



REDUCING THE USE OF ANOTHER PLANNED PERMANENCY LIVING ARRANGEMENT (APPLA) GOAL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE



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WHY IT MATTERS

Each year approximately 20,000 youth age 18 and older “age out” of foster care and find themselves on their own, without a permanent family. In 2015, the percent of youth who “aged out” and had entered foster care at 13 years or older was 77.7%.¹ While more jurisdictions and states are doing away with APPLA as a case goal, long-term foster care and emancipation are often confusingly classified as APPLA, even though these goals do not imply the same characteristics of permanency. Judges, lawyers, and agency professionals are often trained to choose APPLA as a case goal only when compelling reasons

make other options inappropriate. APPLA has often replaced long-term foster care as the default goal for adolescents who face additional barriers to achieving legal permanency.²

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depend on themselves to move ahead in life.³ This resignation to aging out of care held by youth whose case goal is APPLA has been echoed in case manager

focus groups as well.⁴ These findings suggest a diminishing standard of care for older youth in the child welfare system. Older youth with APPLA case goals are more likely to be placed in residential facilities or group homes than with stable foster families, and these group care facilities can be detrimental to adolescent development and increase the risk of youth running away.⁵

Efforts to decrease the number of APPLA cases with an emphasis on permanency options has been underway recently and there are many more interventions now employed to help youth achieve permanency before they “age out” of foster care. Yet there remains wide variation across states with regard to percentages with APPLA goals ranging from a low of 2% to a high of 22%. Advocates are uniquely situated to advocate and support permanency for older youth.

ADVOCATES IN ACTION

The percent of youth who “aged out” and had entered foster care at 13 years or older was 77.7%.

ACTIONS

- **Review the youth’s case plan** to ensure that the primary placement recommendation is reunification, adoption and/or guardianship. Plan concurrently to have at least two permanency options available in the event that one of the options doesn’t work out. For example, having reunification as the primary placement option and guardianship as the secondary placement option.
- **Advocate that long-term foster care or APPLA** not be included as an option on the youth’s case plan. Work with the team and the youth to identify other placement options.
- **Request the team engage in planning with the youth to identify permanent options.** Consider implementing a Permanency Round Table (PRT), Family Group Decision Making process (FGDM) or Family Find strategies to help identify people in the youth’s life with whom there could be “formally recognized permanency.”
- **Partner with the youth to identify someone with whom they can complete a Permanency Pact.** A Permanency Pact is an individualized contractual agreement that is completed by a youth and a self-selected supportive adult.
- **Ensure that youth are engaged in all aspects of their case plan and are “trained” to self-advocate.** Provide them a safe space to express their concerns about their future as well as their dreams. Practice with them ways of expressing their needs to others.

- **Ensure that not only is the youth acquiring skills for living independently but also acquiring skills for living interdependently.** Youth need strong social supportive networks to thrive but are often at a loss about how to build these networks especially if they experienced frequent placement changes in homes and schools. Building connections with others may open the door to more permanency options.
- **Partner with community resources and programs that provide services and supports for adolescent youth.** Expanding the reach of how youth are connected in their community can expand their opportunities to build supportive relationships. Additionally, some programs around the country are mission driven to serve the needs of adolescents in foster care and have more success than traditional child welfare approaches.

BRIGHT SPOT

RED TO GREEN HEARINGS CASA OF SOUTHWEST MISSOURI

A couple of years ago, the Juvenile Judge in Greene County Missouri expressed his concerns about the length of time children and youth were spending in foster care without achieving permanency. He was particularly concerned about the youth that had adoption as their permanency case goal but were not residing in an “adoption” foster home. With his leadership, he created a “Red to Green” hearing process to expedite permanency for these long-term cases. CASA of Southwest Missouri now participates as team members during these special hearings that focus on what it will take to get these youth to expedient permanency. A child’s case flagged “red” means that it isn’t moving –there is not a clear path to permanency. On the other hand, a child’s case that is deemed “green” means that plans are moving forward to help the youth achieve permanency.

CASA volunteers attend the meetings and help advocate for the placement that they know will best meet the individual child’s needs. Since the CASA volunteers are often the ones who know the child best,

their input into placement decisions including the type of home that would be best (e.g., two parent household versus single parent, other children in the home, etc.) for that individual child. CASA volunteers also recommend other important sources of support such as therapy, post-adoption services, educational needs of the child, and so on. Hearings take place every quarter with 10 hearings each time. A case will continue to be reviewed until it is “green” and moving forward.

