



## **A Building Bridges Initiative Guide**

### **Finding and Engaging Families for Youth Receiving Residential Interventions:**

#### **Key Issues, Tips, and Strategies for Residential Leaders**

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## Introduction

This guide provides an overview of key issues and tips for residential providers and advocates on finding and engaging families<sup>1</sup> for youth receiving residential interventions, when these youth lack connections or have only limited connections with family members and natural supports. Children and adolescents (hereafter referred to as ‘youth’) in out-of-home placements, including those receiving residential interventions and those in foster care, may become disconnected from family and natural supports. This disconnection may happen as a result of child welfare involvement, family challenges, and multiple or long-term out-of-home placements.

Finding and engaging families refers to the process of locating, reconnecting, and strengthening connections between youth in foster care or residential and their family members. The family finding and family engagement process typically entails locating potential extended family members and supports for a youth, engaging them, and eventually reconnecting them with the youth, with appropriate safeguards and supports in place. This process may be non-linear, requiring a number of attempts to find and engage different family members and natural supports to foster permanent connections. Family “finding” is typically the easiest component of the work, with the most critical component being family engagement. Family engagement entails working collaboratively with the family to develop and maintain continued involvement in the youth’s life, with the goal of fostering lifelong, safe, supportive relationships, and permanency.

It is important to note that while family finding and family engagement has the primary goal of fostering permanency<sup>2</sup>, this is not the only goal. Youth may benefit from developing connections with family members and natural supports over time, and learning more about their family of origin. Family connections and information about the family of origin can prove healing for youth who have become disconnected from family during long durations in foster care or residential.

The providers interviewed for this guide highlighted fundamental reasons why finding and engaging families is a critical component of supporting the long term positive outcomes of youth receiving residential interventions: (1) youth deserve

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<sup>1</sup> Several models and training curricula describe the steps involved in finding families, which include

<sup>2</sup> The concept of permanency indicates developing and maintaining a safe, loving, lifelong family for a youth; this may take the form of reunification with a biological family, adoption, or legal guardianship.



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unconditional love from family members and natural supports to guide them in their lives; (2) for many youth, contact with family and natural supports fosters positive identity development and can support healing for youth who struggle from histories of trauma and loss; and (3) permanent connections are essential to long term positive outcomes for all youth, and this takes on heightened urgency for those aging out of care. The providers emphasized that it is crucial to begin the process of facilitating permanent connections with youth *pre-admission or at admission to residential* in order to set up the strong and comprehensive support networks they will need throughout life- this can foster a sense of hope for their recovery and for their futures.

The purpose of this guide is to offer strategies and suggestions for residential providers interested in initiating or further developing the process of finding family members and natural supports, connecting them with the youth, and continuously engaging them as a key practice. This guide provides an overview of research and evaluation findings pertinent to family engagement and permanency. Through consultations with residential providers, leaders, and consultants with experience in finding and engaging families, key tips, challenges, and strategies were identified, which are detailed throughout this document.

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### Why is Finding and Engaging Families Important?

Recent research and evaluation findings highlight the importance of permanency for youth in the mental health and child welfare systems, including those who use residential interventions. Findings also support the importance of engaging families and facilitating lifelong, unconditional connections for youth. The section below provides a summary of key research and evaluation findings.

- ***Family engagement and connection is associated with improved outcomes for youth receiving residential interventions and for youth in the child welfare system.*** Numerous studies support the importance of family engagement and involvement for youth receiving residential interventions (Frensch & Cameron, 2002; Hair, 2005; Walters & Petr, 2008). Youth receiving residential interventions who have involved families are more likely to achieve positive social and behavioral outcomes (Hair, 2005). Youth who do *not* have connections and frequent contact with families are at increased risk for serious behavior problems, including running away and juvenile or criminal justice system involvement (Sunseri, 2001). Positive outcomes of residential interventions are more likely to sustain over time when families are involved, both during and after treatment (Leichtman,



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2006). Youth in the child welfare system also benefit from parental visitation, as evidenced by lower levels of behavioral problems when compared with those who do not have parental contact (McWey, Acock, & Porter, 2010). Similarly, youth in the child welfare system exhibit fewer behavioral problems when they maintain close relationships with their siblings (Linares, Li, Shrout, Brody, & Pettit, 2007).

