

“Whatever it Takes”

Using Cross-Agency Collaboration to Strengthen Permanency Outcomes

A presentation to the Association for Children's Residential Centers

May 17, 2023

1:30-3:00 PM



Welcome & Introductions

The **Massachusetts Permanency Practice Alliance (MPPA)** is a collaboration of organizations committed to improving permanency practices within their respective agencies to better serve the children of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



Meredith Rapoza, LMHC
Justice Resource Institute (JRI)
Senior Director of Quality & Compliance
mrapoza@jri.org



Kara Sabalauskas, MSW
The Home for Little Wanderers
Director of Evaluation & Research
ksabalaukas@thehome.org



Cheryl Peltier, LSW
Plummer Youth Promise
Training & Consulting
cpeltier@plummeryouthpromise.org



Noreen K Dolan, LCSW
Bridges Homeward
Deputy Director
ndolan@bridgeshomeward.org

Reflection: Collaboration

- Think about a time when you felt vulnerable... maybe you had to learn something new as a grown person, get or give hard feedback, learn something you thought you already knew;
- Now think about a time when you collaborated with another group or entity (person, state, case, etc.) and the vulnerability that was required.



Today you will learn...

1. How **permanency practices** ensure stronger youth and family voice and promote permanent relationships and stronger supports;
2. How to use **cross-provider agency collaboration** to support improved outcomes for families and workforce strategies; and
3. Key methods to **evaluate permanency** outcomes.



How do we define Permanency?

A safe, stable, and emotionally secure parenting relationship

This includes three types of permanency:
legal, physical, and relational.

Ideally every youth we serve would obtain all three.



Collaboration: Why?

Our intended outcomes are:

1. Youth have a safe, stable, and emotionally secure family and parenting relationship.
2. Youth live in a safe, stable home.
3. Youth have a permanent, legal connection to family.
4. Permanency is sustained.

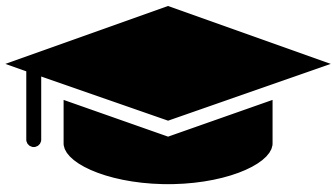


Collaboration: Why?

- Staff across agencies were equally tired of seeing poor outcomes for youth leaving child welfare care without family;
- We were all passionate about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and were continuing to see youth of color over-represented in child welfare in MA;
- Youth involved in the foster system were moving across placements & agencies; we share kids and families across our agencies;
- Staff were already moving across agencies as opportunities arose; &
- Youth find family anyway after discharge.

Collaboration: Why?

Poor outcomes for youth leaving child welfare care without family:



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



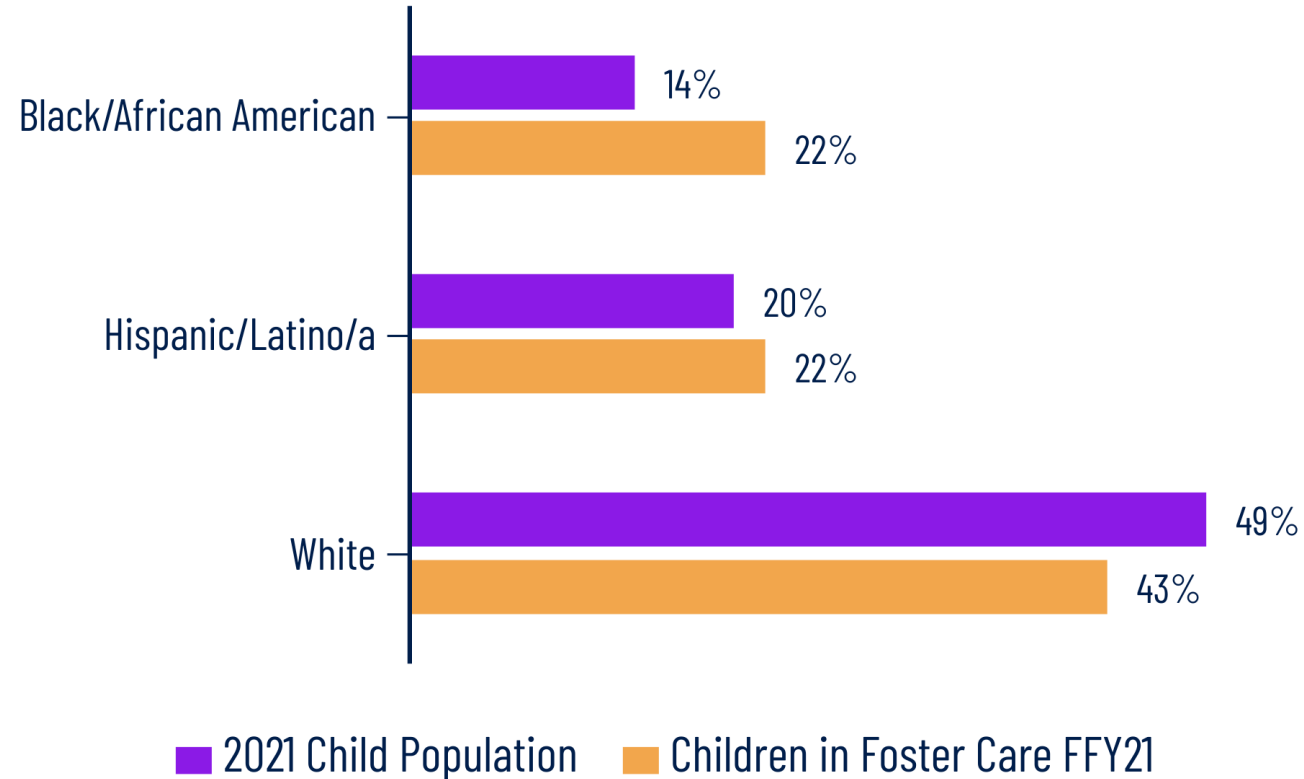
24% will be incarcerated within two years of leaving the system



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

Collaboration: Why?

