

Texas Youth Permanency Study

Exploring outcomes, finding opportunities



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Who we are

- Former caseworker for foster youth
- Social Worker
- Research focus on foster youth & sexual health

Monica



- Former CPS worker
- Counselor
- Research focus on trauma & attachment

Tina

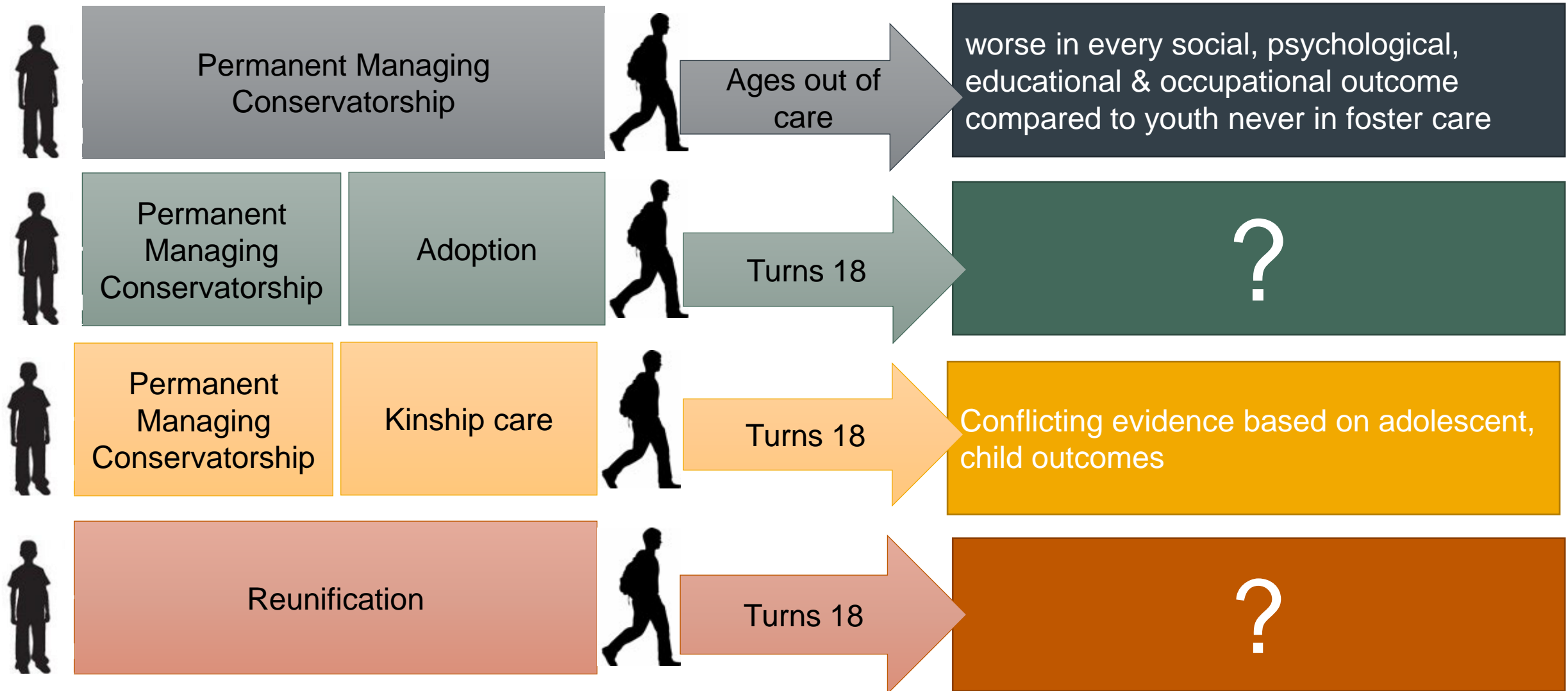


- Former foster youth
- Social Worker
- Research focus on foster youth and permanency

