



## Position Statement

### Achieving Lifelong Family Permanency

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#### THE ISSUE

Foster care is intended to be a temporary intervention in the life of a child. Yet far too many children stay in foster care too long and move too often - exacerbating the trauma that led to the child being removed from their family in the first place. Likewise, too many youth age-out of foster care each year without legal parents and without even a network of supportive family relationships. The outcomes for these youth are often grim.

Over the last two decades multiple initiatives have demonstrated that when improved, best practices are used, it is probable that timely permanency can be achieved for all children in foster care. Unfortunately, these improved practice models are not yet widely used, in part to outdated notions about which families can successfully parent and which children are “adoptable.”

As a result, our children suffer unnecessarily long and unstable tenures in foster care, and the child welfare system fails its purpose for intervening in the first place - to ensure that children have a safe, stable and permanent family.

#### PRACTICE AND POLICY VALUES

- Regardless of a child’s age, individual needs, or complex family circumstances, permanency planning must begin early and continue until the child exits the foster care system to a legally secure family.
- Effective post-permanency support services should be readily available to the families that youth enter – whether it is through reunification, legal guardianship or adoption.
- Permanency is achieved by reunification with birth family, legal guardianship, adoption, or in some jurisdictions, permanent relative placement.
- Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA/OPPLA) or Long term foster care (LtFC) are not permanency goals.
- “Stepping down” from a group home or residential placement to a less restrictive, family-based placement is not a permanency outcome.
- Best effective practices should be prioritized including:
  - Family Search and Engagement partnered with creative, flexible family preservation services
  - Intensive child-specific recruitment, informed by child/youth voice and participation
  - Concurrent Permanency Planning
  - Promoting Readiness for Permanency