

The logo features a stylized starburst graphic in shades of green and blue behind the text. The text is arranged in four lines: 'National', 'Child Welfare', 'Resource', and 'Center for Youth Development'. The first three lines are in a green serif font, while the fourth line is in a larger, bold, dark blue serif font. Below the main title, the text 'A service of DHHS Children's Bureau' is written in a smaller, blue sans-serif font.

**National  
Child Welfare  
Resource  
Center for Youth  
Development**  
A service of DHHS Children's Bureau

**National Foster Care Month**  
*Resources and Topics from an Older Youth Perspective*

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Foster care for younger children and older youth is not a parallel experience. The topics may be the same but the resources and the approaches tend to be different. Recognizing these differences, this document, prepared by young adult professionals with foster care experience, presents the older youth perspective and provides resources that support that perspective. During National Foster Care Month (NFCM), 2009, the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development encourages you to learn more about topics, resources, and approaches of importance to older youth in foster care.

## 1. Reunification

Reunification is important for all older youth whether or not they are able to “officially” return home. For older youth who are not able to go home, it is possible and in many cases necessary, to include their families in the transition process (many youth in Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement [APPLA] go home after aging out whether there is a healthy connection or not). Reunification does not just mean going home. It can also mean finding new ways for youth to be joined with their biological families. That connection is one that could serve as a security blanket (knowing that someone out there knows them, potentially loves them) as they are leaving foster care, making new connections and moving into early adulthood.

a. *Returning Children Home Safely and Permanently*

This practice bulletin focuses on returning children home safely and permanently once they have been placed out of the home as a response to safety issues.  
(Author abstract)

[http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/docs/Sept\\_Reunification.pdf](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/docs/Sept_Reunification.pdf)

b. *Repeat Maltreatment*

[http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/docs/02.08-Repeat\\_Maltreatment.pdf](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/docs/02.08-Repeat_Maltreatment.pdf)

c. *Recommendations on Preventing Entrance into Foster Care*

California Center for Research on Women and Families

[http://www.cwda.org/downloads/publications/cws/PreventingEntrance\\_FosterCare.pdf](http://www.cwda.org/downloads/publications/cws/PreventingEntrance_FosterCare.pdf)

## 2. Family Engagement

This may be an important first step to reunification. Engaging brothers and sisters, parents or other family members, even those who do not have custody of the older youth, can help make the youth feel more whole. Part of the struggle of being a foster youth is the loss of that sense of who you are, and struggling (at a much younger age than most) to find or regain a sense of identity.

a. *Father Friendly Check-Up for Child Welfare Agencies and Organizations.*

National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System. National Fatherhood Initiative. American Humane. ABA Center on Children and the Law. This tool is intended to help assess the degree to which child welfare agencies and organizations encourage the father’s involvement in the activities and programs they offer.

[http://www.abanet.org/child/fathers/ffcuchildwelfareagencyorg\\_msco\\_100108final.doc](http://www.abanet.org/child/fathers/ffcuchildwelfareagencyorg_msco_100108final.doc)

- b. [Reflect and Improve - A Tool Kit for Engaging Youth and Adults as Partners in Program Evaluation](#)

This practical, easy-to-follow tool kit is designed for adults and youth at youth development and youth civic engagement organizations. It guides readers as they assess their organizational needs for evaluations and how to use evaluation data.

### 3. In-Home Service

In-home services are particularly important for older youth. It is easy to let these young adults fall through the crack because they are so close to leaving the system. This is dangerous. Giving youth a chance to have a healthy connection with their families as they move to leave the system, will lead to healthier adults, decreasing the likelihood that them or their children will be placed in the system.

- a. [100 Interactive Activities - For Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery](#)

In this easy-to-use, hands-on, comprehensive book for mental health and substance abuse recovery, you will find many different kinds of activities that can be used with group participants, ages 8-80.

- b. [A New Beginning: Recovery Workbook - Reproducible Exercises to Help People Overcome Addictive Behaviors](#)

Written for professionals who work with youth or adults overcoming addictions, this book is designed to help users lead effective sessions with easy-to-follow, simply designed activities. All activities are appropriate for teens and adults who are involved in any type of 12-step recovery program.

- c. Positive Parenting

- i. [Positive Parenting I](#)

Cooperation, tracking behavior, encouragement.

