



Search, Engage, Explore, Kinnect

FSE Policy and Workflow Development Overview

Developing policy to guide family search and engagement work is critical to strengthening the fabric of agency practice. Creating a manual, a practice guide, or policy involves consideration of several things including expectations for practice, anticipated barriers, administrative and organizational support and alignment, and demonstration of commitment to the core values of family search and engagement. Here are some steps to support the development or updating of policy to support family search and engagement.

Foundation

Start with the “Why”

- Identify the reasons why this work is important and why the change is needed. If the “why” behind the policy is understood by staff *and values-based*, buy-in can be achieved not just by leadership, but agency-wide.
- Establish the values that inform the practice. This helps transform the guiding principles of the intervention into daily practice and embed them into the culture of the agency. Include these developed values statements or statement the agency beliefs in the introduction of the policy.

Initial Considerations

- Brainstorm goals the policy hopes to achieve
- Consider various pathways in which to proceed. For example:
 - Minimum standards for all team members
 - Internal department structures and procedures for different departments
 - Specialized units and expectations for specific roles
 - Explore opportunities to allocate resources and integrate dedicated roles to family finding
 - Incorporation of specific programs such as Kinnect to Family and Wendy’s Wonderful Kids
- Research models (*included below*) and existing policies (*included addendums*)

Examples of Specific Models	Essential Components
Family Finding (Now Family Seeing) is a model developed by Kevin Campbell and colleagues which utilizes six essential components, guided by principles, lessons, and values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Urgency ○ Expanded Definition of Permanency ○ Effective Relative Search ○ Family-driven Process ○ Development of Multiple Paths ○ Well-defined and Tactical Procedures
Within the Family Finding Model, there are also six stages as a part of the aforementioned well-defined and tactical procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discovery ○ Engagement ○ Planning ○ Decision-making ○ Evaluation ○ Follow-up Supports
Family Search and Engagement (model-specific) which also utilizes a six-step process that is similar in language to the Family Finding Model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting the Stage ○ Discovery ○ Engagement ○ Exploration and Planning ○ Decision-making and Evaluation ○ Sustaining the Relationship(s)



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Successful and Effective Program Core Components

- **Are persistent and have a sense of urgency.** With the central focus on the loss experienced by children and youth and their right to a permanent home, staff should never give up trying to find kin and other permanent connections for youth.
- **Are youth-driven.** Youth are the center of the search and engagement process and are involved in all age-appropriate decisions.
- **Collaborate with community partners.** Building relationships and collaborating with partners within the agency and in the community is essential to making permanent connections for youth. Partners may include group home staff, family members, foster parents, school staff, court staff, and advocates, as well as internal agency placement staff.
- **Train staff in resourceful skills.** Beyond using search engines and databases to search for relatives, staff are trained to interview youth and family members to identify family strengths and resources. They also must be trained in grief and loss to help youth understand that they deserve a permanent connection.
- **Provide wraparound services and support.** Successfully linking children with permanent connections often requires child welfare and mental health professionals to work together to provide financial, medical, and therapeutic support.
- **Address systemic barriers.** When implementing any new practice, existing policies, lack of resources, and resistance from within and outside the agency can present barriers. Likewise, when implementing family search and engagement, it is important to address obstacles, remove disincentives, and select key point people to enable the program to succeed.
- **Understand that change requires authority.** Supervisors are supported as they create a practice shift for their workers. Supervisors create checklists, develop expectations, and address systematic resistance through their work with caseworkers and with other stakeholders, such as judges, attorneys, and other involved agencies.

From Casey.org/family-search-engagement and they site Children’s Defense Fund. (2010). *Promising approaches in child welfare: Helping connect children and youth in foster care to permanent family and relationships through family finding and engagement.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/data/promising-approaches.pdf>

Additional Considerations

WHO

- Who should be involved in drafting and reviewing the policy and workflow?
- Whose roles and responsibilities will be clarified or updated?

WHAT

- What expectations will be set?
- What will ongoing support for skills learned look like? Supervisory expectations and accountability?
- What outcomes will be tracked and by whom?
- What ethical and confidentiality considerations should be included?
- For any specialized roles: what does referral look like and what are feasible workloads?

WHERE

- Where does family finding take place? (physical locations)
- Where are family finding efforts documented and what should be included? Include examples.
- Where are there overlaps with other policies or procedures that will need alignment?

WHEN

- When does family finding look different? (timeline of family services- ie: prevention, ongoing, etc.)
- When are family finding efforts shared? (ie: court hearings, staffings, etc.)

HOW

- How will technology be used or not used?
- Will genograms be used? If so, which platform?
- How will communication and training be used to support the successful rollout or update?



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FSE Policy and Workflow Development Addendums

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Blank County Protective Services Policy & Procedure

Procedure Name:	Program Area:
Family Search and Engagement	Protective Services

I. PROCEDURE SUMMARY

Blank County Protective Services is committed to maintaining a child's connections to their extended family and placing with relatives when appropriate. Family Search and Engagement and Family Group Decision Making is a structured model used to build permanent, caring relationships for children by helping adults make realistic decisions on how to be involved in a child's life. When children must be removed from their own home, relatives and non-relatives can provide many levels of support ranging from assuming custody and placement to maintaining regular visits and relationships with children. This process will be utilized to assure staff are actively engaging relatives and non-relatives regarding opportunities to be a permanent connection for children. In addition, this process will be utilized to ensure relatives receive notification when children are removed from their parent, guardian or custodian and the options and resources relative have to be a permanent connection.

Due Diligence

Regardless of where a child is placed, within 30 days of removal of a child from their parent, guardian or custodian, the service team shall exercise due diligence to identify and locate parents, maternal and paternal relatives and non-relatives of the child, including any relatives or non-relatives suggested by the child's parents.

1. Due Diligence includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Interviewing parents, guardians, custodians, children when appropriate and any other collateral resources who may have knowledge about the family.
 - b. If any information is gathered regarding Indian heritage, the service team will follow the Indian Child Welfare Act process.
 - c. Completing an Accurant Search
2. Relatives are defined as:
 - a. Individuals related by blood or adoption
 - b. Parents, grandparents, nephews and nieces including relatives with a prefix of great or great-great
 - c. First cousins
 - d. Stepparents and stepsiblings
 - e. Spouses and former spouses of individuals in a and b
3. Non-Relatives are defined as:
 - a. Any individual the current custodial caretaker or child identifies as having a familiar or longstanding relationship or bond with.

30 Day Written Notice to Maternal and Paternal Adult Relatives

Placement with a relative, non-relative at the time of removal does not exempt the service team from continuing the search to identify additional maternal or paternal relatives and provide the identified relatives with notification of removal within the first 30 days as outlined below. The service team will complete the following within 30 days after removal of a child from their parent, guardian or custodian:

1. Provide written notification using the notification letter template to maternal and paternal grandparents and to all known maternal and paternal adult relatives specifying the following:
 - a. The child has been or is being removed from the parent/guardian/custodian's custody.
 - b. The options the relative has to participate in the care and placement of the child including any options that may be lost by failing to response to the notice.
 - c. The requirements to become a foster parent and the additional services and supports available for children placed in a foster home.
2. The service team will place a copy of the notification to the identified adult relative in the case file and document the notifications in an activity log.

Domestic Violence

1. The service team is not required to send written notification as described above to adult relatives who have an identified history of family or domestic violence, however the following must be followed:
 - a. The service team will review each relative's history of family or domestic violence including, but not limited to: discussing any concerns with parents, guardian or custodian holders and the child is appropriate, criminal history, civil and or temporary protection orders, documented agency history, documentation from police and other community professional with knowledge of the information.
 - b. The service team will document in an activity log if any adult relatives identified above has a history of family or domestic violence which would currently put the child and or parent at risk of physical, mental or emotional abuse if notices was provided.
 - c. Should the caseworker and or supervisors determine the domestic violence exception applies, consultation with the Family Services Manager is required.

Kinship Assessment Approval Process

1. The service team will assess adult relatives who respond to the notification and are interested in placement in accordance with the approval of out of home placement with relative or non-relative policy and procedure.
2. Upon placement of the child with an approved relative or non-relative, it may not be necessary to assess any other adult relatives for placement, however permanency connections should continue to be explored.
 - a. Additional kinship assessments may be necessary to assess other adult relative or non-relatives who are able to be a support for the family or placement option.

II. PROCEDURE STEPS

Family Search and Engagement activities begin with the family's first contact with the agency and continue throughout the life of the case.

Screening

The screening division is primarily responsible for gathering information pertaining to concerns reported to the agency including, but not limited to: household members, family makeup and collateral resources. When a call is received within the Screening Division, the screener will:

1. Ask the referral source for any and all known relatives
2. If the referral source is school personnel, ask who the emergency contact person is
3. Add identified individuals into narrative of the referral including contact information if known
4. Update contact profile information in the participants tab of the intake

Intake and Assessment

The Intake Division is primarily responsible for determining the safety of a child and determining if there is a safe or unsafe safety response.

Safe Safety Response

A safe safety response means there is no immediate safety threat and the child can safely remain in the home. Although there is a safe safety response and placement outside the home is not necessary, the service team still has a responsibility to gather and document support systems including known maternal and paternal adult relatives and non-relatives. The service team will do the following:

1. Build a list of supports as identified by the parent/guardian/custodian/child (when age appropriate) who the family report as being appropriate to care for their child in their absence
2. Add narrative of supports in the "Family Functioning" section of the Family Assessment
3. Add immediate family supports in the "Associated Members" tab within SACWIS
 - a. Maternal and paternal grandparents, aunts and uncles

Unsafe Safety Response Resulting in Safety Plan or Legal Status Change

An unsafe safety response means there is an immediate safety threat and the child cannot safely remain in the home and an alternative plan of safety must be created in conjunction with the family utilizing familial supports. When the service team creates a

safety plan or receives either an Ex Parte order of custody, Officer Acceptance of a Child, Temporary Shelter Custody or a 30-day agreement, the service team will:

1. Secure immediate placement utilizing the Approval of Out of Home Placement with a Relative or Non-Relative Substitute Caregiver Policy, including a referral for a Kinship Home Assessment.
2. Secure immediate foster placement.
3. Complete a file review in addition to identifying safety supports for any identified relative or non-relative substitute caregiver
4. Complete the Family Search and Engagement/Family Group Decision Making Referral within one business day of removal the unsafe safety response in order to obtain detailed information regarding the family, including the identity of parents, maternal and paternal relatives and non-relatives of the child. Sources of information for the referral should include:
 - a. Interviews with parents/guardians/custodians
 - b. Interviews with children age appropriate
 - c. Review of case file
 - d. Interviews with household members, collateral sources who may be knowledgeable about the family
5. Submit the Family Search and Engagement Search/Family Group Decision Making Referral to the Family Finder.

