CONNECTING PROBATION YOUTH WITH FAMILIES AND OTHERS

Ebony Chambers
Yolanda Jammer
UC Davis Extension

WELCOME!

⦿ Introductions
⦿ Objectives

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST CONCERN FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR CARE?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

A DIFFERENT PARADIGM
A DIFFERENT PRACTICE

Creating Sustainable and Permanent
Connections Depends On:

⊙ Planning vs. Case Management
⊙ Reliance on "others" vs. reliance on a System
⊙ The Unfamiliar vs. Programmatic
⊙ A different kind of challenge

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHY IS FAMILY NOT INVOLVED?

⊙ "teenagers don't want a family"
⊙ "not adoptable"
⊙ Treatment and placement given more
  importance than evidence supports
⊙ Behavior is too challenging for a family
⊙ Placements are easier to access than
  relatives
⊙ Devaluation of the importance of love and
  affection in the development of children and
  adolescents

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHERE IS THE FAMILY?

◉ Most often there are relatives who want to and are able to care for their children.

◉ The relatives live locally, in other states, even abroad.

◉ Children have been lost due to broken family connections, multiple placements, or multiple family moves.

IF FAMILY IS AVAILABLE, WHY HAVE THEY NOT COME FORWARD?

◉ Some families fear system involvement or feel powerless to advocate for their children.

◉ Some family members just don't know their child is in need.

◉ Often relatives cannot find their lost children

WILL THIS WORK FOR "OUR KIDS"?

◉ Children gain permanence, identity, and a true belief that they belong.

◉ Once they know who they are and who cares about them, we see improvements in behaviors, ultimately increasing safety and stabilizing placement.

WHY FAMILY?

◉ Children and the systems who care for them simply cannot afford the costs or consequences of raising them in stranger care when they had a fit and willing relative who could have loved and cared for them.

◉ Children who are away from family are less likely to have a stable place to live

- 50 percent of children placed in foster care have multiple placements (National Center for Policy Analysis, 2001)

A FEW REASONS TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

- There are a lot of kids out there: 102,000 children and young people in Foster Care in California
- Instability: One in five children entering foster care has previously been in foster care.
- Uncertainty: In 2008-09, about 4,500 foster youth in California age 18 and older "aged out" of eligibility for foster care, representing 12% of all children and youth who left foster care.

FOUR YEARS AFTER AGING OUT

◉ 25% have been homeless.
◉ Less then half have graduated from high school.
◉ 42% have become parents themselves.
◉ Over 80% are unable to support themselves.
◉ Twice the rate of PTSD than combat victims.
◉ Less than 2 percent completed college.
◉ 41% reported being arrested as an adult
*Anne E. Casey Foundation

FROM PLACE TO PLACE- VIDEO

BENEFITS OF MAKING CONNECTIONS

◉ Increase and assistance in placement stabilization
◉ Preparation for youth to become self-sufficient adults
◉ Allowance for youth to exit the child welfare system with a lifelong connection(s)
◉ Reconnection of families
◉ Assistance to families to meet child's needs
◉ Reduction of dollars in high end out-of-home placements, allowing money to be allocated for supportive services

---

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CONNECTIONS AND PERMANENCY

- Every youth has connections and deserves permanency.
- Seeking connections and finding family is driven by the young person.
- Should have connections with biological family.
- With support, most young people can live in a home rather than foster care or institutions.
- Every youth has a right to know about their family and should be supported in establishing connections with their biological family and "family of choice" if they choose to.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CONNECTIONS AND PERMANENCY (CONTINUED)

- Young person's connections help plan and achieve permanence.
- Ultimate goal is permanency through reunification, guardianship, adoption or other long-term commitment.
- The most important factor contributing to positive outcomes for children in foster care is meaningful connections and lifelong relationships.

STEP 1: PREPARATION

Purpose: For everyone involved to:
- 1. Develop an understanding of the process.
- 2. Develop method of communication and expectations.
- 3. Develop and address safety concerns.

