

Enhancing Permanency Through Family Finding



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Learning Objectives for Today

Understand the origin and philosophy of the Family Finding Model.

Discuss common misconceptions and beliefs that can get in the way of family finding and permanency.

Explore family finding steps, processes, tools and techniques.

Examine how Family Finders and Front Line Workers can work collaboratively to achieve desired outcomes.

Knowledge of Family Finding



Introducing....

The Family Finding Model

Developed by *Kevin A. Campbell*



The Family Finding Model offers methods and strategies to locate and engage relatives of children currently living in out-of-home care. The goal of Family Finding is to connect each child with a family, so that every child may benefit from the lifelong connections that only a family provides.

(National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness)

Core Beliefs Inherent to Family Finding Approach

Every child has a family, and family members can be found when efforts are made.

Many children in foster care feel lonely and isolated, and this can have devastating, even dangerous, consequences.

Engaging relatives can reduce trauma and preventable separation from family.

A meaningful connection to family helps a child develop a healthy sense of self and belonging

The single factor most closely associated with positive outcomes for children is significant, lifelong connections to family.

ALL of the children we work with have experienced disrupted attachment and trauma in some form.

Childhood trauma is
relational trauma...
you can't heal
relational
trauma by yourself.

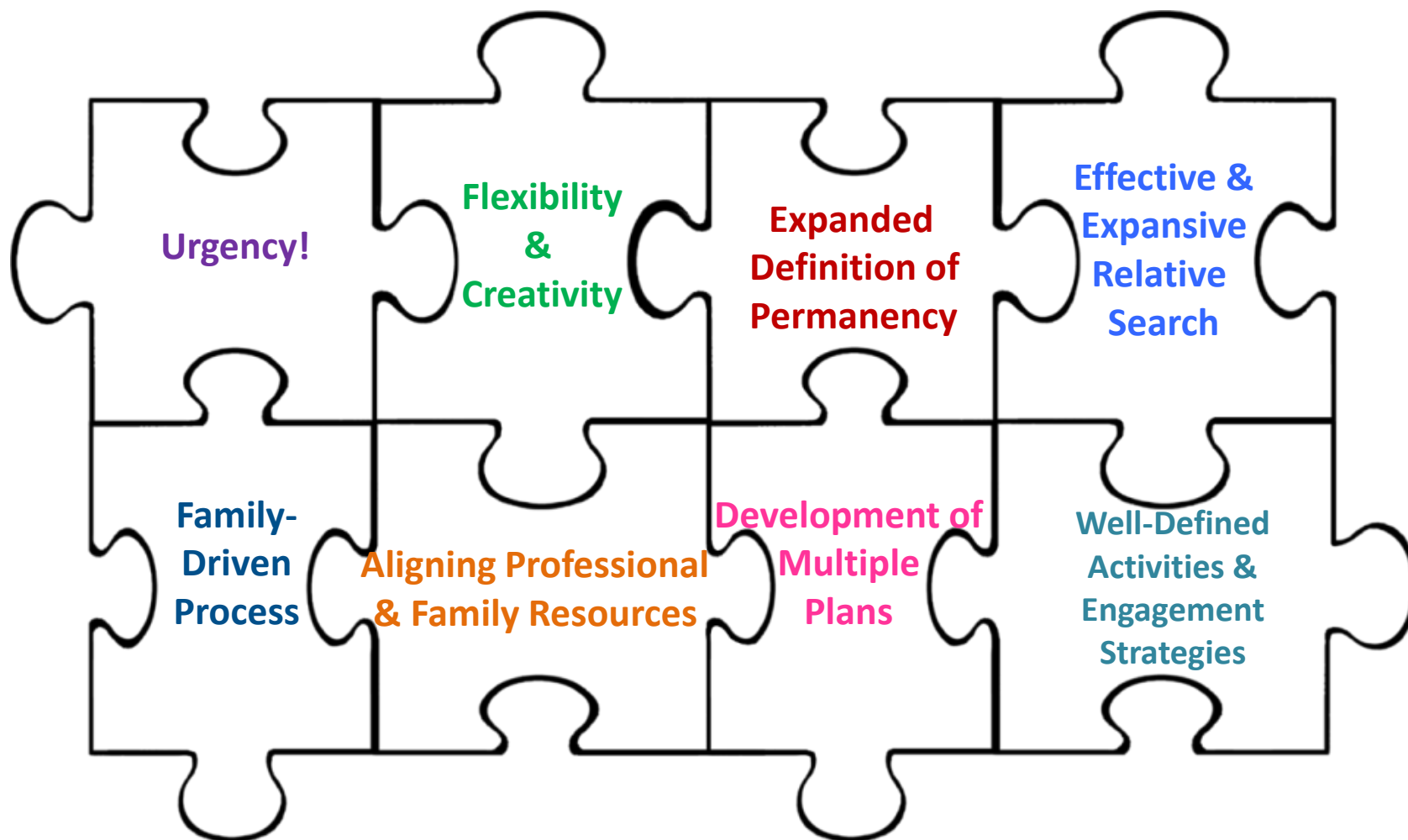
It has
to be healed
in relation.