- ii. [Positive Parenting II](#)

Setting limits behavior contracts.

- iii. [Positive Parenting III](#)

Time out, privilege removal, extra chores.

- d. [Safe Parenting](#)

Treatment plans, state regulations, development vs. actual age, trauma history, and more.

- e. [The Kids' Guide to Working Out Conflicts - How to Keep Cool, Stay Safe, and Get Along](#)

Being teased? Keep cool. Feeling threatened? Stay safe. Can't agree? Get along. Sound simple? It's not, but we all can do it. This book gives teens the knowledge, understanding, and skills to resolve conflict, defuse tough situations, stand up for themselves, and more.

#### **4. Guardianship**

Guardianship is another way to allow youth to leave foster care with some measure of permanency. The focus for older youth should always be on ensuring that they leave foster care with a sense of permanency. Guardianship is great for the youth who don't want to run the risk of terminating the parents' rights. Many youth (especially older youth) fear adoption because they feel that it will terminate connections with their other family (as opposed to giving them another loving support system). Guardianship allows youth to feel as though they have a permanent placement without destroying their original family ties. .

#### **5. Family Finding**

Finding any family that the youth might have should be a continual process. If youth cannot stay with biological parents, then the next step (no matter what their age) should always be to place them with biological family members, when possible.

a. *Relative Search Best Practice Guide*

The purpose of this guide is to assist social service agencies in performing relative searches when a child is removed from the home. (Author abstract)

[http://www.mncourts.gov/documents/0/Public/Children%27s\\_Justice\\_Initiative/Relative\\_Search\\_Best\\_Practice\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.mncourts.gov/documents/0/Public/Children%27s_Justice_Initiative/Relative_Search_Best_Practice_Guide.pdf)

#### **6. Kinship Care**

Childwelfare.gov lists kinship as the option second only to reunification. This should be the same for older youth. Many times a search is done for their relatives when youth are first entered into care. As a former youth, I would push for this to be either annually or biennially. Even though the youth has been in care for an extended period of time, it is possible that a relative was unaware of their situation, or unable at that time, and would now love to take them. Also, something rarely considered in the permanency of older youth is "fictive kin." Youth may connect with a family outside of guardianship or adoption. These families, though not legally permanent, are an important source of permanency for many young people. Incorporating a youth's fictive kin into their exit plan/permanency plan is a way to include the youth in their own permanency plan.

a. [Kinship Care](#)

Challenges and benefits for kinship placement, family feuds, allegiance to birth parents, uniting the family, understanding roles of family members.

#### **7. Transition Planning**

Since the passing of the John H. Chafee Act in 1998, there has been an increasing interest and understanding in the unique needs of older youth in care. States have begun to identify and seek out best practice to assist these older youth in transitioning from foster care into successful adulthood. That being said, there is still work to do. Many

youth are not receiving timely or individualized services and the success rate for adults who were in the system as youth is well below the rate of adults who never entered the system.

a. *Foster Care to 21: Enrollment Trends After Two Years*

The 2006 Washington Legislature passed 2SHB 2002, which allows youth who are over the age of 18 and have completed their secondary school education to remain in a licensed care setting as they pursue postsecondary academic or vocational training. This program, commonly known as Foster Care to 21 (FC to 21), began enrollment in July 2006; enrollment ends December 31, 2008. The Institute was directed to evaluate the program. This preliminary report finds that of the 85 youth who enrolled in FC to 21 prior to 2008, 25 (29 percent) were still enrolled, 6 (7 percent) had turned 21 or had completed their postsecondary program, and 54 (64 percent) were no longer enrolled. Thirty-nine (46 percent) stayed in FC to 21 for at least one year. (Author abstract)

<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/08-12-3901.pdf>

b. *Extended Foster Care*

<http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/adoptionhr6893fostercarechart.pdf>

c. *Aging Out of Foster Care: Towards a Universal Safety Net for Former Foster Care Youth*

This Article identifies the specific needs and outcomes of youths who age out under current foster care policies. This Article next analyzes federal law relating to youths aging out and surveys various state law attempts to address gaps in federal law. Lastly, the author makes policy recommendations, arguing for a universal approach that provides basic services to all former foster care youths. (Author abstract)

