

Long-Term Foster Care – An Impermanent Solution: Questions to Consider

Despite the advocacy efforts of CASA volunteers and the hard work by caseworkers, many children remain in foster care and a family is not found for them. These children live in foster homes or group homes—or move from placement to placement during their time in care.

Long-term foster care becomes the plan for older or difficult children for whom there is no identified family. Sometimes these children are actually placed in a family setting but their caregivers do not want to adopt them. In any case, when the plan is permanent foster care, what the child protective services system is actually doing is planning for these children to belong to no one. Clearly this is unacceptable.

When faced with this as the “only” alternative, it is our obligation to insist that this not be the end of the planning process, but rather the beginning of a new dialogue around how to make permanence a reality, even for the most difficult child. Begin this dialogue with these questions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other options have been explored? • Does the child need specialized care? Is it possible for him/her to have a legal and emotional attachment with a person with whom he/she does not live? • Is there a significant role model or mentor involved with this child? What barriers exist to this person becoming the legal parent? • What are the barriers to the caregiver adopting? How can these barriers be removed? • Have all adoption subsidies, other financial resources, and continuing services been explored and offered? • Who have been the child’s support and attachments in the past? Can any of them be involved now? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the child’s attachments and support in the present? What is their current involvement? • What family or kin connections are available—especially with siblings? • Can parents or other kin be involved anew in this stage of the child’s life? • What does the child want? • What resources and persons will be available when this child is an adult? • Who will be this child’s family for the rest of his/her life?
--	---