



Reasons to Make Referrals to Family Finding

Time of Removal

1. Assists in locating potential relatives to place with immediately to demonstrate reasonable efforts from the time of removal.
2. Prevents non-relative placement when there may be relatives willing and able to help.
3. Time of removal is the best time to locate relatives and get them involved.

Parents Need Support to Help with Reunification

1. When the goal is reunification, Family Finding can build a network of support around the parents that will encourage, assist with, and help provide resources for them to be successful.
2. With a network of support, parents often become more motivated and receive assistance from their network in areas such as transportation, scheduling, and even parenting assistance.
3. We have seen this bring about more timely reunification.

Child in Need of Supportive Connections

1. When applicable, we have brought tribal representatives to be included in the support network for the youth to comply with ICWA regulations.
2. We want to create a support network of people the youth can trust in the event that they leave care and need support afterwards.
3. Children do best when they have connections to their family. We do this so children know where they come from and have life lasting supportive adults.
4. Children need unconditional support from biological relatives and other people that are important to them. We call this emotional permanency.

Voluntary/Non-Court

1. Builds a support system for youth and families before they are brought into the court system and allows them to remain out of the court system.
2. Allows the family to be in the center of creating their own plan to ensure the safety of their own family members.



NCHS Family Finding Process Guide

1. Referral (Green Phone) - e-mail to: karkfeld@nchs.org
2. Alignment - Face to face or phone meeting with CFS to identify goals. We like this meeting to occur within one week, or preferably within 3 business days from the date of the referral. At this meeting, we sign releases and consents, explore what is already known about the people in the family, discuss the purpose as it pertains to this unique family, and identify a list of professionals involved. Helpful documents include court orders/reports, placement history, initial assessment information, etc.
3. Engagement and Searching - Working to engage relatives or other adults the child or family has determined to be supportive to them. This may include reconnecting with old supports or meeting new family members they may have never met before.
4. Blended Perspectives Meeting - Family Finding's first family meeting which discusses what the needs and worries are for the specific child and family, what they are currently lacking, and what safety issues are present. This meeting prepares the team to make a decision on whether they would like to continue to be part of the youth and/or family's team. Our goal is to have this set up within 2 - 4 weeks of referral.
5. Planning & Decision Making - This meeting further prepares the team to make an ongoing lifetime commitment of support for the youth/family. This meeting is intentional about identifying ways to support the youth and beginning to put plans into actions to allow for the youth to have the most normative childhood experiences. We also discuss initial offers of physical and legal permanency. If preservation or reunification is the goal, Plan A will be based on that. Our goal is to conduct this meeting 2 - 4 weeks after the Blended Perspectives Meeting.
6. Lifetime Network Meeting - This meeting further explores offers of permanency and ways to support the youth or family. This can be as simple as calling a youth to catch up or providing rides for the parents to get to and from IOP. All different support ideas and needs will be explored. This meeting occurs 4 - 6 weeks after the Decision Making Meeting and then every 6 - 8 weeks until case closure.
7. Healing and Development - Children and families need to be able to resolve their grief surrounding their losses. This is best done with caring adults that make a lifetime commitment to the youth and family. We utilize Darla Henry's 3-5-7 Model® to assist youth and families in working through their traumas and work individually with the youth and/or families.



Family Finding

Additional Information

We can provide assistance during home visits. If we go to the home together, the case worker is able to speak to the foster parents separately while we do an activity with the youth. This will assist the parents with not having an additional meeting, and it will allow you to speak with the parent freely. It also allows us to get to know the parent/foster parent so we are able to include them in the process. We also want to attend court hearings or any other meetings held for the family.

We make contact with all family, friends of family and other known current or previous supports, even if they can't pass a background check. Even if they are not allowed contact with the youth, they may be able to provide necessary support to the parents. They also may have family information they are willing to share with us so we can expand the family's network of support. Even if those that offer permanency are not appropriate, we write them down. This is the reason we do the "Rating of the Plans" activity from the Decision Making Meeting on, if applicable. If necessary, separate meetings can be held for each side of the family if there is domestic violence or protection orders in place.

We attempt to schedule meetings when the family is most available. Sometimes this means evenings or weekends. We may also travel to meet with the family members if there is a large number of them in a certain location, even out of state. This may be difficult, but we try to have as much advanced notice as possible so schedules can be coordinated. If it is easier for CFS and family, we are able to schedule at our office.

Meetings most often last 90 minutes. This amount of time is necessary to ensure the entire meeting agenda is able to be completed satisfactorily. The meeting will not go over 90 minutes; however, it will on nearly every occasion last more than an hour. We can combine the topics of the Family Team Meeting with the Family Finding Meeting to ensure the needs of the CFS are being met without an additional meeting; however, Family Finding Meetings will most likely always include relatives. If the parent doesn't want relatives involved in their Family Team Meetings, those meetings will need to be held separately.

The primary goal of Family Finding is to create lifetime supports for the youth and/or parents. If placement and legal permanency is needed, we hope there will be offers of this within the network we create which very often happens; however, it is not the primary function. When family members want to get involved, we work to figure out a way they can participate in the lives of the family even if they are not able to provide legal permanency.

On occasion, we are able to assist with providing a supervised visit between youth and family members so we can assist with assessing interactions. If we do this, we will provide a contact record for documentation purposes. We may also be able to help with other things needed as they come up.

Family Finding - SESA

Referrals to Date: 42

Beatrice - 11

Geneva - 3

Lincoln - 28

Children to Date: 76

Children Closed: 56

Children with Offers of Permanency @ Time of Closure: 55

Average # of Connections at Referral: 3

Children with at Least One Connection @ Closure: 56

Children with More Than 5 Connections @ Closure: 48

Average # of Connections at Closure: 12

Children Still Open (So Closing Connections & Permanency Offers Uncounted): 18