- ***Consistency of contact and engagement between youth and family members is important.*** The frequency of contact between youth and family members is associated with permanency for youth in the child welfare system, as those who experience greater parental visitation are more likely to reunify with the family (Leathers, 2002) and to complete treatment (Sunseri, 2001). Additionally, a recent study found that among children receiving residential interventions, frequency of both family and non-family visits was correlated with permanency at discharge, as well as six months post-discharge (Lee, 2011). Foster youth who have relationships with mentors noted that consistency of contact is an important aspect of positive relationships (Munson, Smalling, Spencer, Scott & Tracy, 2010).
- ***Natural supports also play a key role in promoting positive outcomes for youth.*** Emerging research indicates that unrelated adult figures (e.g. natural supports, mentors) can promote positive adjustment among youth and provide an important source of emotional and relational support (Freudlich & Avery, 2005; Frey, Cushing, Freudlich, & Brenner, 2008; Munson & McMillen, 2009). Relationships with mentors and natural community supports have been found to ease stress associated with transitions from foster care (Munson & McMillen, 2009).
- ***Family members can play other supportive roles for youth, even if they cannot reunify with them.*** Youth in child welfare and residential services can still experience benefits from family contact, even when permanency is not an option. Families can support youth and can provide them with a sense of “personal history and identity” (Mapp & Steinberg, 2007).
- ***Many youth receiving residential interventions lack connections with family members and supportive adults, and thus struggle to achieve permanency post-residential.*** Close to 10% of youth in the foster care system reside in institutional settings (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Children who use residential interventions are likely to have experienced multiple out-of-home placements (Brady & Caraway, 2002).



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Permanency is especially challenging for this group. A study of nineteen residential facilities across the nation found that over 30% of youth did not achieve permanency at the time of discharge (Drais-Parrillo, 2005). Even when foster youth with residential experience did achieve permanency, many lost their permanency over time (Teare et al., 1999).

- **Research documents disparities regarding children who are more or less likely to achieve permanency.** African-American children in care are less likely to reunify with families compared with Caucasian children, particularly when families experience socioeconomic and other challenges (Connell, Katz, Saunders, & Tebes, 2006; Hayward & DePanfilis, 2007). Children with physical disabilities and emotional/behavioral challenges are less likely to experience reunification, and are also more likely to re-enter out-of-home care (Barth, Weigensberg, Fisher, Febrow, & Green, 2008; Connell et al., 2006; Yampolskaya, Armstrong, & Vargo, 2007).
- **Family members experience challenges that can impact their ability to engage frequently with their children who are receiving residential interventions.** Research suggests that parents of youth who are receiving residential interventions may experience several challenges, including both personal and structural challenges (Leathers, 2002; Nickerson et al., 2006). Among these challenges are legal issues, time constraints, and financial hardships (Nickerson et al., 2006). Challenges regarding substance abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence, and housing instability have been found to negatively impact the likelihood of reunification (Marsh, Ryan, Choi, & Testa, 2006). Research indicates that families can benefit from an individualized approach to support services to meet their specific needs (Choi & Ryan, 2007; Marsh et al., 2006).
- **Providing support for families, including transportation and stipends, enhances the likelihood of permanency.** In a controlled study, Landsman et al. (2001) found that children who received more visits from family were more likely to reunify with them, as compared to children in a control group. In a recent qualitative study, family caregivers expressed that geographic distance, inconvenient meeting times, transportation costs, lack of transportation, and lack of communication from programs are barriers to involvement and engagement (Kruzich, Jivanjee, Robinson, & Friesen, 2003). Residential providers can foster family engagement by offering assistance with transportation, providing flexible scheduling, facilitating cultural adaptations, expanding opportunities for families to spend time with their



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children, providing family support services and education, and maintaining frequent contact between residential staff and families (Nickerson et al., 2006; Sharrock et al., 2013). Other family-driven approaches include “promoting child and family empowerment, ensuring healthy child and family connections during treatment, building family strengths and competencies, and involving family members in all phases of treatment from the point of referral to discharge planning” (Sharrock et al., 2013, p. 40). Additionally, residential leaders indicate that an essential component of family-driven care is supporting families in spending frequent time together at home and in the community, as opposed to on a residential campus only (Dalton, 2011; Hust, 2010; Kohomban, 2011; Leichtman, Barber, & Neese, 2001; Martone, 2010, as cited in Hust & Kuppinger, 2014).

