

# Association of Children's Residential Centers

*66<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference*

**Operationalizing Permanency Practices in a Residential Setting**  
**Plummer Youth Promise**

*July 13, 2022*

# Introductions

- Shane MacMaster, MS: Director of Operations
- Sarah Morrill, LCSW: Director of Strategy and Evaluation
- Kaleala Shaw, LICSW: Permanency Social Worker
- Chris D, age 19: Plummer Resident



## Youth Quote

*“I’m gonna die in this place. All I’ve ever wanted is to get back to my family.”*

- Age 19  
Plummer Youth Promise





Merely 55% will graduate high school by age 19

Fewer than 3% will earn a college degree by age 25



More than 43% have experienced homelessness by age 21



More than 40% did not earn enough to be self-supporting



24% will be incarcerated within two years of leaving the system



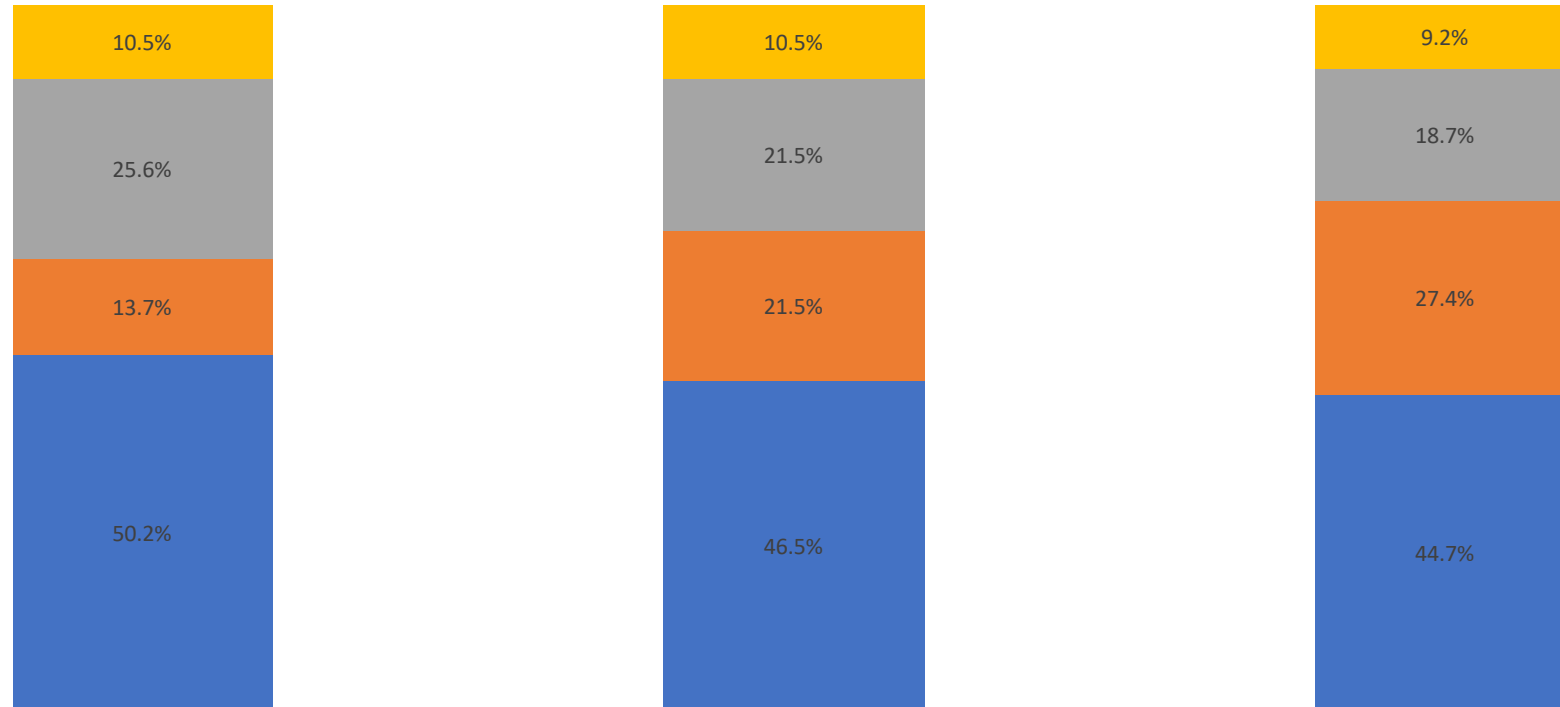
65% of young women reported having been pregnant since leaving care

Source: National Youth Transition Database (NYTD) 2018, [info@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:info@acf.hhs.gov)

# More will be young people of color

FFY2019 - Disproportionality in the Foster Care System

■ White, not Hispanic ■ Black, not Hispanic ■ Hispanic ■ Multiracial/Other



Gen Pop <18 est  
FFY2019

Entries into FC

Current Plmt Group

By age 18, 37% of all young people have interacted with CPS. 72% of them are youth of color.

# Contact with Birth Family after Emancipation

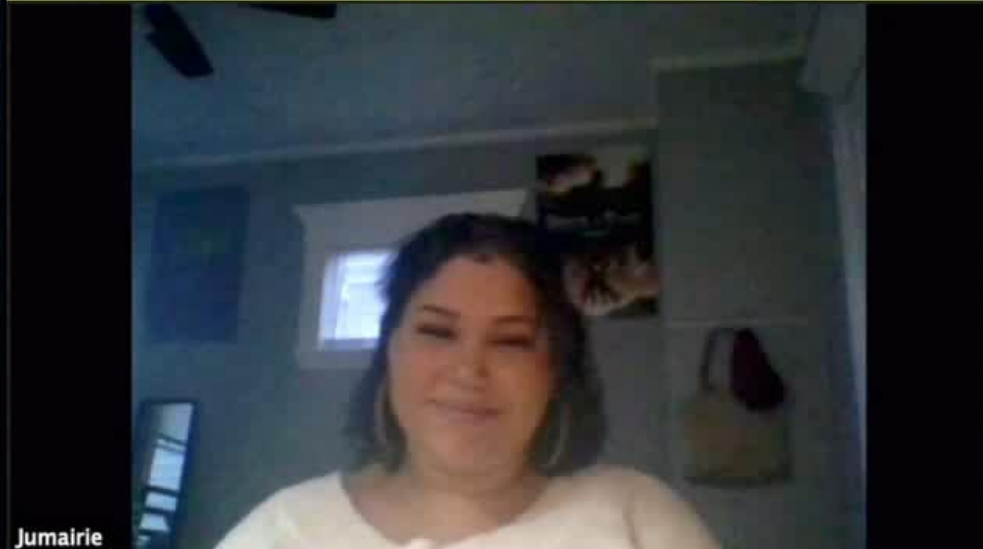
*Research shows that youth search for birth family after emancipation*

- **542** Alumni of foster care interviewed (ages 19–25)
- **87.9%** Reported being in contact with birth family
  - 40.9% Birth Mother
  - 20.5% Birth Father
  - 58.6% Siblings
  - 66.1% Other Relative

Fall Issue of Focus, “Conflict with Birth Families and Emancipation”: Results from two Alumni Studies and Implications for Practice, 2008 and 2011 (Havalchak, White & O’Brien)



# What does the word “permanency” mean to you?



# What you will learn

- ✓ The three elements of a permanency outcome
- ✓ Strategies central to a successful permanency intervention
- ✓ Elements essential to operationalizing permanency best practices in a residential setting





# Plummer Youth Promise Transformation



# PYP Transformation: Timeline

## History

**1854**

At her passing, Caroline Plummer donated \$23,000 to found a “farm school for reform for boys,” which pushed to help children in the city of Salem, MA.

**1950's**

Plummer started operating as a group home for teenage boys, aged five to 18. They attended school, church, and worked at Plummer.

