



1

Permanency Mediation

**Empowering families and collaborating across systems
for prevention and faster permanency for children**

*Child Welfare League of America
Annual Conference
Washington, DC
April 27, 2023*

2

Permanency Mediation

Presenters

*Julia A.B. Pearson, J.D. Program Director,
Plummer Youth Promise*

*Jaime Caron, LICSW Former Regional Director,
Massachusetts Department of Children and Family Services*

*Susan Glatki, J.D. Regional Supervisor,
Plummer Youth Promise*

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3

Learning Objectives / Goals

- Goal 1: Understand the fundamental principles and process of Permanency Mediation and its role in permanency planning for children.
- Goal 2: Understand the fundamental principles and process of Family Preservation Mediation and its role in permanency planning for children.
- Goal 3: Understand the cross systems collaboration necessary for success

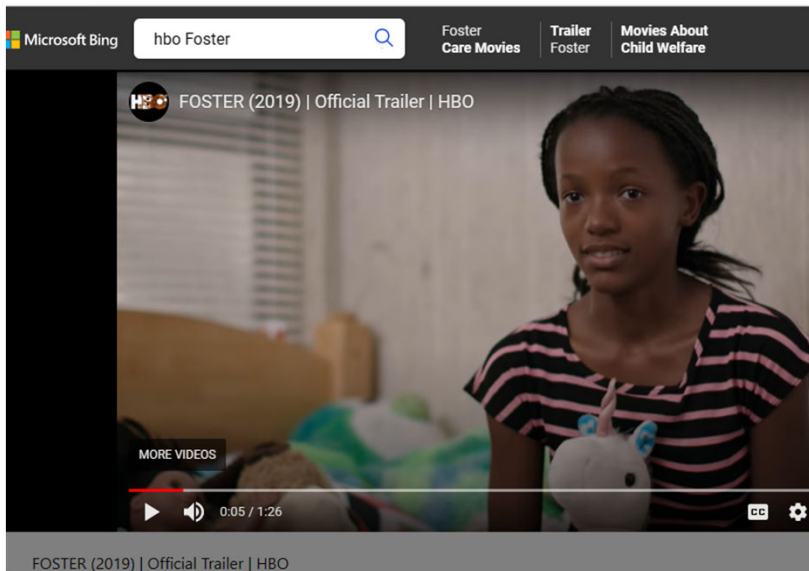
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WHY MEDIATE PERMANENCY DECISIONS?



- Identify a time when a minute seemed like an hour to you.
- Identify a time when an hour seemed like a minute to you.

5



[FOSTER \(2019\) | Official Trailer | HBO - Bing video](#)

6

Permanency Mediation

Program Mission

Decrease the number of children in foster care waiting for permanency through adoption, guardianship, or reunification and identify and promote system changes that result in more timely placements and stable permanent homes for all children in foster care.

Team

Julia Pearson, Program Director
Octavia Fugerson, Data Specialist
Jodie Will, Admin Coordinator

Susan Glatki, Supervisor
Dawn Jewett, Supervisor
Lori Carvalho, Supervisor

37+/- Mediators / fee for service
(Attorneys, former Child Welfare staff, Teachers, Therapists, Foster/Adoptive Parents, etc)

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7



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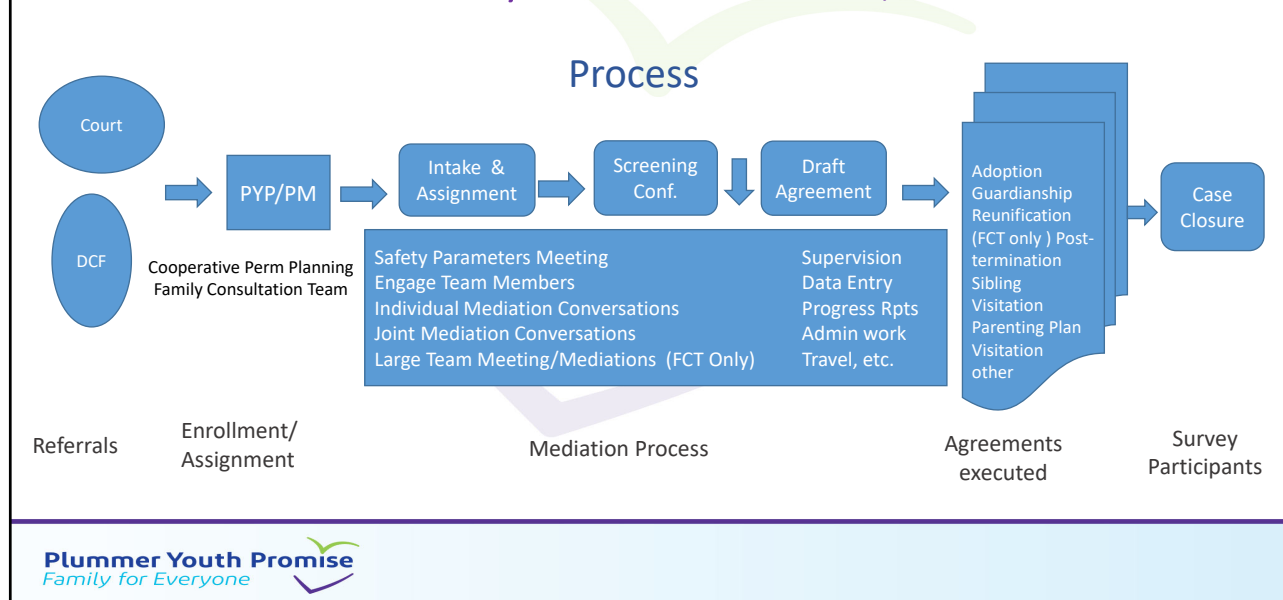
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WHAT IS PERMANENCY MEDIATION

- An alternative to a contested court proceeding for children in the state foster care system
- Specialized alternative dispute resolution approach that addresses the unique issues of both Care and Protection and Termination of Parental Rights trials
- Uses an independent mediator to facilitate a child-centered approach to permanency planning
- Gives parents an opportunity to help develop the plan
- Empowers and preserves families. It improves communication and relationships among all the caregivers

