

Family Finding

Family Finding, originally developed by Kevin Campbell and colleagues at Catholic Community Services in Tacoma, WA, offers methods and strategies to locate and engage relatives of children living in out-of-home care. *Family Finding's* aim is to increase family connectedness for older youth who have spent many years in foster care. Reuniting them with biological family and friends creates relational permanency, or a “lifetime network.” Depending on the youth’s needs, legal permanency or adoption may also be intended outcomes. Recent interest has emerged in implementing the model with children new to out-of-home care.

Family Finding is characterized by the application of a systematic, intensive process comprised of six stages:

1. **Discover** at least 40 family members and important people in the child’s life.
2. **Engage** multiple family members and supportive adults through participation in a planning meeting.
3. **Plan** for the successful future of the child with the participation of family members.
4. **Make** decisions during family meetings that support the child’s legal and emotional permanency.
5. **Evaluate** the permanency plans developed.
6. **Provide** follow-up supports to ensure the child and family can maintain the permanency plans.

Family Finding operates on the core belief that every child has a family, and that family members with functional strengths (those capable of supporting the safety and well-being of the child) can be located and engaged to meet the youth’s needs. It focuses on discovering at least 40 family members and natural supports for the youth, and then engaging at least 12 of those supports. Facilitated family meetings allow for healing and restoration of dignity for family members, and are also used to gain commitment from those able to be a part of the youth’s lifetime network. Realistic, sustainable plans for meeting the youth’s needs are maintained with follow-up supports.

Family Finding has been implemented in locations in New York State, as well as Wisconsin, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Iowa, Rhode Island, Maryland, Hawaii, Washington, Maine, Oklahoma, and California.

For More Information

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<https://www.hillside.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Hillside-FF-Brochure.pdf>

Resources needed for implementation

Designating a worker to focus solely on *Family Finding* is recommended, rather than integrating the role into existing casework. The Hillside Family of Agencies in New York State created the *Family Finding* curriculum in collaboration with Kevin Campbell, and currently delivers Family Finding training and consultation for public and private agencies. In New York State, local districts interested in utilizing the model may call their OCFS Regional Office to determine availability of both training and possible funding sources for training. Training options and cost vary according to needs.

Evidence base

A 2015 report summarizing 13 *Family Finding* evaluations found the evidence was not sufficient to conclude that *Family Finding* improves youth outcomes above and beyond existing, traditional services. The study also states the evidence is not sufficient to conclude that *Family Finding* does not improve outcomes, and poses hypotheses regarding this finding, including lack of complete and consistent implementation.¹

Family Finding has been reviewed by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) and is listed in the CEBC registry.

¹ Vandivere, Sharon and Karin Malm, Child Trends, January 2015, *Family Finding* Evaluations: A Summary of Recent Findings