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### Successfully Finding and Engaging Families of Youth who are Receiving Residential Interventions: Tips and Strategies from Providers

Residential leaders, providers, and consultants provided the following tips and strategies for successfully finding and engaging families.

- ***Re-envision the role of residential.*** Authentic organizational commitment to finding and engaging families requires a shift in thinking about the role of residential in youth’s lives. Traditionally, residential has been framed as a setting in which individual treatment is done with youth until they are ready to be successful in the family and community. In contrast, the notion of permanency and the work of family finding and family engagement suggests that strong, unconditional family connections are what youth need- this *is* the treatment. Thus, fostering these successful connections is essential to treatment, as opposed to an area to focus on at a later stage.
- ***Make an organizational commitment to finding families, engaging families, and fostering permanency for youth.*** In order for the process of finding and engaging families to become a priority within an organization, leaders need to set the direction- permanency preparation and readiness must be the clear organizational mission and focus. The providers shared the importance of becoming a “permanency focused” agency. When permanency becomes the goal, agency priorities must shift accordingly. Rather than focusing on a youth’s success within residential, time and resources must be devoted to supporting families in any way possible as they engage or re-



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engage with the child. The message that leaders must convey is that youth need and deserve families and lifelong connections. Thus, the primary role of residential is to support youth and families in achieving secure and unconditional relationships. After setting this strategic direction, leaders must keep the importance of permanency and connections front and center. Additionally, residential leaders are also tasked with the important job of gaining buy-in from the board. Leaders must engage the board to think differently about the role of residential as it pertains to fostering permanency.

“You must be authentic in your engagement and really believe that family and children are worthy of our engagement and sensitivity; the burden is on us, not them. We can’t make excuses for why kids don’t have anyone in their lives- that’s immoral.” – Jeremy Kohomban, President and CEO, The Children’s Village, Harlem, NY

“We transformed our practice to be permanency driven. It’s our responsibility to connect youth with family. It needs to be a cultural shift that starts at the top.” - James Lister, Executive Director, The Plummer Home for Boys, Inc., Salem, MA

- ***Gain buy-in from state professionals at the Department of Children and Families (DCF).*** For children and youth in state custody, state social workers typically have access to child welfare records and need to provide consent to reach out to family members. Residential leaders can begin by engaging in advocacy with state partners to gain buy in regarding the importance of finding and engaging families. To do so, it is important to effectively convey the importance of permanency and lifelong connections for youth. The residential providers interviewed for this guide shared that when progress stalls with a particular youth and family, residential leaders can reach out to DCF leaders to address road blocks- thus, strong relationships are of great importance. Family finding may be a shared process, with DCF managing particular components. Thus, DCF social workers and residential staff must work collaboratively. Family finding staff in residential may need permission from DCF workers to contact certain family members, particularly if rights have been terminated. To effectively engage DCF, it is important to stress safety and to present an individualized, well-developed safety plan for each youth and family, which includes precautions regarding initial calls and contacts, as well as any potential visits with the youth.





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- ***Begin the process of finding and engaging families on day one- not at discharge.*** Unfortunately, finding and engaging families often becomes a concern at discharge, leaving little time to devote to relationship building. To achieve permanency for youth, it is critical to begin the family finding and family engagement process before or upon intake. Providers can begin by clearly defining permanency as the discharge goal. Staff trained in family finding begin the process before or immediately following intake, and continue engaging families and natural supports throughout a youth's involvement with residential interventions. Residential interventions can provide stability during the initial engagement process by supporting youth as they explore and develop these connections.
- ***Engage community partners in the work of finding and engaging families.*** When permanency with family members or natural supports is defined as the discharge goal, it is important to develop community partnerships to continue supporting families post-residential. While family engagement during residential is crucial, it is equally important to support families throughout transitions and post-residential. Residential leaders can begin by engaging with community partners and sharing the organizational vision, as well as informing them about the family finding and family engagement work that is underway. Community providers may be able to provide support to further this goal, particularly by offering support to families when the youth spends time at home, and post-discharge.