-Joyelle Brandt





Philosophy of Family Finding



Purpose of Family Finding in MD

... is to establish a protocol to ensure supportive connections for children and youth that come into contact with the child welfare system in Maryland.

- Family Finding is designed to promote permanence for youth in foster care, and to prevent children from entering or languishing in foster care by locating and engaging potential resources in a timely manner.
- One major goal is to engage as many connections as possible and identify safe, caring adults who will provide a lifetime network of supportive and unconditional relationships.

"Our purpose in Family Finding is to restore the opportunity to be unconditionally loved, to be accepted, and to be safe in a community and a family."

- Kevin Campbell



How Family Finding Fits

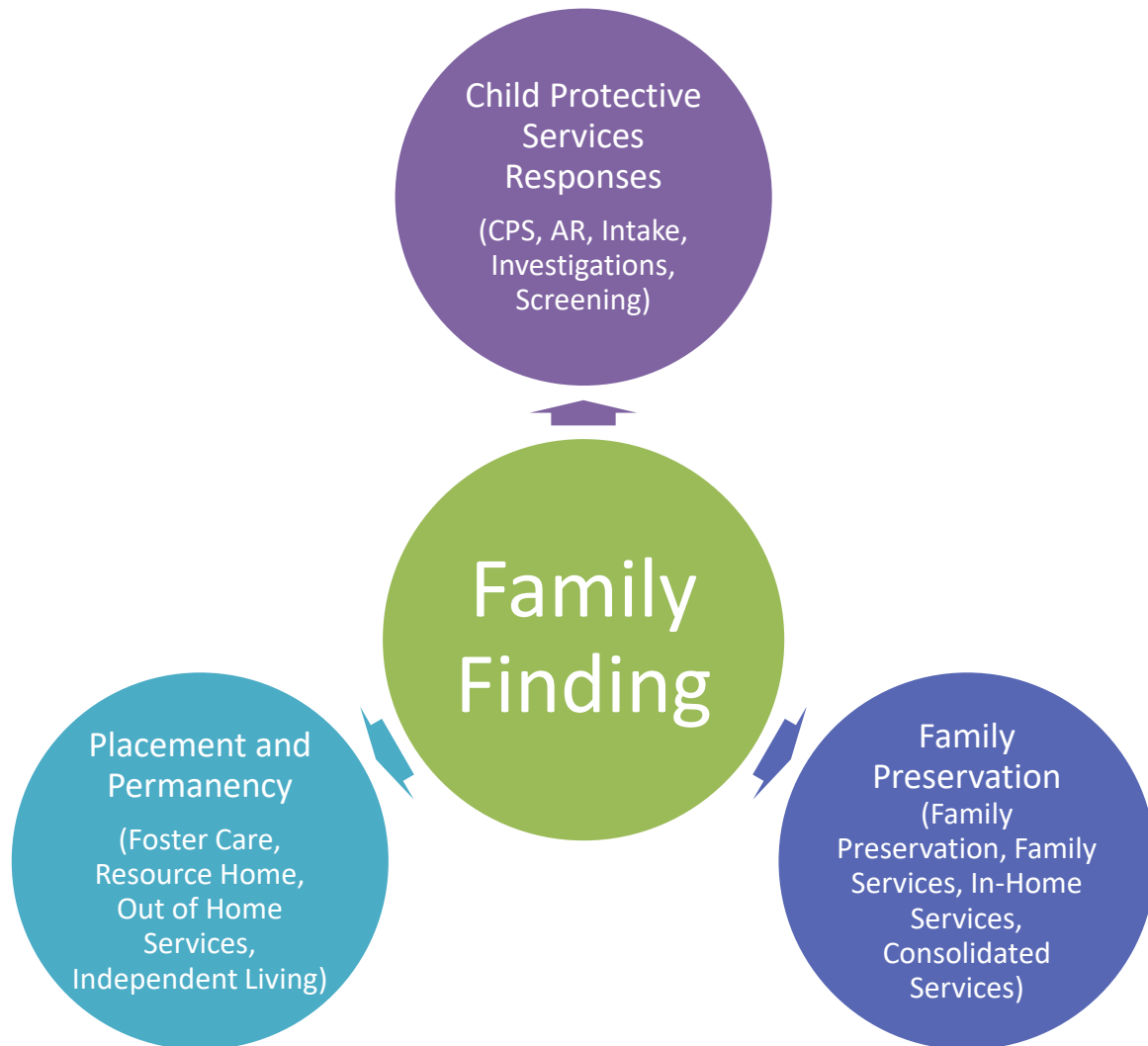
- Family Finding is an extension of case management services to assess relatives and fictive kin as potential placement resources as well as supports.
- Family Finding intervention is applicable for children along with any part of the child welfare service continuum as deemed appropriate to facilitate permanency and establish lifelong connections.
- Developing a stable, caring relationship with adults who are willing to provide emotional support after emancipation increases the chances that youth will transition successfully.
- Family Finding promotes **"Reasonable Efforts."**

