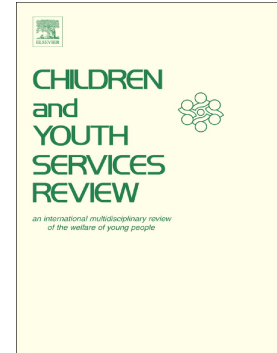


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Youth Connections Scale-Child Version pilot study: Adapted tool for children in out-of-home placement

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*Youth Connections Scale-Child Version Pilot Study:**Adapted Tool for Children in Out-of-home Placement***1. Introduction**

In 2015, there were over 427,000 children in foster care (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). Although a primary goal for children in out-of-home placement is achieving legal permanence (return home, adoption or transfer of legal guardianship), more attention is being paid to relational permanence within child welfare systems. Relational permanence is an emerging concept that focuses on ensuring that children have sustained connections to people that are important to them, have lifelong supportive relationships with caring adults, and have an overall sense of belonging (Brown, Léveillé & Gough, 2006; Samuels, 2009; Semanchin Jones & LaLiberte, 2013).

Having supportive connections with adults throughout a child's development has been linked to positive well-being outcomes (Jackson & Warren, 2000; Levitt et al., 2005; Perry, 2006; Search Institute, 2006). Children in out-of-home care, in particular, need stable and supportive caregiving relationships, benefits of which include positive long-term effects on socio-emotional well-being (Munson & McMillen, 2009; Perry, 2006). Studies have indicated that supportive connections and social support can be a protective factor that promotes resiliency in children who experienced trauma and child maltreatment (Hass, Allen, & Amoah, 2014). Unfortunately, children and youth often lose connections and relationships with key people in their lives, once they enter foster care (Samuels & Pryce, 2008).

Child welfare agencies have recently increased efforts to strengthen the supportive networks for youth in out-of-home placement. The Youth Connections Scale (YCS) was developed to measure these efforts, by assessing the number and strength of connections to

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