

# Collaborative Family Engagement:

Creating & Strengthening  
Lasting Connections



**TEXASCASA**  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

---

STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

---





## OUR VISION

We envision a safe and positive future for all Texas children.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of Texas CASA is to support local CASA volunteer advocacy programs and to advocate for effective public policy for children in the child protection system.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This manual is the product of much hard work, collaboration and effort, and would not have been made possible without the support of:

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES**  
**KEVIN CAMPBELL, FAMILY FINDING MODEL AUTHOR**

And a special thank you to everyone on the Texas CASA team.



STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE



# WELCOME

The word family means different things to different people. When you hear the word family, who or what comes to mind? For me, it is a blend of blood relatives, the friends that play an important role in my life and of course my CASA “work family.”

Family, no matter your definition, is important, and a life without some sense of family is a pretty lonely life. Too often, children in foster care are taken from the only family they know. In addition to the trauma they’ve already experienced due to abuse or neglect, they are often moved from placement to placement which creates instability. This lack of consistency – and lack of family connections and support – means that too often they are left to make their way through the system and deal with the challenges that ensue on their own. Not only that, but their families from which they were initially removed sometimes lack the support systems they need to work toward successful and sustainable reunification.



**Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) is an innovative partnership between CASA and Child Protective Services (CPS) that is built around the fact that children have many blood relatives and other important connections that can be identified and located, and engaged with – providing children and families with a dedicated support system that is meant to last even after CASA and CPS involvement ends.**

This manual will help you get started with CFE, or build off of the work you are already doing to find and engage families for children in foster care. You will read about the background of CFE, including its base in Kevin Campbell’s Family Finding model. You will also learn about CFE in practice: the importance of a team-based approach, engagement and connection tools, family meetings, mobilizing the child’s lifetime network and more.

At Texas CASA we believe in **The CASA Way**: We can achieve what others think is impossible, and each of us is an essential part of the solution. Now let’s dive in to this important work, so that more and more children and youth can be better connected to their families and other supportive adults – giving them a better sense of safety and belonging both during their time in state care and beyond.

Thank you for all that you do,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicki Spriggs". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Vicki Spriggs**  
Texas CASA CEO

**COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:**  
CREATING & STRENGTHENING LASTING CONNECTIONS

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**1. INTRODUCTION TO COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT** ..... 8

    Introduction ..... 8

    What Is Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE)? ..... 9

    Values & Core Concepts of CFE ..... 13

    CFE: More is Better ..... 15

    Why CFE Works ..... 16

    Practicing Differently ..... 20

**2. COMPONENTS OF CFE** ..... 22

    Introduction ..... 22

    Collaborate ..... 22

    Cultivate ..... 25

    Convene ..... 26

    Connect ..... 28

**3. COLLABORATE: CFE TEAM INFORMATION** ..... 29

    Introduction ..... 29

    Why a Team? ..... 29

    Who is on the CFE Team? ..... 30

    Alignment in the CFE Team ..... 31

**4. CULTIVATE: TOOLS FOR CONNECTION & HEALING** ..... 33

    Introduction ..... 33

    A Note on Confidentiality ..... 33

    Engagement & Connection Tools ..... 34

    Searches & Internet Tools ..... 46

<b>5. CONVENE: FAMILY MEETINGS</b>	51
Introduction	51
Philosophy of Family Meetings	51
The Art of Inviting & Making Contact with the Family	54
Structure of Family Meetings	55
Biggest Unmet Needs Statement	56
<b>6. CONNECT: THE LIFETIME NETWORK</b>	57
Introduction	57
What Is a Lifetime Network?	57
Tools to Support the Lifetime Network	60
<b>7. ADDITIONAL CFE CONCEPTS &amp; TOOLS</b>	67
Introduction	67
Getting Started with CFE	67
CFE & CASA	69
CFE & CPS/SSCC	70
A CFE Success Story	72
<b>8. APPENDIX</b>	73
Glossary of Terms	73
Handouts	81
Additional References & Resources	122



# EEU

**Collaborative Family Engagement**

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) is a promising practice in the child protection system in Texas that emphasizes connection and community for children and families. This manual will help you get started or continue your work with CFE. Whether you're a CASA volunteer, brand new to CASA and CFE, or a tenured Child Protection Services worker, this manual is intended as

a collection of tools and strategies that can be used in your case practice and advocacy. Throughout this manual, you will learn about the history and background of Collaborative Family Engagement, including its roots in Kevin Campbell's Family Finding™ model, as well as how and why CFE works to improve the lives of the youth and families. This manual also provides Handouts, exercises and resources necessary to best practice Collaborative Family Engagement.

### CFE IN ACTION

*During a family meeting, a youth in care identified her horse trainer, Donna, as an important connection to her, through the use of a CFE tool called the Connectedness Map. Donna then came to the next family meeting, where the youth's Biggest Unmet Needs Statement was reviewed, and the trainer put herself forward as an option for legal permanency. The youth now lives with Donna, maintaining her connection with her mother. "Without CFE, she (the youth) would not be where she is. **CFE has literally saved her life and her future!**" – Karen F, CASA Supervisor*

### HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Building off the work that you are already doing to find and engage families, Collaborative Family Engagement offers a way for CASA and CPS to do this work together, providing new tools in your toolbox. This manual is intended to be used in conjunction with Texas CASA's Collaborative Family Engagement e-learning curriculum and training, and will provide additional guidance, resources and support.

As you read and learn about Collaborative Family Engagement, please keep in mind the following:

1. The strategies and best practices of CFE build directly from Kevin Campbell's Family Finding™ model, and are adapted to Texas specifically.
2. According to the Kids Count Data Center, the United States foster care system is comprised of 48% females and 52% males. To avoid sexist language in this manual, we will alternate between masculine and feminine pronouns, or use the more inclusive, gender-neutral "they/them" whenever possible.



3. For stylistic purposes, we use the words child(ren) and youth synonymously and to refer to all those served by the child welfare system (all people from infancy to age 17).
4. Please note that throughout this manual, CPS is used to denote all child protective service staff, inclusive of Community Based Care providers/Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC).

The tools within this guide will help you navigate the CFE process and answer any questions you might have along the way. You can refer to this manual as needed, or go chapter by chapter to get a holistic view. This manual is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to Collaborative Family Engagement, its history and background, roots in Family Finding™, key elements, values and core concepts.
- Chapter 2 dives into the four key components of CFE (known as The 4Cs of CFE).
- Chapter 3 looks at the concept and importance of teaming (Collaborate).
- Chapter 4 examines the many creative and practical tools used in CFE (Cultivate).
- Chapter 5 provides an in-depth look at the structure and elements of family meetings (Convene).
- Chapter 6 looks at how to establish a lifetime network (Connect).
- Chapter 7 wraps up the manual with additional information and a CFE success story.

### **MANUAL ON THE GO**

On the go and don't have room to carry this full manual? Check to see if your office has the CFE Manual On the Go (MOTG), which is a condensed version of this guide with information on each of The 4Cs including tool instructions, in a pocket size format. Includes a white board page and marker on the back, for tools to be completed 'on the go'.

## **WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT (CFE)?**

Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) is a structured approach to engage caring and positive adults to support children who are in the foster care system, with the goal of ensuring that all children have meaningful connections during their time in foster care, and after. CFE establishes a true team between CASA and Child Protective Services (CPS) to build networks of caring, safe and positive people for children, parents and their families. This CFE team shares the work of finding and engaging the family and models the need for teamwork and collaboration. CFE is a connection informed approach to CASA advocacy and CPS case practice: focused on maintaining, building or strengthening children's connection to their family, community, culture, and identity. This is whole child best interest advocacy.



## HOW WE GOT HERE: COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN TEXAS

In October 2010, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), in collaboration with Texas CASA and Child Trends, was awarded a five-year Diligent Recruitment Grant by the United States federal government. CASA and DFPS used the grant to find connections for long-staying youth and children in foster care to help identify permanent homes for them.<sup>1</sup> This program began in 2011 and ran until 2015; during that time, Texas CASA and DFPS worked collaboratively to identify permanency (reunification, adoption or guardianship) for the children. The outcomes for the Diligent Recruitment Grant found that Texas youth served under

the grant were 6.7 times more likely to leave foster care to permanency than children not in the grant-funded program.<sup>2</sup> The Diligent Recruitment Grant thus laid the groundwork for CFE in Texas by recognizing the need for connections and permanency for all children in the foster care system, not just for those in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) of the state.

The foundation for both Diligent Recruitment and Collaborative Family Engagement is a better understanding of what is needed to heal from trauma. Developed in 2001, Family Finding™ is a practice used in child welfare worldwide to make connections for children in the foster care system. Family Finding™ is rooted in the **right to know** principle: that family has a right to know about what happened to their loved ones when separated from them. Research shows that not knowing what happens to family members during trauma, either personal or societal, can lead to a traumatic impact in families for generations to come.<sup>3</sup>

The International Red Cross' Geneva Convention IV, Article 26 states that families dispersed during a war or conflict have a right to make inquiries into the whereabouts and well-being of their family members. This right to know principle became federal law in the United States with the passing of 2008's Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. This law requires that state agencies notify extended family members within 30 days of children being placed in foster care.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Texas CASA and DFPS focused in on four specific populations: older youth (children older than 9 years old), children of color, children with special physical or behavioral health needs, and sibling groups. In other words, they focused in on groups that typically have the most difficulty finding permanent placement or adoptive homes in the current system. For more information, see the 2017 Evaluation of the Collaborative Family Engagement Pilot Report, published by the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> For more information on trauma-based research and approaches, see the Resource section of the Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> Section 103 of the law, Notification of Relatives, states: "...within 30 days after the removal of a child from the custody of the parent or parents of the child, the State shall exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents), subject to exceptions due to family or domestic violence,..."

CFE is Texas' way to uphold the right to know principle. CFE is a philosophical shift in the way we serve children in the foster care system and their families. It is not "business as usual," which most often looks like an overworked and well-meaning caseworker becoming a "doer-of-all-things" for a child. Instead, it is a team-based approach that places the youth and their family at the center of the process in order to respond with urgency to what is the crisis of the child's (and their family's) life: foster care. From a lens of how to heal from trauma, CFE values and seeks connections and relationships, all critical components necessary for addressing trauma. A child brought into the system may "be safe" but may not "feel safe" without being connected and in relationships with a trusted, caring adult.

*CFE encourages youth and families to advocate for themselves, and aims to establish a **lifetime network** of family and community members who can support the child or family.*

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE

The history of modern social welfare policy and foster care in the United States has its roots in 17th century English concepts of welfare. Some of the core beliefs of the early welfare system included:

- Families had the sole responsibility of care and welfare of children and youth.
- Families had to find their own solutions to poverty, family separation, etc.
- The state gave out harsh punishments, like debtors prisons, for families who could not adequately fulfill their duties to their children and themselves.

British colonists spread these ideas about welfare throughout the globe during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In former British colonies like the United States and Australia, non-white, immigrant and indigenous populations suffered the most under these policies, with native children being forcibly removed from families in the name of assimilation into dominant culture.

While the modern child welfare system has abandoned such practices as "orphan trains" and Indian boarding schools, the idea that some families and communities are unfit to care for their own persists. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, we saw the rise of large bureaucratic solutions to poverty and child welfare, including public education, public health, social services, family courts, juvenile justice, etc. The 21<sup>st</sup> century foster care system, while vastly improved, still tends to make the assumption that families of youth, particularly those of color, lack the capacity to safely and reliably care for their own.

Collaborative Family Engagement challenges these assumptions about who can best care for a youth by exploring community and family connections. With CFE, we see that it's not just institutionalized services that can provide solutions. By moving the family, community and tribe to the center of the process, we can return personal agency and empowerment to children, families and communities and find creative solutions to creating sustainable, lifetime networks that provide a safety net long after systemic intervention ends.

## KEVIN CAMPBELL'S FAMILY FINDING™ MODEL

Collaborative Family Engagement has its foundation in Kevin Campbell's Family Finding™ model. Campbell is an internationally known youth permanency expert and founder of *The Center for Family Finding and Connectedness*; he developed the Family Finding™ model in 2001 as a response to what he saw as the failures of the modern foster care system. Campbell's model is now used worldwide. Family Finding™ was one of the influencers of 2008's Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act that codified into federal law "intensive family-finding efforts, including work to reestablish relationships and explore ways to find a permanent family placement for children".<sup>5</sup>

### Campbell's Family Finding™ Model Explores Three Key Questions:

1. *Do the longest-waiting children and youth in foster care systems have a family?*
2. *Can a busy caseworker, CASA volunteer or other helping professional find them?*
3. *Finally, if there is a family, would they be concerned enough to offer help?*

With these three questions, Campbell highlights some of the core assumptions of conventional child protection services: that a child does not have anyone besides the system itself, that often caseworkers are the only people capable of finding appropriate living arrangements for children in protective services, and that foster care is a long-term solution rather than a short-term one. **With the Family Finding™ model, and in turn CFE, Campbell pushes us to think about the "vital power of relationship – with parents, extended family, community or tribe – and our hard-wired need for human connections steeped in trust, unequivocal love and the security of permanence."**

### Campbell's Family Finding™ Model is Built On Four Core Principles:

1. Every youth has an immediate and extended family, and this family can be found if we try.
2. Loneliness can be devastating, even dangerous, and is experienced by most children and youth in the foster care system.
3. A permanent, meaningful connection to family and caring adults helps a youth to develop a sense of belonging and hope.
4. The single factor most closely associated with positive outcomes for children is a meaningful, lifelong connection to a family and a community of support.

As a way to address these **core principles**, Campbell offers the **Seven Steps of Family Finding™**.<sup>6</sup> These steps include:

1. **Engaging Youth and Family:** First, caseworkers and volunteers, with the agreement of the youth, work to identify and explore relationships of affection and safety with relatives and non-relatives who could be invited into relationships of support.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bills/110th-congress/house-bill/6893>

<sup>6</sup> As discussed in this and future chapters, CFE has adapted these 7 steps into 4 core directives. See Chapter 2 for more information.

2. **Search:** Second, caseworkers and volunteers use search tools to find and locate family members.
3. **Preparation:** Caseworkers and volunteers then meet with interested family members and other important adults to share information to help prepare them for being a part of the lifetime network.
4. **Planning and Decision Making:** With this next step, plans are made to support the youth, and calendars are created to establish concrete activities to support the child and introduce the concept of the lifetime network.
5. **Lifetime Network:** Once the lifetime network is formed, it becomes the core planning, doing and supporting force in the youth's life, advocating for educational success, health care, and normative community/social experiences.
6. **Healing and Development:** After the lifetime network is established and put into action, the network members continue to seek and support the youth's well-being while in foster care, alongside relational and legal permanency.
7. **Legal Permanency:** Finally, the lifetime network works to establish legal permanency for the youth with safe and caring adult(s), assisting in creating permanency plans, recruiting resources and providing active support for those offering permanency.

## VALUES & CORE CONCEPTS OF CFE

The Collaborative Family Engagement approach shares Campbell's emphasis on the community and family as vital stakeholders in the child's well-being while in foster care. Like Campbell, CFE believes that:

1. Every child has a family and has a right to know and be connected to them.
2. All family members deserve to be heard and provided the chance to show themselves as safe and caring.
3. Every child deserves to thrive, and children thrive in healthy, positive relationships.
4. Every child deserves to be surrounded, both while in foster care and for their lifetime, by caring continuous connections.
5. Every child deserves relational permanence and a permanent home, preferably with their own family.
6. Connections and relationships are critical for well-being and feeling safe and hopeful. Healing from hurt happens in connection with others.
7. Every family is unique, complex and has its own challenges; challenges can be overcome and resilience can be built.
8. Collaboration is important for families and the professionals supporting them, and helps to build shared commitment, participation and understanding.
9. Family meetings provide the space for families and networks to have voice.
10. Family is defined by the individual and is not limited to blood or adoptive relations.

These beliefs lead to the following **core concepts of CFE**:

1. A **collaborative**, coordinated effort between CASA, CPS, providers and others in engaging and involving families is beneficial for all involved.
2. **Engagement** means developing trust-based relationships with others - children, parents, families, natural supports, professionals, volunteers and providers.
3. Developing and supporting **networks** is necessary for ensuring safety and supports for the child, parents and the family.
4. **Family meetings** are where the real work happens: casework, planning, healing of the family, forming the network, strengthening it, and moving the network to action.
5. Giving the youth and family a role and **voice** in developing goals and plans is a trauma-informed approach.

Finally, CFE and Texas CASA/CPS believe that:

1. Child protection interventions are time limited and specific. Services do not equate to safety.
2. How we do our work is as important as the work we do.
3. Families are the experts on their own lives.
4. Families can change.
5. Families and children deserve to be treated with respect.

## THE 4Cs OF CFE: COLLABORATE, CULTIVATE, CONVENE & CONNECT

CFE really comes down to four elements, otherwise known as The 4Cs of CFE. They are:

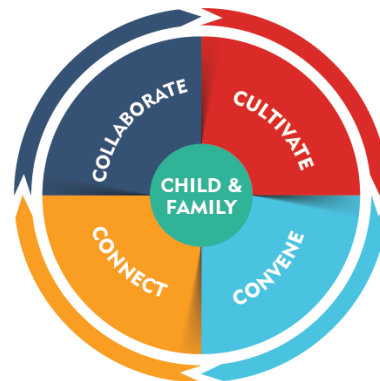
**Collaborate:** CFE uses teams and greater collaboration between systems to involve families and build networks.

**Cultivate:** CFE uses connection, engagement and search tools to find and engage families.

**Convene:** Families are brought together and involved in the process through the use of family meetings.

**Connect:** The end goal is connections and permanency; a lifetime network of supportive relationships is formed for the child and their parents.

### The 4Cs of CFE



**If you remember nothing else from this manual, remember The 4Cs of CFE: Collaborate, Cultivate, Convene and Connect.**

## CFE: MORE IS BETTER

We learned from our final evaluation of CFE, that the more The 4Cs of CFE were utilized (meaning the more CFE work that happened), the better the outcomes were for children and families.<sup>7</sup> With this important learning, and with the desire to do meaningful and impactful advocacy work with children, a definition of what it truly means to do CFE was developed. That is as follows:

### **Collaborate:**

1. A child/family has been identified and agreed upon with CASA, CPS/SSCC to actively apply CFE strategies (The 4Cs of CFE)
2. The CASA volunteer or staff assigned has been trained in CFE.
3. Sharing of information between the CFE Team occurs and a plan is developed with a shared workload.

### **Cultivate:**

1. Three or more of any of the CFE tools are completed with the/for the child, parent, and family/fictive kin. (Of the three tools, at least one tool needs to be attempted with/for child, and one tool with a parent.) If there are multiple children on the case, a best practice is that a tool should be completed/attempted with each child.
2. Contact with parent/s (attempted or completed).

### **Convene:**

1. A meeting between family and professionals in which family and support network members are invited and have the opportunity to participate in planning and decision making. Plans of support for the child and/or parents are developed.
2. In advance of the family meeting, family is contacted or attempted to be contacted and invited. One or more family meetings were attempted or completed, informally or formally.

### **Connect:**

1. Through the CFE work completed, one or more connections for the child/family have been found, made, or strengthened and a plan is in place to grow or maintain these connections for the child.

---

<sup>7</sup> This is from our CFE Evaluation Final Outcomes Report, citation is: Osborne, C., Wu, E., & Huffman, J. (July 2021). Collaborative Family Engagement Evaluation Final Outcomes Report – Fiscal Year 2021. Child and Family Research Partnership, LBJ School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin.

# WHY CFE WORKS

## CFE AS A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Every child in the child welfare system has experienced trauma, whether from abuse and/or neglect, or as a result of separation from their families and community after removal from their homes. Numerous research articles and studies detail the impact of trauma on developing children, which causes both short- and long-term problems, including difficulties with learning, ongoing behavior problems, impaired relationships, and poor social and emotional competence. A trauma-informed care approach pulls from the work of Dr. Bruce Perry and Dr. Karyn Purvis. For more information on both these scholars' work, see the Additional Resources in the Appendix. Perhaps the biggest tragedy is that these children often experience additional trauma once in the child protection system itself, which is something CASA volunteers and CPS caseworkers see across Texas every day.

Given that traumatic experiences affect a child's biological, psychological and social development, CFE takes a trauma-informed approach to working with children and families. This approach includes:

- Recognizing that children heal from trauma through relationships, working to create a network of caring, safe and supportive people for the youth that is immediate and ongoing.
- Responding urgently to the needs of the child, whether that is removal from the home, lingering in out-of-home care, or potentially aging out of foster care without relational or legal permanency.
- Using CFE tools that build rapport, trust and connection through playful engagement.
- Promoting connections that provide healing, safety, healthy attachment, positive development, feelings of security and happiness, all of which help regulate emotions, impulses and recovery.
- Recognizing that services do not necessarily mean safety, and that children and parents can only feel safe and thrive when in positive relationships.
- Using CFE activities/tools supports playful engagement, a more child centric way to build connection.

## CFE AS A CONNECTION INFORMED APPROACH

Building upon the trauma-informed approach above, CFE is then an approach to case practice and CASA advocacy that is *connection informed*. This means that the fundamental truth of the need for human connection and belonging is central and paramount to our work. Because children heal from trauma through relationships with others, we cannot be trauma informed, without also being connection informed and centered.



## AUTHENTIC FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE

It's evident from the name Collaborative Family Engagement that *family engagement* is what this work is all about and is key to building desired connections and finding relational and/or legal permanency. Understanding that connection to family can be a critical component to successful outcomes for children in the foster care system, CASA and CPS strive to maintain and rebuild lasting family connections for children. The overarching goals of family engagement are to avoid removing children from their biological family whenever possible, and to help children achieve strong connectivity and permanency faster, preferably with relatives or fictive kin.

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway,<sup>8</sup> true family engagement involves:

- Setting goals, developing case plans, making joint decisions and working with families to ensure their child's safety, permanence and well-being.
- Involving children and youth in decisions as age appropriate, as well as adult family members to support the development of lasting relationships.
- Empowering families by lifting up their voices throughout the child welfare continuum.
- Promoting family buy-in, as well as promoting the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families.

CFE's focus is to always start this process by engaging the family that we know of now, and searching/finding only when necessary. Valuable time can be saved and much learned from talking to the people we are able to at the start of the CFE work. Even if someone is deemed "inappropriate", too difficult to reach or are not currently available, efforts can still be made to reach them. An example of this is if a parent is incarcerated. Parents who are incarcerated are not physically able to be present, but they still have valuable information to share, and may potentially be able to offer support or a connection to the child. For more information on contacting incarcerated parents, including a sample letter, please see Handout #8 in the Appendix.