"If we've learned anything from our longest-served youth, it's that we can provide millions of dollars of services and they can become homeless adults within hours of aging out of our services."

Kevin Campbell

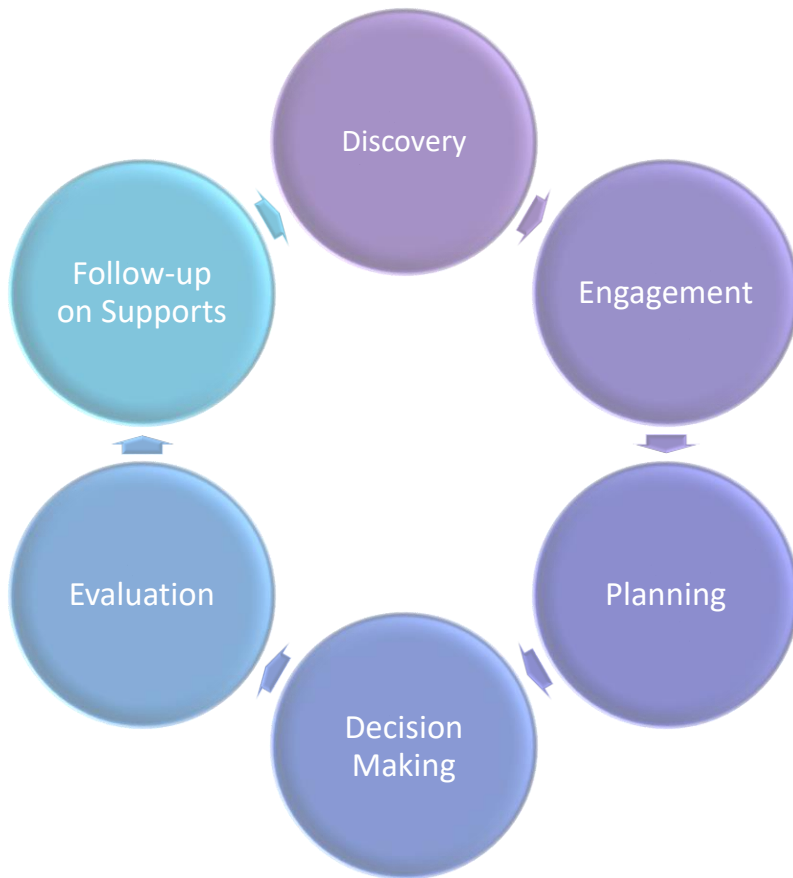


Family Finding Across the Spectrum



Enhancements to Family Finding Model

2006 Original Family Finding Steps



2017 Enhanced Family Finding *Building Lifetime Networks*



Exercise

- How many of you have researched your family history and ancestry?
- What motivated you to do so?
- What steps did you take?
- What discoveries did you make?
- Were they all positive?
- How did you feel about the process and what you uncovered?



What are some of the barriers to Family Finding and Permanency ?



