



# Relational Permanency

*... what young people want is the feeling and experience of closeness, love, and belonging that are typically assumed to come from close family connections. They do not, however, always link membership in a family system with guarantees that they will experience the emotional and familial connections they desire.*

Samuels, G. (2008). A Reason, a Season or a Lifetime: Relational Permanence Among Young Adults with Foster Care Backgrounds, Chapin Hall: University of Chicago, IL. Page 47.



# Research suggests...

- That having a permanent supportive relationship with, and feeling connected to, an adult matters in the long- and short-term wellbeing of youth and young adults (Beam, Chen, & Greenberger, 2002).
- This is typically provided through one's family system via parents and adult relatives in one's extended family network.
- Youth in foster care may miss out on normative opportunities to build important relational and social skills that can be essential to accessing and sustaining these essential relationships.
  - Shared histories
- Normative supportive relationships with adults include supports from child welfare professionals. Participants did not see most of these relationships as permanent, despite wishes or preferences among some that they be "forever."

% of  
Professionals  
Making Up  
Each Circle:

-inner=16%

-middle=19%

-outer=26



# What the youth are saying...

- Emotional support was the most support most frequently noted as being both needed and missing
- Ambiguous loss ...
  - Youth explain how they learn to cope with people coming in and out of their lives.
  - “Trust is the residue of fulfilled promises”
- Hope for permanence in relationships but are not confident of the certainty of this or perceiving it as something under their control.
- The need or desire for a parental figure/biological connection is not erased
- Vows to restore or re-create a family system to which the youth can belong



# Defined....

- IS...
  - Connections
  - Social Capital
  - Emotional & Social Well Being
- Moving Beyond...
  - Placement
  - Legal/federal/system definition



# Clarification

- Children
  - Legal permanency
  - Time to develop relational permanency in a natural family
  
- Older Youth
  - Relational permanency
  - Focus on building social capital/connections
  - Promote positive healthy relationships



# What are we doing about it?

- IL/Transition process
  - Youth focus/voice
- YCP/investigators
  - Locating connections
- Safely Home, Families First
- Permanency Roundtables

Doing Things Differently....



# Independent vs. Interdependent

- A 2011 study by Koball indicated that youth participating in IL Services programs around the country showed no significant improvement on any key outcomes measured.
- G. Samuals work supports a youth development philosophy of child welfare practice
  - specifically in considering how to establish and sustain relational permanence in the lives of older youth in foster care.
  - Central to this is the development of relational skills to sustain interpersonal connections.



# Collaborative Care

- 3CMs
  - Specialized Case Managers
  - Authentic Youth Engagement
  - Youth/Adult Partnerships
- Older Youth Services
  - Continuum of Services
  - Youth Voice
  - Social Capital
  - Relational Permanency



# What can you do...

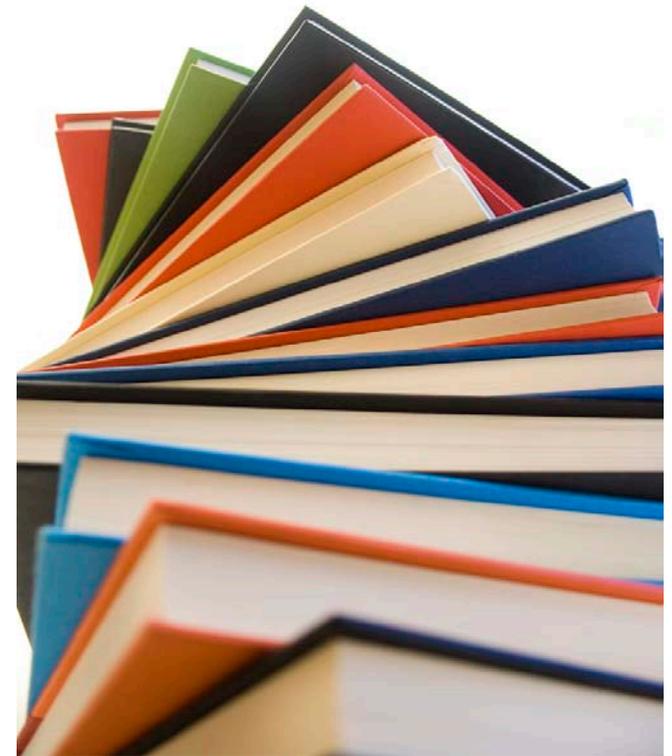
- STOP
- LISTEN
  
- Become/Stay Youth Focused
- Making the commitment
- Do things differently
- Be aware



INDIANA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
CHILD  
SERVICES

# Research

- Midwest Study (Courtney, 2007)
- Relational Permanency (Samuels, 2008)
- Benefits and Costs of Extending Foster Care (Peters et al, 2009)
- The Adolescent Brain (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011)
- Authentic Youth Engagement (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011)
- Social Capital (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011)
- Foster Care to 21 (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011)





**Thank You**

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