

# From Model to Practice: Development and Implementation of Family Finding Service



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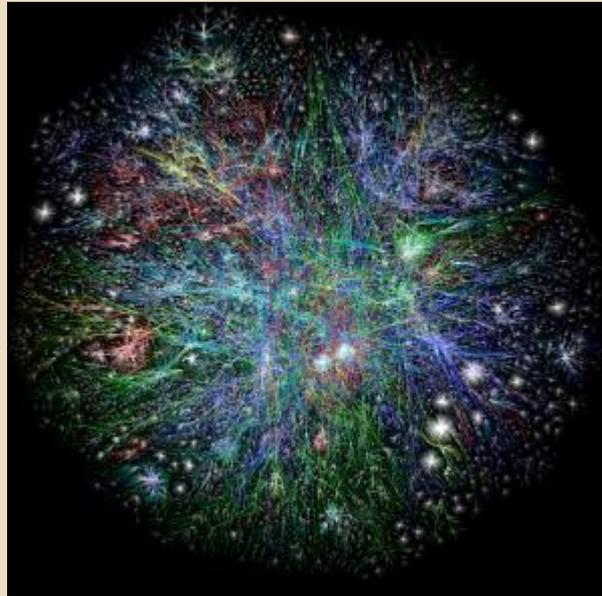
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**CHILD TRENDS**

# Family Connections Activity



- Who is your favorite cousin?
- Where did you spend last Thanksgiving?
- Who in your family sends you birthday cards?
- What is one of your family traditions?
- Who would you call if your car broke down?
- How many family events have you attended in the past year? The past 5 years?

# Connection Mapping



# Six Steps of Family Finding



## **SIX STEPS**

(Preparation phase)

Discovery

Engagement

Preparation and planning

Decision-making

Evaluation

Follow-up Supports

# Preparation Phase



- Bring the professional team together for a meeting to discuss the role and goals of Family Finding
- Create a sense of urgency
  - Every day spent in foster care is a day too long
  - Heart attack example
  - Who does this child belong to?

# Discovery (searching)



- Set the stage
- Create options for support and planning
- See if you can locate and get information from the “family historian”, the arranger of the gatherings and family reunions
- Older individuals tend to be home more during the day

# How to Search



- File review/case mining
- Talk to the child and any known relatives
- Free internet sites - Whitepages, Intelius, Pipl, Zabasearch, People Finders, Spokeo
- CCAP (WI) or other public records sites
- State Prison locator
- Municipal court records
- Seneca search – fee per search

# Engagement



- Engage those who know the child best and have an historic and/or inherent connection in helping the child by sharing information. They become part of the team
- Collect info about family history, stories, and traditions
- Who in the family organizes reunions?
- Who has an interesting career or talent?
- Who has raised their own children successfully?

# Preparation and Planning



- Hold meetings with parents, family members, and others important to the child focused on planning for the successful future of the child or youth
- The emphasis is on family sharing their perspectives and hopes for the child
- Fewer paid professionals and more family
- Overall focus should be **URGENCY**
  - Get the family “fired up”
  - Every day spent in foster care is one day too many

# Decision Making



- The family team with the case worker make timely decisions that provide the youth with appropriate levels of affection and belonging that are expected to be enduring
- The family is encouraged to develop solutions to meet the child's needs

# Evaluation



- An inclusive, individualized and unconditional plan to achieve legal and emotional permanency has been created with a time line for completion

# Follow-up Supports



- The team will have supported the child or youth and their family to plan for and access essential formal and informal support. Normative resources are emphasized

# Family Finding in Wisconsin



**DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL :  
2008**

# The Beginning



- Children's Service Society of Wisconsin has a 100 year history as an adoption, foster care, counseling, and prevention agency. The agency saw Kevin Campbell's model featured on CBS 60 Minutes
- The agency wrote a proposal and presented it to child welfare departments around the state and received lukewarm interest
- After working through eight cases (two counties) and learning some about what it would take in terms of time and investment we chose to apply for the federal discretionary grant in 2009