9

Permanency Mediation Process,



10

Basic Principles of Mediation

- Voluntary
- Informed consent
- Self Determination
- Impartiality
- Confidentiality

11

CHARACTERISTICS OF PERMANENCY MEDIATION

- Child Centered
- Collaborative
- Empowerment based
- Relationship building
- Shuttle diplomacy
- Psycho-educational component
- Outreach model
- Months vs. hours
- Neutral
- Concurrent Planning

12

Permanency Mediation Overview

Two Approaches

Family Consultation Team Mediation
Cooperative Permanency Planning Mediation

13

Two Approaches

Family Consultation Team

The Family Consultation Team is a model that unites parents, kin, foster parents, attorneys, social workers, service providers and other professionals in a single Team. The team develops and implement a permanent plan that addresses the child's long-term needs in four areas:

1. SAFETY
2. SUPPORT
3. CONTINUITY OF RELATIONSHIPS
4. PERMANENCE

14

Cooperative Permanency Planning

- Focuses on individual work with parents and guardians or pre-adoptive parents.
- Utilized in cases at Termination of Parental Rights stage or once all meaningful efforts at reunification have been made and have proven unsuccessful. The Child Welfare permanency goal is either Adoption or Guardianship.

15



16

Permanency Partnerships



- Massachusetts Department of Children and Families / Child Welfare Agency
- Massachusetts Trial Courts
 - Juvenile & Probate and Family
- Massachusetts Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS)
- Massachusetts Committee for Permanence for Children (MCPC)
- Regional Advisory Committees

17

Department of Children & Families - Central Region:

Innovation, Creativity and Collaboration

- Proactive Approach
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- “Build It and They will Come!”
- Ongoing Collaboration, Advocacy & Capacity Building



18

Challenges that were overcome



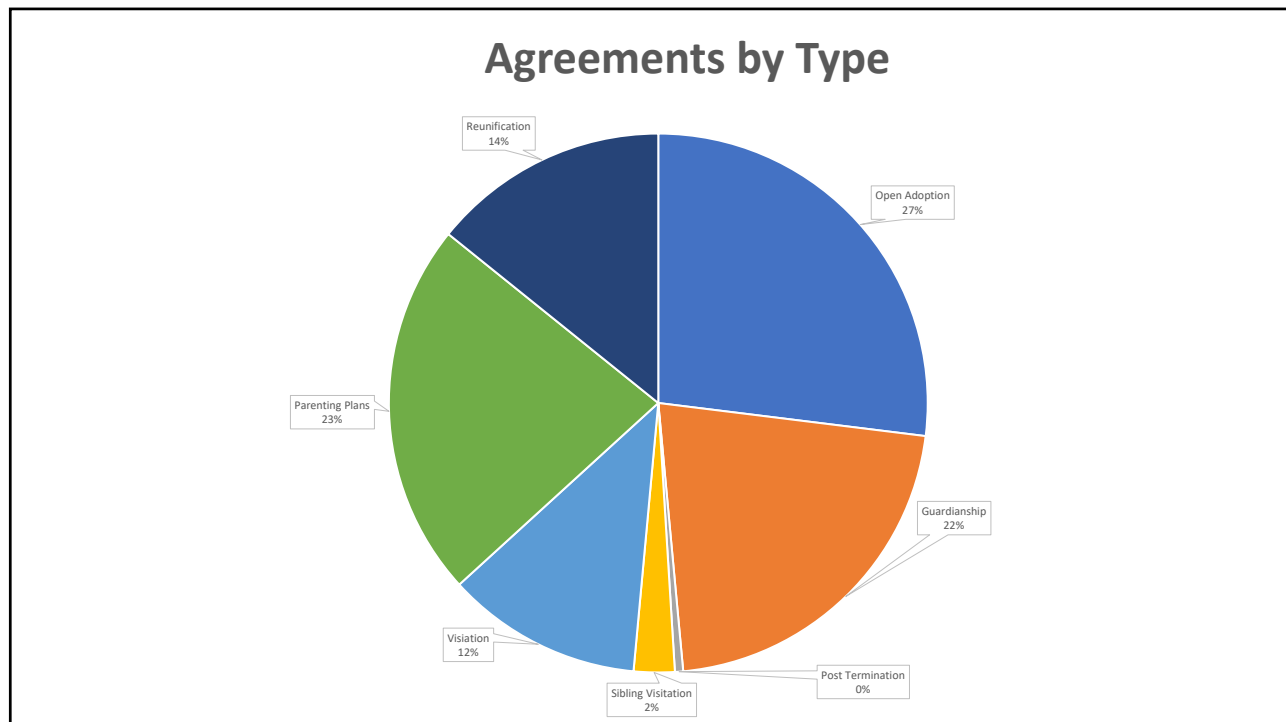
- Pandemic
- DCF Turnover
- Court Delays
- Lack of Resources / Wait listed for services
- Goal changes and bureaucracy to change it
- Child attaching with others
- Entrenchment in "Positions"
- Distrust
- Parent attorneys wanting to mediate the "goal"
- It takes months not hours and court makes referral within a month of trial

