

Family Finding Fact Sheet

What is Family Finding?

Every child deserves a special connection only family can provide. Children's Service Society of Wisconsin is launching Family Finding, a new program aimed at reestablishing family connections between children in out-of-home care and their relatives. Based on a national model, Family Finding provides strategies to find and engage relatives of children living in out-of-home care.

Every child has a family and a meaningful connection to family helps a child develop a sense of belonging. The most important factor contributing to positive outcomes for children in out-of-home care is meaningful connections and lifelong relationships with family.

How it works

Family Finding uses technology developed by US Search, an experienced search agent, to identify and locate family members using multiple databases. Online searches generate streamlined reports in a matter of minutes. Often the people traditionally looked for may fly below the radar of many public record sources.

Once family members are found, Children's Service Society will work with your staff to reestablish relationships where appropriate and explore ways to establish lifelong connections with family and/or find a permanent family placement for the child.

Benefits of Family Finding

- **Emotional improvement.** Children will have increased and improved family connections and experience decreased loneliness and a better sense of belonging.
- **Decreased use of out-of-home care placements.** Whenever possible, children will be able to move in with family.
- **More successful placements.** Research and experience demonstrates that biological families tend to give up on difficult children less often.
- **More involved fathers.** Fathers – and their families – can become more involved.
- **Compliance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act and Chapter 48.** Diligent attempts to find permanent families and efforts to find and engage relatives are requirements of ASFA and Chapter 48.
- **Financial benefits.** Kinship payments are significantly less than board and administrative payments to residential treatment facilities, group homes and foster families.

Referral process

Referrals can be made by calling Children's Service Society at (800) 653-2779. Appropriate referrals include:

- Children in foster care who have little to no family contact.
- Children who have lost connections to their maternal and/or paternal families.
- Children who are able to move to a less restrictive setting.

About Children's Service Society

Children's Service Society is the state's largest private, not-for-profit provider of child welfare services. From offices and family resource centers throughout the state, Children's Service Society offers activities and programs in three core service areas: out-of-home care; counseling and case management; and prevention services. Children's Service Society is a member of Children's Hospital and Health System.

Several agencies across the country use Family Finding strategies with great success:

- Within six months, one agency was successfully able to move 253 of 288 troubled children in with relatives.
- In less than five days of training in Ward County, N.D., approximately 580 potential family connections were found for 40 kids. County workers placed several children with relatives and more placements are in process.
- In less than a year, a California agency found "lifelong connections" – adoptive parents, legal guardians or adults committed to enduring relationships – for almost 250 children.