# Federal grant – Children’s Bureau



- Children’s Service Society of Wisconsin was one of four agencies nation-wide to receive a three-year federal grant for \$1.2 million dollars
- Our model uses a dedicated Family Finding Specialist instead of other models that might integrate aspects of Family Finding into case management practice

# Lessons learned



- The system must be prepared to act differently for children in Child Welfare --- **This cannot be over-stated**
- Having strong buy-in from the state agency, politicians, and judiciary is important
- Have the buy-in from your own administration
  - Have the budget necessary to travel to where family might be.
  - Have the budget to pay for professional searches. Know how to do background checks nation-wide.
- Be prepared to message and explain a lot
- Know your state law. Points to consider:
  - Consent: is it necessary before providing service?
  - Release of information (what can you say and to whom)
  - How to handle cases post-TPR and post-adoption
  - How or whom your state defines “relative”
  - How to handle ICWA cases
- Measure something. Research-minded people want to know if you are making a difference
- Create the sense of urgency with the professional team at every opportunity

# More lessons learned



- How might your state operate in rural versus urban areas?
  - We found that in more rural areas that case managers were more likely to want to “control” the case. They were more likely to have been intimately involved in all aspects of the child’s life and were uncomfortable with other service providers including FF.
  - This occurred in urban areas as well but to a lesser extent. In urban areas worker turnover and the negative impact of that impacted Family Finding
- Some case managers only wanted a list of relatives. They didn’t want the child to receive the benefit of Family Finding because they did not believe the child belonged to the family
- The child welfare system in Milwaukee (urban) is privatized

# The Family Finding Specialist



**ROLE OF A FAMILY FINDING SPECIALIST  
AND IMPACT OF FAMILY FINDING WORK**

# The Family Finding Specialist (FFS)



- FFS in Wisconsin conducts Family Finding activities exclusively whereas other models factor Family Finding into ongoing case work
- Work collaboratively with all members of the child's team
- Attend treatment team/wraparound meetings, court hearings, family meetings

# Languishing



- **Case example: Howard, age 18**
  - In care since age of 3
  - Failed adoption
  - No connection to family
  - Outcome from Family Finding
- **Successes**
  - What works well with languishing cases?
- **Barriers**
  - What gets in the way with languishing cases?

# Newer to Care



- **Case example: Jacob & Joey, ages 4 and 5**
  - Second detainment in 8 months
  - Father incarcerated, mother not progressing towards reunification
  - At time of referral, no appropriate relatives were identified on maternal side, paternal side unknown
  - Outcome from Family Finding
- **Successes**
  - What works well with newer to care cases?
- **Barriers**
  - What gets in the way with newer to care cases?

# FFS as part of the team



- Case managers must buy-in to the Family Finding philosophy and see the value of engaging family
- Present yourself as a support to the case manager and be respectful of their time
- Consult and include the case manager in every stage of the case
- Provide initial and ongoing education about the purpose and goals of the program

# FFS as part of the team



- Build up awareness of the program with the agency and other stakeholders (i.e., CASA, judges, therapists)
- Use examples of success and positive outcomes to help motivate others to participate
- Having a strong agency reputation helps build better working relationships

# Family Finding and the Foster Parent



- Foster parent is an important part of the team
- Why Family Finding is important even in long-term, stable placements
- How the foster parent can help or hinder the process
  - Example of helping: NM
  - Example of hindering: KB

# Effects on the Child and Family (video)

# What Have We Learned?



## **OUTCOMES FROM FAMILY FINDING SERVICE IN WISCONSIN**

# Family Finding Discovery Results

## Totals



	All Sites, n=185	New to Care, n=44	Languishing, n=39
# baseline connections	7	8	8
# new connections	39	29	38
# total connections	46	36	46

\*items may not add up due to rounding

# Family Finding Discovery Results

## Maternal Family Members



	All Sites, n=185	New to Care, n=44	Languishing, n=39
# baseline connections	3	4	4
# new connections	23	17	23
# total connections	26	20	26

