

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services – SPA IV/Metro North Office

In Partnership with



Presents the

Metro North Permanency Project Plan

Dedicated to assuring that no youth will leave our child welfare system without a permanent lifelong connection to a caring adult

Executive Sponsor

Tedji Dessalegn, DCFS Regional Administrator

Project Manager

Adrienne Olson, DCFS Assistant Regional Administrator

Permanency Project Leadership Team

Jerry Clyde, DCFS Permanency Unit Supervisor
Leticia Chicco, DCFS Treatment Unit Supervisor
Shelby Fiorina, DCFS Adoption Unit Supervisor
Bob Friend, California Permanency for Youth Project Director
Robert Haley, DCFS Assistant Regional Administrator
Linda Librizzi, Hollgrove Family Finding Specialist
Olivia Murillo, DCFS Permanency Unit Children's Social Worker
Peter Ngo, DCFS Treatment Unit Supervisor
Deanna Nuanes, DCFS Treatment Unit Supervisor
Charisse Pilar, DCFS Treatment Unit Supervisor
David Swanson-Hollinger, Five Acres Director of Program Development
Susan Wiebusch, DCFS Permanency Partners Program (P3) Supervisor

Editors

Richard Miyake, DCFS Assistant Regional Administrator
Carrie Smith, DCFS Dependency Investigator/Children's Social Worker

*SPA IV/Metro North Office – 3075 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles CA 91040
(213)639-4236*

olsona@defs.lacounty.gov

Plan Finalized May 1, 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: In August 2005, the DCFS Metro North office partnered with the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) to implement strategies to achieve permanency for older youth. This plan reviews the first year's work completed as a result of our partnership with CPYP and serves to provide direction and guidelines to successfully enter into the project's second year.

Need and Definition of Permanency: Outcomes for older youth in out-of-home care are poor. In Los Angeles County, statistics show that of the 1,000 foster children who annually "age out" of the system, half never finish high school, one-third spend their early adult years on welfare, one-fourth land in jail, one-fourth become homeless, and three-fifths of the girls leaving foster care are pregnant within four years. These numbers reflect the need to redesign our services for these youth to ensure that the basic elements to achieve successful permanency, important to their future well being as adults, are provided. These elements include:

- ❖ the involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in the process;
- ❖ a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, lifelong support, a legal relationship if possible; and
- ❖ the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons, including siblings.

Target Population: A recent survey of office youth found there to be approximately 180 High-Need Youth in the Metro North office. A High-Need Youth is defined as a youth placed in "stranger" care, receiving Permanent Placement Services, and who suffers from one or more of the following:

- ❖ no or limited connections
- ❖ multiple recent replacements
- ❖ heavy substance abuse
- ❖ recent psychiatric hospitalization
- ❖ repeat AWOL

All 180 youth will become part of the target population during this second year and will be tracked for outcomes.

Goals: To achieve permanency and connectedness for the 180 High-Need Youth currently being served by the office, Metro North will achieve the following goals and objectives by April 1, 2008:

1. Youth will be a participant or leader in their permanency planning.
2. Youth will have increased connectedness and will be placed with siblings, have visits with siblings, have visits with parents, and have visits with other relatives and non-relative extended family.
3. Youth will be returned to the home of a parent if possible.
4. Youth will be assessed and prepared for adoption if unable to return home.
5. Youth will be assessed and prepared for the appointment of a legal guardian if unable to return home or be adopted.
6. Youth will be placed with relatives or non-relative extended family members (NREFMs).
7. Youth who emancipate will have a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, and lifelong support.
8. Youth will reside in the lowest level of care possible.

Training: To achieve our goals, a variety of permanency training sessions have been provided or are currently planned for internal and external DCFS staff.

- ❖ **Kevin Campbell's Family Finding** model provided staff with methods and web based tools to identify and engage relatives who are not currently known and/or involved in a child's life, with the goal of securing meaningful, permanent connections with the youth.
- ❖ **Bob Lewis' Training**, designed in collaboration with Metro North Administration, provided staff with new approaches to assist older youth overcome challenges to achieve meaningful permanency plans for themselves.
- ❖ **Dr. Darla Henry's Training**, "Concepts in Preparing Youth for Permanency," stressed that the core work in achieving permanency should be centered on the youth's loss, safety, attachments/relationships and resilience.
- ❖ **SCSW Y.O.U.T.H. Training**, conducted by former foster youth, addressed clinical supervision issues that commonly arise in working with youth.
- ❖ **Training on US Search**, a commercial, Internet-based search engine (www.ussearch.com) used to identify extended family through public records was provided to all Permanency Team members.
- ❖ **Future training** includes Family Finding and US Search training for new supervisors and staff. Training on grief and loss issues for staff and community partners, and the development of a youth panel are planned.