Identification of Relatives and Permanency Options

The caseworker will complete the Family Search and Engagement/Family Group Decision Making Referral and submit it to the permanency team Family Finder within one business day of the unsafe safety response.

1. The case worker will update the SACWIS associated members tab with known family information.
2. The Family Finder will send notification letters to all known maternal and paternal adult relatives as identified on the referral form and document notification in a SACWIS activity log.
3. The Family Finder will complete initial online person search utilizing all identified search engines within one business day of the request.
4. The Family Finder will complete an Accurint Search to demonstrate due diligence to locate all relatives within one business day of the referral.
5. Once the search is complete the Family Finder will do the following:
 - a. Enter the identified contact information in the "Associated Members" tab within SACWIS.
 - b. Complete Roadmap to Family and Genogram.
 - c. Send notification to any newly identified relatives, document in SACWIS activity logs and scan letters into COMPASS.
 - d. Contact and engage the known relatives and discuss agency process and willingness to be a permanency option for the child including attending a family planning meeting.
 - e. Notify Family Group Decision Making Facilitator the necessity to schedule a meeting.
6. Schedule and hold planning meeting with the Meeting Facilitator, Intake worker and Family Finder.
 - a. Discuss results of Family Finding and engagement of relatives
 - b. Create plan of action on next steps and who will be invited to this meeting
 - c. Discuss any new leads regarding permanency options
7. The Family Finder, in conjunction with the meeting facilitator, will make contact with and schedule a meeting with all known maternal and paternal adult relatives and assigned case staff and create a plan of support utilizing the following criteria:
 - a. Determine who will be the primary placement for the child.
 - b. Determine who will be a support for the parent/guardian/custodian including, but not limited to; respite care, child care transportation, visitation and financial assistance if needed.
 - c. Identify a support system for the children so the child feels comfortable and safe.
8. The Family Finder will schedule a post meeting with the Family Finder, meeting facilitator and assigned workers to identify the strategy moving forward and will determine:
 - a. What additional kinship assessment must be completed and who will complete what task
 - b. Update the Roadmap to Family and Genogram
 - c. Determine additional search notify and engagement needs to occur
 - d. Update associated members tab in SACWIS
9. The Family Finder, in conjunction with the Family Group Decision Making Facilitator, will schedule and hold a second Family Group Decision Making meeting to formalize the plan of support in preparation for the formal transfer Family Team Meeting.
10. The Family Finder will attend the formal Family Team Meeting to support and identify relative roles for ongoing support and involvement.
11. The Family Finder, in conjunction with the Family Team Group Decision Making Facilitator, will schedule and hold additional Family Group Decision Making meetings as necessary.

12. The Family Finder will make monthly contact with the primary caregiver to ensure:
 - a. The agreed upon support plan is valid or needs to be modified.
 - b. If the primary caregiver is receiving the support as identified within the support plan.
 - c. If the additional resources are needed to support the child within the home.
13. The Caseworker will follow OAC regarding face to face contact with the primary caregiver and ensure:
 - a. The agreed upon support plan is valid or needs to be modified.
 - b. If the primary caregiver is receiving the support as identified within the support plan.
 - c. If the additional resources are needed to support the child within the home.
14. The Caseworker and Family Finder will maintain regular communication with the primary caregiver support to ensure:
 - a. The agreed upon support plan is valid or needs to be modified.
 - b. If the primary caregiver is receiving the support as identified within the support plan.
 - c. If the additional resources are needed to support the child within the home.

Identified Non-Relative with Contact Information

If non-relatives are identified through the Family Search and Engagement process and no relatives are available for placement, the caseworker will engage with the identified non-relative in accordance with the Approval of Out of Home Placement with a Relative or Non-Relative Substitute Caregiver Policy.

Ongoing Family Engagement Search Activities following the Initial Placement

1. When a relative or non-relative is identified after the initial placement the caseworker will follow the above process depending on if contact information is known or if contact is not known and utilizing the Approval of an Out of Home Placement with a Relative or Non-Relative Substitute Caregiver.
2. For absent parents, the caseworker or designee will complete the Family Engagement Local Person Search form in order to attempt to locate them. The Family Engagement Local Person Search form will be completed at least every 3 months prior to the case review in an effort to locate and engage any absent parent.
3. For any child in agency custody but not placed with relatives, the Family Engagement Local Person Search form shall be completed every 3 months prior to case reviews in an attempt to locate identified relatives who have not responded to the initial contact.
4. Any information located in searches by the caseworker or designee will be entered into SACWIS Activity Log and when appropriate in the Associated Persons Tab.
5. Relatives and non-relatives who are not placement providers but who wish to continue as a permanency connection will be assessed by the service team to assure there are no concerns that would prevent them from having on-going contact with the child.
 - a. If the permanency connection is wishing to act as respite or a babysitter the caseworker will follow the Approval of Out of Home Placement with a Relative or Non-Relative Substitute caregiver Policy.
6. Relative and Non-relatives requesting visitation in their home should be assessed for visitation in accordance with the agency visitation process.
7. Known Relatives and non-relatives who have expressed an inability to care for be a permanent connection with a child in the custody of the agency, the service team will make contact at least every 6 months to determine if circumstances have changed or whether there are any supports to help alleviate the barriers to be a permanent connection.

III. ASSOCIATED INFORMATION/FORMS

- Kinship Care Placement-Assessment Request
- JFS 01447 Assessment of Relative or Non Relative Substitute Caregiver
- JFS 1409 Safety Plan
- Kinship Evaluation Narrative
- Kinship Placement Approval/Denial Letter
- OAC 5101:2-37-02
- OAC 5101:2-42-18
- OAC 5101:2-42-05
- Family Search and Engagement/Family Group Decision Making Referral

DRAFT

Family Search and Engagement

Sample FSE Policy

Subject: Family Search and Engagement

Document Number:

Regulations: 5101:2-39-01,
5101:2-42-05, 5101:2-42-18

Effective Date: July 8, 2019

New: X **Replacement:**

Review Dates:

Review Due Date: July 8, 2022

Previous Documents:

PURPOSE & SCOPE: This policy establishes the manner by which County Department of Job & Family Services, utilizes family search and engagement strategies to identify and engage family and other significant adults for youth in care or at risk of removal for the purpose of placement, support, maintaining or reconnecting a relationship. This policy applies to all FCS staff.

Definitions:

- I. Risk of removal is defined as an open Children’s Services case which is being presented at Crisis Response Team (CRT), Family Stability Committee (FST), Protective Supervision Order (filed or granted) Law Enforcement Removal or a Safety Plan.
- II. Relatives/Kin are defined as:
 - A. Individuals related by blood or adoption
 - B. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and cousins including relatives with a prefix of great or great-great
 - C. Stepparents and stepsiblings
 - D. Spouses and former spouses of individuals listed above in A and B
- III. Non-Relatives/Kin are defined as:
 - A. Any individual with whom the current custodial caretaker, parent(s), family member(s) or child identifies as having a familiar or longstanding relationship or bond.

POLICY:

I. All Cases

- A. Caseworker interviews parents, guardians, custodians, caretakers and/or children regarding information on paternity, extended family and kinship support.
 1. Caseworker documents all contact information provided in the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) activity log.
- B. Caseworker contacts Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) to determine if paternity has been established for every child.
 1. If paternity has been established, Caseworker contacts established father.
 - a. Caseworker documents all information into SACWIS.
 2. If paternity has not been established either through paternity testing or the Paternity Affidavit, Caseworker requests a court order for paternity testing on all alleged fathers.
 - a. Caseworker shall attempt to contact all alleged fathers identified by the parent, guardian, custodian or child, OR individuals with whom the child has a pre-existing relationship. Caseworker shall also attempt to contact individuals who present themselves to the agency as the alleged father or individuals who are identified by the alleged paternal relatives.

II. Initial Removal

- A. Within 30 days of removal, Caseworker completes Declaration of Relatives form with the family to afford both maternal and paternal sides the opportunity to identify all potential placement/support options for the child(ren).

- B. Caseworker sends a 30 Day Relative Letter to all relatives identified on the Declaration of Relatives Form.
- C. Caseworker completes diligent search efforts to identify relatives/non-relatives in accordance with the Diligent Search Policy (FCS.CFCS-006)
- D. Caseworker requests an Accurint search.
- E. Caseworker completes a social media (i.e. Facebook) search in accordance with the Social Media Policy (FCS.CFCS-016)
- F. Caseworker attempts to contact all relatives/kin identified through diligent search efforts, Accurint search and social media search. Contact includes phone calls, letters, Facebook messenger and/or home visits
 - 1. Caseworker provides necessary and appropriate information to kin, including information pertaining to the child's safety, risk and well-being. Caseworker shall also provide information to kin regarding the parents if the information has a direct impact on the child's safety and/or well-being. This information is provided for the purpose of determining how to involve kin in the case (i.e. respite, placement or support.)
 - 2. Caseworker is mandated to contact all identified kin regardless of parent, custodian or guardian's request and/or desire.
- G. Caseworker completes a kinship home assessment request on potential placement options or for the purposes of visitation in accordance with OAC 5101:2-42-18.
- H. Caseworker documents all search activities in SACWIS activity log.

III. Adoption Disruption

- A. Caseworker must use due diligence to locate family, which could include adoptive or biological family, for any child who was previously adopted and then subsequently enters the custody of County Family and Children Services. The caseworker consults with the assistant prosecuting attorney to file a motion requesting permission from the court to contact the biological family.

IV. Continuing Search and Engagement

- A. Caseworker continues to make diligent search efforts throughout the life of a case for the purpose of identifying potential kinship placement options or supports.
 - 1. Caseworker documents all search efforts in the SACWIS activity log.
 - 2. Once a child is placed with a kinship caregiver, caseworker shall continue to conduct family search and engagement activities if it is determined to be in the child's best interest.