19

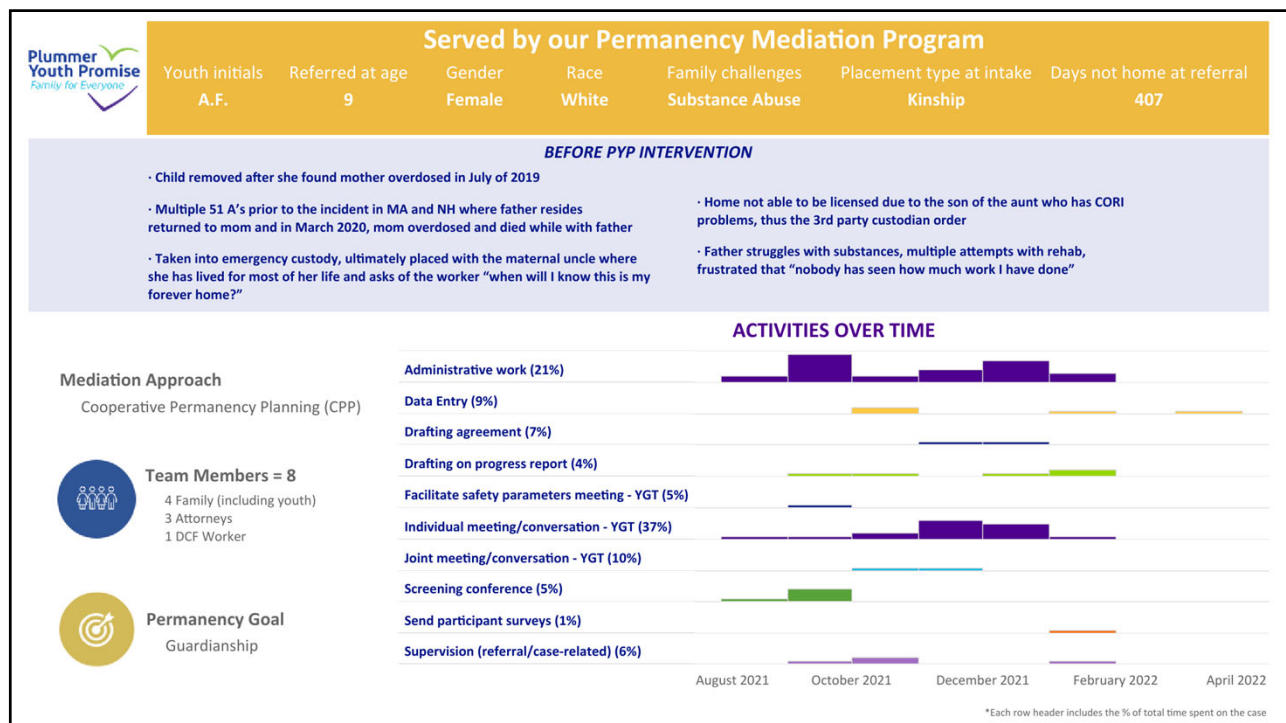
Successes

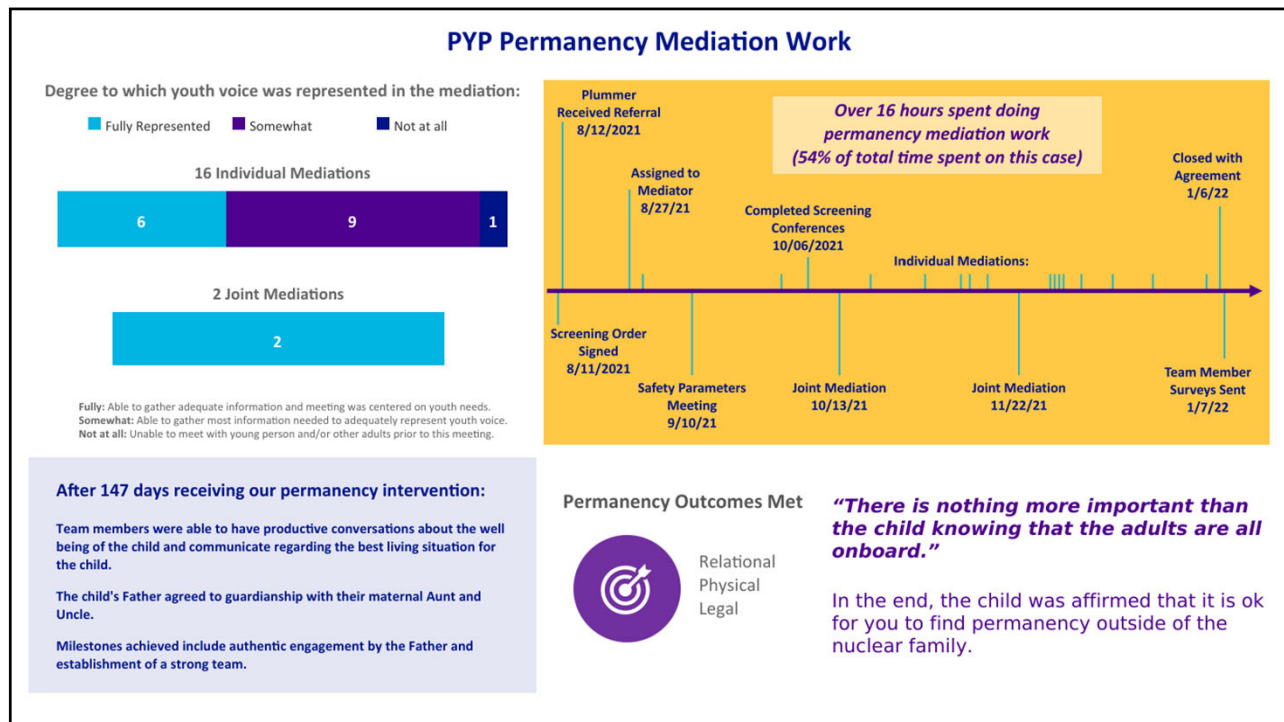
- ✓ Multi-disciplinary collaboration with DCF Clinical and Legal, CPCS and the Courts
- ✓ Improves timeliness to permanency
- ✓ More than a legal solution
- ✓ Virtual mediation
- ✓ Improved communication
- ✓ Allows everyone a voice to make plans for the children
- ✓ Leads to settlement
- ✓ Opportunities for solutions that were not previously considered

20



21





23



24

Family Preservation Mediation

- Family Preservation Mediation supports systems to examine, assess and individualize initial placement-related decisions more carefully.
- These meetings illustrate the following key values:
 - including families as team members;
 - focusing on safety;
 - striving to preserve families;
 - assessing children's unique needs;
 - and promoting timely permanence.

25

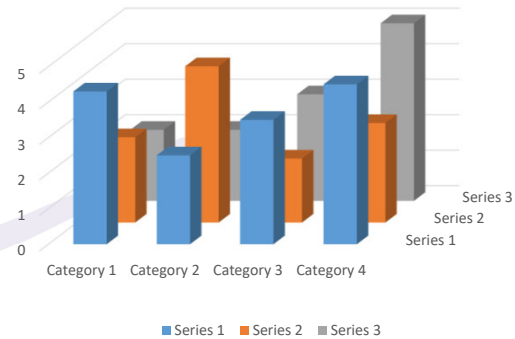
Family Preservation Mediation

A quality Family Preservation Mediation decision does not necessarily prevent removals, but rather ensures that if an initial placement is made, it is a wise and necessary one, with a trusted, safe, family member, or known to the child to **minimize trauma**.