Another effort taking place in Greene County are monthly Residential Review Hearings. For each child who lives in a residential placement, the team looks carefully at their placement to promote a more family like setting. Children’s cases are reviewed to ensure there is a plan to move the child out of the residential setting into a community-based setting or foster home. Staff at CASA of Southwest Missouri note that this is a paradigm shift for everyone involved including the residential care providers who recognize that for many children, what is best is placement in a family setting.

For more information, contact
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SELECTED RESOURCES

Evidenced-based practices that have increased legal permanency and decreased APPLA case goals include:

Name	Description
<i>Concurrent Permanency Planning (CPP)</i> ⁶	Concurrent planning requires the identification of an alternative plan and also the implementation of active efforts toward both plans simultaneously with the full knowledge of all participants. Compared to more traditional sequential planning for permanency, in which one permanency plan is ruled out before an alternative is developed, concurrent planning may provide earlier permanency for the child.
<i>Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)</i> ⁷	Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM) refers to the engagement of a family to participate in the planning, actions, and assessment of decisions that impact child safety, permanency, and well-being. Many different approaches and models to FGDM have been developed and implemented within child welfare agencies and organizations.
<i>Family Finding</i> ^{8,9}	Family find strategies are used to locate and engage relatives of children currently living in out-of-home care. The goal of Family Finding is to connect each child with a family, so that every child may benefit from the lifelong connections that only a family provides.
<i>Permanency Round Tables (PRTs)</i> ^{10,11}	Permanency roundtables (PRTs) are a strategy to increase legal permanency rates for older youth in foster care. PRTs are structured meetings intended to expedite legal permanency (defined as adoption, guardianship, or reunification) for youth by involving experts from both inside and outside child welfare agencies in creative and concrete case planning.
<i>Permanency Pacts</i> ¹²	A strategy developed by <i>FosterClub</i> , “The Pact” is designed to help foster youth identify supportive adult connections which will continue to provide positive supports through and beyond the transition from care. As a foster parent, you can introduce a young person to this tool and help them identify those continuing supports in an effort to build a strong support network.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Name	Description
<i>FosterClub</i> ¹³	<i>FosterClub</i> is a national network for youth in and from foster care. The organization is led by youth and young adults who have experienced foster care. <i>FosterClub</i> provides numerous resources including a listing of state resources for older youth in care.
<i>Mockingbird Society</i> ¹⁴	The <i>Mockingbird Society</i> is an advocacy organization that provides meaningful opportunities for youth to participate in social justice efforts toward improving the foster care system.
<i>The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183/HR 4980)</i> ¹⁵	This Act takes important steps forward in protecting and preventing children and youth in foster care. ¹⁶ The Act provides a strong framework for child welfare systems to shift current policy and practice to prioritize normalcy. It directs child welfare practice and policy to eliminate APPLA as a permanency goal for children under age 16 and adding requirements if older youth have a permanency goal of APPLA.

ENDNOTES

- 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015. "Child Welfare Outcomes Report Data."
- 2 [*Supporting Success: Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care*](#) (2010). Casey Family Programs, Appendix A, pp.65-68.
- 3 Babcock, C. (2010). *Analysis of children with APPLA goal*. Clearwater, FL: Eckerd Community Alternatives.
- 4 McCoy-Roth, M., DeVoght, K., & Fletcher, M. (2011). Number of youth aging out of foster care drops below 28,000 in 2010. *Connections*, 5.
- 5 Badeau, S. H., Perez, A., Lightbourne, W., Gray, E. S., & Suleiman Gonzalez, L. P. (2004). *The Future of Children*, 14(1), 175-189.
- 6 <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/concurrent.pdf>
- 7 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-welfare-podcast-fgdm-implementing-fgc>
- 8 <http://familyfinding.org/>
- 9 See Issue Brief "Family Find Strategies"
- 10 <http://www.tandfonline.com>
- 11 See Issue Brief, "Permanency Roundtables"
- 12 <https://www.fosterclub.com/foster-parent-training/course/fosterclubs-permanency-pact>
- 13 <https://www.fosterclub.com/about-us/who-we-are>
- 14 <https://www.mockingbirdsociety.org/>
- 15 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4980/text>
- 16 [*Implementing the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act \(P.L. 113-183\) To Benefit Children and Youth*](#) (2015). The Children's Defense Fund, Child Welfare League of America First Focus, Generations United Foster Family-based Treatment Association and Voice for Adoption, January 14.