

# CHILD WELFARE FACT SHEET

December 2017

## ANOTHER PLANNED PERMANENT LIVING ARRANGEMENT (APPLA)

**A**nother Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), also known as Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA), is a provision of the federal *Adoption and Safe Families Act* that provides a permanency plan for youth age 16 and older for whom permanency through reunification, kinship placement, adoption, or legal guardianship has not been secured.<sup>1</sup> Nationally and in Rhode Island, child welfare agencies should continue to seek more family-centered permanency

options for teens, including teens with a goal of APPLA.<sup>2</sup>

In Rhode Island on October 23, 2017, there were 194 adolescents in out-of-home placements who had a goal of APPLA. This number excludes youth with a pending APPLA goal and youth who are in permanent placements with relatives. Of the 194 youth with a goal of APPLA, 67% were White, 20% were Black, 7% were Multiracial, 3% were Native American/Alaskan, 2% were Unknown, and 1% were Asian.<sup>3</sup>

### RHODE ISLAND FAMILY COURT APPLA CALENDAR

In June 2017, the Rhode Island Family Court convened a special calendar to review permanency and transition plans for youth aging out of foster care with an APPLA goal. The Court also hosted a training to review the key aspects of state and federal law regarding youth aging out of foster care with a permanency goal of APPLA. Magistrate Angela Paulus presided over approximately 150 hearings in Providence County. Magistrates Paul Jones and Edward Newman presided over the APPLA hearings in the remaining counties. They focused on engaging with the youth, learning about his/her goals, and reviewing how the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) has supported the youth to gain independence and transition successfully to adulthood. The Court reviewed cases to determine if DCYF made reasonable efforts to support family connections for the youth and if the goal of APPLA was appropriate. The APPLA calendar will reconvene in the summer of 2018.<sup>4</sup>

### NORMALCY FOR TEENS

Normalcy, or the ability to participate in developmentally appropriate activities for a child's age, is essential for all children to grow into successful adults, particularly those in out-of-home placements. The federal *Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act* requires states to institute a "reasonable and prudent parenting standard" for all caregivers in foster care and out-of-home placements to determine whether children in their care can participate in social, extracurricular, enrichment, and cultural activities without

prior consent of family court or child welfare agencies. All youth in child welfare, including youth with a goal of APPLA, must be given ongoing opportunities to participate in activities similar to their peers who are not in the child welfare system. Ensuring opportunities for teens in out-of-home placements to engage in age appropriate activities like obtaining driver's licenses, sports, enrichment, and extracurricular activities is critical to supporting their development, social interactions, and developing and maintaining healthy relationships.<sup>5,6</sup>

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## PERMANENCY FOR TEENS

On September 29, 2014, the federal *Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act* was signed into law and included key provisions for older youth in foster care including:

- Reauthorizing the Family Connections Grants and the Adoption Incentives Program;
- Requiring transition planning and annual credit checks beginning at age 14;
- Amending the title IV-E foster care program to include trafficking and normalcy requirements for youth living in out-of-home placements; and
- Limiting APPLA as a permanency goal only for youth over age 16.<sup>7,8,9</sup>

Every effort should be made to keep teens safely at home. When out-of-home placements are necessary, it is critical for

teens to be in a family-based setting. Teens should only be placed in residential or group settings for time-limited treatment when their needs cannot be met in the community and a plan for how family placements will be secured should be concurrently developed as a critical path to permanency.<sup>10</sup>

Congregate care in the form of group or residential placements prevents teens from developing stable nurturing relationships that can lead to permanency, and can have negative long-term outcomes for teens. Providing high-quality, family-based placements is critical to improving outcomes for teens in foster care and reducing reliance on APPLA as a permanency goal. Determination of permanency goals should involve teens directly, and permanency in family-based settings should be a concurrent priority for teens with a goal of APPLA until they exit care.<sup>11,12</sup>

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### Recommendations

- Convene APPLA calendar annually to review permanency and transition plans for youth age 16 and older.
- Ensure APPLA is only used as a permanency goal with children over age 16 as intended by federal legislation.
- Ensure DCYF is concurrently seeking family placements as a permanency goal for teens with a goal of APPLA.
- Provide comprehensive services and supports to teens with a goal of APPLA as they prepare for adulthood.
- Place teens in the least restrictive and most family-like setting whenever possible.
- Provide federally mandated annual credit checks to all youth age 14 and older in the care of DCYF.
- Promote normalcy by encouraging teens to participate in activities such as playing sports or obtaining a driver's license.

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### References

<sup>1</sup>Child Welfare Information Gateway. (n.d.). *OPPLA/APPLA*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

<sup>2</sup>*Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act will improve outcomes for children and youth in foster care*. (n.d.) Washington D.C.: Children's Defense Fund.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Children, Youth & Families Correspondence (2017).

<sup>4</sup>Rhode Island Family Court Correspondence (2017).

<sup>5</sup>Department of Children, Youth & Families (February, 2017). *Foster Care and Adoption Regulations for Licensure Guidance Document*. Retrieved on November 21, 2017 from [www.dcyf.ri.gov](http://www.dcyf.ri.gov)

<sup>6,9,10,11</sup> Juvenile Law Center. (February, 2016). *The role of the court in implementing the older youth provisions of the Strengthening Families Act*. Retrieved November 21, 2017, from [www.jlc.org](http://www.jlc.org)

<sup>7</sup> Davidson, Howard. *Congress Passes New Federal Child Welfare Law, How Can it Be Used by Legal Advocates?* Retrieved September 25, 2017, from [www.americanbar.org](http://www.americanbar.org)

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. (2015). Information Memorandum. Log Number ACYF-CB-IM-14-03.

<sup>12</sup> Hazen, E. K. (2014). *Youth in foster care: An examination of social, mental, and physical risks*. Retrieved on August 22, 2017 from [www.steinhardt.nyu.edu](http://www.steinhardt.nyu.edu)



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT  
One Union Station  
Providence, RI 02903

Phone: 401-351-9400  
[rikids@rikidscount.org](mailto:rikids@rikidscount.org)  
[www.rikidscount.org](http://www.rikidscount.org)