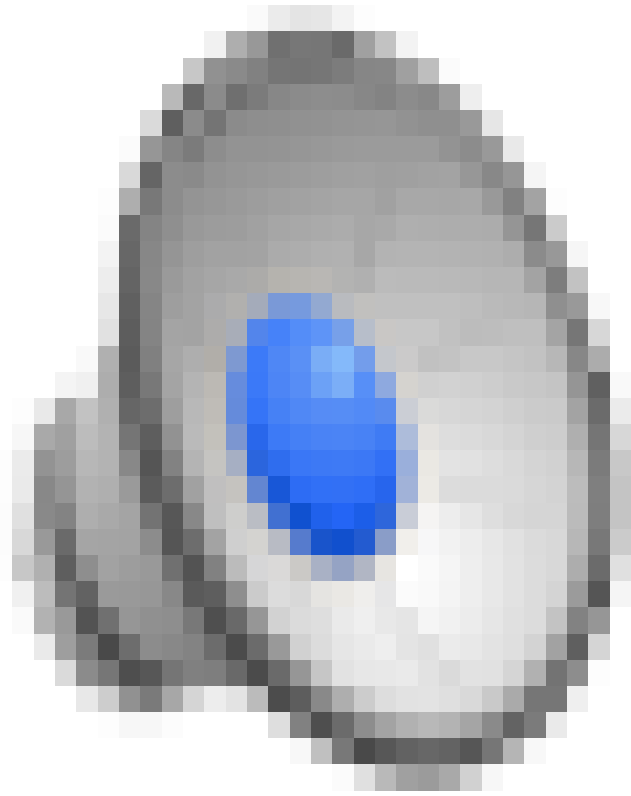
Alfred



What research says



What is permanency?



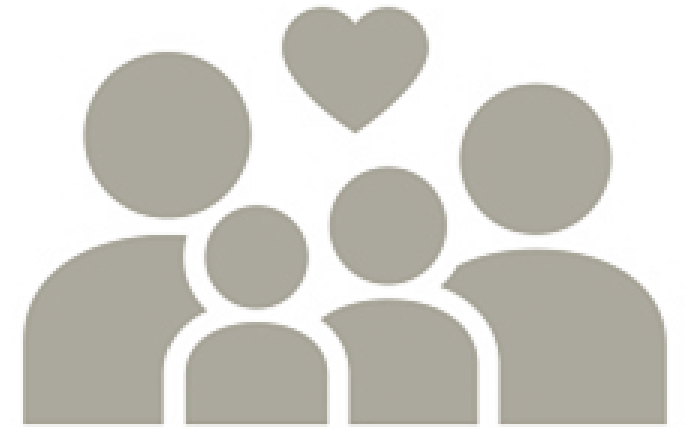
What does “forever” look like?



Legal
permanence

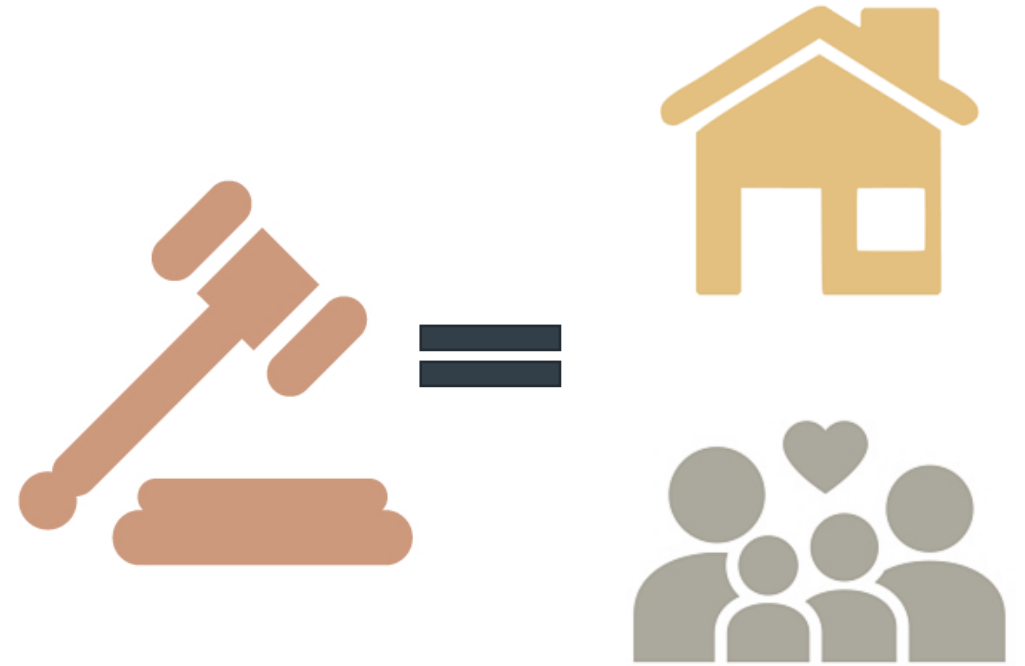


Physical
permanence



Relational
permanence

Our 'forever' assumptions/ hopes



Emerging evidence about long term permanency

Does legal permanency lead to relational and physical permanency in adulthood?

Dr. Alfred Perez

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 31 former foster youth who were young adults in the Chicagoland area (Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana)
- Average age at interview was 27 years old
- At an average age of 15, these youth achieved permanence through Adoption (10), Guardianship (11) or were in Kinship Relative Care (10)

Does Legal Permanence Translate into Relational Permanence Among Young Adults with Foster Care Histories?

By Alfred Pérez, MSW



The findings suggest that child welfare efforts should shift from focusing on legal permanency outcomes to maximizing young adult well-being, however, that might be attained.

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351) promotes, among other things, legal permanency through adoption, guardianship, and long-term fostering with relatives for older youth. The Act recognizes the importance of permanent, emotionally sustained relationships for older youth to reach self-sufficiency and thrive during young adulthood. The Act therefore implies that the legalization or formalization of familial relationships results in relational permanency—enduring, lifelong connections between older youth and parental figures (Samuels, 2008; Cushing, Samuels, & Kerman, 2014). However, little is known about the post-permanency experiences of these youth and whether legal permanency translates into relational permanency.

My research begins to fill this important gap. I recruited and interviewed a small non-representative sample of 31 young adults from the Chicago area who exited the foster care system through adoption (32.5%), subsidized guardianship (35%), or long-term foster care with relatives (32.5%). Their average age at the time of interview was 27 and their average age of achieving these permanency outcomes was 15 years old. The majority of young adults were African American (87%). The adoption group (20%) was less likely than the subsidized guardianship group (73%) to achieve legal permanency with a relative; however, by study design, all of those in the relative group achieved permanency with a relative.

To understand whether legal permanency translates into relational permanency, interviews focused on young adults' relationships with their caretakers currently and historically. Several levels of analyses were conducted, including a line-by-line textual analysis and cross-case and within-case analyses. Particular attention was paid to the affective tones with which young adults talked about their relationships with caretakers, their current relational status, and five dimensions of relational experiences that emerged from their stories (feeling loved or cared about, caretaker commitment, caretaker openness to biological family, sense of belonging, and unwavering support from caretaker).

Based on the young adults' affective tone, current relational status, and dimensions of relational experiences, I ultimately classified young adults into one of four conditions of relational permanency—enduring, ambivalent, spurned, and severed. I briefly describe one young adult in each condition to illustrate the diversity of relational permanency represented in this small sample that exemplifies the complexity and nuance involved in the translation of legal permanency to relational permanency.

James, a 27-year-old, exited foster care at age 17 through subsidized guardianship with his maternal grandparents. He is among the 35% (11) of sampled young adults classified as having an enduring sense of relational permanency with

(see Legal Permanence - page 11)

Enduring permanency



Intact relationships ♦ positive about caregivers ♦ feels loved ♦ physical home ♦ unwavering support

Ambivalent permanency

“Cause that’s my mama. You only get one mama and one daddy. You only get one and its like my dad gone. I mean I understand. Like my mama, you to this day, she’s still out in the world, but that’s my mama.”



T.J., 29
Aged out of foster care, in care for 10 years



positive about caregivers ◆ feels loved ◆ does not belong ◆ does not feel unwavering support

Spurned permanency

“[My guardian] took me off to school... she gave me a card, had a \$100 in[side] it and she said, ‘good luck,’ she said uh, ‘you know make sure that you’re secure, make sure that you have places to go, you know, during the breaks,’ and that was it. And then she left... before [Thanksgiving], break, I let her know I was coming home... and she said ‘ um you know you can’t come here, you know that .”

Dawn, 29
Guardianship with non-relative caretaker at age 14



Caretaker ended relationship ♦ youth still wants relationship ♦ No “home” ♦ Isolation

Severed permanency

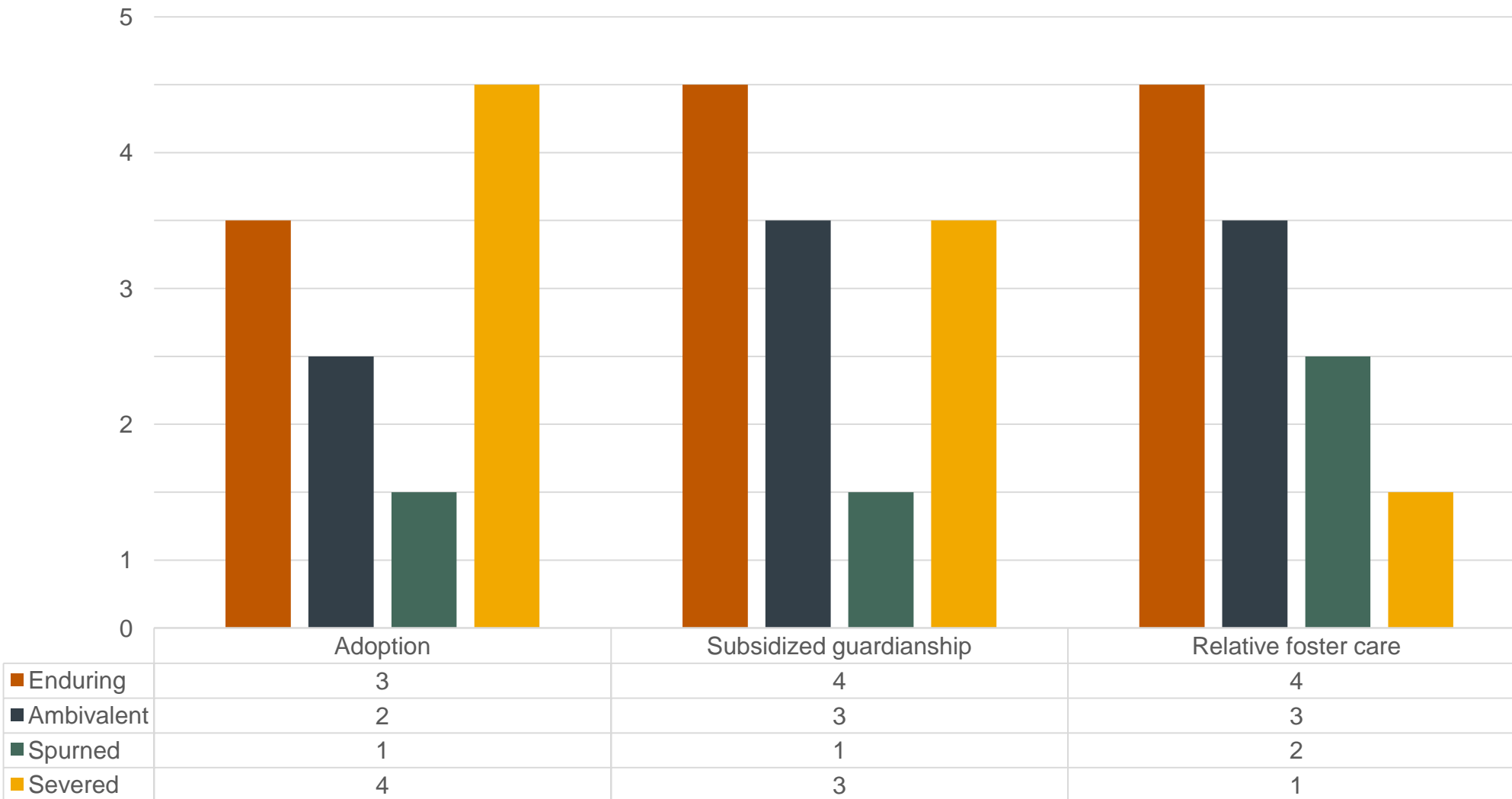
“Even now because [my adopted mother’s] husband [my adopted father] is still living and we don’t even get no support from him... like with my lights, I can’t call him and he would tell me he would help me with my lifht bill because I know it not gonna happen... He didn’t look out for us after the foster mother passed anyway he left and got another girlfriend downstate. It was crazy.”

