AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF RELATIVE SEARCH AND
ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD WELFARE

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by
Stephani Ann Gurczynski
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DEDICATION

This Project is dedicated to my husband, Ben, and my parents, without whom I could not have completed this work or become the person I am today.
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ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF RELATIVE SEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD WELFARE

by

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Master of Social Work

California State University, Chico

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This exploratory study examines current literature on the topic of kinship care and Relative Search and Engagement. The project allowed the researcher to work in a child welfare environment and examine current practices of Relative Search and Engagement. The researcher worked collaboratively with child welfare staff to form solutions to challenges existing in the field of Relative Search and Engagement in child welfare. This study discusses best practices in Relative Search and Engagement and how practices such as family finding, early search for relatives and collaboration with child welfare staff can improve outcomes for children in foster care.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For the last three decades the use of relatives as foster parents for children removed from abusive or neglectful situations, also referred to as “kinship care”, has been a growing phenomenon among child welfare agencies in the United States. The idea of families caring for their own family members is age old; however, the idea of families partnering with child welfare agencies and being utilized as a resource has not been properly explored until more recently.

This explorative study will examine the current literature available on the topic of kinship care and identify where gaps appear in our existing knowledge on the subject. A special emphasis will be given to the area of Early Relative Search and Engagement by child welfare agencies and how a more thorough examination of this practice might illuminate areas in which agencies can improve the quality of their Kinship Care Programs and increase permanency for children in foster care. The struggle of where to focus agency resources will be discussed and advantages to increasing efforts in finding relative at the beginning of the case will be explored. This study will also investigate barriers that exist within child welfare systems which impede progress in Relative Search and Engagement.
History of Kinship Care

A comprehensive definition and history must be given for the topic of kinship care as well as for the process of Relative Search and Engagement. Kinship care is most often defined as a living arrangement in which a relative or another person who maintains an emotional connection with the child takes primary responsibility for raising the child (Leos-Urbel, Bess & Geen, 2002). There are several types of kinship care arrangements that exist the three most common being formal kinship care, informal kinship care and legal guardianship/adoption. For the purpose of this study, when kinship care is discussed, the researcher will most often be referring to formal kinship care unless otherwise noted. Children and caregivers involved in this type of an arrangement are under the supervision of a child welfare agency. The relative who cares for the child undergoes a process similar to a licensed foster parent and must meet certain licensing standards. They also, in some instances, receive compensation as do foster parents caring for non-kin family members. Relative caregivers in these situations are also given the opportunity to access support systems provided by the child welfare agency such as support groups, trainings, and foster parent mentors (National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center, 2004).

The caring for of children by their relatives has existed as an informal system for many years. In fact, before the early twentieth century, when formal government intervention was created, this was the only option for children who could not live with their parents or whose parents were deceased (Hegar & Scannapieco, 1995). Within many cultural systems, specifically those that are more collectivistic in nature such as the African American Community, Hispanic Community and many Native American
Communities, care for children by other members of their family is very common place and considered healthy and natural (Hegar & Scannapieco, 1995). It was not until 1980 that our formal child welfare system publically stated that kinship care should be the preferred out-of-home placement for children in foster care. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (1980), Public Law 96-272 stated that placement with relatives should be the first choice of child welfare workers if removal from the parents’ home could not be avoided.

For the past three decades the child welfare arena has been discovering the world of kinship care and how it differs from traditional foster care, also sometimes referred to as “stranger care.” Kinship placements have multiplied rapidly and more supports for kinship care are in place than ever before. Child welfare agencies and even the federal government are dedicating more financial resources toward supporting kinship care than they have in the past. With this ever increasing focus on kinship care we must ask ourselves some questions. Why the rise in kinship care? Why do we feel this is a resource we should be investing in?