26

Cases for Family Preservation & Placement Prevention

- Educational Neglect
- Medical Neglect
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Family Violence
- Substance Use Disorder
- Reluctant Parents
- Chronic Neglect
- Adolescent Case



27

Why Mediation works

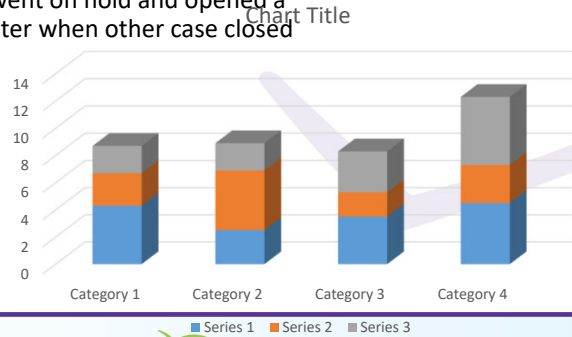
- Mediators approach the family as an ally not an authority
 - Neutral 3rd party – not the Department - Self Determination
- Mediators acknowledge their feelings and perceptions
 - They can vent to a mediator and it won't matter
 - Mediators have no power over them and can't "punish" them for complaining
- Mediators listen – don't judge – reframe
 - Feeling heard is important
 - Mediator can help them communicate better through the reframe
 - Mediators can help them see things from a child's perspective rather than their own
- Mediator keep the process child centered rather than blame and shame
 - Because everyone wants to be a good parent
 - Every parent needs help

28

FPM Stats

of 25 cases 4 were rejected because of one at a time or conflict of interest -

2 parents chose not to participate
4 rejected 1 at a time
1 that went on hold and opened a week later when other case closed



• Case examples

All cases where team meetings were held, there was an agreement for the children to stay with parent or with relative.

2 cases were sent to other mediation program to mediate additional issues -

29

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30

TEAMING APPROCHES

SHARED VALUES

- All families have strengths
- Families are experts on themselves
- Families deserve to be treated with dignity and respect
- Families can make well-informed decision about keeping children safe when supported
- When families are involved in decision making, outcomes can improve
- A team is often more capable of creative and high-quality decision making than an individual
- Children's voices need to be heard

Characteristics of Permanency Mediation

- ❖ Child-Centered
- ❖ Collaborative
- ❖ Empowerment Based
- ❖ Relationship Building
- ❖ Shuttle Diplomacy
- ❖ Neutrality
- ❖ Psychoeducational Component
- ❖ Outreach Model
- ❖ Months vs. Hours
- ❖ Concurrent Planning



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Plummer Youth Promise
Permanency Mediation Program

PERMANENCY MEDIATION - TWO APPROACHES:

FAMILY CONSULTATION TEAM and COOPERATIVE PERMANENCY PLANNING

Plummer Youth Promise staff developed, piloted and trained professionals in the cutting-edge Permanency Mediation model comprised of two distinct approaches: Family Consultation Team and Cooperative Permanency Planning. The primary goals of both approaches are to: reduce the time spent by children in foster care, increase the number of children in legalized permanent living arrangements, decrease the number of moves children have while in foster care, and increase the identification and availability of family members as well as informal supports in achieving a child's permanent plan.

Combining the prominent and nationally-espoused principles of *concurrent planning, family group conferencing, family group decision-making and mediation*, the following characteristics define Plummer Youth Services' specialized Permanency Mediation approaches.

- ↳ **Child-centered and family-focused**, which identifies the child's specific needs, the parental strengths and characteristics needed for any adult to successfully parent a particular child.
- ↳ **Collaborative**, meaning it unites parents, extended family, kin, caregivers and professionals in a cooperative planning process; recognizing that all have a contribution to make on behalf of the child.
- ↳ **Non-judgmental**, reflecting how it empowers family members through participatory planning and decision-making on behalf of their child.
- ↳ **Neutral**, meaning that the professional facilitator who assures that the process is child-centered has no decision-making authority and no stake in a specific outcome.
- ↳ **Relationship building**, a characteristic that provides for the essential opportunity for all adults who are significant in a child's life to plan together and develop positive relationships that can be sustained over time.

A fundamental principle of Plummer Youth Promise Permanency Mediation work is its child-centered nature. This means that it is guided by a comprehensive assessment of the immediate, as well as the life-long needs of each child. Another foundational principle is that it is family-focused, meaning it is highly cognizant and respectful of the primary role played by a child's family in providing him/her with safety, well-being and permanence.

Plummer's mediators understand that race, culture and ethnicity play defining roles in the lives of children and families as does the interplay of primary attachment relationships, kinship connections and a child's essential need for timely and stable permanence. Active participation of family members in team decision-making is initiated, creatively facilitated and supported throughout the process.

The Plummer Permanency Mediation model uses two primary approaches to reach collaborative decisions and timely outcomes. The **first approach** is FAMILY CONSULTATION TEAM (FCT). The FCT is used for cases referred at the Care and Protection level of the court process while the goal is still reunification. Using *concurrent planning and family group conferencing strategies*, FCT addresses what needs to occur for the child to return home, while simultaneously considering an alternative permanent plan if reunification is not possible. The FCT team unites parents, extended family, social workers, attorneys and other service providers in a non-adversarial permanency planning process facilitated by a neutral third party.

The FCT model empowers a child's immediate and extended family, through participatory planning on behalf of the child. The FCT's deliberations are focused on issues of safety, support, continuity of relationships and permanency specific to the child's needs and best interests. Permanency in this model can be achieved through reunification, adoption, guardianship, kinship guardianship, kinship adoption and other creative arrangements that are legally secure.

The **second approach**, COOPERATIVE PERMANENCY PLANNING (CPP) occurs when reunification is no longer a viable option and the service plan goal is no longer reunification. Used at the point where a petition is filed for Termination of Parental Rights, the focus of all activities and efforts shifts in order to assist the parent in planning for the child's future even when he or she is unable to be the full time parent. Even if reunification cannot occur, this does not mean that parents cannot or should not help to plan for their child.