Barrier/Myth # 1

If the child had family members who cared, they would have come forward.

Fact # 1

In many situations, children are literally lost in the system due to broken family connections and multiple placements and moves. Some families fear system involvement, or do not know their relatives are in foster care. Sometimes family members want to help but simply don't know how.

Barrier/Myth # 2

If a child is stable in foster care, it is best not to upset things.

Fact # 2

There is no such thing as stability in foster care. Relatives get sick, people die, people lose their jobs, foster families have to move, and life circumstances change. We cannot ignore permanency simply because a child is stable in foster care at the moment.

Barrier/Myth # 3

If the youth doesn't want to be adopted, it is better to leave it alone. Why disappoint him/her again?

Fact # 3

Many youth who have aged out of foster care wish that their case worker would have continued to ask them about adoption (even when they kept saying “no”). They simply needed help to unpack the “no” , and more time to view permanency in a different way.

Barrier/Myth # 4

The youth is too unstable and challenging to place in a family setting.

Fact # 4

Many foster youth struggle with feelings of hopelessness and don't believe they will ever achieve permanency. They carry around a tremendous amount of guilt and shame. Once a genuine, positive connection is made, they have a safe place to work through their issues. Over time, there is often an improvement in attitude and behavior.

Barrier/Myth # 5

Some youth are too developmentally disabled, mentally ill or special in other ways to achieve permanency.

Fact # 5

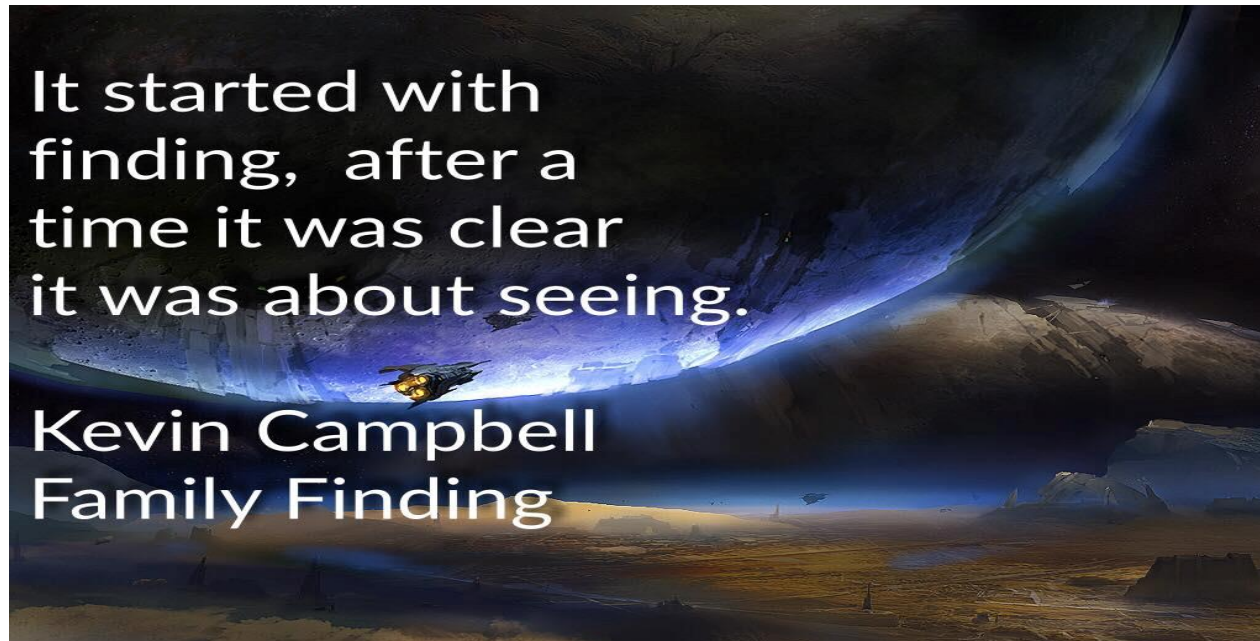
It is just as important for a child with challenges and special needs to obtain permanency as it is for any other child. There are families who are willing/able to parent children with special issues and concerns. Even youth with severe issues can be placed.

