary.
- Advocate with the team and legal custodian for the most appropriate and accessible resource for treatment.
- Include the caregiver and/or permanent parent as the key decision maker in selecting the treatment resources.
- Review treatment goals and progress at each large team meeting.

What are the key considerations in providing and monitoring trauma-informed interventions?

The key considerations are:

Assessment and Intervention Identification

- Obtaining the youth's trauma history from the case record and from the youth, parents, family and team members.
- Conducting an assessment of the youth's trauma history, symptoms, and treatment needs to assist the youth, parents and team in identifying this youth's need for trauma-informed interventions. The social worker uses standardized trauma assessment tools – such as the UCLA PTSD Reaction Index for Children and Adolescents and the UCLA PTSD Index for Parents – as needed for a comprehensive assessment.
- Collaborating with other disciplines such as occupational therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists and educators in assessing and addressing the youth's needs for trauma-informed intervention.
- Identifying the most appropriate evidence-based or promising treatment practices and developing a treatment plan in conjunction with the service provider, primary parent/caregiver, youth and other team members.

Work with the Youth's Primary Parent/Caregiver

- Supporting the primary parent's participation with the youth in the trauma-informed treatment or intervention.
- Helping the primary parent/caregiver plan ways to provide the youth with corrective experiences.
- Working with the primary parent and team to identify strategies to increase the parent's ability to understand and manage feelings and reactions to the youth's responses to trauma and not take the behavior personally.

Evaluation

- Meeting with the youth to discuss his/her thoughts about and reactions to the intervention, including how the youth evaluates its assistance to him/her.
- Meeting with the primary parent/caregiver to discuss his/her thoughts about the intervention and any observable reactions on the part of the youth to the intervention.
- Receiving regular written reports from the provider and sharing these with the team.
- Involving the primary parent/caregivers, youth and all team members in evaluating progress, including changing course and terminating treatment when appropriate.

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THE TRAUMA-FOCUS PRINCIPLE: Viewing each child welfare situation from a trauma-focus includes using a standardized tool that can help the team determine the need for more individualized trauma treatment.

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Education on the Impact of Trauma

- Providing psycho-education to team members about trauma in general and the effects of trauma on this youth.

How does the social worker in consultation with the team identify the most appropriate evidence-based or promising treatment practices and develop a treatment plan in conjunction with the primary parent/caregiver, youth and other team members?

Trauma-informed treatment choices may include, but are not limited to: Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and complementary trauma-informed therapies, such as dramatic arts, art therapy and sensory-motor approaches.

To be effective, the social worker:

- Is familiar with trauma-informed evidence-based, and promising therapeutic practices.
- Consults with other disciplines such as psychiatrists and psychologists in determining the most appropriate and effective trauma-informed practices based on the youth's trauma assessment.
- Identifies internal or external providers that have skills and experience using evidence-based/promising treatment practices with traumatized youth.
- Ensures that the providers understand the need for permanence, respect the primacy of the parents/caregiver role in treatment, and collaborate with the team.
- Refers youth for appropriate services.

Trauma Informed Interventions

As described earlier, Braden's behavioral outbursts led to a referral for more intensive but time-limited trauma treatment. The social worker assists Donisa and Melvin in working together to identify and select a local Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) clinician with whom they feel comfortable. Modeling the need to decrease agency responsibility for parental decision making and increase opportunities for parental responsibility, the social worker asks Melvin and Donisa to contact the therapist and describe the behaviors that Braden is exhibiting and their individual perspectives on the need for intervention. Following this initial contact, the clinician contacts the social worker for additional input. The first TF-CBT appointment is made. At the same time, Braden continues to see his regular therapist once a month to sustain that therapeutic relationship while Braden is receiving TF-CBT.

At first, Braden and Donisa begin attending weekly TF-CBT sessions together with Melvin's occasional participation. After a few weeks, Melvin joins all the sessions with Donisa joining for the last few minutes of each session so they can all be "on the same page" in the strategies Braden was learning. Over the next few months, Braden learns better self-calming skills and is able to talk about the "crazy years" before his mother left them, gaining some greater understanding of her mental illness and feeling less responsible for her choice to leave the family. This trauma narrative work contributes to a reduction in Braden's negative and unsafe behaviors. It also gives Donisa and Melvin additional insight into Braden's trauma history and increases their understanding of how important unconditional commitment and consistent safe parenting are to Braden's healing.

When it becomes clear that Braden will return home to live with his father and that the plan for reunification will be achieved, the formal TF-CBT sessions come to a natural end point. The TF-CBT clinician meets with Braden and Melvin to review the narrative work that has been done with Braden and helps Melvin practice cueing Braden in the self-calming strategies and tools he has learned.

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FIDELITY FOCUS: Provide education on the impact of trauma in the youth's life and encourage participation in trauma-informed intervention.

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ACTIVITY #6. FACILITATE A TIMELY EXIT FROM THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM TO A PERMANENT LEGAL PARENTING RELATIONSHIP.

A timely exit to permanence provides the youth with a permanent legal parent, ending the youth's need for foster care.

What is the time frame for a timely exit from the child welfare system to a permanent legal parenting relationship?

The goal is to exit a youth from foster care to a permanent legal parent 18 months after Casey Family Services accepts the referral and initiates services. Reunification with legal parents, adoption or legal guardianship is the expected outcome of the Lifelong Families model. Most youth who are referred to Casey Family Services already have been in foster care for longer than the time frames specified by the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) for filing a petition to terminate parental rights. The 18 month time frame acknowledges the complexities of these youth's experiences and the intensive work needed to achieve permanence for them.

What are the goals to be achieved through a timely exit to family permanence?

The goal is to achieve a permanent family for the youth that assumes full responsibility for parenting.

What are the social worker's key tasks in ensuring a youth's timely exit to family permanence?

The social worker's key tasks include the following:

- Identify a permanent legal parent for the youth.
- Assist the state agency and the court in finalizing the legal process through reunification with legal parents, adoption or legal guardianship.
- Complete the necessary legal documentation for permanence.
- Facilitate the team in assisting youth and family in the identification of permanency supports beyond agency involvement and developing a plan for transitioning the youth to the permanent family.
- Identify with the team voluntary agency and/or community resources and supports and assists in engaging youth and parents with these supports.

- Monitor implementation and progress of transition at large team meetings.
- Transfer primary responsibility for parenting the youth to the permanent parent, supported by family members, team members and other community resources.

What is involved in a youth's timely exit from foster care to a legally permanent parenting relationship?

From the beginning of service delivery, the goal should be that parental responsibility systematically and consistently increases and agency responsibility decreases. Throughout the teaming process, the youth and parents are assisted in identifying and planning the services needed to support their permanent family relationship beyond agency involvement. Those services are voluntary and may include a range of informal family supports and/or formal agency or community-based therapeutic or concrete services.

As the formal agency support decreases, the team assists the family in maximizing support from their natural networks, extended family and community. Once a legal permanency outcome is achieved, the youth's case is closed to the agency and the family functions autonomously from the agency and the child welfare system.

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THE RESPONSIBILITY PRINCIPLE: Transfer responsibility incrementally – giving parents all the practice they can now will best prepare them for assuming the full responsibility of parenting in the future.

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Planning for Post-Permanency Support

When permanency team planning for Braden reaches the 18-month mark, Braden has been living with Melvin again full time for about three months. Melvin is still attending NA and his sponsor continues to be a strong support. Marquis and Rena continue to provide occasional weekend respite and some after-school supervision. Melvin and Marquis and Rena all agree to pull the team back together again if any problems arise, and the state agency agrees to the team plan. Full custody will be reinstated after Braden lives with Melvin for six months.

Donisa stays in touch with Braden and offers her support to Melvin, Marquis and Rena. They invite her to Braden's birthday party. Donisa is happy that Braden is securely with his family, but recognizes that there will be ups and downs. The TF-CBT clinician offers an "open door" should the family want to review the past treatment progress made or reinstate sessions for any reason. With the TF-CBT session ended, Braden returns to regular appointments with his therapist where the work includes supporting Braden and Melvin as they re-establish their family together. Braden continues to be seen by a psychiatrist to monitor his medications.

Fidelity Focus Summary: Permanency Teaming

In implementing the Permanency-Focused Case Management component of Lifelong Families, the following fidelity measures can be used:

Key Construct	Indicators
Youth assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The formal permanency planning assessment document is completed within 30 days of the date of assignment.• The initial service plan is completed within 30 days of disposition.
Delivery of foster care placement services and supports as a tool in achieving timely reunification, adoption or legal guardianship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Casey Family Services social worker educates foster parents that this is the youth's last foster placement before achieving reunification, adoption or legal guardianship.• The foster parent is encouraged to partner with other significant adults in the child's life, including the birth parent/s or permanent parent/s.• Education is provided on the impact of trauma in the youth's life and participation in trauma-informed interventions is encouraged, as needed.

Chapter 7A. Permanency Preparation: Youth

Permanency preparation is the process of helping a youth clarify past life events, integrate current relationships and become ready for legal membership in a family. Preparing permanent parents includes providing full disclosure and ensuring their understanding of the comprehensive needs of the youth, offering strategies for therapeutic parenting and assisting parents in making an unconditional, lifetime commitment to legal family membership for the youth. When youth and parents are adequately prepared for permanency, there is an increased chance of achieving and sustaining safe, secure and legal family permanence.

Permanency preparation consists of a range of activities: one set of activities are designed to prepare the youth for permanence and the other set of activities are designed to prepare families for permanence. This chapter focuses on permanency preparation for youth. The next chapter (Chapter 7B) focuses on permanency preparation with families.

PERMANENCY PREPARATION: Helping a youth clarify life events, integrate family relationships and feel a sense of belonging. Preparing birth parents, relative guardians and adoptive parents to safely parent and make a lifetime commitment or give permission for another permanent parent to raise the youth.

The Key Activities

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #1 Review complete state agency record for information that can strengthen the preparation of the youth for permanency.	At the beginning of the teaming process and regularly throughout the case planning process as necessary. This activity may take several hours depending on the size of the file.	To gather as much information as possible to help prepare the youth for permanence.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtains information on the youth's history, including trauma and attachment history.• Identifies prior caregivers, family members, and other key people, including their relationship to the youth and contact information.• Records chronology of the youth's placements, both formal and informal.• Notes particular strengths, talents and accomplishments of family members.

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #2 Assist the youth in clarifying and understanding the chronology of life events.	Begins with the first individual meeting with the youth and is done incrementally to the degree that the youth can tolerate, usually from 15 minutes to 45 minutes at a time. The work is ongoing as the youth is prepared for permanence.	To support the youth in fully clarifying his/her life story.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists the youth in developing his/her life story narrative, using permanency preparation tools. Expands individual sessions with the youth to joint sessions that include birth parents, extended family members and/or permanent parents. When appropriate, collaborates with the youth's therapist on clarification work.
ACTIVITY #3 Assist youth in integrating the nature and meaning of multiple family relationships.	Begins with the first individual meeting with the youth and is ongoing as the youth is prepared for permanency. The length of the process will depend on the youth's understanding of his/her life events. Ends at case closing.	To support the youth in fully integrating family members into his/her life.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses permanency tools to help the youth understand his/her membership in numerous families and the ability to feel a sense of belonging in more than one family as the same time. Assists the youth in understanding the meaning and nature of legal family membership (through reunification, adoption, guardianship). Helps the youth identify the people in his/her life that mean something and care about him or her and connects and reconnects the youth with as many of these important people as possible. Helps youth balance the positives and negatives in their many and varied family relationships. Helps the youth express loyalty conflicts and understand that having a relationship with one person does not exclude having a relationship with someone else. Through individual, joint and large team meetings, helps the youth experience how families can plan together and share decision making. Arranges for opportunities for the youth, birth family, caregivers and permanent parents to share information, memories, photos and traditions and create events and ceremonies that build a shared sense of family connectedness now and in the future. Ensures that team members are aware of the family integration work and support the youth and family members in this process.
ACTIVITY #4 Assist youth in developing a sense of belonging and emotional security within the permanent family.	Begins with the first individual meeting with the child and is ongoing as the youth is prepared for permanence and the permanent parent is identified (birth, adoptive or legal guardian) or a permanent plan is clarified. Ends at case closing.	To ensure that the youth has a strong sense of belonging with his/her legal permanent family.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the youth in identifying and expressing his/her feelings about being in a family (whether through return to parents, adoption or legal guardianship). Assists the youth in understanding and developing a sense of belonging and allowing himself/herself to be claimed by his/her permanent family.

Central to preparing youth for permanence are the processes of clarification, integration and belonging and claiming. Table 2 defines each term, explains where the process fits within the Lifelong Families model, and illustrates how each process is used with youth, birth parents and prospective parents.

In this chapter, we illustrate the activities involved in Permanency Preparation using the case of Natasha as an example.

Natasha lived with her maternal grandmother, Eloise, for most of her childhood. She learned early on that her mother was not able to care for her because of chronic and severe substance abuse. Natasha's father had not been in touch with her for many years and her grandmother believed that he was incarcerated. Also in the home were two half-siblings: Eric and Sonia. Eloise had long cared for all three children.

When Natasha was 10, her grandmother passed away. No family stepped forward to care for the children and they entered foster care. Natasha was placed with a foster family, and Eric and Sonia were placed with their father. In the planning process for Natasha, state agency social workers sought out other relatives but reached the conclusion that they had exhausted all family resources.

Natasha lived in several foster homes and group care placements. She vowed that she would do well in school, graduate and attend college in her grandmother's memory. She had had little contact with Eric and Sonia, but often thought about them and wondered what had happened to her parents. Despite her success at school, Natasha was lonely and felt hopeless. At the age of 15, she became pregnant.

Table 2. Clarifying, Integrating and Belonging/Claiming

Process	Definition	How the Process is Used in the Lifelong Families Model		
		With Youth	With Birth Parents	With Identified Permanent Parents (When Youth Will Not Return to Birth Parents)
CLARIFYING	Reflecting on, exploring the meaning of, and providing chronology of life events; identifying missing information; validating feelings; and seeking answers to the youth's questions about people, places, experiences and events from the past.	Use the focus of clarification work to explain the social worker's role in the child's life, engage the child in his or her own permanency process and guide the content for individual sessions as well as joint sessions between the child and caregiver, parents, or family members. Assist the child in developing a timeline, life book, placement history and genogram.	Engage birth parents in providing missing information; answering questions; clarifying misperceptions; validating the child's feelings and memories; providing photos and family mementos. Share the child's timeline, lifebook, placement history and genogram with the birth parent(s).	Include child's permanent parent in clarification discussions with child so parent can understand, validate, support and give consistent messages to the child; also so the permanent parents can continue helping the child to build a coherent life story and legacy of family beyond agency exit.

Table 2. Clarifying, Integrating and Belonging/Claiming cont'd

Process	Definition	How the Process is Used in the Lifelong Families Model		
		With Youth	With Birth Parents	With Identified Permanent Parents (When Youth Will Not Return to Birth Parents)
INTEGRATING	Identifying and exploring the meaning of important attachment relationships, including feelings of love, loyalty and loss. Also includes building unity and strengthening relationships among the important adults on behalf of a child.	<p>Guide child in exploring feelings about parents, siblings, caregivers, relatives, and other significant adults, with special attention to acknowledging love, loyalty, loss and hopes of reconciliation or steps to resolution.</p> <p>Facilitate purposeful connections between parents, caregivers and important adults in the youth's life.</p>	<p>Assist birth parents in understanding that their child may struggle to reconcile feelings of love and loyalty for them with recognition of the harm they may have caused and how they may have put child at risk. In cases where the child will not return to the birth parents, he or she may struggle to reconcile ongoing feelings of love and loyalty to birth parents while being raised by another parent(s).</p> <p>Help birth parents learn to respect the role of other parents and important adults in their child's life and to understand how positive interactions and relationships with those adults will benefit their child.</p> <p>Assist, support and structure opportunities for birth parents to develop positive working relationships with these adults on their child's behalf.</p>	<p>Assist, support and structure opportunities for the permanent parent to develop relationships with birth parents, foster parents, caregivers, other significant adults in the child's life.</p> <p>Help permanent parent plan for continuing positive and healthy relationships with these adults beyond agency exit.</p> <p>Assist permanent parent in understanding how their child may struggle to reconcile feelings of love and loyalty for their birth parents while being raised by another parent(s).</p>
BELONGING/ CLAIMING	The process of coming to feel safe and secure that forms the basis of readiness for the child to accept, grow, identify with and build relationships in a family.	<p>Involve the child in joint work with birth parents and family members as well as permanent parent to continue positive messages of belonging, claiming and permission-giving.</p> <p>Assure child of plan for ongoing relationships with important adults beyond legal permanency and agency exit.</p> <p>Assist child in participating in family activities, events and traditions that help him or her build positive family history and create memories.</p>	<p>Support birth parents in creating opportunities for their child to be re-integrated back into the family unit and family system, especially when they have been placed out of home for an extended time.</p> <p>Assist birth parents in giving permission for their child to love other important adults, including permission to be raised by other parents if reunification is not possible.</p>	<p>Assist permanent parent in verbalizing unconditional commitment to the child, as well as symbolizing and fulfilling his or her relationship as the child's legal parent.</p> <p>Encourage permanent parent to demonstrate claiming behaviors toward the child, such as giving them the family name; displaying family photos that include the child; referring to them as "my son/daughter;" using future-oriented language that includes them, like "when we all go on a family vacation together this summer;" putting them in the legal will; giving them a gift, token or symbol that signifies "you are one of us."</p>

This chart has been developed based on the 3-5-7 Model developed by Darla Henry. See Henry, D. (2005). The 3-5-7 Model: Preparing children for permanency. Retrieved May 3, 2012 from http://www.dregmaning.com/documents/Darla_Henry_3-5-7_model.pdf

The state agency referred Natasha to Casey Family Service's Teen Parent Foster Care program. The program assigned a permanency social worker to help Natasha and her child leave foster care to join a permanent family. The goals of preparing Natasha for permanency include clarifying the events in her life, specifically the loss of her grandmother; integrating all family and important relationships; and preparing her and her baby to belong to and be claimed by her birth family once again or by a new family. Natasha wants to be able to share with her child information about her own childhood and the important people in her life (her parents, siblings, grandparents and the other people who have helped her along the way). Natasha's biggest wish is that her baby's life will be different than her own and that her child will always have a family.

