

Six steps for Family Finding:

Step One: Discovery

Goal: Create more options for support and planning.

Practice: Identify at least 40 family members for the child or young person. Include efforts to identify other adults who can or have in the past been a key supporter of the child or parents. Success is achieved when the family is extensively known. In many situations you can expect to learn of a hundred or more relatives and others connected to the child or young person.

Step Two: Engagement

Goal: Engage those who know the child best and have an historic and/or inherent connection in helping the child by sharing information and helping.

Practice: Through the use of a unique and individualized engagement strategy, enlist the support of as many family members and others important to the child or family to participate in providing important information helpful to the child. Begin preparing family members and others to assist the social worker with decision making and participate in supporting the young person through committed relationships.

Step Three: Planning

Goal: Hold meetings with the participation of parents, family members and others important to the child focused on planning for the successful future of the child or young person.

Practice: Bring the identified family members and others who care about the child together to learn more about the young persons essential, lifelong need for support and affection. Participants must have a voice in the process. The social worker and court will make final decisions that include consideration of the team's perspective about the future of the child or young person. Equal value will be placed on the need for a family to live with and an enduring network of support. Challenges will be identified and solutions created. Planning will be done on a "Plan's fail, our children do not" basis.

Step Four: Decision Making

Goal: The team with the social worker will make timely decisions that provide the young persons with appropriate levels of affection and belonging that are expected to be enduring.

Practice: The team involved in planning will work with a sense of urgency, fully and candidly informed about the needs of the child or young person and the expected consequences of not having a safe forever family. The team will be prepared to make key, informed decisions about the future of the young person, including their safety, physical and emotional well-being and belonging in a life-time family. Teams will meet with an understanding that long-term placement(s) without legal permanency are not considered a successful decision.

Step Five: Evaluation

Goal: An inclusive, individualized and unconditional plan to achieve legal and emotional permanency has been created with a time line for completion.

Practice: The team has successfully “foreseen” the likelihood that their plans for the child and young person are safe, stable and lasting. Adults who are caring for the child have adequate and lasting support and key relationships with siblings, family members and others important to the child continue.

Key evaluation questions:

If this iteration of our plan fails, will the child remain or return to the foster care system?

Have we identified and engaged an adequate level of enduring support for the child and their caregivers?

Has the team created a plan that includes family members and other adults willing to offer their support if the Plan “A” option is unsuccessful?

Are there at least three options?

There is a plan and commitment that if challenges arise which threaten the child’s safety and stability the team will reconvene. A member of the team is elected to organize/facilitate future meetings.

Step Six: Follow on Supports

Goal: The team will have supported the child or young person and their family to plan for and access essential formal and informal support.

Practice: The team will actively support children, young people and caregivers to successfully access services, supports and key relationships. Teams will emphasis natural and community supports that are the most normative and enduring. Services that require payment will be seen as temporary and not as a basis for lifelong relationships.

