

Lighting the Fire of Urgency...

Families Lost and Found in America's Child Welfare,
Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Systems

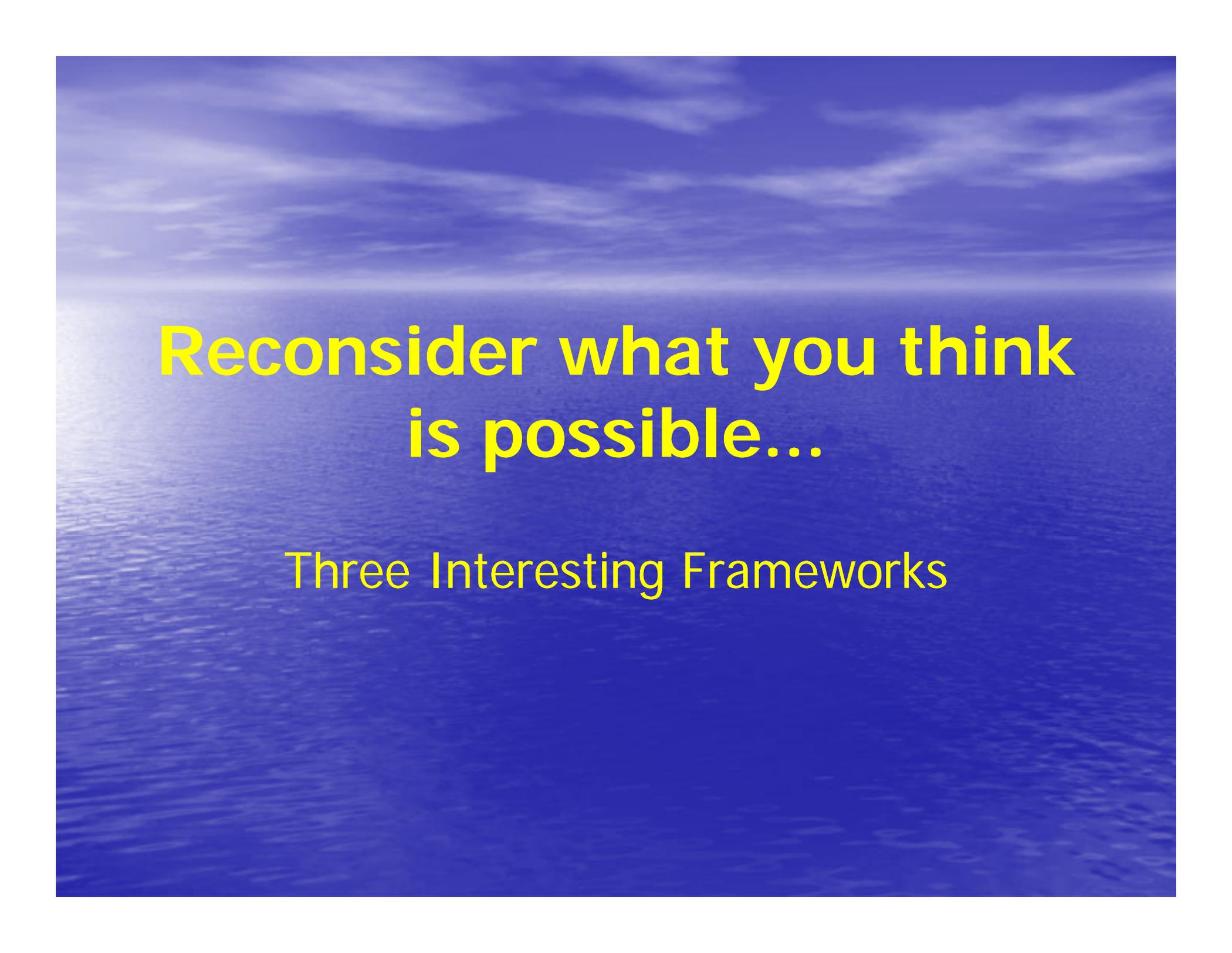
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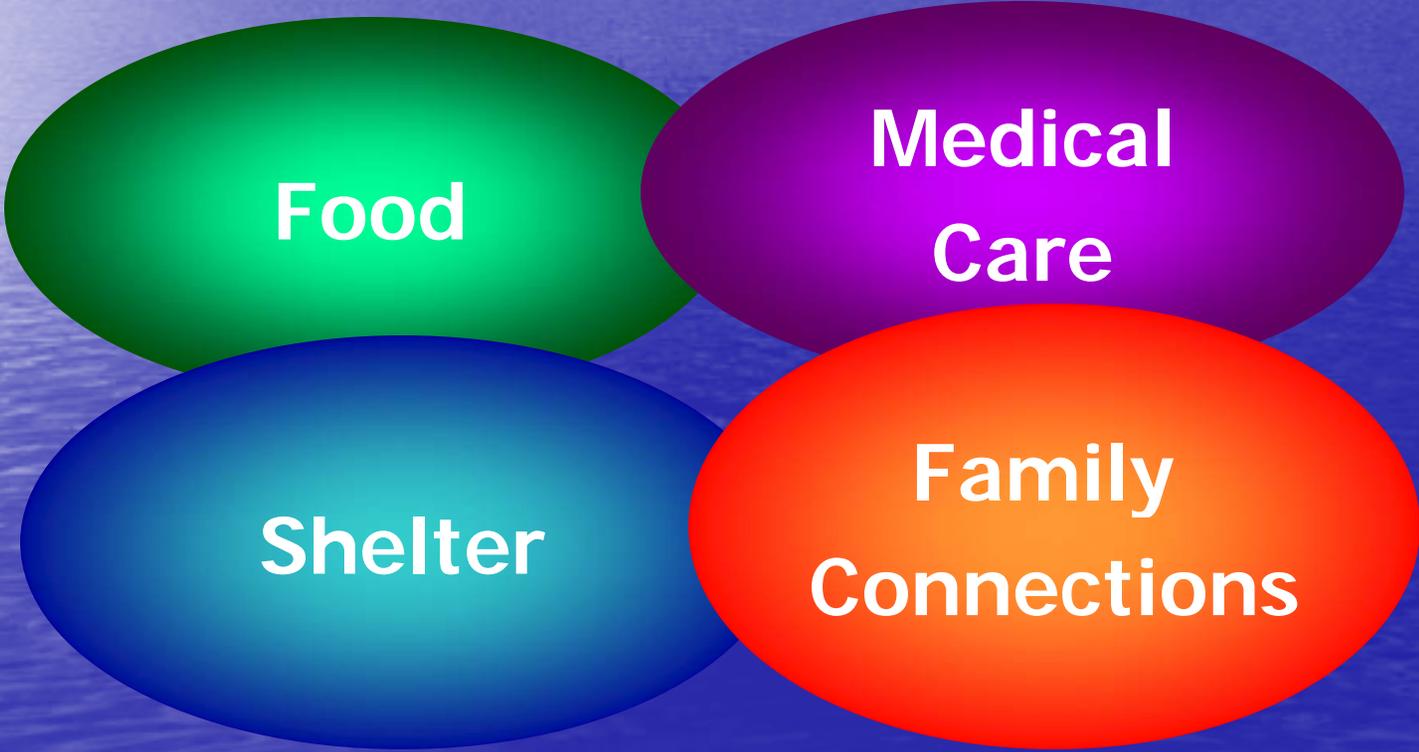