The increase of children placed in kinship placements has been influenced by a number of legal changes, societal changes and changes within the social work arena. Between 1980 and 1990 the percentage of children placed with their kin in foster care rose from 18% to 31%. The number of children placed with kin continued to rise through the mid-1990’s and then leveled off in 2000. In most states kin are still considered the placement of choice. Though placements with kin have leveled off, the number of children in kinship care is still rising due to the fact that children who are in placement with kinship providers tend to remain in care longer than children in traditional foster
care (Geen & Berrick, 2002). There has been an increase in the number of children placed into out of home care in general due to increased family violence, drug abuse and poverty. While the number of children entering the system has risen, the exit rate, or number of children leaving care, has slowed and the amount of foster parents has not been rising fast enough to keep pace. Children are remaining in foster care longer than ever before and are “aging out” of the system, leaving foster care and group homes, with no family connections, ending up homeless on the streets, unemployed, uneducated and sadly, at very high rates, incarcerated (Foster & Gifford, 2004; Havalchak, White & O’Brien, 2008). Caseworkers have turned to relatives for children who have no place to go. Child welfare agencies have begun to realize that as we spend more and more money on foster care and group homes, we are not accessing our full resource potential in relatives. Not only is the increased need for relative care due to a lack of space and financial resources for our growing number of out of home children, but research has pointed to a number of factors which support the use of relatives as placement options (National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center, 2006).
The Psychosocial Well-Being of Substance-Affected Children in relative Care (NAIA Resource Center, 2006), reports the results of several studies which recorded the negative and positive effects of kinship care on foster children. The article refers to the positive effects of kinship care as the “protective factors.” One protective factor is the culturally appropriate, family centered model that kinship care offers. Kinship care embraces the extended family network as care providers. When a grandmother gets placement of her grandchildren, it is often the case that the aunts, uncles, cousins and other extended family members also group around the care provider to offer support. This type of framework is consistent with African American, Latino, American Indian and other collectivistic cultures (Brown & Wheeler, 2002; Messing, 2005). Another protective factor of relative care is that the child is more likely to stay living within their community of origin. This protects the child against the many harmful repercussions of having to be moved outside their familiar community such as changing schools, churches and losing contact with friends and relatives. The child’s transition is much less disruptive as they are already familiar with the relative they are moving to, their home, neighborhood and even the animals in the home. Children are also much more likely to stay close, or in the same placement with their siblings (Grant, 2000). One of the most important protective factors for a child living in kinship care is the fact that their
placement will be more stable. Children placed with their relatives are less likely to change placements compared with children placed in foster care (Chamberlain et al., 2006). Because of this stability, the child has the ability to develop a healthy attachment with their caregiver and the child is protected from multiple school placements which can negatively affect their academic performance. These children have even been shown to have fewer disruptive behaviors and attention problems (Altshuler, 1999; Keller et al., 2001).

Research on Kinship Care

Research indicates that children in relative care have less behavioral problems than children in foster care. These results have been demonstrated in a study by authors Rubin, Downes, O’Reilly, Mekonnen, Luan and Localio (2008) published by the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. In this study, the influence of kinship care on behavioral problems is examined after 18 months and 36 months of out-of-home care. There were 1,309 participants in this long-term study and the tool used to measure behavior was the Child Behavior Checklist. The results of the study were very significant; children who were placed in kinship placement were more likely to have stable placements than children who were placed in foster care. The estimate of behavioral problems at the 36 months mark for children who were placed in kinship care was 32%; it was 46% for children who were placed in traditional foster care only. They also found that children who were moved into a relative’s home after a significant amount of time in foster care were liable to have more behavioral problems than children who had initially been placed into a kinship placement. This is a very important study in the effort to maximize efforts and resource allocation toward the cause of searching for
and engaging relatives for kinship placements. The children placed into kinship care had fewer behavioral problems after being stable in their placement for three years than did children placed into foster care.

Another important perspective to take into account when considering whether children are better off in relative care than in foster care is the perspective of the child themselves. In a qualitative analysis of kinship care placements done by the National Abandoned Infants Assistance resource Center at UC Berkeley (Messing, 2005), the study records the knowledge, feelings and understandings of youth placed in kinship care to help better understand their experience. Eight focus groups were held and the topics of discussion that are recorded in the study are the child’s perception of transitional issues, family relationships, the stigma of being in care and the stability of their placement. After these focus groups took place, the participants responded orally to a Behavior Problems Index (BPI), a standardized measure of child functioning. The participants scored a mean score of 13.5. This score is about the same that was scored by participants in kinship care done by Berrick, Barth and Needell (1994). In this study, the researchers found that this score was significantly lower than the result scored by children who were placed in foster care outside of relative placement or in stranger-care. The lower score indicates a lower presence of behavioral difficulties.