Active Steps of Family Finding and Building a Lifetime Network

- ✓ **Case Staffing and Alignment** (getting those currently involved in youth's life on the same page)
- ✓ **Engagement of Youth and Important Adults** (tools include connectedness circles, mobility mapping, genograms and connectedness maps)
- ✓ **Searching and Outreach** (if adequate network does not already exist – using case review and database searches)
- ✓ **Preparation** (Blended Perspective Meeting with family/fictive kin)
- ✓ **Planning and Decision-making** (tools include calendaring, permanency pact and FIM)
- ✓ **Lifetime Network** (to carry beyond youth's involvement with DSS)
- ✓ **Healing and Development** (therapeutic supports)
- ✓ **Relational and/or Legal Permanence**



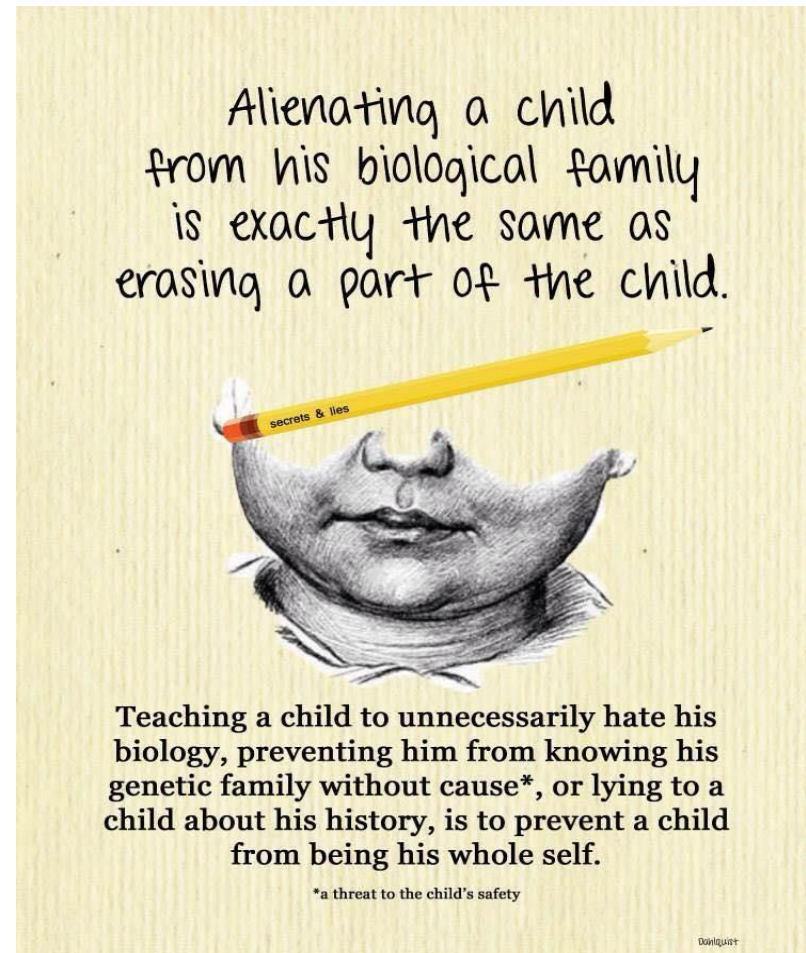
“I set out to find the family which Child Protection said did not exist, to find fathers who were said not to exist. When I found them they said, ‘we weren’t hiding, you just didn’t call or welcome us.’ Now we have the technology of Family Finding, the ability to ‘find’ the family and fathers.”



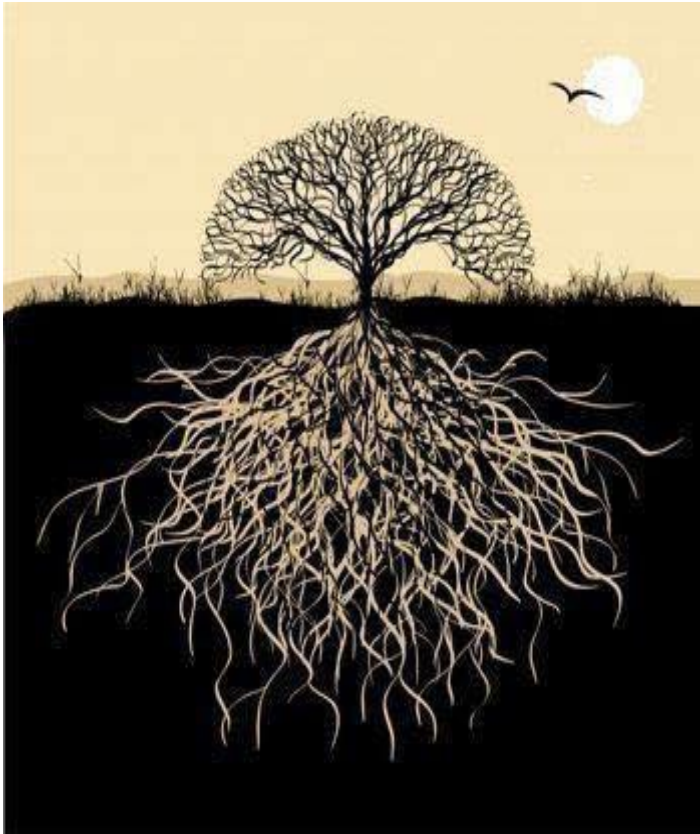
“Now we need a new technology - **Family Seeing**: the ability to see the value of families, mothers, fathers, siblings, friends and culture in the lives of children, not separated from them.”

