



Foster Care: Youth-in-Transition Conferencing

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Fast facts

- ▲ In 2003, Youth-in-Transition Conferences were conducted with 19 youth living in foster care in North Minneapolis. As of May 2004, 20 conferences and 18 follow-up conferences have been conducted.
- ▲ Conferencing is beneficial to youth because it:
 - assists the youth in developing their independent living skills.
 - establishes a committed network of support including community resources
 - connects the youth with adults who have skills related to the youth's needs
 - turns dreams into concrete, manageable steps

What is Youth-in-Transition Conferencing and how does it affect kids in long-term foster care?

Youth-in-Transition Conferencing is a process that enables young people to take the lead in planning for their futures. Conferencing is based on the family-group decision-making model which has been used successfully in Hennepin County.

Conferencing allows the youth to bring together everyone important in their lives – kin, service providers, teachers, friends – to help them develop their own plan for transitioning from foster care to independent living. Conferences are strength based, youth driven and youth empowering.

Long-term foster care is a permanency option often used when termination of parental rights or adoption are not appropriate for a given child, typically a child over the age of 12 or living with a sibling who is over the age of 12. Children who are state wards (parental rights have been terminated) also may be eligible for long-term foster care if they are 14 years old and sign a waiver stating they do not wish to be adopted. Youth over the age of 19 years old or who have graduated from high school are not eligible for out-of-home placement, but may receive case management services.

Who are the children in long-term foster care?

Hennepin has more than 660 children in long-term foster care. The majority are adolescents who remain in foster care until they either become independent or transfer to adult case management.

Ninety-five of those children are served by the Indian Child Welfare Act. The group is almost evenly split between males and females.

The ethnic mix of children include:

- ▲ 40 percent African-American
- ▲ 15 percent multiracial
- ▲ 18 percent American Indian
- ▲ 18 percent Caucasian
- ▲ 8 percent Hispanic
- ▲ 1 percent Southeast Asian

Youth in long-term foster care are assigned a social worker who remains with the them until they become independent. Youth in long-term foster care are eligible for a modest stipend as well as vouchers for educational training.