Youth of color are over-represented in child welfare

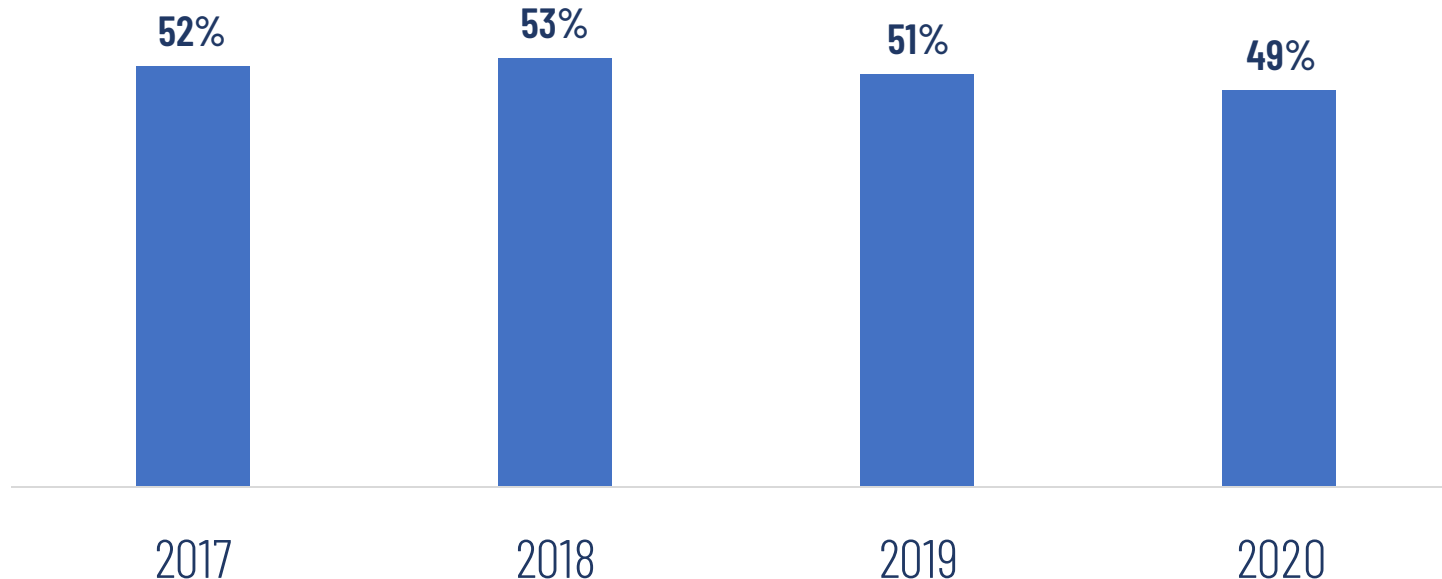


By age 18, 37% of all young people have interacted with CPS.
72% of them are youth of color

Collaboration: Why?

Youth move across placements; we share kids and families across our agencies.

MA DCF children in care with more than two placements



Collaboration: Why?

Youth return to family after emancipation & need supports anyway

- **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
- **41%** said they needed adult support and concrete transitional supports
- **40%** said they wished they had been or adopted, or that someone talked more with them about their options around family

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)

Courtney, M.E., Piliavin, I.P., Grogan-Kaylor, A. and Nast, A. (2011). "foster youth transitions to adulthood: A longitudinal view of youth leaving foster care." *Child Welfare*, 70(6), 685-718.

Collaboration: What?