**Reconsider what you think
is possible...**

Three Interesting Frameworks

Basic Needs

In times of war, conflict or disaster, the American Red Cross provides for the following essential needs:



Food

Medical
Care

Shelter

Family
Connections

Article #23 of the Geneva Convention of 1947

The Right to Know

“The primary need inevitably cited by the families of missing persons is the right to know what happened to their relatives”

The Missing, The Right to Know, December
2003, ICRC

Adoption Issues

“Adoption: An estimated 6 million adoptees live in the United States (Fischer, 2003). In a study of the issues involved in adoption, the Maine Department of Human Resources Task Force on Adoption found that 95% of the adoptees surveyed expressed a desire to be found by their birth parents (Freundlich, 1998).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

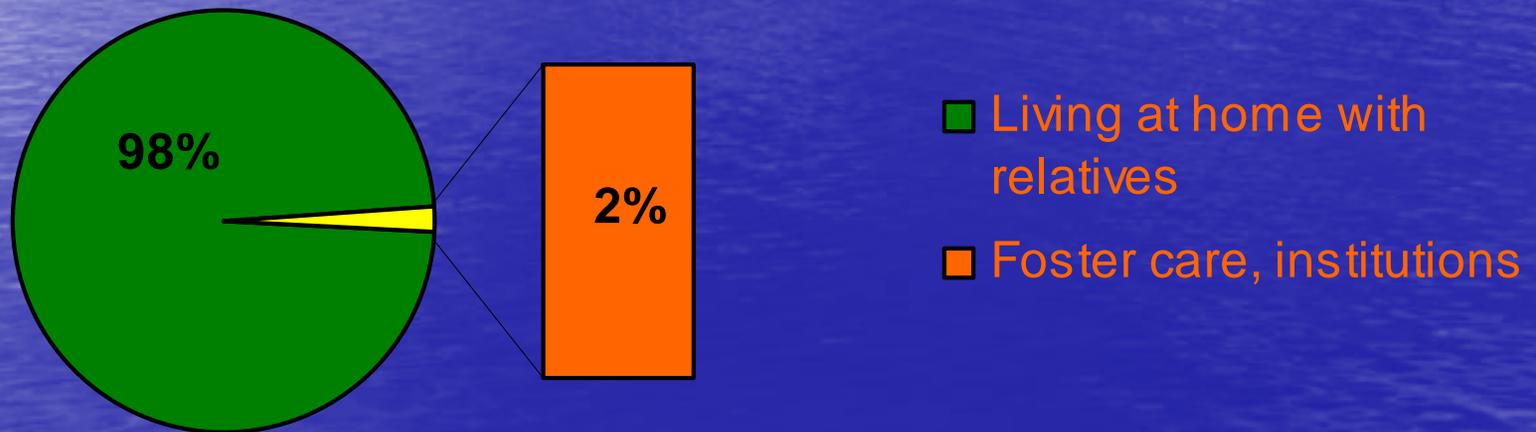
Family Ancestry is an important part of family
community and spiritual life.

The Church has the tools, resources and
expertise to extensively document relative
connections.

Members of the Church, including
representatives of Ogden, Utah DCFS agreed
that (conservatively) each person has
between 100-300 living relatives.

Family Works!

Of 71 Million Children in the US:



Children Not Living with Parents 1999

- ❖ 2.3 Million Children
- ❖ Of those 1.8 Million Live with Relatives without government involvement (NSAF)
- ❖ 151,864 Children were living with relatives who were licensed as foster parents (AFCARS 49 States/2 Territories)

Lessons From the Frameworks Reviewed:

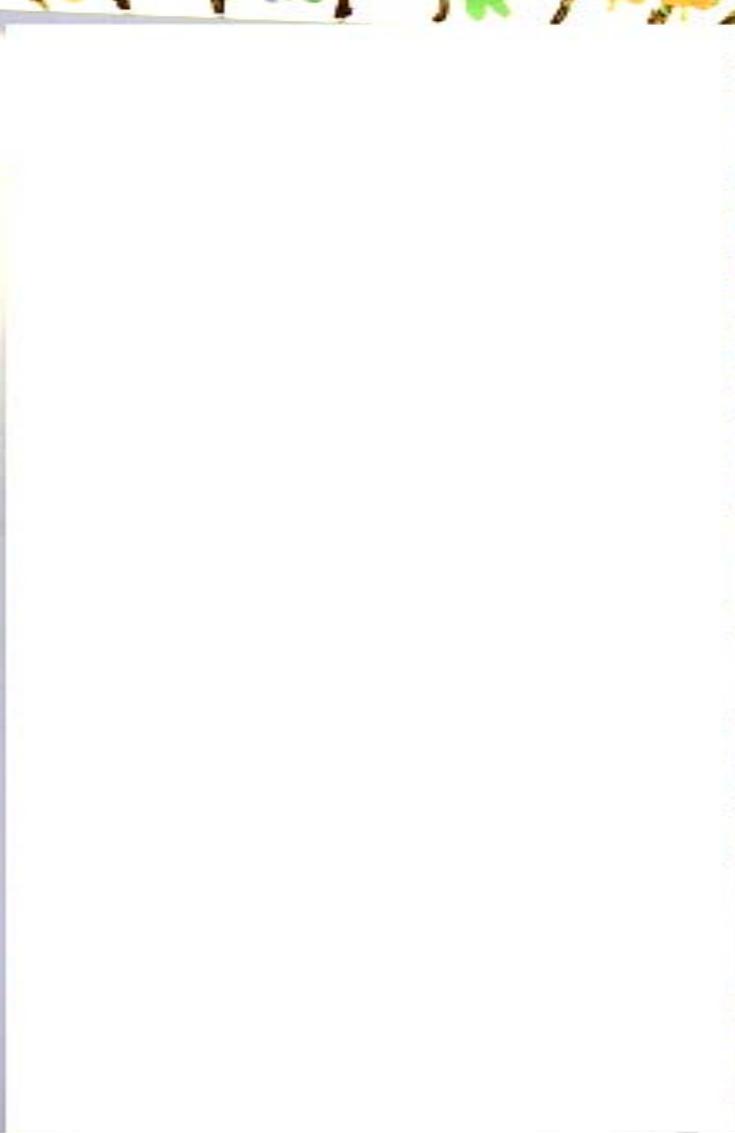
- ❖ It is possible to respond to a crisis while preserving and expanding on information and connections that can lead to a restoration of self-sufficiency
- ❖ The typical American child has between 100-300 living relatives
- ❖ Technologies and strategies exist to extensively document and locate relatives
- ❖ Families are the most normative setting for raising children

