

**A FAMILY FINDING DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

**Louisiana Supreme Court  
Court Improvement Program**



**CONNECTIONS FOR PERMANENCY**

FINAL REPORT



August 2007

August 31, 2007

Marketa Garner Gautreau, Assistant Secretary  
Office of Community Services  
Louisiana Department of Social Services  
627 North Fourth Street  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

Re: Connections For Permanency Demonstration Project

Thank you for joining with the Louisiana Supreme Court's Court Improvement Program (CIP) and providing funding for the Connections For Permanency (CFP) demonstration project. I commend your staff for working so collaboratively with our project team on such a critical and complex initiative.

Currently, planning activities are underway to continue and extend the reach of this project to the rest of the state. Attached is a final report which details proposed strategies and recommendations to accomplish this key objective. This will enable the Louisiana Supreme Court, the Department and all other entities committed to the welfare of children and families to leverage lessons learned and project success factors to facilitate scaling and sustaining this project as desired.

It is my belief that this report will serve as an effective baseline against which to measure future success. It should be noted that although the scope of the demonstration project was limited geographically, proven methodologies can be tailored to support the needs of our diverse foster care population.

I will be happy to meet with you and your staff to review the contents of this report. I trust you will be as excited as I am with the outcomes and look forward to better serving all of our children.

Sincerely,

S. Mark Harris  
CIP Coordinator

cc: Jan Byland  
Karen Hallstrom  
Debra Lazare

*A Louisiana “Family Finding” Demonstration Project*

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### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Connections for Permanency** (CFP) demonstration project was designed to find family or kin for dependent youth and to engage them in the child's life in a meaningful way. A key outcome of the project was the definition of a replicable strategy geared toward establishing long-term relationships for youth that would overcome time and circumstances and to provide

"When parents' rights are terminated, no worker care(s) about where they are and what changes they have made. How do we reconnect - the case must have gone from worker to worker? At the age of 17 or 17 ½, we should be very serious to look for parents even if their rights have been terminated and the child wants them."

*Comment taken from Training Evaluation, July 18, 2007 by a 10-year Louisiana Dept. of Social Services/Office of Community Services employee after participating in "Connections for Permanency" In-Service Training Session*

#### POST KATRINA/RITA

"Nearly 1900 foster children lived in the impacted areas of Katrina. In total, approximately 73% of the foster care population lived in the Katrina and Rita impacted areas. Louisiana currently has nearly 300 foster children displaced out of state. Thus, significant unexpected travel expenses have been and will continue to be incurred by the state. Over 50% of the biological parents of foster children from the greater New Orleans area are displaced out of state. 56% of the therapeutic foster homes (highly trained foster parents) were displaced and are not currently available for placement. With this void, the next level of placement available is residential care and this is exponentially more expensive. Nearly 31,463 physical case records for child support enforcement were completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Lost documents include legal documents as well as "life books" of foster and adopted (children) that document their lives and history. Many individuals need to be located by DSS for the purposes of establishing child support or locating biological parents of foster children."

*Excerpt from Governor Blanco's Priorities for Louisiana Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Funds Request February 2006*

a child with permanency! CFP was conceived, funded, coordinated and staffed by the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS), Office of Community Services (OCS) and the Louisiana Court Improvement Program (CIP). Technical assistance was provided by the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning (NRCFPPP) and Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (CCSWW).

This report was compiled by the CIP-CFP Project Team comprised of:

- ▶ S. Mark Harris, CIP Coordinator/Louisiana Supreme Court
- ▶ Adrienne S. Thomas, Sr. Human Services Consultant
- ▶ Ann Joseph, Licensed Social Worker / Consultant
- ▶ Ophelia Survia, Licensed Social Worker / Independent Consultant

(▶▶**Note:** This team, assembled by the Louisiana Supreme Court, was a subset of the larger CFP Project Team which included OCS staff and national consultants. This report, however, presents findings and recommendations from the perspective of the

CIP-CFP Project Team.)

The following documents were used in the preparation of this report:

- ▶ Project Scope
- ▶ Canyon Acres Children and Family Services' "Creating Family Connections" documentation
- ▶ Various material by Family Finding's creator, Kevin Campbell
- ▶ Monthly Project Status Reports
- ▶ Relative Research resources
- ▶ Notes from meetings and conference calls involving stakeholders, the CFP Project Team, national consultants and other entities conducting family finding programs

## II. DEFINING THE PROJECT

Once the true impact to children in foster care was quantified, it became acutely apparent that a more intense initiative was needed to provide an increased level of service. This was the charge to the combined project team. Defining Louisiana's approach to "family finding" is best described from two perspectives: purpose and process.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Connections for Permanency demonstration project was to refine a Family Finding / Diligent Search capability within the State of Louisiana. This innovative relative search mechanism incorporates a set of specialized strategies to help locate relatives and permanent connections for foster children who have been the subject of abuse and/or neglect.

Following the devastating 2005 hurricane season, the task of "locating and connecting" became more complex and challenging. During project launch activities on January 17, 2007, the project's target population was determined as any youth residing in any one of the Louisiana Department of Social Services regions who is determined to be a member of at least one of three Katrina/Rita class subsets, namely:

- 1) 78 Hurricane Katrina/Rita class children ages 16 and 17 years old who are presently in residential/institutional care;
- 2) 125 other Katrina/Rita class children in need of such services; and/or
- 3) 15 Katrina/Rita class foster children whose parents are missing.

