

What is "Permanency"?

Permanency is about FAMILY MEMBERSHIP: ALL CHILDREN BELONG WITH FAMILIES AND FAMILIES NEED SUPPORT TO THRIVE.

This statement includes two parts: The first part is a commitment to "family" as the kind of environment where children should grow up and the second is recognition that support is what makes it possible for families to provide the nurturing environment so that all family members can thrive.

Underlying these two simple notions are a number of important ideas.

- 1) Children need, and have a human right, to grow up in a nurturing environment. Family membership provides the base. The base must be secure for optimal growth.
- 2) Location within a family is not sufficient; what is required is a sense of belonging. Belonging is a feeling experienced by both the child and the family. Belonging has two components:

BELONGING IS

1. Secure confidence in an enduring bond of mutual caring
2. Regular experience of pleasant, positive interactions

Baumeister & Leary (1995)



- (1) The goal of the statement is to assure family membership. To belong to a family is to hold membership in a family. Membership offers benefits that are essential to growth and development:

MEMBERSHIP OFFERS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A sense of belonging | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A feeling of emotional bond and connectedness |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A sense of inclusion | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A sense of identity |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A source of social networks | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A source of understanding |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A source of empowerment | |

- (2) The pursuit of enduring membership is called "permanency." Permanency seeks assurance of four necessities for all children's growth and development:



PERMANENCY REQUIRES

- > A child must be protected
- > A child needs order and structure
- > A child needs nurturance
- > A child needs continuity

- (3) Some families are able to find the support they need within their own personal networks; others need assistance from outside their available network. To be effective, support for families must fill four requirements:

FAMILY SUPPORT REQUIRES

1. Support must be consistent with life span development of the child and the family
2. The purpose of support is to foster relationships between family members
3. Support must be on the family's terms; it must feel supportive to the family
4. Support must be on the child's terms; it must foster the child's place in a family

National Resource Center on Supported Living and Choice, Center on Human Policy
 Syracuse University, 805 South Crouse Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13244-2280
 1-800-894-0826 • 315-443-3851 (voice) • 315-443-4355 (tty) • 315-443-4338 (fax)
<http://soeweb.syr.edu/thechp> • thechp@sued.syr.edu

(4) The rightful place of a child to grow up with his/her family can be threatened in a number of ways:

THREATS LEADING TO DISRUPTION

1. Diminishing pleasure, a gross imbalance of hassles without sufficient offsetting enjoyment
2. Perception that the child is the problem
3. Inadequate support (level, quantity, frequency, responsiveness, consistency or quality)
4. Unwillingness to tolerate the level of intrusion necessary to be supported

(5) Exploring threats provides direction to what the system needs to do to adequately support families. If no configuration of support can be imagined and created, then the child may not be able to remain with the birth family. The system is then obligated to find an alternate family which can provide:

ALTERNATE FAMILY PROVIDES

- A sense of belonging,
- A source of membership,
- Assurance of permanency,
- An environment that has, or can accept, adequate supports.



(6) When a child's birth family cannot provide a nurturing and enduring home with their own personal networks, then the service system must step in to assure permanency for every child. The fundamental obligation of the system is to make a plan to assure permanency. The surety of commitment is expressed through a short-range plan for reunification with the birth family or adoption by another family.

(7) A child reared by an alternate family will always have two families. The task of permanency is to figure out how to assist two families to raise a child. The tasks two families need to work out are:



SHARED PARENTING TASKS

1. Creating a parenting coalition
2. Negotiating needs of all members
3. Nurturing new relationships
4. Risking involvement despite little societal endorsement

(8) In order to assure available alternate families to assure permanency for all children, the system is obligated to continuously and assertively recruit families to fill this need. The system must recognize that there are members of society who will and can fill this role. The system must invest sufficient effort in connecting with them to assure that all children can grow up in a family.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE CENTER ON HUMAN POLICY

- Permanency Planning in Michigan: From Philosophy to Reality
- Permanency Planning for Children with Developmental Disabilities in Pennsylvania: The Lessons of Project Star
- Families for All Children
- A Statement in Support of Families and Their Children

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Taylor, S. J., Lakin, K. C., & Hill, B. K. (1989). Permanency planning for children and youth: Out-of-home placement decisions. Exceptional Children, 55(6), 541-549.

REFERENCE: Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. Psychological Bulletin, 117, 497-529.

Prepared by Nancy Rosenau

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