**2017**

Plummer became “Plummer Youth Promise” to better reflect the commitment of connecting young people in foster care and group care with permanent families, and the promise of a successful outcome.

**2006-2012**

Plummer began a period of growth spurred by emerging knowledge and data on the best practices for caring for youth in child welfare. We developed the Intervention and Outcome Model and began serving young people of all genders.



## Learn More!

Visit our website to sign up for our newsletter.

Use your smartphone camera to scan the QR code.



# PYP Transformation: Motivation

- Sparked by Staff Frustration
- Driven by 2010 Strategic Plan

*“There are two primary choices in life:  
to accept conditions as they exist or accept  
the responsibility for changing them.”*

*~ Denis Waitley*

- ✓ Permanency
- ✓ Preparedness
- ✓ Community
- ✓ Philanthropy
- ✓ Outcomes



# PYP Transformation: Evolution from 2005 to 2021

## 2005

- 1 program serving 20 boys/year
- 17 employees
- One location
- Single revenue source
- \$800,000 budget
- Reactive programming; immediate needs
- Local organization

## 2021

- 6 programs serving over 200 youth/young people per year
- 63 employees
- Multiple sites
- Diversified revenue
- \$6.1M budget
- Visionary programming; long term solutions
- Nationally recognized

# PYP Transformation: Evolution of our Vision



## Vision 2010

A community committed to providing all children the support necessary to successfully navigate into adulthood.

## Vision 2016

Every young person has a family unconditionally committed to nurture, protect, and guide them to successful adulthood.

# PYP Transformation: Intervention & Outcome Model

## Our Vision

Every young person has a **family** unconditionally committed to nurture, protect, and guide them to successful adulthood.



## Our Mission

Plummer's mission is to set a **standard of excellence** that improves outcomes for young people in or at risk of entering state care by deeply engaging youth, families, and the systems that impact them to develop permanent family relationships, skills, and community connections.

## Our Theory of Change

If we prioritize **permanency** while enhancing **preparedness skills** and **community connections**, youth are more likely to leave our care better positioned to succeed as young adults.



# PYP Transformation: Implementation Science

## 3 Factors\* to Improve Outcomes



### Effective Practices

*(what works, for whom, why, and in what circumstances)*



### Effective Implementation

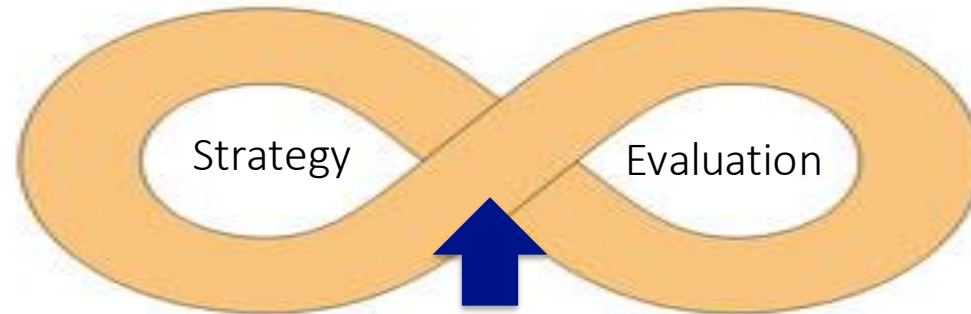
*(operational and other supports)*



### Enabling Context

*(leadership, organizational buy-in, collaboration and support ... and HUMOR 😊)*

# PYP Transformation: Commitment to Learning for Social Impact



*Learning for social impact*

*“Strategic learning is the use of data and insights from a variety of information-gathering approaches – including evaluation – to inform decision-making about strategy.”*

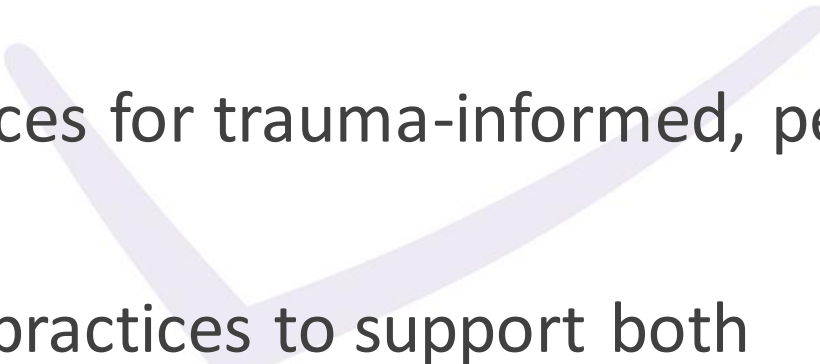
*~ Coffman and Beer. (2011)*

FSG Building a Strategic Learning and Evaluation System for Your Organization Hallie Preskill, PhD and Katelyn Mack, MS

# PYP Transformation: Key Strategies



Engage key elements of **implementation science** to:

- ✓ Change organizational culture in support of permanency and outcomes
  - ✓ Ensure best practices for trauma-informed, permanency-focused interventions
  - ✓ Align operational practices to support both
- 

# PYP Transformation: Implementation Science

## *Key components for effective implementation*

The “methods or techniques used to enhance the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of an intervention” (Powell, et al., 2015)

You can have great ideas, proven practices and best intentions but if not implemented with purpose, they may not be applied as designed (fidelity), be scalable, or innovate.



National Implementation Research Network [www.nirn.fpg.unc.edu](http://www.nirn.fpg.unc.edu)

# PYP Transformation: Implementation Science



## *Effective Practice: Universal definition for permanency*

An enduring family relationship that:

- Is safe and lifelong;
- Offers legal rights and social status of full family membership;
- Provides for physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual well being; and
- Assures life-long connections to birth and extended family, siblings and other significant adults, family history and traditions, race and ethnic heritage, culture, religion and language.

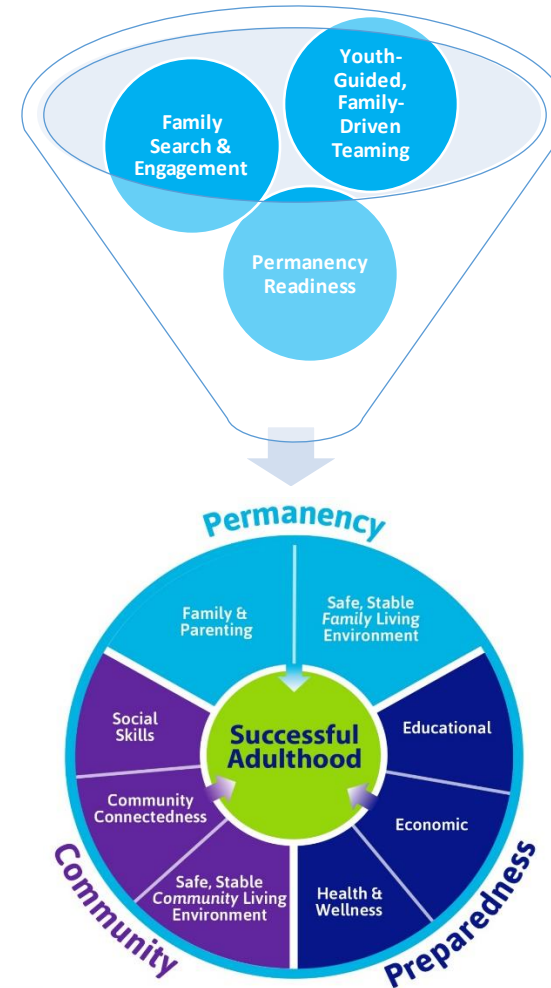
*Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood. Casey Family Services in collaboration with California Permanency for Youth Project, Casey Family Programs, and The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative*

# PYP Transformation: Implementation Science



## *Effective Practice: Proven practices*

- Family Search and Engagement
- Youth-Guided, Family-Driven Teaming
- Youth and Family Permanency Readiness