Natasha currently is doing well with her Casey foster mother, Annette. Natasha shares with her social worker that Annette is helping her prepare for her baby's birth.

ACTIVITY #1. REVIEW THE COMPLETE STATE AGENCY CASE RECORD FOR INFORMATION THAT CAN STRENGTHEN THE PREPARATION OF THE YOUTH FOR PERMANENCY.

Throughout the life of the case, the social worker returns as necessary to the case record to strengthen the work in preparing the youth for permanence. The social worker continues to seek information that can clarify the youth's former relationships with parents and other caregivers and the youth's trauma history. The social worker also continues her search for information about parents, family members and/or significant adults in the youth's life that have newly re-entered the youth's life and have a history with the youth.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to review the case record?

The social worker reads the case record as soon as possible once the case is assigned and as needed to strengthen the permanency preparation process.

What is the goal of reviewing the state agency case record as the youth is being prepared for permanency?

The goal is to gather as much information as possible to help prepare the youth for permanence.

What are the social worker's tasks in reviewing the case record with respect to permanency preparation?

The social worker reviews the case record for purposes of permanency preparation to:

- Deepen the understanding of the youth's history, including trauma and attachment history.
- Deepen the understanding of the people with whom the youth has had relationships and are now a part of the youth's life.
- Develop service plan goals that support quality permanency preparation for the youth.

What is the process for the review of the youth's case record for permanency preparation?

The social worker:

- Coordinates with the state social worker to review the youth's state case record.
- Collects information about the quality of the youth's former relationships and trauma history.
- Gathers information about primary parenting figures, significant others and community or neighborhood connections with whom the youth has or had relationships.
- Attends to strengths, positive characteristics and/or comments by and about the youth.
- Notes shared qualities or experiences that help link the youth to others, such as common interests, talents and physical appearance.
- Notes treatment recommendations and implementation of those recommendations.

Case Record Review: Preparation for Permanence

The social worker reviews Natasha's case record beginning with the placement history. This review provides valuable information in constructing an understanding of the important people, places and events in Natasha's life. The social worker will use this information to create a time line to help Natasha understand what happened to her, recall her many foster and group care placements, and retrieve memories of important people, places and events in her life. The social worker chronologically lists all placements along with names, addresses and phone numbers. In reviewing Natasha's placement history, the social worker finds that when Natasha first entered foster care, she moved several times during the first few months. The social worker also reviews the assessments, case narratives and other documentation for information that she can later share with Natasha about her original family and the other families that were part of her childhood. She reads case notes that describe Natasha's grandmother as "a loving grandparent who was able to care for grandchildren when their mother could not." The notes also describe Natasha as "a bright child, who did well in school but worried about her mom." She plans to share these positive notes with Natasha as they review Natasha's life.

When the social worker made the decision to re-review the case record with permanency preparation specifically in mind, she asked Natasha if she had any questions about her childhood that she would like answered. Natasha said that she would like to have contact with her mother and father. In her review of the case, the social worker learns that Natasha lived with the Gordons for nine months. The social worker continues to search for information to add to the timeline regarding Natasha's parents and the significant adults that have been part of Natasha's life. She plans to share this work with Natasha's foster mother, Annette, to help her understand Natasha's strengths, needs and challenges more fully.

ACTIVITY #2. ASSIST THE YOUTH IN CLARIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING THE CHRONOLOGY OF LIFE EVENTS.

The social worker assists the youth in clarifying his or her life events, including the youth's past experiences, placements and separations from birth parents and family, and the reasons and circumstances surrounding the youth's entry into foster care. The social worker includes birth parents, past and present caregivers and birth family members as fully as possible in helping the youth clarify life events and engage in the permanency preparation process. These individuals often are able to provide information and perspectives that can enrich the process for the youth and the family and strengthen the relationship

between the youth and parents. As this clarification work proceeds, the social worker anticipates potential difficulties a youth may have in managing feelings and memories stirred up by the permanency preparation work. The social worker engages, first and foremost, birth and other permanent parents (when appropriate), caregivers and family members, therapists and other team members in planning for and/or providing the support needed to manage these reactions.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to assess and assist youth in clarifying life events?

This work begins with the first individual meeting with the youth and is done incrementally to the degree that the youth can tolerate this work, usually from 15 to 45 minutes at a time. Assessing and assisting youth in clarifying life events is the basis of most or all of the social worker's individual sessions with the youth. This work is an ongoing process as the youth is prepared for permanency and ends only when the case is closed. The social worker may prepare the permanent family and the youth's clinicians or other team members to expand upon this work and/or continue to support the youth in further clarification work after the agency's case is closed.

What is the goal when assessing and assisting the youth in clarifying life events?

The goals are to enable the youth to do the following:

- Gain understanding and develop a coherent life narrative based on the following questions related to his or her foster care experience: Who am I? What happened to me? Where am I going? How will I get there? When will I know I belong? ^v
- Understand his/her placement history chronology, including reasons for and circumstances surrounding the beginning and ending of each placement move.
- Develop a coherent life story that is developmentally appropriate and can become the foundation for building their future and integrating the youth's life experiences.

How does the social worker assess and assist youth in clarifying life events?

The social worker:

- Uses individual sessions with the youth to develop his/her life story narrative, using permanency preparation tools such as the life book, timeline, genogram, ecomap, Darla Henry's 3-5-7 Model, and supplementary tools such as "Recipes for Success" exercises, bead exercises, the puzzle exercise and family network diagram.

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THE TRAUMA FOCUS PRINCIPLE: A key step in trauma work is to allow the youth to create a trauma narrative and through this narrative "make the unspeakable speakable"
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^v Based on Darla Henry's 3-5-7 Model. <http://www.darlahenry.org/3-5-7Model.html>

- Uses individual sessions with current and/or former caregivers, birth parents and other family members or significant adults in the youth's life who can contribute information, provide placement or family history, and/or share photos to assist in clarification work with the youth.
- Expands individual sessions with the youth to joint sessions that include his or her birth parent(s), birth family members, current or former caregivers, other significant adults to the youth, and/or permanent parents. Bringing these individuals into the work with the youth increases the credibility and accuracy of information, provides them with the opportunity to share their common experiences, gives permission to the youth to do this work, and provides consistent messages to the youth. Involving caregivers provides additional support for the youth as he or she processes emerging feelings and thoughts. Including permanent parents (birth, adoptive or guardianship parents) in this work is essential in order for them to join with the youth in understanding the past and to replace the social worker or agency as the "holders" of this youth's history.
- Collaborates, when appropriate, with the youth's therapist, current caregiver, permanent parent or other team members to assist in clarification work.

Clarification Work

The social worker constructs an initial, rudimentary timeline from case record information and she and Natasha review it together. Natasha adds memories and some details of the places where she had lived. As Natasha looks at the timeline, she says, "For 10 years, I stayed with my family, even when my mom couldn't take care of me. Look how many places I have lived since I was taken away." As she continues to study the timeline, Natasha asks to add the date that her grandmother died and the date that her brother and sister left her to live with their father. She looks very sad when she shares that she often thinks of her grandmother, Eric and Sonia, and her parents.

Natasha adds that she had not visited her grandmother's grave in years and would like the social worker to take her to see the grave so she can tell her grandmother that she is having a baby. The social worker agrees that this visit is important and acknowledges the special relationship that Natasha had with her grandmother and how sad it was to lose her. Natasha then asks if the social worker can help her re-connect with Eric and Sonia so she can share the news of her baby. She adds to the timeline the due date of her baby.

The social worker asks if Natasha has questions about any of the places she lived. Natasha again recalls the Gordon family and says how much she liked the family and Mrs. Gordon's cooking. She again asks about contacting the Gordon's and asking them if they have any pictures of her. Natasha asks if the social worker can take her to the many different places she lived with her parents and grandmother so they could take pictures.

FIDELITY FOCUS: Youth preparation for permanence

Lifebook, genogram and timeline used with the youth.

ACTIVITY #3. ASSIST THE YOUTH IN INTEGRATING THE NATURE AND MEANING OF MULTIPLE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.

The social worker helps the youth to identify important attachment relationships, such as parents, family members, caregivers and other significant adults. The social worker also assists the youth in exploring feelings, memories and experiences – both positive and negative – associated with those adults. As the youth explores the meaning of these relationships, the social worker assists the youth in filling-in gaps in information, exploring ambivalent or conflicted feelings, and/or planning and facilitating safe contact or reconnection for the youth. The social worker also facilitates relationships between and among the important adults in a youth's life, mediating conflict as necessary and assisting the adults in building and maintaining positive relationships on the youth's behalf. A range of tools may be used with the youth to assist in this process, including but not limited to a timeline, life book, ecomap, genogram, and placement history summary.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to assess and assist youth in understanding and integrating family relationships?

This work begins with the first individual meeting with the youth and is done incrementally to the degree that the youth can tolerate this work, usually from 15 to 45 minutes. Assessing and assisting youth in understanding and integrating family relationships is an ongoing process as the youth is prepared for permanency.

What is the goal of the work with youth to help them understand and integrate family relationships?

The goal is to support the youth in fully integrating all families in his/her life. When a youth is helped to understand and integrate family relationships, the youth:

- Understands his/her roles in multiple families and the differences in role in one family compared to another.
- Understands that anyone can belong to more than one family at the same time.
- Understands the meaning and benefits of a legal family relationship.
- Experiences a reduction in loyalty conflicts and an increase in his/her affiliation with the families in his or her life.
- Has an opportunity to acknowledge disconnections, reconcile with family and grieve the losses of family members.
- Builds a family network of relationships for the youth that goes beyond blood and legal relationships and unites the many caring adults whose only commonality may be their connection to the youth.

How does the social worker assess and assist youth in understanding and integrating family relationships?

The social worker:

- Uses permanency tools such as life books, timelines, genograms, eco maps, family network diagrams, Sands of Time exercise,^{vi} and other tools to help the youth understand his/her membership in numerous families.
- Helps the youth identify the people in his/her life who mean something and care about them and connects and reconnects the youth with as many of these important people as possible.
- Helps the youth express loyalty conflicts and understand that being raised by one adult, such as an adoptive parent or a grandmother, does not exclude having a relationship with someone else, such as his/her birth parent.^{vii}
- Helps youth balance the positives and negatives in their many and varied family relationships.
- Strategically structures and facilitates meetings between family members to assist them in developing and strengthening their relationships on the youth's behalf.
- Through individual, joint and large team meetings, helps the youth experience how birth, resource, adoptive and guardianship families can plan together and share decision making.
- Arranges opportunities for the youth, birth family, caregivers and permanent parents to share information, memories, photos, traditions and create events and ceremonies that build a shared sense of family connectedness now and in the future.
- Ensures that team members are aware of the family integration work and support the youth and family members in this process.

Integrating Family Relationships

The social worker meets with Natasha to use the “Sands of Time” preparation tool (from the 3-5-7 Model’s “Recipes for Success”) to help Natasha identify the important attachment relationships in her life. She explains to Natasha that some of the significant adults that she identifies may be able to play a role in her life as a new parent. Natasha identifies her grandmother; her baby; the baby’s father; her sister and her brother; Mary (a staff member from her last group home); her mother; her father; Mrs. Gordon and her Casey foster mother, Annette. Natasha assigns a color of sand to each person and begins her work with each named person in the order of importance. In that order, she places colored sand in a heart shaped glass bottle. Natasha begins with bright yellow sand for her grandmother, “who brought such sunshine to her life” and blue for her mother and father whose absence from her life “makes me sad a lot.” Natasha tells her social worker that she has many questions she would like to ask her parents about why they chose drugs over her, Eric and Sonia. The exercise continues and as Natasha talks about Mary, she asks if she can call and inquire if Mary is still on staff. She adds sand for her siblings, her baby and the baby’s father. As the glass jar becomes full she recalls the Gordon’s and places sand in the jar to represent her relationship with them.

^{vi} The Sands of Time exercise involves the social worker helping the youth to identify important people in his/her life and to choose a color of sand for each of these important people. Using a teaspoon, the youth places sand in a jar for each person, placing as much sand for each person as the youth desires. See Damiano, J. (2002). Preparing children for permanency. Unpublished manuscript. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption Network.

^{vii} Karst, P. (2000). *The Invisible String*. (G. Stevenson, Illustrator). Camarillo: DeVorss & Company.

The social worker ends the meeting by planning the next steps: searching for her mother and father, calling the group home about Mary, contacting the state agency to learn more about Eric and Sonia and the possibility of visits with them, and sending a letter to the Gordons. Natasha and her social worker agree to review the highlights from the session with Annette so that her foster mother can better understand her pain about the past and support her emotionally in exploring her past and reconciling her losses.

ACTIVITY #4. ASSIST YOUTH IN DEVELOPING A SENSE OF BELONGING AND EMOTIONAL SECURITY WITHIN THE PERMANENT FAMILY.

Family relationships become permanent when a youth begins to perceive a sense of safety, security and belonging in the family; the family claims the youth; and the youth and family see a future together as family. Relationships in which a child feels a growing sense of belonging and emotional security are made lasting with legal, permanent family relationships through reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. Achieving permanent family relationships requires taking all the steps needed to finalize the legal relationship while concurrently continuing to strengthen emotional bonds, family identity, belonging and claiming among the youth, parent(s) and extended family members.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to assist in developing a sense of belonging and claiming?

This work begins with the social worker's first individual meeting with the youth and the first individual meeting with the permanent parent(s). The process of preparing the youth and the permanent family for permanency is ongoing. Preparation leads to the youth's physical (in some cases) and emotional (in all cases) transition to his or her permanent family and the finalization of the permanent plan of reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. The social worker is responsible for maintaining the momentum of the youth's permanency team toward achieving the permanency plan through the youth's placement in or transition to the permanent family and completion of the agency and legal paperwork in anticipation of case closure. The work ends at case closing.

What is the goal of this process?

The goal is to ensure that the youth has a full sense of belonging with his/her legal permanent family. Through assisting the youth in achieving and sustaining permanent family relationships, the social worker assists the youth to:

- Strengthen his/her desires to return to his birth family or to belong to a new family, allowing him/herself to be claimed by his birth parents or a new permanent parent and to have legal family membership.
- Address any feelings of disloyalty to birth parents, family members or past caregivers by helping those adults give the youth permission to be raised by another parent permanently.
- Visualize himself/herself as a member of more than one family and preserving relationships with other important family members concurrently with achieving a legal parenting relationship. While in foster care, the youth is a member of his/her birth family and his/her resource family. Upon achieving

permanence, the youth may have membership in more than one family, including birth family, adoptive or legal guardianship family and resource family.

In addition, through the process, team members support the youth in returning to his birth family or becoming a legal member of a new family while maintaining connections to birth, extended, and resource families and significant others.

How does the social worker help the youth develop a sense of belonging and emotional security within the permanent family?

The social worker:

- Uses permanency tools to help the youth begin to develop a sense of belonging in birth family or a new family as his or her family, and the permanent parent(s)/family members to claim the youth as their own.
- Helps the youth and his/her birth/permanent parents(s) and families share family stories and life narratives and understand that no one has to surrender past connections to build new family relationships.
- Assists youth in addressing issues of conflicted family loyalties.
- Includes the youth in the development of the permanency team's plan for his/her transition to living with a permanent parent.
- Provides referrals to other youth who have experienced foster care and have successfully reunified with birth parents or are adopted or have a legal guardian.
- Guides and supports parents, family members and/or prior caregivers in giving youth permission to be raised by another permanent parent if unable to be raised by his/her birth parents.
- Assists the youth in identifying and eliminating barriers to strengthening feelings of safety, security, being claimed by, and belonging in the permanent family.
- Helps team members support the youth's legal membership in the permanent family whether it is the birth family, an adoptive family or a guardianship family and continued connections to other important family relationships.

Belonging and Emotional Security

The social worker visits with Natasha and her foster parent to discuss the next steps in reaching out to Natasha's parents and the other adults she identified as important to her. Annette, Natasha's foster mother, is eager for Natasha to reconnect with her family saying "it's only right – they gave birth to her."

The social worker reaches Natasha's mother, Jolene, at a phone number that the state social worker provides. Jolene says that she wants to see her daughter right away and is relieved to know that Natasha is doing well.

Jolene admits, “I have not been there for Natasha,” but she says that she wants to “be there” for Natasha now. Jolene states that she has been clean and sober for three months and is ready to see her children and be part of their lives. The social worker describes Natasha’s many moves. She shares with Jolene how well Natasha is doing with her current foster mother, with whom she has been living for several months. The social worker adds that Natasha is very interested in learning about her family and suggests that Jolene help by sharing information and photographs. She supports Jolene in understanding Natasha’s need to piece together her past so she can move forward and either be reunited with her family or join a new family. Jolene says, “I messed up a lot being a mom, but I always hoped my kids would come home someday.”

The social worker suggests that she take Jolene to meet Natasha’s foster mother and Jolene immediately says “yes.” The social worker tells Jolene she will make efforts to meet with Natasha’s father to gather and share information about the paternal side of the family. She explains that Natasha is interested in reconnecting with her father and his family.

The social worker facilitates a joint meeting with Jolene and Annette, Natasha’s foster mother. During the meeting, they exchange information about Natasha. Jolene talks about how cute and precocious Natasha was as a toddler, and Annette describes how proud she is that Natasha is working hard in school and following through with her prenatal appointments. They talk about the support that Natasha will need as she prepares to become a mother. As the joint session comes close to the end, Natasha joins them. Jolene shares a funny story about Natasha covered with cake and ice cream on her first birthday. Natasha becomes emotional hearing her mom tell this story and, while guarded, she is clearly delighted to see her mother sharing a light moment with Annette whom she trusts a great deal.

In order to help normalize the many feelings Natasha is experiencing as she explores past relationships and thinks about the future, the social worker facilitates a session between Natasha and Kalani, another teen mom in the program. Kalani experienced an emotional reconnection with her birth father during her permanency preparation work and also learned that her birth mother had died of a drug overdose several years before. Due to her dad’s emotional instability and poor judgment, he was not able to be a daily parent in her life but has kept close contact. Kalani was adopted by her maternal aunt. Kalani is very empathic with Natasha’s situation and instrumental in helping her stay open to all possibilities for how she will get the parenting she needs now and in the future, as well as the grandparenting her baby will need as she grows.