Plummer Youth Promise permanency mediation staff is highly qualified and the most experienced across the Commonwealth in these two Permanency Mediation approaches. Each staff mediator has a minimum of five years Permanency Mediation experience and a minimum of five years child welfare direct service experience. Each staff mediator as well as all agency subcontracted mediators and independent neutrals in the Plummer statewide network also meets the specialized qualifications and experience as defined by the Supreme Judicial Court's Qualifications for Court-Connected Permanency Mediators in Massachusetts.

To request training, consultation or more information about Plummer Youth Promise Permanency Mediation model or to refer a case for Permanency Mediation, please contact:

- Julia A.B. Pearson, Program Director, Permanency Mediation Program at 781-433-0313



ROLES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

There are many different people who play important roles during the Permanency Mediation Process. Each role is different and serves different purposes.

The MEDIATOR

The mediator is a neutral 3rd Party who guides and protects the Mediation Process. They share Information, educate, balance power, and protect confidentiality. Mediators have no stake in any particular outcome and don't make decisions for the parties, but empower the parties to speak for themselves, focus on the child's best interest, and work through the details.

THE PARENTS

In mediation the parents have the opportunity to collaborate in making decisions about their child's future. Through mediation process the parent can express their needs, their concerns for their child, work through the issues that brought the family to the attention of DCF, learn and share information.

Benefits of involving and empowering the parents include:

- Increases exchange of information among mediation participants;
- Improves quality of the agreement due to greater input from all mediation participants;
- Reinforces the parents' role by providing them with an opportunity to contribute to the efforts to find a solution;
- Increases the parent's sense of ownership and understanding of the agreements
- Increases compliance with agreements;
- Reduces conflict between the parents, the care providers, other professionals, and foster parents and increases ability to work effectively as a team on behalf of the child; and
- Increases the parent's confidence in the child protection system.

THE SOCIAL WORKER

Identifies appropriate cases for referral and shares relevant case information with the Mediator. The Social Worker identifies and provides child-specific safety concerns to ensure that the child is protected through the agreement. They articulate the department's plan for the family and identifies the supports and services that need to be in place for the safety of the child and family. Social workers continue their regular case management, make referrals for services, maintain visitation, and keep the mediator informed of any changes in the status of the case, the parents or the child. They also help educate the parents and foster parents about expectations which includes empowering them to participate in the process and supporting the mediation process. When participating in a Family Consultation Team mediation it is important that a DCF representative with authority to mediate and settle any issues be present.

ATTORNEY FOR THE CHILD

The attorney for the child helps to determine how the child participates in the mediation process. The attorney for the child will have met the child prior to the mediation and will assist the mediator in determining the best way to bring the voice of the child into the mediation. If the child participates in a Family Consultation Team (“FCT”) mediation the attorney can support the child’s participation and assist the child to articulate his/her wants and needs, including but not limited to any services, visitation or placement options. If the child does not participate in the FCT mediation the attorney should be the child’s “voice” and articulate his/her wants and needs. Whether the child participates or not, the attorney presents and frames the legal issues on behalf of the child and safeguards the child’s legal interests. The attorney helps the child understand and consider their options, and legal rights before and during the mediation process. This includes counseling the child to understand the consequences of the decisions made during the mediation process and any resulting agreement.

ATTORNEYS FOR THE PARENTS AND DCF

The attorneys for the parents and DCF are responsible for informing their clients about the mediation process, synthesizing their desires, needs, and concerns to maximize their participation in the mediation process, and counseling them as to their rights and responsibilities with regard to the mediation. Their role also includes helping their clients understand the legal consequences of any agreement reached in mediation. Attorneys for victims of domestic violence should alert the mediator about the issue so it can be addressed prior to any joint or group session.

FOSTER PARENTS, RELATIVES, AND NON-SERVICE PROVIDER PARTICIPANTS

It is important that foster parents, relatives, extended family, and other caregivers participate, they can provide insight into the family dynamics, family concerns, the child’s needs, family supports and placement options. Their role in the mediation will be determined by the nature of the case and reason for their participation in mediation and in some cases, the parent’s consent. All participants must sign an Agreement to Mediate in order to participate, and agree to be bound by the same confidentiality laws and rules that apply to other mediation participants. Unless the participant is agreeing to be bound in some way by the agreement, consent is likely not needed in order for the parties to reach a mediation settlement agreement.

GAL, CASA, THERAPISTS, AND OTHER SERVICE PROVIDER PARTICIPANTS

Guardian ad Litem, CASAs look out for the child’s best interests. They work with the child’s attorney to bring the voice of the child to the mediation. Therapists, educators, and other professionals who work with the child or the parents help identify the strengths and concerns of the child and parents, and helps to identify possible supports. They can provide information about the family, the child and the child’s situation that informs the discussion and helps with the decision making. Their role in the mediation will be determined by the nature of the case and reason for their participation in mediation and in some cases, the parent’s consent. All participants must sign an Agreement to Mediate in order to participate, and agree to be bound

