

Prioritize family ties and permanent family connections to provide those lifelong relationships that youth need most to succeed

- Address barriers that prevent youth in foster care from living with relatives or in family-based settings while in foster care
- Increase kinship placements
- Improve supports to youth and caregivers
- Improve recruitment and retention of kin and non-kin caregivers

- Strengthen and incentivize permanency through reunification, and continue incentives for permanency through guardianship and adoption
- Enforce and strengthen current laws to protect and support sibling connections
- Ensure Family First prevention services meet the needs of youth and their families to safely prevent entries into foster care

- Make youth engagement in permanency planning a practice norm
- Incentivize agencies and courts to achieve wide-scale implementation of best practices in youth engagement
- Clarify that peer delivered services and youth engagement are federally reimbursable

Support state and local foster care agencies in developing their workforce so they can provide tailored and intensive permanence services for youth and young adults

Improve the effectiveness by increasing involvement of youth in continuous program improvement, including methods of obtaining youth feedback

Incentivize agencies to develop outreach policies so that more youth are aware of services available to them

THE CASE FOR REFORM

- Permanency rates for teens and young adults are declining. One in four teens who are in foster care age out on their own, usually at age 18, without ever being connected to family in a permanent way. As young adults, they often experience homelessness, joblessness, mental health challenges and poverty.
- Too many youth have a group placement while in foster care, even though youth in these settings are less likely to have relationships with supportive adults, access to effective mental health support or success in school and work.
- The most frequently cited reason for teens entering foster care is neglect, which is often related to poverty, indicating that some of these placements are unnecessary and preventable if communities can provide support and resources to help struggling families.