The target population had little or no family relationships and was experiencing the highest level of urgency for connectedness. This population was generally unstable in placement and had a history of mental illness, destructive behavior, multiple placements and/or few, if any, significant relationships in their lives. This population was also close to the age of emancipation. Finally, the youth in the identified parishes belonged to the Katrina/Rita class and had higher instances of exhibiting these traits due to the effects of the 2005 hurricane season.

The combined project team was responsible for applying "family finding" techniques to support a minimum of twenty-five children in the Katrina/Rita class. Specific responsibilities are included in Appendix B.

### Process

Best practice diligent search / family finding techniques were studied and tailored for Louisiana's unique cultural and social environment by the CIP-CFP Project Team. These techniques were then used to help identify family members or potential long-term connections and support for a fifty-seven children referred to the project.

Consultants from Catholic Community Services of Western Washington facilitated initial meetings and training sessions attended management personnel representing DSS and the Supreme Court. OCS Case managers and human services consultants were also included. It was recommended that the demonstration project should focus on one or two geographical areas/OCS regions. It was, therefore, decided that case referrals would come from Orleans Parish and Jefferson Parish OCS Regional Offices

and areas heavily impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Family finding services would be provided to youths aged 16 – 18 by a multi-disciplinary project team consisting of DSS/OCS professional staff, Supreme Court staff and the CIP-CFP Project Team engaged by the Supreme Court. The CIP-CFP Project Team was composed of consultants with social services and information management/search skills.

Project planning discussions focused on various approaches to overcoming two primary challenges: defining the project scope and designing the preferred family finding methodology. This methodology would adhere to a specialist, generalist or specialist/generalist approach. The specialist approach supports defining a distinct organizational unit within DSS/OCS dedicated to intensive family finding. This unit would collaborate with OCS case workers. The generalist approach supports incorporating family finding techniques into each case manager's daily work responsibilities. The specialist/generalist approach is a combination of both models depending organizational and geographical preferences.

Additionally, project funds were earmarked for the Katrina/Rita class. However, these individuals resided across the state. To better utilize limited project resources, it was decided that only a subset of the Katrina/ Rita class would be targeted during the initial demonstration phase.

The CIP-CFP Project Team developed several instruments to facilitate project execution. These instruments included:

- Program brochure
- Referral form
- Case Update Table
- Policies and Procedures Manual
- Team member position descriptions with roles and responsibilities

The CIP-CFP Project Team developed the policies and procedures manual prior to accepting referrals. These policies and procedures served as a guide to how the demonstration project should proceed and outcomes should be measured. The team developed the other instruments as the project unfolded. The team then experimented with several approaches to the defining an optimal family finding strategy. The overarching strategy was incrementally enhanced as lessons were learned and project scope was refined.

The third method as emphasized by technical assistance representatives is best described as the generalist/specialist approach. The generalist/specialist approach is a straightforward uncomplicated combination of the general and specialist approach. The technical assistance representatives explained in their in-service trainings two approaches to family finding: generalist and specialist. In the generalist approach, social workers are provided an overview on family finding, are guided through an abbreviated family finding process that highlights internet searches and cold calling. This approach emphasizes the social worker capability to “pick up the ball and roll”. The specialist approach, social workers are provided an overview on family finding and the Family Finding concept is introduce to social workers, but there exists an additional department/unit, an independent agency/program, or identified staff dedicated to “family finding” activities.

This proved a statement made by the technical assistants in training session as a disadvantaged to the generalist model whereas the responsibility relies on the case workers and oft times drop the ball due to “work overload” or “still putting out fires”. This was noted in the Cooke County, Illinois (using the generalist model) example as well as during phase 1 of Orange County, California (using the specialist model- search only).

### III. OUTCOMES

This section defines statistical outcomes for the initial phase of the demonstration project. Fifty-five (55) youths were referred to the CIP-CFP Project Team from January – August 2007. By August 31, 2007, 47% of the cases referred were provided service beyond identification or Phase 2 of the standard six phases as defined by Kevin Campbell. See Case Update Table below.

	PHASE 1: REFER	PHASE 2: IDENTIFY	PHASE 3: SEARCH	PHASE 4: ENGAGE	PHASE 5: MEET	PHASE 6: CLOSE
<b>TOTAL</b>	55	29	22	13	6	16
<b>PERCENTAGE</b>		52.7%	40%	23.6%	11%	29.1%

(Note: Thirteen referrals received in April were all cases brought to the general training sessions by OCS social workers.)

- REFER:** Youth identified for referral; initial conversation with Case Worker; Referral Form completed.
- IDENTIFY:** Additional information collected from case files; Case Summary completed; cross-check of addresses and phone numbers; Internet search conducted if needed.
- SEARCH:** Initial contact made with known and possible relatives
- ENGAGE:** Relatives acknowledge youth; encourage and prepare all parties for connection
- MEET:** Case Manager and CIP-CFP Project Team plans for youth to meet with relatives
- CLOSE:** CIP-CFP Project Team closes case and submits final report

Additional statistics include the distribution by gender and parish as shown below:

Gender	# of cases per Total	Percentage %
Male	29	53%
Female	26	47%

Parish	# of Referrals
Orleans	32
Jefferson*	21
Other / Unknown	2

\*East Jefferson: 10 referrals  
 \*West Jefferson: 11 referrals

The following table illustrates the distribution of cases by method of referral.