# PYP Transformation: Implementation Science

## *Leadership:*

- Clarity of purpose
- Inclusive, collaborative, iterative process
- Inclusive design process
- Freedom to experiment (read: make mistakes!)
- Long term commitment
- Data-informed
- Trust (staff & process)
- Resources



# PYP Transformation: Implementation Science

## *Competency:*

- Role-based best practice training for permanency, CPS, TCI
- Permanency consults
- Timely onboarding
- Ongoing training
- Competency-based supervision
- Performance evaluations
- Coaching within the milieu on youth and family engagement
- Fidelity assessments
- Outcome reporting



# PYP Transformation: Implementation Science

## *Organizational:*

- Universal approach to adopting trauma-informed practices
- Eliminate restraints and Point and Level system & implemented CPS
- Universal approach to permanency and documentation from interview through discharge
- Dedicated positions
- Everyone, regardless of role, is working toward permanency
- Policies, procedures and Performance Quality Improvement processes
- Hiring practices & job descriptions (permanency and data)
- Orientation & Training, including re-training
- Supervision
- Documentation & Reporting

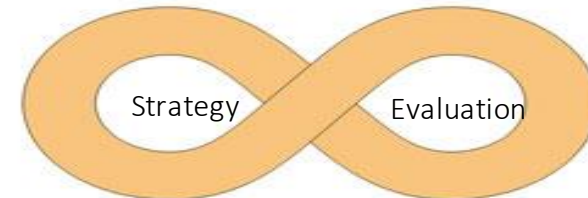


# PYP Transformation: Implementation Science

## *Implementation Stages:*

- (1) Exploration** – assess need (recipients, funders, stakeholders, build consensus) and select what will address need (data-informed, assess fit and feasibility) and sustainability
- (2) Installation** – assure resources and develop supports (see previous, initial training and tools, preparation)
- (3) Initial Implementation**- put in place and use data to improve supports (*identify data points, systems, reports, eval questions*)
- (4) Full implementation** – systematic implementation – practice is consistent (“the way of the work”), and we are achieving outcomes- still using data for continuous improvement

