

Trainer's Guide:
Supervising for Permanence/Permanent Connections: Case Scenarios

1. Janice, age 15, and her sister, Ashley, age 8, are re-entering foster care. Their first entry was when Janice was 11— the girls were in a foster home for 10 months and were returned home. Now they are coming back into care upon credible evidence that their mother's boyfriend sexually abused Janice.

You supervise both assessment and ongoing workers. What steps could the assessment worker take at this early stage of the case to promote permanency and/or permanent connections for Janice should she not be able to return to her mother's care before her 18th birthday? What should the ongoing worker be doing? How should both workers engage Janice in this process? Are there any tools which would be helpful?

Steps:

- a. Keep record of all significant adults in Janice's life and any interest which collateral contacts expressed in keeping contact with her (assessment worker)
- b. Look for relative placement (assessment worker)
- c. Involve Janice in pre- or immediate post-removal family team meeting – ask her who she wants to invite, set aside time in meeting to talk about Janice's positive youth development needs and to engage her mother and others in planning for keeping connections, making transitions, etc.
- d. Place siblings together or, if not possible, facilitate frequent visits

Tools:

- a. Read through case record and take notes about people in Janice's life
- b. Create placement genogram
- c. Use "Remembered People" tool

Engaging Janice:

- a. With Remembered People tool
- b. Interview her about present adults in her life, encourage her to write them an invitation to family team meeting
- c. Prepare her for participation in family team meeting

2. Janice and Ashley were placed with a paternal aunt. After three months, the aunt has requested that Janice be moved from her home because she is acting out -- staying out all night, having sex with a boyfriend, constantly verbally challenging the aunt, and generally being a poor example for Ashley and the aunt's own preteen children.

What are the permanency concerns in this scenario and what steps could the worker take to address them? How should the worker engage Janice in this process?

- a. Early placement disruptions (within first six months) and being separated from siblings after having been placed with them -- are both associated with subsequent

multiple placements – try to avoid moving Janice – talk to Janice and try to get beneath her acting out behavior to see what’s motivating it, if appropriate, normalize Janice’s behavior in discussions with aunt, talk to both parties about aunt’s concerns, appeal to Janice’s desire to be a good role for Ashley, refer to counseling if needed. More frequent caseworker visits during this first 6 months. (and make sure Janice has access to contraception and condoms)

b. Janice may be testing the aunt’s commitment to her – being rejected may set her up for more relationship issues down the road. Talk to Janice. Refer her to counseling if necessary. Seek commitments from the aunt about maintaining this relationship. Ask aunt to participate in counseling with Janice.

c. If Janice must be moved, arrange for twice a week dinner or other ongoing contact with the aunt.

3. Until recently, Janice has been a good student, performing especially well in speech and English classes. She has been singing in her aunt’s church choir. Her grades have started to slip in all subjects. She wants to learn to drive but reports that the aunt is not helping her get ready for the permit test. In the meantime, the aunt’s husband is facing a decision to lose his job or transfer out-of-state with the company. The mother is not making progress toward reunification. Her father was recently released from prison after serving three years for a non-violent offense; Ashley has reported seeing her father at family events. The father has resisted several attempts by the worker to set up an interview, claiming conflicts with his work as a machine operator for a landscaping firm. What opportunities and challenges for permanency/permanent connections are in this scenario?

If Janice is must be moved from the aunt’s home, what strategies/tools could the worker employ to enhance Janice’s chances for permanency and/or permanent connections? What work prior to this event might have made this transition easier? How should the worker engage Janice in this process?

Opportunities:

a. Building connections:

- o As soon as Janice settles into placement with her aunt, read through old case record and talk with Janice about significant adults in her life, using the “Remembered Persons” chart and follow through the steps outlined – connecting her with more adults when she’s in a stable placement not only builds permanent connections but also may identify a potential placement if she needs to move.
- o Talk to Janice about adults in her life right now: adults in the church choir, speech and English teachers. Would she be interested in having them come to a team meeting?

- b. Maintaining connections:
- Investigate the possibility of Janice's father teaching Janice to drive. (He operates machinery for a landscaping firm). Who could help Janice prepare for the written drivers permit test.
 - If placement with another significant adult in Janice's life is not possible, try to find a placement in the same school district.

c. Maintaining connections:

(Looking for: talking to Janice and her mother about guardianship with the aunt, maintaining connections with the father's side of the family, setting up visits with father, finding out if father has a drivers' license and access to a car to help Janice learn to drive on a permit, connect with teachers at school and adult choir members who might be interested in providing support to Janice, even if she has to move away. If she does have to be moved, try to keep Janice in the same school district and see about transportation to the family church. Have a youth-centered team meeting with Janice, mom, dad, aunt, her husband, the choir director or other adult member of the choir)

4. Janice is now 17; her parents' rights have been terminated. She has had a total of 3 placements – first with her aunt, then a short stay with another paternal relative in the same school district, and now in a non-related foster home who has indicated a willingness to adopt. So far, Janice has refused to even talk about adoption. She turns 18 in April (2 months before the end of her senior year) and has indicated that she wants to be “out of the DHS system”. The worker has not pushed Janice to consider adoption; you sense that the worker may not “believe” in adoption for older youth. Janice has secured her driver's license, her grades have stabilized, she is on track to graduate, and she plans to apply to colleges. What additional strategies/tools should the worker implement to help Janice establish permanency and/or permanent connections? How should the worker engage Janice in this process?

- a. Probe workers' attitudes about adoption of older youth, describe cases or have them read about some cases where there was a successful adoption of an older youth
- b. Have worker set up some times to talk with Janice using the tips for “unpacking the no”, i.e., talking with youth about adoption (See handout) Supervisor may want to be present
- c. If answer is still “no”, direct worker to let foster parents know that youth often change their minds and we hope they remain open to the possibility.
- c. Encourage worker to set up another youth centered team meeting – who, including foster parents and relatives, can help Janice gain life skills?
- d. Worker can use permanency pact with the foster parents and others on her team

e. Encourage worker to keep talking to Janice about who is important in her life and make opportunities for her to have contact with them. Allow her make her own transportation arrangements if feasible.

5. Janice is 17 ½ and is moving into a supervised apartment living. Even though parental rights have been terminated, Janice has remained in contact with both her mother and her father (through informal family and church contacts). When the worker asked Janice if she had any concerns about the move, Janice reported that her mother has made several remarks about how nice it will be when Janice has her own place, in case the mother ever needs a place to crash or to get away from her boyfriend “until things cool off”. Her father is currently homeless. What steps can the worker take to assure Janice’s safety and permanency?

a. Through individual contacts or a youth centered team meeting – involve parents about importance of not jeopardizing Janice’s housing and make referral to father for housing assistance.

b. Have someone work with Janice about setting and enforcing boundaries with both of her parents.

c. If necessary, go to court and obtain order to parents not to come to Janice’s house.