Terry, 28
Adopted by non-relative caretaker at age 18

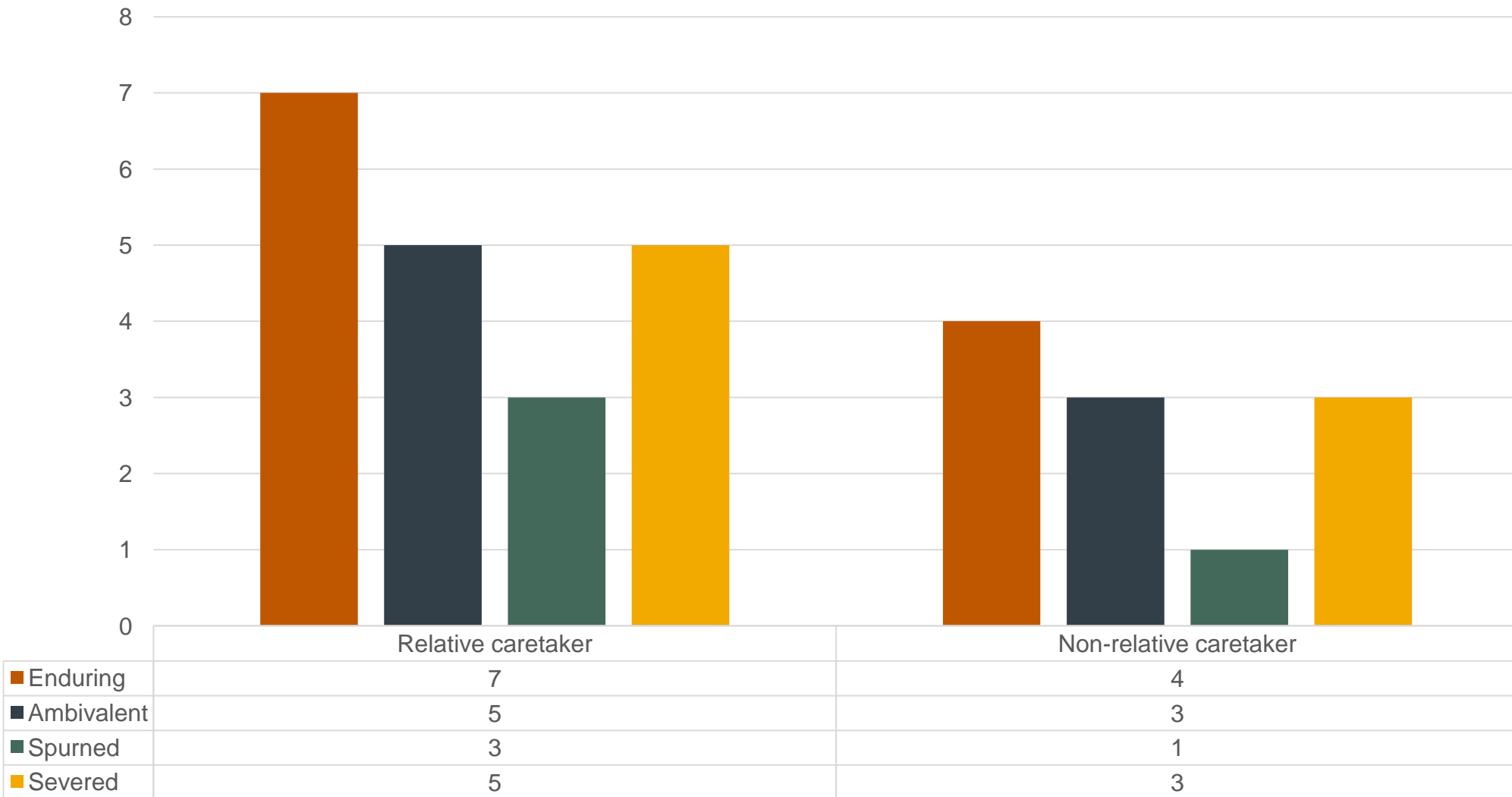


Caretaker ended relationship ♦ youth has negative feelings about relationship ♦ No “home” ♦ Isolation

