

Guidance Article on Family Search and Engagement

Requirements

Placement of a child into a **Substitute Care Setting** by a **Public Children Services Agency (PCSA)** requires the PCSA identify, search for, and notify **Adult Relatives/Kin** of the child's removal.

- The PCSA must exercise due diligence to identify all maternal grandparents, paternal grandparents, adult relatives, and kin to the child or family.
- All maternal grandparents, paternal grandparents, adult relatives, and anyone the parents and/or child names must be notified of the child's removal within 30 days of the child's removal.
- The agency is not required to notify family members/kin who have a history of family or domestic violence.
- Notification to adult relatives or kin identified by the parent or child must:
 1. Specify that the child was removed from the custody of the parent(s).
 2. Explain the options available to the relative if the relative participates in the care and/or placement of the child.
 3. Outline available services and supports
 4. Explain the options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notification.
 5. Describe the requirements to become foster parents
- PCSAs shall continue to proactively search for and provide notice to family members beyond the 30 day requirement when a child is placed in a substitute care setting. The ongoing activities to identify and notify relatives/kin shall be documented in the Semi-Annual Administrative Review.
- Once a child is placed in a relative/kin placement by the PCSA, the PCSA is not required to continue to search for other relatives.
- All efforts to locate relatives must be documented in the case record.

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Documenting Efforts in SACWIS

PCSA's should document their **Family Search and Engagement Activities** in **SACWIS**.

- Notification activities (as well as all other Family Search and Engagement activities) can be labeled as a Sub-Category under the following Categories in the Activity Log:
 - Adoption
 - Assessment/Investigation Mandate
 - Meetings/Conferences
 - Correspondence
 - General
 - Ongoing Visits
 - Other Persons
 - Out of Home Care Provider
 - Parties to the Case
- Relatives and Kin who are identified as supports and/or a potential placement should be included in the Associated Persons Tab in SACWIS. This allows current staff, as well as those associated with the case in the future, to quickly find relative contact information. It also serves as a reminder to workers to gather specific, updated name and address information when speaking with blood and non-blood kin.
- Information that should be gathered for purposes of entering in the Associated Persons Tab includes: Name
 - Name
 - Gender
 - Address
 - Phone
 - Association
 - Description: This field can be used to elaborate on the association of the person to the case/child.

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Purpose and Guiding Principles

Family Search and Engagement (FSE) is the process of searching for and engaging family and kin through a variety of strategies that leads to permanency for youth.

Although the ultimate goal for **FSE** is **permanent placement**, the focus is on building **emotional permanency** with stronger familial connections, therefore **FSE** activities should take place over the life of a case, not just at time of removal (please refer to **Locating and Notifying Relatives When a Child is Placed in Substitute Care Guidance Article**).

- FSE can be tied to the goals of:
 - **Safety**: Secure attachments are considered protective factors for children
 - **Well-Being**: Youth who establish and maintain connections have a greater sense of identity and show a decrease in negative behaviors
 - **Permanency**: The goal of FSE is to provide youth with the sense of security, continuity, and support they want and need.
- Youth should have significant voice in decision-making about permanency-planning, and be kept informed frequently through the process. Youth need and want a network of supports.
- The permanency team, which consists of the youth, family, professionals, and others who are committed to the shared responsibility of helping the youth establish permanency connections, must make permanency for youth a priority goal.

*Adapted from: Family Search and Engagement Distance Learning, OCWTP, 2011.

Strategies for Accomplishing

Across the life of a case, there are **five main strategies** to accomplish **Family Search and Engagement**.

- **Searching**: Workers engage in case mining, family interviews, and use of web-based search tools to create a pool of potential permanency connections for the youth.
 - Searching is primarily done at the Intake/Investigation level and as a result of a child coming into agency custody.
 - There may be times that Protective or Ongoing workers must conduct search activities when a child on their voluntary caseload may come under agency care.
 - Searching can also take place at the other end of the child welfare spectrum, after an agency has received Permanent Custody of a child and is looking at family and kin (possibly for a second time) as a Permanency option.

