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○ DEC 2015

Probation

Adoptions, Legal Guardianships and Permanency Alternatives

ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR TIMELINESS TO PERMANENCY FOR ALL FOSTER YOUTH

The Outcomes and Accountability Act (AB626) mandates all counties to improve outcomes for youth and families. Based on the findings from the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) and County Self Assessments (CSA), each county developed a System Improvement Plan (SIP). The purpose of the SIP is to address four systematic areas in need of improvement, one being timeliness to permanency.

“These kids deserve to be loved too. And there are people that can love them.”

*- Lisa Campbell-Motton
LA County Probation Director*

ADOPTION IS AN OPTION

“All children deserve to be raised in safe, healthy, loving, permanent homes. There are many different paths to permanency—adoption, guardianship, family reunification—each of which, when achieved, marks a successful case resolution and exit from the foster care system. These successes can only happen if the juvenile courts and their partners keep permanency goals in sight from the beginning of every case and work toward them throughout the process.”

Judge Nash, Los Angeles County

Historically, juvenile probation at the state and national level were not involved with adoptions for youth who have committed crimes. Changes in federal laws and strong collaborations between child welfare agencies, juvenile probation and juvenile courts has gained groundbreaking momentum; thus, pioneering a practice unheard of until March of 2006!!

(Yolo County Probation foster youth Jerone with Adoptive family (in photo) was the 2nd Probation Child welfare adoption.)





NAOMI

#1 ADULT
ADOPTION

NEVADA
COUNTY



The Nevada County Probation Juvenile Division was able to share an incredible life changing experience with one of our Foster Youth. This young lady had to overcome and endure many personal and extenuating challenges prior to, and while in foster care. Despite the upheaval in her already chaotic life, she remained focused in school, volunteered in various employment opportunities and remained dedicated to her future plan toward independence. Upon her 18th birthday, she was faced with the harsh reality of attempting to establish her independence while attending school full-time and working a part-time job. She was provided AB12/212, Extended Foster Youth services, and continued to move forward in her life. Further, she remained determined to complete high school, ultimately earning her high school diploma. However, shortly after turning 19 years old, she found herself homeless and with no family to seek support from.

Teaming together with some county and community agencies, she was able to locate a local family who was willing to take her into their home temporarily until a long-term or permanent placement could be found. In doing so, this young lady not only found herself in a new place of residence, but also found her way into their hearts, soon becoming an integral part of the household, and more importantly, a member of their family. Not only did this young lady find a home, she found a family and her foundation. One year later, in the Spring of 2014, this family completed an adult adoption, adopting her at the age of 20 years old! She has since blossomed into a vibrant and outgoing young adult whose ambitions now include obtaining a college degree. She continues to work two part-time jobs, one of which she receives fresh vegetables in exchange for her labor.

