



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WALKER HOSTS THE URGENCY OF PERMANENCY SUMMIT FOR STATE AND NON-PROFIT PROVIDER AGENCIES FROM ACROSS MASSACHUSETTS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN GROWING UP IN THEIR OWN LIFELONG FAMILIES

Needham, MA, June 2 – One hundred and fifteen human service professionals, court officials, child advocates, youth and parents participated in the “**Urgency of Permanency Summit: Galvanizing Commitment & Catalyzing Change**,” which was hosted by Walker, based in Needham. Walker is a non-profit leader in special education, behavioral health services and child welfare programs for some of the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable children and families.

The Summit focused on ways to increase the number of children who will grow up with their own families--either birth families, relatives or adoptive families. Too many children who are in the care of the state spend years in out-of-home settings such as foster care or group homes. With a 51% increase over the past 3 years in children under the age of 11 who will need an adoptive home, there is no time to wait to address this rising problem.

In her keynote speech, Walker President and CEO Susan M. Getman stated that “too many children don’t know what family they’re going to grow up and grow old with.” She added that, as of fiscal year 2015, forty-six percent of the children seeking adoption had been waiting over two years and that “every day spent living without a family is an *eternity* for a child.” Getman noted that each year in Massachusetts, 10,000 children are placed in care with the Department of Children and Families. “Clearly, no single organization or system can alone accomplish timely permanency for children. It is imperative that we all work together to return children home or to help find new families who will love and support them through all the challenges that life can bring.”

To that end, the Summit featured informative panels, provocative break-outs and robust action planning sessions that furthered the Summit’s goal to create the momentum and commitment needed to immediately address the permanency needs of children. The participants, who largely attended as members of twelve agency teams, were drawn to focus on 1.) achieving a clear understanding of the key elements of permanency, 2.) identifying effective strategies and critical resources, and 3.) creating the diverse partnerships that are needed to accomplish timely permanence for all children in the care of the state.

Speakers included Chief Justice Amy Nechtem of the Juvenile Court, Joan Mikula - Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health, Charles Lerner - Executive Director of Boston CASA, Michelle Banks - Adolescent Program Supervisor of the Department of Children and Families, Susan Rooney - Director of Adoption at Cambridge Family and Children’s Services, Patti Cedrone - Director of Behavioral Health & Community Services at Walker, and Nancy Kinder-Tetreault, Area Program Manager of the Department of Children and Families.

Other participants at the Summit included representatives from the Cambridge Family and Children's Services, the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange, Children's Study Home, Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health, Berkshire Children & Families, Silver Lining Mentoring, the Bridge of Central MA, Casey Family Programs, Youth Villages, and Boston College.

The "Urgency of Permanency Summit," which is the second professional forum on permanency organized by Walker in the past year, was made possible by support from the John W. Alden Trust, Bain Capital Children's Charity, Cabot Family Charitable Trust, Casey Family Programs, Cummings Foundation, and TripAdvisor Charitable Foundation.

About Walker

Walker is a leading not-for-profit organization providing intensive therapeutic and academic services for exceptionally vulnerable yet resilient children, teens, and families facing complex mental health, emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges. Walker provides services through campuses in Needham and Watertown, community-based clinical and youth development programs, professional seminars, consultations, and Walker staff embedded in public schools. Founded in 1961, Walker's programs positively impact thousands of children, teens, and families each year throughout Greater Boston, the North Shore, the South Shore, and Central Massachusetts. For more information, please visit Walkercares.org or [Facebook.com/Walkercares/](https://www.facebook.com/Walkercares/).

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