

Critical Questions For Judges About Permanency

For the purpose of this resource, the definition of legal permanence includes reunification, legal guardianship and adoption.

Questions for the Caseworker

Tell me about your conversations with youth about permanency

- ❖ What is the current permanency plan? Do you still believe that this is the appropriate plan?
- ❖ What conversations have you had with the youth about their permanency options? When did you last have this conversation?
- ❖ Did the youth share their preference? If so, what is their preferred permanency goal?
- ❖ Have you explained the differences between all of the permanency options?
- ❖ Is there someone identified as a potential permanent caregiver for this youth? Have you explained all of the permanency options to them?

Depending upon the answers to the questions above, move to Section A or B below

A. If there is an agreed upon permanency goal, possible follow-up questions include:

- ❖ Is there an identified person committed to this youth? If not, tell me about the steps being taken to recruit a permanent parent/guardian.
- ❖ What has been done to help the youth identify their connections?
- ❖ What steps are you taking to provide the youth with a support network?
- ❖ Can you identify one or more adults who are not child welfare professionals with whom the youth has a healthy and potentially permanent relationship?
- ❖ What specific next steps are planned?
 - For youth
 - For family
 - For securing permanent placement
- ❖ Please identify any barriers that may prevent the youth from permanency.
- ❖ What provisions are you making for continued visits with the youth's family or other important connections?

Move on to Section C

B. If a youth is resistant to permanency, possible follow-up questions include:

- ❖ What has been done to help the youth identify their connections?
- ❖ What steps are you taking to provide the youth with a support network?
- ❖ Can you identify one or more adults who are not child welfare professionals with whom the youth has a healthy and potentially permanent relationship?
- ❖ Does the youth have a Life book? Do you use it as a tool to engage the youth in conversations about permanency?
- ❖ Have you used a Permanency Pact with the youth? Would you like one?
- ❖ Have you connected the youth with other youth in foster care (peer support)?
- ❖ Have you explored the underlying reasons why the youth is resisting permanency?

- ❖ Describe the work done with the youth in the areas of self esteem, loyalty to their birth family, loss, and future goals.
- ❖ Is the youth receiving mental health services? How well does the therapist understand the different permanency options and the importance of permanency for all youth?

Move on to Section C

C. Caseworker Supports

- ❖ What assistance and supports do you need as it relates to achieving permanence for this young person?
- ❖ Would you like some tools that will assist you to have more meaningful conversations with the youth about permanency?
- ❖ Please identify any systems barriers preventing the youth from achieving permanency.

Move on to questions for the youth

These are difficult questions that the youth may never have been asked. If they are not ready to answer them, ask them to discuss the questions with their caseworker or therapist and be prepared to revisit them at the next hearing.

Questions for the youth

- ❖ Tell me about your transition plan. How were you involved in making this plan?
- ❖ What does permanency mean to you?
- ❖ Are there important people in your life that you want to stay connected to? Who are they?
- ❖ Who would you like to live with, or where would you like to live?
- ❖ Do you understand the differences between all of your permanency options including adoption and guardianship?
- ❖ What kind of connection do you want to keep with your siblings and other family members?
- ❖ Tell me about some of your future plans. How do you envision a caring adult helping you accomplish those goals?
- ❖ Where are you in school? What future educational and career goals do you have?
- ❖ Do you have a Life book? If not would you like help in creating one?
- ❖ Have you used a Permanency Pact as a tool to identify important caring adults in your life? Would you like one?
- ❖ Have you had an opportunity to participate in a group with other youth in foster care? If not is this something that you would be interested in?
- ❖ Are there any questions or concerns you have about your permanency or transition plan that you would like to raise at this time?