Remember that CFE also involves important adult connections who may not be biologically related to the child. True or authentic family engagement is important for children and youth, parents and families, and is a critical component of the CFE approach. Family engagement is to be present with the child, parent and their family, knowing that trust and rapport are built with time and consistency. Dr. Amelia Frank Meyer says this best with "proximity builds empathy" (2023).

By starting with engagement of the family from the beginning of CFE work, we demonstrate through our actions that we want to know the family's story from their point of view, not through a summary of CPS or CASA documents. By use of CFE tools, we are able to help the family identify for themselves people that they believe can provide positive support. In addition to helping CASA and CPS engage families, the CFE tools can help the child or parent recognize who the significant connections are in their life and help them try to rebuild those relationships when beneficial.

---

<sup>8</sup> See the Family Engagement Inventory on their website, at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/FEI/benefits/>

## AUTHENTIC COMMITMENT

*At its core, authentic commitment is about real engagement with children, youth and families. Here are some ways you can model true engagement:*

### **Engagement is:**

- Being present with the person
- Being available for the person
- Being on time for appointments and putting your devices away
- Listening
- Asking questions
- Showing empathy, concern and care
- Offering support
- Finding out what their wishes, needs, desires, plans, thoughts are
- Encouraging their voice to drive the process
- Accepting tokens as able (offer of coffee, tea, etc.)
- Recognizing the positives
- Providing honesty, transparency (as is age appropriate)
- Sharing information about yourself that is relevant and appropriate

### **Engagement is not:**

- Typing notes during the conversation
- Checking your phone
- Being late
- Missing appointments frequently
- Being distracted
- Being intimidating via direct interviewing
- Dominating the conversation
- Getting through your checklist
- Speaking vaguely or being unclear

### **Engagement will:**

- Take time
- Be challenging sometimes
- Take multiple conversations and interactions

## BENEFITS OF CFE

### **CFE Benefits Children By:**

- Providing connections to family and other supportive adults while they are in foster care.
- Supporting the achievement of relational and legal permanence.
- Maintaining important relationships despite physical separation from them.
- Reducing the likelihood of experiencing psychological stress due to loneliness or isolation.
- Improving feelings of self-worth.
- Experiencing normalcy while in foster care.
- Facilitating easier transitions back to home, family and community when reunification is possible.
- Helping youth who may age out of foster care with a more successful transition into adulthood.
- More likely to live with kin vs. non-kin while in foster care.<sup>9</sup>
- More likely to reunify with their parents.

### **CFE Benefits Parents and Adults By:**

- Supporting positive connections with kin and fictive kin.
- Providing more social connections.
- Providing emotional resources, such as companionship and decision-making assistance.
- Providing greater social support, which, in turn, creates a greater likelihood of reunification, lowers chances of subsequent neglect and provides a safety net for children.
- Ensuring accountability.

<sup>9</sup> Osborne, C., Wu, E., & Huffman, J. (July 2021). Collaborative Family Engagement Evaluation -Final Outcomes Report – Fiscal Year 2021. Child and Family Research Partnership, LBJ School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin.

### **CFE Benefits Child Protection Staff By:**

- Strengthening relationships with families.
- Promoting family buy-in to the case and service plan.
- Building family decision-making skills.
- Increasing participation and attendance at family meetings.
- Creating a shared workload for the case.
- Strengthening relationships with CASA volunteers and staff.

### **CFE Benefits CASA Volunteers and Staff By:**

- Strengthening relationships with youth and families.
- Creating a shared workload for the case.
- Securing a better understanding of youth's needs and best interests.
- Strengthening advocacy efforts.
- Improving relationships with CPS.

## **ENGAGING FATHERS**

Kevin Campbell points out a lack of engagement with fathers is especially pronounced in low-income families, where children are often exposed to greater environmental stressors, such as violence in neighborhoods or sub-standard school resources, and are more likely to face intrusive interventions when child welfare becomes involved in their lives.

Although all children have a biological father, it's not uncommon for fathers to be "out of the picture." The CFE process assures fathers and the paternal family are not left out. CFE engagement with fathers leads to further connections with the paternal family, and an opportunity to explore support and resources from ALL of a youth's family. CFE assures the legal rights of both parents - mother and father - are met, and for the child, all family support and possibility is explored.<sup>10</sup> CFE aligns with DFPS' Fatherhood Initiative and efforts made by CPS to engage with fathers to be more involved in their children's lives.<sup>11</sup>

Studies have shown an association between support from a nonresident father and shorter stays in foster care. Literature points to effective engagement strategies including talking to fathers early on, asking about their lives, experiences and parenting, and seeking this information from fathers directly.

---

<sup>10</sup> Campbell notes that we must keep in mind that engaging with fathers is often a difficult topic, particularly if mothers and children are fleeing a father because of relationship violence, abuse, etc. Because of this, mothers and children/youth involved with child protection services need to be approached in a sensitive manner and offered concrete reassurances on these issues as they may have real fears about risks that could be re-introduced into their lives from father who they have distanced themselves from.

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Doing\\_Business/Purchased\\_Client\\_Services/Regional\\_CPS\\_Contracts/documents/Fatherhood\\_Resources.pdf](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Doing_Business/Purchased_Client_Services/Regional_CPS_Contracts/documents/Fatherhood_Resources.pdf)

# PRACTICING DIFFERENTLY

## THE SINGLE STORY & UNPACKING THE “NOBODY”

In child protection work, we risk using a single, and often biased lens without perhaps fully trying to understand the complicated stories of the families of the youth we work with. The “single story” is the easier and faster way to do casework, but it can be damaging to the person being seen through this lens. Single stories are filled with stereotypes and bias, and keep us from truly seeing the person in front of us as a full human being. The CFE process attempts to replace the single story with a more rich, complicated narrative, by placing the child, their parents and family at its center, as well as hearing and honoring their stories.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to avoiding the single story, we also need to “unpack the nobody.” Parents are asked during an investigation and prior to removal about who can care for the child. Often the response is “no one.” There are many reasons for this answer, including guilt, shame, embarrassment, anger, burned bridges, fear and disappointment — many of which are trauma responses. Through the CFE approach we “unpack the nobody” to open up all possibilities for the child and the case. For more information on how to do this “unpacking,” see Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

## CULTURAL HUMILITY & BIAS

It’s also vitally important to keep in mind that we are often working with families who may have different cultural backgrounds than our own, and that the ability to communicate and work effectively across cultural lines is central to the success of engaging with families. Regardless of whether or not we identify as the same race, socio-economic class, religion, gender or sexual orientation as the families and youth we’re working with, our life experiences and stories will almost always have been different. Learning to approach these connections with an open mind, and with a mindfulness of the bias we may bring to our assessments and understanding is key to building trust, engaging with family and addressing best interests, safety and permanency.

In many Texas family courts, our judges keep a list of questions at their bench, designed to help them “protect against implicit bias.” This list of questions reminds them to pause and ask themselves:

- What **assumptions** have I made about people based on their cultural identity, profession or background?
- How might my assumptions **influence** my decision-making?
- How have I **challenged** any assumptions I might have made based on cultural identity, profession or background?

---

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the idea of the “single story” and how to escape it, see author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s 2009 TED Talk at [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)

In addition to asking yourself the above questions, you can also put the following practices to use to help you practice cultural humility and combat implicit bias while doing CFE:

- Seek to understand, rather than to be understood by, the families you're collaborating with.
- Listen more deeply.
- Seek out context.
- Inquire respectfully: pace or frame questions so that families receive the question as compassionate inquiry and not as inquisition.
- Enter into conversations with openness and trust.
- Be adaptable to difference.
- **See the family as expert of their lives.**

Practicing cultural humility empowers not only the children and family we work with, but also empowers us at every step of our journey to search for, engage with and effectively include family members in the planning and decision making for their loved ones in foster care. For more information on how to practice cultural humility, see Handout #6 in the Appendix.



### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we explore further the key concepts and components of Collaborative Family Engagement, known as The 4Cs of CFE, that were introduced earlier in this manual: Collaborate, Cultivate, Convene and Connect. Each component will then be broken down in subsequent chapters with their corresponding tools and activities.

### COLLABORATE

Many things can be accomplished by working together. We all acknowledge that professionals in the child protection system have specific roles, responsibilities, policies and guiding principles. These should not be reasons, however, to thwart or hinder working together to best serve children and families in need. CFE brings CASA and CPS together as early as possible to share information, identify needs and goals and forge a plan.

#### CFE IN ACTION

*“We are seeing a much stronger emphasis by CPS and CASA exploring positive connections with family and kin. During our FGC meetings, everyone has been asking more questions about possible relatives/kin and digging deeper to identify and find them. It is exciting to anticipate the outcome of this increased effort to build a supportive network for children. – Dawn K., Meeting Facilitator*

The CASA volunteer and CPS worker are the first members of the CFE team and demonstrate a collaborative approach to addressing and meeting case needs. The CFE team grows in collaborative efforts as attorneys, providers, teachers, family and community members are invited and agree to help to meet the needs identified. CFE strives to increase collaborative-based practice from the initial investigation and removal to case closure using teaming and increased connection to the community. Evaluation of CFE has found increased communication, cooperation and stronger working relationships between CASA and CPS.

In addition, CFE helps CASA and CPS to maintain and build a strong working relationship. When implemented appropriately, CPS caseworkers have experienced that closer collaboration with CASA volunteers can help ease their workload burden related to family engagement.

## The Participatory Continuum

A participatory continuum is a very clear way to gauge how organizations, persons, or families might experience their participation or work together. Below is a continuum that illustrates how an organization might engage with a family.

<b>Co-option</b>	Token representatives are chosen from the family and community, but have no real input or power.
<b>Compliance</b>	Tasks are assigned with incentives; staff/case manager decide agenda and direct the process.
<b>Consultation</b>	Parent(s), youth, family and community member's opinions are asked; staff/case manager analyze and decide course of action.
<b>Cooperation</b>	Parent(s), youth, family and community members work together with staff/case manager to determine priorities; responsibility remains with staff/case manager.
<b>Co-learning</b>	Parent(s), youth, family and community members and staff/case manager share their knowledge to create a new understanding and work together to form action plans with outside facilitation.
<b>Collective Action</b>	Parent(s), youth, family and community members set their own agenda and mobilize to carry it forward in the absence of outside initiators and facilitators and with the ultimate goal of legal permanency.



In traditional casework, organizations tend to work on the first three levels of the participatory continuum (co-option, compliance or consultation), giving families only a token voice in the process or ignoring their voices all together.



Here is the same continuum but with a focus on the collaboration between CASA and CPS:

<b>Co-option</b>	CPS and CASA work together on a case, but neither finds value in the other’s input.
<b>Compliance</b>	CPS makes decisions concerning the course of the case and directs the process. CASA has some opportunity for input but only because of policy or legal mandate.
<b>Consultation</b>	CPS asks CASA’s opinion concerning the course of the case and what is needed and should be done. CPS analyzes and decides course of action for planning and decision-making.
<b>Cooperation</b>	CPS and CASA work together to determine needs, priorities, best interests and course action for the case. CPS takes primary responsibility in decision-making.
<b>Co-learning</b>	CPS and CASA share knowledge, information and perspective to create a new understanding and work together to form plans and actions to meet needs and best interests.
<b>Collective Action</b>	CPS and CASA work together in case planning and meeting the best interests of the child. <sup>15</sup>

13 This Participatory Continuum model comes from a 2013 PLA session on Family Finding™.



## CULTIVATE

Collaborative Family Engagement provides CASA volunteers and CPS caseworkers with a number of creative tools to cultivate a support network for children and parents involved with the child welfare system.

### CONNECTION & ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Connection and engagement tools are used to engage children and parents in an interactive process to identify family and fictive kin. Whereas traditional interviewing techniques may be intimidating, particularly to children, mapping tools such as Mobility Mapping or Connect Cards offer a creative alternative to interviewing that can enhance the relationships, gain trust and gather information and insight.<sup>14</sup>

Search tools include Seneca Search, Family Connections, Find Families in Mexico (FFIM), the assistance of the Mexican Consulates, and Internet/social media searches. These search tools are in addition to the Diligent Search and Quick Finds searches that CPS has available to them. Reviewing case records, or case mining, is another common tool used by caseworkers and CASA volunteers to gather the names of family and fictive kin.

Tools used in CFE are listed below, and will be explained in further detail throughout this manual.

Tool	Description
Seneca Search	Search tool used to identify and locate family members.
Find Families in Mexico	Search tool used to identify and locate family members in Mexico.
Genogram	Visual representation tool of family tree used to map family and fictive kin relationships.
Ecomap	Visual representation tool with the child or parent at the center; surrounding circles map different spheres of influence with important people from each sphere listed.
Connectedness Map	Visual representation tool with the child or parent at the center, surrounded by connections. If few connections are listed, this indicates an urgent need for connections.
Circles of Trust	Visual representation engagement tool with circles representing connections to the child or parent, who is at the center. Circles are placed in proximity to represent closeness to the child.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on these tools, see Chapter 4.

Tool	Description
Mobility Map	A visual timeline in which the child or parent illustrates and reflects on important people and events at each place they've lived.
Three Houses	A visual tool that helps the child or parent think about and express what is working well in their life, what they are worried about, what their hopes and dreams are.
Tree of Life	Visual representation tool in which the child draws their hopes, dreams, gifts, people and other important things in the areas they think of as they fit on a tree.
Rapid Appraisal	Brainstorming tool in which participants create an inventory of resources for all participants to help them determine their role in the safety and permanency planning process.
Connect & Engage 100	Brainstorming tool in which participants quickly think of 100 ways to support and engage the child and decide which of these things they can commit to doing; an action plan is created from this list.
Connect Cards	A deck of cards with fun, silly and engaging questions on them. Can be used to play any traditional card game.
Family Connections	A web based program for searching for people and making genograms. There are varying levels of use of this program depending on the need of the user.

## CONVENE

Family meetings are the heart of the CFE approach, as this is where the real work happens, when the family, fictive kin and CFE team come together. In these meetings, the CFE team works collaboratively to meet the child's immediate needs when they are in foster care; and plan and prepare for permanency, progressively engaging family and fictive kin connections in the process. CFE family meetings have some unique agenda items and guidelines, but are encouraged to be incorporated into the CPS family meeting (such as the Family Group Conference, Permanency Conference, Circle of Support, Single Case Plan) whenever possible. The following table outlines the basic meeting structures and key activities that take place at each meeting. Each county establishes guidelines for the timeline of when each meeting should occur, and the CFE team can often adjust these timelines based on the need of the child/family.



CFE Meeting Type	Timeframe	Purpose	Key Activities
<b>First Family Meeting</b>	Within 45 days of removal (Often at Family Group Conferences)	Share information and develop the Biggest Unmet Needs Statement for the youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define the biggest unmet need for each child in the case</li> <li>Develop the family service plan and/ or identify ways for connections to support service plan</li> <li>Use CFE tools to identify other potential connections (as needed)</li> </ul>
<b>Second Family Meeting</b>	Within 60-180 days of removal (Often at Permanency Conference)	Develop ideas of support and/ or action plans to meet the identified biggest unmet needs of the child and support the family in completing the service plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop plan of support for connections to assist family with completing service plan, and to meet unmet need statement of child</li> <li>Develop child plan of service</li> </ul>
<b>Third Family Meeting</b>	Around 180 days after removal	Confirm connections who are committed to becoming a part of the lifetime support network for the family meet; revise plans of support as needed and ensure the support network is sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit to a lifetime of support for the child or family</li> <li>A network member co-facilitates the meeting and network members take responsibility for support planning, when possible</li> <li>Ensure that support is sustainable</li> <li>Calendar</li> </ul>

**CFE Family Meetings Facilitators & Facilitation Style**

In family meetings for a CFE case, CPS meeting facilitators, who normally conduct CPS Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) meetings, are trained to schedule and administer the CFE meetings along with a co-facilitator, who may be a CASA staff or volunteer not assigned to the case. Local CASA staff and volunteers are encouraged to be trained as co-facilitators. Section 4.G.iii of the CASA/DFPS MOU stipulates that CASA staff or volunteers may assist and support in family meetings.

A key feature of the CFE family meetings is the facilitation style used at the meetings. The physical set up of a meeting is done in a holistic way by placing chairs in a circle or semi-circle, without any tables, to create a more open environment among participants, whenever possible. The CFE team strives to have the ratio of family and fictive kin connections in attendance at the meeting to the professionals be at 70% to 30%, so that the family voice is the dominant voice in the meeting. This 70/30 ratio also supports cultural humility and family engagement practice by helping to neutralize the inherent power over the family that the professionals may be seen to have. Last, during the meeting, the facilitator works to involve all participants in the meeting. Together, these styles of facilitation are intended to build trust and rapport among the group and help everyone to focus on the child and their needs.

## CONNECT

The final element of CFE is **connect**, in which the CFE team helps establish a **lifetime network** for the child. A lifetime network is a committed group of caring, positive adults who will support the youth and/or their parents (or guardians) long term, after the CPS case closes.

A lifetime network:

- Works to meet the youth's biggest unmet need that is identified and developed in the first family meeting.
- Supports relational permanence and legal permanency efforts.
- Shares decision-making responsibilities for the youth's safety and well-being.
- Celebrates, encourages and advocates for educational opportunities and successes.
- Provides love, affection and acceptance, as well as encouragement and guidance.
- Fosters connections that are permanent, not temporary, throughout the child's lifetime.

Lifetime networks also supports the adult(s) that care for the youth or child. Because we are building a network of relationships rather than focusing on one relationship of support, when a member is tired or called away to attend to another matter, other members remain available.<sup>15</sup>

**The whole goal and purpose of Collaborative Family Engagement work is to form networks of connection for kids while in care and after they are out of care – for a lifetime!**

---

<sup>15</sup> Campbell notes: "The lifetime network is the resource or context that provides the possibility of parents, children and adolescents reaching a sufficient state of readiness to benefit from time-intensive and expensive health care and social service interventions." Thus quickly creating and fostering these networks' full participation is an essential part of CFE. As Campbell points out: "To fail to do this is to recreate the system and outcomes with which we now struggle."

# CHAPTER 3: COLLABORATE: CFE TEAM INFORMATION

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) team: why teaming is so effective, who is included on the team, and what their various roles are. For more information about collaboration, please also see Handout #5 in the Appendix.

## WHY A TEAM?

Collaborative Family Engagement is completed by small teams that are involved with the family. This lessens the workload by making use of a team approach. The CFE team engages natural support networks and puts them at the center of the casework planning, working with them to plan for the biggest unmet needs and permanency of the child and in the decision-making process.

The CFE team works together in inviting, hosting, convening, facilitating and sustaining the participation of the family and concerned adults. Together the CFE team and the established support network, which we hope can be maintained throughout the child's lifetime, jointly share in the decision-making for safety, and provide levels of love and affection, as well as encouragement and guidance, that engage the protective factors we hope to see so that CPS can close services.



## CFE IN ACTION

*"The biggest and best outcome is that CFE is really getting the parties around the table and calling out connections for children who are not 'professionals,' who can make a commitment to our children/families, and who can be the appropriate relationships, in the ability available, so that these children are getting to be as normal as possible. Also, it is a collection of ideas, responsibilities, and tactics from everyone in order to ensure better outcomes, better relationships, and a solid network for our children. Even though these cases have ended with placements or support, all of our CFE cases engage the whole team working towards a common goal, and everyone can take part in the 'something extra' that these 'special' cases really need."*  
- Justin R., CVS Supervisor

# WHO IS ON THE CFE TEAM?

## CORE MEMBERS OF THE CFE TEAM

- CASA volunteer
- CASA supervisor
- Caseworker (CPS or community provider)
- CPS supervisor
- Family meeting facilitator

Other team members may include important people like parent(s)' attorneys, attorneys ad litem (AALs), caregivers (including foster parents), therapists, teachers, etc.

The hope is that eventually the family themselves and their network will essentially be the CFE team, and the professionals mentioned above will have less involvement, if any. However, in the beginning of the CFE process, CASA and CPS determine what the safety concerns and permanency goals for the child are.

## ROLES ON CFE TEAM

Each person on the CFE team has an important role and brings forward valuable information.

- **CPS caseworker/supervisor:** CPS provides the bottom lines for safety, services and other things the children and family need.
- **CASA volunteers/supervisors:** CASAs provide their insight from meeting with and spending time with the youth. Additionally, CASAs can offer any information they have been able to gather to better understand the family.
- **Family meeting facilitator:** Facilitators provide coordination for meetings and a neutral perspective without any legal responsibility in the case.
- **Attorneys/attorneys ad litem:** Attorneys/attorneys ad litem provide legal insight into the family/child's legal rights, needs and wishes.
- **Other partners:** If other significant partners are working with the family, they can provide a rich resource of knowledge about other aspects of the child and/or the family's story that other team members may not have been aware of.

## WORKLOAD/GOAL SETTING/ACTIONS

The workload of CFE is shared amongst the CFE Team, ensuring that all team members have tasks and supporting flexibility based on other demands. A CFE team document can be used to provide a guideline for discussion (see Appendix, Handout #1). These meetings can vary from 30 minutes to an hour depending on the dialogue, and cover information such as case history, goal setting, the development of an action plan, and the setting of timelines. This process assists in keeping the CFE

team on track and helps to move forward in a timely manner. The number of team meetings will vary depending on each individual family. It is recommended that as soon as a case is identified for CFE, that the CFE team comes together to begin the process.<sup>16</sup> The full CFE process is outlined in the CFE Fidelity Checklist (Handout #7 in the Appendix).

## **ALIGNMENT IN THE CFE TEAM**

In order to assure alignment among members of the CFE team, the following areas are examined at the beginning of their work together, usually at a CFE team meeting.

### **STATEMENTS OF NEEDS & CONCERNS**

The CFE team must be clearly able to state their concerns and what they perceive as the needs of the child or family as it relates to the physical and emotional safety, as well as the well-being, of the youth.

### **PURPOSE & GOALS**

The CFE team should be clear on the purpose and goals of both the reason for child protection intervention and for doing Collaborative Family Engagement. Providing clarity about why the child was removed from the home, what needs to be done to ensure their safety and the reason for and hope of doing CFE, will ensure the CFE team can be clear with the family and network and not work at cross-purposes. This also brings focus and commitment to the process.

### **AUTHENTICITY**

The CFE team should be honest about their degree of authenticity to commit to the CFE process, which may include inviting, hosting, convening, facilitating and safely sustaining full participation of parents, extended family and other natural supports as applicable.

An important part of collaboration is making sure that everyone is on the same page and understands the goals and objectives for what the group is trying to accomplish together. One way to achieve this is through the Authenticity Scale which is discussed immediately after the CFE team outlines their goals, and before the action plan is created for how to achieve that goal. The authenticity scale is intended to make sure the team is on the same page in terms of willingness to engage in the CFE process for the family. This is a scale from 1-10 and the team needs to be at least a 5 before moving forward to reach out to family. The authenticity scale creates an opportunity for discussion around why a member of the team may not want to move forward with CFE. Overall, the authentic commitment scale shows the CFE team where each person is, and how best to proceed. The scale may go up or down as the CFE case progresses.