*It takes several years to engage in a thoughtful, informed process!*

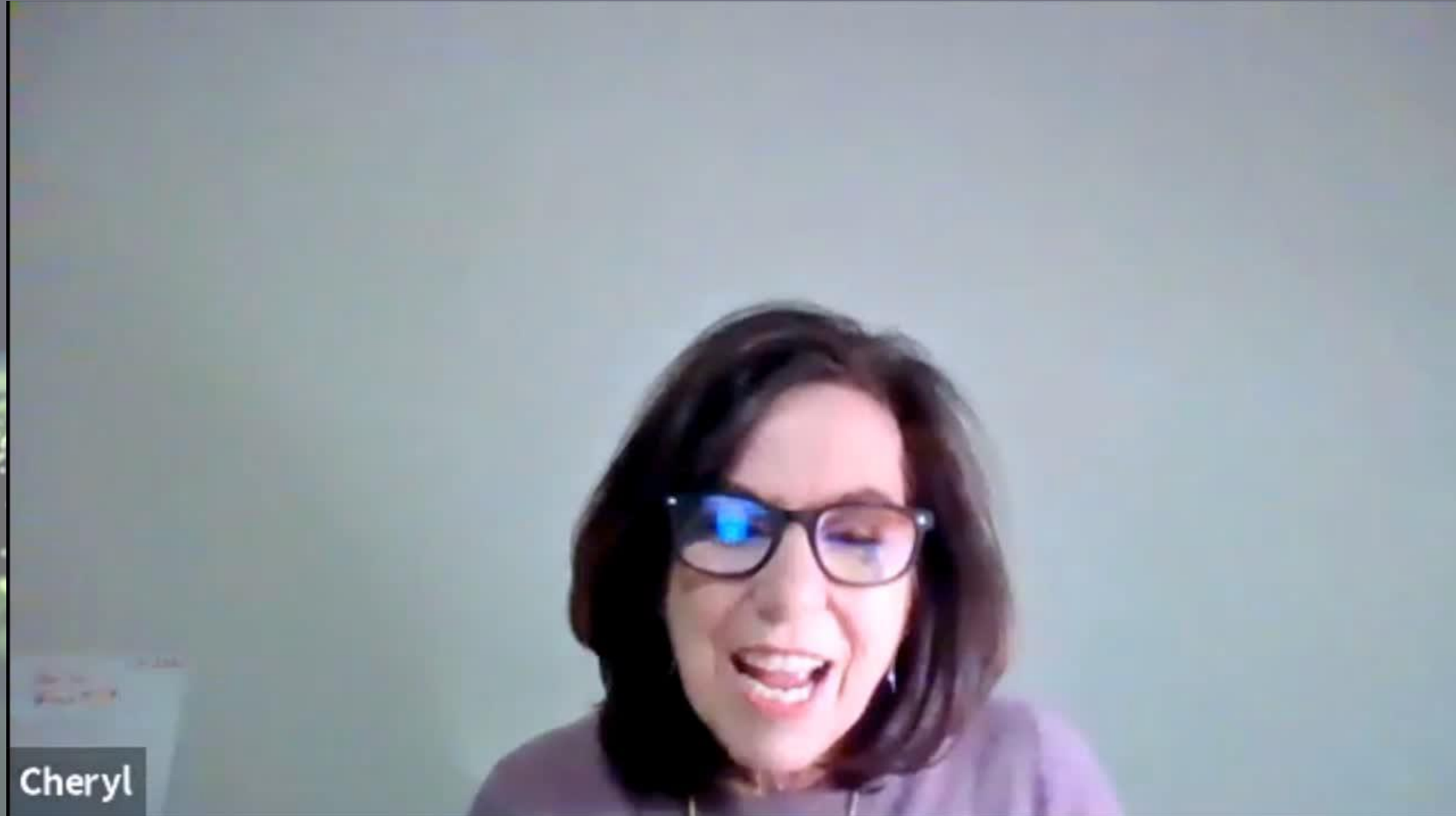




# Plummer Youth Promise Permanency Outcomes

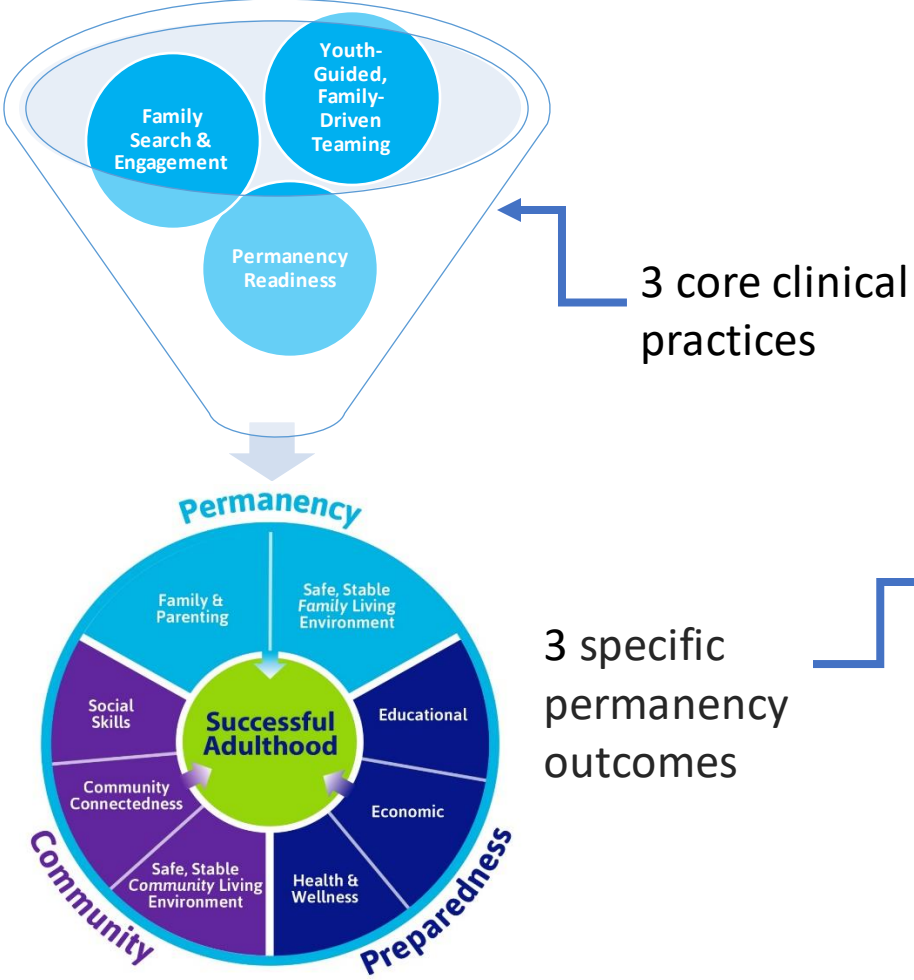


*What is the most important thing you want workers to know about permanency?*





# PYP Permanency Outcomes



**Relational:** Youth has a “safe, stable, emotionally secure parenting relationship” in place. A “safe, stable, emotionally secure parenting relationship” is defined as a relationship that meets ALL FOUR of the following:

- (1) *Physically and psychologically safe;*
- (2) *Consistent, continuous, meant to go on indefinitely;*
- (3) *Unconditionally committed regardless of youth/indiv behavior or the adult’s/family’s changing circumstances; and*
- (4) *Parent claims the youth/indiv as part of their family, and youth/indiv feels that they belong and is accepted as a family member.*

**Physical:** youth/individual is indefinitely able to live with the identified parent.

**Legal:** adoption, guardianship, or reunification has occurred or been finalized (or youth is returning to family who continued to have legal guardianship)

# PYP Permanency Outcomes

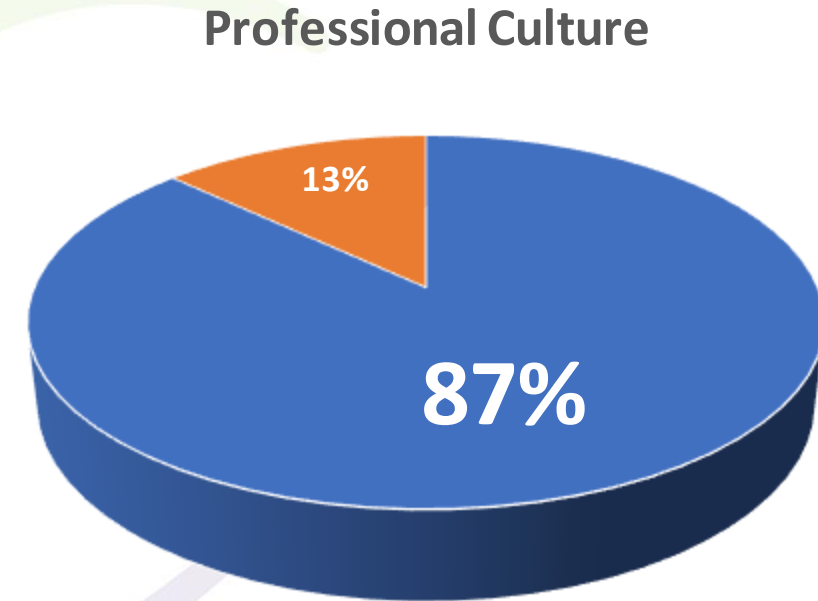
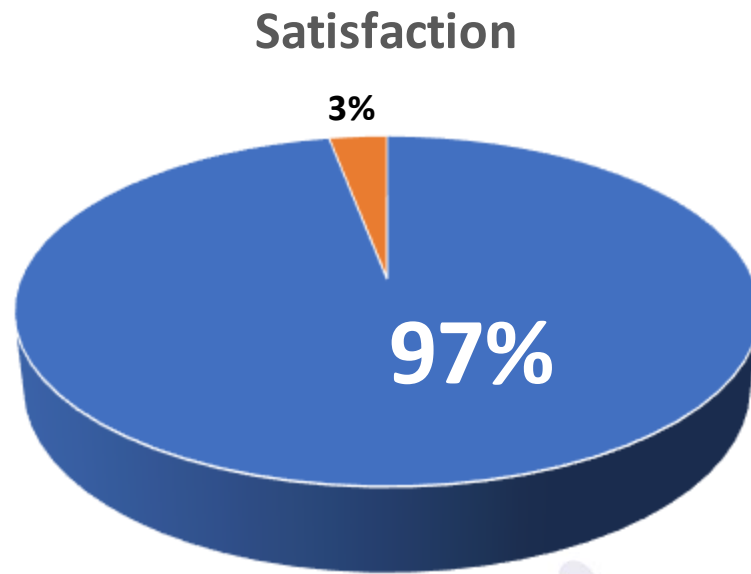
- Relational
- Physical
- Legal

### Permanency Outcomes at Discharge Congregate Care Programs (GH, Pre IL, Pyramid)



# Outcomes: PYP Staff Satisfaction *(81% response rate)*

**% Agree**  
**% Disagree**

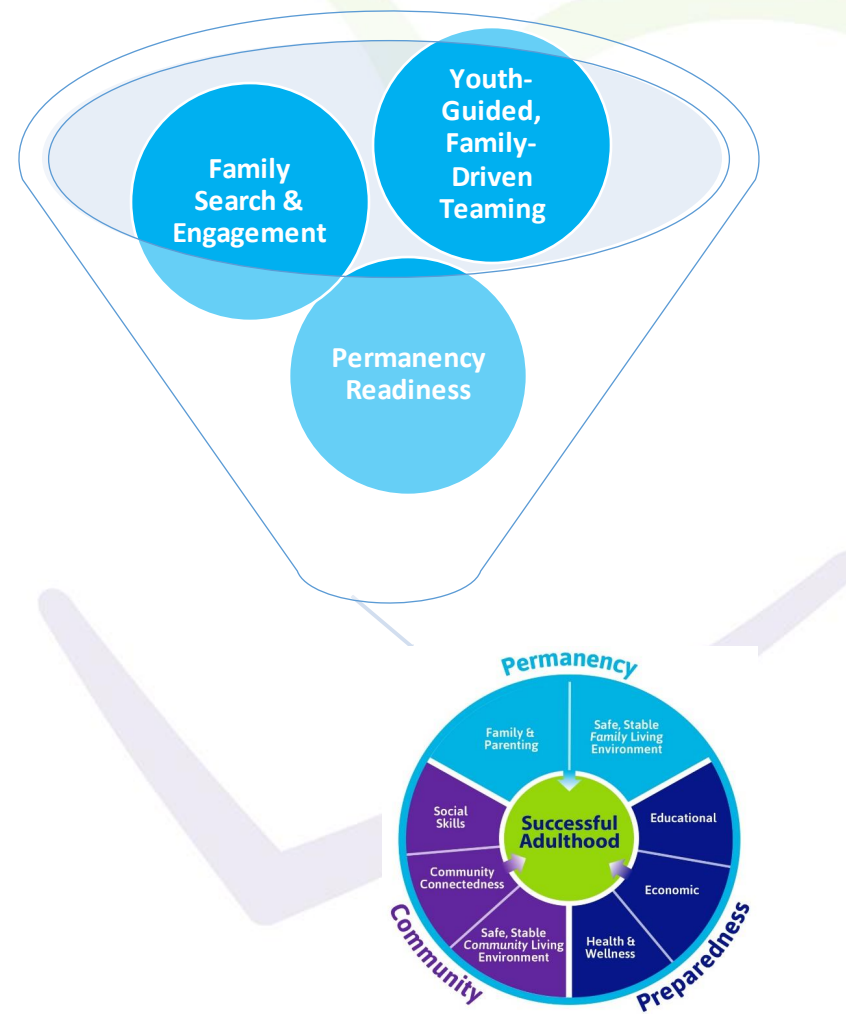


- Staff like and are proud to work at PYP.
- Staff stay working at PYP due to our mission, the strong team, and our reputation for permanency.