\*items may not add up due to rounding

# Family Finding Discovery Results

## Paternal Family Members



	All Sites, n=185	New to Care, n=44	Languishing, n=39
# baseline connections	1	1	1
# new connections	14	11	14
# total connections	16	12	16

\*items may not add up due to rounding

# Family Finding Discovery Results

## Other Kin



	All Sites, n=185	New to Care, n=44	Languishing, n=39
# baseline connections	1	1	2
# new connections	2	1	1
# total connections	3	3	3

\*items may not add up due to rounding

# Outcome Ratings



## Rating of Family Involvement at Case Closure

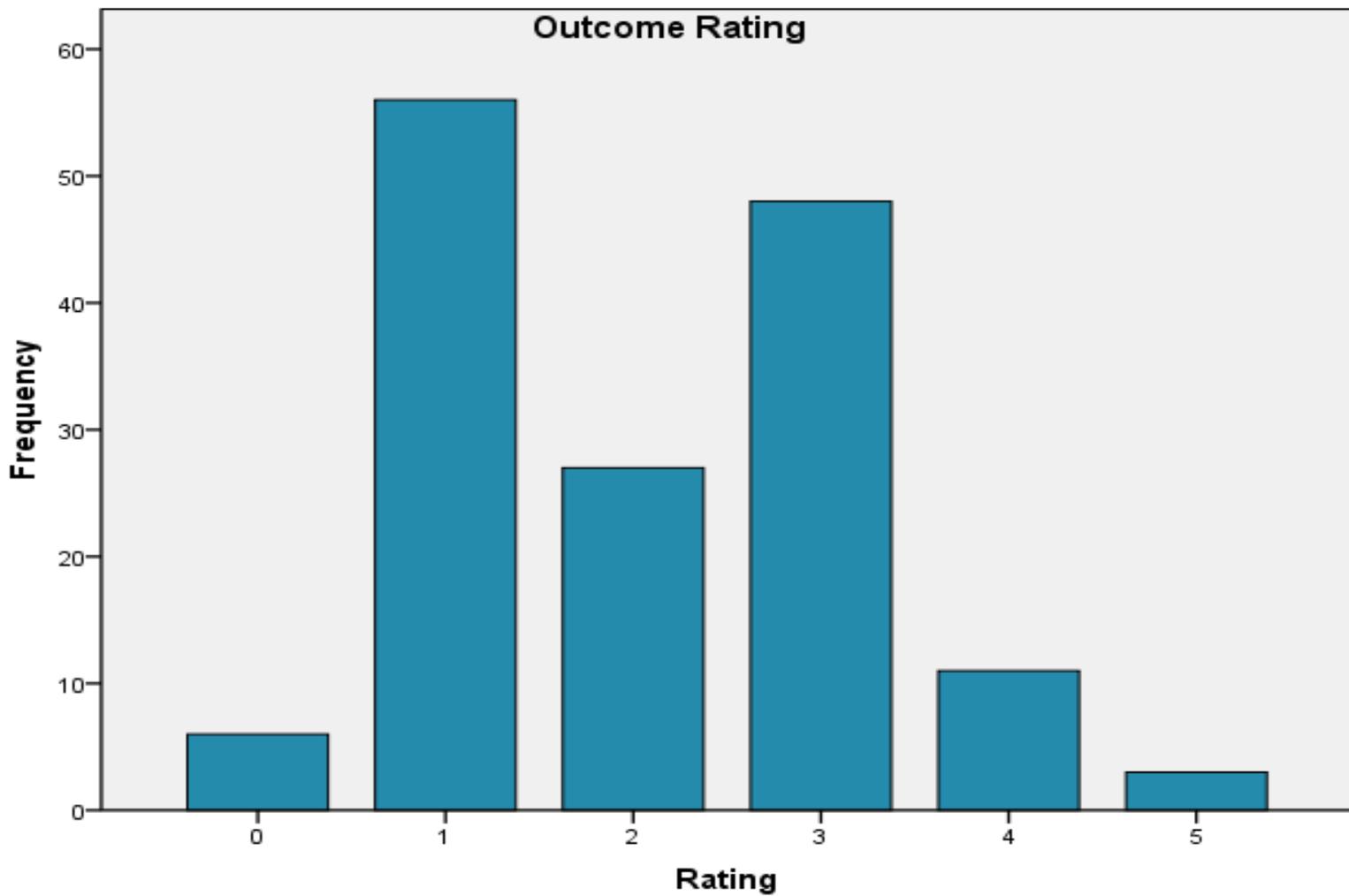
<u>Rating</u>	<u>Definition</u>
0	No progress in case, either due to OCM non-cooperation, parent barriers, etc.
1	Family Connections discovered, but no contact beyond initial meetings or engagement (includes OCM failure to capitalize on found connections).
2	Non-physical connection with Relatives. Includes letters, email, facebook messaging, telephone, presents on holidays, but no in-person visits.
3	Physical connection with Relatives. Includes visits, holidays together, assisting in taking child to appointments, etc.
4	Placement with Relative. Relative agrees to placement, child is placed in relative's home.
5	TOG or Adoption by Relative.

