



Series: 300

Policy Name: Family Finders

Policy Number: 320

Regulations: F.S. 39.4015

Origination Date: 04/10/2023

Revision Date:

- I. Policy:** Florida Statute Chapter 39.4015 outlines the legislative intent of Family Finding, that each child in out of home care has the goal of finding a permanent home, whether achieved through reunification or finding other permanent connections, such as adoption or legal guardianship with a relative or non-relative who has a significant connection with the child. Additionally, while legal permanency is important to a child in out of home care, emotional permanency increases likelihood of achieving stability, well-being, and a successful transition to adulthood. Research consistently demonstrates that children placed with their family reduces trauma and placement disruptions and enhances prospects of reaching permanency when reunification cannot occur.

As outlined in Florida Statute 39.4015, The department, in collaboration with the community-based care lead agencies, shall begin family finding efforts as soon as a child is taken into custody of the department and throughout the duration of the case to engage with as many family members and fictive kin who may help to care for and support the child. These strategies include participating in family group decision making aimed at developing or supporting the family service plan, attending visitation, assist with transportation, provide respite or childcare services, and to provide actual kinship care.

- II. Procedure:** Every child in out of home care shall be afforded the advantages gained from family finding to establish caring long term or permanent connections, as well as establishing a network of long-term emotional support with family and other adults who may not be able to accept placement but wish to stay connected with the child.

- 1 a. The Family Finders Program will accept referrals through uRefer for children who are in out of home licensed care who are without family or community connections from the case managers.
- b. Upon receipt of a uRefer referral, Family Finders will accept or deny the referral within two business days in uRefer and will simultaneously inform the Dependency Case Manager and their supervisor by



email of the acceptance or denial. If there is a current waiting list, the Dependency Case Manager and Supervisor will be notified via email.

- c. If the referral was put on the waiting list, monthly updates will be sent by email to the dependency case manager and their supervisor to inform them that they have not been forgotten and they will be informed once the referral can be worked on.
 - d. Once the case is assigned, Family Finders will complete a file review of the referred children within five business days of approval of the referral. Within the five business days a Seneca search will be initiated.
 - e. Family Finders will email the Dependency Case Manager, their supervisor and the Guardian ad Litem with initial search results and get their written approval to proceed with contacting potential connections. All communication will be documented in FSFN. Case management will ensure they invite Family Finders to meetings such as MDT, PRT, sibling separation and other important meetings on cases assigned to the Family Finders workers.
 - f. Family Finders will reach out to potential connections through various methods (phone, text, email, social media, letters). All successful conversations will be sent by email to the Dependency Case Manager and their supervisor, for their information, as they are entered into FSFN. All failed attempts will be documented in FSFN.
 - g. Home studies – Can be completed on connections by the Family Finders workers if the connections or possible placement is in the Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast area with approval of case management. If needed Family Finders workers are able to transport for children assigned for purposes of connections and relationship building if approved by case management supervisor and the Director of Permanency and Well-Being.
2. Family Finder's Diligent efforts and case activities that will be completed on all cases:
 - a. Searching for and locating adult relatives and fictive kin.
 - b. Identifying and building positive connections between the child and the child's relatives and fictive kin.
 - c. Supporting the engagement of relatives and fictive kin in social service planning and delivery of services and creating a network of extended family support to assist in remedying the concerns that led to the child becoming involved with the child welfare system, when appropriate.
 - d. Maintaining family connections, when possible.
 - e. Keeping siblings together in care, when in the best interest of each child and when possible.
 3. Family Finder efforts are focused on exploring options for placement, to build connections for child(ren), and to identify placements/connections for siblings when applicable. Efforts we work on include the following:
 - a. Interview relatives, non-relatives
 - b. Interviews with children
 - c. SENECA and PEOPLE Search
 - d. ACCESS
 - e. FSFN Case Mining including reporter sources, present/impending danger plans, prior case history household members, collaterals, prior placement history, adoptions etc.
 - f. Vital Statistics for siblings/other parents
 - g. Local Clerk of Courts



- h. Social Media of parents and children (facebook, Instagram)
 - i. Google
 - j. School contact to identify emergency contacts, counselors, teachers, and other potentially important connections for child(ren)
 - k. Community connections such as neighbors, coaches, church
4. Case continual/ closure
- a. Three months of actively working the case and no connections or possible placement are made a summary will be sent to case management as to the barriers and the barriers will be documented in FSFN and the trackers.
 - b. After six months of Family Finders work and no connections and/or possible placement have not been located a meeting with the directors of Permanency and Well-Being will be held with the Director of the agency to review if the case should be put on hold, if the case is put on hold the worker will revisit the case in 3 months, this will allow more youth to be served by the program.
 - c. Once positive connections or a placement is identified and finalize for the youth assigned a note will be put into FSFN by the Family Finders worker and a case closure form will be completed and upload into FSFN and sent to the assigned case manager, supervisor and director, once approved by the director of Permanency and Well-Being.

DocuSigned by:
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Approved: _____
Carol Deloach, CEO