Majority agree that they are:

- well prepared;
- provided adequate supervision feedback, and support;
- able to express opinions and opinions are valued; and
- believe that PYP is conducive high performance.

# Plummer Youth Promise Permanency Best Practices



# PYP Permanency Best Practices



## Family Search and Engagement





*Why do you need family even if you will not live with them?*





# FSE: Loneliness is Bad for Your Health

## Loneliness kills:

Increases the risk of **early death by 45%**

## It's a fact:

People who have strong ties to family and friends are as much as **50% less at risk of dying** over any given period of time than those with limited social connections

## Chronic Loneliness Symptoms:

- Irritability
- Impaired cognition
- Heart disease
- Compromised immunity



# FSE: Defined

- **Family Search** is a set of strategies and tools for identifying and locating family members, community members and other adults who are significant to system-involved youth
- **Engagement** is a set of skills to establish / re-establish relationships between the youth and significant adults who can be resources for - ***safety planning, placement and support***

# FSE: Steps

- 1. Develop a search and engagement mindset**
- 2. Identify critical family relationships**
3. Use outreach strategies
4. Build relationships
5. Team Decision making

# FSE: Strategies



Interviews/  
Conversations  
with young  
people



Contacts /  
Conversations  
with Parents &  
Others



Mine the Case  
Record – look  
for  
RELATIONSHIPS  
not just  
placements

Zabasearch  
Familytreenow.com  
TruePeoplesearch.  
com  
Familysearch.org  
Legacy.com  
Social media

Search public  
records and  
databases & internet  
search



# FSE – Strategies



*How have you connected or re-connected with family and adults?*





# FSE: Youth Engagement is Critical!

Engage youth in thinking about who has been important in their life – past and present

- Ask questions related to the **past** (i.e., most memorable place they lived, siblings in and out of care, key supports along the way)
- Ask questions about the **present** (social media, who's in cell phone, who they'd call with good or bad news)
- Use **tools** (genogram, Bullseye Family Circles, 3 Houses)





# R.Y., 19, White, Male, served by: Group Home and Pre-Independent Living

Initial out-of-home placement at age 10

Referred to PYP at age 15

12 placements to date, including: Kinship, Foster Care, Intensive Group Home, Residential and Hospitalization

Trauma: separation from family, survivor of abuse and neglect



## RELATIONSHIPS

- R.Y. is connected to his immediate family (Two sisters and bio mom occasionally)
- He is also close with his best friend's family and his former foster family (both in NH)
- R.Y. maintains contact with two former teachers who are engaged with PYP



## Strengths

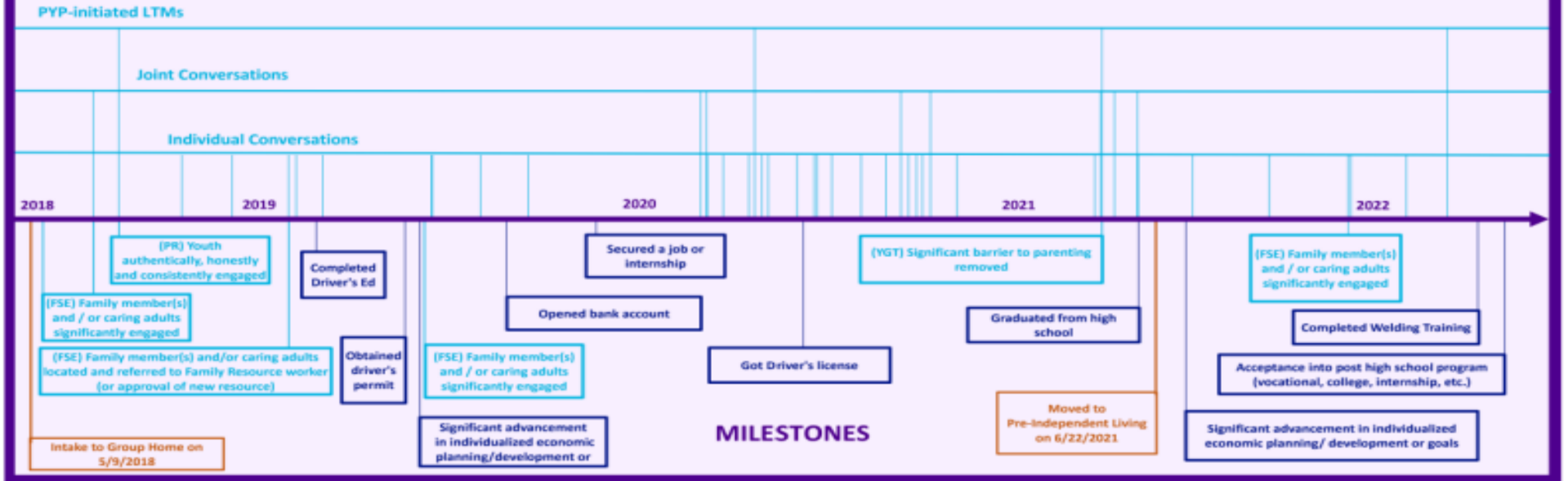
- R.Y. demonstrates a clear attachment to several caring adults, including empathetic and loving sisters who are there for him.
- He is interested in learning about his family history and cultural background.
- Brave and resilient  
"willing to try anything"
- Empathetic, kind and introspective
- Strong social skills  
"can get along with anyone"



## Barriers

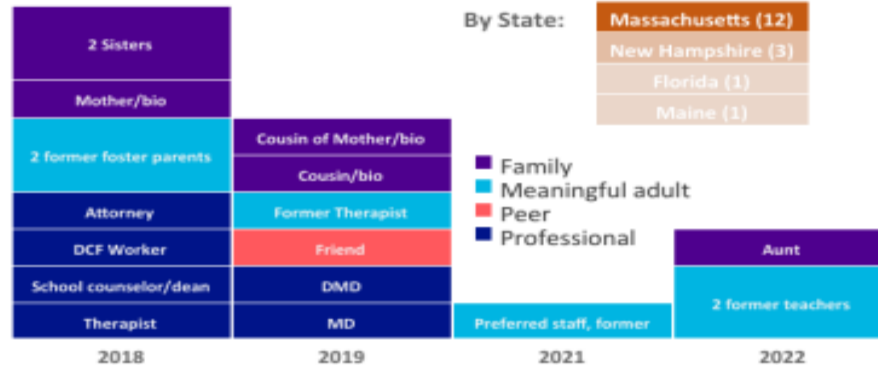
- Bio mom continues to struggle with personal issues, resulting in an inconsistent relationship
- Family is spread out across New England
- Pandemic restrictions around visits with adult supports (Mom, sisters, and former foster parents)

## PERMANENCY INTERVENTIONS

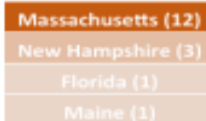


## TEAM MEMBERS

By Year Added:



By State:



## Commitment and Belonging Ratings



# *What can you tell us about the importance of youth voice in permanency planning?*



# You found them.



- 1. Develop a search and engagement mindset**
- 2. Identify critical family relationships**
- 3. Use outreach strategies**
- 4. Build relationships**
- 5. Team Decision making**

# FSE: Outreach: Balancing Placement, Ongoing Family Relationships and Confidentiality



## Use introductory letters and telephone calls

- Disclose youth and/or parent's name to establish a relationship
- Keep information sharing general (youth's interest, favorite subject in school, unique qualities)
- Mention relationships whenever possible
- Emphasize a range of ways to provide support, minimize expectations (+ or -) about placement



