



Reconnecting Foster Children with their Families

A collaborative effort between the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (OCCF), the Reconnecting Foster Children with their Families (RFCF) initiative assists DHS in identifying and locating relatives of foster children and ultimately establishing safe, sustainable connections between foster children and their relatives.

Goal

The Goal of Reconnecting Foster Children with their Families is to provide an avenue to connect or reconnect foster children with their relatives.



Key Principles

(Developed by the Reconnecting Foster Children with their Families Action Committee)

- Children need to hear and feel they are loved on a daily basis.
 - Children without family connections can be some of the loneliest people in the world.
 - When possible, if there is a need for out-of-home placement, children should live with family members.
 - Case planning for children should be accomplished collaboratively with family members and other key persons who contribute to the children's lives.
 - Even if relationships are not possible, children have a right to information about family members and, in most cases, families have a right to information about children.
 - Relationships with family members are critical, regardless of where children live.
- Case planning for children in foster care is only complete when children have permanent forever homes.

Desired Outcomes

- Increase youth's ability to emotionally and physically thrive in a safe and nurturing environment.
- Increase culturally appropriate placement resources for youth while in foster care or after care.
- Increase the number of youth prepared to reconnect with family members, which may include siblings.
- Increase the number of connections with relatives for youth who are "aging out of foster care."
- Increase state collaboration across systems for youth and families.

Long-Term Strategic Challenges

- Align efforts with Oregon’s Runaway and Homeless Youth Initiative.
- Target youth in foster care who are about to “age out” and have the highest risk of becoming homeless (approximately 400 youth statewide).
- Identify and maintain data on youth who have aged out of foster care, and provide resources to prevent homelessness.

Current Status/Next Steps

- DHS and OCCF will join Casey Family Programs in a major effort to safely reduce the number of children in Oregon’s foster care system. The Casey Partnership will focus on these primary strategies: Fully implement the Oregon Safety Model, reduce disparate outcomes for children and families of color, and increase the number of relative placements in lieu of foster placements.
- Lane County is one of nine sites that were chosen to participate in a nationwide Family Finding project under the direction of Child Trends. They have partnered with a local nonprofit agency, A Family for Every Child, in this effort.
- OCCF completed an assessment of the initial six-month training provided by Family Finding Consultant, Kevin Campbell.
- OCCF completed follow-up consultations with the counties to determine the status of Reconnecting teams and discuss continuing training efforts.

“There are only two lasting bequests we can give our children – one is roots, and the other, wings.”

- Hodding S. Carter

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