# Outcome Rating



Mean 2.07 (1.15)

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
0	4.0	6
1	37.1	56
2	17.9	27
3	31.8	48
4	7.3	11
5	2.0	3



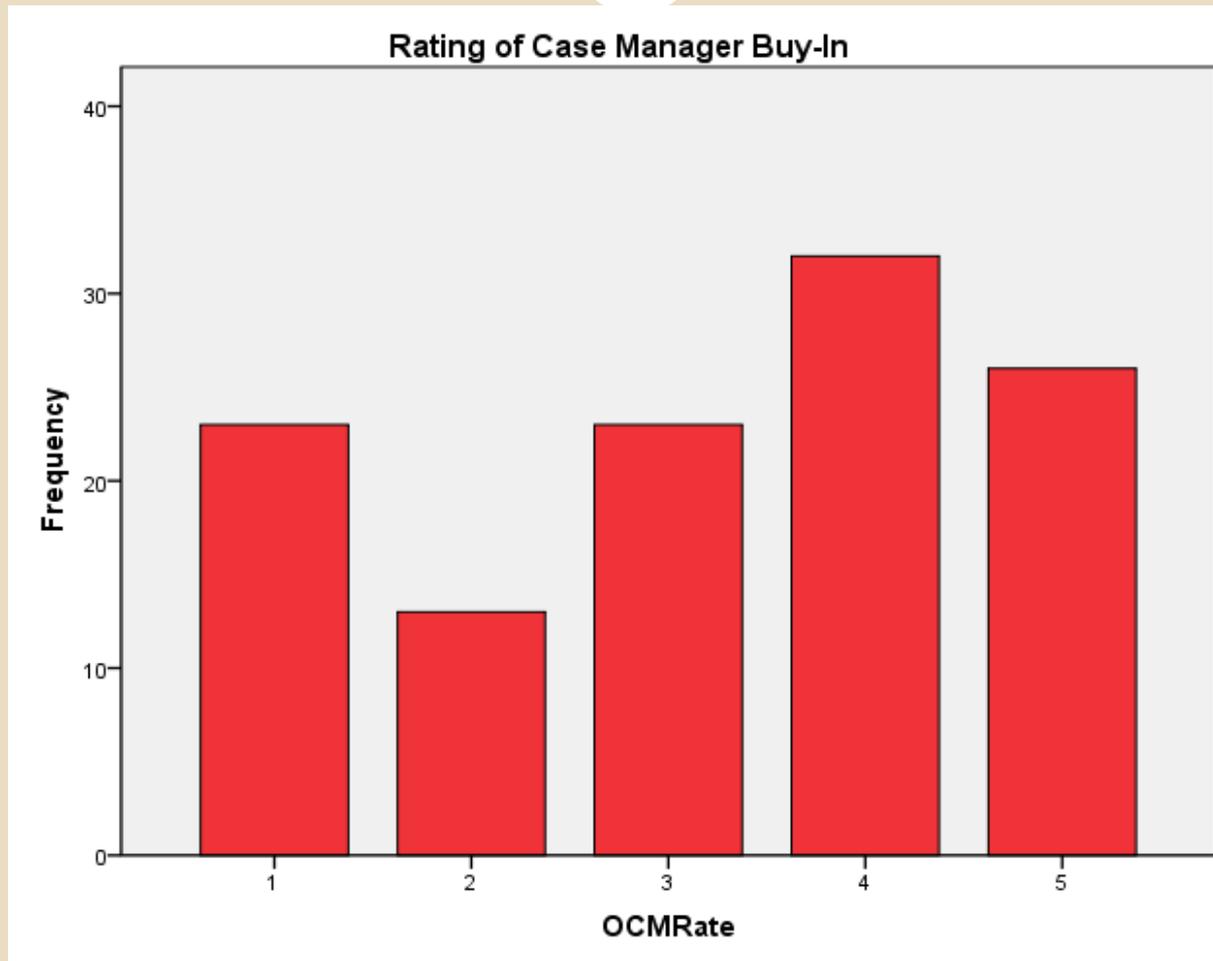
