All children and youth in the foster care system deserve permanent families. When a child or youth in out-of-home care cannot safely be reunified with his or her birth family, adoption offers a permanent and legally binding relationship to an adoptive family that can provide them with care, stability, and home environments that promote healthy development. 1, 2

Parents who adopt children from foster care are diverse in family structure and in their relationship with their adoptive child prior to the adoption. In Rhode Island in 2012, 59% of youth adopted from foster care were adopted by married couples, 26% by single females, 12% by unmarried couples, and 4% by single males.

Nationally in 2012, over half (56%) of adoptive parents had previously been foster parents to their adoptive child, 30% were related to their adoptive child, and 14% were not related. 3

Children adopted from foster care have histories of abuse and neglect and often must overcome issues of trust and attachment, identity formation, and the impacts of childhood trauma. Adoptive families can benefit from post-adoption services support the child’s successful transition into his or her adoptive family. These services can include respite care, counseling, peer support groups, as well as material supports like financial, medical, and educational assistance. 4

On September 30, 2012 in Rhode Island, there were 226 children and youth in foster care waiting to be adopted. Of these, 132 children and youth waiting for adoption had birth parents whose parental rights had been terminated.

Young children are more likely to be adopted from foster care than older youth. During FFY 2012, almost two-thirds (59%) of children adopted from Rhode Island’s foster care system were under age six, while 14% were youth age 12 or older.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2013). Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, Federal Fiscal Year 2012. Children Waiting to be Adopted is a count of all children in foster care on September 30, 2012 whose permanency goal is adoption and/or whose parental rights have been terminated. Children Adopted is the number of children adopted with public child welfare involvement between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012.
I Support child-focused recruitment initiatives and raise public awareness of the benefits of adoption through the foster care system.

I Practice concurrent planning to simultaneously pursue permanency through adoption or guardianship should efforts at reunification fail.

I Increase financial subsidies and economic supports to families who adopt children from the foster care system.

I Enhance funding for pre- and post-adoptive services to prepare and support adoptive children, youth, and families.

I Increase the age at which youth age out of the Rhode Island child welfare system from 18 to 21 to give youth more time to form connections to a permanent family.

I Provide ongoing professional development for the child welfare workforce on clinical interventions for children and families, as well as state and federal policies relating to foster care adoption practice.

Recommendations:

- Support child-focused recruitment initiatives and raise public awareness of the benefits of adoption through the foster care system.
- Practice concurrent planning to simultaneously pursue permanency through adoption or guardianship should efforts at reunification fail.
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References:


