
**ORANGE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
CFS OPERATIONS MANUAL**

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Fostering Connections with Relatives and Important Persons

Purpose To provide guidelines for establishing and maintaining permanent connections between a child/non-minor dependent and their Important Persons.

Approved This policy was approved by Veronica Rodriguez, Chief Deputy Director of SSA. *Signature on file.*

Most Recent Revisions This revision of the Policy and Procedure (P&P) incorporates:

- Updated Definitions:
 - Family Finding & Engagement Efforts
 - Important Person
 - Non-Minor Dependent (NMD)
 - Non-Relative Extended Family Member (NREFM)
 - Out-of-Home Caregiver
 - Legal Permanency
 - Relational Permanency
 - Relative
- Updated Terminology:
 - Replaced Team Decision Making (TDM) with Child and Family Team (CFT)
- Statutory Updates:
 - Changes to [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) section \(§\) 309](#) which includes Family Finding as a strategy for identifying and locating relatives
 - Changes to [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) section \(§\) 366\(a\)\(1\)\(B\)](#) which requires continued efforts - or active efforts in an ICWA case –to locate relatives and others who could provide family support or placement for foster children/NMDs not residing with relatives and or nonextended family members (NREFMs).

- Changes to [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) section \(§\) 366\(a\)\(1\)\(C\)](#) which requires reasonable efforts must be made to maintain relationships between a child (age 10 years or older and has been in out-of-home placement for six months or longer) and individuals who are important to the child.
- Changes to [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) section \(§\) 366.1\(g\)](#) which directs that supplemental reports filed pursuant to Section 366 include a discussion as to the continued efforts - or active efforts in an ICWA case - that the social worker has made to locate any relatives or NREFMs who could provide family support or possible placement of the child or nonminor dependent as well as the names of those individuals.
- Revised Attachments:
 - Attachment 1—[Coordinated Family Finding Efforts](#)
 - Attachment 2—[Youth Interview Regarding Important Persons](#)
 - Attachment 3—[Identification and Search for Important Persons](#)
 - Attachment 4—[Involvement of Important Persons](#)

Background

Fostering connections with relatives and important persons significantly benefits children and non-minor dependents (NMD) in the foster care system. By broadening their support networks and offering potential placement options, these efforts not only enhance the immediate quality of life for foster children and NMDs but also contribute to better outcomes when exiting the child welfare system.

Recognizing the importance of these connections, legislation was enacted in California (Assembly Bills 408 and 1412 in 2003 and 2005) to ensure no child leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a committed adult. Assembly Bill 12 (2010) allows eligible foster youth to remain in care until age 21 and encourages these young adults to have connections with caring adults, including informal support people.

Guided by these statutory requirements, Children and Family Services (CFS) has partnered with foster children and non-minor dependents, caregivers, and community partners to implement strategies aimed at:

- Preserving a foster child/NMD's familial relationships and other important connections
- Increasing a foster child/NMD's support system
- Expanding the perception of "permanency" for foster children and NMDs, to include stable permanent lifelong connections

This P&P addresses Family Finding Efforts to establish and sustain permanent connections between a foster child/NMD and their Important Persons. These efforts include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying and locating relatives and Important Persons
- Facilitating engagement of these individuals to establish or re-establish connections
- Encouraging the maintenance of these relationships to foster permanent connections for foster children/NMDs

Definitions

Assigned Senior Social Worker (SSW): A social worker currently assigned to conduct an investigation/assessment of alleged child abuse/neglect and/or provide case management on an open referral or case. This designation may include, but is not limited to an Emergency Response SSW, Differential Response SSW, Intake/Investigations SSW, and Continuing case-carrying SSW.

Family Finding and Engagement Efforts: Per [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section § 309\(e\)\(3\)\(B\)](#), "family finding" means conducting an investigation, including, but not limited to, through a computer-based search engine, to identify relatives and kin and to connect a child or youth, who may be disconnected from their parents, with those relatives and kin to provide family support and possible placement. If it is known or there is reason to know that the child is an Indian child, as defined by Section 224.1, "family finding" also includes contacting the Indian child's tribe to identify relatives and kin.

Important Person: An adult (in addition to any adult sibling) who:

- The child/non-minor dependent (NMD) considers significant/important
- Is interested in maintaining a beneficial and committed relationship with the child/NMD prior to and/or during their dependency proceedings
- Is willing to provide a permanent, supportive, caring, lifelong connection (relationship) with the child/NMD

–And–

- Whose relationship with the child/NMD is in the child/NMD's best interest

Important Persons may include, but are not limited to a:

- Known or newly discovered relative
- Non-relative extended family member (NREFM)
- Neighbor/family friend
- Former caregiver/former residential staff member of the child/NMD
- Or any other individual with an established familial or mentoring relationship with the child/NMD (e.g., coach, teacher, Big Brother/Big Sister, camp counselor, clergy member, etc.)

Non-Minor Dependent (NMD): Pursuant to [WIC § 11400](#), a current dependent or ward of the Juvenile Court who satisfies all of the following criteria:

- Has reached 18 years of age while under an order of foster care placement but is less than 21 years of age
- Is in foster care under the placement and care responsibility of Children and Family Services (CFS), County of Orange Probation Department, or an Indian tribe that entered into an agreement pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code [\(WIC\) Section \(§\) 10553.1](#)
- Is participating in or intending/willing to participate in a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP)

NMDs include young adults in legal guardianship with an open dependency case as of their 18th birthday.

Non-Relative Extended Family Member (NREFM): Per [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section \(§\) 362.7](#), an adult caregiver who has an established familial relationship with a relative of the child/NMD, as defined in [WIC § 361.3\(c\)\(2\)](#), or a familial or mentoring relationship with the child/NMD.

Out-of-Home Caregiver: Includes any of the following:

- Licensed or certified resource parent
- Relative or NREFM approved by SSA to act as a resource parent

- Staff member designated by a STRTP director to approve a youth's participation in extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities

Legal Permanency: A legal concept that ensures that foster children/NMDs have long-term, enduring connections to family or other caring adults, and those relationships are recognized under the law.

Relational Permanency: A sense of belonging experienced by children/NMDs through enduring connections to at least one adult who will provide a lifelong connection; not tied to a legal outcome such as adoption or legal guardianship.

Relative: Per [WIC § 361.3\(c\)\(2\)](#), an adult who is related to the child by blood, adoption, or affinity within the fifth degree of kinship, including stepparents, stepsiblings, and all relatives whose status is preceded by the words "great," "great-great," or "grand," or the spouse of any of these persons, even if the marriage was terminated by death or dissolution.

POLICY

General Guidelines

The assigned Senior Social Worker (ASW) or designee involved with children/NMDs entering the child welfare system are responsible for:

- Facilitating Family Finding and Engagement Efforts throughout the dependency process
- Initiating Family Finding Efforts and activities at the earliest possible time
- Assisting the child/NMD in building long-term relationships and a permanent network of family members and trusted adults

The degree and ongoing necessity of Family Finding Efforts will vary on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the following factors related to the child/NMD's:

- Best interests
- Permanency needs
- Statutory Requirements
- Desire for connection with Important Persons

**Family
Finding
Efforts - Initial**

CFS staff will make reasonable efforts to ensure each child/NMD has long-term connections to family, Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs), and/or other Important Persons.

Family Finding Efforts will be initiated when a child has been removed from their parent(s), guardian(s), or Indian custodian.

Pursuant to [WIC § 309](#), an investigation must be conducted within 30 days of a child being placed into protective custody to identify and locate all adult relatives, which includes:

- Parents
- Grandparents
- Siblings' custodial parents
- Adult siblings
- Other adult relatives, including other relatives suggested by the parents

If it is known, or there is reason to know, that the child is an Indian child, pursuant to [WIC § 224.1](#), family finding includes contacting the Indian child's tribe to identify relatives and kin.

The social worker is required, within 30 days of the child's removal, to notify all located relatives (excluding those with a known history of family or domestic violence) in writing, and, if appropriate, orally, of the child's removal, and to provide information related to becoming a caregiver for the child. The relatives are to be provided with the following documents:

- *Relative Notification Letter (F063-25-627)* - includes attachment "Important Information for Relatives" and provides information regarding the JV-285 and JV-287 forms
- *Relative Information Form (JV-285)* - allows relatives to inform the social worker and the court about the child's needs and to request permission to address the court
- *Confidential Information Form (JV-287)* - allows relatives to request their contact information remain confidential

Note: Refer to CFS P&P [Absent Parent Search/Relative Search \(G-0801\)](#), Attachment 1 [Suggested Guidelines for Relative Notification](#) for further details regarding the Relative Notification process.

Family Finding Efforts - Ongoing

Pursuant to [WIC §16501.1\(i\)](#), *reasonable* Family Finding Efforts **will** be made for every dependent foster child age 10 years and older, provided at least one of the following apply:

- The child has remained in out-of-home care for six months or longer and currently receives:
 - Family Reunification (FR) services
 - Permanent Placement (PP) services and no prospective adoptive parent/legal guardian has been identified
 - Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (APPLA) services

Pursuant to [California Rules of the Court, Rule 5.637\(d\)](#), Family Finding Efforts will be made for dependent foster children in out-of-home care, (regardless of age) as necessary and appropriate until the child is placed for adoption. Special emphasis will be placed on cases where the prognosis for reunification is low or the child lacks connection to family, etc.

Planning/ Collaboration

Pursuant to best practice, the assigned SSW will collaborate with other parties/agencies involved in Family Finding Efforts on behalf of the child/NMD, including:

- Coordination of Family Finding Efforts
- Referrals for Family Finding Agency involvement

Refer to [Attachment 1—Coordinated Family Finding Efforts](#) for further guidelines.

Identification of Relatives and Important Persons

Identification involves obtaining all available contact information regarding relatives and Important Persons. This process begins at SSA's initial contact with a child/NMD and throughout the child welfare journey.

During all stages of child welfare involvement, the ASW and staff directly involved with the youth, as applicable, will, in an age-appropriate manner, ask each child/NMD to identify:

- Known relatives
- Family connections
- Important Adults (in addition to any adult sibling)
- Level of interest in (re)connecting with Important Persons

Note: The assigned SSW will input identifying/contact information into the CWS/CMS Collateral notebook, as the information is obtained. Refer to policy section “Documentation of Family Finding Efforts” for further guidance.

A. The **ER SSW** will:

1. Request the following contact information from the child and parents for:
 - All known family members/relatives
 - Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs)
 - People who have knowledge of the condition of the child
2. List and identify, under the Family Members/Family Composition heading of the Investigative Narrative, the following:
 - All family members interviewed during the investigation
 - Family members identified, but not interviewed, during the investigation
 - Contact information, as available

Note: For further guidance regarding collateral contact interviews, refer to [CFS P&P Abuse Investigations - Practice Guidelines \(A-0412\)](#).

3. When a child is at risk of removal or has been placed in protective custody, the ER SSW will:
 - List and identify relatives/NREFMs who may wish to be a part of the child’s life in the Investigation Narrative, under the Relatives/NREFM heading
 - Document adults identified as permanent lifelong connection resources for the child on the “Permanency Options” section of the [Application for Petition \(F063-28-43\)](#).

B. During the Emergency Response Imminent Risk Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM), the **CFT facilitator** will:

1. Request and document all known relatives, NREFMs, and Important Persons who may serve as:

- Placement resources
- Permanent connections for the child

Note: For further guidance, refer to the Relative Notification section of CFS P&P [Child and Family Teams \(D-0314\)](#).

C. The **Dependency Intake SSW** will:

1. Ask the parent/legal guardian and child (in an age-appropriate manner) to identify adult relatives for relative notification purposes (i.e., full name, relationship to child, address, and telephone number).

2. Relative information obtained will be:

- Promptly communicated to Emergency Placement Coordination for placement consideration
- Forwarded to the assigned Information Processing Technician (IPT) for input into the CWS/CMS Collateral Notebook (if not already entered)

Note: If a relative's address is unknown, a *Relative Information List (F063-25-628)* may be submitted to the Search Unit, per CFS P&P [Absent Parent Search/Relative Search \(G-0801\)](#).

Note: Refer to CFS P&P [Absent Parent Search/Relative Search \(G-0801\)](#), Attachment 1 [Suggested Guidelines for Relative Notification](#) for further guidelines to identify, locate, and notice adult relatives of a child who has been placed in protective custody.

D. The **Investigations** and/or **Continuing SSW** will:

1. Ask each child, in an age-appropriate manner, to identify:
 - Known relatives and family connections

- Adults (in addition to any adult sibling) who are significant/important to the child youth
- Level of interest in (re)connecting with Important Persons

Note: This inquiry must be completed with any child age 10 years and older, placed in out-of-home care for six months or longer, unless a prospective adoptive parent/legal guardian has been identified.

Refer to [Attachment 2—Youth Interview Regarding Important Persons](#) for suggested questions to engage the child/NMD in identification of Important Persons.

2. Inquire at any Initial Placement Preservation/Change of Placement and/or Permanency Planning Child and Family Team meeting (CFTM) convened, as to Important Persons who may be able to support the child. Refer to CFS P&P [Child and Family Teams \(D-0314\)](#) for further guidance.

Note: If a change in placement is necessary, placement priority will be given to relatives and NREFMs. Additionally, relative placement options previously evaluated for potential placement will be re-considered, provided parental rights have not been terminated. Refer to CFS P&P [Relative/NREFM Placement Assessments \(K-0105\)](#), for guidelines regarding verification of a NREFM relationship.

3. Review the [Relative Information List \(F063-25-628\)](#) and the [RFA EPA Information Sheet \(F063-25-773\)](#), to identify relatives who may be important family connections. See CFS P&P [Jurisdictional/Dispositional Hearing Report \(G-0310\)](#).
4. Within 30 days of the child's removal, conduct an investigation to identify and locate all adult relatives of the child. All located relatives (except those with a known history of domestic violence) must be notified in writing and, if appropriate, orally, of the child's removal, and receive information about potentially becoming a caregiver for the child, along with the documents listed in the "Family Finding Efforts – Initial" section.

Note: If a relative's address is unknown, a *Relative Information List (F063-25-628)* may be submitted to the Search Unit, per CFS P&P [Absent Parent Search/Relative Search \(G-0801\)](#).

5. If no Important Persons are identified:
 - Refer to [Attachment 3—Identification and Search for Important Persons](#) for strategies which may be utilized to identify and locate Important Persons
 - Determine whether the child/NMD may have a pre-existing relationship with a mentor or advocate
 - Inquire about the availability of Family Finding and Engagement Agencies to assist in Family Finding and Engagement Efforts on behalf of the child/NMD (refer to [Attachment 1—Coordinated Family Finding Efforts](#))
6. If an Important Person's whereabouts are unknown, a [Relative Information List \(F063-25-628\)](#) may be submitted to the Search Unit.

Locating Important Persons

As Important Persons are identified, the **Investigations** and/or **Continuing social worker** will make urgent efforts to locate/search for individuals whose whereabouts are unknown.

Identification and Search Strategies include:

- Interviews with the following:
 - Family Members and/or other known relatives
 - NREFMs and/or other collateral contacts
 - Prior social worker and/or other professionals currently/previously involved with the child/NMD's case
 - CASA and/or other youth advocates
 - Current/Prior caregiver(s)
 - Prior school(s) of attendance
- Reviewing the case file
- Contact Letters and Phone calls
- Internet Search
- Using tools such as a genogram, family tree, etc.

Refer to [Attachment 3—Identification and Search for Important Persons](#) for additional search strategies which may be utilized.

Establishing Connections with Important Persons

As Important Persons are located, best practice principles and timely decisions will guide the **Investigations** and/or **Continuing social worker** in engagement, assessment, and (re)introduction of these individuals with the foster child/NMD.

A. Engagement

The assigned SSW will conduct engagement of Important Persons as follows:

1. Consider all available information when engaging Important Persons. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Important Person's relationship to the child/NMD
 - Child/NMD's input
2. Initial engagement may be completed either by telephone/text, email, letter, and/or in-person interview.
3. During contact:
 - a. Explain purpose of contact and benefits to increasing relational permanency for the child/NMD.
 - b. Assess current circumstances including interest in contact with the child/NMD.
 - c. Obtain information regarding:
 - Family members not known to SSA
 - Family members/others interested in establishing/maintaining a connection with the child/NMD
 - Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) heritage
 - d. Maintain confidentiality by following the guidelines in the Policy section entitled "Confidentiality Guidelines".

Note: Family Finding also supports the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) requirement of conducting inquiry with members of the child's family and extended family about whether the child is or may be an Indian child. See CFS P&P Dispatch [Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\) Inquiry/Documentation \(G-0309-D\)](#) for further guidance.

B. **Assessment (Evaluation)**

An assessment of Important Persons will be completed prior to facilitating (re)introduction with the child/NMD.

The **Investigations** and/or **Continuing social worker** will assess the following when determining whether (re)introduction would be in the child/NMD's best interest, and/or pose any identifiable safety risk:

1. Prior involvement with the child/NMD, including duration/nature of the relationship.
2. Desired level of involvement with the child/NMD and willingness to provide a permanent connection for the child/NMD.

Note: If unsupervised home visits are being considered, assess home to determine if physical dwelling and/or household composition pose a risk to the safety of the child/NMD.

3. Level of cooperation with established Case Plan Goal and how contact could impact the current plan for reunification/permanency.
4. Background clearance information obtained from each of the following:
 - Interviews with the Important Person and others who may have relevant information
 - Important Person's *Criminal Arrest and Conviction History Self-Disclosure Statement* ([F063-25-850] request completion; obtain and document consent from individual prior to screening)
 - [California Megan's Law Sex Offender Locator Database](#) (or equivalent in other State)
 - County Superior Court Criminal and Traffic Case system in which the individual resides (e.g., [Orange County Superior Court of California Criminal and Traffic Cases](#))
 - CWS/CMS screening for child abuse/neglect history (obtain and document consent from individual prior to screening)

Note: Due to a lack of statutory authority, live scan fingerprinting will not be requested unless the individual is being considered for placement purposes. Refer to CFS P&P [Relative/NREFM Placement Assessments \(K-0105\)](#) to obtain and evaluate criminal and child abuse history information as part of a relative/NREFM placement assessment.

5. When appropriate, consider re-evaluation of Important Persons previously ruled out for contact with the child/NMD, to assess for changes in circumstance (e.g., rehabilitative success, level of cooperation, etc.) which may impact the suitability of facilitating a connection with the child/NMD.
6. Determine whether to proceed with a visitation plan, based on the results of:
 - Criminal Arrest and Conviction History
 - Court Orders
 - Risk and Safety Factors
 - Case Specific Circumstances
 - Child/NMD's Wishes

C. **(Re)Introduction**

When appropriate, initial contact/visitation will be arranged by the **Investigations** and/or **Continuing social worker** in a timely manner following:

1. Discussion with the child/NMD and Important Person, regarding:
 - Reasonable expectations for (re)introduction
 - Parameters for initial contact/visitation
2. Consult with the assigned supervisor regarding the assessment of the Important Person.
3. Establishment of parameters for initial contact, including but not limited to:
 - Contact type (in-person/phone/letter)
 - Locating a suitable environment to facilitate contact
 - Involvement of others (e.g., family, child advocate, etc.)

4. Coordination of resources and/or travel arrangements necessary to facilitate (re)introduction.

Note: Successful (re)introduction to establish important connections may require coordination of multiple visits.

Maintaining Connections with Important Persons

Following successful (re)introduction of a child/NMD with their Important Person, the **Investigations** and/or **Continuing social worker** will inquire from the child/NMD, as to their desires to pursue an ongoing relationship with the individual.

Provided ongoing contact is appropriate and in the best interest of the child/NMD, the social worker will:

- A. Inform the child/NMD and Important Person of any parameters for ongoing contact/visitation, including any restrictions or limitations.

Refer to CFS P&P [Visitation Guidelines \(D-0313\)](#) to determine appropriate visitation arrangements.

Note: Unless prohibited by court order, foster children/NMDs may make/receive confidential phone calls from individuals significant to them. Refer to CFS P&P [Telephone Rights \(D-0411\)](#).

- B. Inform parents (provided parental rights have not been terminated) and the out-of-home caregiver of:
 - The child's connection with the Important Person
 - The level of involvement permitted (i.e., parameters for contact/visitation and any restrictions or limitations)

Note: If parent is not supportive of the child's relationship with the Important Person, consult assigned supervisor to explore whether contact is appropriate.

- C. Coordinate visits and provision of any services/resources necessary to develop and/or sustain a child/NMD's relationship with their Important Person.
- D. On an ongoing basis, monitor the progression of the relationship through obtaining feedback from all parties involved in Family Finding Efforts with consideration to the following:

- Continued safety of the child/NMD
- Compliance with contact/visitation parameters
- Commitment of the Child/NMD and Important Person to the relationship
- Best interest of the Child/NMD

E. As permanent connections are established, complete a [Permanency Agreement Certificate \(F063-25-658\)](#), if appropriate, for provision to child/NMD and their Important Person.

Role of Mental Health Services

The **Investigations** and/or **Continuing social worker** will regularly assess the level of oversight needed to support the child/NMD and foster permanent, healthy relationships.

The social worker will collaborate with mental health service provider(s) involved in Family Finding and Engagement Efforts to assist the child/NMD in:

- Processing feelings/reactions toward out-of-home care
- Development of interpersonal relationship building skills
- Processing expectations/experiences/challenges regarding newfound and existing relationships

Note: Consult child/NMD's mental health service provider (if any) regarding appropriateness of disclosing emotional/behavioral needs of the child/NMD with Important Persons, to facilitate and/or maintain the child/NMD's important connections.

For further guidelines regarding collaboration in Family Finding and Engagement Efforts, refer to [Attachment 1—Coordinated Family Finding Efforts](#).

Confidentiality Guidelines

Pursuant to Miscellaneous Orders of the Juvenile Court and applicable statutes, agencies involved in Family Finding and Engagement Efforts are authorized access to CFS client records to aid in coordination/implementation of Family Finding Efforts.

Note: Review of CFS records (i.e., Service Folder, Legal File), by Family Finding Agencies, must be completed in CFS offices or the Court.

In addition, the social worker will adhere to the following confidentiality guidelines:

- A. Disclose only child/NMD-specific information necessary to establish and/or maintain the child/NMD's connection with Important Persons.
- B. Advise all agencies/Important Persons involved in Family Finding and Engagement Efforts of their responsibility to protect the confidentiality of any client record/information released.

For further confidentiality guidelines, refer to CFS P&P [Confidentiality—CFS Client Records \(F-0105\)](#).

Documentation A. **CWS/CMS Documentation**

The **ER, DR, Investigations**, and **Continuing social worker** will complete and/or update, the [Family Finding Efforts Case Summary \(F063-25-656\)](#), located in the Case Management Section of CWS/CMS as:

- Family Finding and Engagement Efforts are completed
- Important Persons are identified
- The status of a child/NMD's connections with their Important Persons changes
- Prior to any Statutory Review Hearing

Note: Document significant information related to Family Finding and Engagement Efforts (e.g., interviews, assessments) in the narrative section of the CWS/CMS Contact page. Refer to CFS P&P [Case Compliance Contacts and Documentation \(E-0105\)](#).

Once the [Family Finding Efforts Case Summary \(F063-25-656\)](#), is completed and saved to the database, the social worker will notify the assigned Information Processing Technician (IPT) who is responsible for:

1. Entering and/or updating identifying/contact information regarding Important Persons into the CWS/CMS **Collateral** notebook.
2. Updating the status of a child/NMD's connections with their Important Persons in CWS/CMS, per [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Documenting Family Finding Efforts](#).

B. **Family Finding Efforts Log**

The **Investigations** and/or **Continuing social worker** will generate a Family Finding Efforts Log, pursuant to [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Documenting Family Finding Efforts](#):

- As Important Persons are identified
- As important connections are established
- Prior to case transfer/closure
- Prior to any Statutory Review Hearing

C. **Case Filing**

Case record information regarding Family Finding and Engagement Efforts, not already entered into CWS/CMS, will be imaged and stored in the appropriate folder in designated Electronic Filing System.

Note: Vital records (SSN card, Birth Certificate, etc.) and Adoptions records will be maintained as both electronic and hard copy files. Clearance information will only be maintained as a hard copy file and not imaged.

D. **Court Reports**

The **Intake, Investigations**, and **Continuing social worker** will document Family Finding and Engagement Efforts in Court Reports as follows:

Pursuant to WIC § 309, efforts to identify and locate all adult relatives must be documented for Court as follows:

- At the **Detention hearing**, in the *Efforts to Locate Absent Parents, Relative Placement Information, Witness Statements/Supporting Evidence- Children's and Parents/Legal Guardians Statements, and Child and Family Team (CFT)* sections of the Detention Hearing Report (see CFS P&P [Dependency Intake \[A-0502\]](#))
- At the **Jurisdictional/Dispositional (JD) hearing**, in the *Important Persons, Family Finding Efforts/Relative Notification, Consideration of Relative Placements, CFT and Concurrent Planning* sections of the JD Report (see CFS P&P [Jurisdictional/ Dispositional Hearing \[G-0310\]](#))

For foster children (age 10 years and older) in out-of-home care for six months or longer, not already placed with a prospective adoptive parent/legal guardian, efforts to identify, establish and maintain the child's relationships with

their Important Persons, must be documented for Court as follows:

- At the **Jurisdictional/Dispositional (JD) hearing**, in the *Efforts to Locate Absent Parents, Disposition, Important Persons, Family Finding Efforts/Relative Notification, Consideration of Relative Placements, Visitation, CFT and Concurrent Planning* sections of the JD Report (see CFS P&P [Jurisdictional/ Dispositional Hearing \[G-0310\]](#)).
- At **FR Status Review hearings**, in the *Search Results/History, Visitation, Maintaining Connections with Important Persons, Consideration of Relative Placement, CFT, and Concurrent Planning* sections of the Status Review Report (see CFS P&P [Family Reunification Status Review Reports \[G-0317\]](#)).

Note: Per [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) section \(§\) 366\(a\)\(1\)\(B\) and \(a\)\(1\)\(C\)](#), during Status Review Hearings, the social worker is to document continued efforts to locate relatives, extended family members, and nonrelative extended family members and others who can provide support or placement, the names of those identified, the results of those efforts and efforts to maintain relationships. For an Indian child, the social worker is to document if active efforts were made to prevent the breakup of the Indian family.

- At the **WIC § 366.26 hearing**, in the *Search Results/History, Maintaining Connections with Important Persons, Consideration of Relative Placement, History of Contacts Between Child and Family, CFT and Prospective Adoptive Parent/Legal Guardian* sections of the WIC § 366.26 Report (see CFS P&P [WIC 366.26 Report \[G-0312\]](#))
- At **Periodic Review hearings**, in the *Search Results/History, Maintaining Connections with Important Persons, Consideration of Relative Placement, Visitation, CFT, and Compliance with Permanent Plan* sections of the Periodic Review Report (see CFS P&P [Periodic Review Report \[G-0311\]](#)).
- At **Non-Minor Dependent Status Review hearings**, in the *Consideration of Relative Placement, Consideration of Adoption, Connections with Important Persons, and Visitation* sections of the Periodic Review Report (see CFS P&P [Non-Minor Dependency Court Proceedings](#)

[\[J-0104\]](#)).

Note: Include any recommendations necessary to maintain the child/NMD's relationships with their Important Persons.

E. **Case Plan**

For children (age 10 years and older) and Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs) in out-of-home care for six months or longer, the Case Plan (or Case Plan Update) must include:

- Identification of the child's/NMD's Important Persons
- Actions necessary to establish and maintain the child's/NMD's relationships with their Important Persons

For Children-To document this information in the Case Plan, use autotext code **CMS1A** and insert populating text under the **Arrange and Maintain Placement** – Case Management Services type.

For Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs)- To document this information in the Case Plan, use autotext code **CMS1D** and insert populating text under the **Arrange and Maintain Placement** – Case Management Services type.

See Policy section "Transitioning Youth" for further guidelines regarding development of a Case Plan.

Involvement of Important Persons

For foster children/NMDs with an established connection to at least one Important Person, involvement of the Important Person in the child/NMD's dependency case will vary based upon the needs of the child/NMD and case-specific circumstances.

See [Attachment 4—Involvement of Important Persons](#) for guidelines regarding possible involvement in:

- Providing placement for the child/NMD
- Providing legal permanence for the child/NMD
- Serving as the child's educational representative
- Participation in child/NMD-centered meetings

Transitioning Child/NMD

Prior to emancipation, the **Investigations** and/or **Continuing social worker** will make efforts to ensure a transitioning child/NMD, regardless of participation in Independent Living Program (ILP) services, has an established permanent connection with Important Persons. The **social worker** will regularly assess the child/NMD's

connections with important persons and support networks and provide assistance as needed.

Note: The [Exit Assessment \(F063-25-616\)](#) will indicate whether a transitioning child/NMD has established any permanent connections with Important Persons.

For a transitioning child/NMD with an established connection to an Important Person, all of the following will apply, with regards to the Important Person's involvement/participation in:

A. **Case Plan Development**

Whenever possible during development of a Case Plan (or Case Plan Update) for a foster child/NMD 16 years of age or older, the social worker will:

- Seek input from the child/NMD's Important Person, as it relates to the child/NMD's service needs
- Include in the Case Plan, steps to ensure the child/NMD has a connection to Important Persons, as detailed in the Policy section entitled "Documentation of Family Finding Efforts"

For further guidelines regarding case plan development refer to CFS P&P [Case Plan Development/Elements \(D-0101\)](#).

B. **Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) Development**

Whenever possible, CFS staff preparing/updating the child/NMD's TILP will seek input from the child/NMD's Important Person, as it relates to their emancipation needs.

For further guidelines regarding development of the TILP, refer to CFS P&P [ILP Services \(D-0504\)](#).

C. **Transitional Planning Conferences (TPCs)**

In accordance with CFS P&P [ILP Services \(D-0504\)](#), a child/NMD's Important Person may attend a TPC convened on behalf of the child/NMD. Additionally, any Important Person participating in a TPC will be provided a copy of the Transitional Planning Conference (TPC) Summary.

D. **Development of the 90-Day Transition Plan**

Whenever possible the social worker will encourage the child/NMD to include their Important Person in the 90-Day Transition Plan TPC.

The 90-Day Transition Plan that is developed will include a plan for the child/NMD to maintain permanent connections with family and any other Important Person.

For further information regarding the 90-Day Transition Plan, refer to CFS P&P [ILP Services \(D-0504\)](#).

REFERENCES

Attachments and CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards

Hyperlinks are provided below to access attachments to this P&P and any CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards that are referenced.

- [Attachment 1—Coordinated Family Finding Efforts](#)
 - [Attachment 2—Youth Interview Regarding Important Persons](#)
 - [Attachment 3—Identification and Search for Important Persons](#)
 - [Attachment 4—Involvement of Important Persons](#)
 - [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Documenting Family Finding Efforts](#)
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Hyperlinks

Users accessing this document by computer may create a direct connection to the following references by clicking on them.

- CFS P&P [Absent Parent Search/Relative Search \(G-0801\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Protective Intervention \(A-0414\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Case Compliance Contacts and Documentation \(E-0105\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Referral and Case Filing \(E-0102\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Case Plan Development/Elements \(D-0101\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Child and Family Teams \(D-0314\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Confidentiality—CFS Client Records \(F-0105\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Concurrent Planning \(D-0202\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Dependency Intake \(A-0502\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Family Reunification Status Review Reports \(G-0317\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Jurisdictional/Dispositional Hearing \(G-0310\)](#)
- CFS P&P [ILP Services \(D-0504\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Periodic Review Report \(G-0311\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Relative/NREFM Placement Assessments \(K-0105\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Telephone Rights \(D-0411\)](#)

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- CFS P&P [Visitation Guidelines \(D-0313\)](#)
 - CFS P&P [WIC 366.26 Report \(G-0312\)](#)
 - [Seneca Center—National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness](#)
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REQUIRED FORMS

Online Forms

Required forms listed below may be printed out and completed, or completed online, and may be accessed by clicking on the link provided.

Form Name	Form Number
Family Finding Engagement Letter	F063-25-657
Exit Assessment	F063-25-616
Permanency Agreement Certificate	F063-25-658
Relative Information List	F063-25-628
Relative Notification Letter	F063-25-627
Relative Notification Letter (Spanish)	F063-25-627Sp

Hard Copy Forms

Forms listed below must be completed in hard copy (including multi-copy NCR forms). ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these hard copy forms, where available.

Form Name	Form Number
Application for Petition (Dependent Child)	F063-28-43
Child and Family Team (CFT) Plan	F063-25-806

CWS/CMS Forms

The following required forms may ***only*** be obtained in CWS/CMS. ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these CWS/CMS forms, where available.

Form Name	Form Number
Family Finding Efforts Case Summary	F063-25-656
Family Finding Referral	F063-25-720
Investigative Narrative	IN-INVDOC

Brochures

Brochures to distribute in conjunction with this procedure include:

Brochure Name	Brochure Number
None.	

LEGAL MANDATES

[ACL 17-65](#) requires social workers to identify and locate adult relatives within 30 days of a child's removal and preferential consideration must be given to relative placement requests. Counties are encouraged to also identify non-relative extended family members (NREFMs). Additionally, at the dispositional hearing, the juvenile court must make a finding that the social worker has exercised due diligence in identifying, locating, and notifying the child's relatives.

[ACL 18-42](#) reminds county welfare departments of their family finding requirements and role in supporting the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) transition to increase the number of youth in home-based care.

[ACL 23-12](#) communicates the requirements for participation in the Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support (EFFES) Program and the provisions available to support implementation through the establishment of The Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support.

[ACL 23-110](#) informs county welfare departments of new requirements regarding their agency's existing or anticipated policies, practices, and implementation of family finding efforts whenever a child is under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

[ACL 23-110E](#) amends the due date in the Reporting Requirements section of ACL 23-110 and to inform county child welfare agencies and probation departments of new requirements regarding each agency's existing or anticipated policies, practices, and implementation of family finding efforts.

[ACL 24-75](#) provides updates to the Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support (EFFES) Program which would enable counties that do not have a full-time family-finding worker due to insufficient caseloads to request authorization from CDSS to use funding to pay for the portion of a family-finding worker's time dedicated to family-finding activities.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 309](#) provides within thirty days of a child's removal from a parent/guardian, the social worker will use due diligence in the investigation to identify, locate, and notice relatives, including parent(s), of the child's removal.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 358\(b\)](#) provides the juvenile court must, during the dispositional hearing for a dependent child, make a finding as to whether the social worker has exercised due diligence in conducting the investigation to identify, locate and notify the child's relatives.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 362.05](#) provides that no state or local policy create barriers to a foster youth's participation in age-appropriate extracurricular, enrichment and social activities.

[Welfare and Institutions Code §§ 366, 366.21\(g\), 366.22\(a\), and WIC 366.3\(e\)](#) require Court to determine at Status Review hearings, for select foster youth, the progress towards identification of Important Persons and efforts made/actions necessary to maintain the youth's relationships with those individuals.

[Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) section \(§\) 366\(a\)\(1\)\(B\)](#) requires the Court to determine at Status Review hearings, for select foster youth and nonminor dependents, whether continued efforts - or active efforts in an ICWA case - to locate relatives and others who can provide support or placement has been made, the names of those identified, and the results of those efforts.

[Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) section \(§\) 366\(a\)\(1\)\(C\)](#) requires reasonable efforts must be made to maintain relationships between a child (age 10 years or older and has been in out-of-home placement for six months or longer) and individuals who are important to the child.

[Welfare and Institutions Code §§ 366.1\(k\), 366.3\(e\) and 16501.1\(j\)](#) require the social worker to ask select foster youth to identify Important Persons and provides that any other child may be asked to provide this information, when appropriate.

[Welfare and Institutions Code §§ 366.1, 366.21\(c\) and 366.3\(e and g\)](#) provide that the court report prepared for each Status Review hearing, regarding select foster youth, address the status of identification of Important Persons and efforts to establish/maintain the youth's relationships with those individuals.

[Welfare and Institutions Code §§ 366.21\(g–h\) and 366.22\(a\)](#) authorize Court to make appropriate orders to ensure select foster youth maintain relationships with Important Persons, when a permanent plan of return home, adoption, tribal customary adoption in the case of an Indian child, legal guardianship, placement with a fit and willing relative or another planned permanent living arrangement is ordered and/or a WIC § 366.26 hearing is calendared.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 366.26\(c\)\(3–4\)](#) requires foster youth receiving Permanent Placement (PP) services be asked to identify Important Persons in an effort to identify a prospective adoptive parent/legal guardian.

[Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) section \(§\) 366.26\(c\)\(1\)\(4\)](#), a child who is 10 years of age or older shall be asked to identify any individuals, other than the child's siblings, who are important to the child, in order to identify potential guardians, or, in the case of an Indian child, prospective tribal customary adoptive parents. The agency may ask any other child to provide that information, as appropriate.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 366.31\(e\)](#) provides that during review hearings for nonminor dependents no longer receiving court-ordered family reunification services and placed in a permanent plan of another planned permanent living arrangement, the court shall inquire about the progress being made to provide permanent connections with caring, committed adults.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 391](#) requires transitioning youth be provided information to assist in maintaining relationships with Important Persons.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 827\(a\)\(1\)\(K\)](#) allows members of the child's multidisciplinary teams, persons, or agencies providing treatment or supervision of the minor to review the case file.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 10609.4\(b\)](#) provides the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) prepared for select foster youth include information provided by those individuals identified as important to the youth.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 16500.1](#) provides that a primary goal of child protection is to ensure no child leave foster care without a life-long connection to a committed adult.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 16501.1\(g\)\(16\)](#) provides the Case Plan for a transitioning youth, age 16 and older, be developed with input from the youth's Important Persons, and include steps to ensure the youth has a connection to a caring adult.

[Welfare and Institutions Code § 16501.1\(j\)](#) provides the Case Plan for select foster youth identify Important Persons and actions necessary to maintain the youth's relationship with those individuals.

Memorandum of Understanding Between the County of Orange Social Services Agency and Seneca Family of Agencies for the Provision of Creating Family Connections Services (dated March 19, 2015) permits Seneca to inspect/review CFS case files to aid in Family Finding Efforts.

[California Rules of the Court, Rule 5.637\(d\)](#) provides that upon removal from the child's parent, guardian, or Indian custodian, the social worker has an ongoing responsibility to exercise due diligence to engage in family finding until the time the child is placed for adoption.