

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove 
Administrator

Re: 2019 Family Find and Engagement Training Statewide Roll-Out

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform county child welfare agencies of the Family Find and Engagement Training statewide roll-out in 2019.

BACKGROUND

The connection to relatives helps children develop a sense of belonging. These connections are one of the most important contributing factors to positive outcomes for children placed in out-of-home care. Federal laws related to promoting relative engagement and placement includes the Fostering Connections Act of 2008, Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, and the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018. Federal law requires Public Child Welfare agencies with Placement and Care Responsibility to identify and provide notice to all relatives within 30 days of removal of a child from his or her parent or guardian.

Wisconsin State Law Ch. 48.21(5)(e)(2) also requires identification and notification to relatives within 30 days of removal and any status change in the case. The state of Wisconsin defines relatives to the 4th degree, through blood, marriage, or adoption.

"Relative" means a parent, stepparent, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, first cousin, 2nd cousin, nephew, niece, uncle, aunt, step-uncle, step-aunt, or any person of a preceding generation as denoted by the prefix of grand, great, or great-great, whether by blood, marriage, or legal adoption, or the spouse of any person named in this subsection, even if the marriage is terminated by death or divorce. For purposes of the application of s. 48.028 and the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 USC 1901 to 1963, "relative" includes an extended family member, as defined in s. 48.028 (2) (am), whether by blood, marriage, or adoption, including adoption under tribal law or custom. For purposes of placement of a child, "relative" also includes a parent of a sibling of the child who has legal custody of that sibling.

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was passed and signed into law (P.L. 115-123) as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act on February 9, 2018. Among other provisions, the FFPSA amended title IV-E of the Social Security Act to allow title IV-E agencies the option to receive title IV-E funding for

kinship navigator programs that meet certain criteria, including operating in accordance with promising, supported or well-supported practices. Wisconsin is using a portion of the Kinship Navigator funding it is receiving to support statewide roll-out of Family Find and Engagement Training. A full summary of the Act published by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is available at the following link: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/im1802>.

The federal ACF awarded DCF \$351,400 under the FFPSA to be used between October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019 (FFY 2019). Part of this funding is allocated to training the remaining counties that have not already received Family Find and Engagement training. Additionally, modifications are underway to update Pre-Service and existing trainings to imbed Family Finding and Engagement principles and tools. These on-line trainings and resources are now available through PDS online.

Relative connections and placement with family are key to current child welfare priorities, Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) measures, and positive outcomes for children. In the 2018 CFSR Final Report, Wisconsin scored below the national average on Permanency Outcome 2: continuity of family relationships and connections are preserved for children. The report also listed the preservation of connections between children and extended relatives as a challenge for Wisconsin. Therefore, as part of the CFSR Program Improvement Plan, DCF is planning to expand Family Find and Engagement training in a statewide roll-out.

Relative connections are shown to prevent disruption, promote permanency, and address the shortage of foster parents. Children initially placed in relative care as compared to family foster care are more likely to reunify or exit to guardianship. This limits unnecessary congregate care. The national average of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives is 32%, while Wisconsin exceeds this average at 40%. Training for caseworkers regarding relative and family engagement in child welfare cases has not been uniform or statewide. Wisconsin currently has strong statutory policies and procedures in place to promote relative engagement and family connectedness, but consistency in agency practice will improve through statewide Family Find and Engagement Training.

Family Find and Engagement is a holistic approach to family contact and support, while seeking family connections for children placed in out-of-home care or to assist children in remaining in-home. The process follows a model, developed by Kevin Campbell, which requires caseworkers to make every effort to identify and locate relatives utilizing an array of tools. Once relatives and other adults are identified in the, "Discovery Phase," counties work closely with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) State Permanency Consultants (SPCs) to engage and re-establish relationships with the identified connections.

The focus of Family Find and Engagement is not the discovery of placements, but rather to build connections for the child placed in out-of-home care or to assist a child to remain in-home without formal intervention. Even if an identified relative or connection may not be appropriate for placement, the identified adult may be engaged as a support and positive connection for the child or family. Often those who connect will offer placement and permanency for the child. Every child deserves to have a special connection that only family can provide.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS AND SCHEDULE

Counties listed below are required to have Child Welfare Supervisors and Ongoing Caseworkers attend one 5-day session of Family Find and Engagement training. Agencies are encouraged to have Access, Initial Assessment, and Youth Justice Staff attend the first day of the 5-day training. Tribes have priority registration for the fall 2019 session offered in Wausau, WI. All tribes are encouraged to enroll for this session.

Staffing needs at counties are being recognized by scheduling multiple options of training dates and locations for staff to complete the 5 day in-person training. Counties will be contacted by the Department of Children and Families Regional Permanency Supervisors and the State Permanency Consultants for

more information and details as their dates approach.

There may be multiple series in each grouping to accommodate agency staffing needs. Those interested in attending will register for one of the 5-day series in their area through PDS Online. Staff and supervisors should search in PDS Online for “Family Find and Engagement Series” to see the series that are available to them. Staff and supervisors should plan on attending all 5 days in the series they choose.

If staff or supervisors wish to attend a series that is not open to them, an exception request may be made for that series. Exception requests will be approved if room is available in the series once the county staff in the series area have had an opportunity to register.

Counties	Training Location	Number of 5-day Series Offered	Months
Dane Marquette	Madison	2	January – May 2019
Crawford Grant Iowa Green Lafayette	Mineral Point	1	February – May 2019
La Crosse St Croix Pierce Dunn Pepin Buffalo Eau Claire Clark	Eau Claire and Onalaska	3	February – May 2019 (2 sessions in Eau Claire) June – September 2019 (1 session in Onalaska)
Racine Kenosha Walworth	Racine and Kenosha	2	May – August 2019
Kewanee Calumet Sheboygan Ozaukee Washington Dodge	Sheboygan	2	May – August 2019
Douglas Burnett Washburn Polk Barron Rusk Sawyer Bayfield Ashland Iron Price	Spooner and Hayward	2	September – December 2019

Vilas Oneida Florence Forest Langlade Marinette Oconto Menominee Shawano Waupaca	Crandon and Keshena	2	September – December 2019
Priority registration for Tribes	Wausau	1	Fall 2019

The following counties are not included in the statewide roll-out training schedule, as they have already received the formal 5-day training. Agencies in these counties will be able to utilize the 2-day special topics in-person training and online pre-service training resources after the statewide roll-out is completed.

Family Find and Engagement Completed Trainings:

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Chippewa	Columbia	Brown	Adams	Milwaukee Youth Justice
Jefferson	Green Lake	Door	Jackson	Rock
Portage	Waushara	Fond du Lac	Juneau	
Sauk		Lincoln	Monroe	
Wood		Manitowoc	Richland	
		Marathon	Trempealeau	
		Taylor	Vernon	
		Winnebago	Waukesha	

ACTION SUMMARY

The Wisconsin statewide roll-out of the 5-day in-person Family Find and Engagement training began in January 2019 and concludes in December 2019. After all counties have completed the training, a 2-day special topics in-person training and online pre-service trainings will be available for all counties to maintain practice and train new staff.

Counties are encouraged to work with their assigned DCF Regional Permanency Supervisor as counties near the training process.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Permanency Program Planner
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MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>