



National Resource Center for
Permanency and Family
Connections



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

Ten Things that Youth Want Child Welfare Professionals to Know: Talking to Youth in Foster Care about Permanency

Project LIFE, a partnership of United Methodist Family Services with and funded by Virginia Department of Social Services, held a state-wide conference on permanency in October 2013. During the conference, adopted youth and youth in foster care shared their experiences and developed their ideas into tips for child welfare workers. This NRCPPFC resource highlights their recommendations for workers when engaging youth in foster care.

1. Permanency is a new concept for me.

I need you to explain to me in detail what you mean when you use the word permanency, what the different possible routes to permanency are, and what is involved in each of these possibilities. I may have never even used the term permanency before.

2. Communication about permanency is so important!

Talk with me about permanency often and arrange frequent visits that allow us to engage in meaningful and ongoing conversations. This will help with my process of achieving permanency.

3. Remember that young people process and share information in different ways.

Consider resources and interactive activities that you can use to help me think about my relationships. If we do an activity, use the information as a tool in our planning so that I know my participation in these activities is purposeful.

4. Your support, constructive criticism, exploration, and feedback are essential for me to make good, informed choices.

5. Stay open minded and understanding regarding my ideas and suggestions about permanency options that you may not have considered.

6. Consider my foster parents as an option for permanency when we have a positive relationship and work with everyone involved to explore that possibility and provide support.

Try to recruit more foster parents that may be willing to adopt and create additional foster-to-adopt homes.

7. Stay proactive when addressing concerns that I bring up.

Address them in a timely manner and follow up on things you say you will do.

8. Be patient with me! I may need time to make up mind about permanency – don't expect me to make an immediate decision.

Allow me to change my mind if I don't initially think permanency is for me.

9. Adoption is a great choice for a lot of youth, but I may not think at first it is the right fit for me.

Help me understand more about the reality of adoption. Help me to understand and explore the pros and cons of all permanency options.

10. Identifying and choosing a lifelong connection may be scary for me!

There are so many factors that are unknown and variables that are out of my control. Help me to put my fears into perspective and comprehend what will happen once I find permanency.