

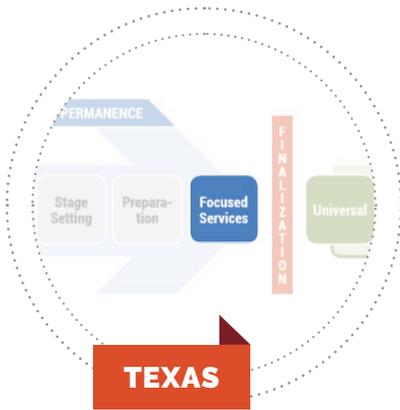


PATHWAYS TO PERMANENCE 2:

**PARENTING CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA AND LOSS (*PATHWAYS 2*)
INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTED IN TEXAS
FOR THE QIC-AG PROJECT**

OVERVIEW OF THE QIC-AG

The Quality Improvement Center for Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation (QIC-AG) is a 5-year federally funded project that promotes permanence (when reunification is no longer a goal) and improves supports for adoptive and guardianship families. Working in partnership with eight sites, the QIC-AG is identifying and testing promising practices and evidence-based models of support and services for children and families both pre and post permanence. Effective interventions are expected to achieve long-term stable permanence in adoptive and guardianship homes not only for waiting children but also for children and families after adoption or guardianship has been finalized. To learn more about the work of the QIC-AG, please go to www.qic-ag.org.



The QIC-AG created a Permanency Continuum Framework to help structure work with sites and families pre and post permanence. The Continuum Framework was developed on the premise that children in adoptive or guardianship families fare better when their families are fully prepared and supported to address issues before they arise, and if issues arise, before they escalate into a crisis. The Continuum Framework is comprised of eight intervals; three intervals start prior to finalization (*stage setting, preparation, and focused services*); three intervals continue after finalization and focus on prevention services (*universal, selective, and indicated services*); and the last two intervals focus on the provision of *intensive services and maintenance of permanence*.

Texas is implementing an intervention that falls into the **focused interval** on the Permanency Continuum Framework. Focused services are targeted for children who are experiencing challenging emotional, behavioral, or mental health issues that might negatively affect their movement to permanence through adoption or guardianship. Focused services are designed with a two-fold purpose. First, focused services are intended to meet the emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs of children whose current needs are hindering permanence. Second, focused services are designed to enhance the capacity of each family to meet the needs of their child and, ultimately, become a permanent resource.

OVERVIEW OF INTERVENTION SELECTED BY TEXAS AS DESIGNED BY THE DEVELOPER

Pathways to Permanence 2: Parenting Children Who Have Experienced Trauma and Loss (Pathways 2) was developed by Kinship Center, a member of Seneca Family of Agencies. *Pathways 2* is one of two parent training series designed by Kinship Center for adoptive, foster, and kinship/guardianship families. *Pathways to Permanence 1: Parenting in Real Life* is designed to prepare prospective adoptive and foster care parents. *Pathways 2* is designed for foster and adoptive parents, kinship caregivers, and guardians who are actively parenting children who have experienced trauma and loss. *Pathways 2* is a seven-session series that uses a group-based format to enhance parents' and caregivers' ability in skilled application of strategies. The program is designed as a clinically informed competency-building training, and is delivered as an interactive learning experience with robust discussion. As designed by the program's developer, the *Pathways 2* intervention has the following goals:

PATHWAYS 2 GOALS

- » Provide parents/caregivers with a foundational understanding (based on science and experience) of childhood trauma, grief, and loss, as well as an understanding of the impact of these issues on their children
- » Help parents/caregivers to recognize, identify, and address the core issues of adoption and guardianship stability
- » Empower parents/caregivers to have more empathy as their skills increase
- » Stabilize families helping children heal from trauma

In addition to parents/caregivers, those in the family's extended support systems are encouraged to participate in the *Pathways 2* series. *Pathways 2* is manualized and designed to be presented by two facilitators. *Pathways 2* facilitator knowledge and experience can vary, but draws from education, knowledge, and experience in working with children who have experienced trauma, and with families struggling to meet those children's needs. *Pathways 2* facilitators are also required to have at least a foun-

dational knowledge of *ACT: An Adoption and Permanency Curriculum for Child Welfare and Mental Health Professionals*. Facilitators are required to attend a 3-day intensive training that provides both the knowledge base and the practical experience to conduct the intervention series. Training materials include a comprehensive semi-scripted facilitator's guide and a multi-media facilitator kit.