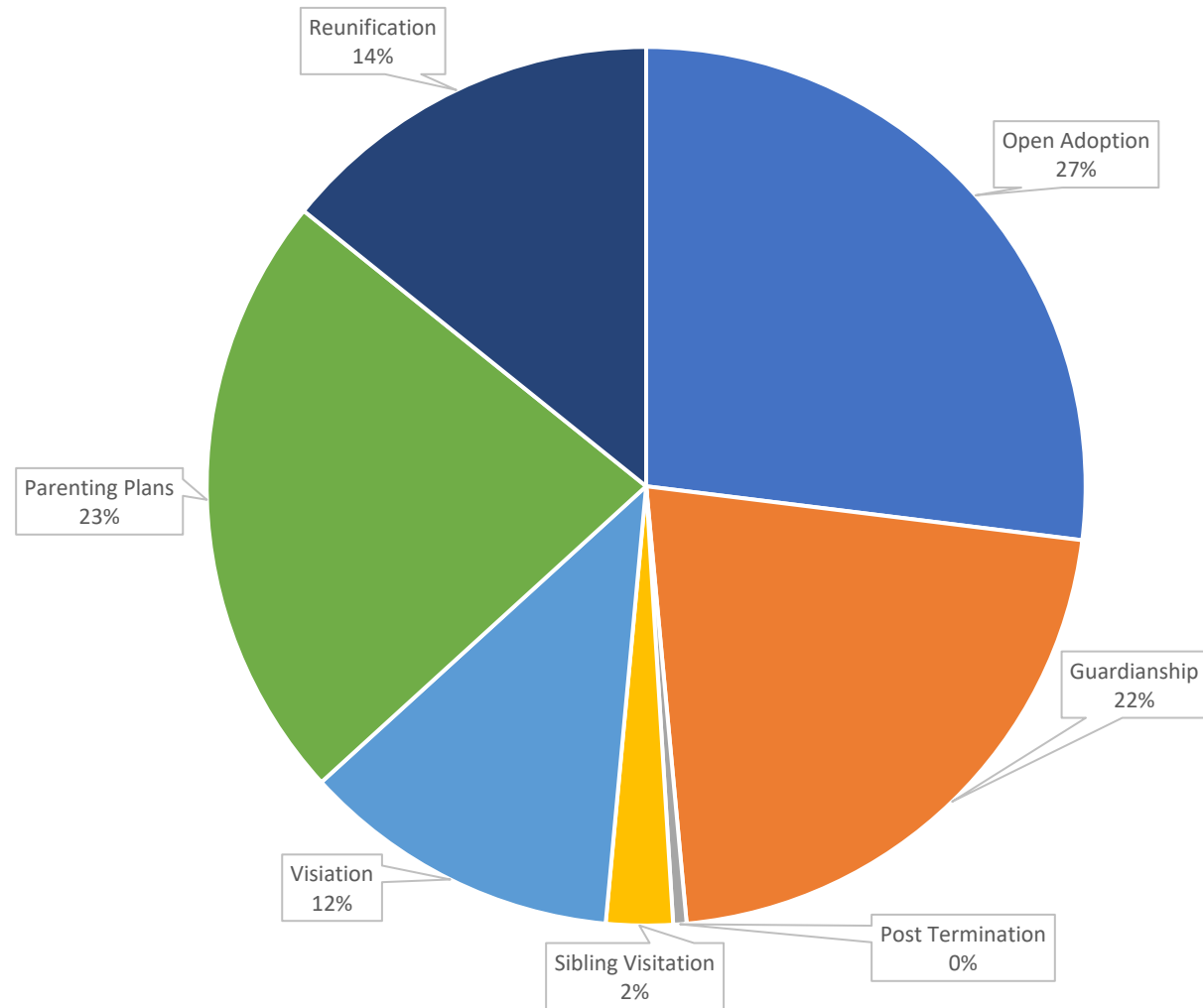
by the same confidentiality laws and rules that apply to other mediation participants. Unless the participant is agreeing to be bound in some way by the agreement, consent is likely not needed in order for the parties to reach a mediation settlement agreement.

THE CHILD

The mediator, in consultation with his/her supervisor determines whether and how a child may participate in the mediation process. Factors to be weighed in such a determination includes the child's wishes, the child's age and developmental capacity and child protective factors, including the nature of the allegations in the case. There will be a meaningful inquiry to determine if the child understands mediation and if the child wants to participate. This discussion will occur between the child, and the child's attorney, GAL or CASA or other appropriate support person prior mediation. The child will not participate in an FCT mediation with an alleged perpetrator in cases where the confrontation is determined to be harmful to the child.

If the child expresses an interest in participation, the mediator will work with the child's attorney, social worker and other support person to determine the child's capacity to actively and safely participate in the mediation. If a child does not wish to participate or it is determined that the child should not participate in person, alternative methods for ensuring the child's "voice" is present will be utilized.

Agreements by Type





Served by our Permanency Mediation Program

Youth initials	Referred at age	Gender	Race	Family challenges	Placement type at intake	Days not home at referral
A.F.	9	Female	White	Substance Abuse	Kinship	407

BEFORE PYP INTERVENTION

- Child removed after she found mother overdosed in July of 2019
- Multiple 51 A's prior to the incident in MA and NH where father resides returned to mom and in March 2020, mom overdosed and died while with father
- Taken into emergency custody, ultimately placed with the maternal uncle where she has lived for most of her life and asks of the worker "when will I know this is my forever home?"
- Home not able to be licensed due to the son of the aunt who has CORI problems, thus the 3rd party custodian order
- Father struggles with substances, multiple attempts with rehab, frustrated that "nobody has seen how much work I have done"

Mediation Approach

Cooperative Permanency Planning (CPP)



Team Members = 8

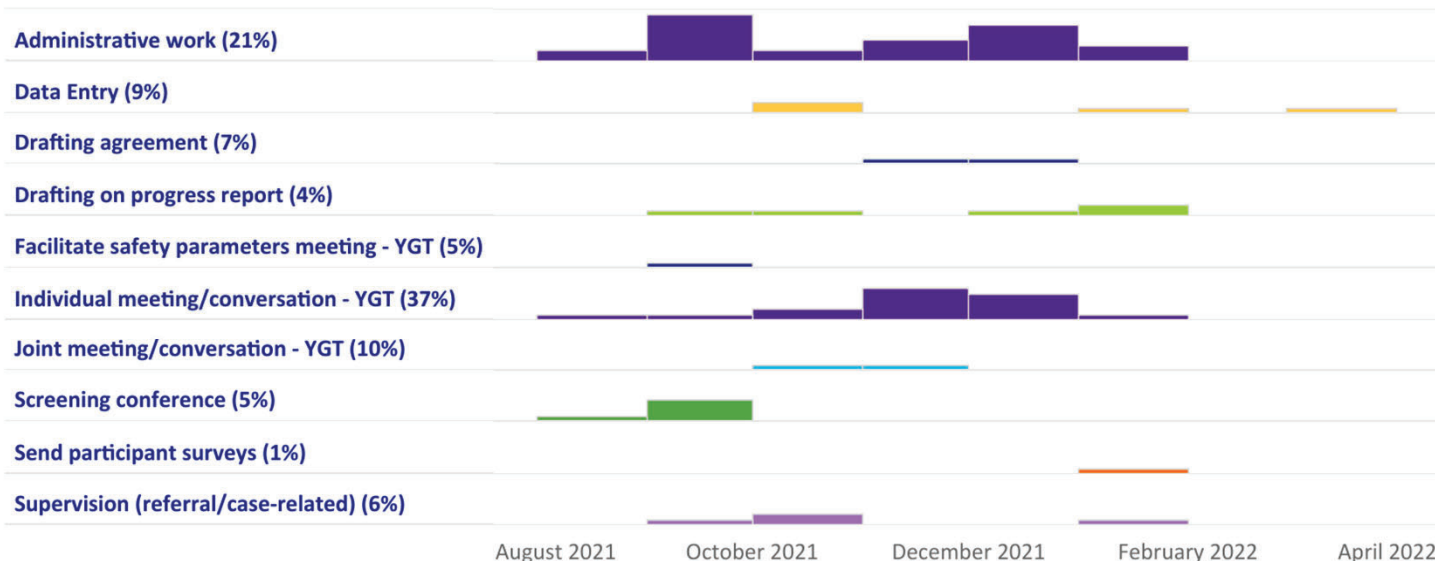
4 Family (including youth)
3 Attorneys
1 DCF Worker



