



*Condensed from article by  
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Over the next four years the child welfare system will attempt to double the adoption rate of children in foster care. Below is a list of twelve factors that should be weighed in making humane, sensible, individualized and timely placement decisions:

- **The Children's Attachments** - It is essential to determine to whom the children are attached. To whom do they look for security and protection? To whom are they connected psychologically? If we are considering splitting a sibling group, what is the nature of the attachment among these children?
- **Protection of Continuity of Care/Permanence** - In which placement would the children experience continuity of care? How would their lives be least disrupted? What would present the least turmoil, confusion, trauma and anxiety?
- **The Best Interests of the Child** - What placement serves the children's best interests? This includes physical health, safety and well being, emotional needs, developmental and psychological needs.
- **The Least Detrimental Alternative** - Which placement option contains the least harm, potential or actual, to the children? If both have negative impacts, which of the options has fewer harmful effects upon the children?
- **Recognition of Psychological Parenthood** - Who do the children view as their parents? To whom do the children feel they belong? Which house do they experience and perceive as their home?
- **Access to Ancillary Attachment Figures** - In which placement setting do the adults appreciate the needs for the children to have access to and contact with past and present attachment figures? If separation from a sibling is contemplated, do the care-givers commit to sibling contact?
- **Parental Capacity** - What are the parenting capacities and skills in the available homes? Do the parent figures have "good enough" parenting abilities to adequately parent these children?
- **Needs of Other Children** - Are there children already living in the foster or adoptive home whose needs would be severely compromised by placement of another child in the home? Will the current adjustment of other children already in the home be jeopardized by new arrivals?
- **The Child's Stated Preference** - In many cases, it is valuable to obtain the child's statements about his/her preferences regarding permanence. The child's sentiments and readiness can have a profound influence on whether our permanency plan for him or her will succeed or fail.
- **The Least Restrictive Environment** - If the placement is for a troubled child we must find the least restrictive setting for him or her. If the child could function well in a therapeutic foster home, he should not be living in a residential treatment center long term, unless there are other compelling reasons to keep him there. If he is adoptable, he should not be residing in a group home indefinitely unless there are extraordinary concerns which justify the placement. We want these children to be placed in the most humane family or family-like setting wherever possible.
- **Kinship Care** - Are birth relatives available to take this child into their home? If so, what is their level of functioning and capacity to parent? Have they had an important attachment relationship to this child and vice versa? Can the relatives protect the child from the birth parent's incursions?
- **Cultural Issues** - If the child is from a minority group, can the child be placed in a family of the same or similar culture right from the start? Identity issues surrounding culture and race are extremely and fundamentally important. At the same time, much harm to foster children occurs if they are placed with a good home, only to be removed later because of racial mismatching.

Permanency is a praiseworthy, highly desirable, and federally mandated goal for children residing in foster care without a goal of reunification with the birth parents. However, permanency is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. Simply put, permanency does not universally and inevitably mean adoption or kinship care. With the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, we must determine the individual optimum permanence for each unique child.