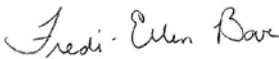


To: DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors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

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove 
Administrator

Re: Family Find and Engagement Initiative

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview of the Family Find and Engagement Initiative implementation by the Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care (BPOHC). The initiative includes a Family Find and Engagement training opportunity for child welfare and juvenile justice agency staff and for an additional permanency consultation option through the State Permanency Consultants to assist counties in utilizing the model for specific out-of-home care cases.

BACKGROUND

As part of the Fostering Connections implementation in Wisconsin, the Department made statutory changes in 2010 to Chapters 48 and 938 which allows caseworkers to contact relatives for the purpose of making family connections without a signed consent from a parent or legal guardian. The statutory change is in alignment with the Family Find and Engagement initiative which provides caseworkers with the tools necessary to find relatives and s. 48.78(2) provides the authority to contact them without parental consent.

The Family Find and Engagement model offers methods and strategies to locate and engage relatives of children currently living in out-of-home care that are disconnected from family. The goal of Family Finding and Engagement is to connect each child with family, so that every child may benefit from lifelong family.

In June of 2014, the Department, in partnership with the Child Welfare Professional Development System University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work and The National Center for Permanent Family Connectedness – Seneca Center, piloted the Family Find and Engagement in the following six counties: Chippewa, Jefferson, Outagamie, Portage, Sauk and Wood. The pilot provided the opportunity to determine the best process to implement the training to additional counties, develop appropriate materials relevant to state statutes, administrative rules, and policies and review outcomes based on cases selected for the process.

Approximately 114 county child welfare and juvenile justice workers, supervisors and managers were trained as well as 13 State Permanency Consultants and other State staff within the Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care. Over the course of the six months of training the 125 participants implemented the tools and facilitated meetings with relatives using the Family Find and Engagement model.

Below are the specific data and outcomes from the cases as of March 1, 2015. It is anticipated that the

number of relatives will continue to increase as case workers follow through with the process.

- 87 cases were selected;
- 267 relatives were initially identified as having a connection with the child or youth;
- 1004 relatives were identified at the end of the six month process as having a connection with the child or youth;
- 5 children transitioned to a less restrictive setting; and
- 14 children found permanence through reunification or guardianship with a relative.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

The Family Find and Engagement initiative is a training over a six-month period. A one-day training is held each month focusing on specific tools and family-centered meetings. The expectation is that workers will implement the tools learned with the identified child in order to report out at the next training the work that was completed and any issues or concerns that arose. In between trainings a one hour check-in call occurs with supervisors and caseworkers on the implementation of the skills they have learned and to discuss any barriers that need to be addressed. It is an opportunity for the caseworkers to receive additional coaching during the process and for supervisors to support staff with the development of their skills and be more family-focused and engaged.

The expectation of the Department is the agencies participating in the initiative must have ongoing support and direction from Directors, Managers, Supervisors and other staff that work with children and youth involved in child welfare. This will involve participation in all of the trainings by the supervisors including participation in the monthly check-in calls. Throughout the process the Directors and/or Managers need to be aware of the progress in order to assist caseworkers in the process and determine if any internal barriers exist that are impacting the progress of the Family Find and Engagement process.

County Managers and Supervisors involved with the pilot recommend staff from all child welfare and juvenile justice sections be considered for the training; this provides an opportunity for the entire agency to make a practice shift with a focus on family-driven decision making. It is important for caseworkers to engage families from first contact through the closure of the case. By having caseworkers from Access, Initial Assessment, Ongoing, Juvenile Justice, and other staff that work with children and youth involved in the training, the agency will have a shared language and successes.

PERMANANCY CONSULTATION

The State Permanency Consultants (SPC's) are available to assist county and tribal child welfare agencies with cases that have little to no family involvement by completing the full Family Find and Engagement process. It is important for the supervisor and caseworker to review the Family Find and Engagement Team Expectations and Responsibilities, document to ensure the team understands and agrees to participate in all aspects of the process. The agency caseworker will need to complete the Family Find and Engagement Referral form DCF-F-5055-E, <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/forms> and provide it to the Regional Supervisor.

The Regional Supervisor will review the referral made by the county or tribal agency to determine if it is an appropriate case for the process. Acceptable cases will be assigned to SPC's based on their availability. If the referral is not appropriate the Regional Supervisor will follow-up with the county or tribal supervisor to discuss the reasons the case was not chosen and provide consultation regarding steps the caseworker may consider to increase the number of adult connections for the child or youth.

SENECA INTERNET SEARCHES

The Department has entered into a contract with the Seneca Center in order to assist counties and tribes that have completed the Family Find and Engagement training or upon case-by-case request in locating relatives through the completion of internet searches. County and tribal agencies may request an internet search be completed on a case through the SPC, however internet searches will be considered only after

other outreach efforts have been attempted and few to no relatives have been identified or located. The SPC's may consult with caseworkers regarding engagement techniques that may be successful in locating relatives prior to utilizing the Seneca Center internet searches. If it is determined an internet search is appropriate, the SPC and the Regional Supervisor will make the request to Seneca Center. The SPC will review the information provided by Seneca Center, assist the worker in deciphering the document and provide consultation on the next steps to locate additional relatives. Requests for the Seneca Center internet search can be submitted to the SPC's.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

Beginning in the second half of 2015, the Family Find and Engagement training will be available to county and tribal agencies through the Child Welfare Professional Development System. County and tribal child welfare agencies will be able to participate in the training on a first come, first serve basis with the expectation that all relevant staff will participate. Once the training is available a notice through the Bureau of Regional Operations will be sent to all county and tribal agencies with information on registering through PDS Online.

Upon issuance of this memo referrals for Family Finding and Engagement and Seneca Center internet searches may be submitted to the assigned Regional Supervisor or SPC.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: PERMANENCY PROGRAM PLANNER
Division of Safety and Permanence
Bureau of Permanence and Out of Home Care
608-422-6943

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: Region 1 Out-of-Home Care Supervisor
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Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care
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Region 2 Out-of-Home Care Supervisor
Division of Safety and Permanence
Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care
608-422-6738

MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>