

FAMILY FINDING SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR EACH CHILD IN FOSTER CARE

WHY PERFORM FAMILY FINDING? Federal law (e.g., 42 U.S.C. 670 et seq.), Oregon law (e.g., ORS 418.480) and Oregon Administrative Rules (e.g., OAR 413-070-0060 through 0087) require or encourage diligent and repeated searches for kin and kith of children in foster care. In January, 2014, the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) issued a comprehensive procedure (*DHS Child Welfare Procedure Manual, Section 4, Part 3, Version 4*) addressing many aspects of the Kevin Campbell Family-Finding Model, widely respected as the benchmark for successfully locating and bringing forth kin and kith for children in foster care. These laws, rules and procedures are valuable, but only if a child's service providers make a commitment to delivering timely, comprehensive, effective, and repeated family-finding services.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED TO ENSURE FAMILY FINDING IS BEING DONE? Attorneys, Judges, CASAs, the CRB and Caseworkers can pose these family-finding questions at many points in the foster care process:

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO ENSURE FAMILY-FINDING SERVICES ARE BEING DILIGENTLY, EFFECTIVELY AND REPEATEDLY PERFORMED	WHEN IS FAMILY FINDING REQUIRED OR SHOULD BE REVIEWED?
What specific family-finding/relative-search process was done? When? By whom? Ask for and review the documentation.	During the course of a CPS assessment When the child first enters care
Has child/relative mapping been done? Are the maps in the file? Results?	During the family-decision meeting
How were identified persons contacted? Only mailing letters is <i>not</i> a sufficient answer. What were the <i>specific</i> , documented results of each contact? What follow-up is needed?	When a child in substitute care must move When DHS Relative Search is to be completed in the first 30 days of the case
Who are the identified relatives and family members? How <i>specifically</i> has each one been engaged in supporting the child?	When DHS is considering reunification When DHS recommends a concurrent plan
Who are the identified kith (e.g., neighbors, teachers, coaches, family friends)? How were they contacted? When? What were the results?	When there is any case-plan change Upon every court hearing
Were all kin and kith calls or email messages answered promptly? Are there copies of the email chains and telephone logs in the file?	Upon CRB meetings
Was a family meeting held? When? Who attended? Which additional kin and kith could be invited to the next family meeting? When is the next family meeting scheduled to take place?	Upon CASA meetings Upon child's attorney meetings
Did DHS engage community partners (e.g., A Family For Every Child) in helping complete or expand family-finding services? If not, why not?	During the 90-day case-plan review
How often has this case had family finding performed? What dates?	When a new family member is identified
Have all kin and kith been assessed for placement? If not, why not, and who made that decision? When?	When new kith is identified
Why is the child in APPLA?	Upon APPLA meetings
For children who have been in foster care for two years or more, has the biological family been re-examined in recent years?	Upon all critical junctures in the case plan
Is there an after-foster-care plan? Specifically how have kith and kin been engaged?	At <i>minimum</i> once per year

How is the child best served by not having family-finding services rendered *now*?

A FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD (AFFEC) offers family-finding services (for *FREE* in many cases).

Call us at (541) 343-2856



aFamilyForEveryChild.org

CONSIDER THE FINANCIAL COSTS OF KEEPING CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

It costs the public over \$25,000 per year to keep a child in foster care (Zill, 2011; Fixsen, 2011). Consider the financial impact of keeping a child in foster care when there may be kin and kith willing, able and appropriate to accept primary financial responsibility for care of the child.

Extended time in foster care *assures* far greater likelihood of life-long problems and public costs (AFCARS, 2013). The homelessness, incarceration, incomplete education, illness and poverty these children are likely to experience constitute the very definition of societal failure. Family finding represents a far more affordable and effective means to help both the children and the public.

In most cases, family finding effectively and promptly provides additional non-institutional human resources representing forms of permanency for the child. Those resources are more likely to cultivate lasting, caring solutions to the problems which landed the child in foster care than any institutional system could, however good the intentions of the system. Lasting, caring solutions presented by kin and kith also cost the public far less than the solutions offered by the foster care system.

Fair and important financial questions for you to consider:

- *How much are Oregonians paying to keep children in foster care without diligent, effective and repeated family-finding services having been performed?*
- *Specifically who is responsible for denying children their right to diligent, effective and repeated family-finding services? Have the public costs of keeping children languishing in foster care and the known societal and financial consequences of doing so been adequately considered?*

A Family For Every Child (AFFEC)



Our mission is to find loving, permanent families for every waiting foster child.

Family finding is one of our programs, and in many cases it is offered **free** of charge.

Contact us now. What is there to lose? www.AFamilyForEveryChild.org (541) 343-2856