It is important to note that there are also hardships experienced specifically by kinship care providers. Being cared for by a relative carries its own unique challenges. One hardship of concern is that overall, kinship caregivers are significantly more likely to be impoverished than traditional foster parents (Ehrle & Geen, 2002). While living in poverty itself does not create a significant problem for children or their caregivers, it can
raise the likelihood of the family living in a neighborhood with higher crime rates, more violence and less advantaged school systems. It also creates a barrier for relative caregivers to providing adequate resources for their children. In fact, children in kinship care are less likely to receive their mental health services and caregivers have shown to be less aware of outside resources available to them than traditional foster parents (James, Landsverk, Slymen, & Leslie, 2004). Another hardship, in addition to poverty, is that kinship homes are typically headed by older caregivers, specifically grandparents. As a result, the child may reside in a home with a caregiver who has health problems or is less physically able to care for them (Ehrle & Geen, 2002). Another interesting hardship is that relative caregivers are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and distress (Billing, Ehrle and Kortenkamp, 2002). This would correlate with the other hardships identified so far. It would make sense that a caregiver might be more stressed if they are having financial difficulty and living in an area of high crime or violence.

An interesting factor to note is that the protective factors all center around the well-being of the child and most of the hardships are hardships experienced by the actual relative caregiver such as poverty, lack of support and mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety. This comparison is useful for seeing where kinship services are needed and important for identifying the benefits for children in relative care.

This project sought to examine the Search and Engagement process of relatives for the purposes of kinship care. Some children will have relatives step forward quickly after they are placed into foster care and be willing to care for them; many children will not have relatives readily identifiable. The relatives may have lost touch with the family; they may live out of the state or even out of the country. Many foster
children have been in out-of-home care so long that they have no memory of any relatives they may have known previously. The need for relatives as caregivers and benefits for foster children has already been established, but a challenge facing child welfare agencies is how to find relatives once a child is placed into foster care and how to facilitate a placement or, as is often the case, a positive relationship between the child and their family member (Louisell, 2006; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). Families are scattered all over the country and are often not even aware that their relatives have been placed into foster care. Child welfare workers have many families on their caseloads and many duties to perform. Spending time and resources hunting down relatives and taking the time to engage them into cooperation with the agency, is not always a high priority. As it is an emerging practice in child welfare, best practices in the area of Relative Search and Engagement should be researched and discussed. Also relevant to the discussion are the barriers to seeking out relatives that may be intrinsic to child welfare agencies (Louisell, 2006).

While conducting a search for studies and articles that spoke directly to the topic of the search and engagement of relative caregivers, the researcher found that there was a distinct lack of literature on this topic. Several databases, child welfare resources and journals were scoured in this effort. Though there was a fair amount of literature acquired that spoke directly to the treatment and support of kinship caregivers (once they have been located), and the well-being of foster children in the care of their relatives, there is very little available on the topic of searching for relatives and using them as a first placement or best placement option. This finding is undoubtedly due to the fact that research highlighting the benefits to placing children with their relatives and state and
federal legislation emphasizing the need to locate and notify relatives that their minor relatives are in foster care has not come into the limelight until recently.

**Early Search and Engagement of Relatives**

The Center for Social Services Research through the University of California, Berkeley conducted a study on Promising Practices in Concurrent Planning (Frame & Berrick, 2003). Concurrent planning is the practice adopted by child welfare agencies that requires the agency to establish a “concurrent” permanent plan for a child during the reunification process. This plan could be guardianship, adoption or long term foster care.

One of these promising practices was the *Early Search for Relatives and/or Absent Parents, and Resolution of Paternity*. This brief article stems from a multi-year project which examined current practices of concurrent planning in six California Counties. The study surveyed all U.S. states and all California counties about their progress in implementing concurrent planning strategies. Out of the study emerged six promising practices in concurrent planning.

Study participants in many of the counties surveyed stated that a search for appropriate relative placements is a vital aspect to the concurrent planning process and is most effective when conducted as early as possible in the case. According to the study, one county has dedicated a specialized Search Unit to screen every case that enters the system and conduct a preliminary search for appropriate relative caregivers (Frame & Berrick, 2003).