<http://cafosteringconnections.org/pdfs/Atkinson%202008%20Aging%20Out%20of%20Foster%20Care.doc>

d. *It's T Time: Transition Planning Toolkit*

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/catalog/product.php?productid=208&cat=0&page=2>

## 8. Permanency Planning

Older youth need permanency too. A different sort of permanency perhaps, but it is still needed. Youth leaving care are especially prone to fall through the cracks. But there should be a renewed effort to help youth leaving the system walk away with adults who are supportive and permanent in their lives. Supportive adults have been cited as one of the key factors in the success of youth post-care. It is important to steer youth towards making those important connections as they move closer to leaving care.

a. *Getting Solid, A Youth's Guide to Permanence*

Establishing permanent connections for young people is essential to ensuring their success. However, identifying supportive adults who can provide these permanent connections is only half the story. Youth need to be ready and able to participate in positive, caring, life-long relationships and accept support from caring adults.

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/catalog/search.php?mode=search&page=1>

- b. [The Family Bound Program - A Tool Kit for Preparing Teens for Permanent Family Connections](#)  
Help teens experience interdependent living. In nine classroom sessions and five weekends with “practice” families, teens learn about families and how to function within one. They learn how to bring their unique values and strengths to the family and how to negotiate and compromise over differences and family rules. They learn also how to come to terms with past mistakes, mourn their losses, and ensure better future outcomes. “Practice” families work with agency staff and teens to identify existing family resources or recruit new family connections – for life.
- c. [Adolescents & Families for Life - A Toolkit for Supervisors](#)  
The Toolkit is a unique workbook for professionals who need to guide, train, and supervise staff to insure permanence for the adolescents on their caseloads. Organized into three sections, “Making the Case for Permanence,” “Choosing, Using and Developing Tools with Teens,” and “Supporting Permanence,” the Toolkit breaks down the issue of permanence for teens into 27 short, staff-meeting length teachable units. Includes a CD-ROM, plus a PowerPoint presentation of the complete Toolkit, unit-by-unit and section-by-section.
- d. [Families for Teens: A Toolkit for Focusing, Educating and Motivating Staff](#)
- e. *Child and Family Visitation: A Practice Guide to Support Lasting Reunification and Preserving Family Connections for Children in Foster Care*  
<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5552-ENG>
- f. [The Family Bound Program: Family Handbook](#)
- g. *Involving Foster Parents in Permanency Planning for Adolescents in Treatment Foster Care: Evidence-Based Practices.*  
<http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/research/ebp/fosterCarePlanning.asp>  
<http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/attributes/PDF/EBP/FPIInvolvementPermanencyPlanning12292008.pdf>

## 9. Drug Courts

Drug courts are programs run under the country or state judicial system that serve as a way for youth who have had a run-in with the law to be rehabilitated through counseling, groups, or other activities.

- a. [100 Interactive Activities - For Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery](#)
- b. [A New Beginning: Recovery Workbook - Reproducible Exercises to Help People Overcome Addictive Behaviors](#)
- c. *Family Drug Treatment Court Standards.*  
<http://spa.american.edu/justice/documents/2458.pdf>

## 10. Court Improvement Plans (CIPs)

Youth need to be in court. Older youth are quickly approaching the day when decisions about them will need to be made by them. So why not start while there is a chance of helping them, guiding them. Allowing youth in the court room allows them to see the

development of decisions. They should be able to ask “why” and “what” so that in two, three or five years, when the decision is theirs, they’ll know how to plan responsibly.

- a. [Reflect and Improve - A Tool Kit for Engaging Youth and Adults as Partners in Program Evaluation](#)

This practical, easy-to-follow tool kit is designed for adults and youth at youth development and youth civic engagement organizations. It guides readers as they assess their organizational needs for evaluations and how to use evaluation data.

## **11. Using Data to Improve Performance**

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) should be one of the big pushes for NFCM 09. Until NYTD begins, we have no universal way of knowing whether our programs for older youth are working. With younger youth, we have time to see if the results are where we want/need them to be. With older youth, there was no way to measure if the programs we were using were working. With NYTD, we are able to judge if programs were effective or not, and if they’re not, change them.