PROCEDURES:

I. Search and Engagement and Documentation

- A. During the Investigation and throughout the life of the case, Caseworker interviews parents, custodian, caretaker and/or child regarding available kinship supports.
 - 1. Caseworker collects names and contact information for all identified kinship supports.
 - 2. Caseworker documents all information into the SACWIS activity log.
 - a. Caseworker chooses Case Category: Intake/Alternative Response/Ongoing
 - b. Caseworker chooses Contact Type, as appropriate
 - c. Caseworker chooses Category: General
 - d. Caseworker chooses Subcategory: Family Search and Engagement
 - e. Caseworker enters names and contact information into the narrative section of the activity log

II. Fathers

- A. Caseworker verifies that paternity has been established by contacting the CSEA or a FCS designee who has access to the information.

1. If paternity has been established, then caseworker attempts to contact the father via phone call, letter, Facebook messenger or a home visit. If those efforts are unsuccessful, the caseworker will continue contact attempts in accordance with the Diligent Search Policy.
 - a. Caseworker makes ongoing diligent efforts to contact fathers and documents all information into the SACWIS activity log.
 - i. Caseworker chooses Case Category: Intake/Alternative Response/Ongoing
 - ii. Caseworker chooses Contact Type, as appropriate
 - iii. Caseworker chooses Category: General
 - iv. Caseworker chooses Subcategory: Family Search and Engagement
 - v. Caseworker enters information into the narrative section of the activity log
 - vi. Caseworker documents father's information on the appropriate CAPMIS tools, including but not limited to the Safety Assessment, Family Assessment, Case Plan, person profile, etc.
2. If the established father cannot be located through diligent search efforts in accordance with the Diligent Search Policy, the caseworker contacts CSEA for assistance.
 - a. CSEA accepts a request for location-only services from Children Services Division on Parent Locator form ODJFS 7713
 - b. CSEA accesses all appropriate location sources within seventy-five days of determining that location is necessary. CSEA shall access and utilize the information received from every appropriate location source
 - c. CSEA uses all appropriate location systems including Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS), Child Support Enforcement Network (CSENet), State Parent Locator Service (SPLS), and Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS)
 - d. Upon completion of CSEA's efforts, CSEA provides a written response to County caseworker documenting the efforts conducted to locate the absent parent(s), guardian(s) and/or potential relative caregivers (electronic or paper).
3. If paternity has not been established either through paternity testing or the Paternity Affidavit, Caseworker requests a court order for paternity testing on all alleged fathers
 - a. Alleged fathers are defined as individuals identified by the parent, guardian, custodian or child, individuals who present themselves to the agency as the alleged father or individuals who are identified by the alleged paternal relatives.
 - b. Caseworker submits a request to the Assistant Prosecuting Attorney (APA) to file a motion for paternity testing on all alleged fathers.
 - c. Caseworker contacts all alleged fathers via phone call, letter, home visits or Facebook messenger.
 - d. Caseworker documents all information into the SACWIS activity log.
 - i. Caseworker chooses Case Category: Intake/Alternative Response/Ongoing
 - ii. Caseworker chooses Contact Type, as appropriate
 - iii. Caseworker chooses Category: General
 - iv. Caseworker chooses Subcategory: Family Search and Engagement
 - v. Caseworker enters information into the narrative section of the activity log

III. Initial Removal

- A. Immediately upon removal (but at least within 30 days of removal,) Caseworker completes Declaration of Relatives form with the family to afford both maternal and paternal sides the opportunity to identify all potential placement/support options for the child(ren).
 1. The Declaration of Relative form is located in the placement handbook and in electronic form database.

2. This form may be completed during all types of contacts with the family (i.e. Phone calls, home visits, team meetings, court, etc.)
 - B. Caseworker requests an Accurant search by emailing an Accurant user with the following information: Case name, Family members' names, family members' dates of birth, known addresses and Declaration of Relatives form.
 - C. Caseworker may also complete public record searches via approved search engines, such as www.pipl.com, www.peoplefinders.com, www.findagrave.com, etc.
 - D. Caseworker sends a 30 Day Relative Letter to all relatives identified on the Declaration of Relatives Form or those identified through other Diligent search means.
 1. 30 Day letter form is completed on electronic form database and provided to all identified members either in person, via email or standard postal service.
- IV. Caseworker attempts to contact all relatives/kin identified through diligent search efforts, Accurant search and social media search. Contact includes phone calls, letters, Facebook messenger and/or home visits. Caseworker documents all search activities in SACWIS
- A. Caseworker chooses Case Category: Intake/Alternative Response/Ongoing
 - B. Caseworker chooses Contact Type, as appropriate
 - C. Caseworker chooses Category: General
 - D. Caseworker chooses Subcategory: Family Search and Engagement
 - E. Caseworker enters information into the narrative section of the activity log
- V. **Adoption Disruption**
- A. If parental rights have been permanently terminated, caseworker engages the court in the case.
 1. Caseworker submits written request to the APA to file a motion for permission to contact the child's biological family. The biological family could include parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, adoptive parents of biological siblings, etc.
 2. Once permission is granted, caseworker attempts to contact the biological family by following the steps outlined in **Section III INITIAL REMOVAL**
 3. Caseworker also attempts to contact the adoptive family by following the steps outlines in **Section III INITIAL REMOVAL**
 - B. Caseworker documents all search activities in SACWIS
 1. Caseworker chooses Case Category: Intake/Alternative Response/Ongoing
 2. Caseworker chooses Contact Type, as appropriate
 3. Caseworker chooses Category: General
 4. Caseworker chooses Subcategory: Family Search and Engagement
 5. Caseworker enters information into the narrative section of the activity log

Related policies:

Social Media

Diligent Search

Kinship Care Placements

Forms:

Declaration of Relatives

30 Day Relative Letter

Kinship Home Assessment Request

Subject: Social Media Professional Use

New: X Replacement:

Document Number:

Review Dates:

Regulations:

Review Due Date:

Effective Date:

Previous Documents:

PURPOSE & SCOPE: This policy establishes the manner by which County Department of Job & Family Services, Family & Children Services (FCS), utilizes social media to search and connect with family and other significant adults for youth in care or at risk of coming into care for the purpose of placement, support, maintaining or reconnecting a relationship. This policy applies to all FCS staff.

POLICY:

- I. FCS staff will only utilize a professional social media account to search for or contact customers, kin, or significant supports.
 - A. Staff receives approval from their immediate supervisor to set up any social media account.
- II. Staff sets-up all accounts using their ODJFS email address.
 - A. The account includes the divisional logo as the photo.
 - B. Staff includes their name, agency, title, business phone, fax and email as it is on their signature page for emails.
- III. Communication
 - A. Staff messages or calls persons privately to make initial contact and to exchange other means of contact. Staff may accept a person's message in order to view the message or accept a call from a person they have attempted to contact.
 - B. Staff will not:
 1. Post any information publicly
 2. Like, friend or follow others
 3. Share photos
 4. Share any case information
- IV. Social media use and contact shall occur only during approved work time.
- V. All other use please see CCDJFS Social Media Use Policy effective
- VI. All correspondence is documented in SACWIS. See SACWIS Documentation policy FCS-CFCS-003.
- VII. At the time, a worker leaves the position, a supervisor, supervisor 2, Deputy Director or Management Information System (MIS) staff will reset the account password then deactivate the account.

PROCEDURES:

- I. Once supervisor gives permission to worker to set-up a social media account, the supervisor adds the employee's name, type of account, date of approval, and supervisor's initials providing approval on the spreadsheet located in the FCS Administrative shared drive, titled Social Media Employee Accounts.
- II. Staff will obtain permission to set up any business social media account (i.e.- Facebook, twitter, Instagram, etc.)
 - A. Your Name
 - B. Your Position/Family & Children Services Division
 - C. County Department of Job & Family Services
 - D. Phone: Your Phone
 - E. Fax: Your Fax
 - F. Your Email
 - G. Agency Logo as your photo
- III. Staff private messages persons of interest with the following script.
 - A. My name is _____. I work at County Department of Job and Family Services/Family & Children Services Division. I am trying to locate family for a child involved with our agency. I am not permitted to share any other information on social media due to confidentiality. Please contact me at me at: phone number or worker@jfs.ohio.gov
- IV. Staff documents all correspondence in SACWIS Activity Log as follows:
 - A. Type of contact

- B. Case category
 - C. Category- is other persons
 - D. Sub category is Family Search and Engagement
 - E. Worker enters specifics in the narrative regarding the name, relationship of how the person is known to the child/family and his/her contact information
- VIII. Management ensures any social media account passwords have been changed and the account has been deactivated. Supervisor enters the date of deactivation on Social Media Employee Accounts spreadsheet.

Forms
Social Media Employee Accounts Spreadsheet

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Definition of Kin/Family

In recognition of the variance between the formal definition of kin/family, society’s view of what make someone kin/family, and how child welfare defines kin/family the following illustrates both Webster’s and the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) definitions. Blank County’s definition is consistent with the OAC definition.

Webster’s Dictionary

Kin: one’s family and relations

Kinship: blood relationship

Family: all of the descendants of a common ancestor

Ohio’s Administrative Code Definition

“Family” means a group of people related by blood or circumstances who may rely upon one another for sustenance, support, security, and or socialization.

“Kin” means the following:

- Individuals related by blood or adoption
- Parents, grandparents (including grandparents with the prefix “great, great-great, grand or great grand”)
- Siblings
- Aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces (including such relative with the prefix “great, great-great, grand or great grand”)
- Cousins and first cousins once removed
- Stepparents and stepsiblings
- Spouses and former spouses of individuals listed in this rule
- Any non-relative adult the current custodial caretaker or child identifies as having a familiar and long-standing relationship/bond with the child and/or with the family which will ensure the child’s social ties

Kinship Summary & Guidelines

Kinship Summary & Guidelines

Guiding Principles

- All children should be safe
- All children should be with family
- All siblings should be together

Competing Factors/Considerations

- Number of siblings (including step-siblings/half-siblings)
- Strength of relationship (between/amongst siblings; relative v. non-relative; between child and specific relative)
- Needs of siblings (different placement needs)
- Distance
- Time (in one placement/custody)
- Custody status (siblings with different status)
- Wishes of parent and/or child

Blank County considers kinship placement as best practice. The use of kinship caregivers for placement of children is the preferred practice throughout federal and state legislation. While placement, when necessary, is a favored outcome, we recognize that it is not always possible and as such encourage all levels of kinship support to children and families.

The search for kinship caregivers/supports begins during the intake process and continues throughout the life of the case.

