

National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness

Seneca Family of Agencies: A Non-Profit Agency for Children & Families
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PERMANENCY BLAST

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April 4, 2012

Dear Permanency Warriors,

The central topic of this month's blast focuses on the voice and participation by those who we serve in child welfare. The items range from a well-renowned court battle waged in Utah and now returned to the district court in Colorado, to guides that assist and promote engagement with young adults and caregivers as California ventures into serving young adults after 18, concluding with news from the Congressional Caucus on Foster Care. Happy reading and best to each of you.

Colorado father's custody fight moves back to his home state

This story appeared in the Denver Post and other Mountain West newspapers in March (Note, newspapers tend to archive articles relatively quickly, so this link is likely time limited). Here is the link to the actual Utah Supreme Court decision([Denver Post Article](#) and [Supreme Court Decision](#))

These detail a father's long court battle to establish his rights to raise his child; the other side of the story is that unbeknownst to him, his child had been placed with maternal relatives in another state and due to the extensive court proceeding, the child has been living with this family since birth and adoptive status had been granted. We have heard advocates from either side discuss the merits of the case and the moral issue from each perspective, and they are compelling arguments. While this particular case does not originate in child welfare, it mirrors cases across the country of fathers who were not properly informed and engaged, or in this case not told of the placement and not allowed to be involved in the lives of their children.

The one area in which we can agree is that these battles negatively affect all parties, especially the children, and can be avoided by properly identifying, notifying

and engaging family members in compliance with federal and state laws. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 specifically outlines the responsibility to identify and notify relatives up to minimally the third degree (and to the 5th degree in California and other states) within 30 days of removal or risk of removal.

The opportunity before us locally, regionally and nationally is to work with fathers and all family members (including non-related connections) immediately to benefit from their often untapped talents and passion for their children thus reducing the number of children in care and the length of stay for those who enter care. If we involve family at the earliest possible opportunity, we can avoid having to decide whether or not moving a child back to a biological parent (or family member) is in the child's best interest - when we should have placed with that parent or family member as soon as possible. For those situations in which all best efforts will not result in permanency with the family we can confidently move toward other options with less trepidation about last minute surprises or appeals which can disrupt potential adoptions.

If you need assistance to improve the quality and capacity of your search and discovery activities, our expert Clif Venable ([Click here for inquiries](#)) can provide support via in-depth internet and social network searches, along with training to improve your discovery activities ([Search Website](#)). If you need assistance to improve the consistency and quality of your work with families and in particular fathers to achieve permanence, our menu of trainings, inclusive of "Family Finding" and "Embracing Fathers and Paternal Relatives" can be found ([List of Permanency Trainings](#))

Videos and guides to working with youth and caregivers after 18

The following information was developed by the California Social Work Education Center and distributed via Barry Johnson, Director. The materials explain the eligibility requirements and responsibilities entailed in the options for extending foster care until the age of 20 in California, granted by AB 12 and 212.

The AB 12 Youth Engagement, Training and Informing Focus Area Team is pleased to provide you with some recently developed materials we hope will be helpful in understanding and communicating about the options of Extended Foster Care under California's Fostering Connections to Success Act.

We have produced four three-minute videos that feature young adults discussing the key elements of extended support in youth-friendly terms. The series includes videos that provide general information on the law and then more specific information on eligibility, placement and probation. These introductory videos were created to stimulate a conversation about the options for foster youth after 18.

To facilitate that discussion, conversation guides have also been developed with questions aimed at building an understanding of the options and supporting decision

making for each youth. The goal of the videos is to offer information about the policy change in a manner that is clear and compelling.

Former foster youth participating in campus support programs and/or working for the California Youth Connection and the California State Foster Care Ombudsman's Office were instrumental in the development, production and editing of the videos as well as assisting in the drafting and review of the questions contained in the conversation guides.

We hope this series of videos will be an effective outreach tool in providing foster youth and caring adults with important information about California's Fostering Connections to Success Act and will assist eligible youth in making informed choices about their future.

To view the videos, [click here!](#) We have attached the conversation guides here for your convenience.

For more information please visit the After 18 website at www.after18ca.org. In addition to access to the videos and conversation guides the website also has resource materials to support consistent understanding of the options available under this new law. We hope these materials will be helpful as we work to ensure all eligible youth are able to take advantage of this exciting and important new opportunity.

A special thanks to Joni Pitcl from the Co-Investment Partnership for her leadership and the rest of the Informing Team for their hard work in getting these developed for your use!!

[Youth Conversation Guide](#) and [Caregiver Conversation Guide](#)

Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth Listening Tour

In an effort to address many of the ongoing issues foster youth face, the co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth launched a national listening tour. Reps. Karen Bass (D-Calif.) and Tom Marino (R-Penn.) joined other Members of the Caucus on Friday, Feb. 24, and Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012, in several events in Los Angeles to gain a better understanding of the current state of foster care throughout the nation, and identify potential federal policy modifications to improve the outcomes for children in the system. Caucus members will travel to four cities for similar listening tour stops. To learn more about this effort, click on the following link to the website! [Check it out!](#)

Sincerely,
Bob Friend

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