“Prioritizing permanency in any way cannot be underestimated. This is the heart of what we need to do for kids, and everything must be organized around it.” – Lauren Frey, Senior Child Welfare Consultant

- ***When engaging family members or natural supports, “rule everyone in” before ruling them out.*** The providers shared that an essential component of successful family finding and family engagement is “opening the door as wide as you can”. This entails conducting a complete family search and engaging natural supports as well. The providers shared their successes engaging the paternal side of the family for some youth, even if this side had not been involved previously. Family members who were not in a place to raise the child in the past due to personal difficulties may be at a completely different point in their lives. In cases where parental rights have been terminated, a long process must be undertaken to reverse the decision. However, if this is deemed safe and in the best interest of the youth, DCF and residential family finders can work together to begin the process. It is



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important to find and engage multiple people to enhance opportunities for permanency, rather than focusing on one individual who may not work out as a permanency resource.

- ***Reach out to natural supports in addition to family members.*** Lifelong connections for youth can also take the form of relationships with natural supports; however, these non-traditional supports are often overlooked in the family finding process. The providers shared their successes involving a youth's previous teachers, neighbors with whom they may have lost contact, and other positive adults and mentors in the community. Even when natural supports cannot act as guardians or permanency resources for youth, they can continue to provide support and a sense of connectedness. This can help youth to feel less alone, and to begin to see that others value them. These supports can also assist and support family members who may be open to becoming a permanency resource. One approach for learning about potential natural supports is for residential staff to drive youth and their family members (e.g., siblings; parents; grandparents; cousins) around various places where they have lived, attended school, or participated in activities to discuss specific natural supports (e.g. teachers, coaches, neighbors, etc.) whom they have fond memories of.
- ***Family members and natural supports can play a number of roles to support the youth's permanency and success- even if they can't act as guardians.*** While a family member or natural support may not have the ability or desire to act as a permanent guardian for the child or youth, they may be able to help residential staff to locate and engage other potential options. They may also have the ability to provide a sense of connection and identity for the youth by connecting him or her with his or her history and background. These individuals can also promote positive messages and provide support in other ways that are helpful to the youth's success post-discharge. For example, a relative or natural support may be able to connect with and mentor a youth regarding a shared interest, such as art, sports, mechanics, or photography. Relationships can be forged through this shared passion. Several providers noted that incarcerated family members can sometimes help the permanency process. Incarcerated family members have provided helpful leads about who might be positive for the youth and safe to contact, as well as who should be avoided. The providers also shared that incarcerated family members have written frequent letters to the youth encouraging them to stay on a positive path in life. In cases when an adoptive family or legal guardian is being considered as a permanency



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resource, family members can still be engaged and connected, and they can support the child/youth as they develop new relationships. They can also become part of the youth's life by taking part in future celebrations, such as graduations, holidays, events, and the creation of new traditions. The providers shared that some family members who are unable to become guardians are eager for any opportunity to help.

“For the family members, there is redemption through this process.” - Gayle Wiler, Director of Residential and Peer Support and Family Search and Engagement, Hathaway Sycamores Child and Family Services, Altadena, CA

“Youth and their family members are helped in the healing process when we attend to positive family identity, as opposed to a focus on diagnosis, behavioral issues, or past mistakes made by some family members. This supports movement to permanency while concurrently supporting the youth in developing a positive identity.” - Mary Stone-Smith, Vice President, Catholic Community Services Western Washington, Tacoma, WA

- **When engaging families and supporting connections between youth and families, cultural awareness and competence is critical.** It is important for residential providers to develop an awareness of the cultural backgrounds of family members to effectively and respectfully engage them. In some cultures, important members of a family may include half siblings, cousins, extended family members, and close family friends. Providers should learn about and respect this and other culturally embedded views of family. When possible, same-culture and same-language providers can be helpful for building trust and rapport with family members.
- **Involve youth in discussions regarding finding and engaging families, in a developmentally and clinically appropriate way.** The providers emphasized the importance of engaging in family finding in a youth-guided way. Youth should be empowered to provide input into the family finding process. Youth are often a key resource in family finding, as they can provide the family finder with information about family members and natural supports. Some youth can identify supports through Facebook, though this should always happen with safeguards in place. They can also shed light on people who have been helpful or harmful to them in the past, and can give family finders a sense of who they might emphasize during a search—however, as stated earlier, the search should still be broad and should still include multiple family members and natural supports. Youth receiving



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residential interventions may have conflicted feelings about family finding and family engagement, since they have been hurt and disappointed by adults many times in the past. Providers can support youth by challenging them to think differently about their futures. Some youth may focus on leaving residential and being on their own. Providers can help youth to understand that they deserve to have unconditional people in their lives, even if this means creating a family of supportive people. Discussions about family finding should be tailored to a child's developmental level. Clinicians should be involved to provide input about how to best present family finding information. The providers noted that family finding can provide youth with a sense of hope and optimism, particularly for those who are losing hope about their futures. However, providers must carefully balance providing hope without overpromising.