# Case Manager Ratings



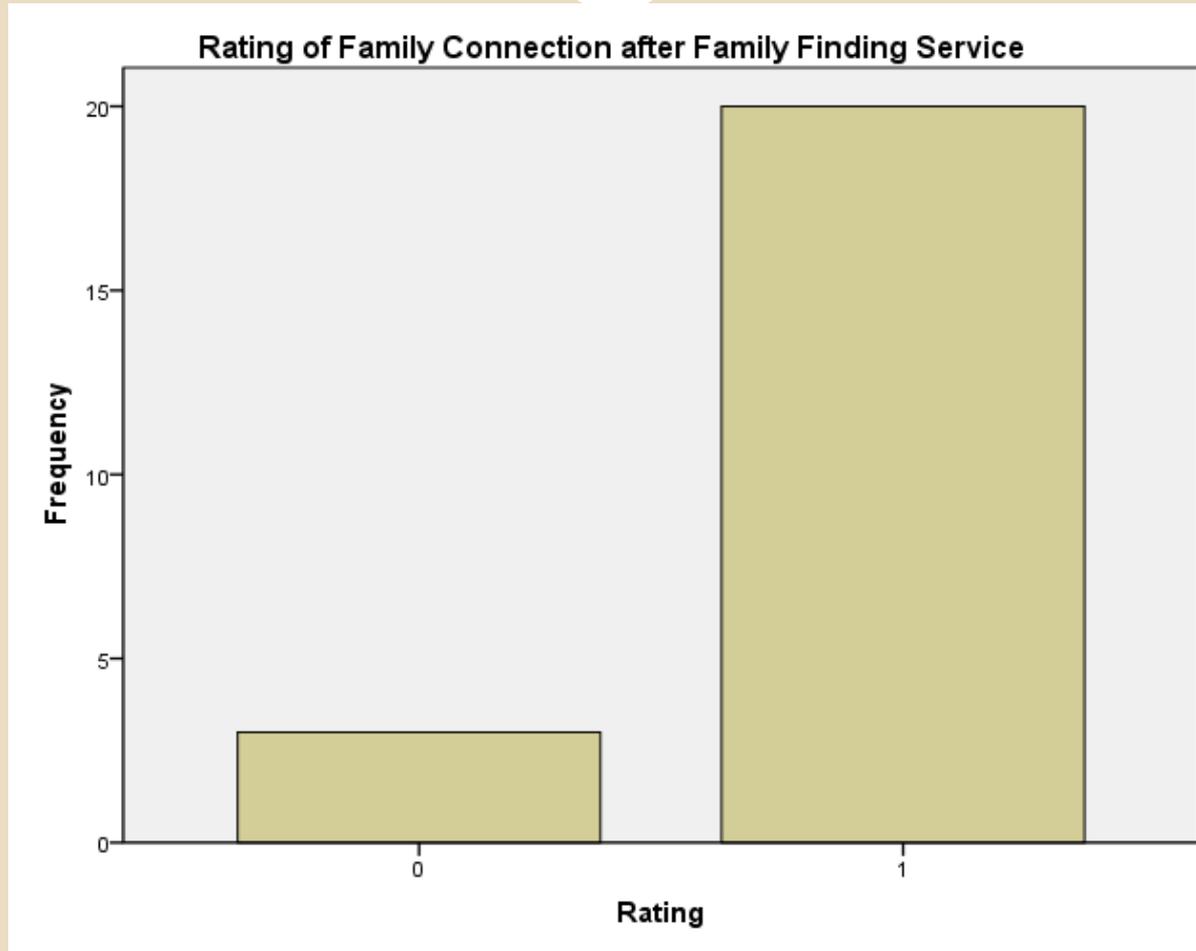
Overall rating of referring worker investment/cooperation with Family Finding intervention (i.e. following the model of re-establishing lifelong relationships)