	YOUTH/SELF-REFERRALS	DSS/OCS REFERRALS	YOUTH / OCS REFERRALS
<b>TOTAL</b>	16	37	2
<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	29%	67%	4%

The CIP-CFP Project Team conducted several training sessions for OCS staff and other key stakeholders. Evaluation results are summarized below and indicate an overall positive response to the delivery and content of the training provided.

TRAINING EVALUATION				
TRAINING DATE	NUMBER OF EVALUATIONS SUBMITTED	HIGHEST POSSIBLE COMBINED SCORE	ACTUAL COMBINED SCORE	PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE RESPONSES
July 18, 2007	69	1380	1018	74%
July 25, 2007	28	560	508	91%
July 26, 2007	42	840	720	86%
TRAINING DATE	ADDITIONAL EVALUATION CATEGORIES	POSSIBLE SCORE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
July 18, 2007	Organization of Content	345	260	75%
	Trainer's Responsiveness to Group Questions	345	268	78%
	Relationship of Training to Actual Practice	345	259	75%
	Relevancy of Content	345	231	67%
July 25, 2007	Organization of Content	140	126	90%
	Trainer's Responsiveness to Group Questions	140	128	91%
	Relationship of Training to Actual Practice	140	126	90%
	Relevancy of Content	140	128	91%
July 26, 2007	Organization of Content	210	182	87%
	Trainer's Responsiveness to Group Questions	210	182	87%
	Relationship of Training to Actual Practice	210	182	87%
	Relevancy of Content	210	174	83%

## IV. FEATURED SUCCESS STORY

Several outcomes had an underlying story worth highlighting. The following are examples of such stories.

### **CONNECTING TODD SMITH\*\***

It took Todd about a month to decide that he was ready to reunite with his family. Finally, on the day his social worker, Ms. Young, gave permission to set up a meeting, the CIP-CFP Project Team did not waste any time. The meeting was held within five days of notification. Initially, Todd was overwhelmed by the presence of his family. Later, he described them as a little “dysfunctional” but the meeting was nevertheless very successful. Todd’s grandmother asked him to forgive her and his mother for anything that may have caused him to have negative feelings toward them. She also asked if he would please consider becoming a “...part of the family again”. Todd was very confident in saying that he “...had made plans and goals...” that he was determined to “...carry out”. He assured them he would maintain a relationship with them but that he needed some time to adjust.

Todd’s family brought lots of pictures for him to see including his baby pictures which were a nice surprise. The family took many pictures with Todd. They also shared donuts and orange juice as they talked extensively about various topics. The meeting ended with the CIP-CFP Project Team acknowledging that Ms. Young, the social worker, would be the appropriate person to oversee any future family concerns.

A few weeks later, Ms. Young notified the CIP-CFP Project Team that Todd had made several visits with his family since the initial CFP meeting. She stated that he, in fact, was assisting them by helping to complete FEMA applications and other Hurricane relief papers. Todd’s demonstrated maturity and level of forgiveness is truly evident!

### **CONNECTING NADIA FRANK\*\***

Nadia’s meeting with her mom was set during the school day in the group room of the residential facility. There were twelve people present at the table: three residential staff, two OCS staff, two CIP-CFP Project Team members, Nadia’s mother, three of her supporting friends and, of course, Nadia. Because of Nadia’s mother limited verbal communication skills, one of the supporting friends began telling her life story. Nadia and her mother have been separated for over ten years. She did not recognize her mother and her mother (initially) did not recognize her. With the adults at the table encouraging “small talk” through comparing the mother and daughter similarities, Nadia abruptly jumped up from the table and walked out. For a second, the adults sat with a blank stare on their faces. Then, the social worker and a CIP-CFP Project Team member left to search for her.

No one knew what was going to happen next once or if Nadia would return. After several minutes, Nadia returned stating she “just went to the bathroom to get tissue”. She then took over by asking if she could spend some time alone with her mother in a private corner of the room. The meeting ended with Nadia connecting with her mother and the supporting friends. Mary, one of the supporting friends, and Nadia began planning for a follow-up meeting with Mary’s teen-aged daughters. Nadia stated she was “very excited” at the end of the meeting.

### **CONNECTING SOLOMON YOUNG\*\***

Before Solomon entered state care, he spent time living with an array of family members in his mother’s home state of Alabama. Upon returning to Louisiana (his father’s home state), the Alabama family lost contact with Solomon. The CIP-CFP Project Team reviewed over seven files of archived information to identify Solomon’s family members. A list of the family members was developed with possible telephone numbers and addresses...and the calls began.

When Solomon’s aunt was identified by telephone call, she did not wait for the CIP-CFP Project Team to plan a meeting. She contacted the OCS office, confirmed her identify with the OCS social worker and set up a communication plan with her nephew. She continues to have regular contact with him and regularly sends him letters.