---

<sup>16</sup> If on a TMC case, the CFE team can connect during the ICM or post removal staffing.

### SAMPLE AUTHENTICITY SCALE

To what degree can the CFE team authentically commit to: 1) be involved in the CFE process, 2) fully and meaningfully engage and plan with, and/or search for family/kin, 3) be open to family/kin's involvement? This rating includes the commitment to attend and engage in the CFE family meetings.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cannot Authentically Commit									Absolutely Can Authentically Commit	

### ACTION PLAN

Once the CFE team has determined their commitment score and agreed that the case will go through the CFE process, an action plan is developed with CFE engagement/search tools assigned. This is where the work is really shared, with the tasks spread about amongst the team. It is important and necessary that the CFE team discusses and is in agreement on what tasks are being done and who is being contacted, and that all standard CASA and CPS policies are followed. One person on the CFE team should be identified as the "lead," someone who will keep the team moving, check in as needed, etc. until the next CFE team meeting. Note: this person is not necessarily the "lead" for the entire time CFE occurs, or a designated CFE Lead staff person at the CASA program.

### TIME FRAMES

The CFE team must also determine the best assessment of time frames for completing their action plan. This is asserting the urgency of the situation. Timelines should take into account and be incorporated with the existing CPS and court timelines whenever possible. Typically, the CPS family meetings guide the timeline, as the CFE team works to get more people in attendance at these meetings.

### THERAPEUTIC SUPPORTS

The CFE team should consider the need for therapeutic and emotional supports for the child, and revisit these needs continuously while completing the CFE process. This is also where the involvement of the child in the process is discussed.

### ROLE OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

The child can be included in the CFE process as is age, developmentally and therapeutically appropriate. The CFE team will make the decision on whether or not to include the child/youth, and what role they will have. Typically, with older youth, it is important to be involved as much as is possible and safe, so that they are empowered to help drive the CFE process. If not able to be at the family meeting(s), the youth's voice should be heard through the use of the connection and engagement tools. Other creative means of involvement can be explored such as writing a letter to be read at the meetings, recording a video to be played, etc.



# CHAPTER 4: CULTIVATE: TOOLS FOR CONNECTION & HEALING

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, you will find information about confidentiality best practices and the tools used for engagement, connection and searching.

## A NOTE ON CONFIDENTIALITY

The CASA/DFPS MOU, section 4.H.iii outlines that:

a. For purposes of Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) or general family finding and engagement with people who are or who can be connections for a child, information may be shared with caregivers, potential caregivers, or other identified individuals that would reasonably be needed to locate, engage, or involve that individual. The following may be shared for these purposes: **child's name (first, last initial) and age (year, not DOB), possible relationship, that the child is in DFPS conservatorship, parents' names (first, last initial) and ages, general location, and the child's needs (general needs, safety, and well-being).**

b. Within family meetings, CASA and DFPS may verbally share additional information, as needed, to ensure that the individual can make informed decisions about the child and their potential involvement with the child.

**iv. What may never be shared: a. The person who reported the alleged abuse or neglect and b. Records regarding a child or parent's substance use disorder or alcohol treatment.**

Section VI A.v. and vi. says that information gathered from CFE tools about important connections and supports, and gathered at family meetings, may be shared between CASA and CPS. Please note that local CASA programs also have MOU's with their SSCCs, which should be referred to when applicable.

Try to gather as much information as you can, and refrain from sharing more information than is necessary. We are all charged in working for the safety and best interest of the youth in the foster care system, and this should guide the decision on what to share or not share. Here are some best practices when addressing confidentiality:

- Always check with your supervisor and your program/organization's confidentiality practices before proceeding, use their consent and confidentiality forms, and have these conversations with the CFE team.
- Avoid sharing identifying information of the child until confirmation of relation/connection is known; e.g. let the person tell you the child's name, etc.
- For family meetings, avoid sharing personal information about a parent, youth or other, to meeting attendees, if the person being spoken about isn't there to share their perspective also. Sign consent forms before family meetings (a sample consent form that can change to meet your needs is provided in the Appendix, Handout #9).
- **If in doubt about what you can share, don't share until you've checked with your supervisor.**

**Consent:** The best practice is to try and work with the parent and youth to get their agreement about the CFE process and who can be contacted and spoken to. This may take multiple conversations. In the end it comes down to the needs of the child, and parents must be reassured that their private information (particularly mental health/medical info as per HIPPA) will not be shared. Document attempts to engage the parent and child for their consent in this process, and continue to discuss and update these attempts as a CFE team.

## ENGAGEMENT & CONNECTION TOOLS

The following engagement and connection tools are helpful for use with the child, parent or relative to learn about who they identify as important people to them, and to more fully hear their voice and story. Each section will discuss the tools' purpose, supplies needed, instructions, and the potential outcomes. You are encouraged to make the tools your own and be creative with them; for example, if you don't have one of the supplies needed, be resourceful and find an alternative. Some of these tools are also available to be done electronically, on the [CFE Tools App](#), available for free download on smart phones and tablets. Please check with your supervisor/program before downloading.

### SIGNS OF SAFETY® TOOLS

**Purpose:** Signs of Safety® is a child welfare practice model that often utilizes a tool called Three Houses developed by Nicki Weld and Maggie Greening from the New Zealand organization Child Youth and Family, which are specifically geared to children. These tools, such as Three Houses and the Fairy/Wizard tool, help children articulate what they are worried about, what they dream about and what is currently working well in their lives.

**Supplies Needed:** paper, pencils or access to the the CFE Tools app at [www.texascasa.org/cfe-tools-app](http://www.texascasa.org/cfe-tools-app).

### MORE TOOLS IN YOUR TOOLBOX

*Collaborative Family Engagement provides more resources to caseworkers, volunteers and to families. Its foundational principles are based on the belief that the more a family is able to build support and resilience within their own network, the greater the likelihood that child protection services will be shorter and more effective.*

*Some of the resources CFE offers include the use of creative and non-traditional tools that help to:*

- *Locate and engage with supportive people to help parents care for the youth in their home when reunification is the goal*
- *Explore if there are known kin supports available for kinship care*
- *Maintain/find connections for youth in foster care, including those aging out of the system*
- *Look for permanency options within the family*
- *Build social history information*

### Three Houses



#### Practice:

**Three Houses:** This is an assessment tool that gives the child a picture of the outlines of three houses. In the first house, the “House of Worries,” the child writes, draws or dictates what they are worried about. In the second house, the “House of Good Things,” the child writes, draws or dictates what is currently going well in their life. In the third house, the “House of Dreams,” the child writes, draws or dictates what they dream or desire for the future. It is important that the child’s exact words are written in each house.

**Fairy/Wizard Tool:** Pioneered by Varia Da Paz, the Fairy/Wizard tool asks the same three questions as the Three Houses tool, but uses the outline of a fairy or a wizard for children to fill in. Da Paz uses the fairy or wizard’s clothes for the “Worries,” pointing out that clothes can/should be changed, as worries can also. The fairy’s wings or the wizard’s cape become the “Good Things” in the child’s life, representing powerful magical abilities (fairies can fly away, wizard capes can become invisible, etc.). Finally, on the star of the fairy’s wand and the spell bubble on the end of the wizard’s wand, the child notes their wishes and visions of the future. This is an apt metaphor since wands represent dreams magically coming true and explore hope for the future.

#### Sample Questions to Ask:

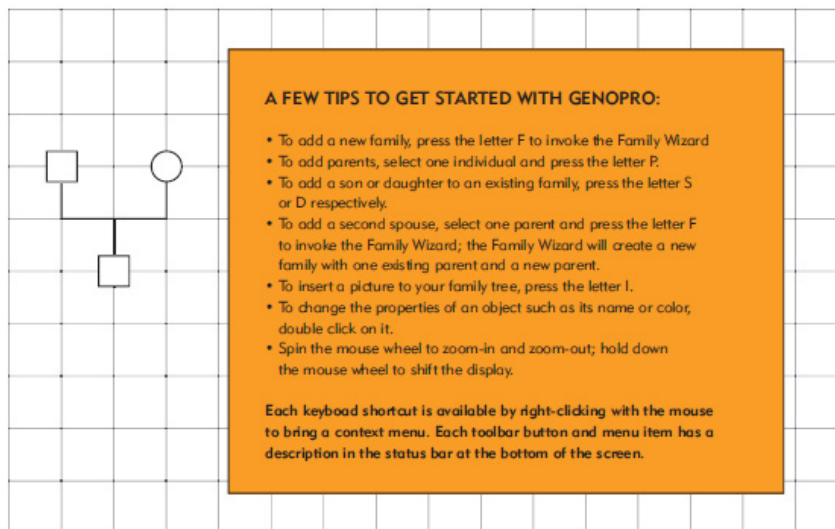
- What is good in your life right now?
- What are you worried about?
- What would you like most in the world to do?
- What would you like your life to look like in six months? In a year? Five years?
- What are your hopes for the future?

**Outcomes:** These tools assist the CFE team by:

- Assessing and providing insight into children’s needs.
- Providing a safe way for children to share their worries, good things and dreams with those they care about, if they so desire.
- Fulfilling the CFE goal of elevating the youth’s voice.

## GENOGRAM

**Purpose:** Genograms are an excellent engagement and connection tool, already used on CPS cases. A genogram is a visual map of a person's family and how the members are connected. It helps us learn about relationships, connections, histories and more. You can use this tool with parents, the child or another family member. When building a genogram, it is helpful to talk to the lead family member. The lead family member, someone who has key insight and knowledge into the family structure, can help you expand a genogram significantly and learn about a child's network.



*Image of how to get started with GenoPro*

Texas CASA has a license to a genogram software, GenoPro, that is widely used in the field of family finding and engagement for building family trees. This software has been approved by DFPS to be installed on CPS computers and is available free of charge to both CASA and CPS involved in CFE. The software can be downloaded from free from <http://www.genopro.com/download/SiteLicense/InstallGenoPro.CASA.exe> and the user guide to the software is also available.<sup>17</sup>

**Supplies Needed:** Access to software, paper and pen, or a visual of a family tree that is filled out

### Practice:

- Create an initial genogram at the beginning of the work from information known by the CFE team, before any CFE activities are completed.
- Add to genogram with information from the case mine.
- Share with the lead family member, parent or youth, and build upon it with their information.
- Save each updated genogram with a new date so that you can see the growth and process over time.

<sup>17</sup> To access this user guide, go to: <https://texascasa.org/genopro-tips/>

### Sample Questions to Ask When Completing the Genogram:

- We've created a genogram based on information we have in our files. Does it look like we have this right?
- Can you tell me more about (your mom, your sister, etc.)?
- Is there any information that you'd like to clarify?
- Would you like to keep a copy?

### Outcomes: A completed genogram.

- Provides a visual picture of the family that can be shared with the family or referred to in staffings and family meetings.
- Helps the CFE team visualize the family and have a full picture of who everyone is.
- Helps break the ice with family when meeting with them for the first time, as it provides something to talk about and somewhere else to look vs. direct interviewing.
- Helps show the generational patterns within the family (e.g. divorce, CPS involvement, etc.).



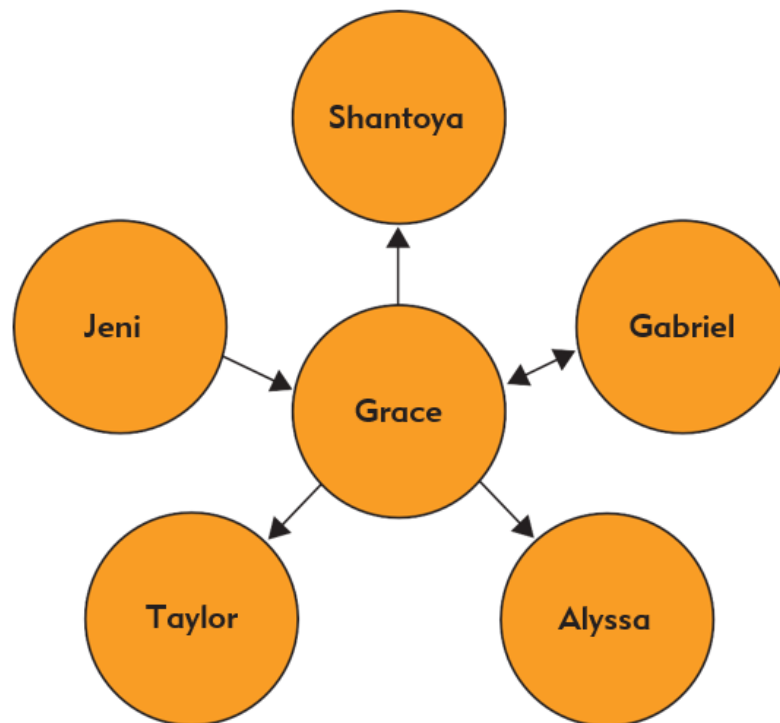
## ECOMAPS

**Purpose:** An Ecomap is a diagram that shows the social and personal relationships of an individual with their environment.<sup>18</sup> It highlights different areas and connections in a person's life and the flow of energy to and from people. The Ecomap is useful in exploring relationships, involvements and activities in such realms of life as family, employment, friends, religious affiliations, school, sports, neighbors, etc.

**Supplies Needed:** Paper, pen or computer, access to The CFE Tools app.

### Practice:

- Share a blank Ecomap with the person you'd like to map and then have them complete it with your assistance.
- Use arrows pointing toward and away from people on the map to indicate giving and receiving energy.
- Arrows can also point in both directions to represent reciprocal relationships.
- To create an Ecomap on the computer, use the Smart Art (relationship, basic radial tool) in email or a Word document. The Smart Art will start with four people but you can add more from the text box.



<sup>18</sup> In the sample ecomap, Katie has a relationship with each of the five people surrounding her in the diagram. Katie is giving more energy than she is receiving to Debora, Derek and Alyssa. These may be Katie's children. Katie is receiving more energy than she is giving to Joseph. This may be Katie's caseworker or a relative helping her. Katie and Gabriel have a reciprocal relationship of energy shared. This may be a coworker or friend.

### Sample Questions to Ask When Completing the Ecomap:

- Who is important in your life?
- Who do you spend most of your time with?
- What groups, activities or memberships do you hold or belong to? Areas to explore are employment, family, friends, school, sports, religious groups, neighbors, etc. Note the differing areas in each circle even if a specific person is not identified within them. This can become a goal area for building future connections.
- Note areas of life and break them down into specific relationships (For example: *You've noted your work here. Is there anyone at work that you talk to on your breaks?*).
- Do you give (arrow away from person) or receive (arrow towards person) more energy from each of the various people in your life? Note: An arrow in both directions represents a reciprocal relationship.

### Outcomes: A completed Ecomap.

- Provides a visual depiction of connections, and an idea of whether those connections are positive for the person or stressful.
- Tells the CFE team something about the nature of the person's relationship and whether they mostly give or receive energy, or have a balanced sense of relationships.
- Provides a different way of looking at connections by exploring all facets of life, helping to draw information out in a different way.



---

## CIRCLES OF TRUST

---

**Purpose:** Circles of Trust is a diagram of concentric circles with the person's name in the center and people they are connected to in the same or outer circles. The goal for using this engagement tool is to indicate visually how connected (or not connected) the child, youth or family is to the network around them and then to discuss or plan for an appropriate level of connection.

**Supplies Needed:** Paper, pen, or access to The CFE Tools app.

### Practice:

- Ask the youth (or family member) to identify people in their lives and place them in the circle that best represents how close they are to them, or how much support they provide in their lives.
- The closer the people are to the middle, the closer the relationship is and the more support they provide to the child, youth or family.
- Each circle represents a level of closeness, with the innermost circle representing the closest, and moves out from there. People placed outside of the circle areas are deemed not in close relationship.

### Sample Questions to Ask When Completing a Circles of Trust:

- Who comes to mind when you think of the relationships in your life?
- Who are you in contact with?
- Who would you call on for support?
- Who do you interact with on a daily/weekly/monthly basis?
- What are you involved in, in your community?
- Who do you think of that you may not contact with regularly?
- Where would you place your family members?
- Who else is in your network?
- Where would you place your (fill in the blank, refer to genogram or other tool) in the circles?
- Note if the individual places CASA or C in a circle, and if so, which one.





**Outcomes:** A completed Circles of Trust.

- Provides a visual of connection, or lack of connection.
- Provides insight into how the individual sees themselves in relationship to professionals.
- Serves as a catalyst for discussion about how to move to more naturally occurring relationships closer to the center, and to move professional ones farther away (if necessary).



## MOBILITY MAP

**Purpose:** A Mobility Map is a visual timeline the person draws of their life, starting from the place they first lived and/or their first memory, up through present day.

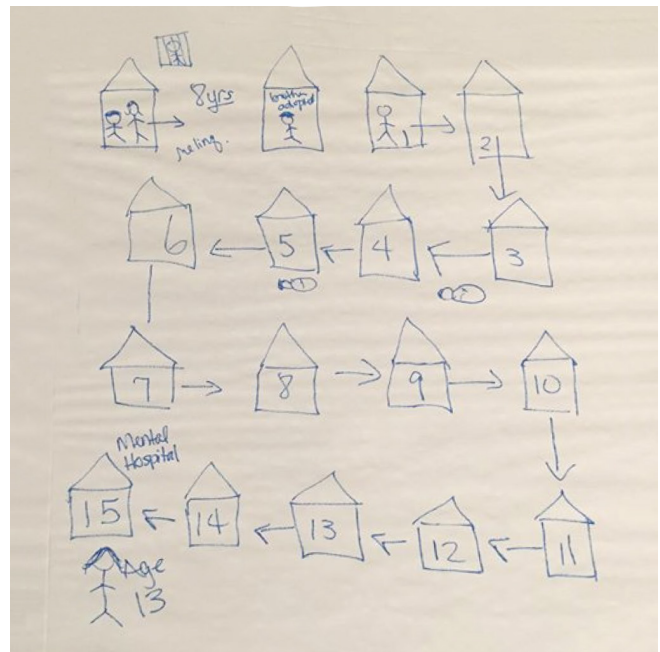
**Mobility Mapping is the number one engagement tool that we recommend be used in CFE.**

Why is this tool so helpful? With Mobility Mapping you can accomplish and learn more about the person you're working with than with any other engagement tool, even if you've worked with them for a long time.

**Supplies Needed:** Mobility Map templates, flip chart paper, tape, markers, time, access to The CFE Tools app.

**Practice:** To complete a Mobility Map, ask the person to draw each place they have lived, noting location, positive memories of the home, who else lived there, age they lived there, etc. For each place documented on the map, explore areas such as family, friends, neighbors, schools, hobbies, jobs, faith-based activities, traditions, holidays and celebrations, etc. Let the conversation be organic, with the map-maker leading the way.

- Standing while holding a marker is said to help the brain elicit memory. Therefore the person being mapped should stand if possible, and accommodations made if this is not feasible.
- The child should write/draw as much as possible on the paper for themselves. You can start it for them but then they should take over and own the process. (Tip: Drawing pets is often a way to get them interested and participating.)
- Start with drawing the first house they remember living in, and build from there.
- Draw as much as they can remember about each person/place.
- Draw only people that the youth acknowledges as important to them.
- Ask if the youth would be interested in finding out how these people are doing now.



- Make sure to schedule enough time for this activity, or do in parts/sections if you run out of time. One hour is recommended for teenagers, and two hours for adults. The map can be built upon at subsequent visits if time does not permit all at once.
- Mobility Mapping is not meant to be a therapy session, but it might bring up emotions for the person being mapped. It's important to acknowledge this if it comes up, see if they'd like to depict it on their map, and then move on.
- It's best practice to ensure that the person being mapped has a support person available to them in the time following the mapping, in case anything does come up for them (see point above).
- If the person is hesitant to start with their whole life timeline, they can focus on a specific area instead (for example draw their different football teams or schools, and try to build out from there).

### **Sample Questions to Ask When Completing a Mobility Map:**

- Where were you born? What is the first place you remember living? Can you tell me a little about it? Can you draw that for me?
- Who lived there with you?
- How long did you live there? Where did you go next? Let's draw that one.
- Who is the first person you remember?
- What did you like about them?
- Did you ever go to visit or eat with them?
- Draw something that reminds you of the person.
- Name/date of birth if known.
- Who was your favorite person at school to play with?
- Tell me a story about that person.
- Do you remember some of the places (cities, etc.) that your family comes from/lives in?
- Is there anyone else that's been important in your life that I didn't ask you about?
- Sometimes the people who loved you a lot have people who loved them a lot, and who will also care about you. Is there anyone like that who should be on your map?
- Do you mind if we reach out to them and see about reconnecting you?
- Is there anyone here that you would want to invite to a planning meeting for you?
- Note funeral/cemetery if they come up.
- Record approximate ages if known.

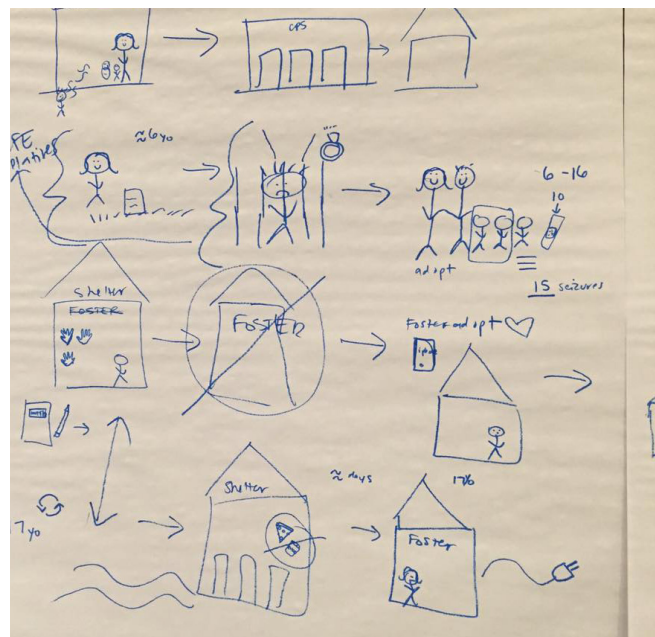
- Of all these people on this chart, who do you think would be the one person that would be there for you today if you needed them?
- Is there anyone here that you would want to say thank you to, or would like to get in touch with? If so, how would be the best and safest way to do that? Is this something your CFE team/caseworker/volunteer can help you with?