Permanency Goal

Guardianship

ACTIVITIES OVER TIME



*Each row header includes the % of total time spent on the case

PYP Permanency Mediation Work

Degree to which youth voice was represented in the mediation:

■ Fully Represented
 ■ Somewhat
 ■ Not at all

16 Individual Mediations



2 Joint Mediations



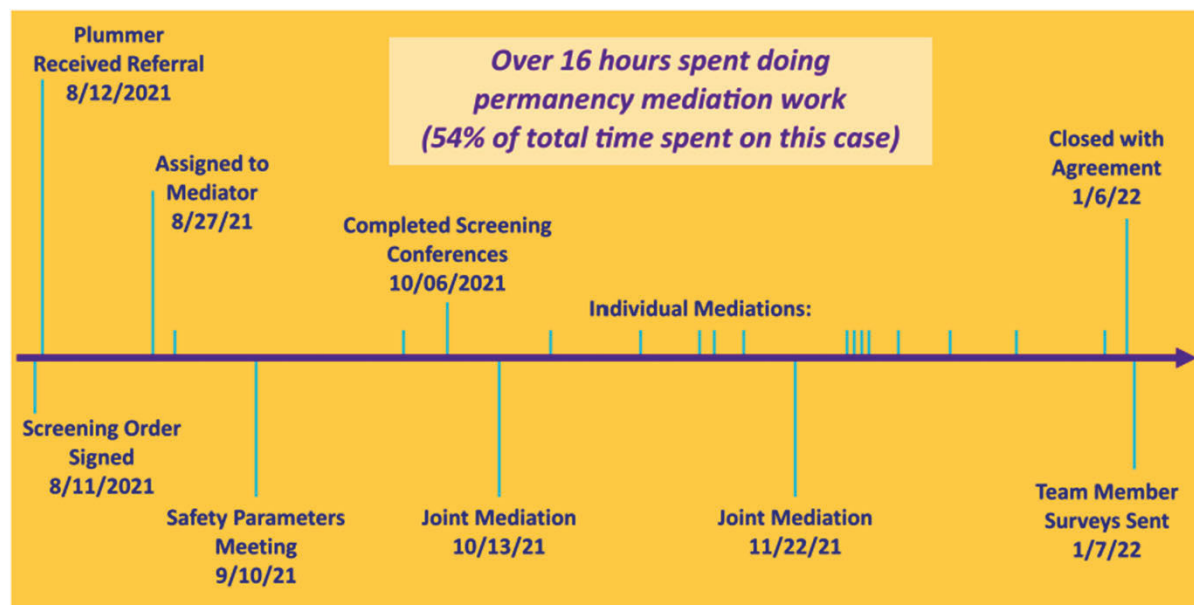
Fully: Able to gather adequate information and meeting was centered on youth needs.
Somewhat: Able to gather most information needed to adequately represent youth voice.
Not at all: Unable to meet with young person and/or other adults prior to this meeting.

After 147 days receiving our permanency intervention:

Team members were able to have productive conversations about the well being of the child and communicate regarding the best living situation for the child.

The child's Father agreed to guardianship with their maternal Aunt and Uncle.

Milestones achieved include authentic engagement by the Father and establishment of a strong team.



Permanency Outcomes Met



Relational
 Physical
 Legal

“There is nothing more important than the child knowing that the adults are all onboard.”

In the end, the child was affirmed that it is ok for you to find permanency outside of the nuclear family.



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FAMILY PRESERVATION MEDIATION FUNDAMENTALS

The goal of engaging families and children in the very decision making and planning processes that affect them, is to improve their experiences and out-of-home placement outcomes when they become involved with the child welfare system.

Out-of-home placement of children is complex and life-altering. Therefore, it is critical that a decision to remove a child from his/her family is deliberately and judiciously examined, and that the decision about where to place a child is made with utmost care. Family Preservation Mediation provides a vehicle to carefully evaluate the safety/protection needs, consider the child's point of view and weigh ramifications to make the best safety and placement-related decision.

Family Preservation Mediation supports systems to examine, assess and individualize initial placement-related decisions more carefully. These meetings illustrate the following key values: including families as team members; focusing on safety; striving to preserve families; assessing children's unique needs; and promoting timely permanence. A quality Family Preservation Mediation decision does not necessarily prevent removals, but rather ensures that if an initial placement is made, it is a wise and necessary one, with a trusted, safe, family member, or known to the child to minimize trauma.

Plummer Youth Promise is exploring the many different ways that Family Preservation Mediation can be utilized. Because we are beginning to provide this service, we want to ensure timely engagement with immediate results. We want to learn which type of case would benefit from Family Preservation Mediation and what infrastructure is needed to enable immediate results.

