WHEN PERMANENCY EXISTS ON PAPER

What happens after the system moves on?

A Thought to Consider

A child returns home. An adoption is finalized. A family remains together after receiving services. A young person transitions out of foster care.

These are meaningful milestones, often achieved through difficult decisions, dedicated professionals, and considerable effort.

But what happens when the case closes and everyday life continues?

A family may experience a period of relief before old pressures return. A young person may have completed every transition requirement but still have no one to call at two o'clock in the morning.

Who notices when things begin to unravel? Who can a child or family depend on when circumstances change?

Child safety is nonnegotiable. But permanency is more than a decision. It's safety, stability, and belonging that children can experience and depend on.

Let's Talk

Three questions worth considering with your team.

1. When a case closes, what tells us that safety and stability can be sustained?

- Required services and case plan goals have been completed.
- The family has demonstrated progress, and appropriate supports have been identified.
- Children and families have helped identify what they need to sustain progress, including dependable relationships and practical supports.

2. How do we know whether children and families have someone to turn to when circumstances change?

- We provide referrals and information about available resources.
- We discuss support networks during case and transition planning.
- We work with children, young people, and families to identify and strengthen relationships they can depend on beyond formal services.

3. When planning for permanency or case closure, how do we know we've understood the child's experience—not only the adults' perspectives?

- We review the case information and assessments.
- We invite the child's input when appropriate to their age and circumstances.
- We create safe, developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to express their needs, concerns, and hopes, and use those perspectives to inform planning.

A Closing Reflection

Child welfare professionals cannot guarantee what happens after a case closes. Nor can they personally provide lifelong support to every child and family.

And when aftercare services, funding, or policies are limited, we cannot expect individual workers to overcome those structural gaps alone.

But we can reconsider what children and families carry with them when they leave.

What if the interactions we're already having gave them greater clarity, a stronger understanding of themselves, meaningful participation in their plans, and a better sense of where to turn when circumstances change?

LUV's Guided Experiences offer a structured way to encourage reflection, clarify priorities, and support participation—without requiring workers to create every conversation from scratch.

Ownership starts when people see themselves in the plan.

Continue Exploring with LUV Solutions

Explore fresh perspectives: Our complimentary LUV Library of Perspective.

Explore building ownership: Our Building Ownership approach and complimentary Ownership Framework Discussion Guide.

Explore Guided Experiences: Structured opportunities for individuals to reflect, clarify priorities, and participate in planning their next steps.