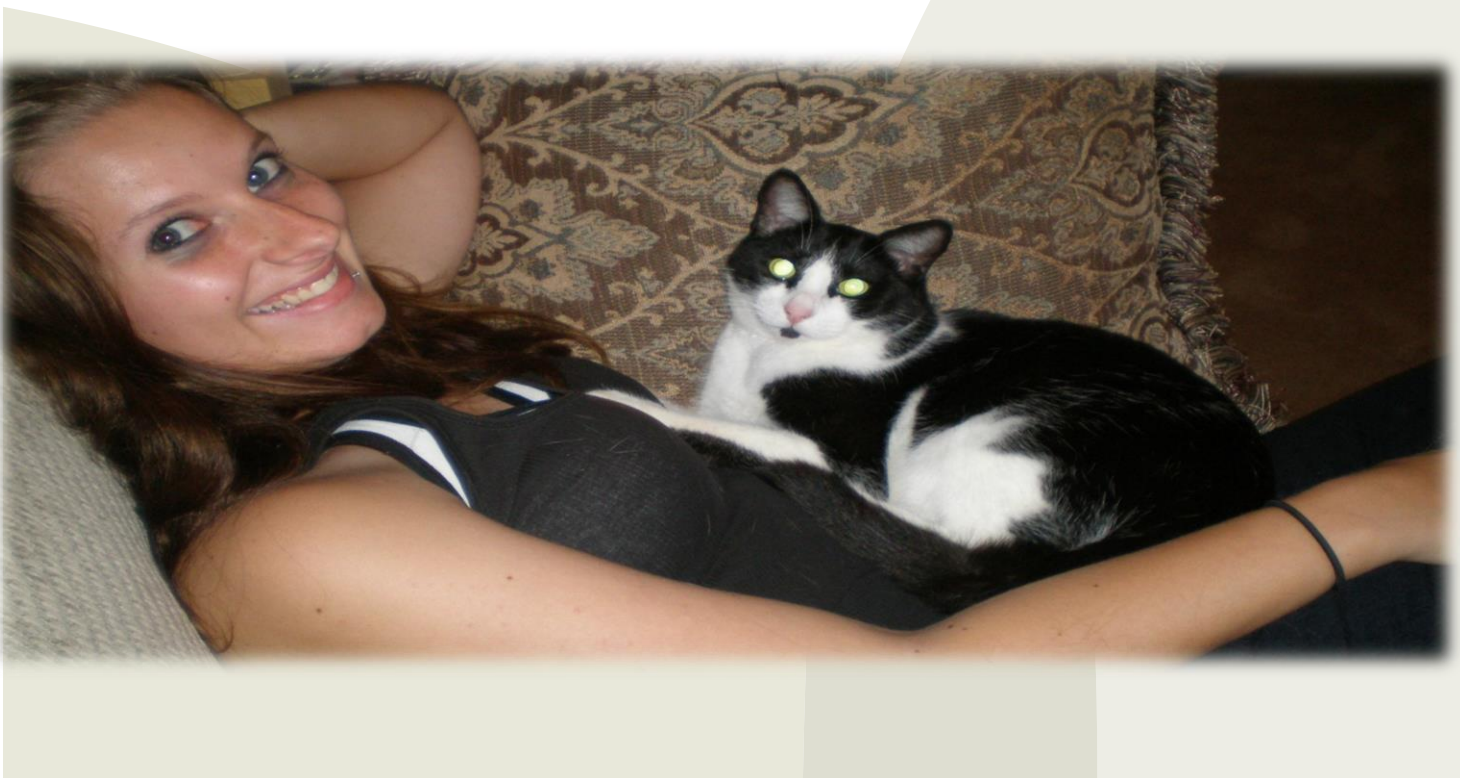




Although this adoption happened in June 2014, we are still celebrating this union over a year later as they sat down to Thanksgiving dinner together, sat around the tree exchanging gifts on Christmas morning and will ring in the New Year together with hugs and kisses.

Given Naomi's personal hardships and life experience, she has a heart for the homeless, often seeking them out to give the fresh vegetables she earned. She currently works part-time at Taco Bell and is attending community college.

When asked about her future plans, she states she will never forget where she came from, and despite life's bumps, she is capable of accomplishing anything she sets her mind to. But most of all, she is thankful for the loving family who embraced her as their own. She now has a place and a family to call "home"!



**ADOPTION
#8**

**LOS ANGELES
COUNTY**



Attorney Cynthia Billey, Adoption Worker Denise Belon and Permanency Officer Angelina Aranda sharing a very special moment at the hearing.



Although the adoption of Probation foster youth “E”, completed on November 5, 2015, is now the 5th adoption for Los Angeles County Probation and the 8th nationwide, it is the first of many things. This is the first delinquency adoption for Commissioner Totten, as the previous four (4) adoptions in Los Angeles County were completed by and in Commissioner Leventer’s court. It is the first adoption for Residential Based Services-Placement Officer Shira Garnett-Mims and Placement Permanency & Quality Assurance-Permanency Officer Angelina Aranda, who have been working with “E” and his newly adoptive dad for over two years. For DPO Angelina Aranda, this was her fourth attempt at bringing a family together through adoption. In the past 10 years, she rode this roller-coaster with 3 previous families; however, the potential adoptive parent gave up due to the youth’s instability and behavioral issues. However, this adoptive dad and “E” remained committed to each other from day one and have never wavered in their decision to be a permanent family.