*\*\*The names of the youth in care, social workers and/or connections described in this section were changed.*

**V. MOVING FORWARD**

The main directive for this demonstration project was the development of a family finding methodology that could be successfully replicated across the State of Louisiana while also developing relative connections for the target population. In preparation for the next phase of providing enhanced strategies in Louisiana, stakeholders should consider the following key recommendations.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Gather and share lessons learned from the demonstration project with all stakeholders.
2. Incorporate family finding strategies in all OCS regions.
3. Continue to serve the youths identified during the demonstration project.
4. Incorporate well-defined communication strategies including a public relations component.
5. Commit to a primary model of family finding in Louisiana (either the generalist or the specialist model).
6. Ensure family finding strategies incorporate an inter-disciplinary approach including collaborating with other state agencies and approved not-for-profit organizations (e.g., Louisiana CASA).
7. Incorporate the use of technology to track data related to case referrals, family finding progress reporting and information sharing particularly with the Integrated Juvenile Justice Information System (IJJIS) and the Children’s Law Advocacy Resources On-line (CLARO) website.

Comments related to these recommendations are included below.

RECOMMENDATIONS	COMMENTS
1. Gather and share lessons learned from the demonstration project with all stakeholders.	The CIP-CFP Project Team should present outcomes and findings to key stakeholders from the Louisiana Department of Social Services and Louisiana Supreme Court. These final project briefings should clearly layout the blueprint for full statewide deployment of family finding strategies along with tools for overcoming anticipated barriers to success.
2. Incorporate family finding strategies in all OCS regions.	Key stakeholders should clearly define on-going project goals and clarify associated roles, responsibilities and expectations prior to beginning the next phase of implementation. These lead stakeholders should define the

RECOMMENDATIONS	COMMENTS
	<p>following before expanding the family finding concept:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders</li> <li>✓ Desired outcomes with milestones</li> <li>✓ Size and composition of target population</li> <li>✓ Protocol for family contact</li> <li>✓ Definition of case closure</li> <li>✓ Criteria for follow-up after closure</li> </ul> <p>Plan and conduct initial orientation and training sessions with OCS personnel and other identified stakeholders (e.g., CASA, CAP) as appropriate. This includes the identification of search and engagement resources to facilitate the exchange of case files between these resources and OCS case managers. Once approved, search and engagement resources need unfettered access to case files.</p> <p>Plan and conduct refresher training as needed and provide on-going consultative support to address situations unique to each region.</p> <p>OCS should ensure that project oversight and mentoring services are in place. This would support the leveraging of lessons learned as well as support on-going training and mentoring of case managers. This oversight and mentoring (as well as initial training and follow-up refresher training) could be provided by members of the current CIP-CFP Project Team or other qualified resources.</p>
<p>3. Continue to serve the youths identified during the demonstration project.</p>	<p>Ensure that any cases in progress on August 31, 2007 are processed to closure.</p>
<p>4. Incorporate well-defined communication strategies including a public relations component.</p>	<p>Learning to effectively communicate was a critical issue that needed to be overcome. Agreement needs to be reached on the overall communication protocol to support statewide project coordination, status reporting and case referrals prior to initiating the next phase of this initiative.</p> <p>Continued use of the Case Update Table (see Appendix E) is also recommended. It has proven to be the most successful method to provide clarity to the project.</p> <p>Special efforts need to be undertaken to ensure that any person or organization that can directly or indirectly impact a youth's opportunity to develop connections be fully aware of OCS family finding initiatives.</p>
<p>5. Commit to a primary model of family finding in Louisiana (either the generalist or the specialist model).</p>	<p>If a specialist model is selected as the primary model of practice, OCS should determine how services should be conducted via additional department/unit, an independent agency/program, or identified staff dedicated to "family finding" activities.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS	COMMENTS
	<p>One alternative would be partnering with Louisiana Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). CASAs could participate in the Identify Phase of the family finding project life cycle. Suggested tasks would include: (1) Review and mining of case files and IJJIS files; and (2) Hold initial meetings with youth and foster parents. CASAs existing relationships with youth and foster parents could also be leveraged.</p>
<p>6. Ensure family finding strategies incorporate an inter-disciplinary approach including collaborating with other state agencies.</p>	<p>Meaningful collaboration by all identified stakeholders, including youth in care, is needed to have successful outcomes in such a complex but important initiative.</p>
<p>7. Incorporate the use of technology for case referrals, progress reporting and data sharing particularly with the Integrated Juvenile Justice Information System (IJJIS).</p>	<p>Communication and data sharing must be secure, timely and on-going.</p> <p>Incorporating the collection and reporting of CFP data into IJJIS is strongly recommended. This should include data specified on the referral form and case update tables.</p> <p>Data sharing agreements between IJJIS and ACESS should be defined to support the exchange of referral data.</p> <p>The use of a Web-based collaboration tool is also recommended. Authorized stakeholders could be provided with a “virtual work room” accessible via the CLARO website to support meeting summaries, discussion boards and task lists or action items.</p>

**APPENDIX A:**

**RESPONSIBILITIES, OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following table describes the outcomes and recommendations as they relate to the specific responsibilities described in the initial CIP-CFP Project Team scope statement.