An Early Spring...

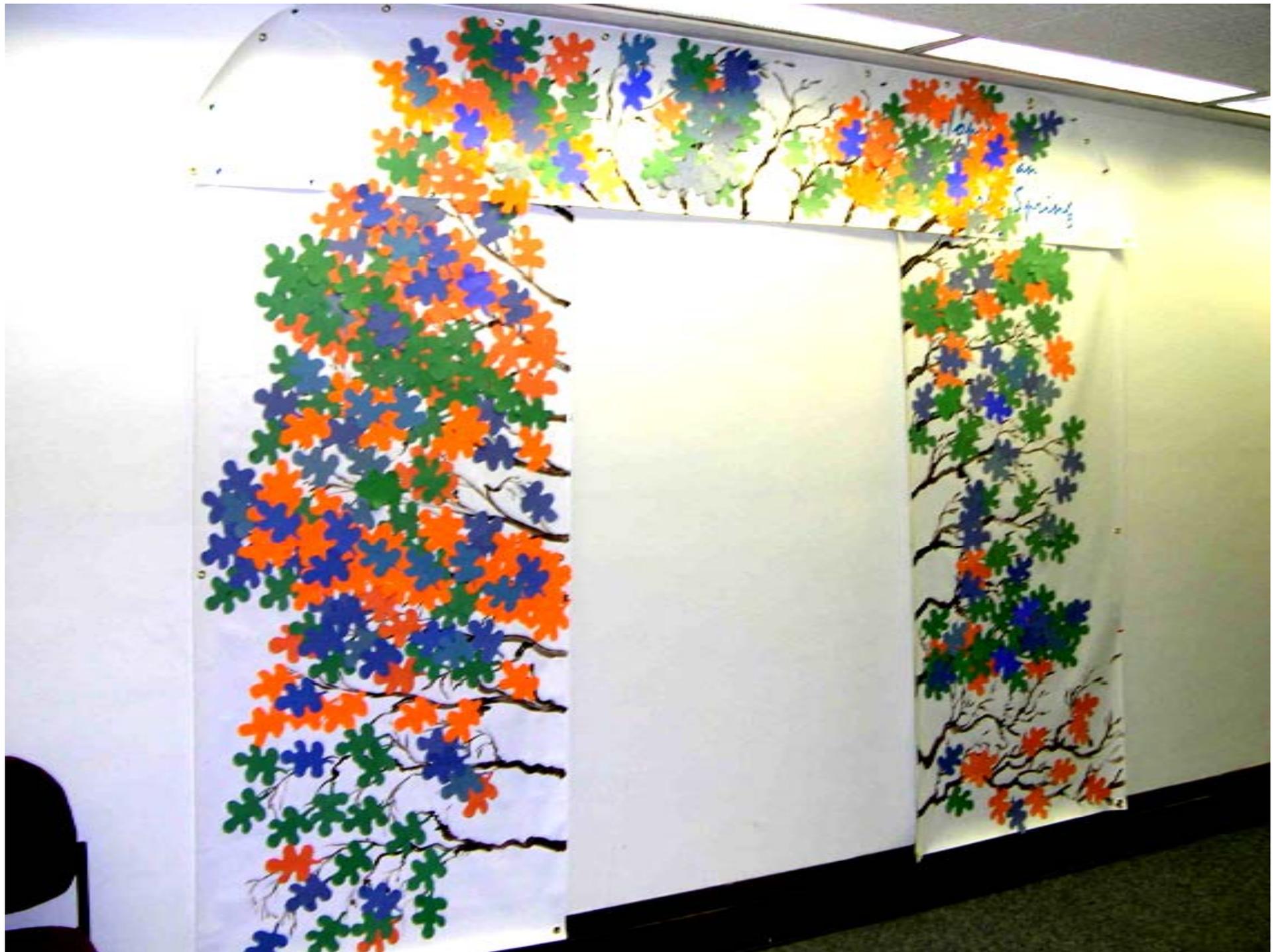
for some of Illinois longest waiting children and youth