INITIAL CHALLENGES

- The youth is resistant
- Potential resources, contacts and information buried in the file or absent
- Strong biases against a youth's biological family
- Belief that the youth do not want and/or need a family
- Social workers' worries that searching for a permanent home for a teenager will re-traumatize the youth
- Changes in social workers or placements

INITIAL CHALLENGES

- Staff concentrating on the immediate future, rather than the long-term outcomes
- Labeling and pathologizing of teen behavior
- Difficulty in maintaining excitement for youth permanency over the long term
- Lack of follow-through with searching for family on the father's side
- Reluctance to consider non-traditional connections for youth, especially current or former staff workers
- Congregate care facilities that use visits with potential relationships as a consequence of behavior
- Concern that there is not time to do the work

CONSIDERATIONS

- What trauma has the young person experienced in their past?
- How much is the young person involved in the process?
- Who should be involved and to what extent?
- What are the expectations? Are they realistic?

A FEW THINGS TO KNOW

- Each step does not necessarily follow after the other
- It is a process that requires flexibility and responsiveness to what steps are taken and when to take them
- It requires sensitivity to the youth, the family members, and friends being contacted, as well an awareness of how relationships are developing
- All of this, with an underlying sense of urgency

STEP 2: DISCOVERY

MISSION: Create a team of support.
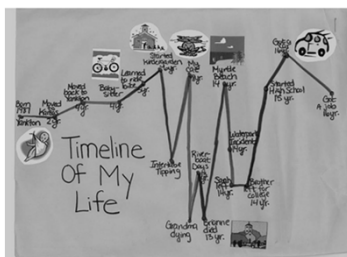The more, the merrier.
BUT…
PROCEED WITH CAUTION

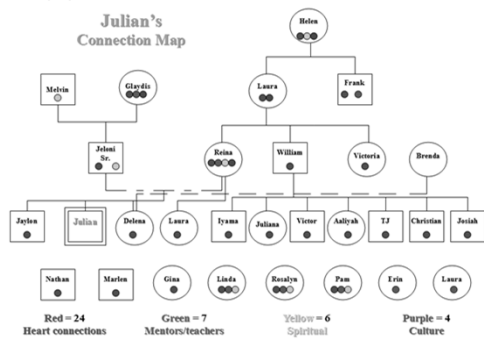## FINDING YOUR CONNECTIONS

LIFE MAP

CONNECTEDNESS MAPPING

◉ Blue= Blood (Biological) Connection
◉ Red= Heart (Love) Connection
◉ Yellow= Spiritual Connection
◉ Green= Mind (Mental) Connection
◉ Purple= The Richness of Culture Connection

DEVELOP YOUR OWN MAPS

WHAT DOES A CONNECTION MAP LOOK LIKE?

CONDUCTING CONNECTION MAP CONT.

- Have the youth identify everyone on the map that they care for by placing a red dot in their square of circle.
  - Almost everyone on the map will receive a red dot but not necessarily everyone.
  - Be prepared to prompt a youth to give a red dot to a family member in the room (not forcing but encouraging) or be prepared to manage a situation where that family member becomes upset or feels hurt.

CONDUCTING CONNECTION MAP CONT.

- Have the youth identify and place a green dot by each person on the map that they learned something from.
  - Have the youth share at least one thing that they learned from everyone that receives a green dot.
  - The purpose of having the youth share what they learned is to identify strengths of others and resources that can be used moving forward example: If the youth identifies that an uncle helped teach them basketball – we should look to include that uncle in a plan where the youth continues to pursue their interest in that sport.

CONDUCTING CONNECTION MAP CONT.

- Have the youth identify and place a yellow dot on each person in the map that they have learned from about their spirituality.
  - Have the youth share at least one thing that they learned from everyone that receives a yellow dot.
  - Before having the youth place yellow dots have the youth and family explain what spirituality means to them.

CONDUCTING CONNECTION MAP CONT.

- Have the youth identify and place a purple dot on each person in the map that they have learned from about their culture.
  - Have the youth share at least one thing that they learned from everyone that receives a purple dot.
  - Before having the youth place purple dots have the youth and family explain what culture means to them.

UTILIZING CONNECTION MAPS

- Connection maps are a visual representation of:
  - Family
  - Natural Supports
  - Strengths of family members and natural supports
  - Natural Support network
  - The diversity of the youth and their support network
  - Current attachments and previous attachments in the youth's life

UTILIZING CONNECTION MAPS CONT.