The primary purpose of placing a child with a suitable kinship caregiver is to maintain the child's familial, cultural and community ties. This enables the child to live in the least restrictive setting and to provide safety and stability.

Principles and Agency Expectations regarding Family Search and Engagement

	Find	Engage	Partner	Support
Guiding Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has family and we can find them if we try • Our effort to find, engage, partner with, and support new family members doesn't end until permanency is achieved • We must maintain a sense of urgency • Finding includes relentlessly pursuing permanency options & connections throughout the life of a case • Staff will be given the tools needed to efficiently and effectively find family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency and openness (good or bad) leads to informed decisions • All connections have value, it's our job to ensure safe boundaries are put into place to protect the child • Encouraging and motivating behaviors lead to belief within our families • Important to keep an empathetic lens – we all have our stuff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet people where they are not where we want them to be • Everyone deserves respect • We all share equal responsibility in the choices and decisions we make • We enter the lives of families when they are in crisis • Families are their own best experts in the problems they face • We must stay child and permanency focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to be available and accessible • Remember that it is hard to ask for help • The process makes people feel vulnerable • Supports should be flexible • We can and must help people before they reach the state of crisis
Agency Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run Accurant search • Partner with 30 Days to Family Specialist upon case acceptance • Send relative notification letters • Complete Finding Checklist • Find out if paternity has been established • Use the Family Connection Tracking Form to document who you found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with families' members to invite them to the FTM and use the Family Involvement Spectrum • Make contact with all known relatives – everyone gets a call back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize the joint visit call to ensure that consistency and continuity of service is achieved between Intake and Ongoing workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find resources for families and caregivers • Provide Birth Family the Family Support Contact List • Provide the Foster Care Provider the Placement Provider Contact List • Help families map their support plan which can be used immediately and to plan for the future • Include kinship information in the placement packet given to caregivers
Intake				

<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with 30 Days to Family Specialist for possible family finding • Run ACCURINT Search • Complete Finding Checklist – if in Kinship for wrap-around, and if in non-kin for placement and support • Update & maintain genogram • Update Family Connection Tracking Form • Enter all names into the Associated Persons Tab • Work to establish paternity if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter all names into the Associated Persons Tab • Send relative notification letters at 90 days – check for new addresses • Continue to engage family in FTM process and Utilize the Family Involvement Spectrum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain ongoing contact and communication • Utilize Family Teem Meetings and the Family Involvement Spectrum • Engage kin in birth parent visits • Provide kin a meaningful opportunity to plan for their youth • YCPRT @ 12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build upon the families’ support plan • Be available and accessible to families • Be willing to continuously reach out to family or other significant adults as their situations may have changed since your initial conversation • Reach out to paternal relatives • Support kinship caregivers
<p>Adoptions Family Resources Independent Living</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to Wendy’s Wonderful Kids Recruiter • Engage family in the Youth Centered Permanency Roundtable process • Complete the Finding Checklist every 90 Days • Update & maintain genogram • Update Family Connection Tracking Form • Update Associated Persons Tab • Document People in SACWIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call past connections and provide them with the Involvement Spectrum options • Complete a placement trail with the youth and past family members • Update Genogram 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize the joint visit home call to ensure consistency and continuity of service is achieved between Ongoing and Adoption • Involve Intake worker in transfer process • Re-visit the Involvement Spectrum • YCPRT Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin building upon the family genogram with the youth and have youth include other relationships • Help youth identify who they want to have relationships with • Support the youth in establishing and re-establishing relationships • Support families who are currently visiting with the youth • Help coordinate visits with relationships the youth has • Talk with Foster Parents about FSE (see FSE Questions and Answers for Foster Parents) and be encouraging, enthusiastic, real and truthful about it. Help them understand their very important role and provide best practice information and national statistics to help them.

Standardized Documentation

Blank County embraces the ODJFS Guidance Article on Family Search and Engagement as a method for ensuring that staff captures and documents FSE activities in a consistent and timely manner.

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.

Guidance Article on Family Search and Engagement

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.

Relative Notification Letters

The assigned worker will notify maternal and paternal grandparents and other relatives within 30 days after removal of a child from his/her parent, guardian or custodian.

Following the removal of a child from his/her parents' custody, the assigned worker will identify and collect information regarding the maternal and paternal grandparents as well as other adult relatives of the child. Upon identification of these relatives, the worker will send the Relative Notification Letter to each of the identified relatives with the exception of those people excluded by OAC 5101:2-39-01(H)(2).

For placement purposes, the assigned worker will submit a Kinship Home study Request to the Kinship Coordinators. Any other case involvement by relatives will be determined by the assigned worker, supervisor and chain of command.

If a child is placed with a relative immediately upon removal, the assigned worker will send the Relative Notification Letter to additional relatives who do not have placement to potentially allow other relatives to participate in the care of the child, visitation, respite or concurrent planning.

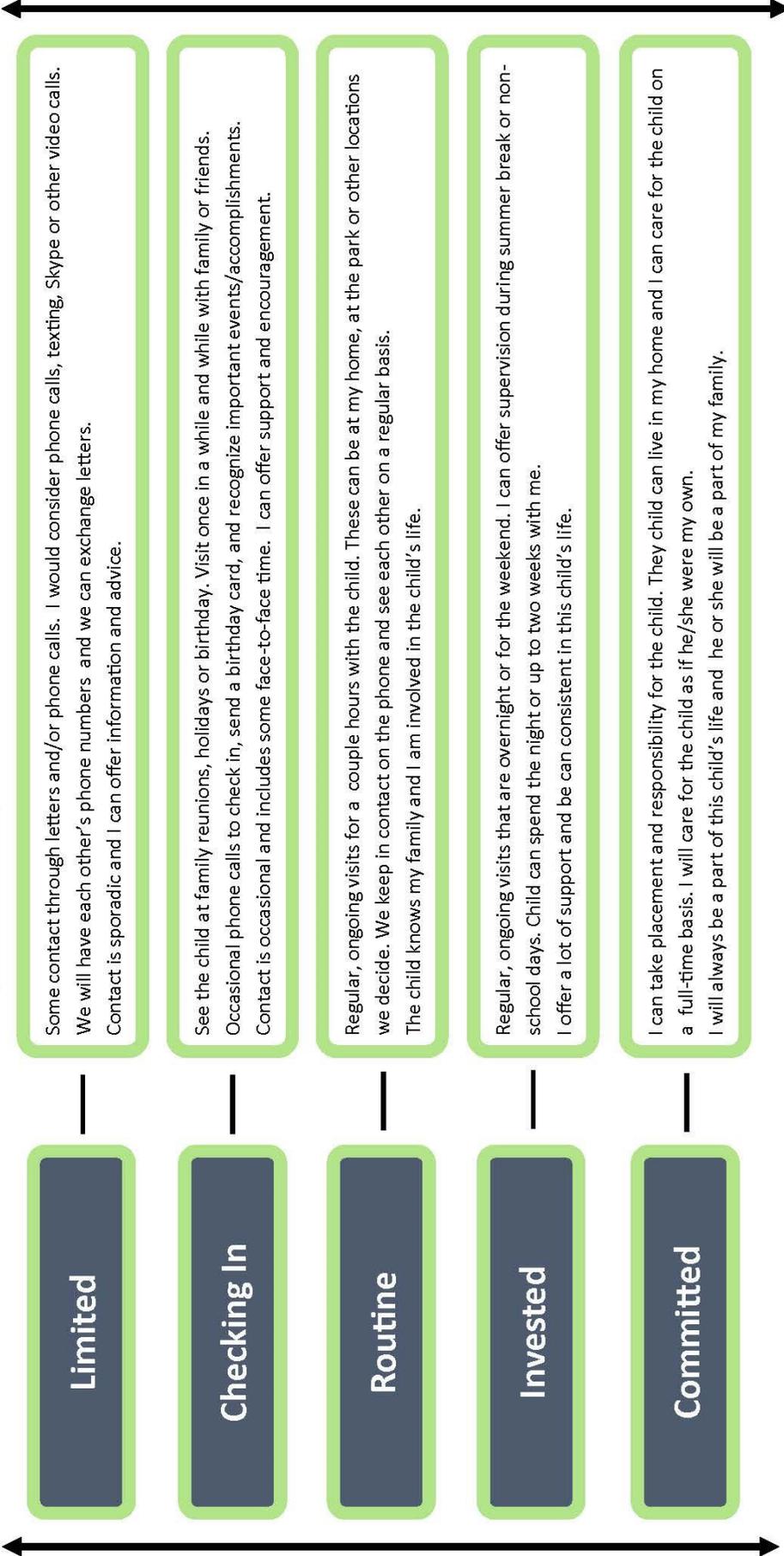
The assigned worker will continue ongoing efforts to identify and engage relatives throughout the life of the case when children are in agency custody. Case Reviews, SARs and Family Team Meetings will be used as identified points in a case to formally review kinship involvement and search efforts.

Family Involvement Spectrum

The Family Relationship Spectrum is designed to be used in a variety of situations. It can be sent to relatives prior to an FTM, or distributed during a meeting. The document can be used when talking with a youth or relative during a home visit, or it can be used during the YCPRT process. It is meant to give a framework for kin/family and youth to think about options outside of solely just becoming a placement option for their youth.

Family Involvement Spectrum

When children enter the foster care system, County Job and Family Services attempts to ensure that they have contact with relatives/kin. You have been identified as a relative, kin or support person for a child involved with Children need support from people who know and care about them. We are asking you to determine what level of involvement is best for you and this child. Keep in mind this can change over time. What type or level of involvement will you consider for _____?



Comments or concerns I have about involvement with this child: _____

Other family members that could be involved: _____

Next steps: important dates, upcoming meetings, court hearing:

Acronyms and what they mean:

FSE	Family Search and Engagement	Efforts to find, engage, partner with and support family members who are involved with the child welfare system
Intake or Ongoing worker	the primary worker assigned to the family Intake worker assigned 45-60 days, then case is transferred to an ongoing worker Ongoing worker may be assigned for six months or longer	Intake worker gathers information about a family and determines if further involvement is necessary; Ongoing worker develops a helping relationship with the family and interventions or services are made available to ensure the children can remain safe.
AR	Alternative Response	An approach by the agency to help families access services, support and other help that will resolve concerns about children's safety
COPS, TC, PC	Legal status of the child COPS: Court ordered protective supervision TC: temporary custody PC: permanency custody	case/family is court involved, but the child is not in agency custody; child is residing in their home or with family kin; Child is in the agency's temporary custody parental rights have been terminated and child is in agency's permanency custody and able to be adopted
Reunification, CLC, Adoption	Permanency options for a child Reunification Change of legal custody Adoption	Child returns to the parent's custody A child goes to the legal custody of a family member/kin; parents maintain some rights to the child Adoption —child becomes a legal and permanent member with another family and parents' rights have been terminated
IL	Independent Living	Support and services to youth in foster care ages 14 and older;
FTM	Family Team Meeting	Meetings to discuss family's case, progress and goals
YCPRT	Youth Centered Permanency Roundtable	Youth driven meetings to support permanency and increasing connections for the child.

Person/Role	Phone and/or email
Caseworker assigned to the family:	
Supervisor at	
GAL/CASA	
Children Service's hotline (emergent need after hours)	
Crisis Center (mental health or drugs and alcohol)	
Opiate hotline	

Child's Name:

Date of Birth:

Family Connection Tracking Form

Name	Address and Phone Number	Relationship to Child	Date Contacted	Involvement Potential	Dates Appeared in File	Follow Up

Finding Checklist

The following list should be completed at each phase of a case and should be revisited every 90 days. Family Finders, FTM Facilitators, WWK Recruiters, Kinship Workers, and other staff are available to collaborate with caseworkers in the effort to ensure this list is completed and revisited regularly.

- Ask the family. Then ask again. And again at least one more time.
- Talk with your supervisor for support and creative approaches to finding family
- ACCURINT search on family members
- Other county/state agencies with involvement with the family – including social service agency, law enforcement, probation officer, counselors, mental health providers, and medical providers.
- State and federal parent locator service
- Social media including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram
- State or county legal records – including child support or divorce proceedings. County clerks may provide a last known address or you could contact the individual's attorney who can pass along a message that you are trying to contact them
- Offender/Inmate search – including immigration and customs (locator.ice.gov), Interstate Compact Offender Tracking System (pwp.interstatecompact.org/PWP) and state and national sex offender registries
- Real estate and tax records
- Birth and death records – including obituaries, cemetery listing, US Veteran's Affairs, and funeral homes
- Hard-copy file mining

Facebook / Social Media

Blank County believes that social media can play an important role in finding relatives for youth in care or at risk of coming into care. Social media also can be a tool in communicating with families involved with child protection who do not have phone numbers but can send and receive messages through social media. The use of social media to locate potential relatives for youth in care or at risk of coming into care can ensure that youth stay within their own families or at least connected to family while parents work toward reunification. It can also be a tool to reconnect youth who are in permanent custody with family members who may be interested in having a relationship with them.

It is recommended that staff using the social media tool Facebook to connect with family members should use a professional account instead of their personal account. The professional account should not include a photo of the staff but should include their name, work phone number and work email address. Here are instructions to create a professional account:

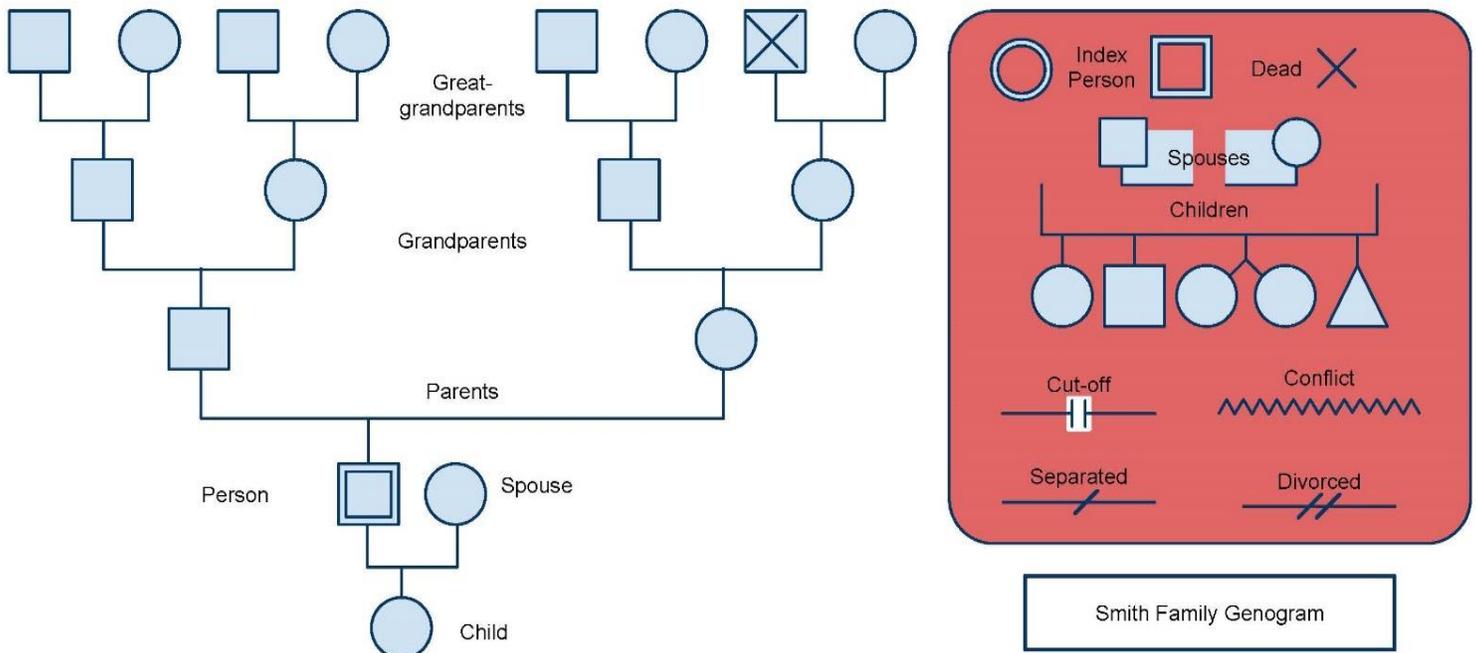
*Go to the **Facebook** homepage (facebook.com) and fill in the required fields on the sign-up form along the right side of the page. Enter an email address that has not yet been used to register for a previous **Facebook** account, your first and last name, a password, your gender and your birthdate.*

It is the expectation of Blank County that no information regarding the details of a case would be given out via social media, instead a confidential message would be sent requesting that the relative and caseworker have contact via a phone call, home call or meeting. All agency policies regarding confidentiality and harassment and discrimination should be followed when using social media. Information regarding persons receiving services may not be disclosed via social media and the privacy rights of fellow employees must be followed.

Genogram Guidance & Format

Genograms are a graphic representation of a family tree that displays detailed information on relationships among individuals. It goes beyond a traditional family tree by showing relationships and patterns in relationships that can illustrate family histories.

Genograms contain a wealth of information beyond basic data (name, gender, date of birth, date of death) such as education, occupation, major life events, chronic illnesses, social behaviors, nature of family relationships, emotional relationships and social relationships. They may highlight family histories of alcohol or drug abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence and other challenges people involved with the child welfare system may face.



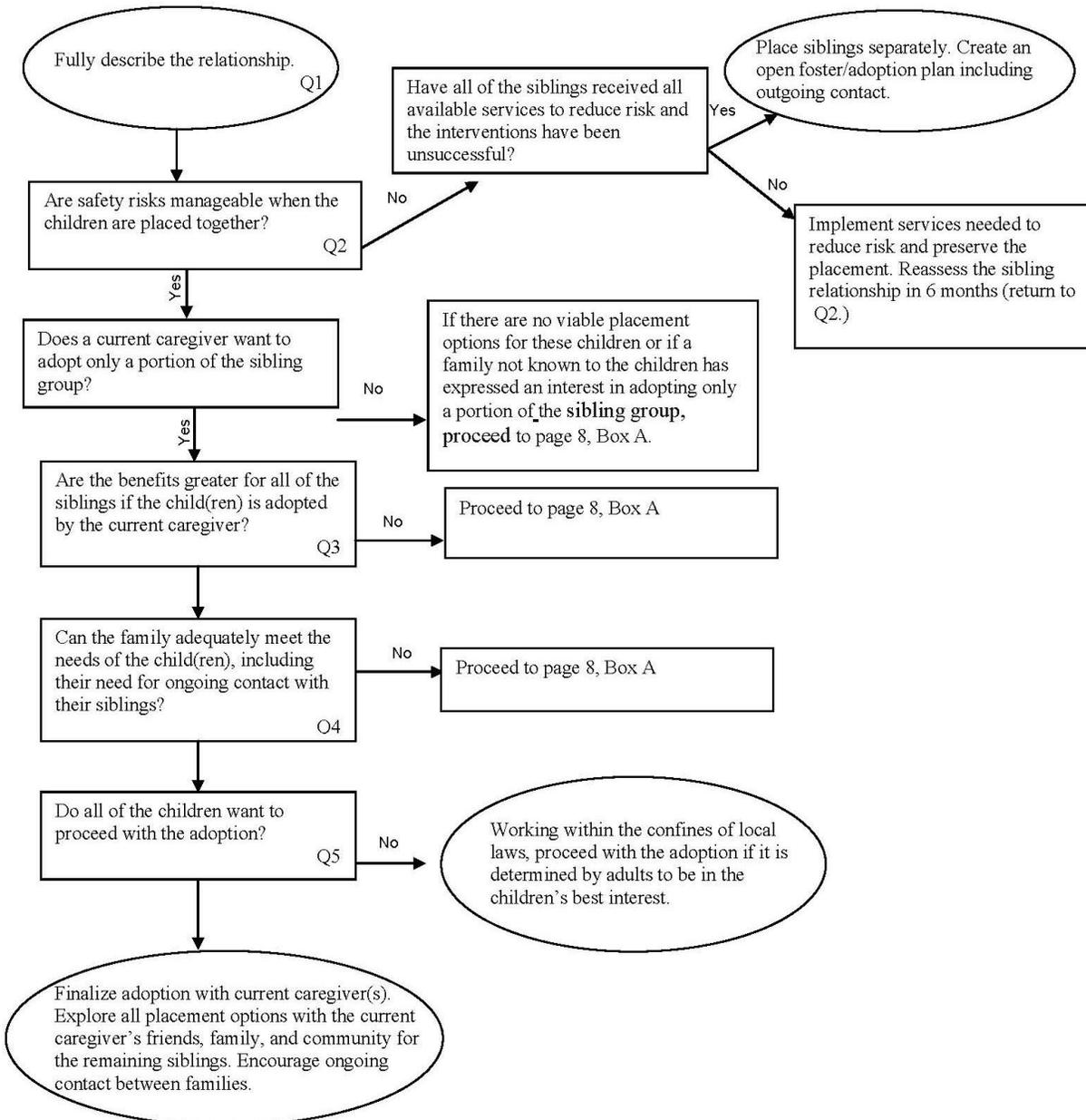
Sibling Matrix

Blank County embraces the belief that siblings should be placed together unless a compelling reason exists in the children’s best interest to the contrary. Blank County also believes that children have a right to be in contact with their siblings and withholding contact with a child’s sibling is not an acceptable form of punishment.