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- **Contacting:** Workers contact potential permanency connections, engage them, and get a commitment from them for further contact.
 - Caseworkers must understand the importance of emphasizing ongoing supports through communication, and family interaction and involvement.
 - The caseworker is responsible for working with family members and other significant adults to help them understand the difference between becoming a placement option and being a support to the youth in care.
- **Teaming:** Workers use engagement and facilitation skills to create and sustain a group of people who are willing to be responsible for the youth's permanency.
 - Family Team Meetings (FTMs) are an excellent opportunity to invite as many family members (as feasibly possible) to engage them in discussions about the types of support they can provide to the family and educate them about their options.
- **Developing Connections:** Workers, with the assistance from the permanency team, assess the risks, impact, and value of each potential connection, in an effort to create a permanency network for the youth.
- **Sustaining Permanence:** Workers, with the assistance from the permanency team, formalize the youth's permanency plan and create plans of support.

*Adapted from: Summit County Children Services Family Search and Engagement Procedure training, May 2013 and Family Search and Engagement Distance Learning, OCWTP, 2011.

Things to Consider

- It is suggested that Intake/Investigation workers gather family information as a regular part of casework practice regardless of a removal taking place, as information obtained should be from the perspective of establishing a support foundation for the family and to build a network of information in the case of future removals of the child.
- When contacting relatives and kin, stick to clear facts about the child only and not the birth parents' history. In preparing the relative for a visit or a phone call, discuss only the child's current needs and situation (rather than the child's parent or custodian's situation).

*Adapted from Summit County Children Services FSE Procedure, effective November 2012

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Resources

Applicable Ohio Administrative Code Rules:

5101:2-39-01 Removal of a Child From His or Her Own Home.

5101:2-38-05 PCSA Case Plan for Children in Custody or Under Protective Supervision.

5101:2-39-10 PCPA Case Plan for Children in Custody or Under Court-Ordered Protective Supervision.

Family, Children and Adult Services **Procedure Letter No. 151**

<http://emanualstest.odjfs.state.oh.us/emanuals/>

Other Information and Resources:

Fostering Connections To Success and Increasing Adoptions Act 2008, P.L. 110-351:

http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Public_Law_110-351.pdf

Child Welfare Information Gateway: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/>

Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center: www.grandfamilies.org

Resources for information on Genograms and Ecomaps:

<http://www.genopro.com/genogram/templates/>

<http://www.routledgesw.com//sanchez/assess/genogram>

http://www.ehow.com/how_5063840_construct-ecomap.html

http://www.researchgate.net/publication/5670819_Interactive_use_of_genograms_and_ecomaps_in_family_caregiving_research

****“Bringing Family to the Table: Tips and Techniques for Effective Family Engagement” (December 2011)**

http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2011_12_2011_RB_FamilytoTable.pdf

Conway, T., Hutson, R.Q., (2007). **Is Kinship Care Good For Kids?** Center for Law and Policy.

www.clasp.org

***Family Finding: Does Implementation Differ When Serving Different Child Welfare Populations? Child Trends Research Brief (October 2011)**

http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2011_10_17_RB_FamilyFinding.pdf

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Family Search & Engagement A Comprehensive Practice Guide, 2008, Catholic Community Services of Western Washington and EMQ Children & Family Services.
http://www.ccsww.org/site/DocServer/Family_Search_and_Engagement_Guide_CCS-EMQ.pdf?docID=641

Family Search and Engagement: An Overview, developed by the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, <http://www.ocwtp.net/Current%20Initiatives.htm#FSE>

***NRCPFC Toolkit: Kinship Care and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008**

<http://www.nrcpfc.org/toolkit/kinship/>

***NRCPFC Information Packet: Kinship Care and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008**

http://www.nrcpfc.org/fostering_connections/download/Kinship_Care_&_Fostering_Connections_Act_KimHertz.pdf

**“Piecing Together the Puzzle: Tips and Techniques for Effective Discovery in Family Finding”, (December 2011)

http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2011_12_01_RB_FamilyFindingTips.pdf

Relative Search Best Practice Guide, Minnesota Department of Human Services

http://www.d.umn.edu/sw/snydersfiles/AdvCW/week10/Relative_Search_Best_Practice_Guide.pdf

Six Steps to Find a Family: A Practice Guide for Family Search and Engagement (FSE)
The National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning
and The California Permanency for Youth Project

<http://www.nrcpfc.org/downloads/SixSteps.pdf>

*Taken from National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections Weekly Update