- Identify location of the child (foster home, identity of foster parents, school or residential facility)
- Discuss specific allegations or reason for entry into care
- Treat this as an assessment for placement-limit questions
- Make promises-FSE is a process, and no one knows where it will ultimately lead



# FSE - Emphasis on the “E”

## Because:

- Family separation has been the system’s main response to CAN
- Policy & practice has resulted in children of color being over-represented in child welfare
- Child welfare and court mandates result in multiple emotional and relational cut-offs

## Approach with an Inclusive Lens

- Children are entitled to process their complete story
- Demonstrate openness and respect – Cultural Humility
- Explore a variety of roles
- Ask “*What would it take*”



# FSE: Relationships & Roles

## Relationships

- Family (Biological, Adoptive, Surrogate)
- Meaningful Adults (unpaid and on the team by choice)
- Paid Professionals

## Roles (Relatives and others as resources)

- Support for family preservation/reunification
- Decision-making partners in team meetings
- Access to family history and genealogy
- Family connections to help youth maintain critical ethnic, cultural and community ties
- Respite providers for parents or other caregivers
- Emotional and tangible supports
- Connections with siblings and other relatives

*What works well to engage youth  
in permanency planning?*



Jonathan



# PYP Permanency Best Practices



Youth-Guided,  
Family-Driven Teaming



# YGFDT: Integrated Planning

**Permanency** Enduring family relationships, emotional security, legal permanency, connection to family history, heritage, culture

- *Relational*: Youth has a safe, stable, emotionally secure parenting
- *Physical*: youth is indefinitely able to live with the identified parent
- *Legal*: reunification, adoption, or guardianship

## Safety

- *Physical*: supervision and environment, safe housing, risk-taking behavior, interpersonal/relationship conflict
- *Psychological*: attachment relationships, identity and emotional adjustment, allowance for mistakes, trauma history

## Well-being

Medical, educational, social, vocational, self-advocacy, prep for adulthood


### DEI Lens:

How might race impact the trust a family has for an organization or system?

How might that affect our ability to build relationships and a sense of safety?

# YGFDT: Desired Outcomes



- ✓ Promotes sharing of information around youth's current needs
  - ✓ Brings to light changes in caretakers' circumstances and capacity
  - ✓ Provides opportunity to explore a variety of roles in the life of the youth
  - ✓ Supports informed decisions
- 

# YGFDT: Strategically woven into contractual meetings

- The youth participated in planning, family contributed to the agenda, meeting scheduled flexibly.
- Broad outreach to many adults (former caregivers, significant adults, child welfare agency, attorneys, GAL, other clinicians, etc.).
- Potential parenting relationships, if existing, identified and prioritized. If there is no current or potential parent relationship, other caring adults engaged in the meeting.
- Individual and joint conversations have already begun to identify and build consensus.
- Parental roles are increasing while the professional's are decreasing.
- All members receive information and preparation about the team meeting including purpose, roles, and goals.
- Exhibit partnership with custodial parent/agency and key professionals at the table.
- Integrate planning for safety, well-being, and permanency.

# YGFDT: It's all about the Prep!

MUST happen (& be documented!)

- Hold **individual conversations** with youth, parents/caregivers and others (as needed)
- Hold **joint conversations** to facilitate teaming, resolve conflict, reconnect and introduce new team members
- Co-create agenda for meeting using both teaming tools and the **Youth Guided Family Driven Large Team Meeting** agenda

# PYP Permanency Best Practices



## Youth & Family Permanency Readiness



# Youth Quote



“I still struggle to define my family and what that means to me. I lack a sense of belonging on many levels.”





# PR: 3 Key Elements

Clarify  
Assist youth in understanding what has happened in their life



Integrate  
Help **youth** understand their membership in multiple families/ group settings



Belong  
Help **youth** know their family membership is permanent



Facts, Feelings, Fear, Grieve losses

Promote reconciliation, membership, address loyalty conflicts

Developing permanent family membership within family network; Increasing readiness to live w/ family



Youth needs, fears about commitment, ambivalence & expectations


Recognizing all child's attachments, giving permission to hold multiple attachments, facilitating relationship building/bridging

Exploration of legal commitment; relational permanence - developing symbols/rituals; acknowledging family network

# PR: Special Considerations for Transracial Caregiving

## Goals:

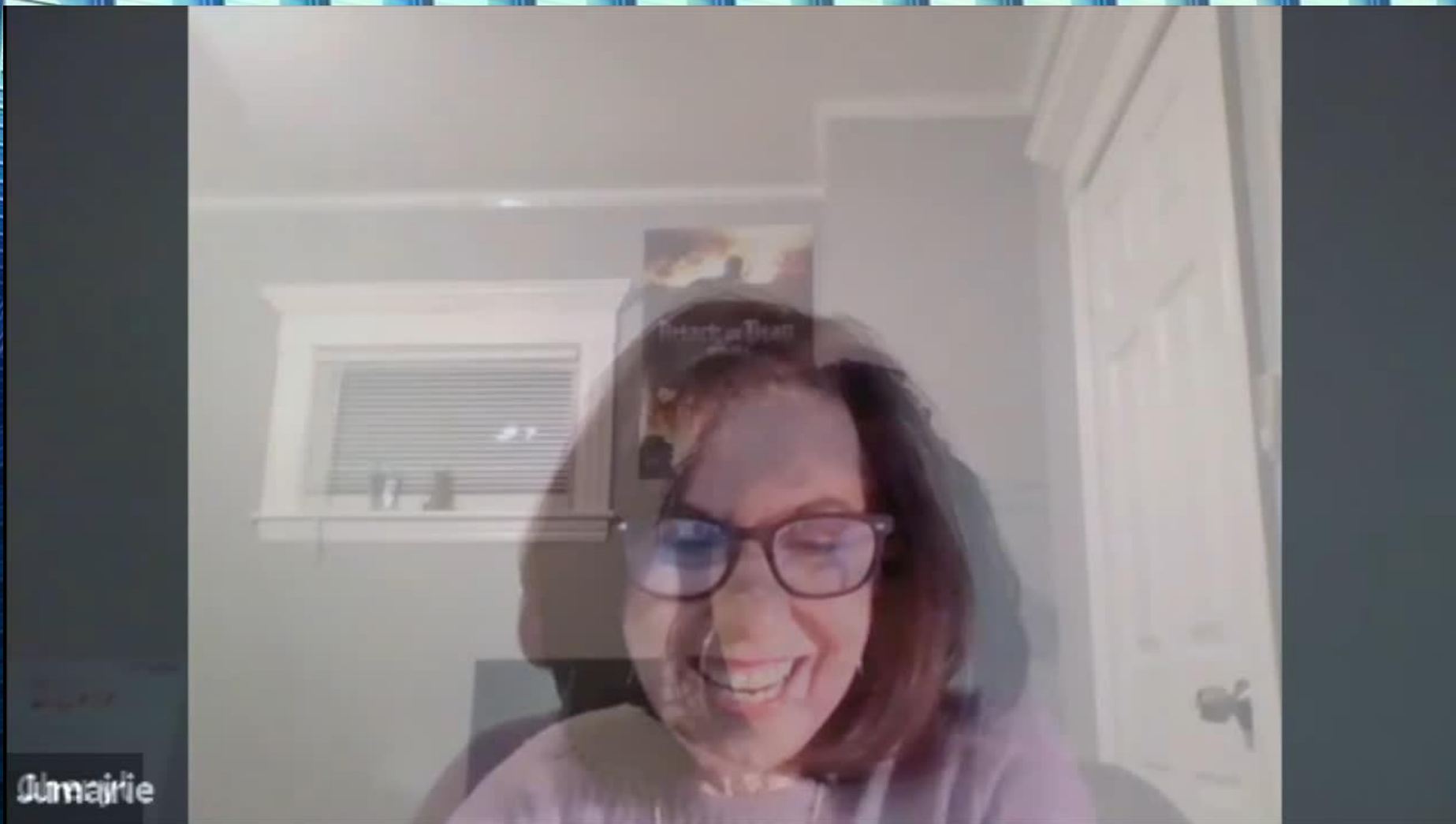
- Explore child's racial and cultural identity with caregiver/parent
- Increase parent/caregiver's skill/comfort in openly discussing racial and cultural issues
- Integrate the child's culture and traditions into the family and introduce child to family's culture and traditions
- Support parent/caregiver in developing a network of racial and/or cultural mentors to support child's identity development