CIP-CFP TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES	OUTCOMES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>A. Conduct Internet and other family finding locating strategies and search for missing and or identified persons who may become permanent resources for children in target population. Such searches to include the use of public record databases such as US Search.</p>	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team used Internet searches for identifying and locating possible individuals to connect with referred youth including ZabaSearch, VINELink and US Search.</p>	<p>Conducting Internet searches should be continued. However, other family finding strategies proved to be the most used strategy to identify connections during the demonstration project. These other strategies included reviewing existing case files, identifying a key contact person (historian) who could possibly identify and contact other family members, assessing information collected from youth and developing a family profile (tree).</p>
<p>B. Interact by telephone, email, fax and other communication methods with person-locating agencies or entities who may have information helpful to the identification and location of missing, absent or potentially viable persons.</p>	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team incorporated the described communication methods in all aspects of the project yet there were still areas for improvement identified.</p>	<p>The increased need for communication was possibly affected by lack of knowledge regarding the project. A continued focus should be increasing case worker knowledge of the program.</p> <p>A description of the program should be included on any regional resource directory (e.g., “Resources At A Glance” for Jefferson district.)</p>
<p>C. Coordinate efforts with designated family finding Social Worker, child’s regular case manager and the local court system.</p>	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team coordinated and allowed the direction of the CIP-CFP Project Team process to be guided by the regular case manager.</p>	<p>There was no identified Family Finder Social Worker for the CFP project. The CIP-CFP Project Team consisted of members that assumed roles and responsibilities of a Search Specialist and an Engagement Specialist.</p> <p>Establishing a multi-disciplinary project team should participate in decision-making as it relates to referrals, continuance of service and/or closing and re-opening cases. Engaging the youth in the process should also be incorporated and encouraged.</p>
<p>D. Research, develop and make recommendations for data and technical linkages to the Integrated</p>	<p>The referral form is being automated to facilitate easier data exchange and sharing.</p>	<p>The Louisiana Supreme Court and the Louisiana Department of Social Services should continue with plans to work</p>

CIP-CFP TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES	OUTCOMES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Juvenile Justice Information System-Child in Need of Care (IJJIS-CINC) module to incorporate search and family finding tracking features.</p>	<p>The development of a “family tree” or family profile is also underway along with other enhanced reporting strategies.</p>	<p>toward building an automated system interface between IJJIS and the state’s enterprise system – ACCESS: A <i>Comprehensive Enterprise Social Services Systems</i>.</p> <p>The referral form and family tree should be web-based and accessible via IJJIS and/or <a href="http://www.childrenslawla.org">www.childrenslawla.org</a>.</p>
<p>E. Provides specialized, technical expertise in a multi-disciplinary and/or inter-disciplinary collaborative effort.</p>	<p>In general, the overall direction of the case was been guided by the OCS case worker.</p> <p>In defining a family finding strategy appropriate for Louisiana, the CIP-CFP Project Team provided specialized, technical expertise in a multi-disciplinary and/or inter-disciplinary collaborative effort within the stakeholder’s committee and project team meetings.</p>	<p>Establishing a multi-disciplinary team effort should be addressed in regards to making decisions about the appropriateness of referred cases, continuance of service and/or closing and re-opening cases.</p>
<p>F. Review appropriate case-specific agency and court records and reports.</p>	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team reviewed case-specific agency and court records and reports. This information was critical in developing connections.</p>	<p>Coordinating other family finding locating strategies (especially reviewing agency reports and court records) should not be minimized because it yielded the most valuable information to identify possible connections.</p>
<p>G. Utilize historical, legal and/or other technical data in order to facilitate family finding searches.</p>	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team utilized the strategies initially employed by other states engaged in family finding initiatives and also reviewed the legal implications for family finding strategies including confidentiality concerns to facilitate family finding searches.</p> <p>The CIP-CFP Project Team used case archives, legal / court documents and technical data (i.e., OCS FACE Sheet) to facilitate family finding searches.</p>	<p>Key individuals involved with family finding strategies in Louisiana should continue to network with other states’ family finding programs. These individuals should also remain cognizant of any changes in laws or regulations which govern working with youth in foster care.</p>
<p>H. Make preliminary determinations and recommendations regarding search outcomes and making appropriate referrals as needed.</p>	<p>Once a referral form was completed, the initial interview conducted and case files reviewed, the CIP-CFP Project Team made preliminary determinations and recommendations regarding search outcomes by providing initial case</p>	<p>Case summaries, search recommendations or a follow-up communication should be continued before, during and after search strategies are executed. Guidelines should be discussed and provided to ensure</p>

CIP-CFP TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES	OUTCOMES	RECOMMENDATIONS
	summaries. All cases were serviced regardless if it they were determined to be appropriate or inappropriate at any point of the process.	appropriate referrals are made.
I. Engage in family team conferences with subject children.	The CIP-CFP Project Team was not requested to participate in family team conferences.	The need to engage in family team conferences should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Successful service delivery may benefit from an initial family finding team meeting involving, but not limited to, family finding team members, case workers, supervisors, and/or regional managers, the youth, CASA workers, and other key individuals.
J. Provide correspondence to appropriate agencies and the courts.	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team provided correspondence to OCS case workers and key OCS administrators.</p> <p>The CIP-CFP Project Team relied on OCS case workers to determine whether information collected from CFP processes needed to be submitted to the courts.</p> <p>The CIP-CFP Project Team presented general project information to the CARE Advisory Committee.</p>	<p>Correspondence to OCS case workers should be continued.</p> <p>The courts should be notified of any youth referred to the family finding program; however, a decision should be made to determine who should assume this responsibility.</p> <p>Family finding strategies should be incorporated into other CIP strategies to improve permanency outcomes for older youth (e.g., provide family finding strategies for youth involved in Orleans Parish benchmark conferences.)</p>
K. Provide monthly written progress reports on the status of the project, including statistics and progress toward stated goals, perceived barriers and recommendations for the continued improvement and overall success of the project in achieving its stated goals.	The CIP-CFP Project Team has submitted regular documents to show the status of the project. Monthly reports have been provided by each team member. The case update table was designed and used to show information specific to referred cases.	Monthly reports should be continued for any family finding project.
L. Provide such other functions as may be deemed necessary to the successful completion of the demonstration project.	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team has designed forms for program identification and management including brochures, in-service plans, referral forms, case summaries, file review forms and case update table.</p> <p>The CIP-CFP Project Team has presented</p>	Going forward, selected individuals should be tasked to provide other functions including presentations, project management / oversight and status reporting to ensure the success of family finding strategies.

