

Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents

No Uncertainty About Permanency, Even in Uncertain Times

Though COVID-19 has brought about many uncertainties, the Child and Family Services (CFS) department at A Second Chance, Inc. (ASCI) has been working to ensure children and youth awaiting permanency are not uncertain about their forever homes. Located in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, PA, our value for family informs our role as a broker of services to link the family to other natural or system supports that result in permanency. With the help of the Permanency and Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) staff over an 8-month period, ASCI's Philadelphia Regional Office (PRO) team worked tirelessly to ensure 37 children are set to have forever homes within the first few weeks of the



courthouse opening. PRO Director of Permanency Tiffany Byrd explains, “Though the Philadelphia courthouse was closed, the team did not use that time to sit back and relax.”

“The SWAN team implemented new processes for follow-up,” she continues. “And now that the courts have reopened, ASCI has received an amazing 37 adoption dates within the first week. These families have been ready and waiting for 8 months, so this is truly something to celebrate!”

With adoptions canceled because of the pandemic and the closing of Pennsylvania courthouses, ASCI's PRO SWAN team proactively developed processes to ensure children could still reach permanency. “The PRO SWAN department developed a document specific spreadsheet to ascertain a 60-day timeline connected to all documents pertinent to the adoption process and finalization in preparation for the courthouse reopening,” Byrd explains. “Using this spreadsheet, weekly notices were sent to workers and families regarding the status of outstanding documentation, which could potentially hold up an adoption. Workers were also scheduled for biweekly calls to aid in problem-solving and to alleviate barriers.”

The ASCI team also used creative virtual measures to ensure children and youth were involved in their permanency journey and staying connected, despite nationwide mandates to social distance. “Virtual tools were supplied by the Philadelphia School District,” Byrd shares. “Parents were able to get affordable internet connections through providers or visiting the multiple Philadelphia free internet locations for youth and families. ASCI also contacted all our families to ensure that virtual tools were readily available.”

At ASCI, guided by a value for family, our approach to permanency is reflective of both cultural and family values to empower youth and their families and make permanent stability possible. “Adoption finalization workers complete Individual Permanency Service Plans (IPSPs) that focus on different objectives, tasks and goals that can be completed during the finalization process and after by way of Post-Permanency,” Byrd says. “Youth and families are left with a plan to ensure the structure and stability of the family and

youth during and after finalization. Depending on the age of the youth, the plan includes college applications, visitation with positive adults, birth family and school, therapy, family therapy and potentially a PACA for birth parent connections that keeps the kinship triad (child/youth, birth parents, caregiver) strong and supported.”

Moving beyond the pandemic, ASCI’s new process will aid in a more rapid process of permanency for all children and youth. “Because of the benefits of this new process, the team has decided to keep it in effect post-COVID. We are now tracking the timeliness of permanency for all cases pre/post-COVID to obtain the real-time data impact as we get to see the in-person benefits to our children and families.”

Read more about A Second Chance, Inc.(ASC) on its [website](#).



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