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FIDELITY FOCUS: Youth Preparation for Permanence

- Include the youth in the development of the permanency team’s plan for his/her transition to living with a permanent parent.
 - Provide referrals to other youth who have experienced foster care and have successfully reunified with birth parents or are adopted or have a legal guardian.
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Fidelity Focus Summary: Permanency Preparation: Youth

In implementing the Permanency Preparation component of Lifelong Families, the following fidelity measures can be used:

Key Construct	Indicators
Youth preparation for permanency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lifebook, genogram, and timeline used with youth• Include the youth in the development of the permanency team's plan for his or her transition to living with a permanent parent.• Provide referrals to other youth who have experienced foster care and have successfully reunified with birth parents or are adopted or have a legal guardian.

Chapter 7B. Permanency Preparation: Families

As described in Chapter 7A, permanency preparation is the process of helping a youth clarify past life events, integrate current relationships, and become ready for legal membership in a family. Preparing permanent parents is equally essential. Permanent parent preparation includes providing full disclosure and ensuring their understanding of the comprehensive needs of the youth; offering strategies for therapeutic parenting; and assisting them in making an unconditional, lifetime commitment to legal family membership for the youth. When youth and parents are adequately prepared for permanency, there is an increased chance of achieving and sustaining safe, secure and legal family permanence.

Permanency preparation consists of a range of activities: one set of activities is designed to prepare the youth for permanence and the other set of activities is designed to prepare families for permanence. This chapter focuses on permanency preparation for families.

PERMANENCY PREPARATION: Helping a youth clarify life events, integrate family relationships and feel a sense of belonging. Preparing birth parents, relative guardians, and adoptive parents to safely parent and make a lifetime commitment or give permission for another permanent parent to raise the youth.

The Key Activities

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #5 Help parents and family members understand and participate in clarification and integration work with the youth, and in claiming the youth.	Occurs over the life of the case, typically 12 to 18 months. Starts immediately when the goal is reunification with the birth parent, a newly identified potential parent expresses interest in an individual youth, or an agency staff member identifies a particular parent as a possible match for a youth.	To fully prepare the youth's permanent family to support the youth's clarification and integration and to demonstrate behaviors that indicate they claim him/her as a family member.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The social worker:• Raises awareness of the youth's needs to leave foster care to a permanent legal parenting relationship as soon as possible.• Provides full disclosure of the youth's comprehensive needs and life experiences.• Assists the permanent parent(s) in understanding that the youth does not have to surrender past connections to be a full member of this family.• Assists the youth in developing positive working relationships with these adults.

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #5	Family work begins with the first individual meeting with the family and is ongoing as the family is prepared for legal permanency and an unconditional, lifelong commitment. Ends at case closing.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists the permanent parent(s) in guiding and supporting the youth in maintaining safe connections to other family members and others. Encourages the permanent parent(s) or family to demonstrate their commitment to and claiming of the youth as a family member. Helps the permanent parent(s) share their own family history, traditions, stories and photos as a way to further integrate the youth into their family. Includes the permanent parent(s) in permanency preparation with the youth. Facilitates discussions between the permanent parent(s) and at least one other experienced parent of a youth with similar needs and circumstances who has achieved an emotionally secure legal relationship. Assists the family in identifying and eliminating barriers to the youth feeling a full sense of belonging to them. Helps team members reinforce and support the youth's permanent and legal membership in the family.
ACTIVITY #6 Assess and support parents and family members in understanding the youth's comprehensive needs across all developmental domains as they impact day-to-day parenting.	Occurs over the life of the case, typically 12 to 18 months. Starts immediately when the goal is reunification with the birth parent, a newly identified parent expresses interest in an individual youth, or an agency staff member identifies a particular parent for a youth. Family work begins with the first individual meeting with the family and is ongoing as the family commits to a legal and lifelong relationship. Ends at case closing.	To support the family in making a fully informed decision about being the youth's identified permanent family.	<p>With the youth's birth parents, the social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps the parents understand the youth's current needs and implications for parenting now and in the future. Identifies the specific interventions and/or services that the youth is currently receiving and/or will need in the future to address the youth's developmental needs. Helps the parents assess how well they are able to participate in and/or obtain these services to support the youth in healing. Helps parents recognize how they can best help their child – either as a full-time parent through reunification or as a support to the adoptive parent or legal guardian that raises their child. <p>With an adoptive parent or legal guardian, the social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discloses all relevant information regarding the youth's individual strengths, needs and circumstances to the prospective permanent parent. Identifies the specific services and supports that the youth is receiving and may need in the future. Works with the identified permanent parent to reach an informed decision about his or her ability to meet this youth's comprehensive needs and make a permanent, unconditional commitment

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
<p>ACTIVITY #7</p> <p>Assess and support parents and family members in understanding the impact of past trauma on family life now and in the future.</p>	<p>Occurs over the life of the case, typically 12 to 18 months. Starts immediately when the goal is reunification with the birth parent, a newly identified parent expresses interest in an individual youth, or an agency staff member identifies a particular parent as a possible match for a youth. Family work begins with the first individual meeting with the family and is ongoing as the family is prepared for legal permanency and an unconditional, lifelong commitment. Ends at case closing.</p>	<p>To support the family in making a fully informed decision about being the youth's identified permanent family.</p>	<p>With the youth's birth parents, the social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores with the parents the youth's trauma history and the impact of trauma on the youth's current relationships with family members. • Helps the family anticipate the impact of the youth's history and needs on their day-to-day parenting. • Helps the parents identify and strengthen their parenting skills so that they can successfully and safely parent their child. • Identifies the specific trauma-informed services and supports that the youth is receiving and may need in the future. <p>With the youth's adoptive parent or legal guardian:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains the youth's placement history, trauma history and special needs, and helps the parents to understand the youth's current needs and implications for parenting now and in the future. • Helps the family anticipate the impact of the youth's history and needs on their daily lives. • Helps the family identify and strengthen the qualities and characteristics needed for successful parenting of this individual youth.
<p>ACTIVITY #8</p> <p>Help parents and multiple family members understand and share information and build mutual relationships on behalf of the youth.</p>	<p>Begins with the first individual and joint sessions with the foster parent and/or potential permanent parent and is ongoing as permanency planning proceeds. Occurs for 12 to 18 months or until a legal outcome is achieved.</p>	<p>To support healthy mutual relationships among the youth's multiple family members.</p>	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses individual meetings with family members to focus on the youth's need for positive working relationships among everyone who is important to him or her and to prepare them for their initial meetings with one another. • Facilitates joint sessions with multiple family members to share information, clarify roles and expectations and share each other's hopes and dreams for the youth. • Helps family members communicate with each other and develop strategies for conflict resolution • Helps family members collaborate in team planning and work together to achieve permanence for the youth. • Encourages the joint involvement of all parents and family members in activities that are important to the youth.

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
<p>ACTIVITY #9</p> <p>Help permanent parents sustain an unconditional and legal parenting commitment and ongoing healthy relationships with other family members and significant adults over time.</p>	<p>Begins with the first individual and joint sessions with the birth parent, foster parent and/or potential permanent parent; is ongoing as permanency planning proceeds. Occurs for 12 to 18 months or until a legal outcome is achieved.</p>	<p>To support the family and youth in sustaining an unconditional commitment and legal permanence.</p>	<p>When the youth will return to live with his or her birth parents, the social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps parents understand their unconditional commitment to safely and permanently parent their child. • Helps parents anticipate changes in the family routine, structure or dynamics when the youth returns home. • Assists parents in recognizing the important parent figures and significant adults in the youth's life and the importance of sustaining healthy relationships with those adults. • Encourages the parent to continue strengthening his or her own positive working relationships with parents, relatives and other significant adults in the child's life. <p>When the youth will have a permanent legal family other than through reunification, the social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps the family explore what it will mean to fully commit to parenting the youth, legally and emotionally. • Helps the parents anticipate the reactions that their birth children and/or extended families may have to the youth's becoming a legal member of the family. • Along with the new parents, helps prepare the birth and extended families for this change in the family system. • Helps the parents anticipate changes in the family routine, structure or dynamics once the youth moves in. • Encourages the family to symbolize their deepening commitment and belonging. • Encourages the parent to continue strengthening his or her own positive working relationships with birth parents, relatives and other significant adults in the child's life.

ACTIVITY #5. HELP PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS UNDERSTAND AND PARTICIPATE IN CLARIFICATION AND INTEGRATION WORK WITH THE YOUTH, AND TO CLAIM THE YOUTH.

As the social worker prepares the youth for permanence, she works with birth parents, family members and permanent parents (when appropriate) to understand the importance of and participate in the clarification and integration tasks with the youth. The adults from the youth's past provide essential links to information, events and experiences that the youth may or may not remember or wants answers about. Parents, family members and adults who hold meaning in a youth's life play a powerful role in either helping or hindering a youth's ability to mature emotionally and as a family member. The social worker helps all parent figures and important adults to contribute, to the best of their ability, to the youth's developing a sense of belonging and of being claimed by the family.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to assess and support families in understanding the youth's need to clarify life events, integrate family relationships and develop a sense of belonging?

This work begins immediately with the birth parent(s) or if reunification is not a viable option, when a potential parent expresses interest in an individual youth or an agency staff member identifies a particular parent for the youth. Assessment and support begin with the first individual meeting with the family.

What are the goals of this process?

The goal is to fully prepare the youth's permanent family to support the youth's clarification and integration work and the youth's development of a sense of belonging and being claimed by the family. The permanent parent may be the youth's parent by birth, the youth's foster parent(s) who will adopt the youth or become his or her legal guardian(s), or another adult who is identified by the team or through recruitment efforts as the youth's adoptive parent or legal guardian. Through this process:

- The permanent parent(s) understands the youth's comprehensive needs and the implications for parenting this youth and is prepared to make a permanent and unconditional commitment to the youth regardless of changes in the youth's behavior or situation or the parent's/family's circumstances.
- The permanent parent(s) understands the importance of helping the youth clarify life events, integrate family relationships and develop a full sense of belonging to his/her permanent, legal family.
- The permanent parent(s) develops and/or strengthens relationships with other parental figures, relatives or significant adults in the youth's life so that the youth experiences integration and blending of his/her many important family relationships.
- The permanent parent(s) helps the youth feel safe and supported during the permanency preparation process and assists the youth in understanding the information and managing the feelings that arise.

How does the social worker assess and support families in understanding the youth's needs to clarify life events and integrate family relationships?

The social worker:

- Raises awareness of the youth's needs to leave foster care to a permanent legal parenting relationship as soon as possible.
- Helps the permanent parent(s) in understanding that the youth does not have to surrender past connections (such as to former caregivers or relatives) to be a full member of this family and to develop positive working relationships with these adults.
- Includes the permanent parent(s) in permanency preparation with the youth to help build empathy and understanding, strengthen the parent-child relationship, and, when appropriate, reinforce the parent as the holder of the youth's history rather than the social worker or agency.
- Facilitates discussions between the permanent parent(s) – whether the birth, adoptive or guardianship parent – and at least one other experienced parent of a youth with similar needs and circumstances.
- Helps the family to identify and eliminate barriers to the youth developing a full sense of belonging to them.
- Helps team members reinforce and support the youth's permanent and legal membership in the family.
- In addition, when the birth parent is not the permanent parent:
 - Provides full disclosure of the youth's comprehensive needs, placement history, life events and experiences, and family relationships to build empathy and assist the parent in making a decision regarding a permanent commitment to the youth.
 - Assists the permanent parent(s) in supporting the youth's safe connections to family members and other significant adults in the youth's life.
 - Facilitates the development and strengthening of relationships between the permanent parent and the youth's birth parents, former caregivers and other significant adults in order to minimize family loyalty conflicts for the youth and increase the integration of family relationships.
 - Helps the permanent parent(s) share their own family history, traditions, stories and photos as a way to further integrate the youth into their family and blend their separate family histories.

Family Assessment and Support

The social worker facilitates several joint meetings with Natasha; Jolene; Natasha's father Howard (who was recently released on parole) and her foster mother, Annette. The goal is to continue strengthening the relationships among all the parenting figures in Natasha's life and to help them support Natasha's need for permanent parents. At the birth of baby Marie, named after Natasha's grandmother, the adults in Natasha's life come together to celebrate. As Natasha and baby Marie are discharged from the hospital to the foster home, Natasha's mother and father thank Annette for the support that she provides Natasha and the new baby. They share with Natasha their gratitude for all that Annette does. Natasha asks Jolene, Howard and Annette what each would like baby Marie to call them as her grandparents.

The social worker discusses with Annette the meaning behind Natasha's gesture of naming her as a grandparent and the permission that Jolene and Howard gave Natasha to love and live with a permanent family. Annette is aware of Natasha's need to leave foster care to a permanent legal parent but has ambivalence about adopting Natasha.

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FIDELITY FOCUS:

- Provide psycho-education to the family, discuss the impact of trauma on the youth's life and the need for trauma-informed interventions, and anticipate the reaction of any family members.
 - Refer the permanent parent to other birth, adoptive or relative families.
 - Encourage the family to demonstrate their commitment through rituals, ceremonies, and other concrete actions.
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ACTIVITY #6. ASSESS AND SUPPORT PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS IN UNDERSTANDING THE YOUTH'S COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ACROSS ALL DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS AS THEY IMPACT DAY-TO-DAY PARENTING.

The social worker fully discloses to parents and family members information about the youth's physical, developmental, social, emotional, psychological and educational needs. Parents are provided access to relevant portions of the child's state agency record and the Casey Family Services case record. They receive copies of relevant evaluations. The social worker meets with parents to discuss the impact of the youth's needs on daily parenting and family living and supports them as they consider how they can best meet the youth's comprehensive needs.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to assess and support families in understanding the youth's developmental needs?

This work begins immediately at the first meeting with the youth's birth parent(s) and/or current caregiver, or when a youth will not be reunified with his or her parents, when a potential parent expresses interest in a youth, or an agency staff member identifies a potential parent for the youth. This work is ongoing as the birth or other permanent parent participates in the teaming process and is prepared for reunification or legal permanence through adoption or guardianship. This work generally takes places from 12 to 18 months. To assist in resolving parental ambivalence about commitment and to maintain timely momentum to a permanency outcome for the youth, the team keeps the concurrent plan for a permanent parent at the forefront of the planning process and continually reinforces the importance of the parent's unconditional commitment to legal permanence.

What are the goals of this process?

The goals of this family assessment and support process are that parents will make a fully informed decision about being the youth's identified permanent family. When parents and family members are supported to understand the youth's comprehensive needs and the impact of these needs on day-to-day parenting, they can:

- Develop increased empathy for the youth.
- Have a heightened understanding of the behavioral/emotional challenges they may face in parenting the youth, the strategies that will be necessary to meet these challenges, and the opportunity to understand and practice using effective tools and interventions.
- Be adequately prepared to make and sustain an unconditional and lifelong legal commitment.

How does the social worker support families in understanding the youth's needs across all developmental domains?

With the youth's birth parents, the social worker:

- Helps the parent identify and strengthen their parenting skills so that they can successfully and safely parent the youth.
- Identifies the interventions and/or services that the youth is receiving and/or will need in the future to meet his/her developmental needs and helps the parents assess how well they are able to participate in and/or obtain these services to support the youth in healing.
- Helps the family anticipate the impact of the youth's developmental needs on their day-to-day parenting and recognize how they can best help their child – either as a full-time parent through reunification or as a support to the adoptive parent or legal guardian that raises their child.
- Provides multiple opportunities for the parent to observe the youth in ways that are least intrusive but enhance the permanent parent's comprehensive understanding of the youth's needs. The social worker arranges for the foster parent or potential permanent parent to observe the youth in natural settings like school, clubs, foster home or group home; meet with the youth's current and former caregivers and/or family members; and talk with other professionals involved with the youth such as therapists, teachers, evaluators, mentors and other social workers. The social worker also facilitates at least one opportunity (but, often, many opportunities) for the potential permanent parent to talk with an experienced parent who has experienced similar situations, experiences, feelings and challenges regarding adoptive or legal guardian parenting.

With an adoptive parent or legal guardian, the social worker:

- Discloses all relevant information regarding the youth's individual strengths, needs and circumstances.
- Explains the youth's needs across all developmental domains and helps the parents to understand the youth's current needs and implications for parenting now and in the future.
- Provides multiple opportunities for the parent to observe the youth in ways that are least intrusive but enhance the permanent parent's comprehensive understanding of the youth's needs. The social worker arranges for the foster parent or potential permanent parent to observe the youth in natural settings like school, clubs, foster home or group home; meet with the youth's current and former caregivers and/or family members; and talk with other professionals involved with the youth such as therapists, teachers, evaluators, mentors and other social workers. The social worker also facilitates at least one opportunity

(but, often, many opportunities) for the potential permanent parent to talk with an experienced parent who has experienced similar situations, experiences, feelings and challenges regarding adoptive or legal guardian parenting.

- Helps the family identify and strengthen the qualities and characteristics needed for successful parenting of this individual youth.
- Identifies the specific services and supports that the youth is receiving and may need in the future.
- Works with the permanent parent to reach an informed decision about his or her ability to meet this youth's comprehensive needs and make a permanent, unconditional commitment through adoption or legal guardianship.

ACTIVITY #7. ASSESS AND SUPPORT PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS IN UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF PAST TRAUMA ON FAMILY LIFE NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

The social worker's full disclosure of information about the youth includes information concerning the youth's trauma history, including all known events and experiences, past trauma treatment and evaluations, and current trauma treatment and recommendations. The social worker assists the parent in understanding to the fullest extent possible the impact of the youth's trauma on daily parenting and family living. The social worker helps parents understand the importance of identifying trauma-related symptoms and behaviors and learning and practicing strategies to assist the youth in regulating and managing these symptoms and behaviors.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to assess and support families in understanding the youth's developmental needs and the impact of past trauma on achieving and sustaining permanence?

This work begins immediately at the first meeting with the youth's birth parent(s) and/or current caregiver, or when a youth will not be reunified with his or her parents, when a potential parent expresses interest in a youth or an agency staff member identifies a possible parent for the youth. This work is ongoing as the birth or other permanent parent participates in the teaming process and is prepared for reunification or legal permanence through adoption or guardianship. This work generally takes place over 12 to 18 months. To assist in resolving parental ambivalence toward commitment and to maintain timely momentum to a permanency outcome for the youth, the team keeps the concurrent plan for a permanent parent at the forefront of the planning process and continually reinforces the parent's demonstration of claiming the youth as a full family member and their unconditional commitment to legal permanence.