### Sample Questions to Ask After Mapping:

- Ask the child to write down the five (or two or three, etc.) things that they think they need most right now to be the happiest they could be, in any order, and then number them by priority.
- Ask youth to finish with five things that makes them awesome, that they are good at, etc. (end on a positive).
- Have the child pick a different color and note different symbols beside people for each of the following: who has a special place in their heart (e.g. red heart), who are they not very fond of (e.g. blue x), who would they like to search for (e.g. a yellow check mark), who would they like to invite to a meeting to help plan for them. Also make a legend to remember what each symbol represents.
- Ask if the person would like to keep their Mobility Map, it is theirs after all! Many people take pride in their work and will be eager to keep it, and perhaps share with others. If they would like to keep it, ask to take a picture of it so that it may be put for safe keeping in their file. If they choose not to keep their map, hold on to it for safe keeping, and for documentation into their file.

### Outcomes: A completed Mobility Map that:

- Provides a visual timeline of the person's life, or period of life showing their full experience and story.
- Serves as a very empowering process for the person being mapped.
- Brings better understanding of the person's experiences for all involved.
- Provides ideas of goals for the service plan an invite list for family meetings.



---

## CONNECTEDNESS MAP

---

**Purpose:** A Connectedness Map is a quick and easy tool that uses simple shapes and lines to illustrate that person's connections (or lack thereof). This tool is helpful in quickly determining the level of urgency needed for response, and can be used in a meeting with a parent or child/youth and asking about who is in their lives. It can also be used in a family meeting or when meeting with a parent or caregiver to learn more about the child's or youth's supports.

**Supplies Needed:** Flip chart paper, tape, markers, access to The CFE Tools app.

**Practice:** You can tailor this tool to meet your needs or approach. For example, you could draw a heart with check marks around it, or a flower with petals (and each person is a petal), etc. You could also make use of color to indicate different kinds of connections. For example:

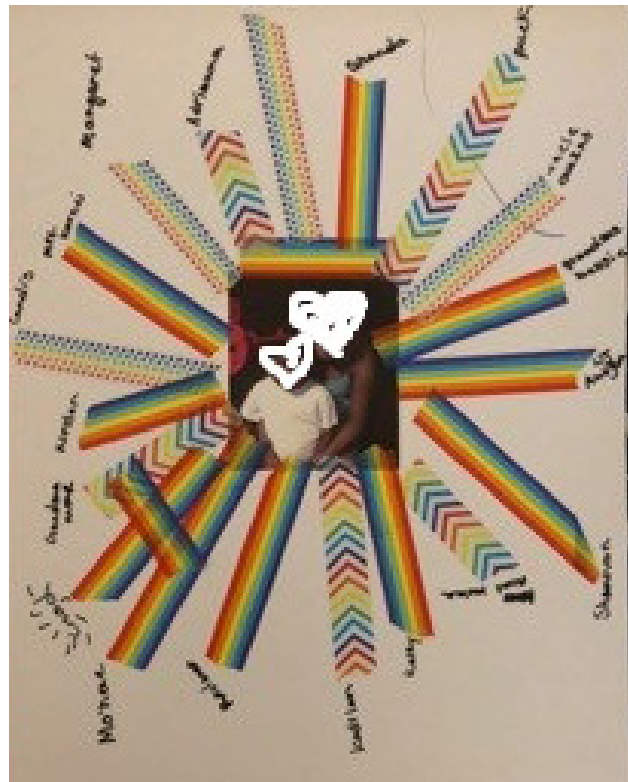
- Blue = Blood/biological connection
- Red = Heart/love connection
- Yellow = Spiritual connection
- Green = Mind/mental connection
- Purple = Culture connection

### Sample Questions to Ask When Completing the Connectedness Map:

- Who is connected to this child/parent/you?
- Who will care/support/love past age 18?
- Do the people they love, care about them also?

**Outcomes:** A completed Connectedness Map that:

- Provides a good discussion tool for highlighting how many positive connections the person has with friends, community, etc.
- Provides insights into where a person is lacking connections and/or community, and can help set goals for creating more connections.
- Provides potential contacts to invite to the next family meeting.



# SEARCHES & INTERNET TOOLS

## OVERVIEW

Remember, with CFE, we start with engagement and only search when necessary. If you do need to search, it's important to keep track of your work. Searching is often completed over numerous periods of time, so it's important to keep track to avoid duplication. You don't want to message the same person in too close of a time period or contact someone again who has asked you not to contact them. In the Handouts section in the Appendix, Handout #2, a sample tracking sheet is included. One of the first places to search is the CASA and/or CPS file, through case mining.

## CASE MINING

The child's case file contains a wealth of information on family and connections and often has information that is not known by all professionals working on the case. It is imperative to read through the file, especially considering historical involvement, worker changes and the vast amount of information that could be discovered.

*Remember to make use of the equal efforts principle when searching: both sides of the child's family need to be included in the search.*

### Best Practices When Case Mining:

- Read through the file in its entirety, both physical and computer records.
- If time constraints are involved, then do a case mine of the child's profile, the people profile and any home studies completed.
- Read through the areas of importance in CPS and CASA electronic or paper records system, such as in IMPACT or Optima.
- Document any and all family members and other potential connections' information (name, date of birth, last known address, how related, where mentioned in file, etc.).
- Document name or relationship of recurring people in file, such as a coworker that drives a parent to visits, a teacher the child mentions, a relative that continues to contact CPS, etc. even if their name is not mentioned.
- Record your findings on a tracking sheet similar to Handout #2 in the Appendix.
- Be sure to document where you leave off in the file when coming back to it at a later date.

## SENECA SEARCHES (FOR U.S.-BASED SEARCHES)

A Seneca Search is an online tool that searches various databases and produces a summarized report of information for the person that was searched in a timely and thorough way. Seneca Searches are best conducted on an adult from each side of the youth's family. The goal of the search is to find names, addresses and contact information for adults connected to the person searched, and therefore, potentially, the child. Often, a Seneca Search is done on a parent or grandparent, but can be run on any adult over the age of 18 (the older the better).

Texas CASA has purchased searches to be used on a number of CFE cases, so be sure to check for room in your area's allotment before requesting a search. The information below will help you interpret and understand the Seneca Search once it has been received back.

Key Terms	Definitions
1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	Shared an address and a last name with subject (person searched)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree	Shared an address and a last name with a first-degree connection of subject
3 <sup>rd</sup> Degree	Shared an address and a last name with a second-degree connection of subject
Associate	Shared addresses with subject, but not a last name

**Tip:** A first-degree connection and associate connection shared an address with the subject; therefore, begin by looking at these people. Second- and third-degree connections could be family members, but are further degrees of separation away from the subject.

You want to find people who share multiple addresses across time with the subject, because that indicates they may be more likely to be family members or connected to the child. You can do this quickly by looking at the past addresses of the subject and pressing CTRL+F on your keyboard. Type each individual address and press enter to find other places within the report that the address is listed. Make note of each connection who has also resided at this address. Go through your notes and mark the people who are listed more than once, as these people are more likely to be kin or fictive kin.

## Helpful Tips

- Only people ages 18+ will show up on the Seneca Search.
- Address history goes back approximately 20 years.
- Show “Family Connections Chart” to adults involved in the case and/or the child to identify if they know any of the connections listed and can provide more information.
- Utilize social media networks and additional search tools to locate, contact and search for family members.
- (PT), (MT), (CT), and (ET) indicate the time zone a phone number is in.
- Phone numbers listed are current for the resident who lives at that address now.

## CONNECT OUR KIDS/PEOPLE SEARCH/FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Texas piloted this innovative and free web based tool that was designed for social workers and CASA volunteers. It has many tools and tips, including a searching platform. More information and a training can be found online at [www.texascasa.org/resources/family-connections-tool-training](http://www.texascasa.org/resources/family-connections-tool-training) and [www.connectourkids.org](http://www.connectourkids.org).

## NON-U.S.-BASED SEARCHES

Family members worldwide love their family, and location and proximity to a child in foster care should not be a determining factor for the level of love, connection and relationship that the child and family member might have. The Internet has the ability to bring people closer together than ever before.

Texas CASA has a Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU, with the Mexican Consulates of Texas to support our CFE work, and their assistance on everything from information, to searching, to completing home studies can be requested. Ask your local CASA program’s Program Director to complete the referral form. Also, Texas CASA will work with the organization Find Families in Mexico to complete a search for kin or fictive kin believed to be in Mexico. Contact Texas CASA at [txcasa@texascasa.org](mailto:txcasa@texascasa.org) to complete this search.

## INTERNET SEARCHING

A list of websites useful for searching has been provided in the Appendix, Handout #3.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is another powerful search tool. Many times you can find valuable information about family and fictive kin via Facebook or other social media and networking websites. Following are best practices when doing a social media family finding search.



## **Mandatory Practices**

- CPS – please refer to and adhere to DFPS social media policy OP-8101, and complete the social media training.
- CASA – please refer to and adhere to your program’s social media policies.
- See note on confidentiality in Chapter 4 before proceeding.

## **Best Practices**

- Use Facebook and other social media to engage and reach out to see if a person is who you think they are without giving any confidential information.
- All contact should be made from a professional profile page of the person sending the message. It is important to keep this separate from a personal page. This page may become the property of your CASA program or CPS.
- The profile page of the professional should be named in a transparent and honest way, not as an alias (e.g. John Smith CASA or John Smith CPS).
- It is recommended to use privacy settings of the highest security, such as no one should post to wall, only “friends” can see posts the profile owner makes on their wall, all posts to be approved by person, friend list is not visible to other friends, etc.
- A disclaimer should be on the sender’s profile page about who they work for, limitations of the page, how to make a report of child abuse, communication becoming part of agency record, etc.
- All contact should be done through private messaging.
- Keep a spreadsheet/list of potential family members, information about them, links to their page and a note on if a message was sent or not and the date. This ensures duplicate messages are not being sent to the same person and follow up can be done in a timely manner if you have not heard back from them. See Handout #2 for a sample tracking form that can be used.
- Communication shared through Facebook does become part of the agency record, and the person being contacted should be made aware of this. Once contact has been made, move the correspondence to occur via email instead of continuing to use Facebook.
- Document messages sent in your organization's documentation system.

## **Tips**

- Through private messaging you can attach pictures or documents such as a consent form.
- By searching family members’ pages, you often find more network connections.
- Check the “about” section of people’s pages for contact info, places of employment and other noted family members.

- Save a picture of the person by right clicking on an image and clicking “save as.” This can be used for later purposes such as sharing with the youth, adding to the file, making it more personal by putting a face to a name when discussing engaging and planning with family, etc.
- Explore a person’s friend list for people with first or last names that are known in the family. You can do this with the “search” function in the friend list.
- Right click to “open in new tab” as you explore people from someone else’s profile, so you don’t lose your work or the original person.
- When doing your initial search for people in the “search” box on your profile page, also open people’s pages in new tabs from the dropdown list, so as to not lose this list.
- Look at who has “liked” or commented on pictures, as well as posted on the person’s wall.
- Private messages are often sent to a person’s “other” inbox if you are not already connected as “friends.” To get around this, a friend request may need to be sent. If sending a friend request at the time of sending a private message, it is recommended to include in your message “Sorry about the friend request, but sometimes this is the only way for my message to get through.” You would then delete the friend if they accepted your request after finishing communication with them. (This may be against your organization’s social media policy, so be sure to speak to your supervisor before doing this.)
- Facebook messages can be copied and pasted in other documentation as necessary for file documentation or to send to the CFE team, etc.



## CHAPTER 5: CONVENE: FAMILY MEETINGS

### CFE IN ACTION

*“Earlier this year, our family became involved with CPS. Our grandchildren were removed from their parents. In the beginning it was of course a nightmare. Now, however, it has become a blessing for this family. Part of our success I believe goes to the CFE process and the family meetings. Each family meeting had a precise outline; each person present was encouraged to be personally involved. And had each one of us make a commitment to support the family in all their goals and needs to succeed with the compliance with CPS. Another awesome thing about these family meetings is each and everyone associated with the case (such as two CASAs, and their supervisor, CPS workers and their supervisor, the children’s attorney, family & supporting friends) were all on the same page as to where they were at and how everything was going. Which I believe to be very important to each case CPS handles. I honestly think it should be mandatory for CPS to do this with every case they have going forward. It has been part of this family’s success. PLEASE keep this going. It also gives the family hope and aids in their recovery knowing they have this support.”*

– Sharon, kinship grandmother

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the philosophy behind family meetings, how they are structured (and in which order), and tips for successful facilitation. After reading this chapter, you will be better prepared for attending and participating in CFE family meetings.

## PHILOSOPHY OF FAMILY MEETINGS

Family meetings are an essential component of CFE, as they provide an avenue for engagement, connection and planning. This is where the real casework happens, and the time investment of attending the family meeting may save hours of casework and advocacy later.

A family meeting provides an opportunity for the network to come together with child protection professionals to share and learn information, often for the first time. Such gatherings foster engagement, build trust and elicit support amongst all whom are involved or desire to be involved in supporting the child or family. Family meetings create the opportunity and space for the family to come together to heal and process the events that have brought CPS and CASA involvement.

Texas CPS has a strong family meeting practice in place, and efforts have been made to integrate the CFE family meeting principles and agenda items into these family meetings. Family meetings with CFE are encouraged to happen over the life of the case, and this means sometimes the process is slowed down. The **first family meeting**, often done in conjunction with the Family Group Conference (FGC), is meant for sharing information, developing an unmet needs statement for the child and preparing the family and network to consider what role they can play moving forward. The **second family meeting**, often done with the fifth-month permanency conference, looks at ideas from the family/network to support the needs of the youth and family. Finally, the **third family meeting** secures a commitment from attendees to be a part of a lifetime network and moves them to action in meeting the needs identified in previous meetings.

## PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY MEETINGS

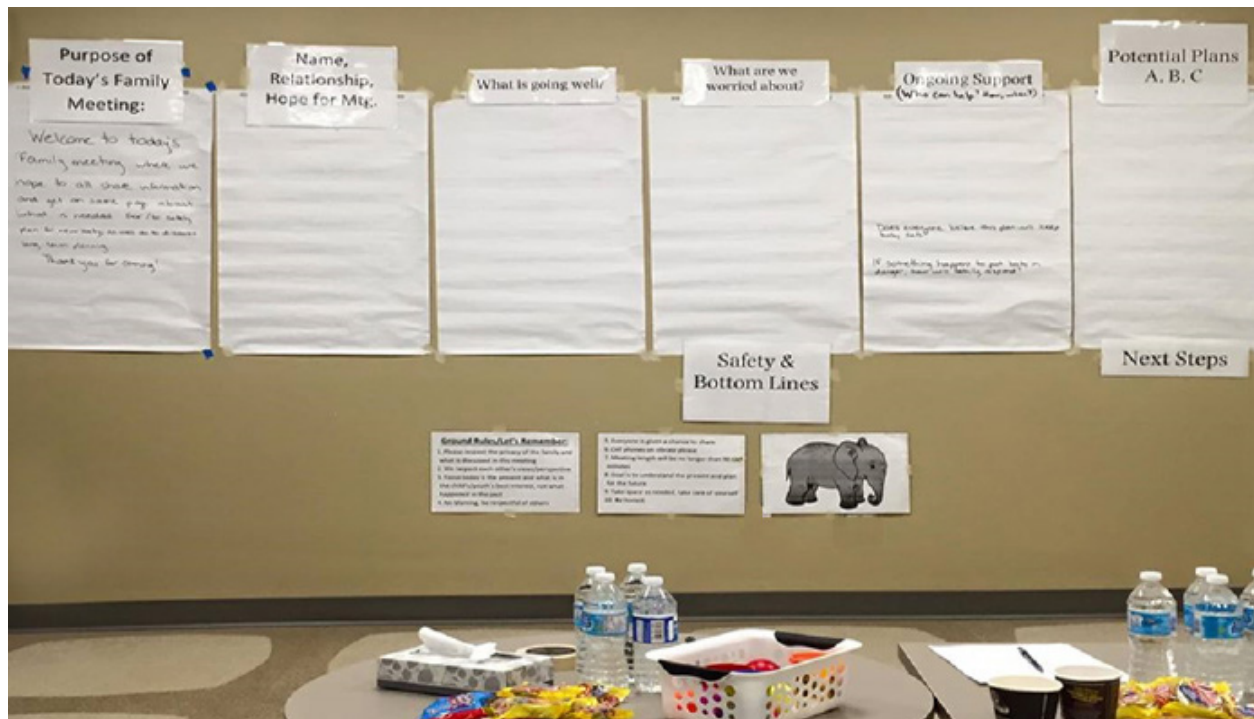
- CFE family meetings should be integrated with the family meetings already happening with CPS.
- Meetings should be welcoming to all.
- 70% of attendees should be natural supports/family members, and the other 30% may be professionals whose role is time limited to the CPS or CASA case.
- The agenda for the meeting should be **transparent**, meaning the agenda should be posted on the wall in the form of a flip chart, or shared on screen if occurring virtually. Notes are taken by a neutral, designated note taker.
- There is no “magic” meeting that will instantaneously solve all the problems; instead, it will be a process to develop support and determine plans, often requiring multiple meetings.
- Consider that for some of the meeting attendees this may be the first time they have heard information, and they may need time to process and think about how they can help.
- The family and network should have time to answer questions first, and the questions should be strengths based as much as possible.
- "Bad behavior" in family meetings (blame, yelling, threats, swearing, etc.) might be a result of grief and anger, and approaching from that lens might be helpful.
- Meetings should be *future focused*, focusing on today and moving forward, not getting stuck in the past.
- The best interests of the child, including but not limited to permanency, should be paramount to discussions.
- Be respectful of time, and keep meetings to a maximum of 90-120 minutes.
- The setting for the meeting should be *holistic*, with chairs in circle or semi-circle formation, no table in front of the chairs, drinks and snacks provided, etc. Everyone attending should be sitting together, intermixed, with no barriers separating the family, their network, and the professionals/CFE Team.

## FACILITATOR TIPS

In family meetings, a facilitator:

- Checks the infrastructure support of the meeting, including holistic room set-up.
- Lets the family and other invitees know ahead of time who is being invited, the length and purpose of the meeting, and that it will be facilitated by a neutral party.
- Determines the need for consent and/or confidentiality forms.
- Uses a large flip chart posted on the wall with agenda items written up to guide the meeting and to take notes, which then can be saved for future meetings. If the meeting is taking place virtually, the facilitator will share the screen to display the meeting agenda and notes.
- Is neutral in the case, meaning they are not a decision-maker, but they are not neutral about the need for connections, permanency and safety for the child.
- Ideally continues as the meeting facilitator from the first family meeting through to the final meeting, whenever possible.
- Looks for and embraces opportunities to involve members of the network in the organization and facilitation of the meeting, with the eventual goal of the network holding their own meetings without professional involvement.
- Takes a picture of notes recorded during the meeting to include in the child's file.

Please see Texas CASA's Family Meeting Facilitation Guide for more details.



A sample meeting set up is pictured here

# THE ART OF INVITING & MAKING CONTACT WITH THE FAMILY/FICTIVE KIN

The art of inviting to a family meeting is to be honest, open and authentic with those you contact. Let them know that this is an important and urgent situation, but that their loved one is okay. The main point of first contact once the person you are talking to is a confirmed family member or connection is to verify basic information and to ask three essential questions:

- 1) Would you be interested in being in touch/connected with your loved one?
- 2) Would you be interested in coming to a family meeting?
- 3) Is this the best way to reach you, and may we contact you again?

For inviting to family meetings, the CFE team should decide together who will be contacted, how and by whom. It's important to always communicate and involve the entire CFE team in the decision about whom to reach out to, once family and fictive kin have been located. There are many factors that need to be taken into consideration before attempting contact, and some members of the CFE team may be aware of information that others are not. If a CFE team member is not authentically committed to contacting a certain person, the rest of the team should attempt to understand where these concerns are coming from (Note: the above points hold true for any attempts to make contact with family by the CFE team.). Ideally, the CFE team would share contacting the invitation list, and when possible encourage other family members to invite others on the list, or those who have been missed.

Sample scripts for both telephone and written messages have been provided in the Appendix, Handout #4. They are just guides to provide ideas for initial contact, should not be read or written verbatim and should be tailored to your individual needs and the specific CFE case. Scripts can be discussed with the CFE team so the team can problem-solve potential barriers or questions in advance of making contact. When in doubt, always air on the side of caution, and do not share information about the child or family if confidentiality is in question (also see discussion of confidentiality in Chapter 4).

## CFE FAMILY MEETING BOTTOM LINES

**70/30 Rule:** *The number of professionals in the room should NOT outnumber natural supports. Ideally, the ratio is 70/30, with 70% natural supports and 30% professionals.*

**Transparent Meeting:** *The agenda of the meeting should be clearly posted on the wall in the form of a flip chart.*

**Neutral Facilitator:** *A CFE family meeting is run by a neutral facilitator who takes notes, and who is neutral about the outcome of the case but who is not neutral about the child's safety and well-being.*

# STRUCTURE OF FAMILY MEETINGS

## RECOMMENDED CFE MEETING PROGRESSION

As outlined previously, there are three central family meetings that typically should occur when working with a family through the Collaborative Family Engagement process. These meetings can fit, merge or adapt to any family meeting that is happening through CPS practices, but it is recommended that we try to incorporate the CFE family meeting philosophies, main activities, and the below structure.

### Family Meeting #1

(Often combined with Family Group Conference [FGC])

- Purpose: Information sharing and preparation
- Activity: Create Biggest Unmet Needs Statement
- Use red border headings/meeting #1 agenda, reflecting that we are sharing information and not proceeding with decision-making

### Family Meeting #2

(Often combined with Permanency Conference or a fifth-month meeting)

- Purpose: Start to create lifetime network
- Activity: Brainstorm and develop three concurrent plans of support
- Use yellow border headings/meeting #2 agenda, reflecting the beginning of the decision-making discussion

### Family Meeting #3

(Often combined with Circle of Support [COS] or a nine to twelve-month meeting)

- Purpose: Finalize plans, move the network to action
- Activity: Calendar
- Use green border headings/meeting #3 agenda, reflecting moving ahead with decision-making and plans of support to meet the unmet needs statement including permanency needs.

## BIGGEST UNMET NEEDS STATEMENT

The Biggest Unmet Needs Statement that is developed in the first CFE family meeting is a fundamental part of the process. This statement will guide the CFE team and the network in best supporting the child and help to determine the planning and activities that need to happen.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Biggest Unmet Needs Statement is to gather information from the family, CFE team and network members about what is missing from the child's or family's life and meet those needs as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

**Supplies Needed:** Flip chart or other large paper, masking tape, marker, wall space

### Practice:

- As a group, gather words that will ultimately form a sentence to explain the child's single biggest unmet need. Ask the group what they believe is the youth's (or family's) single greatest unmet human need. If the youth is in the meeting, start with them. Refer the group to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs;<sup>19</sup> for a person to reach their fullest potential, they need love and belonging.
- Use words that the family uses, not words professionals use. Tell the family this as they come up with words/needs; reframe it for them if needed.
- Put words into a statement that starts with "Child's name needs and deserves...." Complete the statement with the needs identified by all involved.
- One person, usually the meeting facilitator, reads the developed statement out loud for the group to hear, then all reflect on if this statement captures accurately what is needed. If so, this becomes the mission and vision statement for the network.
- The meeting participants should think about how they'll best be able to support the needs identified, and come prepared to talk about this at the second family meeting.