- Connection maps guide:
  - Plan development
  - Family reunification efforts
  - Plan implementation
  - Natural support network development and utilization of existing network
  - Self sufficiency and sustainable supports and networks
  - Clinical assessments and interventions

CONFIDENTIALITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Have parental rights been terminated?
- What information will you share? How will you share it?
- Can a parent forbid you from searching another parent's family?
- Can minors sign releases pertaining to them?
- Can a father or mother refuse to allow you to contact their own relatives?
- Does your agency have a protocol regarding confidentiality in family meetings?

FAMILY SEARCH & REUNIFICATION TOOLS

- Family Tree
- Connection Map
- Child Welfare Record Review
- Search subcontracts: USSEARCH
- Other Internet sites for locating persons
  - www.familysearch.org (Mormon Church)
  - www.peoplefinders.com
  - www.people-search.com
  - www.ancestry.com
  - www.facebook.com

FAMILY SEARCH & REUNIFICATION TOOLS

◉ Other Internet sites for locating persons
- www.usatrace.com (search by name SS#)
- www.myfamily.com
- www.intelius.com
- www.spokeo.com

◉ Social Security Death Index

FAMILY SEARCH & REUNIFICATION TOOLS

◉ Prison Locator Services
◉ International Social Services (Baltimore) 443-451-1200
◉ Inter-State Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC)
◉ Indian Child Welfare Act
◉ Child Support Payment database (Ask CPS to look for Fathers and paternal side of family

---

FACEBOOK OUTREACH

SAMPLE OUTREACH

STEP 3: ENGAGEMENT

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR

⊙ Relationships

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE
(AT STAGE ONE AND THROUGHOUT)

- Meet them at their level.
- Listen.
- Be genuinely curious.
- Ask *good* questions about their hopes, fears, and expectations and vision for themselves.
- Temper enthusiasm with sensitivity and pragmatism.
- Place them in the drivers seat to a large degree.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

VIDEO- REMOVED

INTENSIVE RELATIVE SEARCH
**FAMILY CONNECTIONS-
PROJECT**

Photo Taken January 2005

INTENSIVE RELATIVE SEARCH
FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Photo Taken April 2005   45

PRE-ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS FOR IDENTIFIED CONNECTIONS

- What type of contact is this? What is or was this person's relationship to the youth?
- What information am I trying to gain from this conversation?
- What emotions might present themselves (i.e., loss, shame, guilt, fear, hope, etc …)?
- What can I say about the youth while maintaining confidentiality?
- How can I convey to this person the urgency of connecting this youth to his or her family?
- How will I end the conversation with the person so that they feel comfortable and safe?

ENGAGING CONNECTIONS

- Introduce yourself.
- Explain how you came to contact them.
- Listen to their story.
- Find something you like about the person and build on it.
- If person wants to participate in youth's life, discuss possible types of involvement.
- Explore motivation and commitment
- Educate on types of issues/challenges youth has.
- Obtain releases of information
- Utilize your entire team if possible (Parent Partners, Youth Peer Mentors)

ENGAGING CONNECTIONS (CONTINUED)

- Invite to be a part of the Team.
- Inquire on willingness to be fingerprinted in the event time is spent together.
- Educate them on Family Finding
- Make yourself available to answer questions.
- Assume good intentions.
- Convey a sense of urgency.
- Ensure a plan of following up

SUSTAINING YOUR EFFORTS
(MAINTAINING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS)

Ensure each interaction leaves the person feeling:

Heard

Understood

Respected

Valuable

WHAT ARE 3 THINGS YOU CAN PUT INTO PRACTICE THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED SO FAR?

BRIDGING THE GAP

◉ Will the contact be in person? Or is phone, email or letter contact more appropriate?

◉ If it is meant to be a face to face visit, where will it occur and who will be present?

◉ How can we make this contact as safe and comfortable as possible for this child?(emotionally and physically)

STEP 4: PLANNING

- Bring Team together.
- Clarify roles, goals and expectations.
- Identify Team's strengths, skills, and resources.
- Explore options, assign tasks, and establish time lines.
- Redirect and focus on current progress and moving forward in a planned way.
- Establish lines of communication among Team.