Plummer Youth Promise is accepting referrals where the Department is considering removing the child from the home. Case issues have included educational neglect, medical neglect, domestic violence issues, cases where parents will not engage in services and substance use cases. We are interested in exploring using Family Preservation Mediation to make "a live decision." For example, cases where a Department worker is in the home and is requesting permission to remove. An FPM must be scheduled immediately in order to make a live decision about the necessity of removal. Another type of case is where the child was removed, and the FPM may enable the child to return home or be placed with family. These cases need to be completed within 48 hours after removal and before the 72-hour hearing. These two types of referrals will allow Plummer and the Department to assess the ability to conduct an immediate mediation.

1. REMOVAL OF A CHILD FROM THEIR PARENTS' CARE SHOULD ONLY OCCUR WHEN THERE IS IMMINENT RISK OF SERIOUS HARM AND IN-HOME SERVICES AND PROTECTIVE SUPPORTS CAN NOT PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF SAFETY:

Child welfare staff only initiate consideration of out-of-home care when a child is at imminent risk of serious harm from abuse and/or neglect. At a Family Preservation Mediation, the decision is made whether home-based services and protective supports can provide an acceptable level of safety and protection or if the child must enter temporary out-of-home care while services and interventions are offered to the parent(s). When the team recommends placement for a child, it must also explore the need for concurrent planning and explain timeframes for permanency to the parents at the meeting.

A child's placement in substitute care may precede a Family Preservation Mediation in a crisis situation that requires immediate removal to ensure safety. When the child's placement is in advance of the Family Preservation Mediation, the meeting should be held within two working days and always before the initial court hearing.

2. EVALUATION OF A CHILD'S UNIQUE NEEDS SHOULD BE PART OF THE PLACEMENT DECISION:

Family Preservation Mediation provides the opportunity to discuss and make a recommendation about a child's unique needs. The risk and safety discussion at a Family Preservation Mediation addresses the effects of abuse/neglect in light of the particular child's capacity for resilience and self-protection, as individual child characteristics, including age, can increase or decrease the risk of severe harm from abuse/neglect. Whether placement is considered for a child with siblings or individually, the child's specific vulnerability must be examined as similar safety and risk concerns do not necessarily affect every child in the same way.

While child welfare systems should create clear, values-based placement priorities, e.g. addressing special needs, encouraging kin placement, keeping siblings together, maintaining children in their neighborhood etc., every child deserves individual consideration and a personalized decision about his/her own best placement resource. No one formula works for every child and the key is to remain flexible and view each child as distinct.

3. THE TRAUMA OF SEPARATION SHOULD BE WEIGHED WITH OTHER FACTORS TO DETERMINE THE NECESSITY OF PLACEMENT:

A child's emotional well-being is part of the Family Preservation Mediation discussion. Removal from parental care is likely to cause psychological harm that should be considered. When determining if out-of-home placement is necessary, the risk of harm if the child remains in the home should outweigh the trauma of placement. There should also be a thoughtful discussion about placement options that include a trusted, safe, family member, or family friend, known to the child, to minimize trauma. In cases where there is a lack of trust between the family and DCF and a reluctance to include extended family, the goal would be to build the trust and overcome the barriers.

4. THE VOICE OF THE CHILD MUST BE HEARD:

Older children often verbalize intense opposition to placement, and this issue should be factored into the discussion about appropriateness of out-of-home care. Teens often succeed in attempts to undermine placement stability, sometimes leading to additional safety risks beyond those that brought them into care. Older children should participate in Family Preservation Mediation Sessions regarding their future unless there are significant reasons relating to their safety and/or developmental capacity. The FPM Mediator will inform, prepare, and allow a child to choose their level of participation, while the social worker and others demonstrate sensitivity to their well-being and needs throughout the meeting.

5. ASSESSING SAFETY AND RISK IS ONGOING:

Assessing current safety issues and future risk affecting the child is crucial and is continuous throughout the department's involvement with a family. The evaluation of safety/risk is the foundation for discussion at a Family Preservation Mediation and continues to be a significant focus while a child is in substitute care.

6. OUT-OF-HOME CARE IDEALLY SHOULD BE IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE PLACEMENT THAT MEETS THE CHILD'S NEEDS:

When out-of-home care is required, the child's placement should be in the most family-like living arrangement that meets his/her needs. The team will discuss and make a recommendation about the level of restrictiveness and type of placement, although the specific placement resource may not be identified during the meeting. Children's attachment to extended family members make kinship placement a priority when they are available and can provide safety.

7. RELATIVES IDEALLY SHOULD BE THE FIRST CONSIDERATION WHEN OUT-OF-HOME CARE IS NECESSARY:

The most familiar, most stable situation for a child when they must be removed from their families is often with relatives. However, relatives must be assessed to determine their fitness before the child is placed with them. In keeping with their policies, the department will examine any prior child protective services involvement and criminal background of all adults residing in the relative's home; in addition, the relatives' acceptance of family problems, and their ability to care, protect and cooperate with the department are key factors. Despite these safeguards, it is critical that the department implement expedited kinship placement protocols so that children can be placed with relatives immediately when out-of-home care is required. Plans for the support of relative caregivers are essential at the Family Preservation Mediation.

8. PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IS INVALUABLE:

When a Family Preservation Mediation decision recommendation is removal, it is incumbent upon the mediator to lead a discussion about essential details necessary to aid with the child's transition. The meeting provides the opportunity to discuss issues such as who and how the child will be told of the removal, what the specific messages are about the removal, how essential goodbyes will be made, how critical possessions can be transferred, when and why an introductory meeting will be held, etc. While developing the long-term plan for family visits is not typically part of a Family Preservation Mediation discussion, regular and frequent visits, with the appropriate level of supervision, if necessary, should be anticipated and encouraged.

Consistent visits are important to support the parent/child relationship and promote swift reunification. Visits between parents and child should begin immediately after an initial removal. Parents may need encouragement to visit their children in settings that feel uncomfortable or institutional. The level of supervision at visits should be adjusted to reflect positive progress by parent(s). In cases where caregivers are identified, the team should initiate a plan for an initial introductory meeting for parent(s) and caregivers, and when a Family Preservation Mediation results in out-of-home care; these meetings can often be coordinated with the first parent(s)/child visit.