- ❖ The average Cook South teen in this project is:
 - ❖ African-American
 - ❖ Male
 - ❖ 17 years old
 - ❖ Entered care at age 3
 - ❖ In care for 14 years
 - ❖ Parental rights terminated at 10
 - ❖ Legally free for 7 years









Sacramento County

- 62 Young people in Permanent Placement
- Ranging from 7 – 17 years in foster and residential care
- Little contact with family members in years
- Multiple Placements/Changes in Foster Care

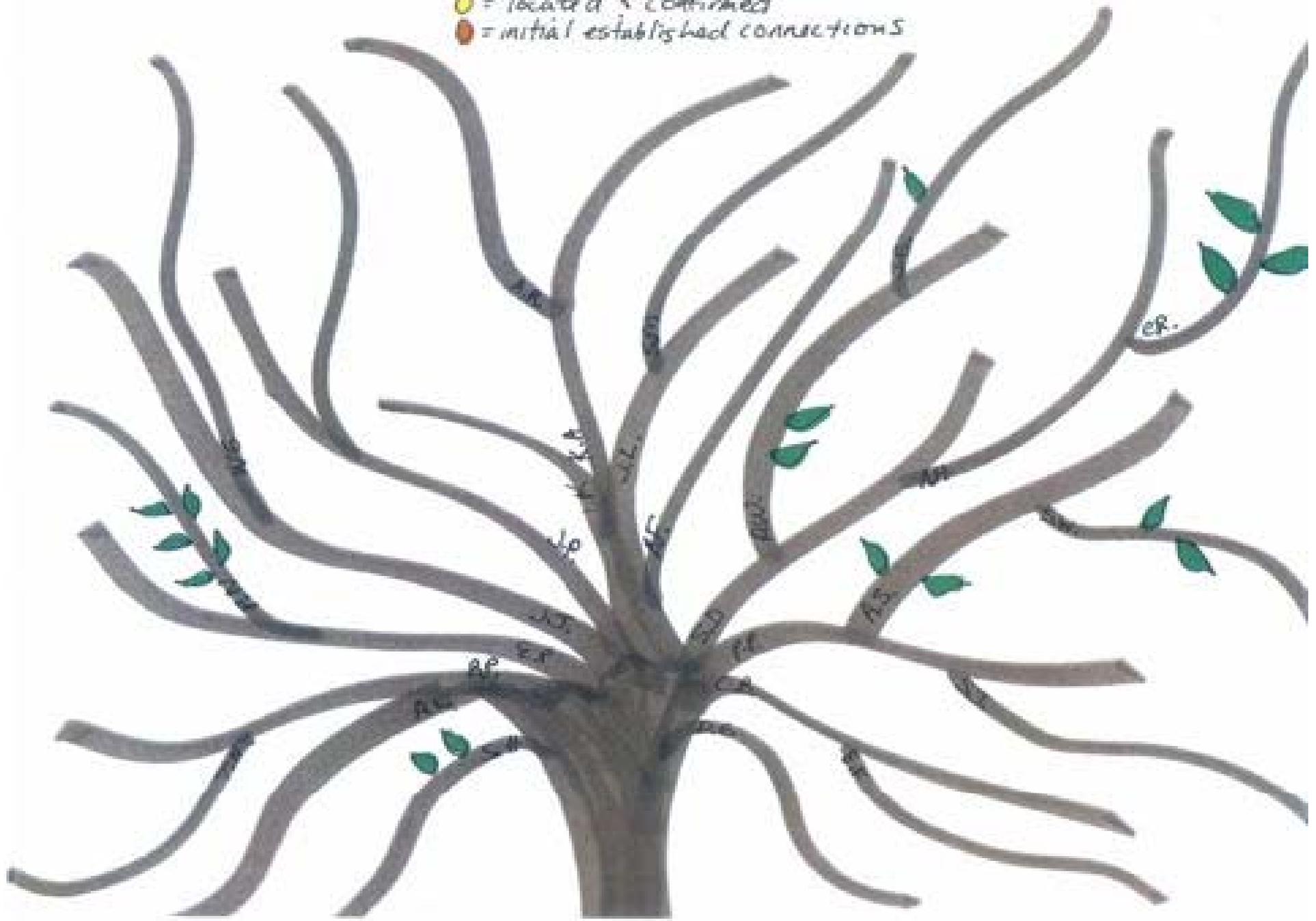




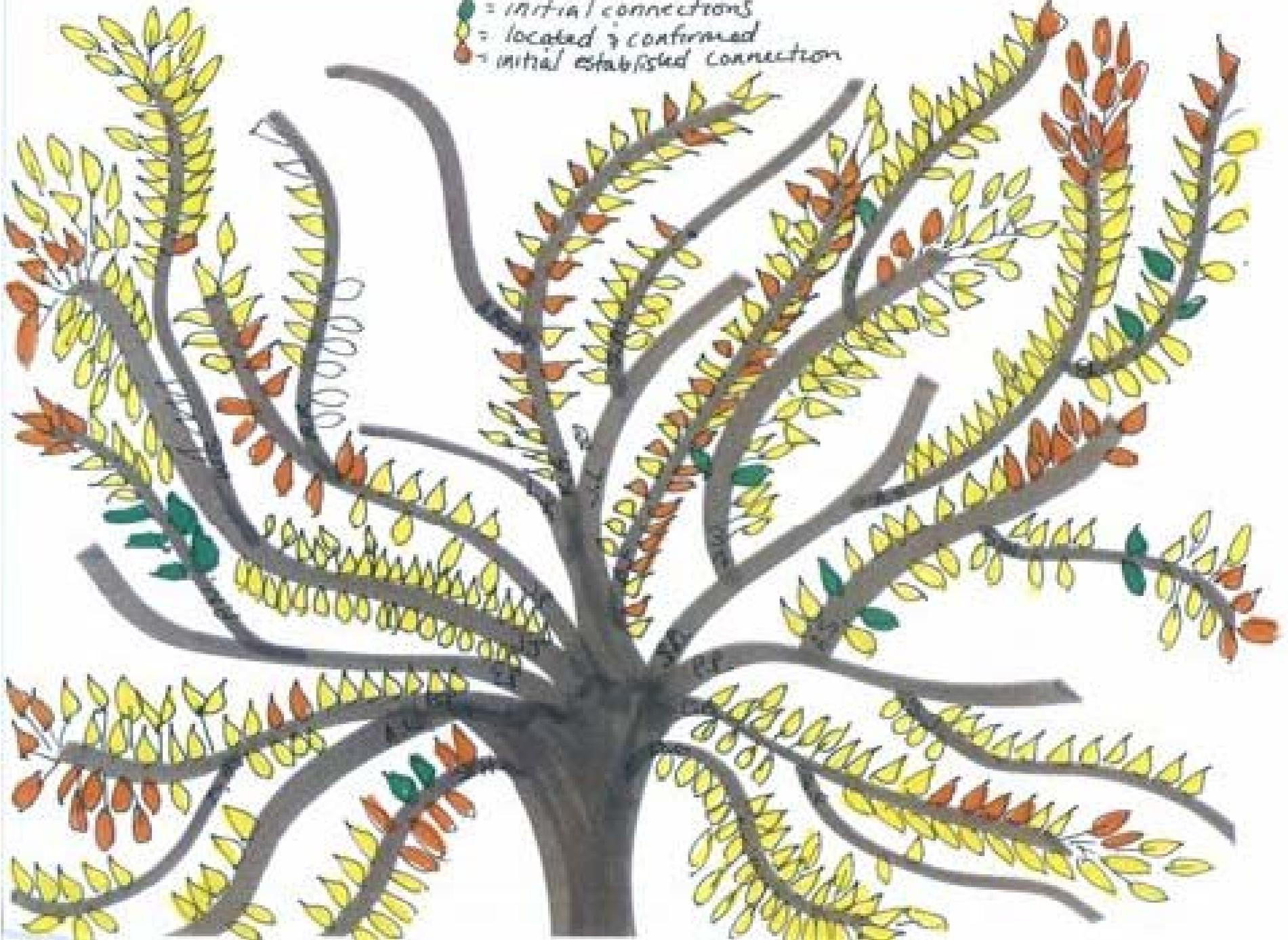
Orange County

- Young people in care between 5 and 17 years
- Living in RCL 12 to 14 facilities
- .58 Connections prior to project
- 7.5 durable connection at project end
- 5.5 Hours of work for each durable connection

- = INITIAL CONNECTIONS
- = located & confirmed
- = initial established connections



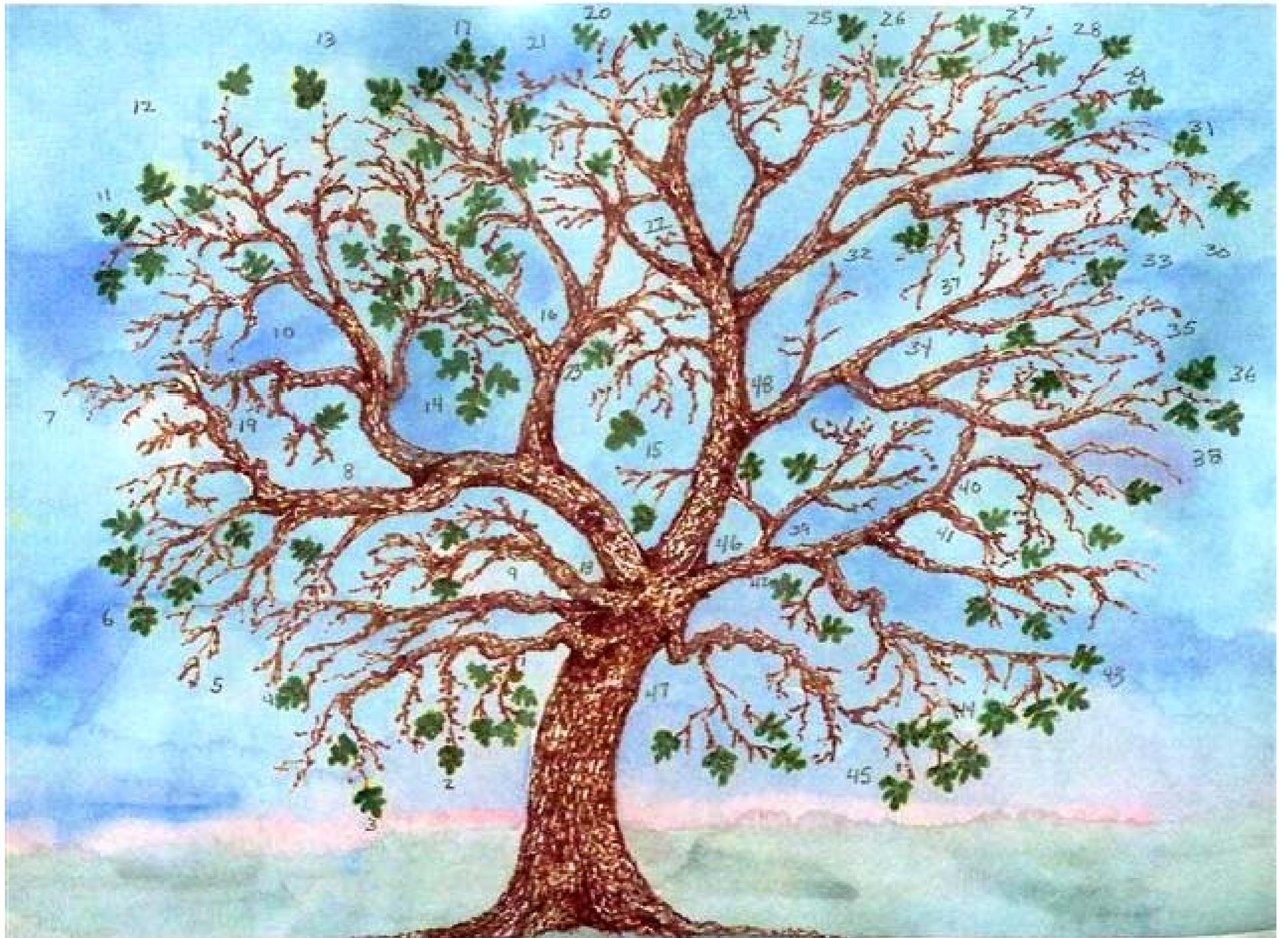
-  = initial connections
-  = located & confirmed
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EMO Children and Family Services Matrix Program, Santa Clara County

- 48 young people between ages of 12 and 17
- Living in a Children's Shelter Alternative Program
- 2.6 Family Connection at Entry
- 7.2 Family Connections at Exit from Matrix







“A significant finding of the Intensive Relative Search Project is that family is out there and willing to support youth in the child welfare system, even for young people who have been with us for over a decade and for whom there has been little contact.”

Brian Samuels, Director of the State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

"Lessons learned:

It is never too late to look for family for a youth in care.

Success will be achieved for more children if work is begun early in the case-both in terms of availability of family information and making the connection before the youth is damaged by years of changing placement and separation from family."

Brian Samuels, Director of the State of Illinois
Department of Children and Family Services

“Healthy development depends on the quality and reliability of a young child’s relationships with important people in his or her life, both within and outside the family. Even the development of a child’s brain architecture depends on the establishment of these relationships.”

National Scientific Council on the
Developing Child: Young Children Develop
in an Environment of Relationships
October 2004

"There is no definitive evidence that the influence of relationships is more important at one stage of a child's life compared to another. It would be more accurate to say that the impacts of relationships continue throughout the lifespan but the nature of those impacts varies by age and developmental status."

National Scientific Council on the
Developing Child: Children Develop in an
Environment of Relationships

October 2004

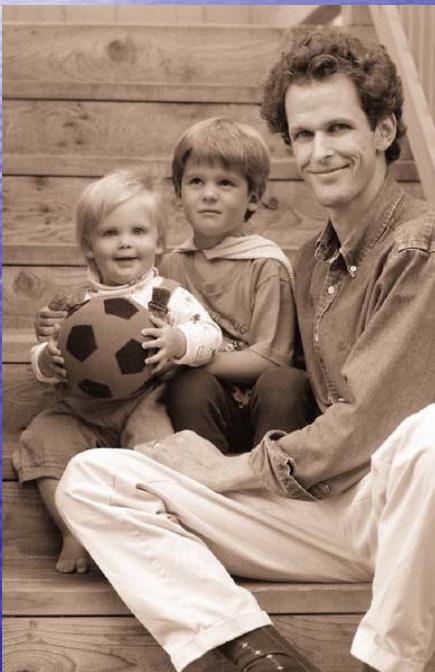
National Scientific Council on the Developing Child

Stress and the Architecture of the Brain

- “Childhood adversity shapes a stress system that has trouble flipping the “off switch.”
- “Children who feel loved and secure seem to have a biological buffer against the threat.”
- “If we provide different experiences we can change the developmental trajectory pretty dramatically”.
- “We’re either adding to the burden of risk and vulnerability, or we’re giving them the best shot from the start.”

“I look at what I have now, I mean it’s a blessing for a person to be reunited with their family...I thank God that I found my dad.”

Words of a youth served by the Intensive Relative Search/Lifelong Connections Project Chicago, Illinois





“I never had family gatherings. I never had cousins or even a real birthday. I always wanted things like my friends had, but I never had it. Now I know I had a family all along, they just didn’t know where I was...”

“I didn’t have a Christmas with my family. I didn’t have a Thanksgiving with my family. I didn’t have a New Year’s with my family...and now I have that, you know, I have that...”

Words of a youth served by the Intensive Relative Search/Lifelong Connections Project; Chicago, Illinois



Roots

“In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage - - to know who we are and where we come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still... an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness.”

Alex Haley