*“Provide hope, but realistic expectations”- Gayle Wiler, Director of Residential and Peer Support and Family Search and Engagement, Hathaway Sycamores Child and Family Services, Altadena, CA*

- ***In residential, a team approach is important to family finding.*** The providers shared that in the context of residential, it is helpful when individuals throughout the organization see family finding as a shared role and responsibility. Multiple staff may assist in family finding, and staff can support engagement by providing transportation, supporting visits, and checking in with the child/youth to discuss feelings about the process. If staff learn about a potential connection from the child or youth, they should share it with the team. Several providers suggest training all staff in family finding and family engagement strategies, with some suggesting a train-the-trainer model. Following initial training, staff benefit from ongoing implementation support.
- ***Educate the whole organization about family finding, but hire or appoint a full time family finder when possible.*** While family finding and family engagement should be thought of as a shared responsibility, several providers noted that they achieved greater success after hiring or appointing a full time family finder. When family finding and family engagement is assigned to multiple part time staff or staff with several responsibilities, it can fall between the cracks as other needs arise. However, a full time family finder can stay completely engaged in the work. It is essential to maintain energy to drive the process of family finding and family engagement forward. Full time family finders are less likely to become discouraged or inhibited by



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excuses or reservations, as this is their central charge and mission in the organization. Some organizations have hired parent partners in the family finding role, while others hire staff with clinical backgrounds. In addition to the family finding work, this full time staff member also educates staff throughout the organization about family finding, including why it is important.

“The goal is not for staff to be lifetime people for these kids- it is about bringing the family in for the lifelong connections.” – Rani Mammen, Clinical Supervisor, Hillside, Pasadena, CA

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### Challenges and Strategies

The leaders, providers, and consultants interviewed for this guide discussed common challenges that providers may face in the context of family finding and family engagement. They described lessons they learned and suggested strategies for addressing these challenges.

- **Challenge: Balancing caution with urgency.** A central concern about finding and engaging families is the risks inherent in this work. Both DCF workers and residential staff may step away from finding and engaging families due to concerns about particular family members, including concerns about placing the youth in a less than optimal or even harmful situation. While it is important to think carefully about safety, the providers noted that safety concerns can become barriers to permanency opportunities. The providers shared the importance of engaging in safety precautions, but also emphasized the urgent need to move forward with this work. As they explained, youth in residential who are disconnected from family and natural supports often feel hopeless, and this hopelessness results in significant risky behaviors. Hopelessness and despair due to a lack of connection and uncertainty about the future is a major risk to a youth’s safety and well being, which cannot be underestimated. Thus, the providers shared that it is important to move forward with finding and engaging families, but to do so with individualized safety plans that consist of both proactive and reactive interventions- by doing so, safety concerns will not stand in the way of establishing connections with the goal of permanency.
- **Challenge: Concerns about disappointing youth can hold providers back from trying to find and engage families.** The providers also shared that a



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significant challenge is balancing concerns about disappointing youth with the need to move forward with the work of finding and engaging families. While providers may have an understandable concern about the youth's emotions in this process, it is important to consider the potential benefits that youth may experience. For many youth, family engagement is a way to re-establish a sense of identity, as family members anchor them in their history, family, and culture. Youth may be able to recognize strengths in themselves when providers highlight the strengths in their families- for instance, youth may see that they come from a musical family, or a family that is intelligent or athletically inclined. Thus, it is important for providers to be strength-based with families, rather than focusing initially on challenges or deficits. Family engagement can provide youth with an opportunity to heal, and to establish a sense of hope. According to the providers interviewed for this guide, residential providers should "give hope, but also be cautious about expectations." Youth and family members should be updated and informed about efforts to find and engage families. As explained earlier, youth should be presented with information in a way to is tailored to their developmental level, in a manner that is clinically appropriate. Family finders can meet with clinical staff to discuss how information may impact the child, and how it can be best explained. Youth may become sad when visits end or when family members leave, and providers can work to prepare them to deal with these emotions.