CIP-CFP TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES	OUTCOMES	RECOMMENDATIONS
	<p>information to youth by request agencies serving youth in foster care.</p> <p>The CIP-CFP Project Team presented information and training sessions to OCS workers as requested by OCS Regional Administrators.</p>	
<p>M. Make recommendations for the continuation of the demonstration project.</p>	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team has documented success and barriers for the continuation of the pilot project.</p> <p>The CIP-CFP Project Team has documented these recommendations in this final report.</p>	<p>Key persons should be prepared to make recommendations regarding strategies in Louisiana to incorporate and contribute to best practice strategies to demonstrate Family Findings as an effective and useful resource for youth in foster care systems.</p>
<p>N. Comply with family finding program standards, policies and procedures presently in place and to be developed throughout the demonstration project.</p>	<p>The CIP-CFP Project Team incorporated the specialist program standard described in the initial training presented in January 2007. The team also adopted strategies and standards advised by the CCSWW consultants.</p> <p>The CIP-CFP Project Team adopted and revised policies and procedures similar to those policies and procedures of agencies (i.e., Canyon Acres of Orange County, California) utilizing the same model.</p> <p>The CIP-CFP Project Team changed continuously throughout the pilot timeline to address family finding program standards as well as concerns specific to the State of Louisiana and the Orleans/Jefferson regions.</p>	<p>Key individuals involved with family finding strategies in Louisiana should continue to work with other states' family finding programs and continue to optimize family finding strategies to better support Louisiana's unique challenges.</p>

**APPENDIX B:**

**PROGRAM BROCHURE**



## **CONNECTIONS FOR PERMANENCY**

A Louisiana Demonstration Project

### **PURPOSE**

Identify and engage absent parents, next of kin or other interested adults in the lives of youths in foster care.

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### **GOAL**

Build a collaborative network of case workers and consultants to define improved diligent search and engagement strategies designed to facilitate long-term relationships between older youths and committed caregivers especially for youth living in areas heavily impacted during the 2005 hurricane season.

January - August 2007

**Connections for Permanency (CFP)  
is a Demonstration Project  
designed to assess the effectiveness of  
“family finding” practices in the  
State of Louisiana.**



**What youth do we serve?**

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CFP currently receives referrals for youth ages 16-18 directly from case workers at the Orleans and Jefferson parish Office of Community Services (OCS) Regional Offices. The program targets those youth with few or no known family relationships and who have experienced the highest level of urgency for being connected.

The targeted youth often have a history of mental illness, destructive behavior, multiple placements and few, if any, significant relationships in their lives. They may also be close to “aging out” of the system. In addition, all youth in the identified areas/parishes are more likely to exhibit these characteristics due to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.



**How does the process begin?**

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The process begins with the **Identification Phase**. During this phase, a referral is received based on pre-defined priorities. The CIP-CFP Team then meets with the assigned social worker to review the Referral Packet. During this meeting, the CIP-CFP Team is provided access to the youth’s legal file and/or the OCS case file to gather information regarding significant individuals in the youth’s life and collect any other pertinent information including, but not limited to, names, addresses, Social Security Number and date of birth.



## How do we search?

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The **Search Phase** begins when the CIP-CFP Team initiates an Intensive Relative Search by accessing Internet-based public databases and by cross-checking newly discovered information with pre-existing information to determine with certainty that the correct family member or potential caregiver has been located. In addition, telephone calls may be made and interviews conducted to uncover additional family members and caregivers. This information can then be used to expand the search. Once these intensive relative searches have been exhausted, the information is reviewed and a transitional/planning meeting is scheduled.



## When do we contact the family?

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Once the transitional/planning meeting has been held, the CIP-CFP Team **moves** into an **Engagement Phase**. The CIP-CFP Team collaborates with the social worker, therapist and youth to gather information, obtain any pictures and take questions from the youth so that when family members or caregivers are engaged a personal representation can be made of the youth's need for family and their value to the youth as well as the value of the youth to them.

The CIP-CFP Team then schedules and facilitates the visit with the family/caregivers and the youth. The Social Worker determines the need for and ensures the completion of background checks. The Social Worker also coordinates the development of an on-going visitation plan.



## When is CFP completed?

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Once the family members/caregivers have been engaged and there is a plan for an on-going relationship, The CIP-CFP Team prepares for the **Closing Phase**. When the CFP file is closed, there is a final meeting with the social worker and all information is compiled and passed on to OCS.