Sibling Decision Making Matrix

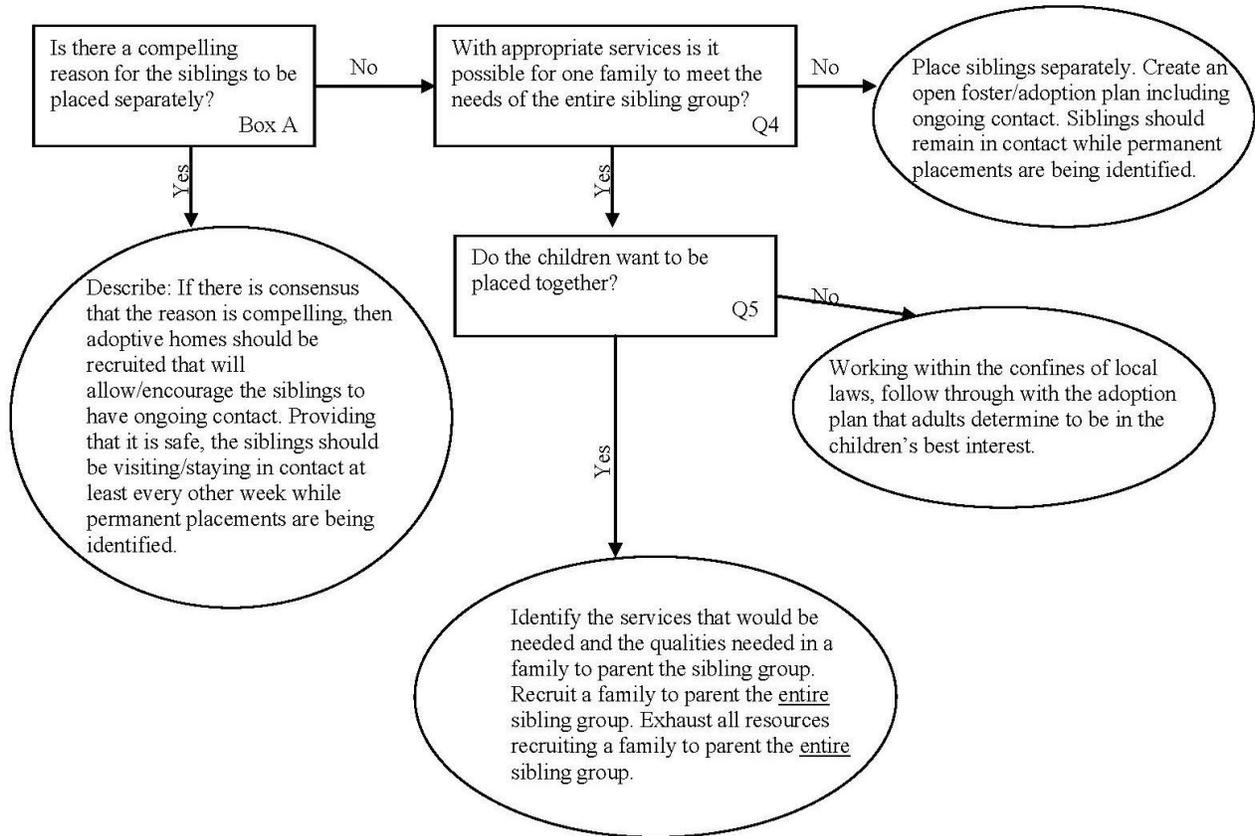
Created by: Northeast Ohio Adoption Services
Sisters and Brothers Together Project
(Grant #90 CO 0821)

NOTE: This matrix is to be utilized in conjunction with the questions provided to guide your discussion.



Sibling Decision Making Matrix
 Created by: Northeast Ohio Adoption Services
 Sisters and Brothers Together Project
 (Grant #90 CO 0821)

Continued...



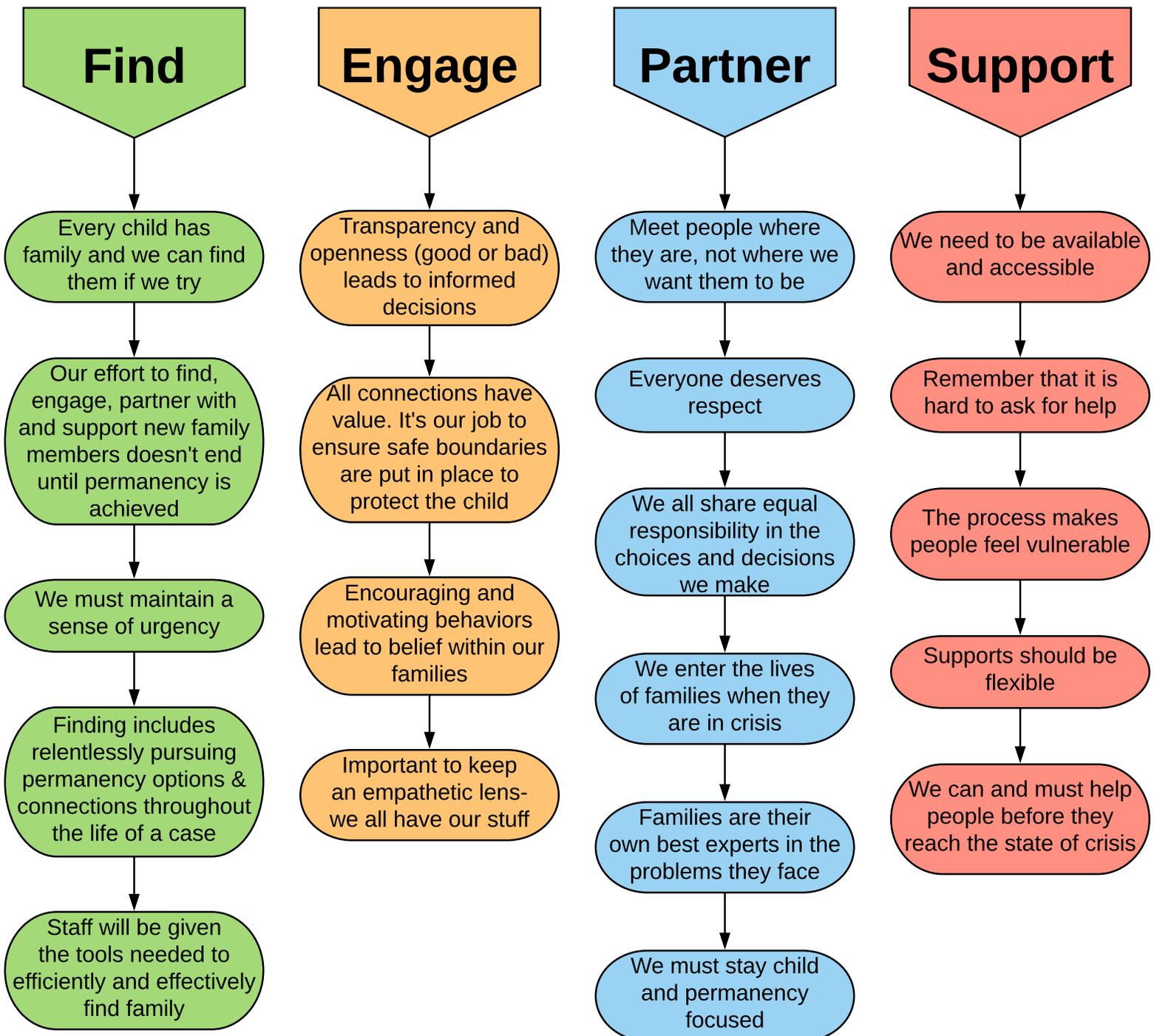
Note: If a compelling reason in the children’s best interest does not exist, then they should not be separated. The most common examples of compelling reasons include:

- Sexual offending behavior that has not been responsive to therapeutic interventions
- Extreme physical aggression toward siblings that has not been responsive to therapeutic interventions.
- Current caregiver wants to adopt the child(ren) in their home but not the entire sibling group. The child(ren) in the home have a strong mutual bond with the caregiver. Services were offered to support the caregiver in providing for all of the available siblings but the caregiver declined the services.

Copies of this document may be made but not altered.