Methods and Staffing: Metro North will fully utilize resources and integrate existing programs to successfully restructure its permanency work, especially as it relates to the High-Need Youth target population. Fundamental work and staffing shifts will ensure completion of good permanency assessments, thorough and easy searches for relatives/connections, and the creation of solid Permanency Teams, as outlined below:

- ❖ **Concurrent Planning Redesign** - Metro North Regional CSWs will partner with Adoption workers to engage youth in the planning process and to conduct appropriate permanency assessments. Where adoption is identified as the permanency plan, the Adoption CSW will complete the permanency work.
- ❖ **Specializing the Permanency Unit** - Many High-Need Youth have suffered significant trauma, left disconnected and suffering extreme impairment in their functioning. Metro North proposes to specialize the Permanency Unit to include six Generic CSWs who will carry a caseload of fifteen youth. These youth will be the most challenged youth within the identified High-Need target population. CSWs will utilize intensive Family Finding and engagement strategies, and collaborate with internal and external resources as outlined in this plan.
- ❖ **Secondary Permanency Coordinators** - Secondary Permanency Coordinators are assigned to lead and carry out the permanency work for the youth who are not assigned an Adoption worker. Their specific role will be to ensure completion of tasks necessary for the youth to achieve permanency. Secondary Permanency Coordinators will be staff from: Family Group Decision-Making, FGDM, Five Acres for those High-Need Youth placed at Five Acres, Hollygrove Family Finding Project, Permanency Partners Program (P3), and additional Secondary Permanency Coordinators to be developed.
- ❖ **US Search Project and Due Diligence** - In November 2006, Metro North partnered with the P3 program to permit its staff unlimited use of its contract with US Search. Metro North implemented procedures to ensure a US Search is conducted with every due diligence report. Due diligence clerks will continue to automatically send letters to all parents, relatives and neighbors found through US Search to contact the case-carrying CSW.

- ❖ **Teaming with Other Permanency Resources for High-Need Youth** - A number of other internal and external resources exist and will be utilized by Metro North CSWs in their work to achieve the goals and outcomes for High-Need Youth. In addition to an Adoption or Secondary Permanency Coordinator, other resources may be very effective in helping CSWs to complete much of the permanency work. CSWs, in consultation with their SCSW, should schedule a TDM (Team Decision Making meeting) to coordinate appropriate services for the High-Need Youth on their caseload, taking special note to consider one or more of the following resources as appropriate: Adoption Promotion and Support Services (APSS), Alternative Services for Youth (ASFY), Interagency Consultation Assessment Team (ICAT), Emancipation Transition Resource Coordinator, Mentoring Program, MSW Interns, Runaway Outreach Unit, Wraparound Programs.

Building Champions and Partnerships: Having strong youth permanency champions and partnerships with other agency staff will have a significant impact in changing the philosophy, attitude and practices within our office, department and the child welfare league. The Leadership Team has a variety of plans for how to acknowledge and build our champions and partnerships.

Tracking Outcomes: Two logs and a quarterly questionnaire have been designed to track the following outcomes for the identified 180 High-Risk youth:

- ❖ Youth is a participant or leader in the permanency process
- ❖ Youth who previously was not placed with siblings, but is now
- ❖ Youth who previously was not visiting siblings, but is now
- ❖ Youth who previously had no contact with parents, relatives or adult mentors and is now connected
- ❖ Youth has moved to a lower level of care (indicating the rate for the past and present placements)
- ❖ Youth has moved from non-relative to relative care (indicating the rate for the past and present placements)
- ❖ Youth has returned to home of parent and jurisdiction has terminated
- ❖ Youth has returned to home of parent and case remains open under FM
- ❖ Youth is moving towards reunification with parent
- ❖ Youth has been adoptively placed and adoption has been finalized
- ❖ Youth has been placed in an adoptive home
- ❖ Youth was previously opposed to adoption and is now in active adoptive planning
- ❖ LG has been granted and case closed under Kin-Gap
- ❖ LG has been granted and case remains open with or without court
- ❖ LG is the plan and case is moving towards that goal
- ❖ Youth has emancipated with lifelong connection(s) in place