

Permanency Teaming

Achieving Families for Life



**CASEY
FAMILY
SERVICES**

THE DIRECT SERVICE AGENCY OF
THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

Connections Count

Each year, as many as 20,000 young people nationwide “age out” of the child welfare system at the age of 18 and move toward adulthood without the comfort and stability of family relationships. Nearly half the nation’s foster children are age 11 and older and all too soon will face similar predicaments.

Casey Family Services is committed to assuring that all young people in foster care have lasting family relationships and preparation for responsible adulthood. We are finding success with a model we call the permanency teaming approach, which uses a young person’s natural network to strengthen or build enduring family relationships—with the help of people already in his or her life.



What is the Permanency Teaming Approach?

The permanency teaming approach leaves no stone unturned in locating or building families with young people in foster care, no matter their age, current placement, or unique challenges.

The process brings together all the adults identified as important to a young person to work together with the youth to plan and prepare for adulthood, and strengthen or build family connections.

The outcome: Young people exit care with enduring family ties and fewer severed relationships.

The Early Benefits

Permanency teaming strategies are increasing our ability to:

- give youth a central role in planning for their lives;
- identify family members for youth thought to have none;
- involve birth parents and other important adults safely and meaningfully in a child's life;
- find permanent families for youth from within their natural networks—people already known to them—or through newly recruited families;
- provide legally sanctioned family relationships; and
- involve key decision makers (social workers and lawyers, for instance) to join together with youth and family members in collaborative planning and decision making.

How It Works

The permanency teaming model is based on existing permanency practice, plus these innovations:

Family relationships as a priority

Social workers begin working with existing relationships and expand their search as needed to include relationships that have been lost, missed, or disrupted. They talk with youth, family members, and caregivers, review case records, and use technology to learn as much as possible about each youth's relationships.

Collaborative planning, problem solving, and decision making

A permanency team is assembled, based on each youth's natural network. The team includes the youth, family members, and other significant adults, as defined by the young person and/or found through a family search. The team also engages key professionals (social workers, lawyers, and therapists, as necessary). The goal is to plan for the youth's safety and well-being, within the context of family, while honoring previous attachments and ensuring the young person's active involvement.

Defining "family"

An expanded definition of "family" includes consideration of any adults connected to a young person now or in the past. This includes grandparents, extended families, foster parents, coaches, mentors, interested neighbors, friends from faith-based organizations, cultural leaders, and others. The definition also extends to newly recruited families for youth.

Permanency conversations

"Permanency conversations" in one-on-one, small-group, and large-group meetings are used for such things as:

- identifying the adults with whom a youth wants to stay connected or be reconnected;
- clarifying those adults' commitment to a youth;
- talking with teens about difficult subjects, such as getting beyond their resistance to adoption, or whether (and how) to stay connected to birth family; and
- encouraging youth and birth parents to talk about reunification, adoption, or guardianship.

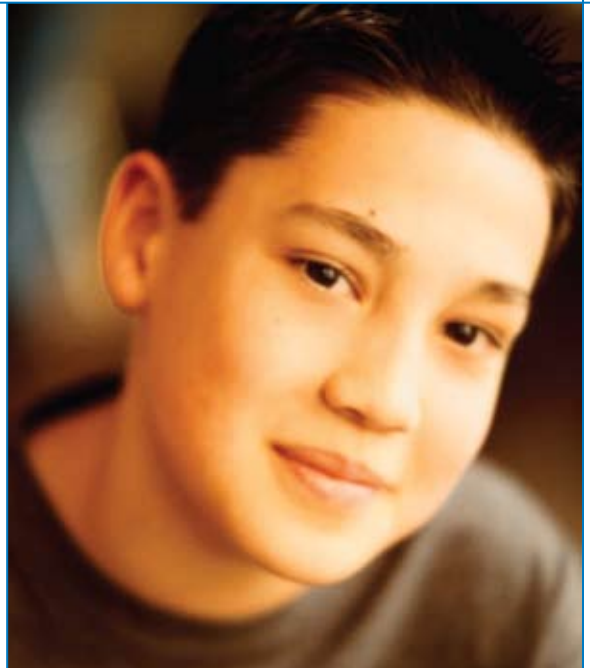
Integrating family networks

The permanency team looks at ways to link past and present relationships in a youth's life. One young person may be reunified with his mother and spend summer vacations with former foster parents. Another may live with her grandmother, be in regular contact with her father, and be brought to monthly sibling visits by a mentor. Youth need permanent parents and lifelong connections to siblings, extended family, and significant adults.

Preparing for adulthood in a family setting

Whether learning to drive, balancing a checkbook, researching colleges, or finding an apartment, permanency teams make sure teens have the confidence, skills, and support needed to become successful adults—within the context of family.

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Casey Family Services

UPS founder Jim Casey established Casey Family Services in 1976 as a source for high-quality foster care. As the direct service agency of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Services today offers a broad range of services for vulnerable children and families throughout New England and in Baltimore, Maryland.

Building on the philosophy that every child needs and deserves a family for life, Casey Family Services provides an array of permanency services designed to preserve, strengthen, develop, and sustain families. In addition, Casey Family Services provides technical assistance, consultation and training to public and private agencies nationwide through the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice.





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