

Family Find and Engagement

Family Find and Engagement is a process aimed at re-establishing 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. The connections relatives can provide help a child develop a sense of belonging. In addition, these connections are the most important contributing factor to positive outcomes for children in out-of-home care.

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

Federal Law:

Fostering Connections Act of 2008 requires Public Child Welfare agencies to identify and provide notice to relatives within 30 days of removal.

Ch. 48.21(5)(e)2) Wis. Stat. also requires identification and notice within 30 days of removal and certain status changes in the case.

Relatives are defined to the 4th degree, through blood, marriage, or adoption.



Ongoing Standards:

There are specific times in a case when caseworkers are required to make diligent efforts in locating and engaging non-custodial parents and relatives. Documentation in the eWiSACWIS Relative Search page must occur for all continued efforts to locate and engage during these times in a case:

- Initial Placement
- Change of Placement
- If paternity is established
- Prior to permanency plan hearings
- Determining content in evaluating the Permanency Plan

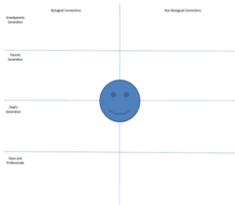
Case Consultation with Staff:

Agency supervisors should consider asking the following questions to ensure diligent efforts are being made in locating and engaging non-custodial parents and relatives:

- What progress has been made in identifying a permanent placement resource since last supervision?
- How is the identified permanent resource involved in case planning? How is the support network involved?
- What kind of support have family members been providing to the youth?
- What tools have been used to identify relatives and what was the impact?
- Have family members identified any barriers to maintaining a positive relationship?
- What barriers exist with regards to permanency?
- What efforts have been taken in locating and engaging relatives?
- Has there been any follow-up in locating and engaging non-custodial parents?
- Have these efforts been properly documented in eWiSACWIS Relative Search page?
- Are the Ongoing Standard requirements being followed based on the stage of the case?

Discovery Tools

See training binder for complete instructions.



Connectedness Map

Clarifies connections, while avoiding recalling traumatic events. Less intrusive than Mobility Mapping



Mobility Mapping

Reveals daily activities, relationships, and community or neighborhood features, structures, or geographic characteristics.
Stimulates child's memory and generates discussion.



Tree of Life

Child shares perspective, background, strengths, hopes, dreams, and wishes.
Stimulates exploration of significant relationships.



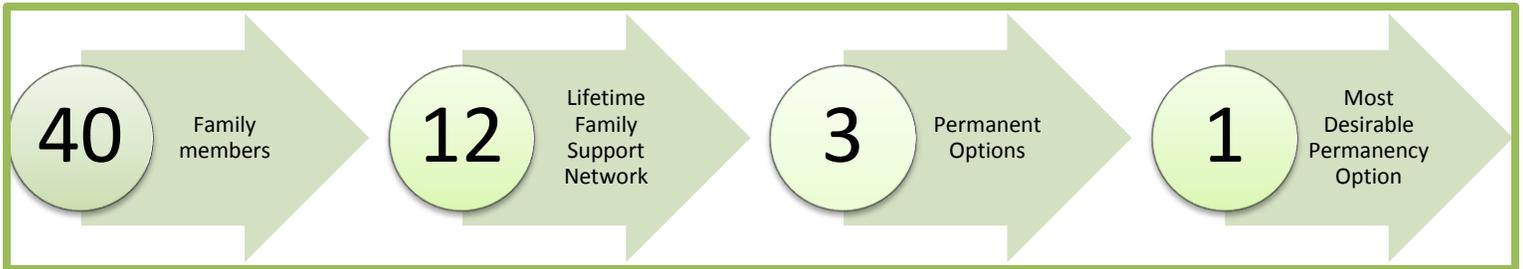
Data Mining

Intense review of a child's file
Identification of significant adults in child's life
Organizes file to find patterns and clues in recruiting family for the child.



Internet Search

Not the first tool to be used.
Searches are done on one person, but several searches can be done for each case.
Limited to finding family in the United States.