WHY PATHWAYS TO PERMANENCE 2 WAS SELECTED BY TEXAS

The Texas site team chose the *Pathways 2* intervention to help children in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) of Texas by providing caregivers with the understanding and skillset to address the trauma, grief, and loss experienced by many children involved with child protective services (CPS). *Pathways 2* aligned well with Texas CPS' Positive Permanency model of building and sustaining strong families with lifelong connections. *Pathways 2* is a parent-centered intervention designed with the goal of strengthening parents/caregivers' skills for meeting the challenges and issues unique to adoptive/guardianship families. The Texas site team determined that the best approach to reversing trends of adoption/guardianship disruption, and to increase the number of families willing and able to move forward with permanence, was to proactively provide families with tools and skills that would help them care for their child.

The short-term outcomes include the following:

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- » Increased permanency outcomes
- » Decreased time to finalization/permanence or decreased time in care
- » Increased placement stability
- » Improved child and family well-being
- » Improved behavioral health for children and youth

Texas is targeting children in PMC Region 7 who do not have a finalization hearing scheduled within 60 days of eligibility screening.

ADAPTATIONS MADE TO PATHWAYS 2



Given that Texas is implementing *Pathways 2* with the intended population for which the program was developed, few adaptations were needed. However, some adaptations were made regarding the preparation of the facilitators. The Texas site team determined that the facilitators needed deeper exposure to the content in order to develop their competency. Therefore, the following training opportunities were added to the facilitator training preparation:

- » Technical assistance calls were provided by the developer;
- » The developer created timing agendas and a "tip sheet" for each session that supported facilitators in their preparation for delivery of session content; and
- » The developer established a facilitator videoconference observation process (non-classroom setting) to assess the capabilities of newly trained facilitators and to provide additional skill development and coaching recommendations.

In addition, the protocol was adapted to include a series of tools used to measure the fidelity in the delivery of the *Pathways 2*.

RECRUITMENT: OUTREACH TO FAMILIES



OVERVIEW OF RECRUITMENT

Families that met the eligibility criteria for the study's target population were sent an information packet that included a letter describing the study and inviting them to participate in the *Pathways 2* intervention, a flyer, and a consent form. The initial recruitment plans were for caseworkers from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to inform parents/caregivers of this opportunity and then make a follow-up a visit to invite them to participate in an upcoming *Pathways 2* session. The caseworkers were asked to discuss the *Pathways 2* opportunity with families and to encourage parents/caregivers to participate. Initially, the caseworkers' efforts also focused on obtaining consent to participate. Later, the site team decided that the consent process should be centralized.

REFINEMENT TO RECRUITMENT

When *Pathways 2* was initially implemented in Texas, the site team determined that the program needed to offer specific supports to make it viable for families to attend. These supports included (1) providing a light meal during each class, (2) reimbursing families for travel costs, (3) offering free on-site child care, and (4) allowing *Pathways 2* participation to count toward families' annual training requirements. Despite these supports, Texas faced challenges getting caregivers to consent to participate as well as actually attending the training series. Knowing that the greatest challenge to recruitment lay in getting families to recognize that the training was relevant to their current and future parenting challenges, the site team revised the recruitment protocol as follows:

RECRUITMENT PROTOCOL

- » The information packet with outreach materials was revised to emphasize the benefits of the intervention rather than the research opportunity (e.g., postcards, flyers);
- » The site team partnered with private agencies toward identifying eligible families and to assist with outreach to these families;
- » Caseworkers assigned to eligible families are now asked to encourage these families to participate in *Pathways 2*;
- » After a post-card and an upcoming schedule is mailed, follow-up phone calls are made to parents/caregivers who have expressed interest, and, in some cases, prior to interest being expressed;
- » The site team increased the frequency and lead time in notifying potential participants about their family's eligibility for *Pathways 2* so that families could adjust their schedules to enable participation; and
- » Video testimonies of *Pathways 2* participants were recorded so they could be shared with prospective participants and other eligible families.

Additionally, the research design was modified. The research design moved away from a random assignment design. In lieu of random assignment, a demonstration group was created in Region 7 and a comparison group was created in Region 8 of the State. This change increased the number of families living in Region 7 who could be referred to the intervention. A change to the target population was made as well, removing a "two year time in care requirement" for children whose biological parents' rights were either not or only partially terminated.

RETENTION: KEEPING FAMILIES CONNECTED TO THE PROCESS

Keeping families engaged through the seven sessions is a high priority. To promote retention, families who complete at least 5 of 7 sessions receive a \$50 gift card.



LINKS

A full description of the *Pathways 2* program is available from the following websites:

- » <https://www.adoption.on.ca/pathways-to-permanence-2>
- » <http://kinshipcenter.org/faqs/what-education-and-resources-does-kinship-center-offer-for-parents-and-professionals.html>
- » <http://www.kinshipcenter.org/assets/files/103-The-Dance-of-Permanence1.pdf>
- » <http://kinshipcenter.org/services/education-institute/classes.html>

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MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the QIC-AG visit www.qic-ag.org