Explore Connections With Youth

- ❖ Explore who is relevant and important to them.
- ❖ Help child see him/herself as a member of more than one family.
- ❖ Give child permission to remain loyal to more than one family.
- ❖ Teach child skills around making connections and keeping connected.



Why Encourage Connections?



“Human flourishing =
balancing the bad stuff
with the good stuff.
Simply removing bad
stuff is it’s own kind of
bad.”

— Kevin Campbell

What Happens To Youth Who Do Not Have Connections and Permanency?



- Joblessness, homelessness, serious health issues and low education.
- Increased risk of victimization.
- Increased risk of incarceration.
- No safety net during challenging times.
- No one to turn to during normative struggle to become fully functioning adults.

Tools to Engage Youth



- Mobility Mapping
- Connectedness Conversation (Circles Tool)
- Genogram and Connectedness Map
- Writing – Drawing – Artistic Expression
- Do not diminish any part of the child's past. Use this as a time for the child to review memories.

Mobility Mapping

Step One: After establishing rapport, explain that you would like to learn more about them to help locate family and friends. Explain that one way to do this is to draw pictures (maps) of where they lived, beginning with their earliest memory.



Mobility Mapping

Step Two: Ask youth to draw a small house in the center of the paper, representing the first house they recall living in. Then ask them to draw all the places around their house that they used to go, including school, and people in their life at that time. Ask how long they lived at this place, and note their age on the map. Write names of streets, schools and people. Continue with each house they have lived, noting the same information for each house.



Mobility Mapping

Step Three: Once all the houses are identified, ask them to mark the places and people they like best with their favorite color. Then ask them to mark the places and people they dislike or do not wish to have contact with in a different color.



Mobility Mapping

Step Four: Explain that you'd like to learn more about their drawing by asking some questions. Ask if it's okay to write down their responses. Beginning with the "best-liked" place, ask questions such as "Tell me about this place. Why did you like it? What did you do there? Who did you see there? How often did you go there? What is your favorite memory about this place?"



Connectedness Conversation (Circles Tool)

First (innermost) circle:

- Unconditional connectedness
- Could be parent(s), best friend, or partner
- Who's committed to you no matter what?

Second circle:

- Conditional connectedness
- Could be friends, acquaintances, or relatives
- Who's good to hang out with, but you wouldn't necessarily call them in an emergency?

Third circle:

- Important people from the past who you may have lost touch with
- Could be childhood friends, teachers or coaches
- Who would you like to reconnect with?

Outside the circles:

- People who are better left out of your life
- Who have you determined are negative influences that may bring you down?

Connectedness Conversation (Circles Tool)

- ❖ If we called a meeting tomorrow of the most important people in your life, who would be on your invite list? Put stars by them.
- ❖ List THREE impacts you want to have during your life: what are your goals and purpose?
- ❖ List FIVE things missing from your life: what do you need to make your life better?
- ❖ List FOUR great gifts or talents you possess: what qualities have helped or will help you succeed in life?
- ❖ MOVING TO ACTION: This is the start of your Lifetime Network. We can pull together a meeting of these folks, and we'd like you to share your lists with your Network to identify how they can support you moving forward.