What is the goal of this process?

The goal of this family assessment and support process is that parents will make a fully informed decision about being the youth's permanent parent. When parents and family members are supported in understanding the impact of past traumatic experiences on achieving and sustaining permanent family relationships, they:

- Have a heightened understanding of the nature and impact of trauma on the youth, including potential long-term effects and how to best help the youth heal.
- Recognize the trauma-related behavioral/emotional challenges they may face in parenting the youth.
- Learn strategies that they can use to meet these challenges, including effective tools and interventions.
- Are adequately prepared to claim the youth as a family member and sustain an unconditional and lifelong legal commitment.

How does the social worker support families in understanding the youth's trauma history?

With the youth's birth parents, the social worker:

- Explores the youth's placement history, trauma history and special needs and helps the parents to understand the youth's current needs and implications for parenting now and in the future.
- Helps the family anticipate the impact of the youth's history and needs on their day-to-day parenting.
- Helps the parent identify and strengthen their parenting skills so that they can effectively and safely parent the youth.
- Identifies the specific trauma-informed interventions and/or services that the youth is receiving and/or will need in the future and helps the parents assess how well they are able to participate in and/or obtain these services to support the youth in healing.
- Works with the permanent parent to reach an informed decision about his or her ability to be a full-time parent to their child through reunification, or to give their permission for adoptive parent or legal guardian to raise their child and for them to play a supporting role.

With an adoptive parent or legal guardian, the social worker:

- Explains the youth's placement history, trauma history and special needs and helps the parents to understand the youth's current needs and implications for parenting now and in the future.
- Helps the family anticipate the impact of the youth's history and needs on parenting.
- Discloses all relevant information regarding the youth's individual strengths, needs and circumstances.
- Helps the family identify and strengthen the parenting skills, qualities, and characteristics, needed for effective parenting of this youth.
- Identifies the specific trauma-informed services and supports that the youth is receiving and may need in the future and helps the parents assess how well they are able to participate in and/or obtain these services to support the youth in healing.
- Works with the permanent parent to reach an informed decision about his or her ability to meet this youth's comprehensive needs and make a permanent, unconditional commitment through adoption or legal guardianship.

Supporting Family in Understanding the Youth's Developmental Needs and the Impact of Trauma

The social worker continues to help Annette understand how Natasha is beginning to trust her and how much Natasha needs her unconditional commitment for the future. The social worker also continues to help Jolene, Howard and Annette understand their unique roles as parent figures in Natasha's and baby Marie's lives. Natasha's feelings are clear when she says matter of factly, "no way I'll get adopted if I have to lose my family."

The social worker shares Natasha's timeline with Jolene and Howard and helps them understand Natasha's placement history and how the many separations and losses have shaped who she is today. They are sad as they consider how their life choices have made Natasha's life so difficult. They recognize that because their sobriety is so new, Natasha cannot be certain that they will always be there for her. They agree that Natasha deserves to know she will never need to move again. The social worker helps them understand that the best way to continue playing a role in Natasha's and baby Marie's life is to maintain a positive relationship with Annette.

The social worker has the same conversations with Annette and shares Natasha's timeline. She provides Annette with additional information about Natasha's history of trauma and her diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. The social worker and Annette review Natasha's strengths and gains over the past few months, including the strong attachment and safe parenting she experienced during the years she was raised by her grandmother. These discussions deepen Annette's understanding about Natasha's need to maintain family relationships and also to have emotionally and legally secure parenting.

ACTIVITY #8. HELP PARENTS AND MULTIPLE FAMILY MEMBERS UNDERSTAND AND SHARE INFORMATION WITH EACH OTHER AND BUILD MUTUAL RELATIONSHIPS ON BEHALF OF THE YOUTH.

The social worker assists parents and family members – in the youth's birth, foster, adoptive, guardian and relative families – to share information that will enable the key adults in a youth's life to adequately meet his or her needs in all areas of safety, permanence and well-being. The social worker facilitates the development of mutual relationships between these adults, strengthening those relationships in the youth's best interest over time and developing a plan for continuing the relationships in the future without the intervention of the agency. The social worker encourages these adults to model and demonstrate positive working relationships for the youth, preventing him or her from suffering further emotional cut-offs in relationships or family loyalty conflicts.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to help multiple family members in the youth's life understand and share information and build and strengthen their relationships?

This work begins with the first contact with each adult and emphasizes the youth's need for positive working relationships among the multiple family relationships in his or her life. The work continues throughout the life of the case.

What is the goal of this work with multiple family members?

The goal is to support healthy mutual relationships among the youth's multiple family members. Through the process of family members sharing information, time and space together:

- Family members develop or strengthen positive relationships.
- Family members become better able to parent the youth and/or maintain positive working relationships with each other in the youth's best interest.
- Family members give consistent messages to the youth.
- The youth experiences diminished loyalty conflicts.
- If the youth does reunite with birth family:
 - Former foster or adoptive parents, caregivers and other significant adults provide birth parents/family information that will assist them in successfully parenting the youth.
 - Former foster or adoptive parents, caregivers and other significant adults give youth their blessing and reinforce positive messages about reuniting with family.
 - The youth can confidently continue positive relationships with former foster or adoptive parents, caregivers and other significant adults.
- If the youth does not reunite with birth family:
 - Birth parents/family members give the youth permission to become a member of another family through adoption or legal guardianship.
 - Birth parents/family members provide information to the permanent parent(s) to assist them in successfully parenting the youth.
 - Permanent parent(s) provide information to the birth parents/family members to help keep them informed and involved in the youth's life.
 - Permanent parent(s) give the youth permission to maintain positive relationships with birth parents/family members and other significant adults in their life.
 - The youth can confidently continue positive relationships birth parents and family members.

How does the social worker help multiple family members in the youth's life share information and build relationships?

The social worker:

- Uses individual meetings with family members to focus on the youth's need for positive working relationships among everyone who is important to him or her (including birth parents, extended family, foster parents, foster siblings, and new permanent family members).
- Facilitates joint sessions with multiple family members to share information, clarify roles and expectations and share each other's hopes and dreams for the youth.
- Helps family members communicate with each other and develop strategies for conflict resolution.

- Helps family members collaborate in team planning and work together to achieve permanence for the youth.
- Encourages joint involvement of all parents and family members in activities that are important to the youth.

Mutual Sharing and Relationship Building

Natasha comes in from school and asks Annette if they can talk before she picks up baby Marie from day care. Natasha shares that for the first time since the death of her grandmother, she is beginning to feel like her hopes for “family” are coming true. She says that she had never dreamed that she could be adopted and still have her birth mom and birth dad in her life, all part of one big family. Natasha looks away from Annette and says quietly, “You are like my grandmother was to me - a parent, and I think you mean it when you say you will always take care of me and my baby. I’m still worried about the ups and downs with my mom and dad – it might be hard to deal with – but I want them be part of my life.”

Annette hugs Natasha and assures her that she wants Natasha to have a relationship with her parents and will help her build it by making them part of the family. Annette suggests that they invite Jolene and Howard for a family cookout and prepare her grandmother’s famous peach cobbler for the occasion. Natasha smiles and nods in agreement.

When Annette calls the social worker to share this conversation, she also shares that as Jolene was leaving a recent family visit, she thanked Annette for coming into Natasha’s life and for caring for her daughter and grandbaby. Natasha overheard this and smiled as she handed baby Marie to Annette. The social worker informs Annette that such moments model for Natasha the positive relationship that is developing between all the important parents in her life. Annette says that she would like to meet with Natasha’s parents together with the social worker to assure them, “face to face, parent to parent” that she is not attempting to take their daughter and granddaughter from them. The social worker agrees to arrange and facilitate this conversation as a “permission message” for Natasha and also to use it to involve Annette, Jolene, and Howard in adding more information and photos to the life book for Natasha and baby Marie.

ACTIVITY #9. HELP PERMANENT PARENTS SUSTAIN AN UNCONDITIONAL AND LEGAL PARENTING COMMITMENT AND ONGOING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS AND SIGNIFICANT ADULTS OVER TIME.

Critical to the work of permanency preparation is support for the permanent parents – whether the birth parents, adoptive parents or legal guardians – so that they can sustain their unconditional commitment to an emotionally and legally secure parenting relationship to the youth and maintain healthy relationships with relatives and other significant adults in the youth’s life. Birth parents and foster parents may need supports in sustaining their relationship after the youth returns home. When the youth is adopted by or becomes the legal guardian of his/her foster parents, an adult identified through the youth’s permanency team, or a newly identified family, the adults may need support in sustaining their relationships with birth parents and members of the extended birth family.

What is an unconditional commitment?

An unconditional commitment is an unbreakable moral bond in which a parent pledges to remain as a youth's parent regardless of any future circumstances, events or behavior the youth may exhibit. A parent who has made an unconditional commitment continues to function as a parent even when the youth needs out-of-home treatment, engages in self-destructive behavior and/or makes poor life choices which make it impossible for him or her to live with the parent for some period of time. For a foster parent, unconditional commitment is defined by this being the youth's last foster placement until the youth reaches legal permanence through reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. For a parent identified as the youth's permanent parent, unconditional commitment also includes providing the youth with a legal family relationship. This parent will become the legal parent of the youth as soon as: 1) the court reinstates their legal rights as the birth parent; 2) the court terminates parental rights to allow the adoption of the youth; or 3) an older youth agrees to a legal family relationship with the parent.

The social worker encourages the parent(s) and family members to verbalize their unconditional commitment to the youth and further symbolize the legal family relationship. The parent(s) and family members may symbolize the legal family relationship by celebrating the youth's return home or their moving in; including the youth in the parents' wills; including the youth's pictures in family albums and photo galleries; and/or by using other rituals, family events and traditions, and/or gifts that signify family belonging and claiming.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to assist families in committing to a legal relationship and sustaining relationships with relatives and other significant adults in the youth's life?

This work begins with the first individual and joint sessions with the birth parent and/or other potential permanent parent. It is ongoing as planning proceeds, continuing for 12 to 18 months or until a legal permanency outcome is achieved.

What is the goal of this process with the family?

The goal is to support the family in sustaining their unconditional commitment to an emotionally and legally secure parenting relationship and maintaining healthy relationships with relatives and other significant adults in the youth's life. The social worker and the team work together to remove barriers to legal permanence (including financial and clinical barriers). When the youth's permanent parents are helped to make and sustain an unconditional commitment to a legal family relationship and to sustaining healthy relationships with relatives and other significant adults in the youth's life:

- The permanent parent follows through on steps to finalize the legal relationship – through reunification, adoption or legal guardianship – and engages in activities and behaviors that symbolize their commitment and claiming.

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THE RESPONSIBILITY PRINCIPLE: The youth will have a parent unconditionally committed to an emotionally and legally secure family relationship for a lifetime– something the state as a parent cannot provide.

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- The permanent parent has increased confidence in their ability to sustain healthy relationships with relatives and other significant adults in the youth's life and demonstrates behavior toward strengthening those relationships.

How does the social worker assist families with these commitments?

When the youth will return to live with his or her birth parents, the social worker:

- Helps parents understand their unconditional commitment to safely and permanently parent their child, including providing an emotionally and legally secure family relationship.
- Helps parents anticipate changes in the family routine, structure or dynamics when the youth returns home.
- Assists parents in recognizing the important parent figures, former caregivers, and significant adults in the youth's life and the importance of the youth sustaining healthy relationships with those adults
- Encourages the parent to continue strengthening his or her own positive working relationships with those same adults in the youth's life.

In preparation for the youth having a permanent legal family other than through reunification, the social worker:

- Helps the family explore what it will mean to unconditionally commit to parenting the youth, legally and emotionally.
- Helps the parents anticipate the reactions that their birth children and/or extended families may have to the youth's becoming a legal member of the family.
- Helps the parents anticipate changes in the family routine, structure or dynamics once the youth moves in.
- Encourages the family to symbolize their deepening commitment and belonging.
- Uses the teaming process – including the youth, birth parent and current caregiver/foster parent – to develop, implement and monitor a planned and purposeful transition of the youth back to the birth parent.
- Continually facilitates and supports the permanent parent(s)' relationship and communication with the youth's foster parent(s) regarding the youth's strengths, interests and needs and all dimensions of the transition to the permanent home.
- Encourages the parent to continue strengthening his or her own positive working relationships with birth parents, relatives and other significant adults in the child's life.
- Assist the parent in continuing to support the youth in sustaining ongoing relationships with these same adults.

In preparation for the youth returning home to his or her birth parent(s), the social worker:

- Continually facilitates and supports the parent(s)' relationship and communication with the youth's foster parent(s) regarding the youth's strengths, interests, needs and challenges and all dimensions of the transition back to the birth parent(s).
- Facilitates the development and strengthening of relationships between the birth parents and other parent figures and significant adults in the youth's life.
- Facilitates meetings between the parents and other professionals such as therapists, teachers, evaluators, mentors and other social workers about the youth's needs and progress – many of which will need to be sustained following reunification.
- Facilitates conversations between the parent(s) and youth about the return and what it will mean to the youth, the parent, and others in the family and explore together any remaining concerns about the youth's safety.
- Uses the teaming process – including the youth, birth parent and current caregiver/foster parent – to develop, implement and monitor a planned and purposeful transition of the youth back to the birth parent.
- Uses the teaming process to support the family in identifying and accessing the services (formal and informal) that the family will need through the transition and beyond.

In preparation for the youth having a permanent parent through adoption or legal guardianship, the social worker – prior to or concurrent with the process of licensing, home study and pre-service training – prepares the foster parent(s) or potential permanent parent(s) to make an unconditional and legal commitment to the youth and to sustaining healthy relationships with relatives and other significant adults in the youth's life. The social worker reinforces the importance of an unconditional and lifelong emotional and legal commitment to the youth. The agency expectation is that the adult makes an unconditional commitment to the youth by providing a legally permanent family relationship through reunification, adoption or guardianship. The social worker assists the family with information about and access to state adoption/guardianship subsidies and Medicaid and for adoptive families, provides information on the adoption tax credit.

Assisting the Permanent Parents in Making Unconditional Commitments

The social worker continues to meet with Natasha, Jolene, Howard and Annette to prepare for Natasha's adoption by Annette. They share many special memories and build a relationship that will continue over time. During joint meetings, the families plan for visits and family celebrations and talk about how they will help Natasha follow-up on medical appointments and will transport baby Marie to day care while Natasha finishes high school. Annette acknowledges the importance of Jolene's and Howard's permission for Natasha's adoption by her and the joining of their two families. The families agree that given Natasha's age, visits will happen regularly and all grandparents will play a role in baby Marie's upbringing. Annette asks Jolene and Howard questions about medical and mental health issues that may impact Natasha and/or baby Marie in the future. The social worker connects

them to another adoptive parent of a teen parent at the agency so they can learn more about her experiences and how to build their own support network. Annette plans for a professional photographer to take a family picture of Natasha's two families with copies for Natasha, Jolene, and Howard and one for her own "family gallery" on the living room wall in preparation for the pending adoption.

Fidelity Focus Summary: Permanency Preparation

In implementing the Permanency Preparation component of Lifelong Families, the following fidelity measures can be used:

Key Construct	Indicators
Family preparation for permanency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide psycho-education to the family, discuss the impact of trauma on the youth's life, and the need for trauma-informed interventions, and anticipate the reaction of other family members.• Refer the permanent parent to other birth, adoptive or relative guardian families.• Encourage the family to demonstrate their commitment through rituals, ceremonies, and other concrete actions.

Chapter 8A. Permanent family identification and engagement: Finding and engaging family members and other significant adults known to the youth

Permanency family identification and engagement involve identifying and locating parents, relatives and extended family members for reunification or reconnection with youth as well as assisting with resolution of grief, loss, attachment and identity issues. Social workers, working in partnership with the youth's permanency team, further explore the interest, willingness and ability of other adults known to the youth -- such as teachers, coaches and previous foster parents -- to play a role in the youth's life. At the same time, the social worker facilitates general, targeted, and youth-specific recruitment to identify adoptive or guardian families for youth who cannot be reunified with birth family. This model component incorporates family search and engagement, and specialized recruitment (see Text Box).

This chapter addresses the activities in the component, Permanent Family Identification and Engagement, designed to find and engage family and other adults known to the youth. Many youth in foster care lose contact with family and significant others and with their communities of origin and struggle with feelings of loneliness and disconnection. They have a right to know what happened to the people in their lives and to have the opportunity to re-connect and remain connected with these relationships. Family members and significant adults also deserve to know about the youth and be given the opportunity to participate in the youth's life. Locating family members and important adults helps the youth clarify the past, integrate multiple family relationships and actualize a sense of belonging in a permanent family relationship. Searching and engaging family members increases the number of potential families available as permanent resources for a youth and may circumvent the need to recruit, train and match youth with families not previously known to him or her. In the next chapter, we address the activities designed to ensure that new families are recruited for youth for whom family members or other significant adults will not be the youth's permanent parent.

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PERMANENT FAMILY IDENTIFICATION AND ENGAGEMENT: Identifying and locating parents, relatives and extended family members for reunification or reconnection with youth as well as resolution of grief, loss, attachment and identity issues. Exploring all relatives and other adults known to the youth (e.g., teachers, coaches, former foster families), while facilitating general, targeted and youth-specific recruitment to identify adoptive or guardian families for youth who cannot be reunified with birth family.

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PERMANENT FAMILY IDENTIFICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Family search: A set of strategies for identifying, locating and reconnecting parents, relatives and extended family members for youth in foster care.

Natural network search: The process of identifying other significant adults in the youth's life who can play a variety of roles, including being considered as a permanent parent.

Specialized recruitment: A comprehensive array of general, targeted and youth-specific strategies used to identify permanent parents when youth cannot be reunified with birth family or have no kin or previously known adults available to provide legal family permanence.

Throughout permanent family identification and engagement, the social worker partners with the youth and other members of the team to identify a permanent parent(s) and lifelong family connections. The social worker guides the team in concurrently:

- Identifying members of the youth's family of origin and involving them in the permanency planning process.
- Exploring all adult team members and others within the youth's natural network of relationships as a team member and/or potential permanent parent or lifelong family connection.
- Recruiting potential permanent families through community-based recruitment activities initiated by permanency team members, the agency, the state agency and other specialized recruitment agencies or community partners.