### SAMPLE BIGGEST UNMET NEEDS STATEMENT:

Jemma needs, deserves and has the right to regular contact with her mom, extended family and friends that is meaningful and beneficial to her, and that supports reunification plans with her father.

<sup>19</sup> These needs include, but are not limited to, physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self actualization needs. See <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html> and glossary for more information.



## CHAPTER 6: CONNECT: THE LIFETIME NETWORK

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the key element of Connect in Collaborative Family Engagement: the lifetime network. It discusses core concepts related to the lifetime network, how to use calendars and calendaring to move the network to action, and other tools for making a lifetime network a reality for youth in foster care.

### WHAT IS A LIFETIME NETWORK?

In a more traditional service model that sees the child having no one except the caseworker, caregiver or volunteer to care for and support them, it is the system of care that becomes the focus of support. The **lifetime network** construct, however, challenges this preconception; and instead we expect that nearly every youth in care has an extended family, which includes both maternal AND paternal family members<sup>20</sup> and community members who care and agree to participate in a lifetime network of support.<sup>21</sup> In this new construct, CASA's advocacy focuses in on the lifetime network as a central component of well-being and permanency and as central to their advocacy activities and recommendations to the court. CASA also can become a facilitator of family and connections, a convener of the network, and a catalyst for meeting the best interest of the child.

#### CFE IN ACTION

*"The team suggested working on a calendar of visits. The mom and the caregiver (paternal grandmother) worked out a monthly calendar in the family meeting. We got the calendar out and they worked on it, and everyone is happy. Great teamwork made this happen. The dad is in jail, but consistently writing letters to the children, and they are able to write back." – CFE Coach*

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the importance of including fathers in the lifetime network, see the May 2018 CFRP Policy Brief on "Fatherhood in Texas: Texas is Supporting Fathers, But Can Do More." <https://childandfamilyresearch.utexas.edu/fatherhood-texas-supporting-fathers>

<sup>21</sup> The term and idea for a lifetime network was created by Robbie Gilligan at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

These networks can function as a tailored crisis support system, and/or those to share life's special moments and celebrations with. But first, we need to ensure their existence. While doing CFE, if there is not a network or if this is unclear, the goal is to find the network. If a network is in place, then the goal is to strengthen it. The CFE team collaborates to determine the plan to create or strengthen the network through cultivating family and fictive kin, convening with them through family meetings and connecting them as a lifetime network.

## CORE CONCEPTS

1. In order for the lifetime network process to be successful, you must secure a commitment of the child to join the network. This may not be at the very beginning as the youth builds trust with those committed to them, which we know takes time- some research suggests it takes on average 10 months of someone showing up consistently before trust is built (Franck Meyer, 2023). No matter what, the young person should be aware of the network, and have a voice in the process of their planning, as well as about who is in their network.
2. Once formed, the lifetime network becomes the core planning, doing and supporting force in the youth's life. As the CPS case closes and the CASA volunteer, the caseworker(s) and attorney(s) are no longer involved, the youth continues to have caring adults supporting them.
3. After the network is formed, the caseworker acts as content expert, the voice for the agency and the timekeeper for moving the process along. The CASA volunteer continues to be the conduit for supporting best interest, which includes looking at how the network can foster and support well-being, and relational and legal permanence.
4. Network members:
  - *Begin with team-building activities such as Rapid Appraisal.*
  - *Review activities of the six-week calendar previously established and revise as needed.*
  - *Choose a member to co-facilitate and streamline communication/coordination.*
  - *Create a phone/text/email tree to communicate and respond to emergencies.*
  - *Meet as often as needed to review progress and formulate goals and actions.*
  - *Develop strategies to stay in touch when circumstances change for members or child.*
  - *Plan activities for the year to support the youth and/or parents (birthday, holidays, regular meetings).*
5. The lifetime network members **become part of the CFE team** which help guide and ensure continual connection and support to the child and/or parents after the CPS case closes.
6. If there are any concerns about the network lacking in strength, the CFE team helps re-focus and re-prioritize.

## Healing & Development via The Lifetime Network

Lifetime networks have many benefits. Here are some ways they can benefit children or youth in foster care:

- The single most healing and protective experience that can be offered to the child is that of safe, permanent, meaningful, persistent and active care and support by a committed community of parents, adults, siblings and friends. "It is in the shelter of each other that people live." (Franck Meyer, 2023).
- No medication or therapy can fully treat the absence of these relationships.
- When youth are connected into meaningful and supportive relationships, there will be more clarity about their therapeutic, medical and educational needs.
- "The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely they will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love." (Perry, 2006).
- Children and youth in foster care must be supported in a context of safe relationships of affection throughout their time in out-of-home care and beyond. These relationships are critical to protecting childhood and adolescent development and health.
- For information on the importance of connections on development and healing through relationships for infants and young children, please see Texas CASA's program portal and 0-5 resources.



Lifetime network members assist with permanency by:

- Providing and advocating for relational permanency.
- Continuing efforts, throughout the CFE process, to create legal permanency with a safe and caring adult.
- Keeping permanency, if needed, at the forefront of every network meeting until achieved.
- Providing active support for those offering permanency.

# TOOLS TO SUPPORT THE LIFETIME NETWORK

The following activities and tools can help the CFE team with the lifetime network when they have hit a barrier to really exploring what is best for the youth, and/or to brainstorm potential ways for the network to engage the child or parent.

## CALENDARS & CALENDARING

The use of calendars is a concrete way to move the lifetime network formed in the family meeting process to action, and holds them accountable to the youth and the plan that is being made. Feel free to make a calendar in Word, or use any other calendar you have. Activities on the calendar should be scheduled in six-week increments, and be updated as needed.

The calendar should be created with the child's wishes and plans at the forefront, and the network commits to make these things happen. Alternately, the calendar can be created by the network and shared with the youth for their input and feedback. It is also recommended that network members identify back-up people on the calendar, so that someone will show up for the youth if plans change.

### Plans on the Calendar Should Aim to:

1. Focus on action.
2. Be accepting of youth.
3. Be flexible.
4. Be consistent.
5. Be mutually supportive of all network and family members.
6. Be hopeful.

### Areas of Consideration for the Calendar:

- **Friends:** Does the youth have any activities with friends coming up? Look for activities of normalcy, such as sleepovers or dinner at a friend's house.
- **Family:** With whom does the child wish to spend time or be in contact with?
- **Celebrations:** What celebrations are coming up that are special to the youth that the network should recognize?
- **Culture:** What are some cultural activities, events or holidays that are identified by the youth and/or family as being important?
- **Siblings:** Does the child have any contact with siblings? Can they have more contact?
- **Vacation:** Are there vacation plans that should be reflected on the calendar? Is there a school vacation coming up? When would it be nice for the child to spend time with their network?
- **Helping Others:** Are there ways the child can volunteer or ways for them to give back? How can the network support the child in thinking about their community?

## Other Elements to Consider When Calendaring:

- Dreams
- Exercise
- Creativity
- Parents
- Community
- Holidays
- Traditions
- Identity
- Skills/interests/hobbies that can be pursued
- Faith-based activities
- New experiences/wishes/things the youth would like to do

# September

2023

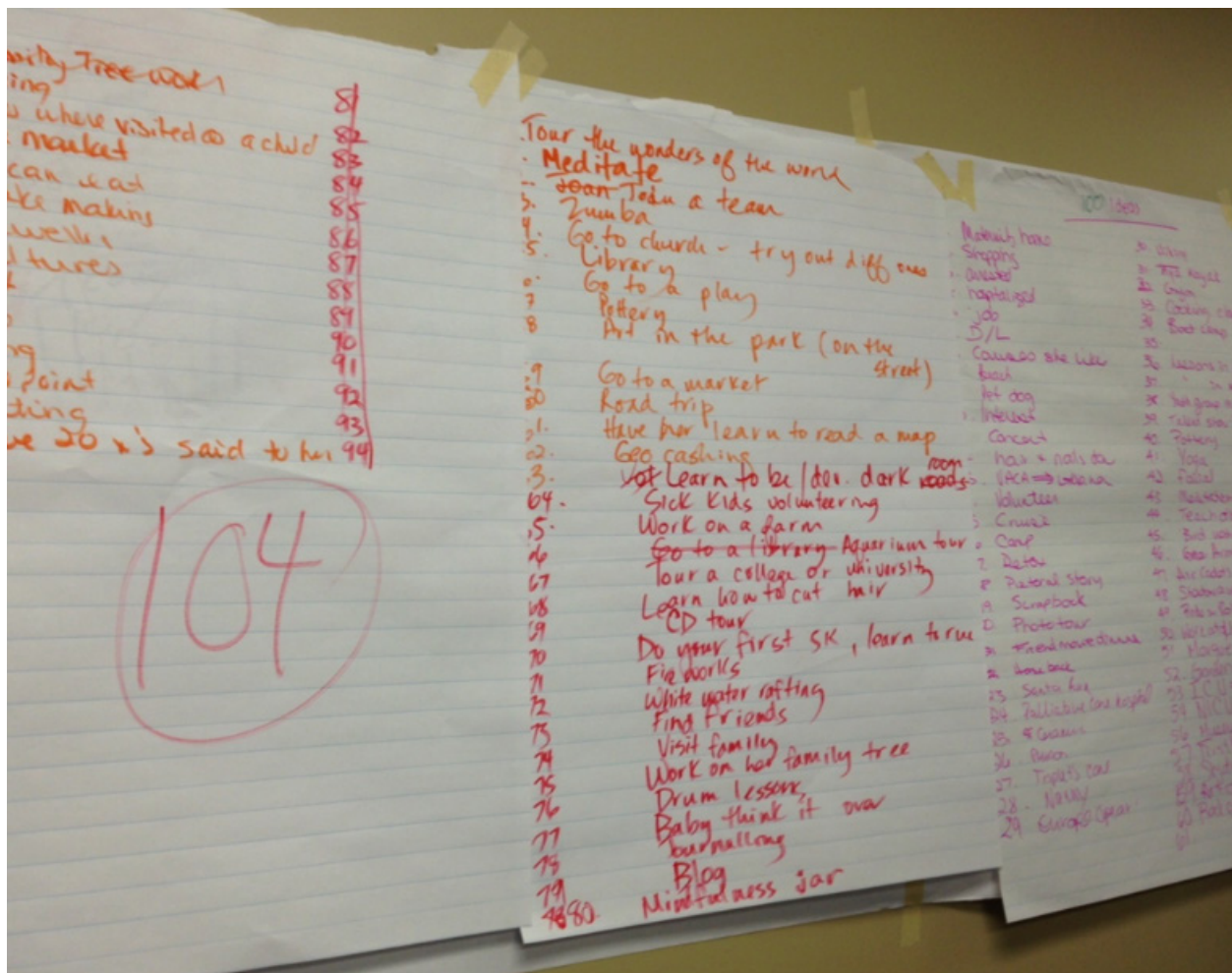
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 Lunch with Grandma and siblings	4 Holiday	5 School Phone call with dad	6 School	7 School in am Court in afternoon	8 School Dinner at friend's house	9 Visit with Mom
10 Phone call with Aunt	11 School Football practice	12 School Phone call with mom	13 School	14 School Football practice	15 School After school with friend	16 Visit with Dad
17 Visit with siblings	18 School Football practice	19 School Family meeting in pm, network coming	20 School Counselling after school (Uncle driving)	21 School Football practice	22 School	23 Visit with Mom
24 13 <sup>th</sup> Birthday! Pizza party with family at Grandma's	25 School Football practice	26 School Phone call with mom	27 School	28 School Football practice	29 School Football game, parents coming to watch	30 Visit with Dad Sleepover at friend's

## CONNECT & ENGAGE 100

### Purpose:

- Use this exercise when the participants of a family meeting appear at a loss for ideas of how to help or support the person being planned for, or if there appears to be tension in the group.
- This is an easy, fast and fun activity for team building, brainstorming, moving a group to action and/or problem solving.
- With the list of generated ideas, the team can discuss which ideas that they may be able to commit to doing. This should then be noted on a calendar, creating a schedule of support and touch-points to which everyone will be held accountable.
- This activity can also be done in staffings or a CFE team meeting, to brainstorm as needed.

Sample Connect & Engage 100 from a training in Ontario, Canada



**Supplies Needed:** Flip chart or other large paper, masking tape, marker, wall space

**Practice:**

- Put up big paper on the wall.
- Assign one person in the group to write ideas on the paper; the facilitator keeps track of time (15 minutes).
- Have the group come up with 100 ideas in fifteen minutes that can be used to connect or engage the youth/adult/parent of focus. This can be adapted to meet the timeframe available to you (e.g. 50 ideas in three minutes).
- Everyone shares ANY and ALL ideas that they have to engage or to increase safety and connection for the person of focus. All ideas should be written down as offered, with no ideas shut down.
- After you have the 100 ideas or the time is up, everyone discusses which ideas they would like to see take place, and which they themselves can commit to doing. Record on a calendar with the group when and how these chosen ideas can happen.

**Outcomes:**

- Very quickly you have a list of the team's available resources and functional strengths that can/will be drawn upon during planning meeting. This may help shape their role in the lifetime network.
- The team will feel they have something worthwhile to offer moving forward.



---

## RAPID APPRAISAL

---

**Purpose:** During a Rapid Appraisal, the family members and network identify their own connections, resources and what they have to offer the child/youth or family. For example, some resources they may offer include: a car for transportation, access to the Internet or a cell phone, gardening skills, church or community resources, etc.

**Supplies Needed:** Flip chart or other large paper, masking tape, assorted colored markers, wall space

### Practice:

- Put up a large piece of paper (or flip chart) on the wall.
- Each person writes/draws their connections and resources, in all areas of their life. (Home, school, religious affiliations, relatives, community, friends, etc. For example: “My neighbor is a teacher and has a car.”)
- Professionals who are present in this activity draw from their organization’s perspective and not their personal life. For example, they can draw professional resources available for the child/youth and family.
- Professional resources need to be clearly labeled as temporary.
- When everyone is finished drawing, each person shares their identified resources.
- Have each person put a meaningful symbol beside each of their resources; then these symbols move to the side of the entire rapid appraisal diagram and become a flow diagram.
- The group will be reminded of their resources at later planning meetings and can draw upon them when creating plans and developing a calendar of events for the child/youth and family.

### Outcomes:

- Very quickly you have a list of the team’s available resources and functional strengths that can/will be drawn upon during planning meetings. This may help shape and inform their role in the lifetime network.
- The team will feel they have something worthwhile to offer moving forward.



---

## TREE OF LIFE

---

**Purpose:** The Tree of Life is an approach to working with children and adults who have experienced difficult times. It is an approach that enables people to speak about their lives in ways that make them stronger. In the Tree of Life exercise, an illustration of a tree is used to guide/prompt reflection on aspects of one's life. The person can draw their own tree, or you can use a pre-made image or visual. The Tree of Life was co-developed through a partnership between Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough<sup>22</sup>.

**Supplies Needed:** Large paper or print out of template, masking tape, marker, wall space, access to The CFE Tools app.

**Practice:** Ask the child or parent to draw and/or add onto the Tree of Life template. Here is some language that can be used to prompt what the participant draws/writes:

- **Roots** – Where you come from; could be places, people or ideas.
- **Ground** – Where you live now, everyday activities that you might engage in.
- **Trunk** – Skills and abilities, what you give value to or hold as important.
- **Branches** – Hopes and dreams, where you would like your life to be heading.
- **Leaves** – Significant people in your life; could be living or passed, could be people you have known forever or people you never met.
- **Fruits** – Gifts you have received.
- **Seeds** – Gifts you have received or hope to give.

### Outcomes:

- The participant will have shared their thoughts, ideas, needs, etc. that can help inform their CFE team and network of needed next steps.
- The participant will have a visual of their thoughts in different areas, that they have created.



---

<sup>22</sup> The Dulwich Centre. (2023, January 17). *The Tree of Life*. The Dulwich Centre. <https://dulwich-centre.com.au/the-tree-of-life/>

---

## **FIRE HOUSE INTERVENTION**

---

### **Purpose:**

- Within a family meeting, if a **crisis situation** becomes evident, then adapt your meeting to focus on the urgent need at hand.
- Consider if a **“house was on fire”** what type of response would be needed, and move with that urgency in your safety planning.
- Utilize the **“rule of three.”** Ensure there are three people who are willing to commit their time to be part of the immediate safety plan. This provides a layer of protection and support so that the person in crisis can always reach one of the three identified supports, and it also ensures that those in crisis management support roles are there for one another and do not become isolated or drained.
- Stay task focused during the meeting, and identify timely goals with who is responsible noted on a calendar.
- Outline a clear safety plan that the person in crisis, their family and supports agree upon before the meeting ends, if applicable.
- Once the crisis has been addressed and planned for effectively and supports are following through, then you can move to planning through the regular family meeting agendas.

**Supplies Needed:** Flip chart or other large paper, masking tape, assorted colored markers, wall space.

### **Practice:**

- Acknowledge the crisis that needs addressing.
- Introduce the concept of a Fire House Intervention.
- Identify the need for three key support people: **“rule of three.”**
- Collaboratively work on a safety plan that everyone can follow and support.
- Create a calendar that clearly outlines tasks and timelines, emergency contact information, etc.
- Ensure everyone is clear on the plan going forward and that the child or parent in crisis feels supported.
- Put the plan into immediate action.

### **Outcomes:**

- Everyone is clear on the plan going forward.
- The youth or parent in crisis feels supported and knows they can reach out for support and it will be there for them.

## CHAPTER 7: ADDITIONAL CFE CONCEPTS & TOOLS

### CFE IN ACTION

*"In my opinion, I believe CFE is a positive experience. It gives the families a sense of hope and encouragement that no matter what their past brought them, it does not determine their future. It's all about connection for the children, not necessarily placement. But it gives the children and families a peace of mind knowing that they have a family to call on if they need them. It has impacted me as a worker in a way that while a situation looks impossible, as long as you try, you can have people who are willing to take baby steps towards a goal, and something positive can come out of the circumstance. I am so happy that the children I've been working with have family to call on for anything. It brings me great joy and satisfaction that the siblings (five teenagers) are able to reunify with their biological mother after 10 plus years. Honestly, this is a reason why I entered into the field of social work, to unify families, not separate them. It was an amazing experience and I highly recommend anyone to take the CFE journey. The workers will not be let down." – Delicia N, CPS CVS Worker*

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we explore how Collaborative Family Engagement can be used for all children and youth in foster care, regardless of their age or legal status.

## GETTING STARTED WITH CFE

Both TMC and PMC cases will benefit from the CFE approach. **CFE for all, we say!** Every child or youth needs and deserves to be connected and supported by a community of caring adults - a lifetime network. The 4Cs of CFE, Collaborate, Cultivate, Convene and Connect, are used throughout the case to work together, engage family and create connections. The entire CFE process and corresponding activities are outlined in the Fidelity Checklist in Handout #7 in the Appendix, and can be applied to both TMC and PMC, as well as any age group. When appointed to infants and young children up to age five, CFE can be used with a special focus on parent engagement, child development, and positive visitation. Please see the Texas CASA program portal for more information. When appointed to infants and young children up to age five, CFE can be used with a special focus on parent engagement, child development, and positive visitation. Please see the Texas CASA program portal for more information.

## **EARLY CFE: WITHIN FIRST 14 DAYS OR WITH TEMPORARY MANAGING CONSERVATORSHIP (TMC)**

Keeping children connected as they enter the foster care system will help them adjust during this difficult time. Relationships with school, community, faith if applicable, friends and family should be maintained whenever possible, despite the child being in foster care. This will help alleviate the unintended consequence of foster care: further isolation and the impact of social quarantine. CFE can start as soon as a CASA volunteer is appointed to the child, which usually happens after the adversary hearing. The sooner that family engagement and connection work begin, the better! At the beginning of the case, the focus might be on reunification and making sure the parents have a network around them to help keep the child safe, and it may also be to ensure the child is connected during their time in foster care. The CFE team meets as soon as possible, ideally with the initial coordination meeting (ICM call or post-removal staffing), if at the very beginning of the case. The team then works to cultivate people to come to the first CPS-scheduled family meeting, and continues their work aligned with the CPS and court timelines. If CFE helps achieve reunification or another permanency outcome before the final court hearing, requesting a date sooner on the docket may be requested/considered. Texas CASA has more information and resources available on how to begin CFE within the first 14 days of a case, called Early CFE. Please see [www.texascasa.org/resources/early-cfe](http://www.texascasa.org/resources/early-cfe) for more details.

## **PERMANENT MANAGING CONSERVATORSHIP (PMC) & CFE**

Connections for children are crucial at this stage, because they may be isolated and may have already lost many of their connections at school, in their communities, cultures, and within their families. Sometimes the urgency for permanency has diminished for those in PMC, or there is no clear path to permanency beyond long-term care. CFE can be a great way to re-evaluate the permanency options and look at things from a new connection informed lens.

The same process as in TMC is appropriate for a young person with PMC status. However, the first CFE team meeting does not happen at a post-removal staffing, but at a later staffing or case conference. Family meetings in a PMC case follows the schedule as determined by CPS, such as a Circle of Support or Permanency Conference. A Family Group Conference (FGC) may also be requested. It's more likely however that a non-CPS family meeting will happen for PMC cases, as family meetings do not happen with the regularity needed to form a lifetime network. The child or youth should be a member on their own CFE team, when possible. **Please note:** for both TMC and PMC cases, additional meetings for the family can be scheduled as needed or requested, by the young person, the family, the network, or by the CFE Team.

## **CFE SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

All children and families deserve and need to be engaged with and connected in an authentic and meaningful way. Remember, CFE for all! However, there may be specific dynamics present in the CPS case that may pose barriers. For example, situations with intimate partner violence, sexual abuse or pending criminal charges (involving the reason for removal) may be more complex and require more time, engagement and patience from the CFE team. These dynamics alone, however, are not reason to automatically prevent the team from using the CFE approach, but require further dialogue and sensitivity by all involved. CFE can be used with children and youth of all ages, including newborns and toddlers. Texas CASA has worked with Child Advocates of Fort

Bend to incorporate CFE into their infant and toddler advocacy model, which is available for the CASA network: [www.texascasa.org/0-5-advocacy-guide](http://www.texascasa.org/0-5-advocacy-guide). Special considerations for CFE with this young and vulnerable population include the need to engage with the child's parent even more than usual, to advocate for increased time for the infant and their parent to bond (attachment is key for development!), and to be open to supporting the parent through sharing more information and helping to connect them with resources. The role of a CASA volunteer is instrumental when appointed to a child five years and younger.