There are other agencies that are beginning to realize the importance of early search and engagement of relatives and family finding. The Northern California Training
Academy, an academy through UC Davis that has a hand in training child welfare social workers throughout California, has begun to distribute literature highlighting this issue (2009). An article from Reaching Out, a monthly newsletter from The Northern California Training Academy in 2009, talks about the newest emphasis on family finding early in the case. For years, in child welfare, family finding has been seen as a viable option for finding permanency for older youth who are languishing in the foster care system or who are placed into group homes. While this remains a true and vital part of the family finding process, this article suggests that it can also be a useful tool to help identify more permanent and stable placement options from the front end of the case.

This dichotomy speaks to a very important dilemma not only in family finding but in child welfare in general. The dilemma is where to focus our time and resources: is it in the area of prevention, where we could divert some of the negative outcomes that we are seeing with our children and families? Or do we work to help those who are already struggling through the system and need immediate attention?

Family Finding

The article, entitled, “Family Finding: Not Just a Fall-Back Strategy for Permanency,” discusses a program that is currently being used in the state of Illinois (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). The director of the Intensive Relative Search/Lifelong Connections Project, Brian Samuels, summed up his observations of working with the project as quoted in the article: “Success will be achieved for more children if work is begun early in the case—both in terms of availability of family information and making the connection before the youth is damaged by years of
changing placement and separation from family” (p. 15). Mr. Samuels speaks to the difficulty of locating relatives for foster children once the children have been in care for an extended amount of time, sometimes ten or more years. Often by this time, the relatives have lost the connections with the child, moved to different parts of the country, changed their names and many other factors that make them difficult to locate. He also speaks to the very damaging effects of multiple placement changes for a child, which is what makes family finding such an important and necessary tool for our child welfare agencies to be utilizing, when considering best practices for Relative Search and Engagement.

Family finding was developed around 2001 in Washington State and was the brain child of Kevin Campbell, then director of intensive resources for Catholic Community Services of Western Washington. Family finding is described as a “. . . set of people-locating strategies with the potential to connect tens of thousands of foster children with relatives who can give them permanent homes or at least a sense of connectedness” (Shirk, 2006, Hunting for Grandma, para. 3) Throughout his career, Campbell had worked with the saddest cases in child welfare, children who were classified as “hard to place” and who had no family connections. Campbell watched these children move from foster home to foster home and knew in his heart that they would never find permanency. In 1999, Campbell overheard a National Public Radio program about the family-tracing techniques used by the Red Cross following disasters which helped reunite displaced family members. Campbell wondered why these techniques couldn’t be used to reunite foster children with their long-lost family members. Over the past nine years, Campbell has worked with agencies such as EMQ Families First,
California Youth Permanency Project (CPYP) and countless child welfare agencies to train workers in family finding techniques. The fever has spread to all parts of the child welfare system. One memorable quote came from Judge Leonard P. Edwards of the juvenile court in Santa Clara County, California in his speech to the U.S. Supreme Court in November 2004, “It is my dream that the expanded use of family finding will literally dry up the foster-care system” (Shirk, 2006, Hunting for Grandma, para. 5).

Family finding can happen at any point during a case. Traditionally it has been seen as a very useful tool to help reunify children with long-lost family members at the end of their case once the parent has failed to reunify with their child. Sadly, we know that this can take years to happen and often times that child is bouncing around from one foster home to another during the life of the case and never gets connected with a meaningful relationship with a family member before they age out of the foster system. Why not search for these family members at the beginning of the case, immediately after the child is placed into foster care? It is estimated that each foster child has between 100-300 relatives alive and available in the United States at one time (Casey Family Services, 2007). These relatives are often estranged from the birth family and cannot be located without thorough family finding efforts including youth interviews, case mining and internet searching. The goal of family finding is not only to find placement options for youth (during and after their time in foster care) but also to “explore the possibility of establishing meaningful and lasting relationships” (n.p). Advocates of family finding concede that the main problem with the process is that family finding is not implemented soon enough in the case to make the biggest impact. Though it is very successful, even late on the case (some private family finders boast up to 75% success rates), it is
considered most effective when used to prevent children from spending many years in a damaging foster care system in the first place (Binkley, 2007).

