



Name of Protocol: **Family Search and Engagement Protocol**

Protocol Effective Date: **08/01/2019**

Protocol Yearly Review Date: **08/01/2020**

Does this Protocol replace an earlier version: Yes, replaces Kinship Protocol

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**Purpose for this Protocol:**

To outline the requirements and responsibilities for intake, ongoing and Family Search and Engagement (FSE) caseworkers in regards to identifying, locating and engaging parents and Kin/kin-like relations to be prominent figures in the child's/youth's support system to ensure the child/youth stay connected.

**Underlying values/guiding principles:**

We believe that children do best when raised in their own families.

When children cannot live safely with their families, the first consideration for placement will be with kinship connections.

When placement outside the extended family is necessary, we encourage healthy social development by supporting placements that promote family, sibling and community connections.

We believe that all children and youth need and deserve a permanent family.

Lifelong family connections are crucial for children and adults. It is our responsibility to promote and preserve kinship, sibling and community connections.

**Protocol compliance:**

Protocol compliance resides with CYFS administration, managers, supervisors and caseworkers.

**Definitions:**

“Kinship” means a relative of the child and /or youth, a person ascribed by the family as having a family-like relationship with the child and/or youth, or a person that has a prior significant relationship with the child and/or youth. These relationships take into account cultural values and continuity of significant relationships with the child and/or youth.

“Parent” in terms of diligent search means: the biological or adoptive parent.

“Sibling” means one of two or more individuals who is descended from one or two mutual parents. The term also includes stepsiblings and former stepsiblings. For the purpose of Family Search and Engagement, this also includes an individual that is considered by state or tribal law to be a sibling of the child or youth or the individual would have been considered a sibling of the child youth under state or tribal law but for a termination or other disruption of parental rights, such as the death of a parent.

**Procedures:**

**Identify/Locate:**

1. The placing caseworker will turn in a diligent search referral with child's birth certificate attached, for all absent parents to FSE within 2 business days from child's removal from their home.
  - a. When caseworker receives additional information regarding absent parent, a new diligent search will be requested. (Do not wait until the 6 month diligent search renewal is submitted).
2. The FSE worker will begin the search for noncustodial parents within 3 business days of the child's removal from their home.
3. All possible leads for absent parents, as provided through diligent search results, shall be followed up by the FSE caseworker and documented.
4. All possible leads for absent fathers, as provided through diligent search results, shall be followed up by the FSE caseworker in conjunction with center on fathering caseworker.
5. FSE caseworker will conduct diligent searches to identify and/or locate absent parents by using the following methods:
  - a. Google search
  - b. CBMS
  - c. Co-courts (Search entire state, not just El Paso County)
  - d. Accurint
  - e. Conduct Interviews (through cold calls) with other family members to secure names, addresses, phone numbers of the absent parent
  - f. Child's birth certificate
  - g. Assessor's page
  - h. Face book
  - i. Colorado Springs Utilities Search
  - j. CJC inmate search
  - k. Federal Bureau of Prisons
  - l. Trails
  - m. National Sex offender search
  - n. DOC offender search
6. The diligent search for an absent parent will be completed within 7 business days from receipt of the diligent search referral.
7. Once completed, the FSE worker will sign a diligent search affidavit, have it notarized and send it to the Office of the County Attorney.

**Notify:**

1. Once an absent parent is located, the FSE worker will notify the parent that their child has been removed from home and they will be notified of the options to participate in the care, treatment or placement of the child. The FSE worker will provide the parent with the Caseworker and D & N Facilitator contact information. The FSE worker will inquire as to the parent's Native American heritage.
2. The FSE worker will identify and notify all grandparents and other adult relatives within 30 days of the child's removal from home of the following information (Notification form letter):
  - a. The child has been removed from home
  - b. Options to participate in the care or placement of the child

- c. Options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice
- 3. All relative responses from letters will be addressed by the FSE worker.
  - a. The FSE worker will email all relative responses to the caseworker and supervisor.
  - b. The FSE worker will document all relative responses in Trails under: FSE tab in contact log.
  - c. The FSE caseworker will respond to the relative to discuss their role in maintaining connections with the child. All kin contacts will be documented in Trails under: FSE tab.
    - i. The FSE worker will ensure that the relative has the caseworker's name and phone number to maintain further contact between the relative and the assigned caseworker.
    - ii. The FSE worker will ask the relative about the child's family's Native American heritage.
- 4. FSE worker and Caseworker will consult with parents and family members to identify all other adult kin who could be willing to be a prominent figure in the child's/youth's support system to ensure the child/youth stays connected.
  - a. All contacts with kin/kin-like members will be documented in Trails under: FSE tab.
  - b. Supervisors will have ongoing discussions with caseworkers during regular supervision times where kinship connections will be discussed.

#### **FSE Caseworker Assignment**

1. Kinship unit receives PPP paperwork from OCA's legal assistant or from verbal emails through the kinship "warm line" (e-mail inbox).
2. FSE caseworker is assigned to monitor the warm line daily for pertinent paperwork & is "on-call" for emergency placement.
3. All kinship workers monitor family engagement meeting (FEM) schedule & attend when necessary (e.g. emergency removal). Kinship worker will verify with caseworker to ensure they need FSE representation.
4. FSE caseworker folder will contain:
  - a. Accurint search
  - b. Stipulation
  - c. PPP paperwork
  - d. Relative Resource Affidavit (RRA)
  - e. Trails results (looking for earlier case collaterals)
  - f. ICWA documentation if needed (not applied to all cases)
  - g. Report of Relative Resources (created in Family Connections database)

5. Cold calling family to make family tree (use Family Connections worksheet).
6. Create Report of Relative Resources and send to caseworker. Send any Family Connections worksheets returned by family members to caseworker.
7. Send out letters to family members within 30 days to check for placement options, family connections or support.
8. Send caseworker email with family member contact information when contacted in regards to the removal letters sent out for the child(ren).