STEP : 5
DECISION MAKING AND EVALUATION

- Team evaluates itself, the process, and permanency.
- Team has primary and contingency plans.
- Team explores legal options to secure permanency.
- New and on-going challenges/needs addressed and strategies developed.

STEP 6:
FOLLOW UP AND SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

- Progress continually reviewed.
- Decreased frequency of formal Team meeting.
- Periodic check-in process around Team members' commitments.
- Review of legal status
- Review of formal and informal resources needed to continue successful permanency.
- Identify one or more "point person(s)".

BILLING EPSDT

⊙ Rehabilitation
⊙ Collateral
⊙ Case Management

First Telephone Call Scripts with Relatives:

⊙ Hello, my name is _____, and I am with _____.

⊙ I am calling for _____. Is this she/he? (Yes) I am working with one of your family members. Do you know (parent/child name)? I am worried about _____ and I'm not sure how much you know about _____ and his/her life. Are you in a place where you can talk right now? (Yes).

⊙ _____ is interested in information about his/her family, traditions, religion - in general his/her family

⊙ history. You can imagine that someone in _____'s position, being raised away from home, would want to know about his/her past. Do you have any information that we can pass on to _____, because your help sharing this information could really make a difference in _____'s future.

Leaving a telephone message:

Hello, my name is _____, and I am with _____.
I am calling for _____ regarding (parent and their child - first name only).
_____is physically OK, however I am worried about him/her.
Please give me a call at (   ) ___-____.
If I don't hear from you, I will call you back within the next 24 hours. Thank you.

If they don't return your call:

I am calling to follow up on the message that I left you earlier.
I can imagine this must be a difficult phone call to receive.
Are you in a place where you can talk right now because I am very worried about _____.
I'm not sure how much you know about _____ and his/her life.
_____ is interested in information about his/her family, traditions, religion - in general his/her family history.
You can imagine that someone in _____'s position, being raised away from home, would want to know about his/her past.
Do you have any information that we can pass on to _____, because your help sharing this information could really make a difference in _____'s future.
(Allow time for the person called to explain their situation, to tell their story about _____.)

(If the person asks about _____'s situation.)

I know that you must have questions. I really can't answer them right now. There may be a time in the future where we could talk to you and answer some of your questions. Again I realize that this is difficult but my primary concern right now is to help _____ get answers to some of his questions. Your help with this information could make such a difference in his life. One of the things that might really help our conversation today is if you could tell me one of the things you are most proud of about your family. A story or something someone has done in the past that was very special to you.

What about family reunions and gatherings? What are your family traditions? Do you know who plans them (reunions)? (Try to get their name and contact information. Perhaps put them on a conference call with the family member who plan the reunions or other family gatherings.)

(If they ask about how to have contact with _____).

I want to assure you that I am going to share your information and how to contact you with the rest of my team. It sounds like you're offering to help _____ more. Let me make sure I have all of your contact information for future planning for _____.

(If they cannot have any contact with _____).

This may be your one of the few opportunities you may have to do something to really help _____. The information that you share with me could truly improve this child's life. (Default back to questions about family).

WHAT ARE 3 THINGS YOU CAN PUT INTO PRACTICE THAT YOU LEARNED TODAY?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED?

◉ What questions do you still have?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

YOUR NEW MANTRA
REPEAT AFTER ME:

The needs of the young people…
 require more than I alone can provide.
             (REPEAT)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SOURCES, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND APPRECIATION

- Association Of Small Foundations, "Helping Children Aging Out of Foster Care Prepare for Independence". April 2008
www.aecf.org
http://www.ellabakercenter.org/downloads/bnb/budget_close_testimony.pdf

- Dr. David Arredondo, www.davidarredondo.com

- Kevin Campbell, Center for Family Finding and Youth Connectedness, familyfinding@senecacenter.org

*Public Policy Institute of California, "Just The Facts: Foster Care in California", March 2010.
www.ppic.org

*Pew Center Charitable Trust, "Time For Reform: Aging out and On Their Own". 2005
www.pewtrusts.org

- National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, Hunter College, and California Permanency for Youth Project