

# Permanency and Well-Being

*A Former Foster  
Youth Perspective*

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Youth*

# My Story?

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- From Portland, Oregon
- In foster care two separate times, 2-6 (or so) and 14-18 (foster care, reunification, APPLA, aged out)
- College, Oregon State University
- Became a youth advocate, FosterClub (intern to director of programs)
- Found a family of my own
- Trained with Oregon administrators on the importance of permanency in every county
- Fostering Connections legislation advocacy
- Voice for Adoption

# Rejoice in Your Success!

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- Celebrate your accomplishments  
“Don’t discredit the incredible”
- Share more success stories!!!
- The more good stories WE (the youth) see and hear the better - to know we are not alone, to give hope.
- The more success stories the public hears to drive increased positive public perception of foster youth & increased public awareness and involvement

# Youth who turn down permanency: Respect it but, don't accept it!

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- Youth disregard, disrupt & reject permanency for a reason
- Meet youth where they are, keep peeling away the onion
- Don't accept that a youth does not want a family; help overcome the fears
- Validate our stories
- Build trust & keep following up with youth about their permanency plan/options (get mentors to talk permanency)

# Youth who turn down Permanency

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“Foster kids experience rejection in a way that most will never know. They go from house to house. Mentally, this is very hard for a kid. They finally find a place that feels like home. Their pain begins to slowly die, and they begin to trust the people who say they care about them, only to have their pain resurrected again when they graduate high school or on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Unlike an adopted kid, they have no one to return to, no place to go home to for holidays, no one to guide them through their college experience, no one to help them through their mistakes, no one to give them unconditional love. So, it’s back to anger and survival mode.”

-Darren, now 17, adopted at 9

# Youth Driven - Peer Permanency Learning

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- Youth involvement in case planning is a must
- Meaningful youth permanency training
  - My hope: replace/enhance ILP programs to have a core focus of relationship building & well being
- Let other youth drive the concept of permanency home to the youth in need
  - Effective youth engagement to drive success in older youth
- FosterClub, Getting Solid, permanency panels/transition panels
- Ability for youth to relate and accept

# Don't be fooled. Youth listen.

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- “Teens don't listen to me”
- Youth are like sponges, they absorb a lot, be persistent
- What a shame if we don't utilize the opportunity to influence them while we have them

# What makes a difference?

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- Honesty/trusting
- Genuine hope (we know the difference)
- High Expectations
- Second chances
- Positive Reinforcement
- Dispelling the myths
- Reiterating the importance and meaning of being connected
- Youth involvement
- Family or other caring adult engagement - the youth know who should be at the table
- Opportunities

# Understanding What Permanency Means to Young People...

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“Adoption is a big deal and I’m glad my dad Jeff opened his heart to us. Adoption is a kid taking part in a family’s life and being loved despite the scars and pain they have been through. To me it felt like someone reaching to me, as if an angel had looked at me and spared my suffering.”

-Foster youth, in the process of being adopted by his foster parent, age 11

# Questions?

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