Youth interviews are a useful place to start with family finding efforts if the child is at an appropriate age to interview. In *Six Steps to Find a Family* (Louisell, 2006), the goal of searching for family members is to gain “knowledge of a large pool of family members and significant adults, some of whom will establish connections and join the team to assist support the youth’s quest for permanency” (p. 21). The first and last of the practical steps given to family finding are “talk to the youth” and “talk to the youth again.” This is a step that is often ignored or overlooked especially when the child has been in foster care an extended amount of time as the assumption is they probably don’t remember any of their family anyway. This is a step that is especially useful when searching for family early in the case. When the child has very recently been in their home of origin their memory of family members, family friends and caregivers is still very fresh. Several family finding resource agencies have examples of youth interview worksheets available for social workers to utilize when talking with youth.

The second practical step is a review of the child’s case for any family members currently in the youth’s network such as siblings in care or siblings who have been adopted. These people can be additional resources in the search (Louisell, 2006).

The third practical step is to contact the parents and any other professionals who are part of the child’s life. This is an important step and is often missed early in the case. If this child has been in care for an extended period of time, these parents may have been absent from the case for a very long time and very difficult to locate. However, if this case is new to the system and the parents are still engaged, an interview with the
parents can be very illuminating and informative. The parents should be asked about their family history and who they feel could be an appropriate caregiver for their child (Louisell, 2006). It is very important that the father be interviewed as well as the mother and that the paternal family is explored as well. It is a common misconception for child welfare workers to assume a connection with the maternal side of the family and neglect the paternal relatives (Shirk, 2006).

The fourth practical step asks the family finder to take into account any confidentiality or permission issues when searching for family. At times, issues may arise about contacting biological family if the child has been adopted or the parental rights have been terminated. If there are lawyers involved they may need to be included in the search efforts.

The fifth practical step is “case mining”. This is a step which requires time and resourcefulness and is often not given its due diligence, especially when family finding efforts are being done by a primary social worker with a full case load. The purpose of case mining is to scour the child’s (and parents’) file for names, addresses and phone numbers of potential relatives. Several tips are given in Six Steps to Find a Family such as “pay attention for names that repeat themselves throughout the file.” Many agencies including the Catholic Community Services agency provide literature and advice on case mining on their websites and in their trainings (Louisell, 2006).

The sixth step to family finding is the use of an internet search engine to find lost contacts. It is normally recommended to utilize free search engines first, before using search engines that charge. Kevin Campbell worked with US Search, his preferred search engine, to develop a contract that would provide child welfare agencies with a lower
priced search, quicker more comprehensive searching and a personal family finding assistant (Shirk, 2006). The US Search family finding assistant runs several searches based on information provided by the social worker. The more information provided, the more accurate the search. If the worker has been able to conduct a thorough case mining search or has gathered information from the child or the parents, they should have enough information to gather the names and contact information for several possible relatives (Louisell, 2006).

The last four practical steps in family finding are to document your findings, start engaging connections immediately, keep the youth and team informed of progress, and talk with the youth again. Each time a worker talks with the youth, they will remember more information (Louisell, 2006).

The most challenging of these last four steps, but arguably the most important, is the process of engaging the relative once they are located. This is a step that requires much of our attention, but will bring with it many difficult challenges. Kevin Campbell, founder of family finding, talks about how this process can open up old family wounds that many family members would rather keep hidden. Contact from a social worker many years down the road can rekindle the problems surrounding the child’s birth or their removal from their biological parents’ care. Campbell tells social workers to expect a third of the family members they attempt to engage to refuse further contact (Binkley, 2007). Situations where family members are located and refuse to engage with departments are all too common and could be avoided if the family was located and engaged in the beginning of the case. A situation which illustrates the importance of searching and engaging family at the beginning of the case is the story of Tony Ruiz a 12
year child from Los Angeles County. In 2007, Tony had been in foster care for nine years and had nine different foster placements. He finally ended up landing in a boys’ group home, very depressed, on medication and severely overweight. A family finding specialist, trained by Kevin Campbell, was brought onto his case and spent several days working with a US Search specialist to locate relatives for Tony. The specialist found out that Tony was a member of a San Fernando Indian tribe who had not been contacted when Tony was first put into foster care. The tribe’s administrator, Mr. Ortega, turned out to actually be a relative of Tony. He and his wife, with their three young children, had once been interested in adoption and say they would have adopted Tony if they’d known he needed a family. The tribe decided to bring Tony into its care and the Ortega family decided to give Tony a place to live. Tony did wonderfully at first, but after a short amount of time his old behaviors returned. When his behaviors reached a point that Mrs. Ortega feared for her children’s lives, they discontinued the adoption and Tony was returned to foster care. This story has a sad ending; however, many positive things happened for Tony through this family search. He made connections with family members, though the placement was not successful and he learned about his family history. Mr. Campbell states that outcomes like this are all too common. “You might ask yourself how would Tony’s story be different if his family had been found in the first six months after being taken from his mother” (Binkley, 2007, p. 6).