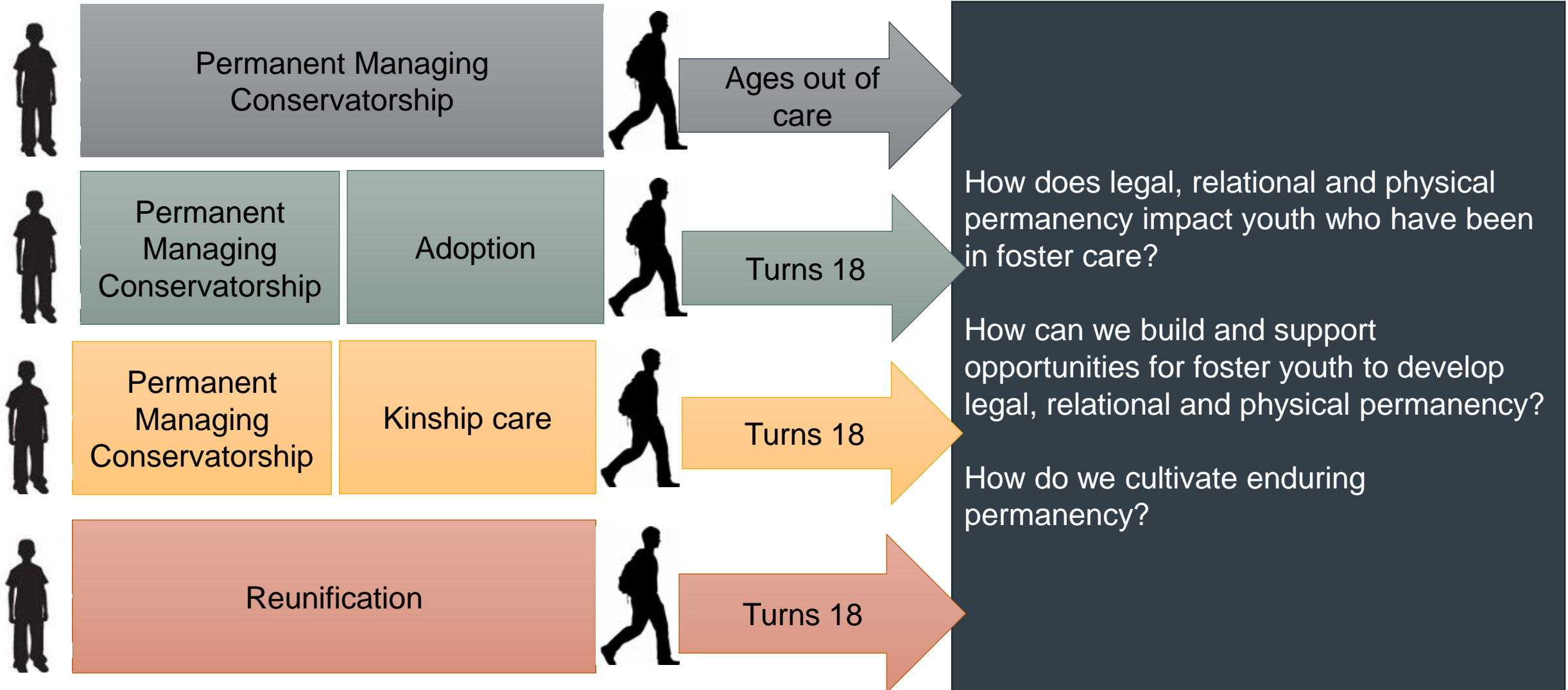
Emerging evidence about long term permanency



Emerging evidence about long term permanency



What we need to know



Basic study design

15 year olds
in care on a
particular
date

- Former foster youth will be hired to conduct interviews & interface with youth
- Interviews will collect information about
 - relational, legal & physical permanency
 - Psychological & social measures



Initial
interviews &
recruitment

Annual interviews, quarterly
surveys to promote continued
participation

Fall 2016

Thru summer
2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

Anticipated challenges & solutions



Next steps

Gather feedback,
suggestions, ideas

Submit DFPS
paperwork, IRB

Team in place

Launch study

Moving
forward



Importance



PRACTICE

- Design services to enhance relational & physical permanency for youth
- Honor youth voice and choice related to legal permanency

POLICY

- Use evidence to guide funding of what works for youth
- Design policies to support the establishment of relational permanency
- Fund options for physical permanency

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