Building Connections

The focus of Family Find and Engagement is **not** the discovery of placements. The focus is to discover and build connections for the youth. In the discovery process, engage adults as potential connections to help meet the youth's greatest unmet need in a variety of ways. Even if an identified family member may not be appropriate for placement, continue to diligently engage the family member as a connection for the youth. Often those who connect will seek placement and permanency for the child.

Engaging the Youth

- Who do you feel connected to?
- Who from the past or present do you want to stay connected to? How? Why?
- How are you feeling about this process? What memories is it stirring up?
- Who are the three people in your life that you have the best relationship with?
- Would it help to review where you have lived in the past to help you recall important adults in your life?
- Who cared for you when your parents could not in the past?
- Who pays attention to you and cares about what happens to you?
- Who do you share holidays and/or special occasions with?
- Who believes in you? Stands by you?
- Who can you count on?
- Who would you call at 2 a.m. if you were in trouble?
- Who would you call if you wanted to share good news? Bad news?

Relative Talking Points

- **Introduction:** Introduce yourself, your agency, and your role.
- **Clarify purpose:** Follow-up on the letter sent, explain that you are currently working with a child that may be a relative and express the goal to find some information about the child's family.
- **Explain child's status:** Express that the child is currently in out-of-home care and the need to find connections for them when they are ready.
- **Reflect on information given:** Ask for their questions and concerns. Give time for the relative to process the information, if necessary.
- **Ask for further information:** Further information, other relative contact information, family photos and letters, and anything else pertinent to child of their family should be discussed.
- **Discuss next steps:** Depending on relative response, describe what the process looks like and when to expect to hear from you again.
- **Provide agency contact information:** phone number, e-mail address

Confidentiality s. 48.78(2)(i) & 938.78(2)(i) Wis. Stats.

(i) Paragraph (a) does not prohibit an agency from disclosing information to a relative of a child placed outside of his or her home only to the extent necessary to **facilitate the establishment of a relationship** between the child and the relative or a placement of the child with the relative or from disclosing information under s. 48.21(5)(e), 48.355(2)(cm), 48.357(2v)(d), 938.21(5)(e), 938.355(2)(cm), or 938.357(2v)(d) Wis. Stats. In this paragraph, "relative" includes a relative whose relationship is derived through a parent of the child whose parental rights are terminated.

Statutory Authority to Contact Family: Out-of-Home Care through Adoption Discontinuity

The information below provides statutory authority for contacting relatives of children you may be working with. The State/DMCPS (guardian) is able to provide consent needed to contact biological parents when the State is the guardian. The key below indicates consent, court order, and statutory authority to contact relatives. DCF has created *Extended Relative and Non Relative Search and Engagement Consent* (Form: DCF-F-5058-E) to assist agencies in obtaining consent with all necessary statutory citations.

Contact	TPR	Adoption	TPR		
	Bio Case	Pre-Adoptive Case	Adoptive Case	Pre-Adoptive Case	
	Out-of-Home Cases Pre-TPR	Pre-Adoption Post TPR	Adoption	Displacement Post-Adoption	Dissolved Adoption Post-TPR
Biological Parent(s)		s.48.43 Wis. Stat.	s.48.43(2) Wis. Stat.	s.48.43(2) Wis. Stat.	s.48.43(s) Wis. Stat. **
Siblings	s.48.21(5)(b)(2m) & s.938.21(5)(b)(2m) Wis. Stats.	s.48.43(2)(a) Wis. Stat.	s.48.92(2) Wis. Stat.	s.48.38(4)(br) & s.938.38(4)(br) Wis. Stats.	s.48.43(2)(a) Wis. Stat.
Parent of sibling who has custody of the sibling	s.48.21(5)(b)(2m) s.48.78(2)(i) s.938.21(5)(b)(2m) s.938.2(2)(i) Wis. Stats.	s.48.43(2)(a) & s.48.78(2)(i) Wis. Stats.	s.48.92(2) Wis. Stat.	s.48.38(4)(br) & s.938.38(4)(br) Wis. Stats.	s.48.43(2)(a) Wis. Stat.
Biological Relatives	s.48.78(2)(i) & s.938.2(2)(i) Wis. Stats.	s.48.43(2)(b) & 48.78(2)(i) Wis. Stats.	s.48.78(2)(i) Wis. Stat.	s.48.92 Wis. Stat.	s.48.43(2) Wis. Stat. **
Adoptive Relatives				s.48.78(2)(i) & s.938.78(2)(i) Wis. Stats.	s.48.78(2)(i) & s.938.78(2)(i) Wis. Stats.
Other Adults – Not Related		s.48.43(2) Wis. Stat.			s.48.43(2) Wis. Stat.