Top Reasons to Keep Searching for Family and Other Connections

1. Most families have dozens of relatives, even if they have lost touch.
2. More options means a greater likelihood of finding stable family members and trusted adults who can make lifelong commitments.
3. A child with a traumatic past will probably need lots of supportive adults.
4. Ensures reasonable efforts have been made and all avenues have been pursued.
5. Relatives and connections are sometimes waiting to be contacted or approached.
6. Keeps hope alive. If you don't believe, who will?

Thinking Outside the Box



When you think outside the box, the possibilities are endless.

Blended Perspective Meeting



A Blended Perspective Meeting is a specialized Family Finding forum to discuss options for supporting the child or youth after relative resources have been identified.

- ☐ Bring together identified family members and potential connections who care about the child/youth
- ☐ Should be scheduled during a mutually convenient time
- ☐ Participation is strictly voluntary for family members
- ☐ Not a place to make decisions
- ☐ Youth may not participate, to allow family members to speak openly and honestly

Goals of Blended Perspective Meeting

Identify Strengths and Needs of Youth

Help Family to Understand How Isolated Youth Is

Identify Individuals Who May Be an Active Part of Support System for Youth

Identify Individuals Who Are Interested in Becoming A Permanent Connection or Placement Option

Clarifying Roles: Who Does What?



Navigating the Working Relationship



Ensure ongoing communication

- The caseworker should share relevant information re: the child's social/cognitive/emotional level and readiness for relative contact.
- The caseworker and supervisor will assume primary responsibility for communicating outcomes of the Family Finding engagement to the youth.

Focus on clear objectives within a limited time frame, with the ultimate aim of identifying connections.

- The goal is for the Family Finder to step out once resources have been located and connections have been established.

Plan the ending.

- Plan how others will access support after family finding services end.

Maintain clear boundaries.

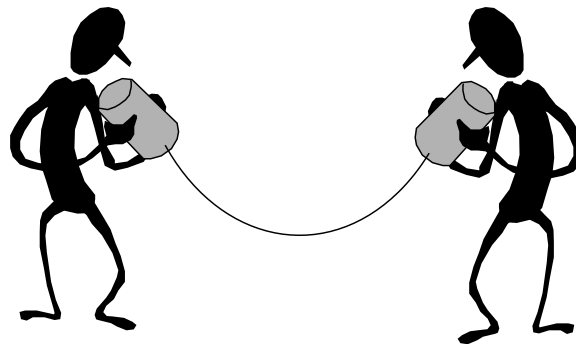
- The caseworker may not fully understand the role of the Family Finder or how long the Family Finder will be involved.
- The caseworker may push for the FF to do more than what is expected.
- Feelings of personal connection/investment may result in the Family Finder stepping outside of his/her role.

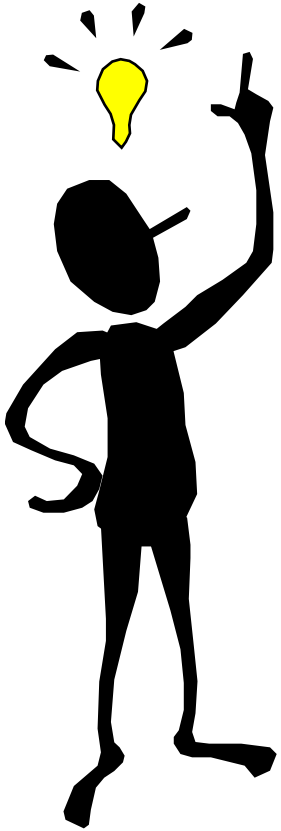
Be self-aware.

- Both caseworkers and Family Finders bring biases that may impact the work.
- Family Finders may have a hard time stepping back and letting go.

Collaboration and Teaming

- ❑ **Ongoing communication is critical.**
- ❑ Lack of follow-up can result in lost information and broken connections.
- ❑ Regular team meetings are important for sharing process, planning next steps and sustaining the momentum for creating permanency.
- ❑ Talk with the youth about the process, assess their feelings, and review engagement tools used.
- ❑ Team should discuss the challenges that will arise for the youth and the family.





Questions
Insights
Final Thoughts



Helpful Resources

National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness

Familyfinding.org

Six Steps to Find a Family

hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/SixSteps.pdf

You Gotta Believe

yougottabelieve.org

Child Information Gateway

childwelfare.gov

Seneca Family of Agencies

Senecafoa.org/familyfinding

The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare

cebc4cw.org/program/family-finding/detailed

Family Finding Evaluations: A Summary of Recent Findings

childtrends.org