## CFE & CASA VOLUNTEERS

The CFE approach aligns with the CASA volunteer role and responsibilities as outlined in the Texas Family Code and CASA Standards. CASA's legal role is most often that of the GAL - guardian ad litem - with legal guidelines in the Texas Family Code or by judicial order of appointment. In short, CASA's role is to serve as an advocate for a child's best interests. To do so, CASA volunteers must strive to truly understand the needs and issues of the child, their parent's, the child's family, their community and their culture. CASA must engage with the child's parents, family and other people important to explore and understand possibilities of support in meeting the needs, hopes and dreams of the child. CASA strives to see beyond "the single story," the single event(s) that brought the child into foster care, and seek to understand how best to meet the immediate and long term needs of the child.

*"It is my hope that all CASA programs will begin to use CFE with all children they are appointed to as it is the one thing that I think will make the greatest difference in the child's life and in the lives of those involved. CFE offers hope and support to families during this most difficult time in their lives and in many cases wraps a network of support around the family."*

*– Kathy D, CASA Program Director*

Like CPS caseworkers, CASA volunteers are busy folks, with identified requirements for their advocacy, supported and coordinated with their CASA staff and program. In the Appendix, Handout #10 is an Activities Form for CASA that outlines recommended activities to fulfill the CASA role. This form is a case management tool developed for CASA staff to share and discuss with volunteers. This form has been amended to include CFE activities that align well with the CASA volunteer's role and the advocacy activities they are already doing.

CASA, like CPS workers, provide a written report to the court. These court reports should include efforts to engage and find family and natural supports, to build connections for the young person, and any other CFE activities.

## CFE & CPS/SSCC

### CPS Practice Model

Collaborative Family Engagement perfectly aligns with the direction of DFPS and the CPS Practice Model, which stipulates:

- Children come first, with the goal of being protected and connected.
- Families are complex and are more than the situation that brought CPS involvement.
- Caseworkers must work with urgency for safety, permanency and well-being.
- Casework is family focused; family, and the child voice in the process, is imperative.
- Casework is an engaging and collaborative approach.
- Caseworkers aim to create safety networks.

The CFE approach also aligns with CPS goals in locating family and reuniting children in foster care. CPS is mandated to continue to search for family members throughout the life of the case, as well as to notify any family members of a child in foster care. Once a child comes into foster care, the Department's policy is to have a Family Group Conference where the family is brought together to discuss the issues identified in the affidavit. As the 2015 DFPS Handbook<sup>23</sup> notes, Family Group Decision Making, like CFE:

- Recognizes that families possess the information needed to make well-informed decisions and are responsible for their children's security and sense of belonging;
- Emphasizes developing a partnership between families, DFPS, and other departments and agencies that serve them, so that service planning and decision-making become a collaborative process;
- Respects families and children and helps them decide what services they need, based on their strengths and resources;
- Emphasizes the family's responsibility to care for and to provide a sense of identity for their children;

*"I wanted to share with you how things with CFE are working on our side. I feel CFE has really impacted me as a caseworker for the better. The CASA (volunteer) and I took a little extra time and went out to speak with a grandmother regarding a child in her home. This was a grandmother who had a negative home study and was guarded with the Department (DFPS). I feel that the one visit has made all the difference, as I was able to understand the struggles that the grandmother has endured and understand the wall she had put up with the Department. I feel taking that extra time to meet with the grandmother will benefit the child in the long run. I know it may take a little extra time; however, I feel that it was definitely worth it for the child." – Tiffany, CPS*

<sup>23</sup> From Section 1121.1 The FGDM Philosophy CPS, from the September 2015 DFPS Handbook

- Encourages families to connect with the resources available in their communities and provides a means for communities to support families;
- Encourages families to participate voluntarily in meetings that are family-centered, culturally relevant, community-based, and oriented to the families' protective capacities; and
- Provides a supportive environment in which families can discuss their needs and concerns.

Family Group Decision Making is thus enhanced by having CASA volunteers assist in the locating of family, engaging the family and finding connections for the children and parents, and sometimes co-facilitating the meetings.

For those children who are 14 years of age and older and may age out of the system, DFPS holds a Circle of Support.<sup>24</sup> A Circle of Support is held to develop a transition plan for youth who are moving from foster care to adulthood, as well as to connect the youth to supportive and caring adults when the youth ages out of foster care. CFE enhances the work of the youth's support network by providing tools and holding the team accountable to each other as they work to connect the child to their natural support system.



<sup>24</sup> From Section 1121.23 Circle of Support (COS) CPS September 2015 DFPS Handbook, [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child\\_protection/](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection/)

## A CFE SUCCESS STORY

To conclude, we would like to share with you one last CFE success story. As you read, think about the many ways this approach - including the use of The 4Cs of CFE: collaborate, cultivate, convene and connect – helped facilitate the success story of this particular family, and how it might continue to aid other families in the future.

***Through Collaborative Family Engagement, a 16-year-old girl and her mother were reconnected, after parental rights had previously been relinquished.***

*In 2012, while experiencing homelessness and substance dependency, the mother asked the youth's paternal grandparents to become their granddaughter's legal guardian, as she knew them to be more stable and safer than she was able to be at that time. This was not an easy request or decision, but one done out of love and care for her daughter.*

*In 2016, the child became hospitalized over concerns about her mental health, at which time CPS became involved. Her grandparents were no longer able to care for her. Over the next two years while in foster care, the child had 13 placements including five RTCs and five psychiatric hospital stays. During this time, the youth received multiple mental health diagnoses, including schizoaffective disorder, a bingeing and purging eating disorder, and ADHD. While her physical health remained stable, her psychological and emotional health was considered severe.*

*The CPS and CASA team decided to try the CFE approach for this young lady, even though it was brand new in their county. They were very concerned about her and saw the need to try something different, urgently. The CFE team set out to find and build connections for the youth, with the hope of truth to the notion that relationships help healing.*

*When the CFE team located the youth's mother, they proceeded cautiously and began having family meetings with her and both the paternal grandmother and maternal grandparents, as well as an adult biological sibling. They worked hard to engage the family. Over time, mom and daughter began communicating by phone and then started in-person visits; each visit encouraged the teen, and she slowly began to feel, and be better. With time and continued contact with her family, the youth's emotional and psychological health improved and stabilized.*

*A goal was set for the teen to return home to the mother when she could be released from the residential treatment center, and the mom set to work to acquire appropriate housing, employment and to prepare for the reunification, with the support of all the grandparents and the adult sibling (their lifetime network).*

***Today, a family is repaired and given a fresh start. The youth, her mom, and their network all report that living together is going well, and is where they want to be. Together. The CFE process has helped to heal the relationship between the family members, as well as to heal the teen's heart.***



## CHAPTER 8: APPENDIX

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**70/30 Ratio:** The ratio of professionals (defined as those whose involvement is time limited to the CPS case) and those who will remain involved long-term, in a CFE family meeting.

**Alignment:** A state in which all participants are on the same page and are supporting the engagement and collaboration with family and the lifetime network.

**Assimilation:** The process by which a minority culture is encouraged, or forced to, adapt to dominant cultural norms of the majority; often requires the minority culture to abandon heritage and cultural practices in the name of 'fitting in.'

**Authenticity Scale:** A scale from zero to 10 that is used to measure authentic commitment to Collaborative Family Engagement by the CFE team members. A ranking of zero represents the CFE team member not being able to commit to authentically engaging with the family or engaged connections, while a 10 represents complete commitment.

**Biggest Unmet Needs Statement:** A statement created in the family meeting about the biggest unmet needs of the child, including permanency needs. The goal of the lifetime network is to help meet the defined needs.

**Calendars & Calendaring:** A concrete way to move the lifetime network formed in the family meeting process to action; holds the network accountable to the youth's wishes and plans for the future.

**Case Mining:** The act of reading existing case files for information that can be used in CFE. Involves careful review of what is already known to CPS, CASA, etc.

**CFE Family Meeting Bottom Line:** The concept that all CFE meetings should be transparent, have a neutral facilitator, and follow the 70/30 rule (70% family or fictive kin and 30% professionals).

**CFE Lead:** A member of the CFE team designated to help keep the team moving forward between meetings and engagements. Sometimes a CFE Lead is the main person at the CASA program who is responsible for CFE implementation overall.

**CFE Team:** A collection of CPS and CASA professionals and volunteers who work together to facilitate Collaborative Family Engagement. A CFE team includes: a CASA volunteer, a CASA supervisor, the caseworker (CPS or community provider), the CPS supervisor, a neutral family meeting facilitator, and care coordinators. Other team members may include important people like parent(s)' attorneys, attorney ad litem (AALs), caregivers (including foster parents), therapists, teachers. The child, youth, parents, family and network members are also a part of the CFE team whenever possible, and as the CFE work/case progresses.

**CFE Tools App:** A free, downloadable mobile application for smart phones and tablets that bring many of the CFE tools to the palm of your hand. [www.texascasa.org/cfe-tools-app](http://www.texascasa.org/cfe-tools-app)

**Circle of Support:** A meeting that is held by CPS soon after a youth in foster care reaches the age of 14; the circle of support develops a transition plan for older youth who are moving from foster care to adulthood, as well as connects the youth to supportive and caring adults for when they age out of foster care.

**Circles of Trust:** A visual engagement tool with circles representing connections to the child or parent, who is at the center. People are placed in circles of proximity to represent closeness in relationships.

**Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE):** A structured approach to engage caring and positive adults to support children who are in the foster care system, with the goal of ensuring that all children have meaningful connections during their time in foster care, and after.

**Connect & Engage 100:** A brainstorming tool in which family meeting participants quickly think of 100 ways to support and engage the child and decide which of these things they can commit to doing; an action plan is created from this list.

**Connect Cards:** A deck of cards with fun, silly and engaging questions on them. Can be used to play any traditional card game. There are two decks, both are available in Spanish and English.

**Connectedness Map:** A visual representation engagement tool with the child or parent at the center, surrounded by connections. If few people are identified on the tool, this provides an opportunity to discuss the need to build connections, that everyone needs support.

**Connection Informed Care:** An approach to advocacy and case practice that puts the need for connection and belonging as central to the child's experience in the foster care system. This approaches intersects with trauma informed care, as healing from trauma happens in relationship.

**CPS Practice Model:** A model used by CPS that aligns well with CFE, with its collaborative approach to focus on children first, acknowledging the complexity of families, and working with urgency for the safety, permanency and well-being of the youth.

**Cultural Humility:** An attitude of humility and openness to learning about another culture and asking questions to fully understand the different aspects of a person's culture that are important to them. See also: **implicit bias**.

**Due Diligence:** The knowledge that there have been exhaustive measures to ensure that important connections for a child are not lost, while meeting the child welfare mandate. It is not enough to merely "ask" if there is family; there needs to be a diligent search to engage meaningful supports.

**Early CFE:** Tools and strategies for beginning CFE as soon as a CASA volunteer is appointed after a removal has occurred, usually within the first 14 days.

**Ecomap:** A structural diagram of a person's most important relationships with other people, groups and organizations.

**Equal Efforts Principle:** The principle that ensures we have made equal effort to engage all sides of the family, meaning maternal and paternal sides equally.

**Fairy/Wizard Tool:** An engagement tool that uses the outline of a fairy or a wizard for children to fill in with worries, good things and wishes or visions of the future.

**Family Connections:** An innovative and free web based tool that was designed for social workers and CASA volunteers. It has many tools and tips, including a searching platform. Also known as People Search or Connect Our Kids.

**Family Finding™ Model:** Model created by Kevin Campbell, an internationally known youth permanency expert and founder of *The Center for Family Finding and Connectedness*, in 2001 as a method of addressing inequities in the foster care system. The predecessor and model for Texas' Collaborative Family Engagement.

**Family Group Conference (FGC):** A meeting held by CPS once a child comes into foster care, where the family is brought together to discuss the issues identified in the affidavit; CFE's first family meeting can be done in conjunction with this conference.

**Family Group Decision Making (FGDM):** An existing process used by DFPS that aligns well with CFE. Like CFE, FGDM places the family/community at the center of the decision making process for the child's well-being.

**Fictive Kin:** Individuals who have a relationship with the child or parent that are not blood or adoptive relations. Examples of fictive kin relationships may include but are not limited to friend, coach, neighbor, etc.

**Find Families in Mexico (FFIM):** Search tool used to identify and locate family members in Mexico.

**Fire House Intervention:** A brainstorming technique used within a family meeting, if a crisis situation is evident; uses the metaphor of "house on fire" to brainstorm how to meet the youth's most urgent needs/safety. See also: **rule of three**.

**Fostering Connection to Success & Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (FCSA):** An Act passed unanimously by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush on October 7, 2008; made major changes to the child welfare system, including improving incentives for adoption, improving outcomes for children in foster care, and supporting relative caregivers; this Act included Family Finding™.

**Geneva Convention IV, Article 26:** A stipulation of the 1949 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention regarding dispersed families during wartimes, and their right to inquire and renew contact if possible. See also: **right to know principle**.

**Genogram:** A visual map of a person's family and how the members are connected, also known as a family tree.

**GenoPro:** A genogram software that is widely used in the field of family finding and engagement for building family trees. Texas CASA provides both CPS and CASA access to GenoPro.

**Implicit Bias:** A bias or stereotype we may carry around unconsciously, such as assumptions about a parent or child based on race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. It is the job of the CFE team to be aware of and work to dismantle these biases. See also: **cultural humility**.

**Indian Boarding Schools:** Schools established in the United States, often run by Christian missionaries, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century with the primary objective of assimilating Native American youth into dominant American culture. Students were immersed in European-American history and culture, and were forced to abandon cultural practices such as not cutting their hair or speaking their indigenous languages, as well as having their names changed to "civilize" and "Christianize" them.

**Lead Family Member:** The person who has key insight into and knowledge of the family structure (e.g. the person who would arrange a family reunion, have contact information for relatives, etc.).

**Legal Permanency:** Achieved when a child has a permanent legal connection to another individual, through such processes as adoption, legal guardianship, custody, etc. See also: **relational permanency**.

**Lifetime Network:** A system of support for the youth in foster care that includes family, community members and fictive kin who are invested in the youth's long-term mental, physical and emotional health, permanency and well-being, even after they age out of the system. See also: **natural supports**.

**Manual on the Go (MOTG):** A condensed version of the CFE manual with information on each of The 4Cs including tool instructions, in a pocket size format. Includes a white board page and marker on the back, for tools to be completed 'on the go'.

**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:** A ranking of human needs created by Albert Maslow in 1943 that take into account emotional as well as physical well-being. According to Maslow, these needs include (in order of importance): physiological, safety, social belonging (love/acceptance), esteem and self-actualization needs.

**Mexican Consulate:** An official branch of the Mexican government that has offices in the United States and other countries; responsible for helping Mexican citizens living or traveling in the United States who need assistance from their home government when dealing with U.S. laws and legal issues. Can be a useful resource for CFE team members when working with a child, parent or family with Mexican citizenship or with connections in Mexico.

**Mobility Map/Mobility Mapping:** A visual timeline a person draws of their life, starting from the place they first lived and/or their first memory, up through present day; a useful tool for discovering previously unknown family or fictive kin, and to hear the person's story.

**Natural Support:** A person who has a relationship with the child, parents and family that is naturally occurring and is not contingent on being in a service role. See also: **lifetime network**.

**Neutral Facilitator:** A neutral party in a CFE meeting who takes notes and runs the meeting; a person who is neutral about the outcome of the case but who is not neutral about the child's need for safety, well-being, community and permanency.

**Normalcy:** A positive state for children in foster care that supports them to feel "normal" and engage in normal activities as compared to their peers not in foster care, such as going to sleepovers, going on dates, earning an allowance, etc. [www.texascasa.org/resources/normalcy-matters-guide](http://www.texascasa.org/resources/normalcy-matters-guide)

**Original Soil:** Term coined by Robbie Gilligan, which uses horticultural metaphors to illustrate a youth's origins and the importance of not ignoring them. Gilligan notes: "No attempt to transplant a tree or shrub is easy and can only be contemplated if a lot of original soil surrounding the roots goes to the new site of planting. Similarly I propose that the child needs to bring a sufficient amount of emotional soil from the old site to the new, if the new placement is to have a chance of taking hold."

**Orphan Trains:** A supervised welfare program in the United States, operating from 1854 to 1929, that transported youth thought to be homeless or 'orphaned' from crowded cities in the Eastern United States to homes in the largely rural Midwest. During its years of operation, the orphan trains transported roughly 200,000 children from urban to rural areas, and resulted in many children being abused or forced into unpaid labor.

**Participatory Continuum:** A continuum that demonstrates the range of working relationships between CASA and CPS, as well as how CFE can shift those relationships in a positive direction for both, as well as with families.

**Permanency Conference (PC):** A meeting held by CPS that examines the option for permanency for a child in foster care; often done at the five month mark and in conjunction with CFE's second family meeting.

**Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC):**

*Without termination:* Custody of a child is given to DFPS, a relative or other party, but the parents' rights are not terminated. In this situation, the parents may retain visitation privileges or other rights decided by the court. A child in this type of custody is not available for adoption.

*With termination:* Custody of a child with all rights of both parents terminated for all time. A child in this type of conservatorship is available for adoption.

**Personal Agency:** The capacity of a child and/or family to make their own decisions and know their own best interests.

**Quick Finds:** A search tool CPS has available to locate information on family and fictive kin during the search/cultivate stage of CFE.

**Rapid Appraisal:** A brainstorming tool in which family meeting participants create an inventory of their own resources to help them determine their role in the safety and permanency planning process for the child in foster care.

**Relational Permanency:** The long-term relationships, with family or fictive kin, which help a youth feel loved and connected and are a vital part of the CFE approach, specifically the lifetime network. See also: **legal permanency**.

**Right to Know Principle:** The Geneva Convention principle that families have the right to know what happened to relatives who were displaced during a war. Article 26 states: “Each victim has the right to know the truth regarding the circumstances of the enforced disappearance, ... and the fate of the disappeared person.” See also **Geneva Convention IV, Article 26**.

**Rule of Three:** A rule that ensures there are three people who are willing to commit their time to be part of a child or parent’s safety plan; provides a layer of protection and support so that the person in crisis can always reach one of the three identified supports, and also ensures that those in crisis management support roles are there for one another and do not become isolated or drained. See also **Fire House Intervention**.

**Seneca Search:** A search tool used by the CFE team to identify and locate family members.

**Signs of Safety®:** A relationship-grounded, safety-organised approach to child protection practice, created by researching what works for professionals and families in building meaningful safety for vulnerable and at-risk children. [www.signsofsafety.net](http://www.signsofsafety.net)

**Single Case Plan (SCP):** both a meeting model and an integrated way of developing and documenting the Child’s Plan of Service (CPOS). The SCP meeting acts as the initial permanency planning meeting and utilizes the expertise and principles of Family Group Decision Making (FGDM). At the SCP meeting, the CPOS is developed with input from all appropriate family members and stakeholders in addition to the development of the Family Plan of Service. The SCP model will provide a more formal process to engage the parents in the permanency planning for the child and ensure that all parties are collaborating on the development of the child’s service plan.

**Single Story:** The idea that in child protection work we risk using a single and often-biased lens to understand the complicated stories of the families and youth with whom we work. Often based on the story as told by the case file, or the event leading to the removal.

**Social Quarantine:** A separation of the child from the family for safety, but which can also separate the child from positive and helpful things, like key social relationships (with school, teams, etc.).

**The 4Cs of CFE:** The practice approach of Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE). These include:

- Collaborate:** The use of teams and greater collaboration between systems to involve families and build networks.
- Cultivate:** The use of connection, engagement and search tools to find and engage families.
- Convene:** The bringing together of families, with an emphasis on their involvement in the process through the use of family meetings.
- Connect:** The end goal of CFE; a lifetime network of supportive relationships for the child and their parents.

**Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC):** The legal term used for temporary placement in the foster care system, in which the state temporarily takes charge of the child’s physical and emotional needs.

**Three Houses:** A tool in which the child or parents reflects on their worries, good things, hopes and dreams in templates of houses (or other shapes they choose).

**Trauma-informed Approach:** An approach to care of children and youth who have experienced trauma, which recognizes the need for stable, safe connections in the child’s life and that healing happens through relationships.

**Tree of Life:** A visual representation tool in which the child draws their hopes, dreams, gifts, people and other important things in the areas they think of as they fit on a tree. Co-developed through a partnership between Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough.

**Unpacking the Nobody:** The false concept that children and parents involved in the foster care system have nobody; Collaborative Family Engagement encourages CFE team members to “unpack” this concept, looking more closely at the relatives and fictive kin that could eventually establish a lifetime network for a child in crisis.



# HANDOUTS

## Handout #1: CFE Team Meeting Notes

---

Please see the next page.



# CFE Team Meeting Notes

## *Family Name*

### Table of Contents for CFE Team Meetings

Initial CFE Team Meeting.....	2
Follow-Up CFE Team Meeting.....	7
Follow-Up CFE Team Meeting.....	8
Follow-Up CFE Team Meeting.....	9
Case Closure.....	10

## CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES

Adapted from Family Finding™

### I. Initial CFE Team Meeting

Date of meeting:

Child/youth's name, age, DOB:

Child/youth's gender and pronouns (he, she, they, etc.): [Click here to enter text.](#)

Race, ethnicity, cultural and religious/spiritual needs, etc. of the child/youth and family:

Was identity information self-obtained by child and/ or family? Y N If no, state source of information:

Is the child/youth a member of an indigenous tribe or an Alaskan Native (e.g. subject to ICWA)? [Click here to enter text.](#)

Date of removal: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Court dates scheduled: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Name and contact information for parent(s): [Click here to enter text.](#)

Name and contact information for caregiver(s)? [Click here to enter text.](#)

How long can they stay with caregiver(s): [Click here to enter text.](#)

CFE Team Member Name & Position	Contact Information

**CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES**  
**Adapted from Family Finding™**

**A. Child/Youth Connections**

Genogram, Connectedness Map, or list of Connections/Family (prior to using CFE tools, include contact info if known)

Is the child connected/attached to parents/family? **Highlight / Circle one:**  
(connected, somewhat connected, not connected)

Is the child connected to their network? **Highlight / Circle one:**  
(connected, somewhat connected, not connected)

For children ages 0-5: What is the current visitation schedule?

For children ages 0-5: Will utilizing the positive visitation approach be useful?

For youth 16 and older Is there a Circle of Support Meeting scheduled?

For Youth 16 and older: Has the youth identified what her/his/their goals are for their future?

## CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES

Adapted from Family Finding™

### B. Calendaring

What does this youth's **points of connection (with other people)** look like in a typical month? In the calendar below, input all of the activities, visits, and involvement this youth has over the next month that we know of (i.e. school, faith-based activities, visits with family, etc.).