The Key Activities

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #1 Identify and locate family members and other significant adults through conversation with youth and adults and through case record mining, public record review and internet search.	Begins immediately upon referral after the safety parameters discussion with the legal custodian (the state agency or the parent); continues throughout the life of the case as new people are identified and as others previously identified are located. Even after permanency has been achieved, people contacted in earlier phases of the work may be recontacted or contacted for the first time based on a youth's individual needs.	To identify and locate as many people as possible who are significant to the youth.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds discussions with the youth, parents and other adults in the youth's life to identify and obtain information on the whereabouts of family members and other adults who have played roles in the youth's life in the past. • Reads the state agency record and all records regarding the youth that may exist at his or her own agency. • Makes note of any person who may have had a connection to the youth, including parents, siblings, all formal and informal caregivers, relatives, fictive kin and other significant adults, past and present. • Looks for endearing language used to describe the child and notes who expressed these feelings. • Creates a time line of moves, placements and significant events in the youth's history.

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #1	This work is particularly labor-intensive early in the case. The time needed early in the case and throughout the case will depend on a number of factors, including how long the youth has been in care, the number of previous relationship/ contacts that are identified, how long the person has been disconnected from the youth, and the person's availability and readiness to respond to the youth's needs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a genogram. • Researches public records such as birth, death, school and property records. • Uses internet search sites, such as Accurant, to locate family and significant adults from the youth's past.
ACTIVITY #2 Contact and engage family members and other significant adults.	Begins immediately upon receiving the case referral; continues throughout the life of the case. Amount of time required depends on individual circumstances of the case.	To contact and engage as many people as possible in planning with and for the youth.	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches an agreement in the safety parameters discussion with the state child welfare agency social worker about an outreach strategy to family members and significant adults, keeping the state worker informed of developments. • Uses letters, phone calls, social networking and social functions to connect with family members and other significant adults. • Views every individual as having something to contribute to the process. • Reaches out even when individuals are initially uncertain or unresponsive. • Meets with people in their homes or in places where they feel most safe and comfortable, while also structuring the contact for the social worker's safety. • Identifies which family member to speak with first and strategically reaches out to family members who hold power in the family. • Listens to the family's interpretation of the past and acknowledges their feelings of disenfranchisement, anger and grief. • Maintains timely and consistent follow-up with family members and other significant adults after starting communication with them. • Helps family members and significant others focus on how they can now play a role in the youth's life that is in the youth's best interest.

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
<p>ACTIVITY #3</p> <p>Assist the youth, family members and significant adults to establish or re-establish safe and healthy relationships.</p>	<p>Begins after the social worker individually prepares the youth and the family member or significant adult and determines that they are ready to attend a joint meeting. Continues throughout the case as needed and sometimes after permanency has been achieved. Amount of time required depends on individual circumstances of case.</p>	<p>To establish or re-establish connections between the youth and as many of the family members and other significant people in his/her life as possible.</p>	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works in partnership with the state agency to plan for safe reconnections between the youth and family members or significant adults. • Ensures that all involved have a clear understanding of the permanency teaming process and the importance of their potential roles in permanency planning. • Prepares the youth, family members and significant adults for the initial contact with each other and all subsequent contacts. • Respects the lines of parental authority and includes the permanent parent and/or current caregiver in contacts with other family members or significant adults with whom the youth will be reconnected. • Explores with the youth the questions that he or she wants answered and helps all involved be ready to answer those questions. • Schedules regular follow up meetings with the parties to assess progress, address barriers to and provide support for rebuilding relationships. • Helps youth, family members and significant adults to be future-oriented and realistic about their expectations. • Helps the permanent parent and/or current caregiver support the youth as he or she makes connections.
<p>ACTIVITY #4</p> <p>Assess each family member's or significant adult's initial interest, willingness and capacity to become the youth's permanent parent or a lifelong connection.</p>	<p>Begins as soon as someone expresses an interest in being considered as a permanent parent for the child or as soon as a team member identifies a person as a potential permanent parent. May begin at any point in the casework process. Continues with a potential parent until they do or not pass licensing standards; make a decision on their own about whether they could be a parent for the youth; successfully resolve any ambivalence about parenting the youth, resulting in a decision to pursue or not pursue permanency; or the youth expresses a very strong opinion for or against a potential parent. Ends with a definitive decision by the adult and/or a team decision to move ahead (or not) with the potential parent. Amount of time required varies but can be a lengthy process, requiring as much as several months.</p>	<p>To fully assess all identified family members and other significant adults in the youth's life as potential permanent parents for the youth.</p>	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores the mutual emotional connection between each family member or other significant adult and the youth. • Along with the team, explores the role that each of the family members and other significant adults would like to play in the youth's life and the role that the youth would like each individual to play. • Assesses the adult's ability to understand and respond to the youth's needs for safety and well being, and make an unconditional legal parenting commitment. • Determines what it would take for the family member or other significant adult to be the youth's permanent parent. • Develops a concurrent plan that names another potential permanent parent if permanency cannot be achieved for the youth with one identified permanent parent.

In this chapter, we illustrate the Birth Family and Significant Adults Known to the Youth activities that compose Permanent Family Identification and Engagement using the case of Rudy as an example.

Rudy is 15 years old and the oldest of three children. His birth family includes his mother, Lois, and twin brothers, Anthony and Mark. Rudy and his brothers initially came into foster care in Michigan as a result of physical abuse, neglect (insufficient food, clothing, medical care) and abandonment. At the time of foster care entry, Rudy and his brothers were living with a family friend. Lois had dropped the children off with the friend so that she could “take a break” for a few days. When Lois had not returned after three weeks, the friend contacted the state child welfare agency and the children were placed in unrelated, separate foster homes. Rudy was three at the time he entered care, and his brothers were younger, though the record does not tell us their exact ages. Rudy’s father, Ernie, was estranged from the family at the time of Rudy’s placement, but he contacted the state at a later date to ask about his children. At that point, he was not able to provide consistent care and was ruled out as a resource for his children. He did not attend any of the state/family meetings.

At the time they entered care, the three children had many behavioral problems. These behavioral issues led to disrupted placements and multiple moves. Several months after the children’s entry into care, Lois contacted the child welfare agency. The agency provided reunification services designed to address her difficulties parenting her sons and her history of substance abuse, prostitution and incarceration. Ultimately, Mark and Anthony returned home. Although Lois expressed a continued interest in Rudy, she was unable to meet Rudy’s needs on a full-time basis, and he remained in foster care and continued to experience frequent placement disruptions. After Rudy had been in care for nearly six years and reunification with his mother had been ruled out, Lois requested that her sister, Harriet, who lived in Massachusetts, be allowed to care for Rudy. With the permission of the Michigan and Massachusetts child welfare agencies, Rudy, then age 9, was placed with Harriet and her six children. Rudy’s father, Ernie, was not included in this discussion and was not aware that Rudy had moved to Massachusetts. After one year, the situation deteriorated and Rudy re-entered foster care, now in the state of Massachusetts.

Over the next two years, he was placed in several group and residential facilities. At age 12, Rudy was placed in the Casey Family Services foster home of Betty and Bob Jones. Over time, Rudy’s contact with his mother, Lois, and his aunt Harriet diminished, becoming sporadic and inconsistent. There has been no contact between Rudy and his mother, his father, or with his aunt Harriet in over a year.

ACTIVITY #1. IDENTIFY AND LOCATE FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT ADULTS THROUGH CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUTH AND ADULTS AND THROUGH CASE RECORD MINING, PUBLIC RECORD, AND INTERNET SEARCH.

The social worker engages in a diligent search for family members, relatives and other significant adults in the youth’s life early in the planning process and continues this work until achieving permanency. After first and most importantly interviewing the youth, parents and/or caregivers (as described in Chapter 5 on Permanency Teaming), the social worker mines the case record and public records and uses search technology to identify and locate family members and other adults who know and care about the youth. This work generates a list of adults in the youth’s life – past and present – who may be willing to play a role in the youth’s life. It may lead to connections with adults who can provide family history, stories, pictures and other information that will be essential in developing a timeline, genogram or lifebook to prepare the

youth for permanency. It also may lead to contact with adults who have lost contact with the youth and want to reconnect. Others may want to be a permanent parent. Other adults may be invaluable and/or lifelong supports to the youth and the adult who becomes the permanent parent.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to identify and locate family members and other significant adults known to the youth?

Identifying and locating family members and other significant adults begins immediately upon referral after the safety parameters discussion with the legal custodian (the state agency or the parent). Specific permission from the legal custodian is not needed for the social worker to contact these adults, but the legal custodian's permission is needed if the youth will be in contact with any of these individuals. The social worker must discuss with the legal custodian any safety risks in contacting a specific individual using the guidelines established at the safety parameter discussions. The work of identifying and locating family members and other important adults continues throughout the life of the case as new people are identified and as others previously identified are located. Even after permanency has been achieved, people contacted in earlier phases of the work may be re-contacted based on a youth's individual needs.

This work is particularly labor-intensive early in the case. The time needed early in the case and throughout the case will depend on a number of factors, including how long the youth has been in care, the number of previous relationship/contacts that are identified, how long the person has been disconnected from the youth, and the person's availability and readiness to respond to the youth's needs. The time needed to assemble a list of family members and significant adults also may be affected by how much a youth remembers, who they remember from their past and how well or poorly their placement history has been documented. The time needed also may be affected by the readiness of the youth to reconnect with identified family members and significant adults.

What are the goals of conversations with the youth and adults and the case mining, public records review and internet searches?

The goal is to identify and locate as many people as possible who have meaning or significance to the youth and for whom the youth has meaning. Through these activities, the social worker generates a list of all adults with whom the youth has been connected in the past and makes connections with as many of these individuals as possible. Through these connections, the social worker begins to assess with each individual the role that he or she can play in the youth's life. The goals for the youth are to put his/her life history together through reconnections and to experience a greater sense of hopefulness for the future, as well as to remain open about who could potentially be his or her permanent parent if unable to return home to live with birth parents.

What is the process for identifying and locating family members and significant adults known to the youth through case mining, public records review and internet searches?

The agency:

- Has a protocol in place with the state child welfare agency regarding access to the youth's case record upon referral to the agency.
- Develops a systematic process for getting access to and collecting data from the youth's state agency case record.
- Assigns an individual to do the case record mining for each youth, either the youth's social worker or another staff member who is trained and supervised in case record mining.

The assigned social worker:

- Reads the state agency record and all records regarding the youth that may exist at his or her own agency.
- Makes note of any person who may have had a connection to the youth, including parents, siblings, all formal and informal caregivers, relatives, fictive kin, and other significant adults, past and present.
- Looks for endearing language used to describe the child and notes who expressed these feelings.
- Creates or expands a previously created time line of moves, placements and significant events in the youth's history.
- Creates or expands a previously created genogram.
- Researches public records such as birth, death, school and property records.
- Uses internet search sites, such as Accurant or US Search, to locate relatives, extended family and significant adults from the youth's past.
- Works to locate and engage as many people as possible.

When is it helpful to use search technologies?

The social worker uses search technologies in all cases. Search technology can be especially helpful when:

- The youth has no connection to birth family or information about birth family history.
- The youth expresses a longing to be reconnected to birth relatives.
- The youth feels hopeless and is grieving the loss of relationships.
- The youth is unable to accept legal permanency due to ambivalence and conflicted loyalty related to family of origin.
- The youth has only professionals on his or her permanency team.

Can others assist the social worker in locating identified family members and other significant adults?

When a number of contacts must be made, particularly through “cold calling,” specialized investigators, family support specialists or administrative support staff can effectively support the social worker in making timely contacts. When it is clear that the contacts that are being made solely for additional information and the goal is not to assess the individual’s interest in becoming involved in the youth’s permanency team or reconnecting with the youth, administrative support staff can be quite effective. However, the potential for relationship-building begins on the first contact with each individual. The opportunities to initiate a positive connection with that individual should not be underestimated. Often, it is not known at the point of contact what role the individual may be willing or able to play on the youth’s permanency team or in the youth’s life. As a result, it is essential to treat each contact as significant and each individual as having something important to contribute to the permanency process.

Is the youth’s permission required to reach out to family members or significant adults?

A social worker does not need a youth’s permission to contact family members or significant adults, especially if gaining the youth’s permission would delay the social worker in reaching out to these adults. The youth, however, should be kept informed and provided with information about the process based on the youth’s developmental level. Because youth in the child welfare system have often been restricted from contact with family members in the past, some youth are eager to reconnect and may initiate a search for family on their own. Other youth oppose anyone attempting to reach out to certain adults from their past. The social worker must balance the need to be sensitive to the youth’s feelings and the implications of a search for the youth while, at the same time, exploring any relationships that may lead to a safe and permanent family for the youth. The youth will not be pressured to reconnect or be in contact with the family member if the youth feels unsafe or uncertain, but the social worker will not delay contacting any adult who could provide information, guidance, leads or assistance in any aspect of the permanency process.

Identification of Relatives and Other Significant Adults

Rudy’s social worker talks with him about the key people in his life. He identifies his mother, Lois, and his aunt, Harriet, but says that he has not been in contact with either of them in some time. Rudy also wonders about his father, Ernie, who he last remember seeing around the age of 5. Rudy wonders what happened to him and whether he is still alive. Rudy talks about his cousin, Joe, who was like a “big brother” to him when he lived with Harriet. Rudy says that he considers his foster parents to be important. The social worker reviews Rudy’s case record and notes that Rudy had a close relationship with a staff member, Tyrone, at the last residential center where he lived before moving to the Jones’ home. Rudy confirms that Tyrone was “special,” taking him to concerts and helping him with anger management. The social worker notes in the case record that there were other adults in Rudy’s life who may be able to play a role now: a neighbor of Harriett’s, Mr. Frank, who played basketball with him and came to see him when he first entered foster care; and a tutor, Alvin, who worked with Rudy on his reading skills at Rudy’s most recent residential placement and who visited Rudy outside of tutoring time. The record does not contain information about

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THE URGENCY PRINCIPLE: The social worker balances these words of wisdom: “leave no stone unturned” and “nothing about us without us.”

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the current whereabouts of Lois or Ernie. So, the social worker initiates an internet search to locate them. Rudy also has an attorney, Marcia Brown, who represents him in court and has been actively involved in his case for the past year.

ACTIVITY #2. CONTACT AND ENGAGE FAMILY MEMBERS AND SIGNIFICANT ADULTS.

The social worker, working with the youth's permanency team, develops an outreach strategy to contact and engage as many people in the youth's life as possible who can play a role in the youth's life now and into the future. The social worker is responsible for diligent outreach to all adults identified. The social worker informs them that the youth is in foster care and that the social worker's role is to help the youth exit foster care to a permanent family and explore the individual's interest in playing a role in the team planning process.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to contact and engage family members and significant adults?

Outreach to family members and other significant adults begins immediately upon receiving the case referral and continues throughout the life of the case. Once a permanent parent is identified, that individual is introduced to others who have already been re-connected to the youth and becomes involved in any continuing outreach activities as the youth and family move toward reunification, adoption or guardianship.

Outreach to family members and significant adults can be highly labor-intensive in the early phases of the cases, but it often saves time later and because it often yields permanency resources that will allow the youth to exit from foster care more quickly. The time that is needed varies based on a number of factors, including the circumstances under which the youth left the home (e.g., if the individual was the primary caregiver), the individual's perceptions and feelings about state intervention and the removal of the child, the individual's willingness to engage in a conversation with the social worker, logistics of contact (e.g., does the individual have a telephone?) and geographic proximity.

What is the goal of contacting and engaging families?

The goal is to contact as many family members and other significant adults in the youth's life as possible and engage them in planning with and for the youth. The desired outcomes are that family members and other significant adults in the youth's life will:

- Positively respond to the outreach efforts on behalf of the youth.
- Feel heard, respected and able to focus on the youth's needs.
- Be willing to do whatever they can do to help the youth get out of foster care and be raised by a permanent parent.
- Consider re-building relationships with the youth.
- Assist the social worker in contacting other family members.

Through outreach activities, the social worker begins to build relationships with individuals in the youth's life.

What is the process for contacting and engaging family members and other significant adults known to the youth?

The social worker:

- Reaches an agreement in the safety parameters discussion with the state child welfare agency social worker about the strategy for contacting and engaging family members and other significant adults known to the youth and keeps the state worker aware of developments.
- Views every individual as having something to contribute to the process, regardless of who the individual is, the individual's past involvement with the youth or the current circumstances.
- Uses letters, phone calls, social networking and social functions to connect with family members and other significant adults. When an individual does not respond to the first contact attempts, the social worker continues efforts, even stopping by unannounced at their house as appropriate.
- Reaches out even when individuals are initially uncertain about whether they wish to respond.
- Meets with people in their homes or in places where they feel most safe and comfortable (while maintaining the social worker's safety).
- Identifies which family member to speak with first and strategically reaches out to family members who hold power in the family.
- Listens to the family's interpretation of the past and acknowledges their feelings of disenfranchisement, anger and grief.
- Maintains timely and consistent follow-up with family members and other significant adults after initiating communication.
- Helps family members and significant adults focus on how they can now play a role in the youth's life that is in the youth's best interest.

What potential roles does the social worker explore with identified family members and other significant adults?

Among the roles that the social worker explores with adults are:

- Providing information about the youth's history, family stories, memories, keepsakes, photos and/or the names of other adults who know and care about the youth.
- Becoming a member of the youth's permanency team.
- Reconnecting with the youth and restoring a broken relationship.
- Becoming a lifelong connection for the youth.
- Serving as a temporary placement resource for the youth.
- Becoming the youth's permanent parent

Outreach to Family Members

Rudy's social worker locates Harriett and Joe and Rudy's other cousins with ease. Harriett states that she wants to be in contact with Rudy. She explains that she requested his removal from her home because of his aggressive behavior, including punching a hole in the wall. She felt unable to parent him and her six children. She talks about the many different caseworkers for Rudy and her view that the state agency blamed her for "giving up on Rudy." She says that despite her best efforts, she eventually lost contact with him. Her son, Rudy's cousin Joe, states that he wants to reconnect with Rudy. The social worker supports Harriett and Joe in playing a role in Rudy's life and invites them to join Rudy's permanency team.

