

# Creative Youth-Centered Permanency Action Plan Approaches



This tool offers a collection of creative approaches and related action steps that may be relevant for youth served through YCPRTs. While not all ideas will apply to each young person, the intent is to provide a flexible guide to inspire approaches that support each youth in achieving lifelong connections and legal permanency.

Creative Action Plan Approach	Steps to Inform Goal Setting
Pursue overlooked or unconventional family connections as potential permanency resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revisit documentation of family members that were previously "ruled out" and reassess whether they can be "ruled in," even if the agency already has permanent custody.</li><li>• Engage with youth to revisit their support network, utilizing a variety of approaches, such as Mobility Mapping, Naturally Connected Questions and/or the Circles of Support.</li></ul>
Boost family search and engagement efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage with youth to revisit their support network, utilizing a variety of approaches, such as Mobility Mapping, Naturally Connected Questions and/or the Circles of Support.</li><li>• Ask the youth about their friends, especially if they've moved to a new city/area but maintain important friendships from their previous location.</li><li>• Create a genogram and review with youth.</li><li>• Revisit and update previous genograms with the goal of reaching out to contacts – even if not a placement option, consider the type of support they can offer.</li><li>• Utilize Wendy's Wonderful Kids to recruit additional supports.</li></ul>
Use kin gatherings and life events to identify and engage extended family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrange and accompany youth to kin gatherings, including out-of-state events (i.e., family reunions).</li><li>• Attend sporting events and youth activities to engage potential kinship supports or placement options.</li><li>• Attend funerals of family members to identify potential supports or placement options</li></ul>

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Support frequent and consistent visits with youth and their supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a structured weekly engagement calendar to ensure consistent, meaningful time between the youth and supportive adults.</li> <li>• Arrange off-site visits with identified support persons, allowing the youth to participate in typical childhood activities in community settings.</li> </ul>
Engage youth and parents together in team-led discussions around reunification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the youth desires contact, hold a separate meeting with the parent (outside the YCPRT) where the youth can safely share their thoughts on reunification.</li> <li>• Use the meeting to help the youth gain emotional closure and feel heard, regardless of the outcome.</li> </ul>
Affirm and formalize a lifelong supportive bond with the current foster family (and/or previous placements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate regular discussions and meetings to build mutual understanding and long-term expectations between the youth and current foster family or previous placements.</li> <li>• Document the family's commitment to being a permanent emotional and relational support in the action plan and have them complete a <b>Permanency Pact</b>.</li> </ul>
Strengthen youth connections and identity through community-based mentorship and leadership opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and engage unpaid community mentors already informally connected to youth.</li> <li>• Provide tools for mentor-youth engagement, such as independent living workbooks or structured discussion guides for mentors and youth to work through together.</li> <li>• Encourage youth to mentor younger peers in the community as a way to build connections, develop leadership skills, and foster belonging.</li> </ul>
Tailor adoption recruitment around a youth's specific strengths and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with the youth to explore their hopes and goals for a family and engage in meaningful conversations about what a "forever family" looks like to them.</li> <li>• Marry the strengths and needs of a youth with family dynamics and structure that will match this.</li> </ul>

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Identify natural and community supports to help prepare youth leaving care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help youth identify their support network using tools like Mobility Mapping, Naturally Connected Questions, or Circles of Support.</li><li>• Have natural supports complete a <b>Permanency Pact</b>.</li><li>• Work through Foster Club's Getting Solid book with the youth.</li><li>• Assist kinship supports in partnering with the youth to explore career/education paths, housing options and available resources, such as Youth Navigator Network (YNN).</li><li>• Reality test kinship connections and their ability to support offerings such as a home base, visits during school breaks, and long-term connections to ensure family's ongoing role.</li><li>• Connect youth with former foster youth.</li></ul>

## Creative Strategies at Work

"A teen girl in care learned about an upcoming family reunion, and the agency helped her attend the event to explore and build connections."

"One of our youth recently went to a funeral and reconnected with a cousin they hadn't seen in years. They'd like to invite the cousin to the next meeting to explore the possibility of her becoming a placement option."

"A staff member attended the funeral of a youth's biological father to meet relatives who could be supportive or become a placement option."

"One of our youth has a CASA who is working to become a licensed foster parent for them. Once that happens, the CASA will step away from their professional role to focus on providing a permanent home for the youth."

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"In one situation, the agency had filed for permanent custody but hadn't received it yet, we talked with the youth as a team about what permanent custody meant, as they weren't fully clear. We also included in the action plan for their therapist to help them understand and process their feelings."

"One youth was hoping for reunification with their mom, who shared the same desire. However, mom was inconsistent in contacting the agency or completing necessary steps. We invited her to a team meeting to discuss everything, hoping that hearing the child's feelings would motivate her. She was receptive, and we updated the action plan with her committed steps. Despite this, it didn't result in reunification, and we had to pursue permanent custody. I believe it was a valuable attempt and worth trying again in future cases. I think the youth also was able to find closure even though mom wasn't able to follow through, since he was able to say what he wanted to say to her in that meeting."