

Finding Success in Family Finding and Engagement Efforts

Kelly Lynn Beck, Attorney and Senior Permanency Trainer
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Growing up, Family was important to me because...

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1. Re-Define "Success"



Outcomes for Youth without Family

- 1 in 4 – incarcerated - 2 years
- Over 1/5th will be homeless at some time
- Only 58% - HS diploma (87% Nationally)
- Less than 3% earn college degree
- Post traumatic stress rate double that of war veterans
- Serious untreated health conditions
- Less likely to be employed
- Poverty level incomes
- Higher rate of becoming victims of crime, or engaging in criminal activity – over 270,000 American prisoners were once in foster care

• From: AFCARS Data, and studies by Courtney Walker, Haskop, Casey, Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013; Enhancing Permanency for Youth in Out of Home Care, Fostering Connections, Org; From Place to Place the Movie

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2. "Connections" are crucial



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What we know about healthy development...

- depends on the quality and reliability of a young child's relationships with important people in his or her life, both within and outside the family. Even the development of a child's brain architecture depends on the establishment of these relationships.

• National Scientific Council on the Developing Child: Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships October 2004

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The Importance of Social Capital

- Complex social support system that parents (or significant other adults in the child's life) garner to advance their children's chances of success in life.
- Social capital is fundamentally about how people interact with each other.
- Formed as a result of relationships between parents and children, and is enhanced when the family is embedded in social relationships with other families and community
 - Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

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What the Research shows

- Large proportion of youth who age out of foster care experience significant social capital deficits*
- Smaller support networks (less social capital) are associated with higher likelihood of homelessness and loneliness

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Family Connections

- "Re-establishing family connections for teens before they exit out of care, no matter what age they are, is the strongest and most positive youth development program the child welfare system can offer..."
 - Avery, Rosemary. Examination of theory and promising practice for achieving permanency for teens before they age out of foster care, 2010

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3. Change of Perspective

- Lifetime Family Support Network
- *How* can Family be involved?
- Youth-centered decision making
- "Family" is also key in meeting "family focused" legal mandates
 - RE/Visitation/Concurrent Planning/Paternity/ICWA
- Permanence(*)

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4. Permanency is not a word that Families Use



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What does Permanency look like?

- *"It means having your side of the church full when you get married."*
- *"It means having the key to the house."*
- *"It means having your picture on the wall in someone's house."*
- *"It is a chance for someone to choose you and for you to choose them."*

(Youth presenters, compiled by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development)
National Conference of State Legislatures, October, 2008

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5. Children are grieving loss



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What the research shows

Ambiguous loss, where losses are not “clear-cut and final” results in:

- Unresolved grief, including outrage and inability to move on
- Confusion, distress and ambivalence
- Blocked coping processes
- Experience of helplessness, and therefore depression, anxiety and relationship conflicts.
- Rigidity of family roles, confusion in boundaries

Lee, R., & Whiting, J. (2007). Foster Children's Expressions of Ambiguous Loss. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 35(5), 417-428.

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The Hope for Belonging

“Without stability and continuity within relationships to secure attachment, it is difficult to achieve resolution of painful losses and to actualize a more secure sense of the future”

- D. L. Henry, The 3-5-7 Model: Preparing Children for Permanency, *Children and Youth Services Review* 27 (2005) 197-212

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6. Behaviors and our Reactions



- Behaviors are visible - needs are not;
- Look behind the behavior to understand needs;
- Behaviors are driven by different needs;
- Services are not designed to meet the need behind the behavior
 - Behind Behavior: The Challenge of Appreciating Child & Youth Needs, Marty Beyer, Ph.D.

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FREQUENT PLACEMENTS

- Adverse Child Outcomes
 - Poor grades
 - School truancy
 - Social/emotional adjustment difficulties
 - Aggression
 - Withdrawal
 - Poor social interaction/peers & teachers

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7. DAD MUST BE ON EQUAL GROUND



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Labels – “Absent parent”

- Out of 4,000 families involved with CPS, across the county:
 - 73% of cases with “non-custodial” parent listed – parent had contact with the child in the last year.