- a. *CalSWEC: Data 101, Using Data to improve performance*
  - i. [http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/Data101\\_Part1Manual.doc](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/Data101_Part1Manual.doc)
  - ii. <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/Presentation.pdf>
  - iii. [http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/CCFSR\\_ProposedOutcomes.pdf](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/CCFSR_ProposedOutcomes.pdf)
  - iv. [http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/CCFSR\\_ProposedOutcomes.pdf](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/CCFSR_ProposedOutcomes.pdf)
  - v. [http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/Compare\\_CFSR\\_CCFSR.doc](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/calswec/Compare_CFSR_CCFSR.doc)

## **12. Developing Local Resources to Enhance Placement Proximity**

Placement proximity is very important. As youth are already being shuttled from home to home, it is essential that they are left with some sense of normalcy. School is always a big issue with this. Not having to switch schools with every move means less lost records, less time spent making new friends, getting adjusted, and more time spent on homework and adjusting to a new home (which should be a quicker adjustment). Youth have connections to community besides school, think about their involvement: family, friends, groups, dance lessons, etc.

- a. [Neighborhood-Based Foster Care: A Critical Examination of Location-Based Placement Criteria](#)
- b. <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/507933>

## **13. Risk Assessment in Out-of-Home Placements Including Residential Placements**

Youth who are placed in residential programs are at risk of being victimized again. No longer is it solely a question of physical risk, but also psychosocial and emotional. Youth not being able to develop relationships during this time could have long-term consequences.

- a. [Residential Child and Youth Care Professional Curriculum](#)  
This strengths and competency-based curriculum includes a strong youth development philosophy and current best practice components that incorporate work in diversity and independent living/life skills. (Formerly called “The Basic Course for Residential Child Care Workers.”)

#### 14. Post Permanency Service

Permanency is a continually growing and adapting idea, and so should we be. Just because a youth has found permanency, doesn't mean that they should be written off as “done”, this is especially true for older youth. They may have connected with their worker, or need further help in adjusting to being a part of a “permanent situation.” For someone whose life has been spent being constantly interrupted and disrupted, this is understandable.

- a. *Your Promising Future - Career Development Tools for Young Adults-Student Workbook #94*
- b. [A Future Near Me - Questions to Guide a Young Adult Toward Self-Sufficiency](#)  
A pocket workbook for youth who are thinking about moving out on their own. It includes 100 questions to guide a young adult toward self-sufficiency. It can be used by individuals or groups to stimulate discussion.
- c. [Do You Have What It Takes? A Comprehensive Guide to Success After Foster Care By Teens Who Have Been There](#)  
The young adults of *Represent* magazine have written about charging off to their own apartments only to learn how lonely they are and losing first jobs due to conflicts with bosses. These stories engage teens and prepare them for the practical challenges they will face on the road to independence.
- d. Handbooks for Adoptive Parents [Website].  
[http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info\\_services/handbooks-for-adoptive-parents.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/handbooks-for-adoptive-parents.html)
- e. Some states have handbooks that assist prospective adoptive parents in negotiating the adoption process. This website points to some handbooks that are available on-line.
  - i. [Improving Outcomes for Older Youth: What Judges and Attorneys Need to Know](#)  
Produced by The University of Oklahoma National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development in conjunction with the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, this publication is a comprehensive guide to federal legislation for youth in out-of-home care.
  - ii. *Helping Former Foster Youth Graduate from College: Campus Support Programs in California and Washington State*  
[http://www.chapinhall.org/article\\_abstract.aspx?ar=1483&L2=60&L3=125](http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1483&L2=60&L3=125)

## **Authors**

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**Lacy Kendrick** recently joined the staff of the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development as a Trainer/Consultant. She has served on several boards addressing adoption and foster care issues, including six years on the Missouri State Youth Advisory Board, the ABA-Bar Youth Empowerment Project National Advisory Board, and the Multicultural Advisory Committee for the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Adoption. Ms. Kendrick and her five younger siblings were placed in foster care when she was age 15, spent six years in foster care, and is currently undergoing adoption proceedings with her long time foster parents. She has a bachelor degree in psychology with minors in Latin and general business, and plans to pursue a master's in child and adolescent counseling and a doctorate, then to teach at the university level. Her goals also include doing research and evaluation of child welfare and adoption programs and policy while continuing to advocate for positive outcomes for older foster youth.