



SUGGESTED OPPORTUNITIES AND QUESTIONS TO GATHER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO BUILD THE NETWORK OF SUPPORT

(NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

MARCH 2024

Judges/Hearing Officers

- Meet with CW supervisors to determine policy and practice.
 - It is important to build trust outside of the courtroom
- Provide guidance on what you will accept and not accept as DD
- If not enough information is available to make the DD finding, order the department to go back and re-do. Set an interim review hearing.
- Ask those present at the hearing any or all the following questions:
 - What methods of outreach has the agency utilized?
 - What was the outcome of those methods?
 - Who are the relatives we know about already?
 - Were they invited to come to Court?
 - Were they invited to come to a meeting to help plan for the youth's future?
Were they advised that they could participate and support the youth in other ways – not just as a placement?
 - What additional methods have you employed? If none, why not?
 - If you have sent a letter and no reply, did you attempt to call that relative?
 - Did you run an internet search for relatives using the parents' names, etc.?
 - Do any of the identified relatives live within this county or neighboring county? Have you gone to visit them and discuss this situation with them?
 - Have those known relatives been asked about other relatives?
 - Has anyone had a discussion with the youth about important people?
 - If not provided, ask for a summary of all efforts.
 - Has a family/relative map been created? If yes, where is it? If not, why not and when do you expect it to be created?
 - If no paternal relatives have been identified – why not? If paternity has not been established as of today, reaching out to those identified relatives now can save time and effort later. It is possible that some may already be a connection for the youth.



- Advise all in the courtroom that you will require the answers to these questions at every hearing where DD is required.
- Advise the agency that you will require a summary of all efforts to be attached to the report as well as a copy of any family mapping done with the youth and/or his/her family.

Social Worker/Probation Officer

- Make sure questions are asked beginning at the hot line response or initial interaction with family and youth:
 - Parents/Family Members:
 - Review entire case file and ask about already identified family and close family friends
 - Engage those already known relatives.
 - Ensure you are asking them if they are willing to come to an hour-long meeting to discuss and plan for supporting this family/youth
 - Ask how big is their family?
 - Ask who has the family bible or family tree?
 - Ask who sets up the family reunions (who has the list)
 - Has there been a recent family funeral?
 - Start developing a “family map”
 - Search previous court files, family law, child support and electronic CW data base for siblings, siblings’ parent, other relatives
 - Conduct comprehensive internet search
 - Search school (emergency contacts) and/or childcare provider’s records
 - Obtain visitation logs if youth resided in group home
 - Contact neighbors, previous foster families, guardians, or other care providers, including those who:
 - May have been ruled out previously
 - Reside in other states
 - Parent(s) whose rights may have been terminated but have turned their lives around may have been estranged from the parents/children due to no fault of the children.
- Some states require the CWW to travel to an identified relative’s home for an interview if that relative’s residence is within 30 miles of the CWW office. These directives and policies should be carried out in every situation when a youth is at risk of removal or has been removed.



Attorneys

- Parent(s) Counsel:
 - Ask “how big is your family?”
 - Do you have siblings? When was the last time you spoke to them?
 - Are you close to any family members? Grandparent(s); Aunts, Uncles?
 - Anyone that you are close to that isn’t a relative?
 - Who would you contact if you need money for gas?
 - Who would you want to call if you had some exciting news to share?
 - Is there anyone in your life that you were close to but haven’t seen in a long time? Would you like to contact them now for support?
 - Who is in your immediate sphere of close friends?
 - Do you have other children? Does that other child(ren) live with your previous spouse/relationship? Can we call them now?
 - Everyone is pulling for you to regain custody of your child(ren), but if that doesn’t happen within a certain period, who would you want to raise your children if you could not?
 - Are you close with any of your neighbors?
- Child’s Counsel:
 - Who do you miss?
 - Who do you believe misses you?
 - Where do you usually go for holidays?
 - Who comes over to your birthday parties?
 - Do you have a list of friends on your cell phone?
 - Who would you call if you needed bus/lunch money?
 - Who would you call if you had some exciting news?
 - Who would you call if you needed to talk about something important to you?
- Agency Attorney:
 - Ensure that the agency is in compliance with the federal and state laws to identify, locate, and notice relatives (3rd degree or higher, depending on your state statute)
 - Help develop a summary or report to present to the court which lays out what “efforts” have been employed to engage found relatives. Include dates, responses, and commitments.
 - Ensure that the agency is engaging family members about supporting the youth and family and not just asking about placement.
 - Ensure that policy and procedures are developed and shared with the court and/or court collaborative so all are aware of the process.
 - Be prepared to answer all questions posed by the Judge to comply with Fostering Connections and state requirements.



- Assist agency in setting up an out-sourcing (if needed) so that the searches and outreach can be done efficiently and the CWW can follow up with the found relatives.
- Ensure that the agency has conducted a thorough, comprehensive internet search utilizing reputable, paid internet search sites.
- Develop strategies with the agency to conduct follow up procedures if no one responds to first attempt at engagement. Recall, sending letters with none being returned is not DD. Someone received the letter and there must be follow up (either re-send letter with handwritten envelope, add paragraph that if they speak Spanish, the letter can be re-sent in Spanish or they can call office and a Spanish speaking SW will be available, make sure that a phone number listed in the letter is a number that will actually get answered by someone who knows how to handle these calls)
- Make sure your agency has a way for a member of the public to contact the agency if they have information that their relative has come into care (either 800# on website or some type of community outreach).

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