Understanding Postadoption and Guardianship Instability for Children and Youth Who Exit Foster Care, 2017 - 2020 - Overview

For children in foster care, adoption and guardianship represent two important permanency outcomes. However, a finalized adoption or guardianship relationship does not necessarily indicate that a child will experience long-term stability or have a permanent home. The prevalence of post-permanency instability for children or youth who have exited foster care through an adoption or placement with a legal guardian remains uncertain. In addition, very little is known about the risk and protective factors for instability after a finalized adoption or guardianship arrangement.

The purpose of the Understanding Postadoption and Guardianship Instability for Children and Youth Who Exit Foster Care project is to better understand post-permanency instability for children and youth who exit foster care through adoption or guardianship.

Specifically, this project will:

1. Assess the knowledge base related to postadoption and guardianship instability including: what is known about rates of instability; risk factors that may make certain children more vulnerable to instability; protective factors that may buffer children from the likelihood of instability, as well as services and supports for adoptive/guardianship children and families.
2. Identify current federal, state, and local program policies and practices related to the postpermanency experience of children and youth who exit foster care through adoption or guardianship.
3. Develop design options for a group of studies that would leverage existing local, state, and national data as well as collect new data, when necessary, to obtain information on postadoption and guardianship instability rates, services, and risk and protective factors associated with instability.
4. Take steps to implement one or more of the proposed studies.
5. Develop resources that will build the capacity of agencies at the federal, state, and/or local level to collect ongoing information about postadoption and guardianship instability and its correlates.

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