*” Adopted kids of color come with trauma and different needs. It is important to meet those needs and build trust; and even when you develop a bond, that doesn’t mean you stop putting the work in.”*

*- Henry, PYP youth, age 18*





*Why is a parent figure important, no matter your age?*

# PR: Desired Outcomes

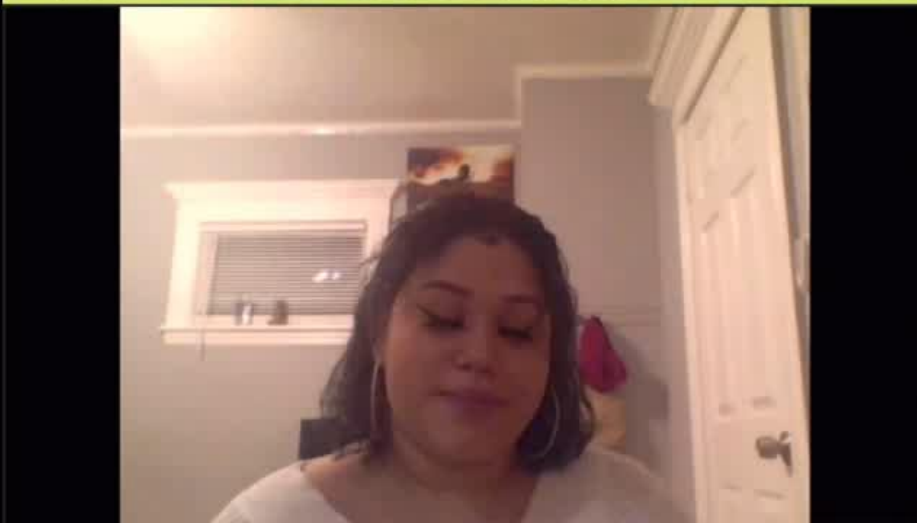
## Youth

- ✓ has a coherent life narrative, and can answer: *Who am I? What happened to me? Where am I going? How will I get there? When will I know I belong?*
- ✓ understands his/her chronology of placements, removals and permanency efforts
- ✓ has information about his/her experiences of abuse, neglect and other trauma
- ✓ feels supported in becoming a member of the permanent family while maintaining connections to other family members and significant adults

## Parent(s)

- ✓ fully informed regarding the youth's history and experiences of abuse, neglect, and other trauma





*What do we say when you are  
telling us "no"?*

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Referred to PYP at age 15

12 placements to date, including: Kinship, Foster Care, Intensive Group Home, Residential and Hospitalization

Trauma: separation from family, survivor of abuse and neglect

## What it Takes

PERMANENCY INTERVENTIONS

### Family Search & Engagement

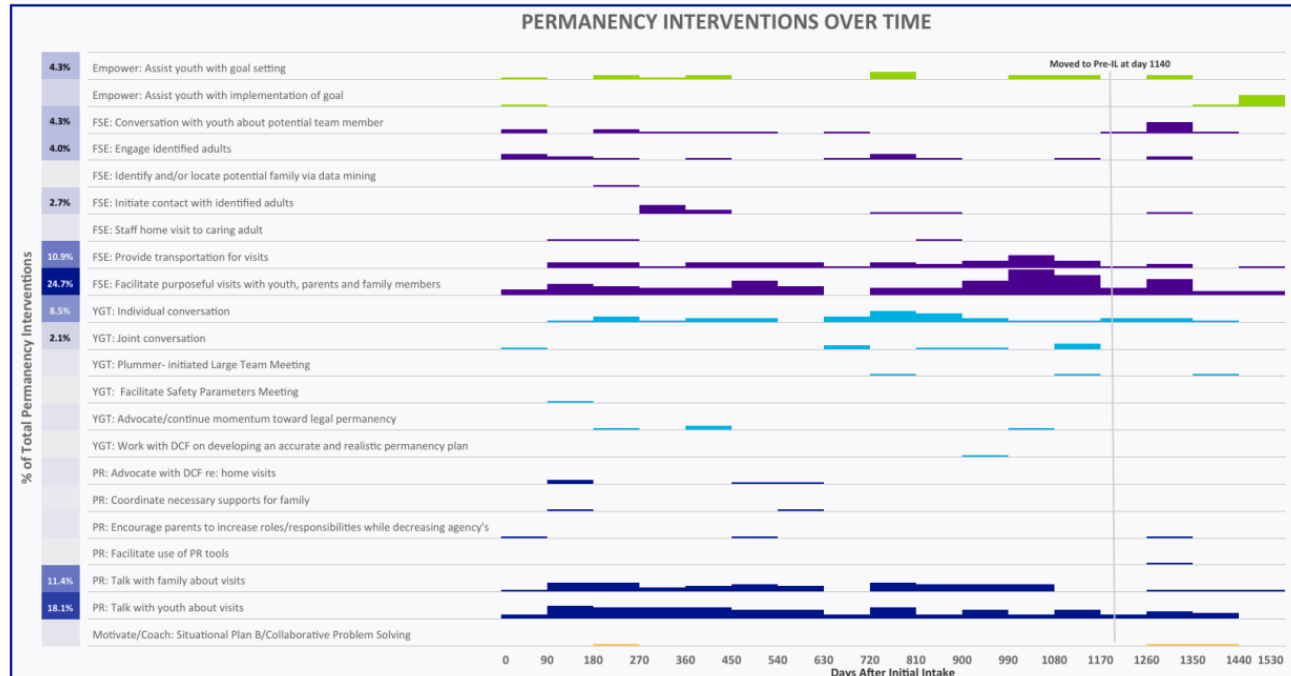
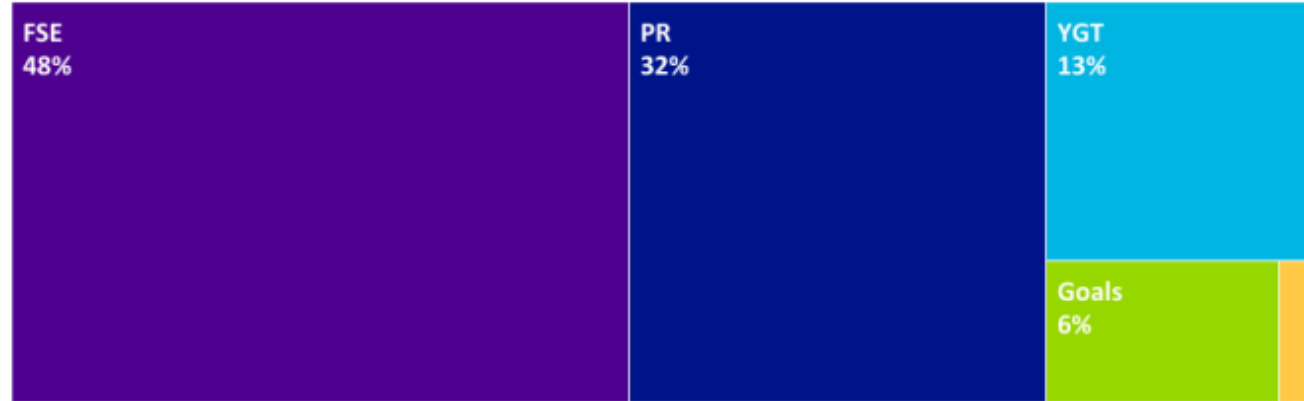
(FSE) Identifying and engaging potential family and encouraging DCF to consider them as potential parents or permanency resources.

### Youth and Family Permanency Readiness

(Y&FPR) Engaging in activities and arranging supports designed to help with the transition to a safe, stable, emotionally secure relationship.

### Youth-Guided, Family-Driven Teaming

(YGFDT) Intensive services designed to engage all parties through individual and joint conversations, team and safety parameter meetings, and facilitation and processing of time spent with family.







# Putting it all Together



# Putting it all Together: Elements of Permanency Focused Residential Care

Permanency Element	Implementation: Training & Supervision	Documentation of Staff Actions
Authentic engagement with young people & families	Family is a right, not a privilege & time with family is never used as a consequence or intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASSESS: Ask as early as the interview about who is important to them, who they miss</li> <li>• FACILITATE: Time with family – in person, phone, video</li> <li>• ENCOURAGE: Inviting family to attend events, meetings, games, dinners, etc.</li> <li>• ENGAGE/SUPPORT: Checking in with youth and family pre/post visits</li> <li>• CONNECT: Provide transportation to kids and families</li> <li>• EMPOWER: Provide dinner cards and gifts at holidays and birthdays</li> <li>• ENCOURAGE: Ask about all the people important to them</li> </ul>
Provide physical and psychological safety	Trauma-informed, non-coercive, strengths-based approach allows staff to be an ally	
Families as equal partners, engaged based upon roles they CAN play	Key permanency roles are understood and staff are supported to work with what family members can do, not what we think they SHOULD do	
What ever it takes to advance permanency plan	Staff identify and eliminate barriers, often through use of flexible funds, to support permanency plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transportation to see family (planes, trains, automobiles)</li> <li>- Furniture for youth returning home</li> <li>- Recreational activities</li> <li>- Family meals</li> <li>- Gifts for family during holidays or birthdays</li> <li>- Therapeutic activities</li> </ul>	

# Putting it all Together: Roles and Responsibilities

## PYP Intervention & Outcome Model, and Staff Roles



**All Staff**  
Progress Notes – Services, Behaviors

**Residential Clinician (GH, Pre-IL)**  
PEARLS (Trauma)  
CRAFFT (Substance Abuse)  
CPS (Trauma-informed problem solving)  
CANS  
*Services, Interventions, Milestones*

**Intervention Coordinators**  
Goal setting in Prep and Comm domains and specific assessment/screening tools:

<b>GH, Pre-IL</b>	<b>IL</b>
PAYA (Preparedness)	PAYA
YRAT (Youth Readiness)	YRAT
	CRAFFT (substance abuse)

*Services, Interventions, Milestones*

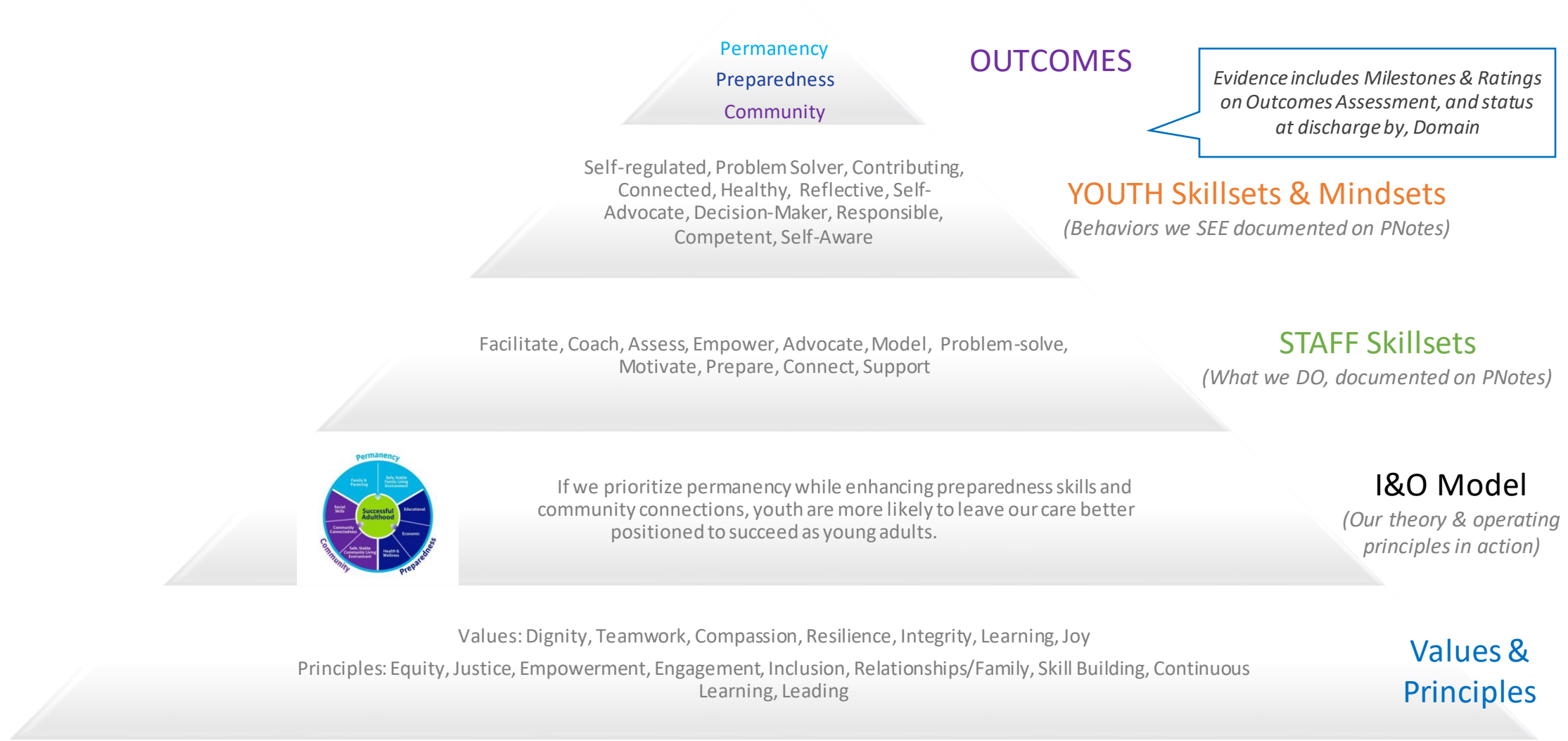
**Permanency Workers** Goal setting in PERM domains and...

<b>GH, Pre-IL, IPS, IFC</b>	<b>IL</b>
Comprehensive Assessment	all of those listed &
Family Search & Engagement	CANS
Youth-Guided, Family-Driven Teaming (Individual & Joint Conversations, LTM Facilitation)	PEARLS (Trauma)
Permanency Readiness	
Youth Connections Scale/Perm Tools	
Referrals	
Advocacy	

*Services, Interventions, Milestones, Outcomes Assessments, Team Member Participation*

# Putting it all Together: Living the Mission

*VISION: Every young person has a family unconditionally committed to nurture, protect, and guide them to successful adulthood.*



**MISSION:** Set a standard of excellence that improves outcomes for young people in or at risk of entering state care by deeply engaging youth, families, and the systems that impact them to develop permanent family relationships, skills, and community connections.





## Youth Quote

*“I’m gonna die in this place. All I’ve ever wanted is to get back to my family.”*

- Age 19  
Plummer Youth Promise



*What is a final word of advice for workers as they think about permanency in their work?*





What do you see?



**FAMILY IS NOWHERE**





Questions?





# Thank you!

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