

Family Find and Engagement Team Expectations and Responsibilities

What is Family Find and Engagement?

Family Find and Engagement is a process aimed at reestablishing family connections between children in out-of-home care and their relatives. Every child deserves to have a special connection that only family can provide. Every child has a family and a meaningful connection to family which helps a child develop a sense of belonging. The most important factor contributing to positive outcomes for children in out-of-home care is meaningful connections and lifelong relationships with family.

The Family Find and Engagement process follows the model which requires workers to make every effort to locate at least 40 relatives per child. Once family members are found, State Permanency Consultants (SPC) and caseworkers work to reestablish relationships, where appropriate, and explore ways to build lifelong connections with family and/or find a permanent home with family.

How Does the Family Find and Engagement Process Work?

The Family Find and Engagement Process is a team effort between the county caseworker, supervisor and State Permanency Consultant. The SPC will take the lead on many parts of the process; however the caseworker must attend all meetings with the child and family. It is also imperative for the caseworker to be responsive to the SPC when efforts are being made to schedule meetings, get consents or court-orders signed, or anything else that is needed in order to make progress. *In accordance with the Ongoing Standards, Administrative Rules, Statutes and agency policies, the caseworker will complete background checks on any relatives who will have contact with the child.*

The process is not linear, there may be times the caseworker and SPC will need to go back to the beginning of the process to identify additional relatives or other adults to get involved.

Preparing for the Family Find and Engagement Process

- The SPC will need your help to coordinate:
 - A meeting with all team members to discuss the Family Find and Engagement process, the child's permanency status, and desired outcomes.
 - A meeting with the child and parent(s), if appropriate. *Please inform the SPC if this needs to be done in a therapeutic setting.* If the child is old enough, they can help decide the course of their Family Find and Engagement process.

Discovery Efforts – Locating and Contacting Relatives

- The SPC will begin Discovery efforts to identify the child's relatives. This can be accomplished in multiple ways:
 - Phone calls and letters to previously known relatives
 - Completing different tools; Genogram, Connectedness Map, Tree of Life, Mobility Mapping, and Data Mining
 - An internet search

Family Meetings

- The SPC will coordinate a **Permanency Team meeting** in collaboration with the caseworker. The parents and interested relatives will be invited for the purpose of identifying additional relatives and other adults that could be a part of the child's team.
- The SPC will coordinate a **"Blended Perspective" meeting** with all interested relatives and the caseworker to discuss the child's current circumstances and greatest unmet need. The team will begin to develop ways the family members can become involved with the child, up to and including placement.
- A **"Decision Making" meeting** is scheduled next, in which family members commit to ways they can be involved in the child's life, up to and including placement.
- Once the family team has developed a plan an **Evaluation meeting** is scheduled with everyone to determine if the plan is working, or if there needs to be any changes. At this meeting a support plan is developed to ensure the family is taking the lead on supporting the child.

Please inform the State Permanency Consultant of;

- Any scheduled meeting or staffing that pertain to permanency planning.
- Any upcoming court dates, especially related to the permanency plan.
- Any contact made with relatives.
- Any change to the child's placement.
- Any major change to the child's treatment plan.

What can be expected from the SPC during this process?

- The SPC will begin Discovery of family members immediately. This can take weeks or longer, or it can happen very quickly. The caseworker will be notified when the SPC has located relatives interested in becoming involved with the child.
- The SPC will contact you by phone or email on a weekly basis to provide updates. Please provide the SPC with the email addresses of the treatment team members so they may be included.

What are the expectations of the caseworker in the Family Find and Engagement process?

- The caseworker will be expected to attend and assist the SPC in arranging the necessary meetings. This could include setting up conference calls, finding rooms, and following up with any action items that are identified
- At times, parents may be unwilling to identify relatives or give consent to contact relatives or other adults with substantial relationships with the child, the SPC may request the caseworker obtain a court-order allowing for the necessary contact.
- If barriers occur, the SPC and caseworker will need to collaborate to determine how to proceed to ensure the process continues in a safe and appropriate direction.
- The caseworker will share concerns about relatives with the SPC, however the SPC may contact the relatives since they might be appropriate for certain forms of support or contact with the child.
- The caseworker will share all information about family members that have shown interest in having contact with the child. The caseworker will share if steps have been taken to maintain contact through letters, cards, email, phone calls, or visits.

- The caseworker will share all information regarding family members that have shown interest in placement and the steps that have been taken to either consider them for placement or ruled them out.

The Family Find and Engagement process requires collaboration and work by the SPC, caseworker and family. The SPC may take the lead in the process in the beginning stages; however the caseworker and family will be responsible for following through with the decisions made during the process and at the final Evaluation meeting when the support plan is developed. After the conclusion of the Family Find and Engagement process, the SPC may follow-up with the caseworker to evaluate the progress being made in the case and that connections continue to be maintained.