**The program is sponsored by the Louisiana Supreme Court's Court Improvement Program through funding provided by the Louisiana Department of Social Services Office of Community Services.**



**APPENDIX C:**

**REFERRAL FORM AND PROCESS OVERVIEW**

Referring SSW: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Referring Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Referral: \_\_\_\_\_

### CHILD

Last Name:	DOB:	SS#
First Name:	M    F (circle one)	TIPS #
Current Placement :		Ethnicity:
Address:		Phone:
Contact Person:	Status of Dependency:	
Date entered dependency:	Adoptions:        yes                    no	

### CONNECTIONS

Duplicate or Attach Sheets for Additional Connections			CONTACT WITHIN LAST 90 DAYS
NAME	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD	PHONE	

### SIBLINGS

NAME	CURRENT PLACEMENT	DOB

### PLACEMENT AND THERAPEUTIC CONTACTS

AGENCY	NAME/TITLE	PHONE

1. **Has this child been a danger to him/herself or to others in the last 90 days?**     YES     NO     UNK  
 attempted suicide     suicidal gestures     suicidal ideation     AWOL  
 puts self in dangerous situations     sexually molested others (or attempted to)
  
2. **Has this child experienced physical or sexual abuse or has she/he been exposed to violent behavior?**  
 YES     NO     UNK
  
3. **Does this child have behaviors that are so difficult that maintaining him/her in his/her current living or educational situation is in jeopardy?**     YES     NO     UNK  
 fire-setting     cruelty to animals     hears voices or responds to internal stimuli  
 repetitive body motions     smears feces  
 excessive masturbation     repetitive vocalizations
  
4. **Has the child exhibited bizarre or unusual behaviors in the last 90 days?**     YES     NO     UNK
  
5. **Does the child have problems with social adjustment and maintaining healthy relations?**  
 YES     NO     UNK
  
6. **Does the child have problems with personal care?**     YES     NO     UNK  
 eats or drinks substances that are not food     enuretic during waking hours  
 poor personal hygiene     encopretic
  
7. **Does this child have significant functional impairment?**     YES     NO     UNK
  
8. **Does this child have significant problems managing his/her feelings?**     YES     NO     UNK  
 severe temper tantrums     cries inconsolably     nightmares     frequently sad or depressed  
 excessive worries     withdrawn     restless or overactive
  
9. **Does this child have a history of psychiatric hospitalization?**     YES     NO     UNK
  
10. **Is the child known to abuse alcohol and/or drugs?**     YES     NO     UNK

**Date of Review:** \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted             Denied

In Need of Further information

**To review again on:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**FAX REFERRAL TO:**  
 Mark Harris  
 504-599-0098

**APPENDIX D:**

**IN-SERVICE TRAINING AGENDA AND NOTES**

The following agenda and related speaker notes are provided as an example of a format that was used to conduct in-service training for OCS case managers.

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## AGENDA

### *I. Introductions*

### *II. Family Finding*

**Family finding: a set of people-locating strategies with the potential to connect foster children with relatives who can give them permanent homes, or at least a sense of connectedness.**

About seven years ago, Kevin Campbell was driving to work in Tacoma, WA when he heard a National Public Radio report about the International Red Cross' family-tracing techniques. These techniques were being used to reunite families separated by international conflicts and natural catastrophes. Campbell thought, "If they could reunite families separated by wars and natural disasters, why couldn't they reunite families separated by the child welfare system?" **SO...**

He invited the Red Cross to their agency to discuss their strategies and how they would apply to working with youth in foster care. In 2000, Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (CCSWW) began a concerted effort to find safe, stable and permanent families for foster children with serious behavioral problems and multiple failed placements.

Treating each case as a medical emergency, team members combed files for the names of relatives. They interviewed children about relatives and even unrelated adults to whom they felt connected. Then they used commercial Internet-searching services to find those adults, as well as relatives whom the children didn't even know.

Over the next few years, Campbell says, the team found relatives for all but one of nearly 500 youth for whom it conducted searches. He says 85% of the youth were reunified with their parents or placed with relatives. The agency's success led the Washington legislature in 2003 to require intensive relative searches for all children in foster care.

The strategy began attracting national attention in 2003 when Campbell gave an impassioned presentation at a conference in San Francisco hosted by the California Permanency for Youth Project. Other states began to invite Campbell to introduce his strategies and results.

**(Note:** A research study by Harvard Medical School and Casey Family Programs found that people who grew up in foster care were twice as likely as U.S. war veterans to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. )

### *III. Overview of Connections for Permanency (CFP) Program*

The CFP demonstration project began with the introductions to Family Finding in Louisiana in late January/early February 2007.

The direction of Family Finding (in states) has basically involved two starting points:

- (1) the Family Finding concept is introduced to social workers and “family finding” activities become the responsibility of the social worker; and
- (2) the Family Finding concept is introduced to social workers but an additional department/unit, an independent agency/program, or identified staff is dedicated to “family finding” activities.

There are pros and cons to both methods. The main concern to the first method (especially for social workers) is that it adds to the existing list of responsibilities for the social workers. The second method has challenges dealing with confidentiality, communication/sharing information and relationships with social workers.

*(Note: Highlight purpose and goals of project and that Orleans and Jefferson regions were selected due to impact of Hurricane Katrina. Refer to CFP Brochure.)*

#### Referral Process

The Louisiana process begins with a referral. The referral usually comes from the social worker. However, since some meetings were held with groups of youth already in foster care some youth did express an interest in family finding in writing. The youth did not receive referral forms but they were allowed to express their interest in family finding.

Family finding stakeholder should share notes and requests written by youth. See CFP Referral description.