KEY:

Who can give consent: Statutory citation authority and prohibitions

	No Consent or court order is needed to contact siblings or relatives (biological and adoptive)
	The State/DMCPS (guardian) may give consent to contact anyone
	Pre-TPR: Court-order consent by parent or youth over the age of 14 consent under s. 48.78(2)(am) Wis. Stat.
	Adoption: Court-order or information obtained through discussions with the parent and/or child outside the adoption record
**	Does not meet the legal definition of relative

Relative Definition: s.48.02(15) & s.938.02(15) Wis. Stats.

"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.

Documentation

All connections identified through the discovery tools and casework must be documented in the child's Permanency Plan through the Relative Search page. For in-home cases, you may open and maintain the Relative Search page in the event that the child enters out-of-home care and needs family support. Even if a specific connection is not being pursued at the moment, be sure to document that decision and as much information about the connection as possible. This connection may become important later on in the child's life or a future case that could involve the child. Give yourself credit for all the hard work you are doing and show legal partners your diligent efforts. Document everything.

Family Find and Engagement Meetings

Permanency Team Meeting

- The permanency Team meeting is the very first meeting that occurs in the Family Find and Engagement Process.
- State Permanency Consultant (SPC) and county caseworker will coordinate this meeting.
- The team is made up of family members, professionals, and other adults identified by the youth or family.
- The mission is to coordinate efforts among all who are working with the family to achieve permanence and to develop the plan for discovery efforts.
- Members assist in identifying the minimum 40 relatives or important adults.
- There can be multiple meetings to assist in identifying the 40.
- Development:
 - Ask the child if they have anyone they want participating in the Permanency Team, using the Connectedness Map or other discover tool.
 - Ask the parent(s) and/or foster parent(s) if they are aware of appropriate relatives or adults to include in the Permanency Team.
 - Review the Relative Tab in eWisacwis and other case files.
 - Determine which professionals would be appropriate to include.
 - Once potential members are identified, gather proper forms for members that do not meet the statutory definition of relative.
 - Please see training materials for further information and agenda templates.

Blended Perspective Meeting

- The SPC and caseworker will coordinate this meeting with all interested team members 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.
- The meeting occurs after the 40 relatives have been identified and 12 adults have committed to taking a role in the youth's life. The "12" is the youth's Lifetime Family Support Network.

Decision Making Meeting

- This meeting occurs after the Blended Perspective Meeting.
- Similar to the Blended Perspective Meeting, the Lifetime Family Support Network (the "12") attends.
- The purpose of the meeting is to identify 2-4 plans to support the greatest unmet need.
- Family members commit to ways they can be involved in the child's life, up to and including placement.

Evaluation Meeting

- Once the family team has developed a plan, an Evaluation Meeting is scheduled with everyone to determine if the plan is working and if any changes are needed. A support plan is developed at this meeting, as well. This plan ensures the family is taking the lead on supporting the child.

Role of the State Permanency Consultant (SPC)

- The SPC can assist in discovery efforts when needed. 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 and caseworker will have regular contact to discuss case updates. For larger teams, a group e-mail can be started so all members continue to receive the same information.
- If barriers occur, the SPC and caseworker will collaborate to determine how to proceed to ensure the process continues in a safe and appropriate direction.
- 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 to obtain a court-order allowing for necessary contact.
- Alongside the caseworker, the SPC will assist in updating the Relative Search page in eWiSACWIS regarding all efforts to locate and engage relatives during the Family Find and Engagement process.
- 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 Evaluation Meeting when the support plan is developed.

Please inform the SPC of:

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