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

### C. Statement of Strengths, Needs, and Concerns

What are the biggest strengths of the child and parents?

What are the biggest safety concerns for the child and parents?

Permanency options the CFE Team is aware of presently:

### D. Purpose

What is the purpose of CFE in this case? (Searching for family, identifying connections for children, placement need, building support for caregiver/parent, etc.)

## CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES

Adapted from Family Finding™

### E. Authentic Commitment

Determine the level of authentic commitment of the CFE Team to 1) be involved in the CFE process, 2) fully and meaningfully engage and plan with, and/or search for, family/kin, 3) be open to family/kin's involvement. **Note:** The CFE Team will work together for inviting, hosting, convening, facilitating, and sustaining the participation of the family and concerned adults. All will be expected to support these efforts.

<b>Authenticity Scale</b>										
To what degree can the CFE Team authentically commit to participating in the CFE process (as outlined above)? This rating includes the commitment to attend and engage in the CFE family meetings.										
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Cannot Authentically Commit										Absolutely Can Authentically Commit

**Date of Initial Team Meeting**

*Agreed Upon Score* [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Date of Follow-Up Team Meeting**

*Agreed Upon Score* [Click here to enter text.](#)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

**Date of Follow-Up Team Meeting**

*Agreed Upon Score* [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Date of Follow-Up Team Meeting**

*Agreed Upon Score* [Click here to enter text.](#)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

### F. CFE Team Action Plan

Date of next CFE team meeting:

Date of family meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Facilitator and note taker for family meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Who will be the lead team member to keep the CFE process moving for this case, until the next CFE team meeting? [Click here to enter text.](#)

**CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES**  
Adapted from Family Finding™

Date Assigned	Person Responsible	CFE Task	Date for Completion	Result

**Searching Tools**

- Case mine
- Searching websites
  - WhitePages.com
  - Family Connections
- Seneca Search
- Social media search
- Genogram and GenoPro
- Find Families in Mexico

**Connection Tools**

- Mobility Map
- Circles of Trust
- Ecomap
- Three Houses
- Fairies and Wizards
- Connectedness Map
- Calendaring
- Tree of Life
- Connect Cards

**Facilitation Tools**

- Connect and Engage 100
- Fire House Intervention
- Rapid Appraisal

## CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES

Adapted from Family Finding™

### II. Follow-Up CFE Team Meeting

Date of meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

CPS updates: (Visits, parents' service plan, children's placement, action plan tasks)

CASA updates: (Visits, family/connection interaction, children's placement, action plan tasks)

Goals for next CFE Family Meeting: (What do we want to accomplish?)

Who will be attending? (Do we need to do more family searching? Did we invite those missing from last meeting?)

Additions to Genogram, Connectedness Map, or list of Connections/Family: (Include contact info)

Date of next CFE team meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Date of family meeting & facilitator: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Who will be the lead team member to keep the CFE process moving for this case, until the next CFE team meeting? [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Revisit Sections C-F**



## CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES

Adapted from Family Finding™

### III. Follow-Up CFE Team Meeting

Date of meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

CPS Updates: (visits, parents' service plan, children's placement, action plan tasks)

CASA Updates: (visits, family/connection interaction, children's placement, action plan tasks)

Goals for next CFE Family Meeting: (What do we want to accomplish?)

Who will be attending? (Do we need to do more family searching? Did we invite those missing from last meeting?)

Additions to Genogram, Connectedness Map, or List of Connections/Family: (include contact info)

Date of next CFE team meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Date of family meeting & facilitator: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Who will be the lead team member to keep the CFE process moving for this case, until the next CFE team meeting? [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Revisit Sections C-F**

## CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES

Adapted from Family Finding™

### IV. Follow-Up CFE Team Meeting

Date of meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

CPS Updates: (visits, parents' service plan, children's placement, action plan tasks)

CASA Updates: (visits, family/connection interaction, children's placement, action plan tasks)

Goals for next CFE Family Meeting: (What do we want to accomplish?)

Who will be attending? (Do we need to do more family searching? Did we invite those missing from last meeting?)

Additions to Genogram, Connectedness Map, or List of Connections/Family: (include contact info)

Date of next CFE team meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Date of family meeting & facilitator: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Who will be the lead team member to keep the CFE process moving for this case, until the next CFE team meeting? [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Revisit Sections C-F**

## CFE TEAM MEETING NOTES

Adapted from Family Finding™

### V. Case Closure

Date of meeting: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Please think about the relationships represented on the connection tools that you completed at the start and end of this case.

- A. How many connections did the CFE team know of at the beginning of the case? [Click here to enter text.](#)
- B. How many of these connections had a strong, supportive, and positive relationship with the child at the start of the case? With the parent/s? [Click here to enter text.](#)
- C. How many connections did the CFE team know of at the close of the case? [Click here to enter text.](#)
- D. How many of these connections have a strong, supportive, and positive relationship with the child at the end of the case? With the parent/s? [Click here to enter text.](#)

Please reflect on how the strength and quality of relationships with the child and/or parent/s changed over the life of the case. Which relationships were strengthened? Which were weakened?

How many connections does the child have with supportive adults who will be there for the child after the CPS case ends? In other words, how many people are a part of the child's lifetime network? Who are these connections? Were they made, strengthened, or maintained during the CFE process?

If the child isn't connected and the case is not legally closing please reconsider ending CFE. Your work could focus on building connections in that child's past, present, or future to ensure a lifetime network of support.

## HANDOUT #2: Record of Searches

Remember, with CFE, we start with engagement first and only search when necessary. If you do need to search, it's important to keep track of your work. Searching is often completed over numerous periods of time, so it's important to keep track to avoid duplication. You don't want to message the same person in too close of a time period, or contact someone again who has asked you not to contact them. A sample tracking sheet is included below.

**Family Name:**

Date	Website	Searched	Results
October 3, 2023	Facebook	Mary Smith, aunt of child	100 returns, no clear matches.

## HANDOUT #3:

### Additional Search Tools Provided by Seneca Center

---

#### **411.com**

This site has both reverse phone and reverse address lookup. You can also search for neighbors.

#### **Anywho.com (free/paid)**

This is AT&T's online directory; advanced searches are done through Intelius. The site includes white pages and a people finder. Using the free portion, you can find towns and sometimes ages.

#### **Area Codes ([www.allareacodes.com](http://www.allareacodes.com))**

#### **Blackbookonline.info (free/paid)**

This site includes links to several other search engines, including state, local and federal information.

#### **Crimetime.com (free/paid)**

Similar to blackbookonline, this site includes links to other search engines.

#### **DMV records ([www.dmv.org](http://www.dmv.org))**

#### **Facebook.com (free)**

#### **Google Phone Book (<http://www.googleguide.com/phonebook.html>)**

#### **General Search Engine ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com))**

Sometimes you can find a current address, genealogy or other interesting information on individuals online. If you Google an address, you can obtain a map and/or satellite view of the location.

#### **Indian Tribal Records ([www.accessgenealogy.com/native/](http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/))**

#### **Latter Day Saints (LDS) Genealogy Search ([www.familysearch.org/](http://www.familysearch.org/))**

#### **Mamma.com (free)**

Another general search engine that is good for preliminary information.

### **Obitsarchive.com** (free/paid)

Newspaper obituary search. Searching through ObitsArchive.com's vast collection of obituaries and death notices is free and unlimited. Users then pay to view a specific item.

- Pricing: Single Article: \$2.95, 100 articles every 30 days: \$19.95 (billed monthly)

### **Peoplefinder.com** (free/paid)

This site is run by Intelius. Preliminary information is free; additional information costs (through Intelius).

### **Privateeye.com** (free/paid)

The free portion lists places that people have worked, towns they have lived in, and possible relatives. The paid portion lists people the search subject has lived with.

**Rootsweb Death Records** (<http://searches.rootsweb.com/>) Go down to Records from Federal and State Resources: Social Security Death Index (SSDI) for Federal Death Records Death Records.

### **SearchSystems** ([www.searchsystems.net](http://www.searchsystems.net))

Very large public record directory online. Provides links to more than 35,958 searchable public record databases, many of which are free. A good site for finding municipal records and death certificates. SearchSystems also offers a premium service, which is charged on a per-search basis. Recommended by Kevin Campbell.

### **Vitalsearch.com**

Contains links to several sites for vital records searches.

### **ZABA** ([www.zabasearch.com/](http://www.zabasearch.com/))

Directory-Address assistance. It has added something similar to US Search.

## SUBSCRIPTION WEB SITES

### **Accurint** ([www accurint.com](http://www accurint.com))

A division of LexisNexis. Key features include:

- People Search: Locates neighbors, associates and possible relatives.
- Phones Plus: Track down phone numbers not typically available to increase your chances of finding your subject. Access more than 50,000,000 non-directory assistance records, including cell phone numbers.
- People at Work: Links more than 132 million individuals to businesses and includes information such as business addresses, phone numbers and possible dates of employment.
- Relavint™: Visually links individuals with businesses, addresses, relatives and vehicles.
- Advanced Person Search: Helps find individuals when only old or fragmented data is available.

### **Ancestry.com** ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com))

Contains obituaries, death records, census records and more.

### **Entersect** ([www.entersect.net](http://www.entersect.net))

Entersect Public Records (EPR) offers searches on a variety of public records. Individual searches range from \$1 to \$21, plus a one-time application fee of \$49. No monthly service fee or minimum usage fee. Entersect Police Online offers extensive online background investigations, including all addresses used in the past 20+ years. No initial implementation or set-up fee. Monthly fee of \$75/user for unlimited access.

### **Intelius** ([www.intelius.com](http://www.intelius.com))

People search, as well as background and criminal check. Annual membership fee of \$9.95

### **Obituaries (\$39 Quarterly | For up to 90 records)** ([www.obitsarchive.com](http://www.obitsarchive.com))

Contains archived obituaries from newspapers across the United States.

### **US Search** ([www.ussearch.com](http://www.ussearch.com))

Service: US Search has a search specialist who runs the search manually.

## OTHER POTENTIAL RESOURCES

- Absent Parent Department
- Assessor's Office/assessor's records
- Child Support
- Coroner
- County jails
- County Vital Statistics
- CWS-CMS, and history in hard case file
- Department of Justice
- District Attorney's office
- Eligibility Worker
- Emergency contact information card from school
- Family Services
- Immigration Services/Consulates
- Medical records (death code)
- Military agencies (Social and Family Services Departments)
- Obituaries (funeral homes)
- Parole and Probation
- Postmaster
- Red Cross
- Tribes
- Voter registration (phone or web)
- White & yellow pages (work), online or other



## HANDOUT #4:

### Sample Scripts – Letters, Emails & Phone Calls

---

Below you will find useful sample scripts to help you write letters and emails to relatives when conducting searches, as well as scripts for phone conversations once you have located them and want to invite them to family meetings. **Remember:** These are just suggested scripts and should not be read word-for-word.

#### SAMPLE FIRST LETTER TO RELATIVE

Dear contact person,

I am writing about child's first name and maybe last initial who I believe may be a relative of yours. I am a job position here in/at location or agency.

I do not know how much you know about child's first name, and I understand this letter comes to you as a surprise. I want you to know that child's first name is okay, but it's important that we talk soon. I am writing because child's first name would so much appreciate some information about his/her/their extended family, such as whom he/she/they looks like, how many cousins he/she/they has and if there are family reunions. You can imagine the sorts of questions that a boy/girl/child/youth would have about his/her/their family and culture.

I will call in a week to make sure you received this letter. In the meantime, if you would like to talk to me sooner, please feel free to write or call me. I can be contacted at contact information. Thank you in advance for helping child discover a greater sense of identity.

Sincerely,

#### SAMPLE FIRST LETTER TO INCARCERATED PARENT

Dear parent first name and last name,

My name is your name and I am the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for your children while they are in foster care. My role is to make sure your child(ren) are well cared for and to learn about everyone important in their lives before foster care.

I am writing today to find out about you. Can you tell me about your role in your child's life? Can you tell me what your plans are for your child. What would you like for your child? I want to get to know your child through your eyes.

I am also interested in learning more about your family and friends that were important to your child. Can you give me names and contact information about others in your family that I should talk with? Family is very important during this time and I want to make sure

your child knows that they have not been forgotten.

I am enclosing paper and a stamped envelope and I look forward to hearing from you. Any information you can share can help your child during this difficult time.

Thank you,

## **SAMPLE SCRIPTS FOR INTRODUCING CFE WORK/TOOLS**

### **Reunification Family:**

1. “We are trying to work differently with families than we have in the past. I have a tool that I would like to use with you, called Mobility Mapping, that will help us get more information about who is important to you, who has been good supports to you and the kids; information that will hopefully help us get to a faster resolution for you and your family. I know that you don’t want us in your family’s life, and I would like that too. This tool also helps us learn more about your story; we know that your family is more than just xxx (this incident of CPS involvement). Would you be open to giving this tool a try?”
2. “Many parents who have experiences that involve our agency are struggling with limited support in their day-to-day life as adults, partners and parents. We have learned that parents who successfully complete services with us become reconnected with family members, friends and sometimes even people at work or in the community. Parents who are able to rely on safe, healthy adults in their lives are less likely to have our agency involved with them a second or even a third time.”
3. “This is important because families that become involved with the courts and our agency a second or third time are far less likely to keep their children home and may even lose their rights as parents.

It is important that we take some time now to talk about people from any point in your life who have been healthy, safe and supportive to you. Their relationship to you, relative, friend or teacher for example, is less important to me than hearing how they were supportive at that point in your life, and how it made a difference.

A good way to have this conversation is for you to think of a person at any point where you needed support and tell me a story about what was happening, who the person was and how they made a difference.”

*For parents struggling to do this, offer support by giving an example: When you were at your sickest and someone was there for you; when you needed help with money; someone who celebrated an accomplishment or important event.*

## **PMC, Other Permanency Plans Needed:**

“We would like to do work now to explore if the children can stay together and stay within your family if at all possible, should the court decide they can’t return to you. We know that children do better when cared for by someone they are connected to, versus a stranger; and we would like for you to be involved in these decisions as much as possible. We have a few tools that we can use to learn about your family tree and other important people to you and the kids. Would you be open to xxxx (for example: looking at your genogram with me, doing a Mobility Map, Ecomap, talking to me about how big is your family and things like who would organize your family reunion?) Are you okay with if we try to get in touch with some of these people about planning for the kids?”

## **PHONE CALL SAMPLE SCRIPTS**

### **First Phone Call**

Hello, my name is name, and I am a job title from location or agency and I am calling for contact’s name. Is this he/she/them?

### ***If there was a response to the first letter***

Thank you so much for leaving me a message and responding to my letter. Are you in a place where you can talk right now, because I am so excited for youth’s name to find out more information about his/her/their family? Remember the questions from the letter that youth’s name had, such as who he/she/they looks like, how many cousins he/she/they has, family reunions... Your help sharing this information could really make a difference in youth’s name’s future.

### ***If there was no response***

I am calling to follow up on the letter that I sent you a week ago. I can imagine this must be a difficult phone call to receive. Are you in a place where you can talk right now, because I am so excited for youth’s name to learn more information about his/her/their family? Remember the questions from the letter that you had, such as who he/she/they looks like, how many cousins he/she/they has, family reunions... what would you like to tell me? (*Ensure time for the person called to explain their situation and to tell their story about the child.*)

### ***If they ask about how to have contact with the youth***

I want to assure you that I am going to share your information and how to contact you with the rest of my team. It sounds like you’re offering to help youth’s name more. Let me write down the things that you would like to do, and I will share that with the rest of my team.

### ***If they cannot have any contact with the child***

This may be one of the opportunities you may have to do something to really help youth’s name. The information that you share with me could truly improve his/her/their life.

*Default back to questions about family.*

***If the contact sounds upset***

I can't imagine what you must be feeling right now. I am so sorry for what your family has been through, but we're asking for your help now to give some answers to youth's name's questions.

You might think of some more things that are important for youth's name to know over the next few days, or you might know other family members who would like to share information with youth's name. Please feel free to contact me at contact information. Thank you so much for sharing this important information; it is really valuable for youth's name. The act of sharing this information may dramatically affect his/her/their life.

***If the person asks about the child***

I know that you must have questions. I really can't answer them right now. There may be a time in the future where we could talk to you and answer some of your questions. Again I realize that this is difficult, but my primary concern right now is to help youth's first name get answers to some of his/her/their questions. Your help with this information could make such a difference in his/her/their life.

One of the things that might really help our conversation today is if you could tell me one of the things you are most proud of about your family. Such as a story or something someone has done in the past that was very special to you.

What about family reunions and gatherings? Do you know who plans them? What are your family traditions?

**Try to get their name and contact information. Perhaps put them on a conference call with the family member who plans the reunions or other family gatherings.**

Hello, my name is name and I work for an organization called organization which is a nonprofit, and am currently working with a youth in foster care. I am calling for his/her/their name. Is this she/he/them?

**Yes**

I am working with one of your family members/someone you are connected to. Do you know child's name? Is now a good time to talk?

**Yes**

Child's name is interested in information about his/her/their family, traditions, religion - in general his/her/their family history. You can imagine that someone in child's first name's position, being raised away from home, would want to know about his/her/their past. Do you have any information or stories that we can pass on to child's name? Because your help sharing this information could really make a difference in child's first name's future.

### **Leaving a telephone message**

Hello, my name is name and I work for an organization called organization, which is a nonprofit, and am currently working with a youth in foster care. I am calling regarding parent and their child child's name - first name only. Child's name is okay; however I am worried about him/her/ them. Please give me a call at phone #. If I don't hear from you, I will call you back within the next 24 hours. Thank you.

### ***If they don't return your call***

I am calling to follow up on the message that I left you earlier. I can imagine this must be a difficult phone call to receive. Is now a good time to talk? Because I am very worried about child's name - first name only. I'm not sure how much you know about child's name and his/ her/their life. Child's name is interested in information about his/her/their family, traditions, religion - in general his/her/their family history. You can imagine that someone in child's name's position, being raised away from home, would want to know about his/her/their past. Do you have any information that we can pass on to child's name, because your help in sharing this information could really make a difference in child's name's future. (*Ensure time for the person called to explain their situation, to tell their story about the youth.*)

### ***If the person asks about the child's situation***

I know that you must have questions. I really can't answer them right now. There may be a time in the future where we could talk to you and answer some of your questions. Again I realize that this is difficult, but my primary concern right now is to help child's name get answers to some of his/her/their questions. Your help with this information could make such a difference in his/her/their life.

One of the things that might really help our conversation today is if you could tell me one of the things you are most proud of about your family. Such as a story or something someone has done in the past that was very special to you.

What about family reunions and gatherings? What are your family traditions? Do you know who plans them (reunions)? (*Try to get their name and contact information. Perhaps put them on a conference call with the family member who plans the reunions or other family gatherings.*)

### ***If they ask about how to have contact with child***

I want to assure you that I am going to share your information, and how to contact you, with the rest of my team. It sounds like you're offering to help child's name more. Let me make sure I have all of your contact information for future planning for child's name.

### ***If they cannot have any contact with the child***

This may be one of your opportunities you may have to do something to really help child's name. The information that you share with me could truly improve this situation.

### ***If the person sounds upset***

I can't imagine what you must be feeling right now. I am so sorry for what your family has been through. But we're asking for your help now to give some answers to child's name's questions. You might think of some more things that are important for child's name to know over the next few days, or you might know other family members who would like to share information with child's name. Please feel free to contact me at phone # or email me at email address. Thank you so much for sharing this important information, it is really valuable for child's name. The act of sharing this information may dramatically affect this child's life.

### ***Ending conversation***

Over the next few days, you might think of more things that are important for child's name to know, or you might think of other family members who would like to share information with child's name. Please feel free to contact me at phone # or email me at email address. Thank you so much for sharing this important information, it is really valuable for child's name. The act of sharing this information may dramatically affect this child's life.

### ***Trying to reach a neighbor/leaving a message***

Hello, my name is name, and I am I work for an organization called organization, which is a nonprofit, and am currently working with a youth in foster care. I'm trying to reach your neighbor, neighbor's name regarding one of their relatives. It is very urgent I speak with him/her/them. Please have neighbor's name call me back at phone #. If I don't hear from him/her/them, I will call you back within the next 24 hours. Thank you.

### ***Reaching a neighbor***

Hello, my name is name, and I am I work for an organization called organization, which is a nonprofit, and am currently working with a youth in foster care. I'm trying to reach your neighbor, neighbor's name regarding one of their relatives. It is very urgent I speak with him/her/them. Is it possible for you to take down my information and walk over to deliver it to neighbor's name or put it on the door? (Yes) Please have him/her/them call me at phone #. Thank you.

*Thank them so much for their time and speaking with you, and ask if you may be in touch with them again in the future. Confirm what the best contact information and time is for them. Also encourage them to let other family members/support people know of your call and ask them to pass your contact information along.*

## **SAMPLE COMMUNICATION SCRIPTS (EMAIL & LETTER)**

### **1. Sample script to birth parent (when rights terminated)**

Hi birth parent's name, my name is name and I am a job title at organization. Part of my role is to try and connect with family members to hopefully get a full picture of a youth's family tree. If you were born in month year and you have # children, I would welcome connecting with you about this. Knowing your family roots is so important, even if contact is not possible. Any help you can provide is greatly appreciated, and if I have the wrong person my apologies and please disregard this message. I can be reached at phone, email and mail. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

## 2. Sample script to possible birth father

Hi possible birth father's name, my name is name and I am a job title at organization. In this role I try to locate family members with the hopes of finding out family tree information and strengthening family connectedness for the children we serve. I am looking for a person who has the same name as you. If you by any chance had a past relationship with a person named "mother's name (first name only)", who would be age now and is the mother of three boys; I would welcome hearing back from you. Thank you. I can be reached at phone, email and mail.

## 3. Sample script to possible relative through adoption

Hi possible relative's name, my name is name and I am a job title at organization. I am looking for possible family connections for an infant/child/youth we are currently planning for. I believe that you are the parent of child's half/full sibling. It would be helpful if you could contact me at phone, email and mail. Any information would be helpful and greatly appreciated to ensure this young person knows all of their family connections. We appreciate your time and attention to this sensitive matter.

## 4. Sample script to possible relative

Hello, my name is name and I am a job title at organization. I am currently looking for someone who has the same name as you that has a relation- sister, brother, cousin, etc. named first name only. If you are the person I am looking for, I would love to speak to you at your earliest convenience about another member of your family. I assure you that they are okay, but it is important that we connect soon. I can be reached at phone, email and mail. I do hope to hear from you soon. (If Facebook messaging) P.S. Sorry about the friend request, but this is sometimes the only way my message gets through.

