

Written Testimony in Support of Restoring Funding for Post Permanency Services

Submitted by: Karen Stewart, Adoptive Parent

Our Family's Experience with Post-Permanency Services

Our family received post permanency services when we adopted our second child who we fostered from six weeks old. She became a permanent family member when she was 18 months old. Lund supported us through the adoption process just as they had supported us with our first child who was a private adoption. From the beginning, Lund was there, answering questions about the post adoption contact agreement (PACA) because our daughter's birthmother relinquished her parental rights saving months of DCF support and hours of hearings in the courts. Lund's post permanency counselor, Anna Mumford worked with our family for five years helping us understand developmental trauma, link us with NFI to receive family counseling services and connecting us with critical training on trauma-informed parenting through the Howard Center.

How Specialized Support Helps Families Navigate Complex Needs

Our daughter has multiple special needs which creates a complex life for both her and our family system. **Without the Post Permanency advice and connections, we would have floundered in the school system and in the community to try and get the services needed to support her developmental trauma, her intellectual disabilities, her ADHD and her genetic conditions.** Our post permanency counselor attended confusing IEP meetings with us, coached us on which questions to ask and how to advocate for our daughter's educational needs.

Our post permanency counselor identified available slots in the mental health care field and got us connected to NFI for family therapy, a service which has been life saving for our family.

Post Permanency provided guidance and worked with our pediatric primary care to get our daughter assessed for ADHD and to get the genetic screening which revealed missing genetic material directly related to our daughters behavioral and intellectual challenges.

What Aspects of the Program Have Been Most Meaningful

The support Anna provided was reliable, consistent and essential to what we needed for both our daughter and our family. Anna was a partner to our family in a very trying time when we didn't know how to get the help we needed for our daughter.

Why Supporting PPSP is Good Policy

Alcohol abuse is a part of our daughter's birth story, her birth mother's story and her biological grandmother's story. Post Permanency services not only support families with complex needs, but they also address the wider societal and educational issues of children exposed to substances in utero. **The services are not just a perk to Vermont adoptive families; they are necessary for the growing complexity of communities affected by substance abuse.**

In Closing

My comments above tend toward the more difficult parts of raising a child with special needs. I want to step back and paint a different picture. Because of Post Permanency services linking us to other community resources in mental health, education and primary care, we have an 11-year old who is competing in Special Olympics, she won a silver and gold medal in the regional swim meet last October. She spends one day a week at an outdoor educational program where she is happiest learning about nature and science and bugs and creatures. She is supported by a behavioral interventionist at her elementary school and his support helps her stay emotionally and behaviorally regulated so that she can access learning. She is beautiful with blonde hair, piercing blue eyes and a freckled nose.

She has a fantastic sense of humor and she loves her community, most especially she loves her family because **with the Post Permanency support we were able to work on the important things like attachment which helps her feel safe and secure with us. She knows she is loved and that makes all the difference in the world.**