Children's Service Society of Wisconsin™

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Federal grant helps children in out-of-home care find biological relatives.

MILWAUKEE (10/21/2009) - Children's Service Society of Wisconsin received a $1.2 million grant from the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families – Children's Bureau. This grant will allow Children's Service Society to expand its Family Finding program to serve all Wisconsin counties. Family Finding locates biological family members for children placed in out-of-home care. Studies show that children thrive when cared for by family members. Unfortunately, when reunification with a parent is not possible, children often are placed in other out-of-home placements because it is difficult and time consuming to conduct extensive searches to locate other biological relatives. Family Finding specialists, employed by Children's Service Society, will partner with local child welfare workers to implement the Family Finding model. A Family Finding specialist will conduct an electronic search in partnership with US Search. The search follows a model developed by Kevin Campbell, founder of Family Finding. Campbell is providing training and technical assistance.

"This grant is crucial to the children of Wisconsin," said Maria McDermott, director of out-of-home care for Children's Service Society. "This grant effectively allows us to provide services to the entire state of Wisconsin. Our goal is to help more than 300 children over the three-year grant period."

One contingency of the grant requires Children's Service Society to secure $626,700 of matching community funding during the three-year period. A research evaluation is also included in the grant. Researchers will gather data on the outcomes of the youth who receive family finding services and are placed with family members, compared to youth

not receiving family finding services. This data will be gathered from all participants nationwide and could impact child welfare regulations on a federal level.

Children's Service Society has offered Family Finding in the Milwaukee area, teaming up with Children's Family and Community Partnerships, to find biological family members for children in foster care in Milwaukee County. One recent case involved finding a biological relative who was interested in taking permanent placement for a 23-month-old child who had spent nearly his entire life in the foster care system

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 provides funding for foster care agencies to connect and support relative caregivers, improve outcomes for children in foster care and improve incentives for adoption. The Act authorizes Health and Human Services to make matching grants to state, local, or tribal child welfare agencies and nonprofit organizations to help children in, or at risk of entering, foster care to reconnect with family members.

Children's Service Society of Wisconsin 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. The health system is able to fulfill its mission thanks in part to philanthropic gifts and support from members of the community. For more information visit Children's Service Society at www.cssw.org.

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