It is the first time that Wrap Around was able to create an exception for an older youth and actually provide services in Juvenile Hall through the tremendous work and intervention of DPO Gregory Graam. It is the first adoption of a youth who committed a new crime during the adoption process and was detained in Juvenile Hall at the time of the Adoption Hearing, which created numerous barriers for DCFS Adoption Worker Denise Belon to overcome. It was definitely a first for her, and she rose to the challenge with integrity, passion and commitment, making this impossible adoption possible.

It has been a rocky road for “E” from birth. He struggles with depression, abandonment, a life-long medical issue, anger, substance use and poor peers. He has suffered incredible losses from a young age, he never met his biological father, his mother died when he was young, his grandma who raised him died and his mother’s female cousin, married to adoptive dad and who took over after grandma, also died. He has been in two placements and ultimately, Dorothy Kirby Center (DKC), a locked treatment facility in Los Angeles County. The incredible DKC Team, with the strong support and work of SDPO Fred Young and DPO Liovardo Ochoa, was a critical piece to the success of this adoption. Without their teamwork, partnership with PPQA and strong therapeutic intervention for “E”, this adoption would not have been possible. “E” completed his program at DKC and was placed back with his adoptive father for two months until his recent crime, for which he was detained and remained detained at the time of the adoption hearing. Both adoptive father and “E” remained so committed to being permanently and legally bonded, even in the face of “E”’s worst behavior. This rare commitment is why the multi-agency Permanency Team, made up of Probation child welfare, Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS), DCFS County Counsel Deborah Singer-Frankes, Probation County Counsel Veronica Pawlowski and Alliance for Children’s Rights Attorney Cynthia Billey, worked tirelessly to bring this adoption to finalization. It is a beautiful illustration of a love that is beyond natural human love. As Commissioner Totten stated, “There is no stronger bond than what a parent and child have for each other.”



ADOPTION NOT AN OPTION?

THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES!

LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP

The idea of Legal Guardianship in delinquency court is spreading! As of May 2014, Los Angeles County Probation has 3 strong potential legal guardianship cases!

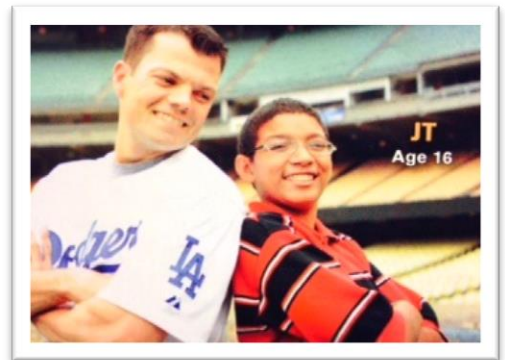
MEDIA-BASED RECRUITMENT

On February 2010, Los Angeles County Probation made history by having the first media-based recruitment case in delinquency court! Media-based recruitment allows Probation to showcase the youth to potential adoptive families through various forms of media, such as Heart Gallery, Channel 5 & 7 news, Dodger games/calendars, Kid Save and recruitment websites. As of December 2015, Los Angeles County Probation Child Welfare has 87 pending assessments for family finding and permanency. Approximately, 14% will meet the criteria for media-based recruitment.



Jared and JT were the first Probation foster youth to be included in the Heart Gallery Los Angeles and have their life-sized images displayed at a recruitment event! (Seen here with former Permanency Officer Princess Bennett-Strong.)

JT poses with Dodger Player. He was the first Probation foster youth featured in the Heart Gallery Los Angeles Calendar approximately 3 years ago.



FAMILY FINDING

Family Finding utilizes various search engines, such as Lexis-Nexis and social media to locate family members for youth. Due diligent efforts are made to find parents whose whereabouts are unknown, and for legal guardianships and adoptions purposes. Many times youth are reunited with biological parents who have rehabilitated and are now permanency options for their children who they were separated from.



Foster youth, Stephen, was the second Probation youth to be included in the Heart Gallery Los Angeles Calendar approximately 2 years ago.