Harriet provides the social worker with contact information for Rudy's mother, Lois, who still resides in Michigan with her two younger sons. She says that Lois may have contact information for Ernie, Rudy's father. The social worker contacts Lois who says that she has never stopped worrying and wondering about Rudy. She tells the social worker that she had no hope of having any contact once he went into the Massachusetts foster care system. Lois is very anxious to see Rudy again but also concerned that she does not have the financial resources to travel to Massachusetts and there is no one to care for her younger sons, who are now age 13. The social worker asks if Lois would be willing to write to Rudy and participate in Rudy's permanency team via telephone. Lois agrees to both. Lois provides the social worker with a cell phone number for Ernie and states that she is willing to call him and ask him to contact the social worker directly. Later, Ernie contacts the social worker. He says that he still struggles with his drinking but wants to have contact with his son.

The social worker gathers as much information as she can from both parents so that she can update Rudy on where they were and what is happening in their lives.

ACTIVITY #3. ASSIST THE YOUTH, FAMILY MEMBERS AND SIGNIFICANT ADULTS TO ESTABLISH OR RE-ESTABLISH SAFE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.

The social worker engages the youth, parents, caregiver, therapist and other team members in exploring the specifics of each situation and weighing the pros and cons of how best to include each adult in the permanency process with this youth. The social worker serves as the bridge between the youth and family members and other significant adults in the youth's life as they explore whether re-establishing a relationship can be safe for the youth and in his or her best interest. The social worker purposefully facilitates the rebuilding of relationships between the youth and adults and the rebuilding of relationships between adults. In some situations, the social worker will only make an initial contact with a family member and will not support their re-introduction or reconnection with the youth because of the risk to the youth's safety or because of the youth's wish to not be reconnected. In these situations, family

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LIFELONG CONNECTIONS: Lifelong connections are in addition to, not in place of, a permanent parent. A lifelong connection is any other safe and caring adult committed to a relationship that is intended to go on indefinitely in the life of a youth. A lifelong connection is not an adult in a paid professional role with the youth. However, if an adult is in a paid professional role with the youth and subsequently makes a personal commitment to remain in the youth's life once he/she is no longer paid to do so, this adult may be identified as a lifelong connection.

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members may be extremely helpful in other ways: sharing key information for permanency planning or permanency preparation work, communicating positive messages of caring about the youth, sharing fond memories of the youth and giving the youth permission to be raised by another parent. Even in cases when a family member is not reconnected with the youth because of safety reasons, the social worker should not underestimate the importance of that person to the youth. The permanency team coordinates how all adults can provide consistent messages to the youth as this work progresses.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to re-establish safe and healthy relationships between the youth and family members and/or significant adults?

This work begins with the social worker's first individual meeting with a family member or significant adult. Often several individual meetings are necessary as the social worker assesses safety and the structure for re-establishing the relationship between the adult and the youth. As appropriate, joint meetings are held with the adult and the youth to begin the process of rebuilding the relationship. This work continues throughout the case as necessary and, at times, after permanency has been achieved. Once the permanent parent has been identified, this individual must be connected with the youth's other important relationships. Any continuing relationship building with other important adults must take place with the youth and permanent parent together.

The amount of time needed to re-establish relationships depends on the individual situation. Factors impacting the time commitment may include the length of time over which the youth has been separated from the adult, the reasons for the separation, unresolved feelings about the separation, the level of safety risk, whether the adult is someone with whom the youth previously lived and the ability of the adult to focus on the youth's needs rather than his or her own wishes or needs to reconnect with the youth.

What is the goal of this activity?

The goal is to establish or re-establish connections between the youth and as many of the family members and other significant people in his/her life as possible. The expected outcomes of this process are:

- Those most involved and knowledgeable about the circumstances, events and relationships answer youth's questions about the past.
- The youth develops healthy and lasting relationships with family members and other significant adults who have become disengaged from him or her.
- The youth's well-being improves and has reduced loneliness and isolation.
- The youth is helped to heal from the trauma of the past.
- A safe and permanent parent is identified so the youth can exit the foster care system as quickly as possible.

What considerations must be taken into account in assessing and supporting the rebuilding of relationships between family members/other significant adults and the youth?

The following considerations are important:

- **LEGAL CUSTODIAN PERMISSION.** The state agency/legal custodian must give permission for a family member/ other significant adult to have contact with the youth, and other team members should be asked for input.
- **ADDRESSING SAFETY ISSUES.** When the state agency and Casey Family Services social worker agree that the adult may reconnect with the youth, the social worker uses individual meetings to prepare the youth and the adult for a joint meeting and helps them determine when they are ready or what they need to get ready for a joint meeting. The social worker must address any potential safety issues related to the contact and if needed, put a safety plan into place.
- **THE WISHES OF PARENTS.** It is important to consider the role of parent figures in the youth's life in relation to reconnecting the youth with an adult from the past. The youth's permanent parent may wish to meet the adult prior to his or her meeting with the youth. The social worker should respect the parent's authority and arrange this meeting before, at the same time, or soon after the youth meets the adult, based upon the parent's wishes.
- **INCLUSION OF THE YOUTH'S CAREGIVERS.** The youth's caregiver and/or potential permanent parent (if one has been identified at this point) may also participate in the joint meeting. Alternatively, the social worker may facilitate a joint meeting between these caregivers and the adult. In order to provide safe and supportive parenting, it is important that the adult caring for the youth be aware of, introduced to and included in communication with all the youth's relationships.

What is the process for assisting the youth and family members and significant adults in re-establishing relationships?

The social worker:

- Ensures that all involved have a clear understanding of the permanency teaming process and the importance of their potential roles in permanency planning.
- Prepares the youth, family members, and significant adults for the initial contact with each other and all subsequent contacts.
- Respects the lines of parental authority and includes the permanent parent and/or current caregiver in contacts with other family members or significant adults with whom the youth will be reconnected.
- Explores with the youth the questions that he or she wants answered and helps all involved be ready to answer those questions.

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THE ADVOCACY PRINCIPLE: Guard against over-generalizing when considering contact with family members. It is rare that "everyone in the family is unsafe." Gather the information for yourself and stay open to possibilities.
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- Schedules regular follow-up meetings with the parties to assess progress, address barriers to and provide support for rebuilding relationships.
- Helps youth, family members and significant adults be future-oriented and realistic about relationship expectations.
- Helps the permanent parent and/or current caregiver support the youth as he or she makes connections.

Re-establishing Relationships

Rudy's social worker talks with him about her contacts with Lois, Ernie, Harriett and Joe, Tyrone, Mr. Frank, and Alvin. She explains that she spoke with his parents by telephone (because they are out of state) and has met individually with the others. She tells Rudy that each person has expressed an interest in helping Rudy make plans for the future. She talks with Rudy about what it will mean to reconnect with each of these people, and she describes the teaming process of joint meetings and then a large team meeting. She suggests that together they plan joint meetings either in person or by phone with each person. She asks Rudy to think about the questions that he would like to ask each person. The social worker meets with Bob and Betty about the reconnections that are being planned and helps them understand how important their support is as Rudy makes these reconnections and assures them that she will arrange for them to meet and communicate with family members with whom Rudy will be connecting. The social worker also ensures that attorney Brown is aware of these outreach efforts and why they are so important to Rudy.

ACTIVITY #4. ASSESS EACH FAMILY MEMBER'S OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT ADULT'S INITIAL INTEREST, WILLINGNESS AND CAPACITY TO BECOME THE YOUTH'S PERMANENT PARENT.

After initially establishing a relationship with the family member or other significant adult, the social worker assesses, and helps the individual assess for themselves, their interest, willingness and capacity to become the youth's permanent parent or lifelong relationship. The social worker, having a good understanding of the youth, explains the youth's strengths and range of needs. The social worker supports them in assessing their ability to help the youth build from his or her own strengths and their ability to meet the youth's needs for safe and permanent parenting and additional lifelong family relationships. Team members provide input regarding any potential parent's interest, willingness and ability. Much of this work takes place through the teaming process itself as a particular team member comes to understand the youth's needs and the social worker and team members comes to understand this individual.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to assess a family member's or other significant adult's interest, willingness and ability in becoming a youth's permanent parent?

The assessment starts as soon as someone expresses an interest in being considered as a permanent parent for the youth or as soon as a team member identifies a person as a potential permanent parent. This work may begin at any point in the casework process as individuals may step forward with an interest early or later. Multiple potential parents may be assessed at any one time. Assessment continues with a potential parent until the individual does or does not pass licensing standards; makes a decision on his or her own

about whether he or she could be a parent for the youth; successfully resolves any ambivalence about making an unconditional legal commitment to the youth, resulting in a decision to pursue or not pursue permanency; or the youth expresses a very strong opinion for or against a potential parent. Assessment ends with a definitive decision by the adult, the state agency and/or the team to move ahead (or not) with the potential parent.

Assessment may be a lengthy process as the potential parent may need time to form a complete picture of the youth's strengths and needs and assess whether he or she can make the commitment to parent the youth. This process may be as long as several months.

What is the goal of this activity?

The goal is to fully assess all identified family members and other significant adults in the youth's life as potential permanent parents for the youth. The desired outcomes of this process are:

- The identification of persons who are open to and capable of providing permanency for the youth, if the plan is no longer reunification with the birth parent.
- If the primary permanent plan is the birth parent, the other persons open to and capable of providing permanency will be considered as concurrent permanent parent.
- The identification of any other resources or barriers that must be resolved in order to move ahead with a primary permanency plan.
- The development of a concurrent permanency plan in addition to the primary permanency plan.

What is the process for assessing family members' and other significant adults' interest, willingness and ability?

The social worker:

- Explores the mutual emotional connection between each family member or other significant adult and the youth.
- Along with the team, explores the role that each of the family members and other significant adults would like to play in the youth's life and the role that the youth would like each individual to play.
- Assesses the adult's ability to understand and respond to the youth's needs for safety and well being, and make an unconditional legal parenting commitment.
- Determines what it would take for the family member or other significant adult to be the youth's permanent parent.

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THE CONCURRENCY PRINCIPLE: **Behind every good parent is a back up parent!**

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- Develops a concurrent plan that names another potential permanent parent if permanency cannot be achieved for the youth with one identified permanent parent.

What are the outcomes of the assessment process?

In some cases, potential parents initially believe that they can make the commitment and later realize that it is not feasible. In other cases, potential parents initially do not believe that they can make a commitment and then realize that the commitment is more feasible than they originally believed. Family members or significant adults who are not interested or able to make a commitment to parent a youth permanently may be able to become a lifelong family connection. As a lifelong family connection, the family member or other caring adult makes a commitment to be part of a youth's life indefinitely and supports the permanent parent in his or her parenting role with the youth.

Exploring Family Interest, Willingness and Capacity to Become a Permanent Parent

Lois sends Rudy's social worker a letter that describes her life since Rudy left her care. Lois acknowledges making many poor choices and says that her substance abuse problem had "led her down a road" that affected her ability to parent her children. Lois describes having entered treatment a number of years previously and says that she has been completely free of substances for the past five years. Lois understands that Rudy may have many questions for her and may feel quite angry toward her, but she states that she wants what is best for him and wants him to have a relationship with her and his younger brothers. Lois states that she is currently employed full time as an in-home aid for elderly clients. She has an apartment in which she has lived for the past four years.

Rudy's social worker has several phone calls with Ernie who wants to have contact with his son. He recognizes, however, that he cannot provide a home for Rudy given his own struggles with substance abuse. After several conversations, Ernie agrees that he will write to Rudy, sending the letters via the social worker, and gradually work toward phone calls with Rudy. Rudy is comfortable with a slow approach to reconnecting with his father. He says that he feels he needs time to feel comfortable with someone he can barely remember.

Rudy's social worker meets again with Harriett. Harriett states that she wants to start slowly in rebuilding her relationship with Rudy, with some day visits that might eventually become overnight visits. She is clear that he cannot return to live with her and her children. However, she frequently reminds the social worker that "he's family" and should be connected to family, particularly to his mother. Harriet offers to invite Lois to stay with her so that Lois can visit regularly with Rudy. Harriet suggests that the family may be able to help Lois pay for a plane ticket from Michigan to Massachusetts.

When Permanent Family Identification and Engagement Leads to Reunification

Rudy begins the process of renewing his relationship with his mother and expresses his feelings of anger and disappointment at the choices she made that had a dramatic impact on his life. The social worker facilitates joint sessions with Rudy and Lois by telephone. Rudy is both sad and happy as he reconnects with his brothers who were babies when he last saw them and are now teenagers. Lois participates at Rudy's large permanency team meetings by telephone. After several months, she travels to Massachusetts and sees Rudy in person again in a very emotional meeting for both. The social worker supports Lois and Rudy in keeping their expectations of one another realistic. Lois attends Rudy's large team meeting, and Rudy proudly introduces his mother to his team. As Rudy's permanency team continues to work with him, it becomes clear that Harriett will not make

the commitment to adopt Rudy or become his legal guardian. She wants to be his aunt and remain connected to him through this relationship. At the same, Lois makes significant changes in her life as she is committed to reunification with her son. She repeatedly states her intention to do whatever is necessary to have her son returned to her care. Rudy's foster parents, Bob and Betty, continue to support Rudy in whatever plan his team decides is in his best interests. With this goal in mind, they state their openness to considering adoption or legal guardianship of Rudy. Rudy appreciates their support but is ambivalent about this option.

Rudy's social worker talks with Rudy about his team's efforts to make the right decision and find the "right family" for him. Although Rudy initially stated that "I just want to have an apartment of my own," he recently has expressed his desire to be reunified with his mother and brothers. Several team members are initially skeptical about reunification. However, they come to support reunification as the best permanency plan for Rudy given Lois' consistency in working with the team and following through with the state welfare agency's requirements and Rudy's growing recognition that he really wants to return to his mother's care. With reunification as the plan, the social worker, in collaboration with the state agency worker and Rudy's attorney, begin the interstate compact agreement process. Lois returns to Massachusetts for a two week visit during which Rudy lives with her at his Aunt Harriet's home.

Before Rudy returns to Michigan to live with his mother and brothers, his team grows to include the Michigan child protection services workers who will follow his case once he returns to the state. The team identifies community supports for Lois once Rudy returns home: family therapy to help the family adjust to living together again and educational supports for Rudy as he transitions to a new school. Rudy's foster parents are committed to continuing a relationship with him and plan to use Skype to remain in contact. They invite Rudy to visit them during his summer vacation from school.

FIDELITY FOCUS: Identify a permanent family and lifelong connections

Consider all significant adults known to a youth as a potential permanent parent.

Fidelity Focus Summary: Permanent Family Identification and Engagement

In implementing the Permanent Family Identification and Engagement component of Lifelong Families, the following fidelity measures can be used:

Key Construct	Indicators
Identify a permanent family and lifelong connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider all significant adults known to a youth as a potential permanent parent or lifelong connection. Involve all team members including youth in targeted and youth-specific recruitment activities.

Chapter 8B. Permanent family identification and engagement: Youth specific recruitment

As discussed in Chapter 8A, permanent family identification and engagement involve identifying and locating parents, relatives and extended family members for reunification or reconnection with youth as well as assisting with resolution of grief, loss, attachment and identity issues. Social workers, working in partnership with the youth's permanency team, further explore the interest, willingness and ability of other adults known to the youth -- such as teachers, coaches, and previous foster parents -- to play a role in the youth's life. At the same time, the social worker facilitates general, targeted and youth-specific recruitment to identify adoptive or guardian families for youth who cannot be reunified with birth family.

For some youth, it will not be possible to reunite with their birth family and there will be no kin or other families previously known to them who can provide legal family permanency. Targeted and youth-specific recruitment is essential in identifying new families for these youth as these forms of recruitment have been found to be most successful in locating permanent families for school-aged youth, teens and youth with emotional and behavioral needs. Involving experienced parents, community members and organizations as well as members of a youth's permanency team helps to share the responsibilities and expand the reach of recruitment efforts. Involving youth in their own recruitment is essential to empowering them in making decisions about their futures and fully engaging them in the permanency planning process.

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PERMANENT FAMILY IDENTIFICATION AND ENGAGEMENT: Identifying and locating parents, relatives and extended family members for reunification or reconnection with youth as well as resolution of grief, loss, attachment and identity issues. Exploring all relatives and other adults known to the youth (e.g., teachers, coaches, former foster families), while facilitating general, targeted and youth-specific recruitment to identify adoptive or guardian families for youth who cannot be reunified with birth family.

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The Key Activities: Youth-Specific Activities in Specialized Recruitment

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
<p>ACTIVITY #1</p> <p>Prepare and involve youth as partners in their own recruitment.</p>	<p>As soon as the need for recruitment is identified; continues until a permanent parent is identified and permanency has been achieved.</p>	<p>To actively engage youth in their own family recruitment.</p>	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists the youth in understanding that the role of the social worker is to ensure that the youth leaves foster care as quickly as possible to a parent and emotionally and legally secure family membership. • Assists the youth in completing the clarification work (described in Chapter 7, Permanency Preparation) though answering the questions: Who am I? What happened to me? Where am I going? How will I get there? When will I know I belong? • Explores the youth's understanding of general, targeted, and youth-specific recruitment as tools to identify a permanent family when he or she cannot return to live with birth family. • Explains the recruitment process and answers any questions the youth may have about his/her involvement in the process. • Asks the youth to identify any people who might be added to the team to help recruit a family for him/her, especially individuals who may not be a potential parent for the youth but care about them and want to help them. • Helps the youth articulate the qualities that he/she needs in a parent. • Identifies target populations within the community that relate to the youth's interests and hobbies. • Ensures that the youth has a voice in what he/she would like potential permanent parents to know about them and how they will be presented in recruitment publications, etc. • Assists the youth in writing or contributing in his/her own words to the written recruitment profile and be involved as much as possible in all media activities (video, audio, digital stories, or other media). • Connects youth with peers who have also been involved in their own recruitment efforts and can help support the youth through the experience.

The Key Activities: Youth-Specific Activities in Specialized Recruitment cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
<p>ACTIVITY #2</p> <p>Involve the youth's permanency team members in developing and implementing a youth-specific recruitment plan, including tasks and timeframes.</p>	<p>As soon as it is determined that no one known to the youth or no team member is able to or willing to be the youth's permanent parent. Begins concurrently with an exploration of potential permanent parents. Continues until a permanent parent is located and has made an unconditional commitment to a legal family relationship with the youth.</p>	<p>To actively engage permanency team members in recruiting a permanent family for the youth.</p>	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets recruitment as an agenda item for team meetings. • Helps the youth share with team members how he or she is involved in his or her own recruitment (for example, shares the written recruitment profile, video, audio, or other media material). • Helps individual team members identify how they can be part of recruitment planning and implementation and volunteer to do specific recruitment tasks. • Shares with team members what the youth needs and desires in a family. • Invites new team members, such as a Resource Coordinator or community agency recruiter, who are experts in specialized recruitment and who are able to help the team create and implement the recruitment plan. • Sets goals and tasks that are individualized, time-focused and measureable and specifies the responsible parties for task completion. • Reviews progress on recruitment tasks and timelines during team meetings. • Involves all key stakeholders in recruitment plan development and implementation.

