

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services  
(CCDCFS)  
Policy Statement**

**Policy Chapter:** Case Requirements  
**Policy Number:** 5.01.09  
**Policy Name:** Family Search and Engagement Activities

**Original Effective Date:** 04/01/2015  
**Revision Date(s):** 06/01/2019, 05/01/2016  
**Current Revision Date:** 06/01/2022  
**Approved By:** Cynthia G. Weiskittel

**PURPOSE:** To ensure that all children involved with our agency ultimately have permanent connections, by ensuring that Family Search and Engagement (FSE) activities are completed.

The practice of Family Search and Engagement activities is essential for building and sustaining child/family relationships, connections, and support networks for addressing children's needs and achieving permanency outcomes. Family search and engagement activities are conducted from a family-centered perspective. Diligent search of all potential resources and supports are utilized in completing thorough assessments, locate family members and potential caregivers, engage in services and/or case plan planning process. Thus, FSE activity efforts continues throughout the life of a case and leads to multiple resources in the concurrent planning process.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to Hotline, Short-Term and Extended Services, Case Review, and Kinnect to Family units at CCDCFS.

**POLICY**

A family may share information about current relationships and important persons in their support network, at any time during involvement with the agency. This information can be useful presently or in the future. Seeking out and documenting information on important relationships and support persons is critically important to child safety, permanency and well-being.

**I. Exceptions - Family Violence/Domestic Violence/Sex Abuse & Sex Offenders**

- A. Notification to relatives is subject to exceptions when there are indications of: 1) family violence/domestic violence; 2) sexual abuse or sex offender identification. The facts of family violence/domestic violence sexual abuse or identification of a registered sex offender are verified, when possible.

The facts are verified through police reports, Accurint searches, court dockets, and sex offender registry, when possible. If based on the facts presented, it is deemed by the supervisor and the Child Protection Specialist (CPS) that notification would pose a risk to the child or caretaker, the justification for exception is thoroughly documented in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare System (SACWIS) activity logs and other assessment tools. It is important to use the subcategory "Family Search and Engagement".

## **II. Required Notifications Upon Identification (Except as Noted in 'A' Above)**

- A. Pursuant to the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rule 5101:2-1-01 (264), "Relative" is defined as: Individuals related by blood or adoption:
1. Parents, grandparents, including grandparents with the prefix "great", "great-great", "grand", or "great-grand";
  2. Siblings;
  3. Aunts, uncles, nephews, and nieces, including such relative with the prefix "great," "great-great," or "great-grand;"
  4. First cousins and first cousins once removed.
  5. Stepparents and stepsiblings;
  6. Spouses and former spouses of individuals named in paragraph (B) of this rule.
- B. Pursuant to the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rule 5101:2-1-01 (202), "Nonrelative" description entails: for the purposes of selecting a substitute care setting for the placement of a child means an individual identified by the current custodial caretaker or child as having a familiar and longstanding relationship with the child or the family. In accordance with OAC 5101:2-42-05 (B), if a suitable relative is not available to assume placement, temporary custody or guardianship, the PCSA or PCPA shall explore placement with a suitable nonrelative who has a relationship with the child and/or family.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **I. Case Activities During a Hotline Call:**

- A. Hotline CPS clearly documents in an activity log and associated persons tab any information obtained about father and maternal/ paternal relatives in the intake and/or activity logs, as appropriate.
- B. Race/Ethnicity Documentation: Race and ethnicity of the identified family and relative is documented in SACWIS. If Native American heritage is known or discovered during the identification and engagement of relatives, we must follow the guidelines and provisions in accordance with OAC 5101:2-53-03.

## **II. Case Activities During All Investigations/Assessments:**

- A. CPS documents all known information and inquiries about maternal and paternal family/relatives/fictive kin and any other identified person as a support.
- B. CPS asks the youth (if age appropriate) of identified supports.
- C. CPS initiates contact and engages all alleged father(s).
- D. Accurint searches and SACWIS searches are completed on identified birth parents and family members within 5 days, or sooner, of receiving custody.
- E. CPS documents all responses in a SACWIS activity log with the subcategory "Family Search and Engagement". CPS includes the type of contact the identified relative is interested in having with the child(ren).
- F. CPS documents all relative information under "Associated Persons" tab in SACWIS.
- G. In the event a relative or fictive kin have not been identified, CPS shall refer to departments identified Accurint user for further searches. A referral to Kinnect to Family unit can be completed.

## **III. Continuing Case Activities Until Permanency:**

- A. CPS continues attempts to engage birth parents; contacts unresponsive or uninterested relatives; conducts updated searches throughout the life of the case and reviews at Semi-Annual Review meetings.
- B. CPS continues to search and engage biological and adoptive siblings that are not already located.
- C. Case Review Facilitator reviews and supports the process at all meetings by reviewing efforts made, making recommendations, and reviewing permanency planning and connections for youth.
- D. CPS and Permanency Support Staff partners with Wendy's Wonderful Kids to facilitate ongoing recruitment efforts.
- E. The CPS may request assistance from their identified department Accurint user at any time or by submitting the Kinnect to Family Referral Form. A request for support from Kinnect to Family is recommended if efforts have been made; but, no relatives have been identified, or child(ren) have been in custody for more than six months and there are fewer than 6 to 12 relatives engaged; or there is no identified permanency plan or concurrent plan.
- F. During supervisory conference, the CPS and supervisor reviews associated persons tab, identifies any barriers that prevent relative identification, engagement and notification. Ongoing efforts will be continued and documented throughout the life of the case, until an adoptive match or permanency plan has been achieved.

### **SEE ALSO:**

#### **State and Federal Rules and Regulations**

Ohio Administrative Code

Sections:

5101:2-1-01

5101:2-39-01

5101:2-39-03  
5101:2-42-05  
5101:2-42-18  
5101:2-53-03  
5101:2-53-06

[Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, PL 110-351](#)

Indian and Child Welfare Act of 1978

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual:**

Policy 6.01.03 Placement Into Out of Home Care Setting  
Policy 6.04.00 Caregiver Approval for Custody Cases  
Policy 2.03.07 Cases Involving Domestic Violence

DCFS Practice Memo: Domestic Violence Reference Guide

**Additional Reference**

Achieving Permanency: Guidelines for Expectations of County Child Welfare Staff;  
Prepared by Mardith L. Louisell / California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP)

**FORM**

Location: Traverse  
Kinnect to Family Referral Form