Family Search and Engagement Guiding Principles Workflow

Guiding Principles



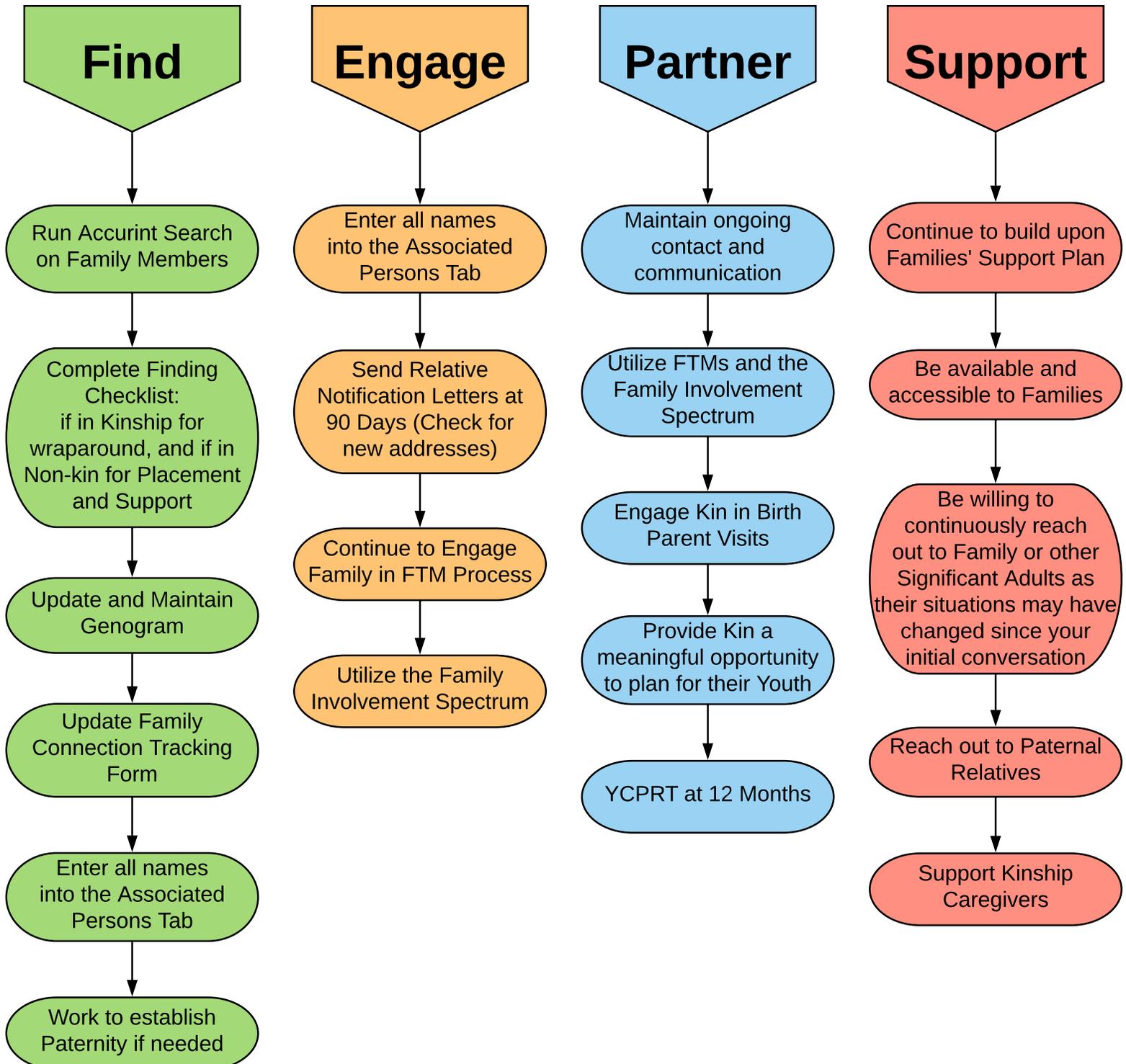
Family Search and Engagement Intake Workflow

Intake



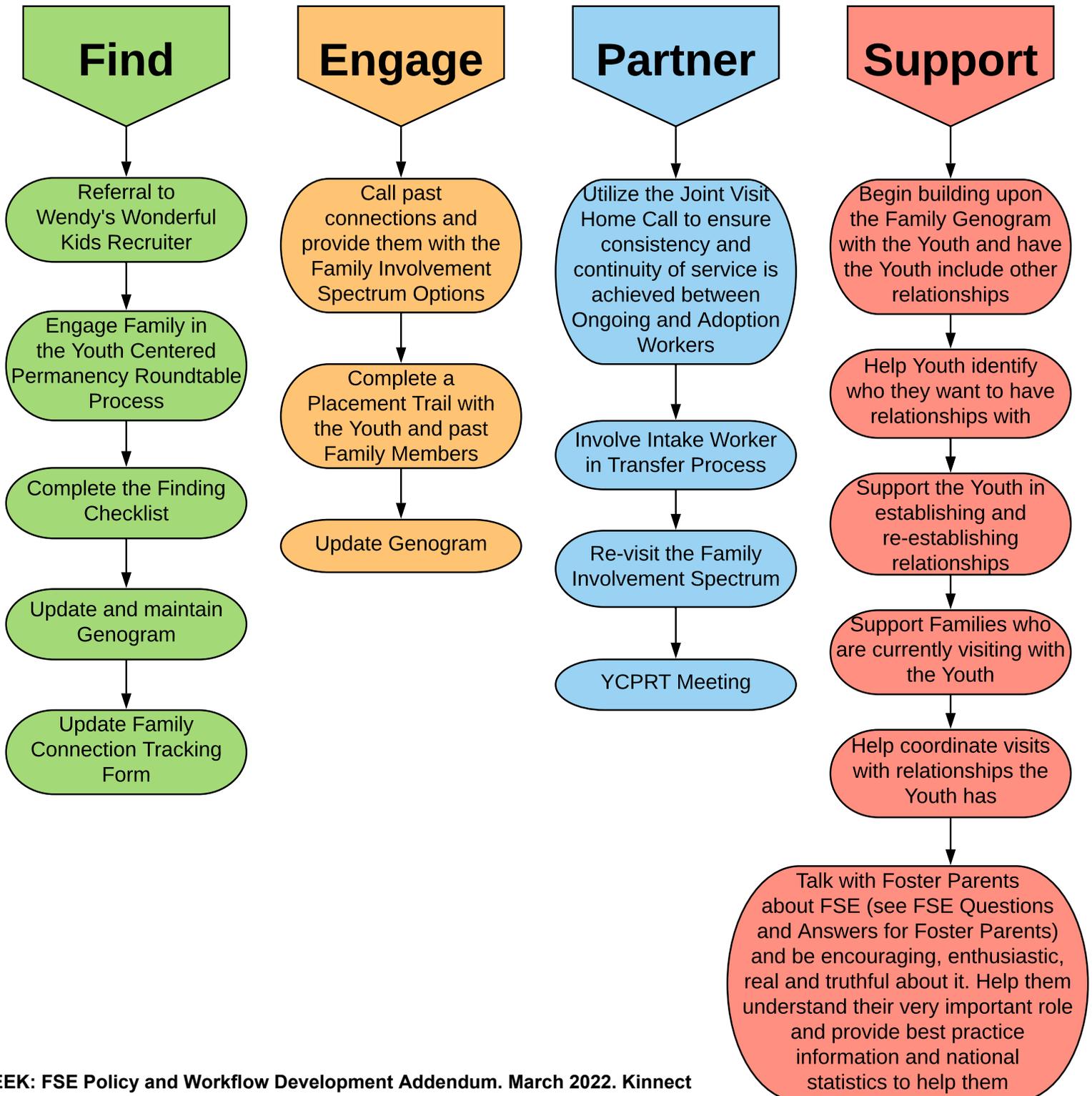
Family Search and Engagement Ongoing Services Workflow

Ongoing



Family Search and Engagement Workflow

Adoptions, Family Resources & Independent Living



Family Search and Engagement

A Relentless Curiosity Process

Why This is Vital: Family Search & Engagement Philosophy

Children Thrive in Families and Adults Thrive in Communities is the vision for Partnering for Safety (PSF) is the foundation of the Division's practice model, which provides a framework for how the Division as a whole will work internally and partner with families, service providers and others to put our mission and guiding principles into active daily practice and operations. At its core, the model is the description of what we do, how we do it, why we do it and what outcomes we hope to achieve for children, adults and families. Our priority in engaging, partnering, and placing with relatives/kin flows out of our practice model PSF's three fundamental values:

- Building good working relationships and partnerships
 - We want to collaborate and partner with relatives/kin so that safety and permanency for children, youth, and adults is enhanced
- Developing critical thinking
 - We want to ensure that relatives/kin understand the danger, risk, complicating factors, strengths and safety so that they can partner in developing next steps and plans, and to be aware of ongoing safety concerns and areas of support
- Enhancing daily safety
 - We want to ensure that relatives/kin are partners and active participants in safety plans and support plans so that relatives/kin are able to support the children and their families in an ongoing manner, even after our involvement has ended.

Our agency believes that:

- All families have strengths
- Families are experts on themselves
- Families deserve to be treated with dignity and respect
- Families can make well-informed decisions about keeping children and adults safe when supported
- When families are involved in decision-making, outcomes can improve
- A team is often more capable of creative and high-quality decision making than an individual
- Children's voices need to be heard

Family Search and Engagement is the practice of rigorously searching for and engaging extended family members and other supportive adults to establish an enduring support network for children, youth and adults. When possible, we want to reduce trauma to children and youth placed in out-of-home care through stranger care. Our first priority is always having children remain with their parent(s) when safety can be mitigated. When this is not possible, our next priority is placement with a relative or kin as this provides the least amount of trauma for the

child and family caused by the out of home placement. The child or youth will feel more secure and have a greater sense of normalcy with this type of placement. This is done with a sense of urgency and purpose.

Our practice is to engage families in the decision making for their children and vulnerable adults by working to identify all placement options and supports within the family and their community. It is a priority to actively search and engage with family to collaborate and partner with relatives/kin so that safety and permanency for all children, youth and vulnerable adults is achieved.

We need to ensure that relatives/kin understand the danger, risk, complicating factors, strengths and safety so that they can partner in developing next steps and plans and are aware of ongoing safety concerns and areas of support. We will ensure that relatives/kin are partners and active participants in the safety plans and support plans so that relatives/kin are able to support the children, vulnerable adults their families in an ongoing manner, even after our involvement has ended.

What are the goals of Family Search and Engagement?

Program goals include engaging all parents in assessments and cases and when OOH placement is necessary due to safety and risk issues, that the child/youth are placed in the lowest level of care, which involves placement with relatives and kin. Other goals consist of creating more options for support, planning and potential placements, engaging individuals who know the child/youth best or have had a historic connection to the child/youth, using family engagement tools to bring in the voice of the family members, establish relationships with kin and other child/youth supports to plan for the future of the child and develop life-long connections.

Program goals also include encouraging the child/youth's team to make timely decisions that provide the child/youth with immediate safety, support, and steps toward permanency. FSE wants to help develop an inclusive, individualized, and unconditional plan to achieve legal and emotional permanency with a timeline for completion as well as identify backup placements or respite care for placement providers.

We believe that every child/youth deserves to have someone to lean on and be given the opportunity to learn about their family history and culture.

What is the role of the FSE Caseworker?

The primary function of the FSE caseworker is to identify viable family members or psychological kin that can provide support or possible placement for children and youth that are at risk of removal or are in out-of-home (OOH) placement. The FSE caseworker is responsible for actively partnering with caseworkers, Kinship Navigators, family members, and collaterals to identify supports to create a network for children/youth currently being served by child welfare.

