

Maryland CASA Conference Wrap-Up
March 29, 2014
Annapolis

Keynote Speaker: Pat O'Brien, founder of *You Gotta Believe! The Older Child Adoption & Permanency Movement, Inc.* gave overview of problem of homelessness being the outcome of many children leaving the child welfare system.

Conference "Aging Out" Track addressed the problem of homelessness among foster youth after leaving the child welfare system.

Statistics shared + some of my research:

- 46% of the homeless were in foster care
- 49% of runaways were in foster care
- 61% in group homes were in foster care
- 27% of homeless parents' children will end up in foster care
- 77% of parents who were in foster care will have children entering foster care
- 25-30% of foster care children are homeless within three months after emancipation
- Many homeless former foster youth turn to human trafficking (3%) or end up addicted (32%) and/or incarcerated (18%)
- These problems facing former foster youth are only recently being addressed
- A recent Harvard Univ. study on homelessness didn't even address kids in foster care/juvenile justice system.

What causes homelessness:

- Common belief: poverty, mental illness, addiction, unemployment, etc. which is all true
- But the real story is: the lack of any functional human relationships
- PEOPLE get you where you need to go
- That's where CASA & other agencies/organizations come in

Solutions:

- Educating prospective adoptive parents about need to adopt older children
- 95% of former foster kids will have children. They can learn good parenting through programs like Fostering Futures and others.
- Linking former foster children to programs like Fostering Futures, Ready by 21 , Women's Initiative, and others
- Our Fostering Futures program will be enhanced and adapted to meet our own needs over the next year to give it more substance, greater opportunities for course work and for workshops/speakers.