"It entails conversation with the kids that they're not used to; what family can we connect you with?" James Lister, Executive Director, The Plummer Home for Boys, Inc., Salem, MA

"Family finding connects youth with their history so they have an opportunity to move forward....for youth in residential, it is key to their ability to see themselves as more than a 'residential kid' ." -Rani Mammen, Clinical Supervisor, Hillsides, Pasadena, CA

- **Challenge: Trauma can make youth hesitant to consider the possibility of developing connections with family and natural supports.** Youth may express hesitation to outright disapproval of efforts at family finding. Some may interpret this as a sign that the child "doesn't want a family". However, the providers interviewed for this guide challenged this notion. It is understandable that youth may be resistant to this, particularly since they have had negative experiences in the past. Instead of abandoning family finding efforts, explore with the youth why they are reluctant. Ask them to think about what they would want from a person in their life. Providers can



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gain trust by asking youth for permission to allow them to check into some options, without pressuring them to commit to anything further. Providers can also agree to check in with the youth to discuss it further. Some shared that clinical interventions that support the youth in exploring their histories and relationships, such as the youth component of TF-CBT (trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy), is a helpful complement to this work.

- **Challenge: Staff may express negative perceptions, misconceptions, and biases against family members.** On an organizational level, it is important to combat biases and misconceptions about families. This requires a shift in thinking about families. The providers shared that judgment of families does occur, and that families are often blamed. However, this is not ultimately helpful to youth. A middle class bias can sometimes occur, especially for providers who encounter families that may not look like their own- however, these family members and natural supports may be positive and supportive for the youth. Organizational leaders can set the tone for the agency by emphasizing an authentic positive regard for families, and by continuously addressing statements or behaviors that express judgment toward families.
- **Challenge: Crises in residential can distract from finding and engaging families.** The providers shared that it is easy to lose sight of permanency goals when youth are going through crises or periods of difficulty. The organization can enter into a mode of crisis response, thus distracting from the goal at hand. By discussing permanency progress at every meeting and having a family finder (preferably full time) continuously engaged in the work, organizations can avoid this common pitfall.
- **Challenge: Families and natural supports may require assistance with logistical arrangements, such as transportation and lodging.** Consistent with the literature, logistical challenges, including geographic distance, lack of transportation, and financial difficulties often inhibit a family's opportunities to have the youth spend time at home and to visit with the youth at residential. Organizations can prioritize family engagement in the budget and allocate money toward transportation and lodging costs. Some programs provide transportation to families or offer gas or gift cards to cover the expenses. Others have purchased plane tickets and funded hotel stays for families. Providers can reach out to local hotels to negotiate lower rates. Programs can also consider setting up a family apartment on or near the



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residential program to accommodate families during visits<sup>3</sup>. Staff should be available to support families during their initial time together – whether at the residential program or in their own communities. Unstructured and supported time in a new location can prove awkward. Staff should work with the youth and families to identify the amount of support they need, and to be available throughout the entire first visit. It is also imperative, as the relationships and commitments towards reunification progress, to have clinical staff working with the families in their own homes and communities. Working with families at the residential campus is NOT sufficient for supporting successful reunification.

“Having a place [such as a family cottage on campus] where youth can make a connection and for the family to have intimate engagement is so important.” - Joe Ford, Vice President, Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services, Altadena, CA

- **Challenge: Programs will need to fund family finding and family engagement work.** While fiscal challenges are often of concern, organizations can draw from several strategies to support family finding and engagement work. When beginning this work, programs can start by funding a part time family finder or by appointing this responsibility to one or more staff members. Organizations can explore funding opportunities through preventative funding in their state. Organizations may also realize success by reaching out to private foundations for funding, or by seeking grant funding. The providers shared that permanency is often a priority to private foundations, and that this is often a fundable activity. Some programs have achieved success through advocacy and fundraising, while others fund family finding and family engagement services by “belt tightening” and achieving efficiencies in other areas by using resources that are already built into the case rate. Flex funds can offset costs, including transportation for visits. The providers shared that “a lot can happen with family finding and family engagement, even with limited money”. Residential leaders can also explore opportunities to partner with other agencies in family finding and family engagement work.