When a youth cannot go home to his or her parents and no other relative or adult known to the youth is able to become the permanent parent, recruitment strategies must be employed to identify a permanent parent not previously known to the youth. The most successful strategies in locating permanent parents for school-aged youth, teens and youth with emotional/behavioral needs are targeted and youth-specific recruitment. Key to sharing recruitment responsibilities and expanding the reach of recruitment efforts for the individual youth is the involvement of the members of a youth's permanency team, other experienced foster and adoptive parents at the agency, and community members and organizations. Involving youth in their own recruitment is essential in helping potential parents get to know the youth, empowering the youth in making decisions about their future, engaging them in their own permanency planning process, and implementing the most individualized and effective recruitment strategies.

There are two concurrent activities: preparing and involving youth as partners in their own recruitment and involving the youth's permanency team in developing and implementing a recruitment plan for that youth, including tasks and timeframes.

In this chapter, we illustrate the Youth-Specific Activities for Specialized Recruitment with the case of Alexandra (Alex).

Alex, age 16, entered foster care when she was 14 after her mother, who was drinking heavily at the time, pushed her, causing Alex to break her arm, and then locked Alex out of the home. Alex went to a neighbor who took her to the emergency room at a nearby hospital. Hospital staff phoned in a report of child abuse. Alex entered foster care the next day. During her first year in foster care, Alex was placed with a foster family with whom she felt she never connected. When the foster father was transferred to another state, Alex gladly accepted another foster care placement. At this point, the state agency referred Alex's case to Casey Family Services.

Over the course of the first year in care, efforts were made to reunite Alex and her mother. Reunification efforts were not successful. Alex's mother continued to abuse alcohol, denied substance abuse or anger issues, blamed Alex for all the troubles that she had experienced since Alex was born and insisted that she did not want Alex to come home. It appeared that Alex's mother enjoyed her new found freedom without responsibility for her only child. Alex did not want to return home. The state agency social worker learned that there were no aunts or uncles but was able to speak with extended family members. The social worker made a positive initial contact with Alex's father's cousin, Gladys, who worries about Alex and wants to make sure that she is okay but readily said that she would not be able to parent Alex full time. All family members stated that they were afraid of Alex's mother and would not step forward to care for Alex. The agency verified that Alex's father died in an automobile accident when Alex was 9.

Alex's Casey Family Services social worker helps Alex adjust to her new foster mother. Anne is a single woman with interests in common with Alex. They both love gardening and long walks and the transition goes well. Alex's Casey social worker works with Alex to build her permanency team. Eventually, the team consists of Alex; Anne; Alex's English teacher; Alex's therapist; her Guardian ad Litem (GAL), Gladys; and a cousin who lives in another state but participates by telephone. Alex has developed a particularly strong connection with her GAL. Alex's mother refuses to participate and states she wants nothing to do with the agency. The court-approved permanency goal for Alex is adoption and the concurrent goal is legal guardianship, possibly with Anne. In a recent team meeting, Alex shares that after much work with her therapist and her social worker, she wants a real family that is hers. She wants to be fully part of a family and wants the agency to find

someone who will love her and adopt her. She also wants to be certain that Anne and Gladys will continue to be in her life. Her social worker assures her that is her (the social worker's) job to make certain that Alex leaves foster care with a lifelong family.

ACTIVITY #1. PREPARE AND INVOLVE YOUTH AS PARTNERS IN THEIR OWN RECRUITMENT.

Integral to all specialized recruitment is the full preparation and engagement of young people in their own recruitment efforts. Youth-specific recruitment is not needed for all youth, such as when there are potential permanent parents on the youth's permanency team or individuals have already been identified outside the team. Even in these cases, however, specialized recruitment often takes place as relatives, family members or current caregivers are concurrently explored as potential permanent parents for the youth. This type of specialized recruitment is needed when there is ambivalence on the part of the young person or the identified permanent family. Involving a young person in his or her own recruitment should happen naturally as the permanency preparation process (as described in Chapter 7, Permanency Preparation) and the youth's participation on the team deepen (as described in Chapter 5, Permanency Teaming).

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to prepare and involve a young person in his/her own recruitment?

Involving the youth in his or her own recruitment parallels many of the permanency preparation activities for the youth. Youth are involved as soon as the need for targeted or child-specific recruitment is identified. The young person remains involved in his or her own recruitment until a permanent parent is identified and permanence is achieved.

What is the goal of this activity?

The goal is to actively engage youth in their own permanent family recruitment. Expected outcomes are:

- A central role for the youth in designing and implementing his/her own recruitment plan.
- The youth's active participation in developing media products (written recruitment profile, photos, video clips).
- An increased number of potential permanent parents.

What is the process for preparing and involving the youth in his or her own recruitment?

In preparing and involving the youth in his or her own recruitment, the social worker:

- Assists the youth in understanding that the role of the social worker is to ensure that the youth leaves foster care as quickly as possible to a legal parent.

- Assists the youth in completing the clarification work (described in Chapter 7, Permanency Preparation: Youth) through answering the questions and having reached an understanding of Who am I? What happened to me? Where am I going? How will I get there? When will I know I belong?^{viii}
- Explores the youth's understanding of targeted and youth-specific recruitment as tools to identify a permanent family when he or she cannot return to live with birth family.
- Explains the recruitment process and answers any questions the youth may have about his/her involvement in process.
- Asks the youth to identify any people who might be added to the team to help recruit a family for him/her, especially individuals who may not be a potential parent for the youth but care about them and want to help them.
- Helps the youth articulate what he/she wants in a family: the qualities that are most important for him or her to have in a parent.
- Identifies target populations within the community that relate to the youth's interests and hobbies.
- Ensures that the youth has a voice in what he/she would like potential permanent parents to know about them and how they will be presented in recruitment publications, etc.
- Assists the youth in writing or contributing in his/her own words to the written recruitment profile and being involved as much as possible in developing all media activities (video, audio, digital stories or other media).
- Connects youth with peers who have also been involved in their own recruitment efforts and can help support the youth through the experience.

Youth as Recruitment Partners

With no one currently identified as a potential adoptive parent for Alex, the team begins to work with Alex on how to find the “right family” for her. Alex says that she wants a family that will let her be creative, have friends and travel. She wants a nice yard where she can garden and space to take long walks without having to worry. Most important to her is not having to keep moving from place to place and having a parent who will never give up on her. As part of the recruitment effort, Alex helps write descriptions of herself and her interests that can be used in the media. She agrees to participate in a Wednesday's Wonderful Child segment on television with the support of Anne and her social worker. Her social worker connects her with Pam, a young woman who received services at Casey when she was in middle school and is now age 20. Pam works with Alex and her permanency team to help recruit an adoptive family. Pam becomes a recruitment “guide” for Alex, supporting her each step of the way. She is the only one who can truly say to Alex, “I've been there too.”

ACTIVITY #2. INVOLVE THE YOUTH'S PERMANENCY TEAM MEMBERS IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A RECRUITMENT PLAN FOR THE YOUTH, INCLUDING TASKS AND TIMEFRAMES.

The youth's permanency team should be fully engaged in developing and implementing a recruitment plan as soon as it is determined that there is no one known to the youth or on the youth's permanency team who is able or willing to be his/her permanent parents. In cases where there is no person named as a

^{viii} Based on Darla Henry's 3-5-7 Model, <http://www.darlahenry.org/3-5-7Model.html>

permanent parent in the concurrent plan, recruitment activities should be implemented concurrently with the process of exploring known candidates. In these cases, the youth's team may be involved in developing and implementing recruitment tasks before it is determined that there is no viable permanent parent. Along with the youth, all permanency team members should be involved in specialized recruitment. New team members should be considered for inclusion on the team at this point. New team members may include the agency resource coordinator; other experienced foster or adoptive parents; other agency staff members with special skills in recruitment; select community members or external agency recruitment specialists and family members with a special interest, capability or commitment to assist with recruiting a permanent parent.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed for the youth's permanency team to develop and implement a recruitment plan for the youth?

Involvement of the permanency team in the youth's recruitment efforts begins as soon as the need for recruitment is identified, and often concurrently with the exploration of known family members or the current caregiver as a permanent parent. The team remains involved until a permanent parent is identified and permanence is achieved.

What is the goal of this activity?

The goal is to actively engage permanency team members in recruiting a permanent parent(s) for the youth. The expected outcomes are:

- Recruitment planning is an active agenda item for each large team meeting.
- Permanency team members takes responsibility for specific recruitment tasks and assignments.
- The permanency team regularly reviews recruitment progress.
- Team members share workload, decision making, risk-taking and successes.
- The youth reports being heard and supported and having hope about the future.

What is the process for preparing and involving the team in developing and implementing the recruitment plan for the youth?

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THE CONCURRENCY PRINCIPLE: Recruitment takes place simultaneously while exploring other options, just as helping the youth's foster parents resolve ambivalence to adopting the youth or assisting a relative in deciding whether to commit to full-time parenting.

.....

To fully engage the permanency team in developing and implementing the recruitment plan for the youth, the social worker:

- Shares with team members what the youth needs and desires in a family.
- Sets recruitment as an agenda item for team meetings and reviews progress on recruitment tasks and timelines during team meetings.
- Helps the youth share with team members how he or she is involved in his or her own recruitment (for example, shares the written recruitment profile, video, audio or other media material).
- Helps individual team members identify how they can be part of recruitment planning and implementation.
- Invites new team members who are experts in specialized recruitment and who are able to help the team create and implement the recruitment plan.
- Sets goals and tasks that are individualized, time-focused and measureable and specifies the responsible parties for task completion.
- Involves all key stakeholders in recruitment plan development and implementation.

Once a potential permanent parent is identified, the social worker and the state agency social worker together determine the process for completing the initial steps for basic licensure of the home (e.g. criminal record checks, home study) in accordance with state-specific and/or division-specific guidelines. Depending upon the terms of the contract between the private agency and the state, either the agency or the state agency is designated to do a home study and complete the licensure process. The social worker empowers the adults in a self-assessment of their strengths and challenges related to this youth's individual needs, while gathering essential information in assessing this adult's potential as a foster parent or permanent parent to this youth. At any point in time, the social worker allows the foster parent or potential permanent parent(s) to discontinue the process. If the parent(s) chooses to continue the process, the social worker and state agency worker arrange for the parent(s) to participate in an adoptive/foster parent training and home-study through the agency or the state agency.

Team Engagement in Recruitment

Alex's team places the recruitment of an adoptive family for Alex at the top of each team meeting agenda and places one of Alex's recruitment photographs on the printed meeting agenda. At each meeting, team members support Alex in describing her efforts and experiences with the recruitment process and give her well-earned praise for her courage and determination. Team members take responsibility for specific recruitment tasks, such as completing the forms necessary to photolist Alex's information on the state service and reaching out to gardening and walking clubs in the area. The team adds new members, including a resource coordinator from the Casey Division and a representative from the state's adoption resource exchange who specializes in adoptive family recruitment for teens, and former a Casey foster parent who is also an adoptive parent of three teen girls.

As a result of Alex's and her team's combined recruitment efforts, a family that lives within a few blocks of Anne's home and knows Anne through the local gardening club learns about Alex and her desire to have an adoptive family. The family has three

children, two of whom are adopted and all teens. They contact Casey Family Services about Alex, and the process leading to adoption – involving many steps – begins. Over the next nine months, Alex and the family get to know one another, the family joins Alex’s permanency team, and they complete the necessary paperwork and training to be licensed adoptive parents. Alex spends time at their home, getting to know her potential new parents and siblings, helping with the family’s garden, and learning what it would be like to be a part of this family. She especially likes that she will still be able to attend the same school where Anne was her teacher. At a large team meeting, Alex and her prospective parents announce that they are ready to finalize the adoption.

FIDELITY FOCUS: Identify a permanent family and lifelong connections.

Involve all team members including youth in targeted and youth-specific recruitment activities.

Youth-Specific Recruitment Leads to Adoption

In implementing the Permanent Family Identification and Engagement component of Lifelong Families, the following fidelity measures can be used:

Key Construct	Indicators
Identify a permanent family and lifelong connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider all significant adults known to a youth as a potential permanent parent or lifelong connection. Involve all team members including youth in targeted and youth-specific recruitment activities.

Chapter 9. Permanency Support Planning

Permanency support planning is designed to enhance the mutual adjustment of youth, parents and family members following reunification, adoption or legal guardianship and to help sustain permanence. The services are those that a family anticipates needing to navigate the critical transitions and stages of family development. Permanency support plans may include information and referral, clinical case management, brief counseling, ongoing trauma treatment, mediating family relationships, as well as informal supports provided by family members and team participants. Regardless of whether the legal permanency outcome for the youth is reunification with birth parents, adoption or legal guardianship, most families will need some level of support beyond agency case closure to sustain the success of safe and healthy family relationships and well-being. However, accessing support beyond case closure is completely voluntary and self-determined by parents and family members. Most post-permanency support plans will primarily include informal supports provided by the extended family, relatives, school and family community and accompanied by more formal community resources such as counseling or child care. In some cases, Casey Family Services will also be able to provide discreet, time-limited and goal-focused support at the family's request.

PERMANENCY SUPPORT PLANNING: [Developing a plan for voluntary services and community supports beyond agency exit to sustain permanence with birth, relative guardian or adoptive families.](#)

The Key Activities

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
ACTIVITY #1 Help the family identify and define their ongoing permanency support needs.	Plan in place at least one month before permanency is achieved.	To clearly identify the youth's and family's post-permanency support needs.	The social worker: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engages the family in thinking about the services, supports and resources that they are likely to need after permanence is achieved or sustained and the agency closes the case.• Facilitates the entire team in helping the youth and parents identify needs and supports and how they will access

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
<p>ACTIVITY #2</p> <p>Assist the family in developing a plan for meeting their permanency support needs and continuing team meetings or re-engaging team members as necessary.</p>	<p>Two to four weeks prior to permanency being achieved. Continues until permanence is achieved or within the first 4 to 6 weeks after services are requested.</p>	<p>To fully engage the youth and family to develop a plan to meet post-permanency needs.</p>	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares and supports the youth to participate in permanency support planning. • Facilitates the team meetings to assist the family in developing a permanency support plan including goals, tasks, and benchmarks for closing the case. • Engages the youth and family to determine if they want their team to continue after the agency closes the case, and whom they want included or added to their team. • Determines with the family who will facilitate the team in the future and contacts team members regarding their ability and willingness to be part of the team. • Determines with the family the need for individual or joint meetings prior to the large team meeting and suggests options for resolving potential team conflicts. • Determines with the family where the team meetings will be held and schedules the meetings or sets up a structure for re-convening the team if necessary.
<p>ACTIVITY #3</p> <p>Support and help the parents and family members in locating and accessing resources, supports and services.</p>	<p>Work starts at the initial assessment and continues throughout planning process, including in preparation for case closure.</p>	<p>To support and empower the parents in to take responsibility in identifying necessary resources and services. To support and empower the extended family as the primary support network for the family in the future.</p>	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the family with information about financial resources for birth parents who are reunifying, adoption/guardianship subsidies and Medicaid assistance, and coordinates with the state agency social worker regarding these resources. • Clarifies the roles of the extended family and informal supports in supporting the family and the youth. • Helps the youth and family identify formal and informal supports in the community. • Assesses informal and family supports that can advocate on behalf of the family and the youth. • Provides information to the family about community services. • Helps the family develop skills (including modeling, when needed) in connecting with service providers and in understanding what questions to ask, what to expect and their rights. • Encourages the family to recognize their abilities and develop skills in managing services.

The Key Activities cont'd

Activity	Time and Timing	Goal	Tasks
<p>ACTIVITY #4</p> <p>Help the family sustain progress with informal and family supports independent of agency involvement.</p>	<p>Begins one month before planned termination of permanency support services; plan may continue well beyond closure of agency case.</p>	<p>To support the youth and parents in advocating for meeting their own needs with informal family and community support.</p>	<p>The social worker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides the team in helping the family identify what supports they need, if any, to maintain positive functioning for the youth and the family members. • Establishes a plan with the family as to how they will monitor progress on an ongoing basis. • Provides helpful resource materials to the family (such as informational brochures and service directories). • Participates with the family and youth in a closing celebration or ritual.

In this chapter, we illustrate the activities involved in a Permanency Team using the case of Wanda as an example.

Wanda was initially brought to the attention of the child welfare system when she was 4 years old. She entered foster care at age 7 and experienced a number of foster care placements. At age 14, the state child welfare agency referred Wanda to the Casey Family Services' foster care program with a permanency goal of adoption. Her mother's parental rights had been terminated and her father was contesting the termination of his parental rights. The state agency had discontinued visits with her birth father due to the pending legal process. The state agency also had stopped all visits with her siblings and was reluctant to resume them because of worries about bullying behaviors among the siblings in the past. Wanda had not seen her birth mother for many years and no one knew the birth mother's whereabouts. The state agency agreed that Wanda could not grow up with her birth parents and had no relatives able to provide parenting. The agency hoped Casey Family Services could find an adoptive family but also said Wanda "could stay with her foster parents until 18" if she did not want to be adopted.

At the time of Wanda's placement with her resource family, the Martins, the family is open to adoption but not certain that they can make a commitment to adopt Wanda. Casey Family Services asks all foster parents to commit to being a youth's "last foster placement" until the youth reaches permanence, and the Martins made this commitment to Wanda.

The Adoption Decision

As their relationship with Wanda grows, the Martins' commitment to her also grows. After six months, they express interest in being considered as adoptive parents for Wanda after her father's rights are terminated. However, they become ambivalent when she goes through a period of emotional and behavioral instability and they are worried that they cannot keep her safe. While helping the Martins access more intensive mental health services for Wanda and continuing discussion of adoption with them, the agency simultaneously begins efforts to recruit another adoptive family for Wanda in case the Martins are unable to sustain their commitment. Concurrent targeted and child-specific recruitment strategies are initiated, including submitting Wanda's photo in the state's Heart Gallery and a local adoption recruitment event. As this recruitment process unfolds, Mr. and Mrs. Martin become very aware of how much they love Wanda and state that they cannot imagine that she would be parented by anyone else but them. They decide to complete the paperwork necessary for her legal adoption.