#### Roles & Relationships between CIP-CFP Team and OCS Staff

As stated earlier, a challenge to the overall process COULD BE the relationship between the members of the CIP-CFP Team and the OCS social worker... **so while** defining and re-defining the process. The CIP-CFP Team should:

Emphasize through the CFP phases to not make a next step without notifying the social worker. We want to ensure OUR ROLE- is to assist the social worker in family finding activities only. We are not here to try to take over- YOU ARE IN CHARGE of this process.

We also attempt to have an initial conversation with you (especially in person, but sometimes over the phone) to discuss “where the youth is”, current contacts, family members who may not be appropriate to reunite the youth with, and/or possible persons to contact first.

Other ways we try to strengthen our relationship with you is to provide updates (we will provide you with an example shortly) and also because our team is comprised of members who live outside of the area, we have a team member that comes into your office for a few hours to give and get updates from you as well as to get information regarding the youth from archive and current files.

**From Referral to Closure**

*(Note: Give each participant a copy of a sample Update and Program Brochure.)*

We will refer to our sample update to show how we move from referral to closure. You may also refer to the information in the CFP brochure.

**REFERRAL**

Youth has been identified for referral; Initial conversation with Case Worker; Referral Form is completed.

**IDENTIFICATION**

Additional information collected from reviewing files; Case Summary is completed. Cross check on addresses and phone numbers; Internet Search conducted if needed.

**SEARCH**

Initial contact is made with known and possible relatives

**Preparation of Youth & Family Members**

**ENGAGEMENT**

Relatives acknowledge youth; Encourage and prepare for connection

**MEETING**

Case Worker and CFP Team plans for youth to meet with family

**CLOSURE**

CFP closes case and submits final report

***IV. Program Information***

- Brochure
- Referral Form
- Sample Update
- Contact Information

***V. Questions/Answers***

**APPENDIX E:**

**FINAL CASE UPDATE TABLE**

# CONNECTIONS FOR PERMANENCY

FINAL REPORT

FILE	CASE WORKER	DATE ENTERED	REFER	IDENTIFY	SEARCH	ENGAGE4	MEET	CLOSE
1.	SBARKER	02/14/07	X	X	X	X		X LET/PHONE
2.	DMORRIS	02/15/07	X	X	X	X		X LET/PHONE
3.	TLANDRY	02/15/07	X	X	X	X		X CWR/YLP
4.	JBUTLER	02/23/07	X	X	X	X		X
5.	LKENNEDY	02/15/07	X	X	X	X		
6.	BWILLIAMS	02/14/07	X	X	X			X
7.	JBUTLER	03/20/07	X	X				X
8.	AHENDERSON	03/28/07	X	X	X			
9.	HOTORI	04/24/07	X	X	X	X	X SW VISIT	X
10.	MFISHER	04/24/07	X	X	X	X	X COMPLETE	X
11.	TBELMON	04/24/07	X					X CWR
12.	SJONES	04/24/07	X	X	X	X		X CWR/RUN
13.	KENGLISH	04/24/07	X	X	X	X	X ACP	X ACP
14.	TBELMON	04/24/07	X					X CWR
15.	TBELMON	04/24/07	X	X	X			
16.	MFISHER	04/24/07	X					X CWR
17.	EKELLEY	04/24/07	X	X	X			
18.	EKELLEY	04/24/07	X	X	X			
19.	SSANDERS	04/24/07	X	X	X	X		
20.	SSANDERS	04/24/07	X	X	X	X		
21.	CSHELBY	04/24/07	X	X	X	X	X COMPLETE	X
22.	EKELLEY	05/01/07	X	X				
23.	CGOINS	05/01/07	X	X				X TRANSFER
24.	KENGLISH	05/01/07	X	X				
25.	CEBERS COVINGTON	05/02/07	X	X	X	X		
26.	BWILLIAMS	02/14/07	X	X				X
27.	BTAYLOR	05/15/07	X					
28.	TSCOTT	05/15/07	X					
29.	TREDGE	05/15/07	X	X	X			
30.	ACONDLEY	05/15/07	X	X			X INTRNAL PHONE	
31.	EKELLEY	05/15/07	X					
32.	EKELLEY	05/15/07	X	X	X			
33.	KKAARON	05/15/07	X					
34.	SBARKER BOSIGWE	05/15/07 08/15/07	X	X			X	
35.	VBERGERON	05/16/07	X					
36.	TTHOMAS	05/16/07	X					
37.	TTHOMAS	05/16/07	X					
38.	SBUDDINGTO	05/16/07	X					

39.	ABRIDGES	05/16/07	X	X	X			
40.	ABRIDGES	05/16/07	X	X	X			
41.	ABRIDGES	05/16/07						
42.	SBUDDINGTO	05/30/07	X					
43.	VBERGERON	05/30/07	X					
44.	BTAYLOR	05/30/07	X					
45.	BTAYLOR	05/30/07	X					
46.	ACONDLEY	07/02/07	X					
47.	MNWUBAH	07/03/07	X					
48.	VBERGERON		X					
49.	BTAYLOR		X					
50.	RJONES		X					
51.	SBARKER		X					
52.			X					
53.	ABRIDGES	08/07/07	X					
54.	ACONDLEY	08/07/07	X					
55.	ACONDLEY	08/07/07	X					

- **CWR**= Case Worker Request. The Case Worker may decide in the best interest of the youth to not move forward with family search and engagement activities.
- **YLP**= Youth Left Program.
- **ACP**= Active Connection Plan.
- **RUN**= Youth on Run Away Status