• Bellamy, Jennifer L. “A National Study of Male Involvement among Families in Contact With the Child Welfare System.” *Child Maltreatment* 14, 2009, 255-262.

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Father Involvement - Studies

- Involvement by nonresident fathers associated with more reunifications and fewer adoptions
- Higher levels of nonresident father involvement associated with substantially lower likelihood of later maltreatment allegations
- Highly involved nonresident fathers’ children exited foster care more quickly
- Children who had had contact with a non-custodial parent in the last year were 46% less likely to enter foster care

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The Effects of Father Absence

COSTS

Children of father-absent homes

- 5 times more likely to live in **poverty**
- 3 times more likely to **fail in school**
- Two times more likely to develop **emotional or behavioral problems**
- Two times more likely to abuse **drugs**
- Two times more likely to be **abused and neglected**
- Two times more likely to become involved in **crime**
- Three times more likely to commit **suicide**

BENEFITS

Children with involved dads

- Better **cognitive outcomes** even as infants
- **Higher self-esteem** and less depression as teenagers
- **Higher grades, test scores, and overall academic achievement**
- Lower **drug/alcohol use**
- Higher levels of empathy & **pro-social behavior**

How are we currently doing at involving Dads?

- 2,000 children removed from homes where father did not reside;
- 88% - Agency identified the father;
- 55% - Agency made contact with father;
- 30% - Father visited child
- 28% - Father express interest in child living with him

• What About the Dads? US Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2006

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Same Study

- Mothers were contacted in 100% of the cases
- Why?
- Majority of the perpetrators were not the Dad.

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Fathers' Barriers

"What about the Dads?" 2006

- Poverty
- Low literacy
- Substance abuse/criminal history
- Incarceration
- Uncertain parenting skills
- Unawareness of children/fatherhood
- Conflicting domestic relations orders

2014 Study of Child Welfare Workers

- Ongoing relationship difficulties with mother;
- Substance use problems;
- Lack of a valid address or working phone number;
- Distrust of agency and/or caseworker

• Anne E. Casey Foundation (Coakley, Kelley & Bartlett, 2014)

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“We expect men to be something they haven’t seen or witnessed - A MAN.”

“Connect them with male focused resources to help them. By doing NOTHING we continue to help alienate fathers.”

*Martin Henderson, Executive Director, Fatherhood Matters, Inc.,
San Antonio, TX - www.fatherhoodmattersinc.com.*

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8. Know Key Family Focused Legislation

- **Reasonable Efforts**
 - Prevent removal; Return home; Permanency
- **Family Finding**
 - 3rd degree Relatives
 - Important Connections
- **Paternity**
 - Inquiry, Determination, Involve
- **ICWA – Active Efforts**
 - Inquiry, Notice and Involvement
- **Relative Placement Preference**
 - Kinship/NREFM
- **Siblings**
 - Placement or Connection
- **Visitation**
 - What is reasonable?
- **Concurrent Planning**

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Reasonable Efforts

- Before taking child into custody, SW shall consider:
 - If reasonable services available to eliminate need for temporary removal;
 - Public assistance available;
 - Can non-offending caretaker provide for & protect child? [W&I 306(b)]
- Court shall determine:
 - Whether RE made to prevent or eliminate removal AND
 - Whether there are available services to prevent need for further detention.
- Court: Detention alternatives – temporary placement in:
 - Assessed home of relative; or
 - Assessed home of NREFM
 - W&I, 319(d)(1)(f)(1)/600, Rules of Court: 5.676
 - Enhanced Resource Guidelines, NCJFCJ, CCC Initial Hearing bench-card, NCJFCJ.org

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FAMILY FINDING – FEDERAL



NOTICE TO RELATIVES

FEDERAL: [PL: 110-351]

Within 30 days of removal, State shall exercise **due diligence** to identify and provide **notice** to adult grandparents and other relatives

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California – Family Finding - Detention

[W&I §309(e) Rule of Court 5.637]

- SW shall:
 - conduct, within 30 days, an investigation to identify and locate all grandparents, *parents of a sibling of the child,* if the parent has legal custody of the siblings*, adult siblings and other adult **relatives*** and other adult relatives suggested by parents]
 - Only exception to notice: history of DV
 - Provide all adult relatives who are located, with 30 days of removal, written notification and
 - Also, whenever appropriate, provide oral notification, in person or phone;
 - Provide a relative information form re: needs of the child & permission to address the Court

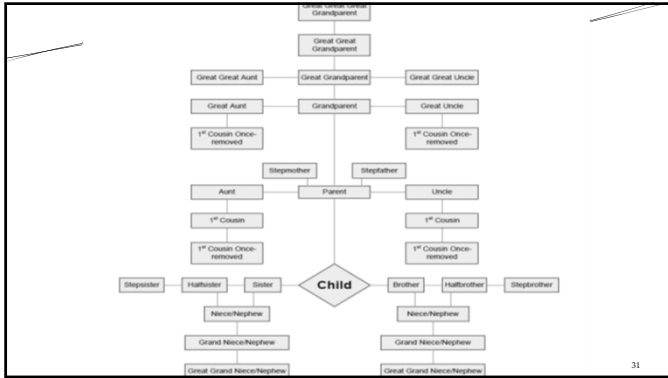
*[PL113-183]

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CA - Relatives

- Adult related by blood, adoption or affinity within the fifth degree of kinship; including:
 - Parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle....great-great-great-grandparent;
 - Stepparent or stepsibling;
 - The spouse or domestic partner of any named above, even if marriage or partnership was terminated by death or dissolution; or
 - An extended family member as defined by law or custom of an Indian Child's tribe.
- Added: all parent of a sibling of the child, where such parent has legal custody of such sibling [even if term or death of other parent] [PL113-183]

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Due Diligence

- Detention [W&I §309]- Social Worker shall use **due diligence** in investigating the names and location of relatives, including, but not limited to:
 - Asking the child in an age-appropriate manner about relatives important to the child (consistent with the child's best interest); and
 - Obtaining information regarding the location of the child's adult relatives
- Each County welfare department shall create and make public a procedure by which relatives of a child who has been removed, may identify themselves to the CW department and be provided with notices.

Due Diligence – Dispo. [W&I358(b)(2)]

- Court shall make a finding as to whether SW has exercised **due diligence** in conducting the investigation, under 309, to identify, locate and notify the child's relatives, including BOTH MATERNAL AND PATERNAL RELATIVES;
- Court may consider, among other examples of **due diligence**:
 - Asked child (under §309)
 - Obtained contact information (§309)
 - Telephoned, e-mail or visited all identified relatives;
 - Asked located relatives for names & locations of other relatives
 - Used internet search tools to locate relatives identified ass support

Due Diligence – Dispo. [Rule of Court 5.695(f)]

- Court may consider, among other examples of due diligence:
 - All of the above; and
- Whether SW has used developed tools, including a genogram, family tree, family map or other diagram of family relationships, to help the child or parents to identify relatives.

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Due Diligence – Relative Pref. [FC §7950]

- When a placement in Foster care, following considerations shall be used:
 - Placement shall, if possible, be made in the home of a relative;
 - **Diligent efforts** shall be made by the agency to locate appropriate relatives as defined in W&I §319(2)(f);
 - At permanency hearing which court terminates FR or any post-permanency hearing where child not placed for adoption:
 - Court shall find that the agency has made **diligent efforts** to locate an appropriate relative and that each whose name has been submitted to the agency as a possible caretaker, has been evaluated as an appropriate placement resource.

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Engagement Tools

Employ early and often

- Allows for the young person to:
 - Identify relatives and important connections;
 - share their story;
 - build relationships/trust;
 - work through grief and loss
 - be part of the process
 - find and/or rebuild “connections”

Most effective tools

- Conversations (Engagement)
- Case Reviews/Case Mining
- Internet Searches (Free & Paid)
- Tree of Life
- Remembered People Chart*
- Loss Line
- Mobility Mapping
- Connectedness Mapping

• *Bob Lewis Trainer

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The "Notice" must:

- specify that the child has been removed from the custody of the parent,
- explain the options the relative has under federal, state, and local law to participate in the care and placement of the child,
- explain the options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice,
- describe the requirements to become a foster family home,
- describe the services and supports that are available for children in a foster home, and
- describe how the relative guardians of the child may receive kinship guardianship assistance payments, if the state has elected to offer such payments.
 - Fed. Program Instruction: ACYF-CB-PI-10-11; ACL No. 09-86, Dec.2009

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Reasonable Efforts - Permanency

- Reasonable Efforts to finalize the permanent plan that has been identified.
 - Reunification
 - Adoption and Customary Adoption
 - Legal guardianship
 - Placement with a fit and willing relatives; or
 - Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (16 years or older only)

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9. Family Finding and Engagement (FFE/FSE) is a Process

- designed to build or maintain a lifelong family support network for children and youth;
- is not a "one-time" event;
- involves patience and
- trust



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Team Approach

- Who are the members of the Team?
- Preparation is essential
- Blended Perspectives (FGC/FGDM/TDM)
- Family & Youth Centered
- **Goal – Identify, engage and facilitate the youth's Lifetime Family Support Network**



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Key Shifts for Team members

- Being relentlessly curious
- Belief that families can solve their problems, and “family” is possible for every young person
- Respect that families are the experts in their own matters
- Engage in collaborative practice
- Move from a role that determines and decides to one that facilitates and coaches
- Increase the time and emphasis on getting to know people outside of their problems. Create a balance of stories.
- **Shift the focus from placement –eliminate “chase management”...**

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Facilitation of Forever Family

- How will you deal with behavior issues (such as sexual/acting out)
 - Would the youth be asked to leave the home?
- What if the youth were to get into legal trouble?
 - Would you take the midnight call?
 - Would you bail him/her out?
- Will you be willing to pay/help with college tuition [out of state?]
- If you divorce, where will this youth live?
- Help with obtaining drivers license, car and car insurance?
- Would you be upset or feel threatened by contact with biological family members?
 - Understand that it is to be expected?
- Why do you want him with you? Ask other children in the home.
- Is youth expected to move out at a certain age? Can they come back?
- How will they be introduced to others?
- Teen pregnancy...will you support the mother and child?
 - If youth got someone pregnant, how will you handle?

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- Are you willing to commit to continued care of youth when you are no longer paid a stipend?
- Do or will your extended relatives treat this youth the same as your biological children?
- Is the youth in family photos? Are they hung up around the house?
- Can the youth share with you their hopes, dreams and expectations for the future?
- Will you be able to respect the youth's cultural background and allow him/her to celebrate those traditions with you?
- What if youth is expelled from school?
- What if youth is incarcerated? Will you be there when he/she is released?
- What if youth becomes addicted to drugs or alcohol while with you?
- Do you have a backup plan if youth is a danger?
- What would it take for you to give your notice? [What is the one thing?]
- What if youth is allergic to your long time family pet?
- If another family member moves in, what is the safety plan?

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10. Judicial Oversight and Leadership



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Decisions

- In order for a Judge to make the best possible decision for a family, it is critical that he or she receive:
 - The most accurate and complete information possible about all parties
- Incomplete or inaccurate information results in:
 - Delays
 - Increases in length of stay
 - Additional costs to state
 - Less beneficial decision

• ACF: Dept. of HHS, ACYF-CB-IM-17-02, Jan. 27, 2017

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Kelly Lynn Beck
National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness
Seneca Family of Agencies
www.familyfinding.org
kelly_beck@senecacenter.org

Resources

- <http://rglewis.com> (Talking with Youth)
- www.fyi3.com (Resources for youth)
- www.fatherhood.org
- www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc
- rose@wentztraining.com (Visitation Resources)
- NCJFCJ.org

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