FSE functions are: (please refer to the FSE Flow Chart)

- ✓ Completes searches and engagement for missing parents/guardians
- ✓ Complete searches and engagement to identify potential supports and placement options with kin/relatives
- ✓ Initiating multiple search tools to search for relatives and psychological kin:
 - Facebook, Accurant, Trails, Covis, Inmate Search, Prison Bureau Database, Ancestry.com, Obituary, review old referrals, Courts, Online family reunion sites, and DMV
- ✓ Identifying and engaging other professionals involved in the child's case
- ✓ Adding Facilitated Family Meetings as an active participant at the table
- ✓ Adding Mappings for cases that need to explore relative involvement after the child/youth has been placed in OOH care for 6 consecutive months
- ✓ When appropriate, meeting with the birth parents to begin discussion around those connected to the child/youth in placement
- ✓ Meeting with youth, if applicable, to begin discussion around those important to him/her in their life
- ✓ Effectively communicating with assigned caseworker throughout process of identifying family connections
- ✓ File mining the cases as they are referred
- ✓ Expanding the genogram for the family using Genopro (building off already created genogram)
- ✓ Utilizing Partnering for Safety tools in engaging family members and supports around the care and placement of the child/youth (Safety Circles, Circles of Support, Safety House, etc.)
- ✓ Contact with family members will be through telephone or face to face when possible
- ✓ Once a potential placement or support is found for a family, the FSE Caseworker will complete the FSE CAT referrals with all identifying information and send an email to the CW, their supervisor, and the Guardian ad Litem (when appropriate) notifying them of the potential supports, potential placements as well as missing parents/guardian information located. It will then be the responsibility of the child/youth's team to move forward in engaging that potential placement or support in the child/youth's life.
- ✓ Coordinate with the kinship Navigator to ensure connections are maintained and encouraged
- ✓ Reach out to complete follow up information on closed FSE CAT referrals that have been closed for 15 days and again at 45 days.
- ✓ Make new FSE efforts for referrals received for child/youth who continue to be in OOH care every 6 months when a stable, committed and permanent home has not been found.

How does FSE get started?

Family Search and Engagement is the responsibility of the caseworker, Kinship Navigator and the FSE caseworker. A FSE referral must be completed to initiate FSE at any stage of the assessment or case for the following purposes:

(Please refer to the FSE Flow Chart)

1. To locate a missing or absent parent and/or guardian (must be initiated within 3 days when a case is opening)
2. To Identify relatives/kin for supports
3. To identify relatives/kin for placements
4. To locate contact information for known relatives/kin
5. For a case involving a disrupted adoption, FSE focuses on bio and adoptive family
6. If congregate care is being considered, FSE CW must be invited to CC staffing
7. If a child/youth is in OOH care and permanency has not been achieved, FSE is required every six months (see policy and procedure for exceptions)
 - If you are considering a removal and have scheduled a CR TDM, the caseworker can identify if FSE needs to be completed prior to the meeting by completing the notification on the TDM CAT referral. If FSE is needed, the FSE caseworker will begin to work on family finding and will plan to participate in that initial TDM.
 - If you have received a court hold and have scheduled an ER TDM, the caseworker can identify if FSE needs to be done prior to the meeting by completing the notification on the TDM CAT referral. If FSE is needed, the FSE caseworker will begin to work on FSE and will plan to participate in the initial TDM.
 - If the child/youth is placed in OOH with a Kinship Care provider, it is the role and responsibly of the Kin Navigator to continue ongoing FSE efforts. They will explore with the child/youth, parent(s) of the child, youth, and current care provider who their identified supports are to develop a support network and additional respite or placement options. The Kinship Navigator will further engage extended family members and other supportive adults to establish their commitment to the child/youth.

What does the FSE Caseworker share with the family they are reaching out to?

Shares what the role and the responsibility is of the FSE caseworker and why they are being contacted. Sharing how their name was found and if they know the child/youth that the referral was made for. FSE caseworker will establish what the relationship is, gather historical information and disclose that the child/youth is currently in the care and custody of the Division and permanent connections and placement options are being explored. The goal is to keep children with family members and to build up their support systems.

The FSE caseworker will not disclose locations or case information regarding reporting parties.

Does the FSE Caseworker complete any follow up?

1. The referral will remain open until the FSE caseworker has completed their searches, engaged all potential relatives for placement and/or supports. Once the FSE caseworker has received confirmation that family member and/or supportive adults have been engaged by the caseworker, the referral will be closed. Follow up work will be completed by the FSE caseworker 15 days after the referral has closed and again in 45 days from the previous follow up.
2. If a child/youth is in OOH care and permanency has not been achieved, FSE is required every six months until case closure or permanency has been achieved (see policy and procedure for exceptions). The caseworker will receive a CAT notification when a new FSE referral is due for a 6 month follow up.

Common Myths of Family Search and Engagement:

The child/youth is doing well and is in a great foster home. We don't need family.

We have an obligation to explore placement with family as a first priority for every child. That would also free up a great foster home for a child without family!

I already know all of the family.

You probably do know the immediate family. Our vision is to have a minimum of 25 engaged supports for each child in our care. There is always room for more.

The family isn't safe or appropriate.

Maybe not as a placement, but are they appropriate as a support? Or at least as a source of information. We certainly want to ensure safe contact, but all children deserve to know their family.

Have we engaged the father? It could be that his family can provide some opportunities for potential supports and placement options.

The child needs to be in a high level of care, the child/youth is beyond control.

All children will eventually step down to a lower level of care. Beginning to build the relationship between potential future placements and children/youth sooner rather than later increases the likelihood a future placement will be successful.

I want to minimize the trauma for the child and not move them more than necessary.

That's a valid concern, but children have the right to be with family. This is a discussion we can have with the entire team to address how to minimize the disruption and trauma. For many children/youth who grow up in foster care, there is a greater trauma from knowing they had family willing to take them but the Division saw it as a barrier.

What if we find a family member but they refuse to be involved or they end up taking placement but it doesn't work?

If they refuse to be involved, the next step would be to ask if they have other family members or supports that they can share with the FSE caseworker. It can be explored if they be willing to reconsider in a few months. Also exploring if they can provide information on family history when the child is older.

If they take placement, but it doesn't work, we can put our efforts into keeping the relative or supports as a permanent connection and explored what other ways they can be involved with the child or youth.

The parents are already engaged and the child plans to return home.

Great! Would the parents benefit from some additional, planned support from kin? What is the plan if reunification doesn't go well?

What will help FSE be the most successful?

1. Engage early, the sooner that FSE can get started the more success permanent connections and placement options are found.
2. When family members are identified, engage them quickly. If you wait until you "need" them, it will be much harder to get them involved.
3. Add family to collateral contacts in Trails as you find them. This is the first place someone will look for supports if needed. Always note who they are to the child and add a phone number and email if possible.
4. Note contacts in the closure summary.
5. Be sure you are keeping ROC notes on family contacts and keeping information up to date
6. Don't be satisfied with one family member or connection. The goal is to build a network of supports for the child/youth and their families.
7. Know the legal rights of children to families.
8. If you need help from the FSE Caseworker, don't hesitate to call, email or invite them to a pre-meeting or an FFM.
9. Do not consider family finding just about placement. Not all family members can provide a home for the child, but there are other ways family and friends can be involved:
 - Babysitting
 - Respite Care
 - Transportation
 - Financial assistance
 - Mentoring
 - Holiday hosting
 - Providing meals or household help
10. Once family is found **MAINTAIN THE CONNECTION!** Contacting family can be emotional, not following through can make it difficult to engage them later.

Six Steps for Family Search and Engagement

By Kevin Campbell

Step 1 - Discovery

Goal: Create more options for support and planning

Practice: Identify as many family members for the child or young person. Include efforts to identify other adults who can or have in the past been a key supporter of the child or parents. Success is achieved when the family is extensively known. In many situations you can expect to learn of a hundred or more relatives and others connected to the child or young person.

Step 2 - Engagement:

Goal: Engage those who know the child best and have an historic and/or inherent connection in helping the child by sharing information and helping.

Practice: Through the use of a unique and individualized engagement strategy, enlist the support of as many family members and others important to the child or family to participate in providing important information helpful to the child. Begin preparing family members and others to assist the social worker with decision making and participate in supporting the young person through committed relationships.

Step 3 - Planning

Goal: Hold meetings with the participation of parents, family members and others important to the child/youth focused on planning for the successful future of the child or young person.

Practice: Bring the identified family members and others who care about the child together to learn more about the young person's essential, lifelong need for support and affection. Participants must have a voice in the process. The social worker and court will make final decisions that include consideration of the team's perspective about the future of the child or young person. Equal value will be placed on the need for a family to live with and an enduring network of support. Challenges will be identified and solutions created. Planning will be done on a "Plan's fail, our children do not" basis.

Step 4 - Decision Making

Goal: The team with the social worker will make timely decisions that provide the young persons with appropriate levels of affection and belonging that are expected to be enduring.

Practice: The team involved in planning will work with a sense of urgency, fully and candidly informed about the needs of the child or young person and the expected consequences of not having a safe forever family. The team will be prepared to make key, informed decisions about the future of the young person, including their safety, physical and emotional well-being and belonging in a life-time family. Teams will meet with an understanding that long-term placement(s) without legal permanency are not considered a successful decision.

Step 5 - Evaluation

Goal: An inclusive, individualized and unconditional plan to achieve legal and emotional permanency has been created with a timeline for completion.

Practice: The Team has successfully “foreseen” the likelihood that their plans for the child or young person are safe, stable and lasting. Adults who are caring for the child have adequate and lasting support and key relationships with siblings, family members, and others important to the child continue. Key evaluation questions: If this iteration of our plan fails, will the child remain or return to the foster care system? Have we identified and engaged an adequate level of enduring support for the child and their caregivers? Has the team created a plan that includes family members and other adults willing to offer their support if the plan “A” option is unsuccessful? Are there at least three options? There is a plan and commitment that if challenges arise which threaten the child’s safety and stability, the team will reconvene. A member of the team is elected to organize/facilitate future meetings.

Step 6 - Follow up on Supports

Goal: The team will have supported the child or young person and their family to plan for and access essential formal and informal support.

Practice: The team will actively support children, young people and caregivers to successfully access services, supports and key relationships. Teams will emphasize natural and community supports that are the most normative and enduring. Services that require payment will be seen as temporary and not as a basis for lifelong relationships.