ACTIVITY #1. HELP THE FAMILY IDENTIFY AND DEFINE THEIR PERMANENCY SUPPORT NEEDS.

At this point in the work with families, the social worker helps them pinpoint the issues that they will likely face once permanence is achieved or sustained and identify the services, supports and resources that they will need. Families may need such services as information and referral, parenting education/coaching, counseling (individual, family, multi-family and/or crisis intervention), support groups for parents, youth and family members, training on permanency-related issues, concrete services (such as transportation, housing, child care, financial assistance through the state adoption/guardianship assistance program and health coverage through the Medicaid program), case management, including systems advocacy and facilitating and mediating family relationships.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed for families to identify and define their permanency support needs?

A plan should be in place at least one month before permanence is achieved, building on the prior work of the team throughout the permanency planning process. This work continues until the agency closes the case. However, because permanency support services are voluntary, the family is in charge. They may choose not to implement the plan at all, access only some services or implement the plan fully and continue to do so for as long as they desire.

What is the goal to be achieved through helping families identify and define their permanency support needs?

The goal is to clearly identify the youth's and family's post-permanency needs. Through this process, the youth is supported in expressing his or her needs to the family and team. Building upon the permanency preparation they received in advance, the permanent parents of the youth clearly understand the youth's current developmental needs and are able to anticipate the future needs. With a clear understanding of the needs of the youth and family, the family, social worker and team together begin to identify the resources, supports and services that the family may need after legal permanence is achieved and the youth exits the child welfare system.

What is the process for helping families to identify and define their permanency support needs?

The social worker, having the closest relationship with the youth and family and the most knowledge of the youth's and family's needs, engages the family in thinking about the services, supports and resources that they are likely to need after permanence is achieved and the agency closes the case. The social worker facilitates the entire team in helping the youth and parents identify needs and supports and how they will access resources and services. Often, some resources and supports that the youth and family utilize before exiting agency services are the same resources and supports they need to continue after agency exit; in other cases, the services are different. In either situation, the social worker and team members work to locate the family- and/or community-based services that are critical to the family's success in the future.

Identifying and Defining the Family's Post-Permanency Support

The Martins are initially apprehensive about losing their social worker's support when it comes time for Wanda's adoption to be finalized. The social worker helps Wanda and her parents review the progress they have made in their relationship over the past two years -- some of the difficult times and the love, commitment and hard work it has taken for them to make it to this point in the adoption process. Working with the social worker and other members of Wanda's permanency team, the family identifies the following post-permanency supports as important to them: continuing Wanda's TF-CBT on a periodic basis as needed, maintaining Wanda's connections with birth family members and siblings with whom she has established or re-established safe and healthy connections, family support through their current connections with other adoptive families at the support group and other agency events, and accessing state-funded adoption subsidy and Medicaid to enable them to continue to meet Wanda's special developmental, psychiatric and educational needs. The Martins have taken responsibility for identifying a responsible adult to be Wanda's guardian in the unlikely event of their death or serious illness. They have invited a long-time family friend and church member, Jessie Robertson, who has a close connection to Wanda, to join the team for the last few meetings. Although they have not yet discussed this matter with Wanda, the Martins have begun to talk with Jessie about naming him in their will as Wanda's guardian. They don't want Wanda to ever have to worry about losing her family or being in foster care again.

ACTIVITY #2. ASSIST THE FAMILY IN DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR MEETING THEIR PERMANENCY SUPPORT NEEDS AND CONTINUING TEAM MEETINGS OR RE-ENGAGING TEAM MEMBERS AS NECESSARY.

The social worker facilitates team meetings designed to assist the family in developing a plan that specifies how they will meet their permanency support needs. Following the identification and definition of the family's permanency support needs, the social worker works with the family regarding if and how they feel about continuing the teaming process beyond agency case closure. If they feel a need for the team to continue, the social worker assists them in talking to the team about team composition, who is best to facilitate the team going forward, and exploring how team members will be re-engaged or added as needed. If they do not feel a need for the team to continue at this time, the social worker provides information on how the family can bring the team back together if needed.

What is the timing of and how much time does it take for the family to develop a plan for meeting their permanency support needs and to re-engage team members?

The development of the plan for permanency supports begins at least three to four months prior to permanency being achieved. The planning typically continues until permanence is achieved.

What are the goals of helping families develop permanency support plans and re-engaging or adding team members as needed?

The goal is to fully engage the youth and family in developing a plan that meets their individual needs so that they can sustain and build on their progress as a family beyond the ending of formal agency services. The family, with the support of the team develops a plan for post-permanency supports. At the family's request, the team may continue without a break or team members may be re-engaged and, when needed, new team members added. The youth is actively engaged in the planning process. The agency supports the plan but is not a primary resource to the family after the case is closed. In some cases, the agency may provide – at a family's request and within agency guidelines and as mandated by state contracts – limited support for a short period of time after the case is closed.

What is the process for helping families develop permanency support plans and re-engage team members?

The social worker:

- Prepares and supports the youth to discuss permanency support planning with his/her parents and team members.
- Engages the youth and family to determine whom they want to continue to include or add to their team based on the types of support they identify.
- Determines with the family who will contact team members regarding their ability and willingness to continue to be part of the team or to join the team.

- Determines with the family the need for individual or joint meetings prior to the large team meetings and suggests options for building relationships among team members and/or resolving potential team conflicts.
- Determines with the family where the team meetings will be held, who will facilitate these meetings after agency exit, and how and when to schedule the meetings.

Developing the Post-Permanency Support Plan

After the team discusses with Wanda and her parents the range of post-permanency supports that they might need in the future and together, the team jointly develops a permanency support plan.

The plan includes:

- The social worker and family meeting with Wanda's TF-CBT therapist to ensure that clinical services will continue after Wanda is adopted and the agency's case is closed.
- The social worker joining one final IEP meeting at the school to formally transfer the role of educational advocate from the state agency to Wanda's parents.
- Having joint meetings with siblings and other birth family members to plan ongoing contact after Wanda is adopted.
- Adding their close family friend, Jessie, to the team for the last two official team meetings so he can better understand Wanda's and her parents' perspective on the supports they will continue to need as a family.
- Linking the family with a post-adoption support group for parents and teens.

Ongoing Team Meetings

Team members agree to facilitate large team meetings after the agency is no longer involved if it will be helpful to the family. The family states that they would like very much to continue having their team in place. Wanda's CASA volunteer, Miranda, who has been an active member of Wanda's team throughout the planning process and is committed to her well-being, offers to facilitate the team meetings. Wanda and her parents are pleased that Miranda will assume this role. The social worker works with Miranda and other team members to plan for time-limited team meeting facilitation after the agency closes Wanda's case.

FIDELITY FOCUS:

Identify family permanency support needs in preparation for case closure

- Final team meeting summary (that follows close of enrollment in foster care) specifies permanency supports, tasks and responsibilities related to sustaining legal permanence for youth. It predicts obstacles and challenges to sustaining permanency.

Establish plan for continued teaming as a voluntary permanency support after case closure

- Evaluate the parent/family need/request for time-limited team facilitation after close of enrollment in foster care.
 - As requested, provide guidance for large team meeting planning and voluntary supports to continue after close of enrollment in foster care.
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ACTIVITY #3. SUPPORT AND HELP THE PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS IN LOCATING AND ACCESSING RESOURCES, SUPPORTS AND SERVICES.

With the plan in place, the social worker and team members assist the family in finding and using the resources, supports and services that are outlined in the plan.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to support and help the family in locating and accessing needed resources, supports and services?

This process begins at the initial assessment and continues after permanence is achieved over the time period specified in the agency's policy (often three months).

What is the goal of this work?

The goal is to support and help the parents to take responsibility in identifying and accessing necessary resources and services. First and foremost, the youth's and family's informal networks of support are accessed and expanded and the parents are encouraged to identify local community-based resources as needed. Internal agency services, supports and resources from Casey are only utilized when absolutely necessary, as agency services are time-limited. While the parents deepen their understanding of how to access resources and services with the support and guidance of the social worker, their skills are being strengthened for advocating and accessing appropriate services for their child and family in the future.

What is the process for supporting and helping families in locating and accessing needed resources, supports and services?

The social worker:

- Provides the family with information about adoption/guardianship subsidies and Medicaid, or any available financial resources available to birth parents who are reunifying with their children and coordinates with the state agency social worker regarding these resources.
- Clarifies the responsibility and role of the parent(s) as the key decision-maker and the agency as empowering and supporting the parent(s) in this role.
- Assists the parent(s) in identifying extended family and informal network supports as well as formal supports within the community.
- Guides the parent in assessing the appropriateness and accessibility of these formal and informal supports in order to determine whether they will be effective and well-matched to the needs of their child and family.
- Provides information and engages team members in providing information to the family about community services as requested.

- Helps the family strengthen skills (including modeling, when needed) in connecting with service providers and in understanding what questions to ask, what to expect and how to understand and assert their rights in accessing services.
- Encourages the family to recognize their strengths and abilities as well as enhance their skills in locating and managing services.

Locating and Accessing Needed Resources, Supports and Services

The social worker assists the Martins in applying for a state adoption subsidy, provides them with information on the federal adoption tax credit, and meets with Wanda, her parents and the TF-CBT clinician to ensure that clinical services will continue after Wanda is adopted and the agency's case closes. The social worker facilitates a final joint meeting with Wanda, the Martins, Wanda's older sister and the sister's foster parents. In this joint meeting, the social worker helps them clearly define the plan for continuing sibling visits: where they will happen, who will provide transportation, and other specifics related to these visits. The social worker also facilitates a joint meeting with Wanda, the Martins, Wanda's brother and the social worker at the brother's group home to map out similar plans for their visits. A few months prior to Wanda's adoption, her birth father moved out of the country. In his last phone call with Wanda, he promised to stay in touch. He did not respond to the social worker's or the Martins' phone calls to try to plan a visit with Wanda before he left. The Martins and Wanda sent him a note expressing their interest in staying in touch and writing down their address and phone numbers – they don't know for sure, but they think he received it before he left. The social worker connects the family to a post adoption support group for parents and for teens. They attend their first meetings with their respective support groups and recognize a few other parents and teens from prior agency events. They are very pleased with the support that will be available to them on an ongoing basis. They are especially glad that some of the support group members (both parents and teens) have experience in navigating ongoing birth family relationships as they anticipate the most need for permanency supports in this area.

ACTIVITY #4: HELP THE FAMILY SUSTAIN PROGRESS WITH INFORMAL AND FAMILY SUPPORTS INDEPENDENT OF AGENCY INVOLVEMENT.

Once permanence is achieved, the family will implement its permanency support plan. The role of the agency is time-limited and is designed to help the family continue to progress without agency involvement. Focus is on informal and family supports that can provide the family with the resources needed to function independently.

What is the timing of and how much time is needed to help the family sustain progress independent of agency involvement?

The work with the family to move from reliance on the agency to reliance on informal and family supports begins immediately upon identifying this adult(s) as a permanent parent. This work is purposefully

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THE RESPONSIBILITY PRINCIPLE: **The family is in charge and making all the decisions at this point – the social worker and agency are now acting as “consultants and advisors.”**

.....

reinforced in all aspects of planning and decision-making approximately one month before the planned termination of agency services. Exit from agency services concludes with a celebration or ritual at formal case closure. The permanency support plan continues well beyond agency closure for as long as the family wishes, although the formal involvement of the agency as a provider of permanency support is very prescribed and time-limited (and will not be provided in all cases, unless specifically requested by the family). The agency's involvement ends, but the planning period is used to insure that both formal and informal external resources continue to be available to the youth and parents as long as they want and need them.

What is the goal in helping the family sustain progress?

The work with the family to move from reliance on the agency to reliance on informal and family supports begins immediately upon identifying this adult(s) as a permanent parent. This work is purposefully reinforced in all aspects of planning and decision-making approximately one month before the planned termination of agency services. Exit from agency services concludes with a small celebration or ritual at formal case closure that reinforces the family's strength, unity and autonomy from the agency.

What is the process for helping the family sustain progress with informal and family supports independent of agency involvement?

The social worker:

- Reinforces parental decisions for what will best meet the family's needs and maintain positive functioning of the youth and the family.
- Encourages the parents to identify a "back up" parent from their own extended family network, just as any responsible parent would do, in the event that death or serious illness prevents them from continuing to parent their child.
- Establishes a plan with the family as to how they will monitor progress on an ongoing basis.
- Encourages the family to continue positive relationships with team members, including team meetings as necessary, and re-engage or add new team members as the need arises.
- Provides helpful resource materials to the family (such as resource packets and service directories).
- Participates in a closing celebration or ritual with the parents, youth and any other family members that the family chooses to include.

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THE CONCURRENCY PRINCIPLE: Parents engage in their own concurrent planning by designating a responsible adult to parent their child in the event of the parents' death or incapacity.
.....

Sustaining Progress

Prior to the agency closing the case, Wanda's permanency team members host a celebration at their last formal team meeting with a closing candle ritual planned by Wanda and her parents. Joining with team members are the adoptive family's extended family members, Wanda's birth siblings, a few neighbors, some close members of their adoption support group and their minister. Their close family friend, Jessie, is positioned next to the Martins and Wanda during the short ceremony. Team members take photos and a short video so Wanda can add them to her digital lifebook and the Martin family photo album. The social worker also takes a large group photo of Wanda and all her family and team members. All team members and guests join in the lighting of three candles:

- The First Candle to honor and remember Wanda's birth family. It is a time to give thanks and gratitude to her birth family for Wanda and their gift of life. It is also a time to remember the courage and difficult decisions that her birth family has made, and to recognize the light that her siblings and birth father continue to bring to her life.
 - The Second Candle to honor Wanda. It is time to celebrate her joining her family through adoption and being able to love and be loved by two families.
 - The Third Candle to honor Wanda's adoptive parents, supporting and encouraging them in the joy and challenges of committed parenting to Wanda and honoring them as the parents who are raising Wanda while respecting the important and continuing role of her birth family.
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Fidelity Focus Summary: Permanency Support Planning

In implementing the Permanency Support Planning component of Lifelong Families, the following fidelity measures can be used:

Key Construct	Indicators
Identify family permanency support needs in preparation for case closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final team meeting summary (that follows close of enrollment in foster care) specifies permanency supports, tasks, and responsibilities related to sustaining legal permanence for youth. It predicts obstacles and challenges to sustaining permanency.
Identify family permanency support needs in preparation for case closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate the parent/family need/request for time-limited team facilitation after close of enrollment in foster care.• As requested, provide guidance for large team meeting planning and voluntary supports to continue after close of enrollment in foster care.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

The Lifelong Families Implementation Manual has been developed to provide other agencies with the benefits of Casey Family Services' years of experienced in program design, practice model development, service delivery and evaluation. Through this journey, Casey Family Services had developed a model of permanency practice with youth in foster care that is supported by a growing evidence base. Casey Family Services hopes that in detailing each component of the Lifelong Families model, and the specific set of activities that compose each component, that other agencies can fully utilize this practice to achieve legal permanent families for youth in foster care.

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Appendices

Appendix A. The Casey Family Service Supervisory Tool for Permanency Practice

Appendix B. The Casey Family Services Permanency Case Consultation Outline

Appendix C. The Casey Family Services Permanency Case Planning Tool

Appendix D. Lifelong Families Brochure

Appendix E. Template of Casey Family Services Large Team Meeting Agenda

Appendix F. An Internet Search Tool: The Accurint System

General Information

The Accurint System by LexisNexis is an online research tool that allows users to search millions of public records through one portal. This system was originally developed for use by businesses to collect debts from their customers who could not be otherwise located. Law enforcement also uses this product as an investigative tool. More recently, Accurint has become a powerful tool in the search for relatives of children in the foster care system who have become disconnected for a variety of reason. It is important to note that Accurint is a fee based service and can only be accessed by contracting with LexisNexis. Each agency or entity will have to contract with LexisNexis and determine the kinds of searches they may wish to conduct, and negotiate their “permissible uses.” For example, Casey Family Services, as a private child welfare organization would not be given the same access to records as a law enforcement agency. For Casey Family Services the most useful search has been the “Advanced Person Search.” Such a search can provide information on addresses, current and former, phone contacts, and other people associated with the person up to three degrees of separation. Although having a social security number ensures the most accurate information, often times, having a name, approximate age and/or a last known address can provide significant information.

Factors to consider in using Accurint:

- **THE COST.** This is not insignificant, and can vary depending on the level of use for each organization. However, this may be offset by the power of the system to locate people who can make a significant difference for a child languishing in foster care.

- **TRAINING REQUIREMENTS.** Staff using this system must be trained on the appropriate uses. Casey Family Services has developed an “Acknowledgement of Appropriate use for Family Finding Tool,” see attached, that each staff person and their director must sign before being granted access.
- **OTHER WAYS TO FIND INFORMATION.** Staff will need to understand that this is one tool in finding information about lost family and friends, often times, searching the case record, or interviewing the youth or any other family that is present, or simply using more generic search tools may be more effective. Also, it is important to remember that people who do not have many public transactions are not as visible to this network.
- **RECORD RETENTION.** LexisNexis prohibits retaining the search results for longer periods of time, and the individual contract will stipulate that records must be shredded after a maximum of 90 days. It may be possible to extend this period if an agency can demonstrate a contractual obligation to use records for a longer period, but this cannot be indefinite. It is important to note that records cannot be just thrown away, but must be destroyed, hence the stipulation that they must be shredded.

For More Information Contact: LexisNexis – 1-800-869-0751 or <https://secure.accurint.com/app/bps/main>

Endnotes

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- ⁷¹ Cook & Steigman, 2000; Tunnard, 2004.
- ⁷² Glennon, 2003; Park & Ryan, 2009.
- ⁷³ Park & Ryan, 2009.
- ⁷⁴ Friesen, Katz-Leavy & Nicholson, 2011.
- ⁷⁵ Young & Gardner, 2003.
- ⁷⁶ Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009.

CASEY FAMILY SERVICES

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