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<sup>3</sup> See the Building Bridges Fiscal Guide for more examples of strategies used by residential programs to support family contact and engagement ([www.buildingbridges4youth.org](http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org))







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## Appendix A

### Family Finding and Engagement Models

Several models and training curricula exist for providers interested in family finding and engagement. Mary Stone-Smith and colleagues were some of the earliest developers of this approach. Ms. Stone-Smith was instrumental in the development of this guide, and her contact information can be found in the Acknowledgements section. This approach to family finding and engagement is described in the following free document:

Stone-Smith, M., Norman, B. et al. (2008). *Family search and engagement: A comprehensive practice guide*. A collaborative produce of Catholic Community Services of Western Washington and EMQ Children and Family Services.  
[http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ccsww.org%2Fsite%2FDocServer%2FFamily\\_Search\\_and\\_Engagement\\_Guide\\_CCS-EMQ.pdf%3FdocID%3D641&ei=2w2KVJ7DJpHGsqTut4KQAw&usg=AFQjCNHxHDMvyLxscNr-XRyrHjAmEERTQ&sig2=TGvc9T--oiYdt4Bj6vrVPw&bvm=bv.81828268,d.cWc](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ccsww.org%2Fsite%2FDocServer%2FFamily_Search_and_Engagement_Guide_CCS-EMQ.pdf%3FdocID%3D641&ei=2w2KVJ7DJpHGsqTut4KQAw&usg=AFQjCNHxHDMvyLxscNr-XRyrHjAmEERTQ&sig2=TGvc9T--oiYdt4Bj6vrVPw&bvm=bv.81828268,d.cWc)

Additionally, the National Institute for Permanent Family Connections (Seneca Family of Agencies and Kevin Campbell) offers a model of family search and engagement that is used by a number of residential providers, and trains extensively in this area:

<http://www.familyfinding.org/NIPFC.html>

Hillside Institute for Family Connections™ also provides extensive training in family finding and engagement, which is detailed in a proprietary guide listed below (contact Michelle Belge and Jerry Callan, who are listed in the Acknowledgements, for further information):

Hillside Institute for Family Connections™ *Family Finding: Six steps to finding permanence and lifetime connections for disconnected youth.* [www.hillside.com](http://www.hillside.com)

While these models differ somewhat in their emphasis and approaches, most entail internet searches, formal searches through a paid service to locate family members, specific drawing and mapping activities to conduct with youth to gain insights into potential family members and natural supports, and specific steps and strategies for initial and later contacts with family members and natural supports.



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Additionally, some residential providers have integrated Facebook searches into their efforts, and have used [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) as a resource for the family finding component of family finding and engaging.

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### Family Finding/Engagement Resources: Suggestions for Further Reading

Family finding/searching for relatives and kin: State and local examples. Child Welfare Information Gateway.

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/outofhome/family\\_finding/searching\\_statelocal.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/outofhome/family_finding/searching_statelocal.cfm)

Family search and engagement resource sheet:

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=7&ved=0CEgQFjAG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ocwtp.net%2FPDFs%2FFSE%2FResources.pdf&ei=2w2KVJ7DjpHGsqTut4KQAw&usg=AFQjCNFS2jbHeuqNa8sJaUzsbHbKIMJ-Q&sig2=wAwg8pd9aY02LBJXF5feEA&bvm=bv.81828268,d.cWc>

Louisell, M.J. *Six steps to find a family: A practice guide to Family Search and Engagement (FSE)*. Developed by The National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work: A Service for the Children's Bureau/ACF/DHHS.

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nrcpfc.org%2Fdownloads%2FSixSteps.pdf&ei=mQyKVMvVntXdsASog4HIAG&usg=AFQjCNGqMbIb6VnTxztbTHc3EyRyQEHe0A&sig2=Fh2mAeKSXzlu5CA77wGVg&bvm=bv.81828268,d.cWc>

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections: Silberman School of Social Work at Hunger College. <http://www.nrcpfc.org/is/family-search-and-engagement.html>

The Plummer Home: Plummer Permanency Practice Model.

<http://plummerhome.org/permpractice.php>

Pinsoeneault, L.T., Fiermonte, C., & Dreyfus, S.N. (2013). *Realizing permanency, well-being through authentic engagement*. Alliance for Children and Families.

[http://www.ourkids.us/newsandevents/SiteAssets/News2013/13-121\\_family\\_engage\\_booklet\\_1.pdf](http://www.ourkids.us/newsandevents/SiteAssets/News2013/13-121_family_engage_booklet_1.pdf)





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Collins, J. *Fiscal Strategies Guide*. Building Bridges Initiative.

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**For more information about the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI),  
please go to the BBI website:**

**[www.buildingbridges4youth.org](http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org)**