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Definition</u>
1	Thwarts/sabotages progress
2	Not open to the FF process, or defines process in a narrow or ineffective way
3	Allows some progress, but may limit relationships or outcome potential in some way.
4	Supports and assists with the process, but is not likely to continue efforts or plans post FF case closure.
5	Supports and assists with the process and will likely continue to carry out efforts and plans post FF case closure.

If the Case Manager buy in is rated as supportive of Family Finding, there is a stronger likelihood that the child will have a greater connection to family after Family Finding service is completed



If the Case Manager is rated as highly resistant to the process, there is no gain in family connectedness after Family Finding service.



# Connection to Family



- Qualitative interview completed on 71 of 110 (65%) closed cases.
- Of completed interviews, 35 (50%) had child comments.
  - ✦ Child comments not received due to case manager restricting contact to child, child too young, AWOL
- Children at case closure reported positive comments such as increased knowledge of family, new family members located, increased time spent with family
- “My family is the most important thing in the world to me. I can’t believe I have so many relatives now. I’m getting to know my sister that I never knew I had. I like being her big brother and that we share a dad. I have a picture of my dad now and I look like him.”

# Qualitative Interview



## Child

### *What did Family Finding do for you?*

- “I got to see my grandma again and didn’t have to only spend time with the \_\_\_\_\_ (previous foster family). It was like 5 years since I really got to spend time with my grandma, aunt and cousins and I love spending time with them now. I think it’s really cool that I have the family tree and pictures. I think I want to continue to look for my family and maybe I can find my Mexican family later.”

### *Are you happy with the outcome?*

- “Yes. I love seeing my grandma. I had no family and was forced to do family stuff with the \_\_\_\_\_ (previous foster family) and now I have my own family. This has been really cool. Thanks so much for doing this.”

# Qualitative Interview



## Case Manager

*What did Family Finding do for your client? AND What impact did Family Finding have on your work with your client?*

- “I don’t see Family Finding as helping \_\_\_\_\_ or my work with him so far. \_\_\_\_\_ already had contact with his family and he has contact with (them) now and we did not get the needed support to have a family meetings. I think the Family Tree for \_\_\_\_\_ will be the best thing since he is really interested in seeing that.”

# Relative Placement



- Percentage of Treatment vs. Control children who moved to relative placement after FF: 11% vs. 5%
- Percentage of children with family being considered for placement after Family Finding service: 21%
- Lesson learned: The system moves slowly, effects of Family Finding service may not be known at time of case closure

# Questions



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# Resources



- Seneca Center: National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness

<http://www.senecacenter.org/familyconnectedness>

- Children's Service Society of Wisconsin

<http://www.cssw.org> click "Family Finding"

- Child Trends

<http://www.childtrends.org>

# Contact



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