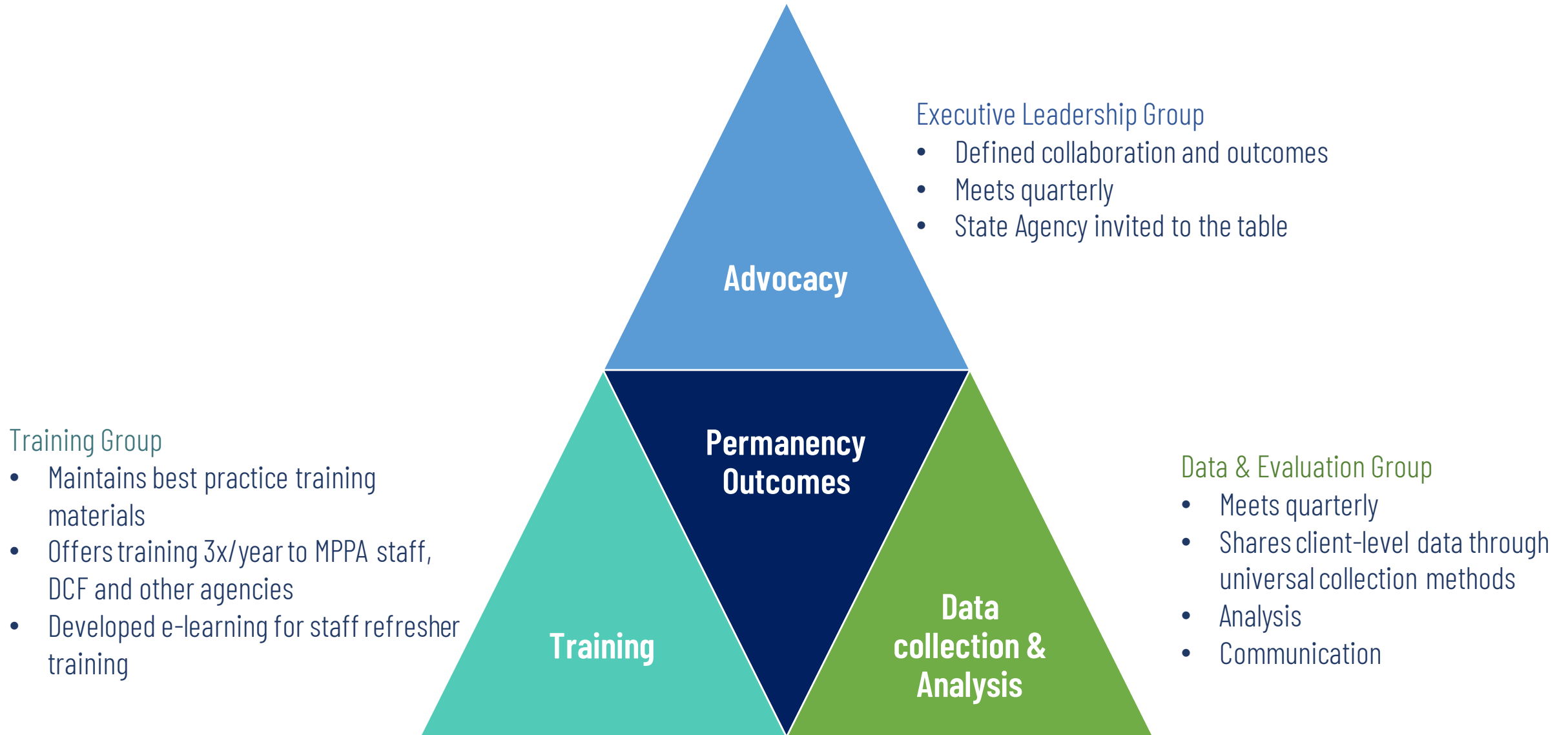
MPPA strives to create a pathway to permanence that enables every child to be united or reunited with a caring adult.

The mission of the MPPA permanency initiative is to ensure that children and youth **stay home, go home, or find home.**

[Video](#) from MA Permanency Practice Alliance Executive Leadership Team



Collaboration: How?



Collaboration: How?

- Common training
- Aligned outcomes
- Shared data collection & analysis



When is the last time
you've been in
contact with a
family member?



Permanency Best Practices

Permanency is 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.



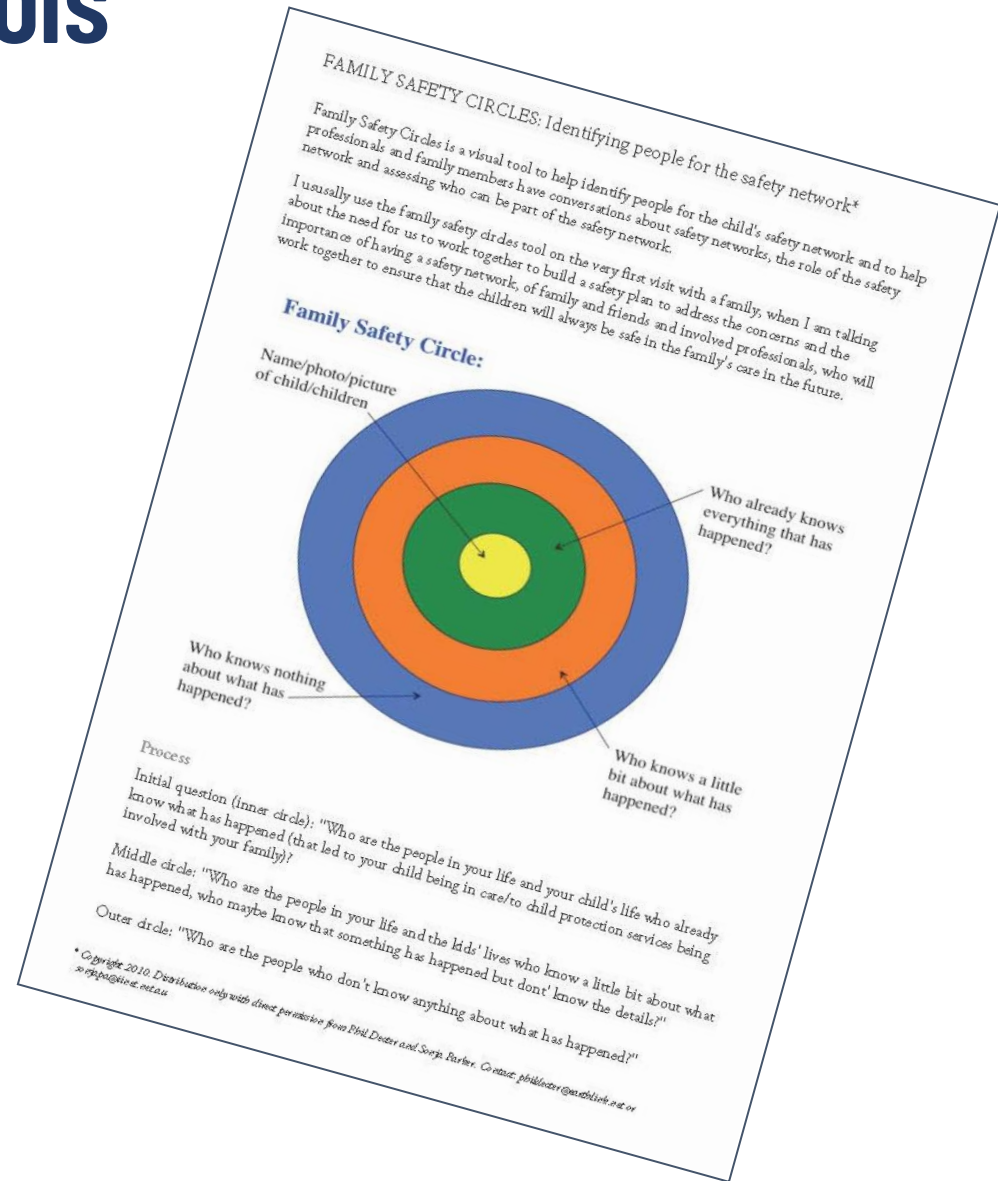


Family Search & Engagement

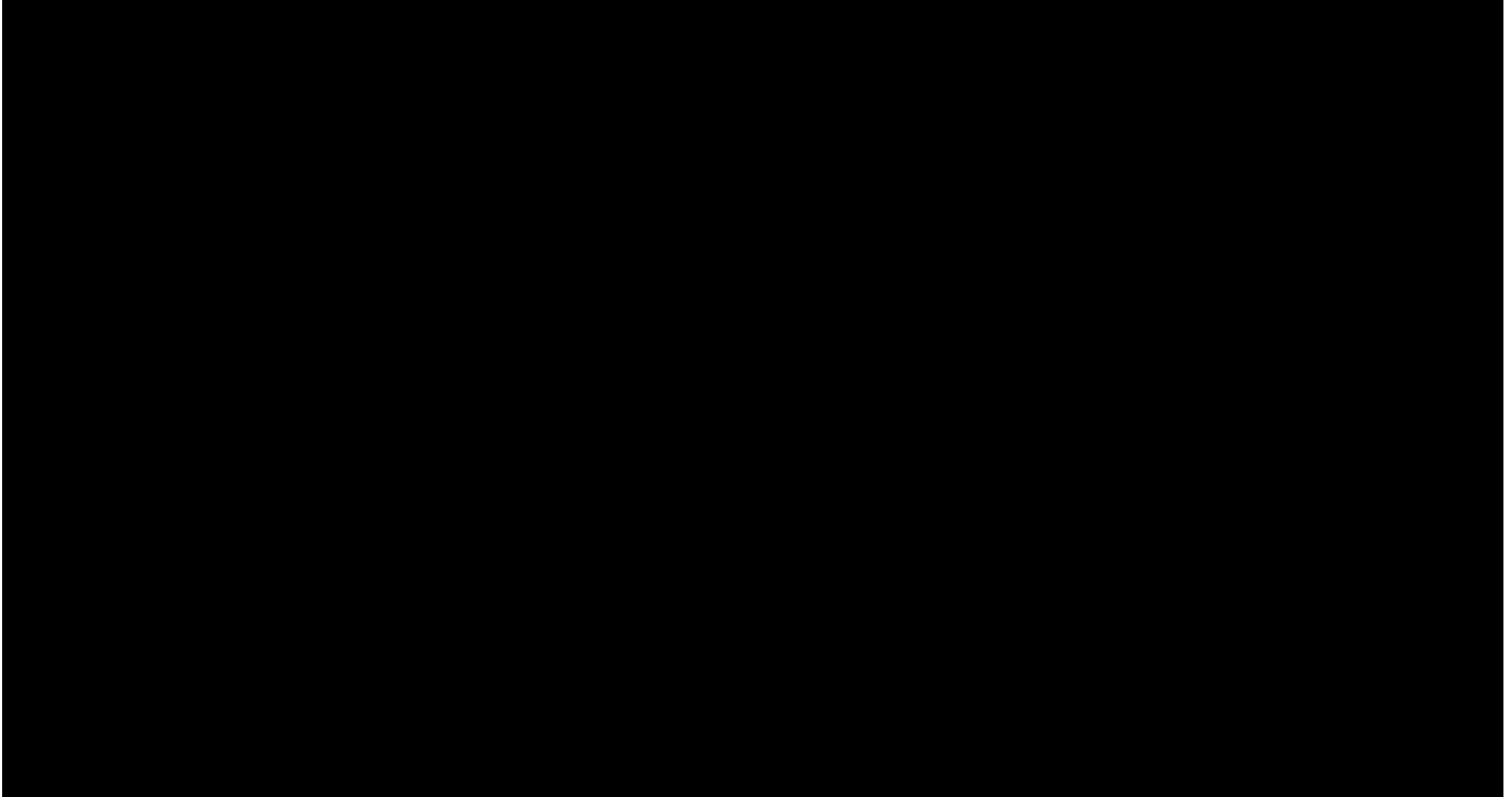
- Family Search is a set of strategies and tools for identifying and locating family members, community members and other adults who are significant to system-involved youth
- Engagement is a set of skills to establish / re-establish relationships between the youth and significant adults who can be resources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

Engaging Youth through Tools

Family Safety Circle



Bull's Eye Family Safety Circle (Video)



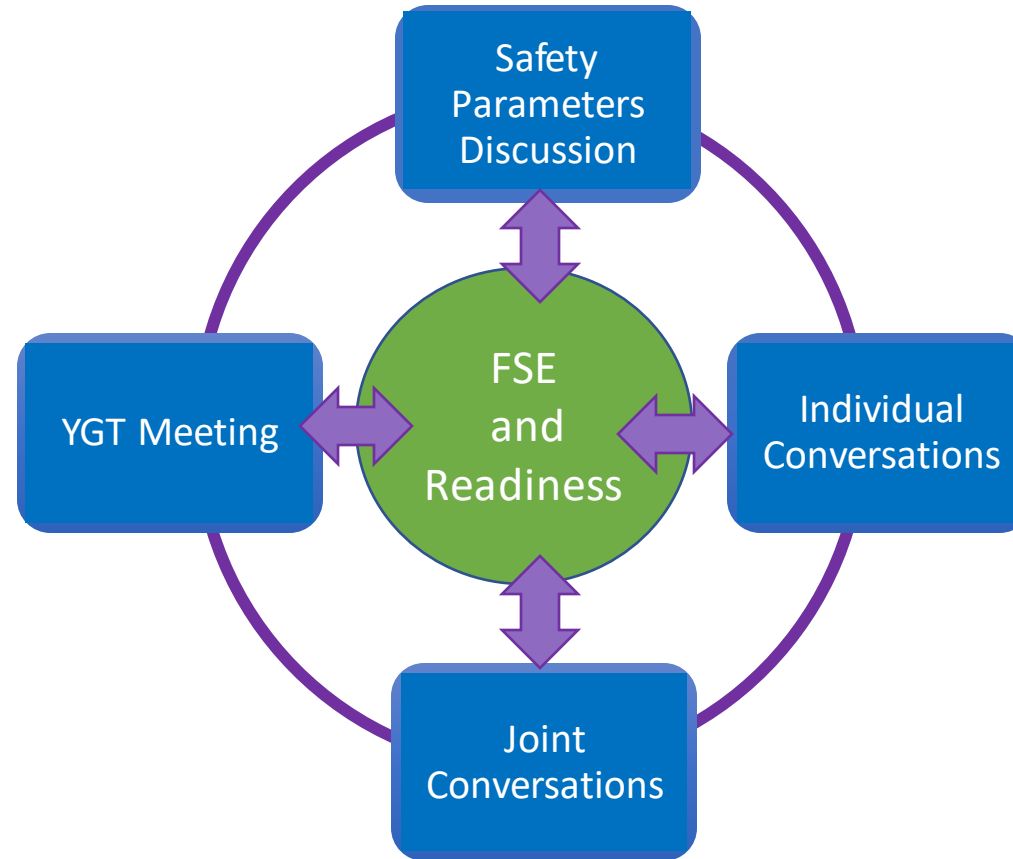


Youth-Guided, Family Driven Teaming

A process that requires intentional conversations with and across individuals on a youth's team to:

- Promote sharing of information about youth's needs
- Bring light to changes in caregivers' circumstances
- Provide opportunity to explore a variety of roles in the life of the youth
- Support informed decisions

Overview of the Teaming Process



Youth-Guided, Family Driven Teaming



It's all about the preparation!

Individual conversations with youth, parents/caregivers and others (as needed)

Joint conversations to share information, encourage direct communication, resolve conflict, reconnect and introduce new team members, clarify roles, prepare for large team meeting

Co-created agenda for meeting with youth and family

GIO





Youth and Family Permanency Readiness

A continuous process to:

- **Clarify** - assist youth and parent/caregiver in understanding what happened in their lives
- **Integrate** - Help youth and parent/caregiver understand their membership in multiple families and communities
- **Belong** - Help youth know their family membership is permanent

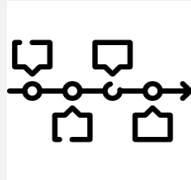
Permanency Tools

- Support search efforts to identify significant people who may be part of planning for safety and permanency
- Bring the youth/family voice into planning
- Help youth to clarify the past, understand the present, plan for the future with family
- Increase readiness of youth, parents and family for successful family relationships

Zabasearch
Familytreenow.com
TruePeoplesearch.com
Familysearch.org
Legacy.com
Connectourkids.org
Vinelink.com
Social Media-Facebook



"I Want to Say
Something"



Timeline



Sands of Time



"Three Houses"



"I Am From"

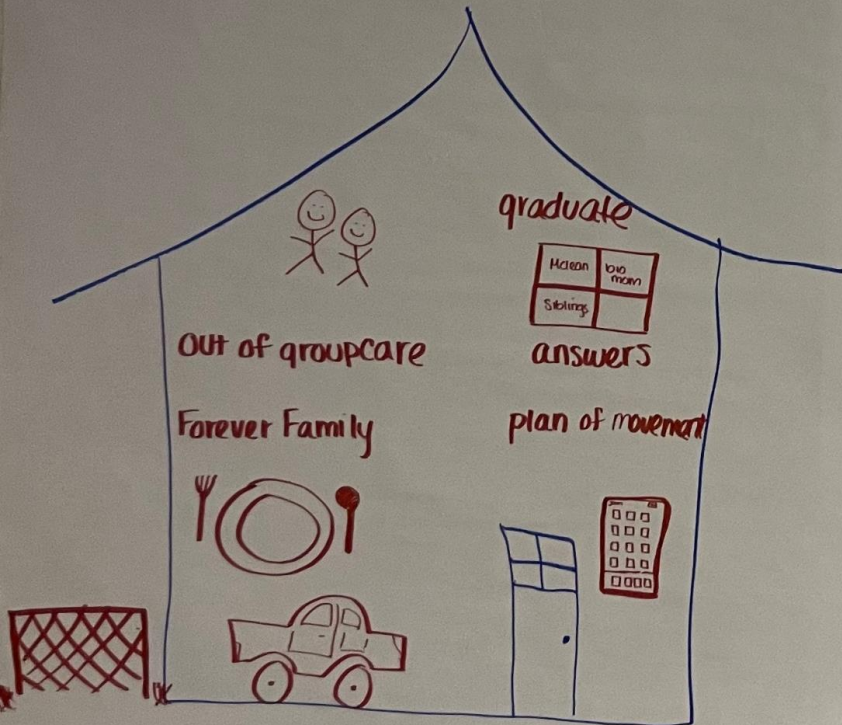


Bulls Eye Family
Safety Circles

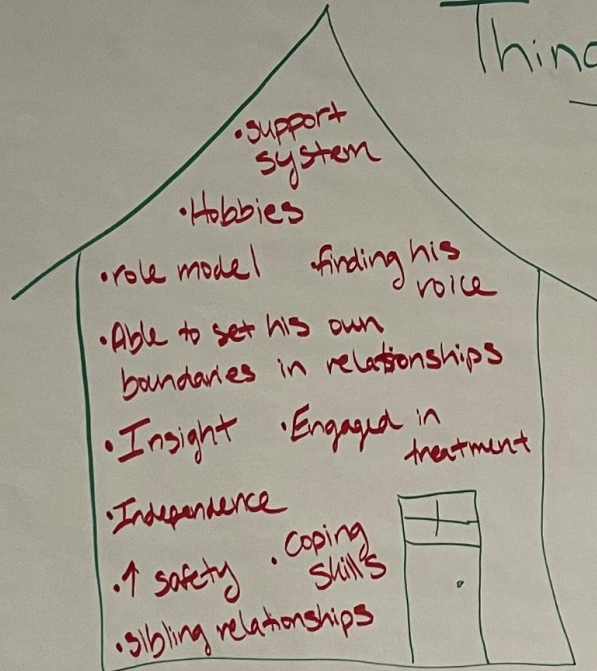
YOUTH PERMANENCY TOOLKIT

<http://www.nrcpfc.org/toolkit/youth-permanency/>

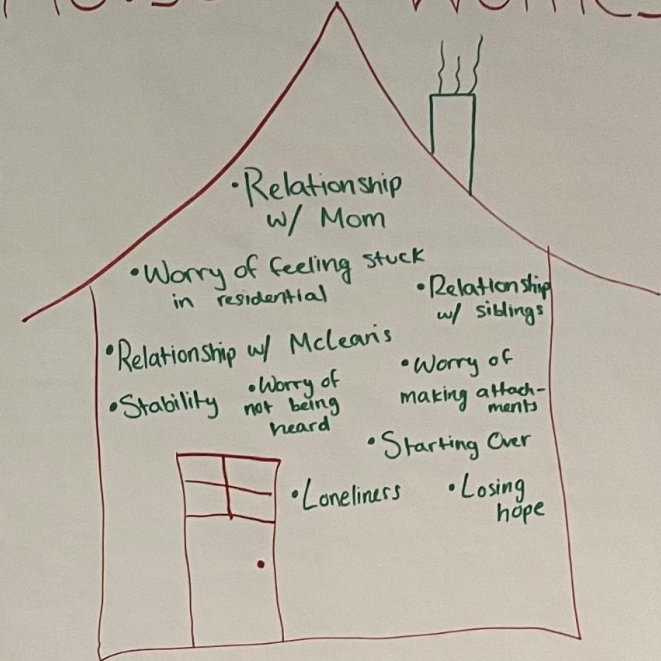
House of Wishes



House of Good Things



House of Worries



Three Houses

Testimonials: MPPA Trainees

"I would recommend this training and trainer to others because the training provides psychoeducation and tools which can be utilized within permanency work with clients."

"Valuable to any person working with youth in a foster care setting."

"This training is an imperative framework and reminder of families' strengths and resilience despite situational difficulties."

"Valuable information and perspective that often isn't prioritized enough in congregate care (and all treatment really)"

"Yes, it should be mandatory for adults working with kids in care regardless of the adults' particular position."

"100% recommend this training as it allows you to self reflect on your efforts to help a child achieve permanency."

Data Sharing: Goals

- **Assess** the short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes of children and youth who receive permanency services
- **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the permanency intervention model
- **Provide outcomes information** for advocacy and systems change efforts



Data Sharing: Methods

- Define the short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes
- Implement a common youth permanency assessment
- Create a data dictionary and standardized format for collecting and sharing data fields
- Sign data sharing agreements
- Determine sample cohort and data sharing intervals
- Remain upbeat and collaborative as we all learn together



MPPA Cross-Agency Data Sharing

Sample

- Children and youth who entered out-of-home care in FY20
- We are following these youth over time until discharge
- Assessments are from the time period 7/1/19–12/31/21
- N=327 children and youth with multiple assessments



MPPA Cross-Agency Data Sharing

Demographics

- 60% of youth identified as BIPOC
- 35% of youth identified as Hispanic / Latino/a
- Age ranged from 1-22; the median age was 16
- 49% female (sex assigned at birth)
- 4% of youth identified as trans or nonbinary



Permanency Scale

Vulnerable



1. No existing or potential parenting relationships
2. Potential parenting relationship identified but no commitment made
3. Has parenting relationship and there is consensus among youth, state agency, and caregiver about the plan, but limited action
4. Youth and caregiver are engaged with one another and actively moving towards permanency

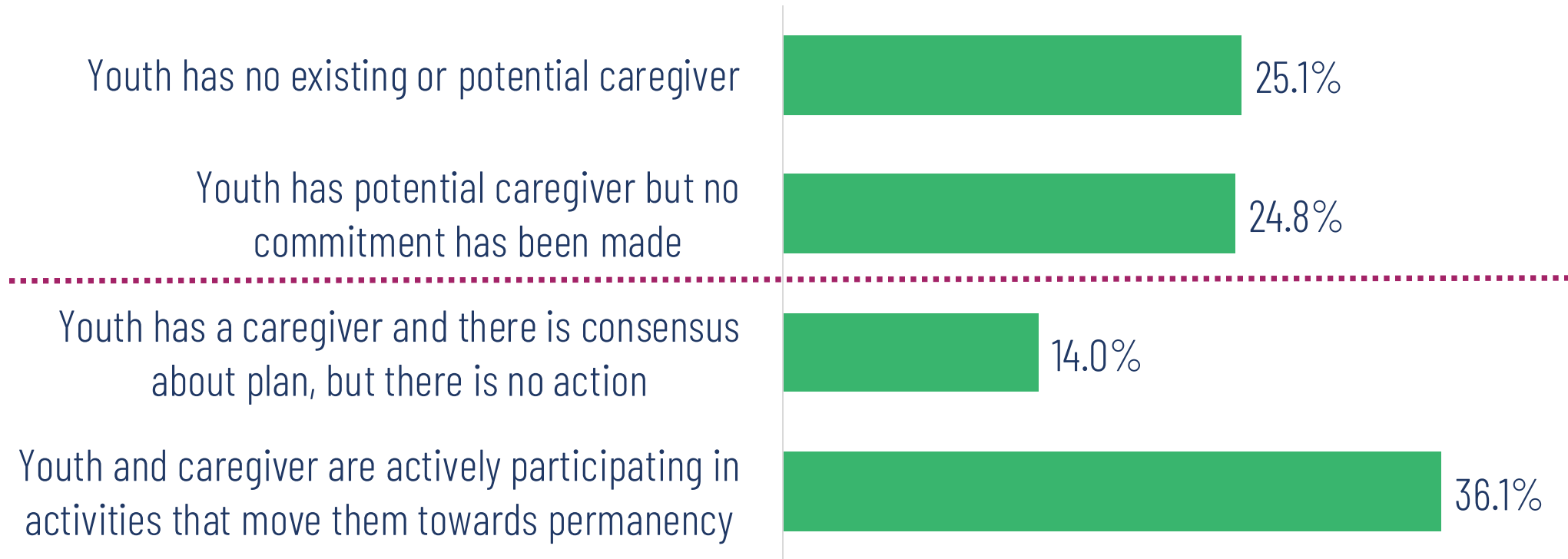
Permanency Achieved



5. Adoption, guardianship, kinship placement, or reunification has occurred within a safe, stable, emotionally secure parenting relationship

Initial Permanency Status

49.9% of youth/young adults did not have a committed caregiver at their initial assessment

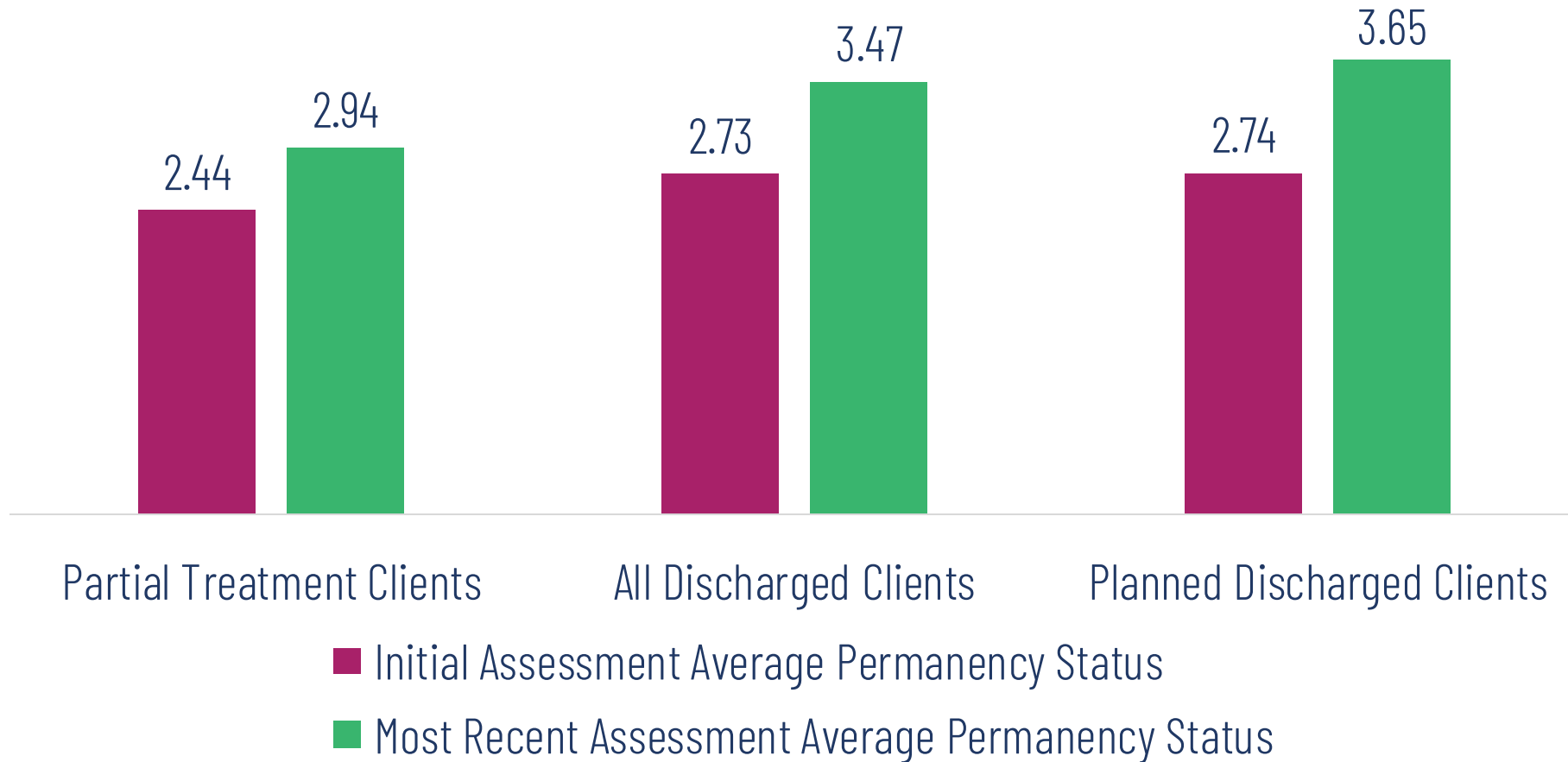


Significant Progress at Reassessment

- Both youth who were still receiving services and youth who had discharged demonstrated statistically significant improvement in permanency scores at reassessment.
- Youth age birth-17 made greater progress towards permanency than young adults age 18+.
- There were no other significant impacts of other demographic variables, such as race or ethnicity.



Significant Progress at Reassessment



Intervention Model

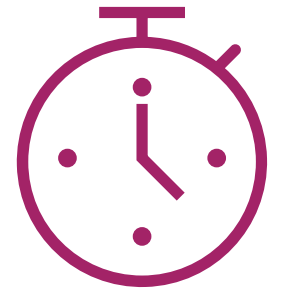
We analyzed whether there was an impact of various components of the intervention model on client outcomes.

- Conversations with permanency connections were associated with a higher likelihood of achieving:
 - legal permanency,
 - relational permanency,
 - and a higher average exit permanency score.
- Youth-guided, family-driven teaming was associated with a higher likelihood of achieving physical permanency.

Time to Achieve Permanency

We also conducted analyses to look at the impact of time on achieving permanency.

- Youth who did not achieve permanency within 10 months of out-of-home care take almost **3x** as long on average to reach permanency.
- This finding indicates the importance of moving towards permanency with great urgency early into a youth's treatment episode.



Key Findings

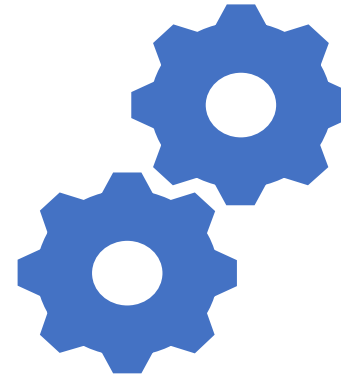
- ✓ Children and youth make significant progress towards permanency when program staff, families, and state partners are engaged in permanency best practices.
- ✓ Several elements of the intervention model being implemented and measured by MPPA are associated with positive outcomes.
- ✓ Time is important—ideally children and youth should achieve permanency within 10 months of out-of-home care.



Permanency collaboration - Where to start



Relationship



Technical



Where to start: Relationships

- Who shares your **vision** for kids and families?
- Who are your **allies and partners**?
- Who needs to be?
- Is there a “**natural leader**” to help kick off the conversation?

Where to start: Technical

- Commit to **permanency outcomes** for all kids in your care.
- Adopt **practices & tools** that seek to achieve those outcomes.
- Initiate **data collection & analysis** to inform outcomes (e.g., permanency scale and permanency best practice activities).
- Build in **fidelity measures** (e.g., supervisory competencies and tests of activities).

Our Work Going Forward

- Evaluate fidelity to the model during implementation.
- Continue to evaluate the associations and relationships between the outcomes and the activities.
- Evaluate permanency practices and outcomes in community-based services.
- Understand the longer-term outcomes of youth post-discharge from services.





**What do you
want to know
more about?**

Our contact information:



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THANK

you