## 5. Sample script to possible fictive kin

Hello, my name is name and I am a job title at organization. I am currently looking for someone who has the same name as you that is/was a (name connection, e.g. teacher, friend, neighbor, coach, prison guard, etc. for a person named (first name only). If you are the person I am looking for, I would love to speak to you at your earliest convenience about what's going on for person's first name. I assure you that they are okay, but it is important that we connect soon. I can be reached at phone, email and mail. I do hope to hear from you soon. (If Facebook messaging) P.S. Sorry about the friend request, but this is sometimes the only way my message gets through.

## 6. Second message after hearing back from person

Hi person's name, thanks so much for getting back to me, I am very happy to hear from you. I'm hoping to speak to you and any other family members that you can think of as soon as possible, hoping we can share information about what is going on and what's needed for child's first name. Please let me know the best way to reach you and I'll be in touch soon! Thanks again!

## SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR INVITING FAMILY & COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO FAMILY MEETINGS

**Remember:** As with other sample scripts presented in this manual, these are guidelines only, and are not meant to be read verbatim. Instead, use them as a jumping-off point for real conversation with family and community members.

### Invitation to Family Meeting #1

Hello, my name is name and I am calling for contact's name. Is this he/she/they? Hi contact's name, again my name is name and I am a job title from location or agency.

Are you in a place where you can talk right now for a few minutes? I am calling to invite you to a family meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to share information about child's first name and his/her/their family so that we can begin the process of planning together. We will not be making any decisions at this family meeting. Our first step is to bring everyone together to share information and talk about what has been going on. We will be talking about the future and not staying focused on things that have happened in the past. This meeting is important so that when we have additional family meetings we will be able to start making decisions.

Do you have any questions about the format of the meeting or who else we have invited? I want to make sure I answer all of your questions before I talk about the logistics of when and where the meeting will take place.

The meeting will be on day of the week, date, from start of meeting to end of meeting at location. It is really important that you attend so we can begin the process of planning for child's first name. Does this time work for your schedule?

#### **If yes**

That's great. Will you be able to attend in person?

*(wait for answer)*

If not, you can call into the meeting and we can put you on speaker phone. Is this a good number to call when the meeting starts?

#### **If no**

Is there any way to rearrange your schedule so you will be able to attend? *(Depending on who this is, the CFE team can decide to change the date and time of the meeting so that this person can be present either in person or on the phone.)*

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today. I look forward to seeing you at the family meeting on day of the week, date, from start of meeting to end of meeting at location. Please let me know if you have any more questions before the meeting and I'll do my best to answer them. Is there anyone else you think we should be inviting? Would you mind reaching out to them and letting them know about the meeting? That would be great; thank you so much!



## Invitation to Family Meeting #2

Hello, my name is name and I am calling for contact's name. Is this he/she/they? Hi contact's name, again my name is name and I am a job title from location or agency.

Are you in a place where you can talk right now for a few minutes?

I am calling to invite you to another family meeting where we hope to start talking about plans and decisions regarding child's first name. The purpose of this family meeting will be to develop different plans that address the needs we identified at the first family meeting for child's first name. We want to discuss all of the different possible options that child's first name has for when the case closes and CPS is no longer involved. We also want to start thinking about making sure child's first name has people in his/her/their life long term that will be there to support him/her/them.

Do you have any questions about the format of the meeting or who else we have invited? I want to make sure I answer all of your questions before I talk about the logistics of when and where the meeting will take place.

The meeting will be on day of the week, date, from start of meeting to end of meeting at location. It is really important that you attend so we can continue the process of planning for child's first name. Does this time work for your schedule?

### **If yes**

That's great. Will you be able to attend in person?

*(wait for answer)*

If not, you can call into the meeting and we can put you on speaker phone. Is this a good number to call when the meeting starts?

### **If no**

Is there any way to rearrange your schedule so you will be able to attend? *(Depending on who this is, the CFE team can decide to change the date and time of the meeting so that this person can be present either in person or on the phone.)*

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today. I look forward to seeing you at the family meeting on day of the week, date, from start of meeting to end of meeting at location. Please let me know if you have any more questions before the meeting and I'll do my best to answer them. Is there anyone else you think we should be inviting? Would you mind reaching out to them and letting them know about the meeting? That would be great, thank you so much!

## Invitation to Family Meeting #3

Hello, my name is name and I am calling for contact's name. Is this he/she/they? Hi contact's name, again my name is name and I am a job title from location or agency.

Are you in a place where you can talk right now for a few minutes?

I am calling to invite you to another family meeting to plan for parent/child's first name. The purpose of this family meeting will be to review the plans we discussed at the last family meeting and get a commitment from each person at the meeting for what they can provide for parent/child's first name now and in the long term.

Do you have any questions about the format of the meeting or who else we have invited? I want to make sure I answer all of your questions before I talk about the logistics of when and where the meeting will take place.

The meeting will be on day of the week, date, from start of meeting to end of meeting at location. It is really important that you attend so we can continue the process of planning for child's first name. Does this time work for your schedule?

***If yes***

That's great. Will you be able to attend in person?

*(wait for answer)*

If not, you can call into the meeting and we can put you on speaker phone. Is this a good number to call when the meeting starts?

***If no***

Is there any way to rearrange your schedule so you will be able to attend? *(Depending on who this is, the CFE team can decide to change the date and time of the meeting so that this person can be present either in person or on the phone.)*

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today. I look forward to seeing you at the family meeting on day of the week, date, from start of meeting to end of meeting at location. Please let me know if you have any more questions before the meeting and I'll do my best to answer them.

## **HANDOUT #5:** **Increasing Collaboration**

---

See the next two pages.



# INCREASING COLLABORATION



## The Compassionate Perspective

- Compassion is at the core of being a productive, confident, and driven team member.
- Compassion is having a true concern for the well-being of others.
- Compassion is empathy plus action.
- Compassion opens our minds to the common ground.



## Four Questions to Ask Yourself Before Going Into Any Meeting:

1. What is the narrative you're coming in with about the person or situation?
2. What facts are driving that narrative?
3. Are there any assumptions you're making?
4. How can you validate or disprove your narrative and related assumptions so you can get to the truth?



Preparing for meetings this way can get you out of the deep attachment you feel for your own perspective and give you a fighting chance to seek better information.



## Establish Roles and Responsibilities

- When we don't clearly define team members roles and responsibilities, we slow things down.
  - Research tells us in the absence of clarity, we waste time protecting territory and negotiating roles.
- By having their roles more clearly defined, people are able to move faster by doing.
- Roles are not defined by someone's function but rather how someone can contribute to getting to good decisions.



## Design Rules of Engagement

- Team norms are a set of practices that a team adopts that, if done well, creates deep trust and common identify. Team norms are critical to ensure the team knows the norms for how we operate to be successful. Doing so respects the fact that we all have different working styles and values and aligns us towards a common goal.
- Avoid choosing not holding people accountable. This is the team's job.



# INCREASING COLLABORATION



## Plan Foreseeable Barriers

- Write down all barriers.
- Label the controllables.
  - Let the uncontrollable barriers go.



## Collaboration Checklist

1. Do we have a clearly stated collective goal?
2. Do we have alignment on the collective goal?
3. Do we have the right people on the team to achieve the goal?
4. Do each of those team members know their role and responsibility?
5. Do we have a clear decision-making process?
6. Is someone assigned as a group facilitator?
7. Are the leaders of all team members aligned on the collective goal?
8. Is there a plan for the foreseeable barriers?
9. Do we have a set of team norms that the entire team has adopted?
10. Do we have a visual roadmap for our project?



## Evaluation and Iterate (Questions to Ask)

- How did the team work well to contribute positively to this project?
- Based on this project, what is one tactical change you would suggest to work together even more effectively?
- What are we willing to commit to doing differently?
- What is the next step for us to do so?



## HANDOUT #6: Sample Letter to Incarcerated Parent

---



**Golden Crescent Court Appointed Special Advocates**

P.O. Box 1627 • Victoria, Texas 77902-1627 • [www.goldencrescentcasa.org](http://www.goldencrescentcasa.org)  
361.573.3734 • FAX 361.573.3729

Dear Mr./Ms. First Name Last Name,

My name is Jane Jones and I am the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for your children while they are in foster care. My role is to make sure your child(ren) are well cared for and to learn about everyone important in their lives before foster care.

I am writing today to find out about you. Can you tell me about your role in your child's life? Can you tell me what your plans are for your child. What would you like for your child? I want to get to know your child through your eyes.

I am also interested in learning more about your family and friends that were important to your child. Can you give me names and contact information about others in your family that I should talk with? Family is very important during this time and I want to make sure your child knows that they have not been forgotten.

I am enclosing paper and a stamped envelope and I look forward to hearing from you. Any information you can share can help your child during this difficult time.

Thank you,

## HANDOUT #7:

### Collaborative Family Engagement Fidelity Index

#### COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FIDELITY INDEX

CASA Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Child/Family Name & ID: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Collaborate:</b> The creation of a CFE team is necessary for CFE fidelity.		
Action Step	Progress	
1. Agreement from CASA, CPS/SSCC on selection of child to receive CFE strategies.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
2. CASA volunteer or staff assigned have been trained in CFE.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
3. CFE team sets purpose and goals for CFE work and scores authentic commitment.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
4. Initial connection record made (who we know of prior to doing any CFE work - can be done via Connectedness Map, list, genogram, etc. Enter known connections into Optima under Family Members or Associated Parties.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
5. Action plan developed and has shared workload.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
6. CFE lead identified (person who will help keep CFE moving until next CFE team).	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
7. CFE team check-in meetings (touch base in-between family meetings, check commitment score, re-align goals, action plan).	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____

**Cultivate:** The use of one or more engagement and connection tools is necessary for CFE fidelity. Ideally three CFE tools will be completed: one with/for the child, one with the parent, and one with someone else the child or parent is connected to.

Action Step	Progress	
8. CFE team engages with child and youth using engagement and connection tools such as: Mobility Map, Ecomap, Connectedness Map, Three Houses, etc.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
9. CFE team engages with parents and other family members using engagement and connection tools such as: genogram, Mobility Map, Ecomap, Connectedness Map, etc. Add information from CFE tools into Optima as CFE tool completed.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
10. CFE team searches only when necessary using search tools.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____

**Convene:** Progression of family meetings with the elements of a neutral facilitator, transparent agenda, room set up, and 70/30 rule (goal) are necessary for CFE fidelity.

Action Step	Progress	
11. Kin, fictive kin, and child's caregivers invited to family meetings, with advance notice and/or input into the scheduling and location.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
12. Family meeting to share information occurs (first family meeting).	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
13. Family meeting elements achieved in first family meeting (neutral facilitator, room setup, transparent meeting, 70/30 rule).	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
14. Biggest Unmet Need Statement developed in first family meeting.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
15. Family meeting for planning occurs (second family meeting).	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____



16. Family meeting elements achieved in second family meeting (neutral facilitator, room setup, transparent meeting, 70/30 rule).	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
17. Minimum of three concurrent plans of support identified. Add CFE Family Meeting into Optima with details of the meeting and who attended.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
<b>Connect:</b> The presence of a lifetime network that is committed to supporting the child and/or family for the long- term, with the ultimate goal of relational and/or legal permanency, is necessary for CFE fidelity.		
<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
18. Family meeting to move network to action occurs (third family meeting). Permanency plan identified.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
19. Family meeting elements achieved in third family meeting (neutral facilitator, room setup, transparent meeting, 70/30 rule)	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
20. Network established for every child and/or parents/caregivers.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
21. Calendar made for the child, parents or caregivers, and for the network (as needed). Actionable plans of connection to be documented via the calendar.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
22. Network takes leadership role in action planning, calendaring, and coordinating/facilitating meetings; and has plan for action and communication with one another following CPS/SSCC case closure.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____
23. Closing connections noted (who we know of after CFE work is completed - can be done via Connectedness Map, list, genogram, CFE Team document, etc.). Add any closing connections into Optima under Family Members or Known Associates.	<input type="radio"/> In Progress	<input type="radio"/> Completed Date of Completion _____

## HANDOUT #8: Cultural Awareness Continuum

Our roles within the foster care system give us a **powerful voice** in the experiences and outcomes for the families and youth we work with, so it's important that we're continually practicing and expanding our cultural awareness skills. One way we can do this is by **making a commitment to be aware of how we react and respond during times of conflict**. When we are offered feedback within our CFE work, we need to be prepared to receive it with openness and a willingness to learn and grow. This can sometimes feel uncomfortable, but it's critical to our commitment as CASA volunteers to see things from new and different perspectives. How do we put commitment into action? Check out the chart below and consider these questions:

- Have you witnessed any practices from the **red list** or experienced someone acting toward you in this way?
- What practices are you already currently using from the **green list**?
- What practices from the **red list** do you think you need to work on avoiding?
- What practices from the **green list** do you think are most effective? Which ones do you plan on emphasizing in your work with families?

Red List: Ways to <u>Avoid</u> Learning	Green List: Ways to Learn
<b>Denial</b> - "I didn't say or do anything offensive."	<b>Let Go of Unproductive Reactions:</b> I notice and let go of feelings of defensiveness, anger, fear, embarrassment, shame or guilt that interfere with my capacity to listen to what you are saying.
<b>Dismissal</b> - "You're overreacting." "You're too sensitive." "You're blowing this out of proportion."	<b>Listen:</b> I focus on understanding what you are telling me and ask for clarity when I do not understand.
<b>Explaining It Away:</b> "You're misunderstanding my actions; I didn't mean it like that."	<b>I Receive Your Feedback as a Gift:</b> I understand that when someone offers me information, I can be more conscious of my role and the impact of my beliefs, words and actions. I welcome feedback and do not take it lightly or ignore it.
<b>Guilt:</b> "I'm ashamed that you think I meant any harm." "I feel awful and am having strong feelings or thoughts about how bad I am at this."	<b>Take a New Perspective:</b> I try to step back from the situation and how I advise someone else in the same dynamic. I try to see the situation from your point of view.
<b>Avoidance:</b> "I can't work with this family anymore." "This family is too difficult."	<b>Genuine Apology:</b> I apologize for what I specifically did that resulted in conflict or mistrust.

*Adapted from handout at Journey Conference on White Ethnic Identity (GLW), Fall 2005, author unknown*

# HANDOUT #9:

## Consent for Family Meeting Form

---

### CFE FAMILY MEETING

Parent/Youth/Child's Name	
Date of Meeting	
CFE Team Members	
Type of Meeting	

### CONSENT

Everyone attending this family meeting is consenting to participating in today's meeting and respecting the children/youth and family's privacy. If another meeting is held, relevant and needed information may be shared with people attending who were not at today's meeting, including who was present today and the main points of planning.

We are here to focus on the children/youth and their immediate needs that will support permanency and enhance family connections. We are not focusing on the past but focusing on where we hope to go. Thank you for all attending and being so committed.

The meeting notes taken by the facilitator are the only notes to be taken, and become part of the Agency record. All participants may have a copy, for the purposes of supporting their planning for the child/youth/family and for no other purpose.

### SIGNATURES OF ALL PRESENT AT MEETING:

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME DATE

**SIGNATURES OF ALL PRESENT AT MEETING (cont.)**

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

---

NAME DATE

# HANDOUT #10:

## CFE CASA Activities Form

---

**TIME: So, you have 20 hours....**

What is needed for CFE and CASA “best interests” and GAL advocacy?  
Establishing priorities for using time wisely and effectively.

When? TMC case - first “30 days” after accepting assignment	Time to do this?
<p><b>Begin CASA activities (as required by standards)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with CPS caseworker and rest of CFE team               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Meet with CFE team (alignment/first/initial CFE team meeting)</li> <li>◦ Maintain ongoing communication with CFE team</li> <li>◦ Complete any assigned tasks on CFE action plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CFE search tool of case mining to access and review available written information               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Petition, affidavit, historical CPS involvement info, assessments, education records; medical health records; info in CPS case file</li> <li>◦ Create initial family tree document with information found from file mine</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In consultation with CASA staff, plan introductory meetings with everyone – child(ren), parents, placements, educators, and others identified that have knowledge about the child(ren) and family</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize CFE connection and engagement tools to contact and meet parents and other identified family</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize CFE searching tools to identify additional relatives/connections</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After engaging with family and/or child(ren)/youth, add to genogram with any additional information</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact and share information and consult with parent’s attorneys, including any information from CFE tools</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact, share information and consult with the AAL, including any information from CFE tools</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe parent/child visits as appropriate</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit child(ren) in their placement(s) and utilize CFE engagement and connection tools</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist as needed with first CFE family meeting (FTM, FGC): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Attend this meeting</li> <li>o Seek to support efforts to build a network of connections/support for child(ren) and family</li> <li>o Bring evidence of connectedness tools used with children</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document information – keep a contact log/info in Optima, upload genogram and connectedness map into Optima</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and/or review pre-service training relevant to specific case issues/dynamics as needed; “think about” and begin preparation for written court report for next hearing</li> </ul>	

When? \_\_\_\_\_ Subsequent months’ time to do this? \_\_\_\_\_

**CFE tools at your disposal:**

- **Connection/engagement tools** (Mobility Map, Ecomap, Connectedness Map, Circles of Trust, calendars, Three Houses, Connect Cards)
- **Searching tools** (White Pages, Family Connections, GenoPro, other searching resources)

Continue to complete CASA activities required by standards	Time to do this?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue building upon genogram or other method of building a comprehensive family tree and search for relatives</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue use of connection/engagement and/or searching tools</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with CPS caseworker and other members of CFE team</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist as needed with planning/supporting CFE family meeting(s); attend meeting(s)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be in contact with parents monthly as well as other identified family</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact, share information and consult with parent’s attorneys</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact, share information and consult with AAL</li> </ul>	

• Observe parent/child visits as appropriate	
• Visit child(ren) in their placements, revisit/build upon connection/engagement tools	
• Continue efforts to build and support networks for child(ren) and families, search for network members if needed	
• Provide advocacy in education, medical/mental health areas for child(ren)'s needs	
• Document information – keep a contact log/info in Optima; upload additional CFE tools as needed	
• Continue research and/or development of understanding of relevant specific case issues/dynamics as needed	
• Work on court report; share/consult with CPS on critical issues for recommendations to the court, include network information gathered by tools in court report	
• Assist as needed with subsequent CFE family meetings (FGC, PC, COS); attend meetings; continue to support efforts to build a network of connections/support for child(ren) and family	

- Remember to always keep in mind child well-being while in foster care with connections and relationships (trauma informed).
- Remember that an out of home “CPS intervention” – “time in foster care” should be as short as possible.
- Remember that our goal is to seek relational and legal permanency (family) and safety.

### SEEK UNDERSTANDING – REVIEW RECORDS & DOCUMENTS

Initially and on an ongoing basis review case files, records and reports; and interact with, collaborate with and talk to the child, parents, caseworkers, teachers, caregivers and providers to understand the facts and circumstances of the case.

### SEEK UNDERSTANDING – TALK, LISTEN, OBSERVE

Seek understanding from all involved including the child/youth, family, CPS, attorney for the child, attorney for parents, service providers, community supports. Have in-person contact at a minimum as outlined in CASA standards with the child/youth and their parents.

### SEEK UNDERSTANDING – BEYOND A “SINGLE STORY”

Children, parents and families are more than the incident(s) that caused the child/youth to be known to CPS or come into foster care.

## **FIND FAMILY – SUPPORT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & INVOLVEMENT**

Engage with known family and kin and work to identify family and natural supports through a genogram, ecomap, mobility map or other searching or mapping tool. Engage with family, kin and natural supports in a culturally and trauma-informed manner, seeking to share power and decision making. Utilize search tools and family meetings.

## **HELP TO IDENTIFY & BUILD A NETWORK (CONNECTIONS & RELATIONSHIPS) FOR THE CHILD**

Identify, build and support a network of positive supports and relationships for the child/youth/parent understanding how critical connections and relationships are to healing and well-being. Utilize connection tools and family meetings.

## **ON AN ONGOING BASIS, GATHER & SHARE INFORMATION**

Collaborate with the CPS caseworker, attorney ad litem, attorney for parent(s), caregivers, providers and educators. Respecting each one's role, strive to facilitate information and perspective sharing to support urgency in meeting the safety, permanency and well-being needs of the child/youth/young adult in foster care. Meet in person after assignment as possible, and continue ongoing contact through preferred means of contact agreed upon with others.

## **WORK WELL WITH OTHERS – COLLABORATE**

Participate respectfully and collaboratively in meetings and conferences (service planning, permanency planning, family meetings, and in educational, medical, and mental health areas) that will help gain insight and in making recommendations to the court. Approach with cultural humility. Maintain awareness of and sensitivity to personal and implicit biases that can affect perceptions and positions.

## **DEPEND ON & USE CASA STAFF**

Work closely with CASA staff, and on a regular basis (at least once a month) seek support, guidance, and let staff serve as a sounding board. Discuss ideas and advocacy outside of court in systems supporting well-being (medical, educational, mental health, placement).

## **PROVIDE THOROUGH, PERTINENT COURT REPORTS**

Prepare court reports that have information to support recommendations. Begin development of each report by talking through concerns, issues, and proposed recommendations with CASA staff and then with the CPS caseworker, attorney ad litem and parent's attorney. Acknowledge the child/youth's wishes within your best interest's recommendations. Submit reports prior to the court hearing, sharing the report with CPS and attorneys prior to the hearing.



## **DOCUMENT YOUR WORK**

Develop a practice or system that works best for you to provide documentation as outlined in your CASA program's policies. This is very important.

## **UPHOLD CONFIDENTIALITY**

Approach your work and role as a CASA volunteer with great integrity. You will have access to and receive very personal information for which you must serve as a safe and respected guardian. Be mindful of this at all times.

## **WORK WITH URGENCY FOR GOALS OF SAFETY, WELL-BEING, LEGAL & RELATIONAL PERMANENCY**

Keep focus on the long-term goals.

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES & RESOURCES

0-5 Advocacy Guide: <https://texascasa.org/0-5-advocacy-guide/>

CASA College (includes e-learning modules): <https://texascasa.org/casa-college/>

Child Trends Research: <http://www.childtrends.org/>

Child Trauma Academy: <http://childtrauma.org/>

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2009 TED Talk about the "single story" and how to address this stereotype: [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)

Collaborative Family Engagement: <https://texascasa.org/what-we-do/collaborative-family-engagement/>

Collaborative Family Engagement in the Texas CASA Program Portal: <https://texascasa.org/program-portal/collaborative-family-engagement/>

Early CFE: <https://texascasa.org/resources/early-cfe/>

Family Finding: <https://www.familyfinding.org/>

Right to Know Principle: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/protected-persons/missing-persons/overview-missing-persons.htm>.

Trust-Based Relational Intervention® Strategies (see trauma-informed care), from the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development: <https://child.tcu.edu/about-us/tbri/#sthash.2fm50RID.dpbs>



FEE

# Collaborative Family Engagement



STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE