

PERMANENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

MEASURES

Overview

This document is a companion to the Framework for Permanence for Young People and may be used to support a Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Permanence for Young People. It provides a list and brief description of a handful of key measures that can be used by agencies across the country to evaluate their progress on improving the way they achieve and maintain permanence for young people. As with the Framework document, these measures were developed and discussed at a national Expert Meeting on June 7-8, 2004 co-sponsored by the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work and Casey Family Services through the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice.

Although there are a multitude of measures that agencies can use to define and evaluate permanency services, supports, and outcomes, child welfare agencies are already responsible for many required data reports such as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), and state mandated reports. To that end, the expert group limited the number of suggested key measures to seven and included several that are being captured through existing data systems already.

Agencies that expect real and sustainable improvements in their systems of permanence for young people should track all seven of these measures. No single measure can indicate whether the system is improving for young people and their families. Moreover, sometimes focusing on a single measure causes an unintended negative effect on another key measure. Thus, the complete body of measures proposed in this document should be used together. It is recommended that these measures be tracked on a monthly basis, as this is the only real way to see incremental progress and make adjustments as needed.

Other systems that serve and support young people should also be encouraged to track key measures of permanence as well. Courts, employment offices, housing organizations, schools, and similar agencies and organizations are partners in this work and this partnership should include shared responsibility and accountability through joint measurement.

While only a few sets of measures recommend tracking data by race/ethnicity, it is strongly encouraged that all measures are tracked by race/ethnicity. To identify and address disparities in outcomes for children and families of color in the public child welfare system, all measures should be tracked by race/ethnicity.

Key Measures

Available Potential Resource Families

- ❖ Increase in the number and percentage of resource families (foster, adoptive, kinship families) who have a demonstrated knowledge of, commitment to, and concern for young people and can parent young people with the unique needs, characteristics, and issues represented in the population.

Placement Settings and Stability

- ❖ Decrease in the number and percentage of young people in non-family settings, e.g. institutional and group home settings.

- ❖ Decrease the number of moves young people experience in out-of-home care.

Participation in Meetings

- ❖ Increase in the number and percentage of young people who report that they actively participate in their own case planning and decision-making and that their wishes are respected.

Training and Education

- ❖ Increase in preparation, training, education, and/or support that is provided about permanence for young people to key constituency groups such as:
 - Young people, families and extended families
 - Agency staff
 - Courts
 - Tribal courts
 - Attorneys
 - CASA workers
 - Schools
 - Probation officers
 - Community providers
 - Other key partners as determined by the young people or the Department

Maintaining Connections

- ❖ Increase in the number and percentage of young people who maintain connections with their birth parents, siblings, extended family members and other significant adults in their lives.

Youth-Defined Permanence

- ❖ Increase in the number and percentage of young people who leave out of home care reporting that they have the optimal level of family belonging and membership based on their vision and definition of permanence.

Legal Permanence

- ❖ Increase in the number and percentage of young people who achieve legal family permanence through reunification, adoption, or guardianship (by race and ethnicity).