

Section 15 – Transitioning Youth Overview

“All children have the right to live in a permanent family and to timely permanency decisions, as these are critical to the health and welfare of dependent children.”

***- Mission & Guiding Principles for
Pennsylvania’s Child Dependency System***

“All” children need a safe, permanent family. This is especially true for older youth making the multifaceted transition from childhood to adulthood. While some youth may be ready and eager for the responsibilities of adult life, many are not. The support of a family in this transition can significantly help these young people. For foster youth, many who have experienced multiple placements, the transition to adult life can be overwhelming and have dismal outcomes. A permanent connection to a safe, loving family is vital for these youth.

This section provides fifteen resources to help judges address issues unique to this population and ensure older youth are fully prepared for and supported in their transition. Two articles in the primary resources provide an overview of the topic, encouraging judges to consider adoption as a permanence option for older youth and to seek kinship placements as a priority. Also included is a link to reports and resources created by the Pennsylvania State Roundtable’s Transitional Youth Workgroup.

- I. This resource outlines the importance of focusing on legal and relational permanency for older youth, federal legislation that supports this focus, and strategies for permanency planning with youth. (See, *Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019*)
- II. The report provides statistics illustrating the experiences and perspectives of older youth in the foster system. While the study highlights older foster youth from Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois, their experience descriptions are similar to experiences shared by Pennsylvania foster youth. (See, *Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Lee, J.S., Raap, M., Cusick, G.R., Keller, T., Havlicek, J., Perez, A., Terao, S. & Bost, N., 2011*)
- III. The Pennsylvania State Roundtable’s Transitional Youth Workgroup provides judges practical resources, including educational videos, reports, and tools to assist older youth in the state’s foster care system. (See, *Office of Children & Families in the Courts: Transitional Youth, n.d.*)