While many children are connected with relatives that can give them a permanent placement outside of foster care, many other family finding searches will yield relatives who cannot provide placement, but who can provide a lifelong connection for the child. There are some organizations that are beginning to understand the importance
of this topic and are compiling resources for agencies to use when wanting to improve their practices in this area. One of the most dynamic organizations in this area is California Permanency for Youth Project or C.P.Y.P. This organization partners with counties across California to help develop the practice of family finding and permanency (among other services) in the child welfare sector (Louisell, 2006).

The organization’s Development Guide for Youth Permanency emphasizes the mainstay motto of CPYP which is the importance not of only finding family for youth, but developing permanency (Louisell, 2006). Permanency is defined by CPYP as “a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment and lifelong support…” (Louisell, 2006, p. 1). This document outlines steps that an agency should take to develop a lasting permanency program championed by either an internal “champion” or by partnering with an agency such as CPYP. Suggestions include collaborating with community stakeholders such as FFA’s and CASA advocates. The document, as a reflection of CPYP’s beliefs, switches the focus from placing children with relatives to developing lifelong connections with them that may or may not result in a placement. These relatives could also include extended and non-related family members such as teachers, community members or mentors with whom the child is connected. This document also outlines the major challenges of trying to make organizational change toward youth permanency and what important elements to include along the process of establishing permanency for your foster youth. The major paradigm presented in the guide, and held as important by CPYP, is that child welfare agencies often focus more on placement than on forming connections.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In order to research what “best-practice” might look like in the area of Relative Search and Engagement and Relative Placement in child welfare, the researcher began by conducting a thorough review of the literature available on the topic of kinship care and Relative Search and Engagement. This information was compiled and found to exist generally in one of two categories. Most of the literature and research available is centered on the topic of kinship care, how this affects the children in this type of placement and how we can best support our existing kin caregivers. There is a small amount of literature available on the topic of family finding and how locating relatives for children in foster care can contribute to their permanency.

Another source that was taken into account was data gathered for the state of California and each county child welfare agency that depicted the current situation for children in foster care. The researcher was able to access statistics on the number of children in foster care versus the number of children placed with relatives as well as the number of placement changes those children have experienced during their time as a foster child. These statistics can be isolated by specific California counties, by gender or ethnicity or age of the child or by the placement type. This information was very helpful in getting an overall picture of the circumstances for children in placement and provided
data for an argument of why kinship care is a more permanent and stable option for foster children.

A further source of information that was utilized for this project was personal interviews and interactions with child welfare social workers. In order to effect change within the child welfare system, improvements in the process of Relative Search and Engagement will have to be initiated and sustained by social workers. The researcher conducted this internal research in a child welfare agency that is currently attempting to start a more comprehensive kinship program. This was seen to be an ideal site to gather worker feedback and for the researcher to observe what practices were being implemented to improve the Relative Search and Engagement process and if these practices were effective or not. The researcher worked closely with program managers, social work supervisors, emergency response social workers and ongoing social workers to find out what the agency was currently practicing in the field of Relative Search and Engagement. Practice methods of the social workers were observed by the researcher and their behaviors were documented. This researcher tracked several categories of social work practice such as: Were relatives sought out once a child was placed into foster care? Were the parents questioned about relatives during interviews with the social worker? Were the social workers aware of state and federal law requiring child welfare agencies to conduct due diligence in seeking out and notifying relatives within 30 days of a child being brought into custody? Once relatives were identified, what methods were employed to engage them in the case and assist them through the placement process?

Along with documenting these observations, the researcher also discussed with social workers how this process could be made easier for them and what practices
could be employed within the agency to encourage more effort in the area of searching for and engaging relatives at the front end of the case. Five child welfare staff members who specialize in kinship care were interviewed by the researcher. They included workers who offered support to caregivers caring for their relatives, social workers who conducted home studies and workers who assisted the relatives with paperwork to become approved as caregivers. There was no specific social worker who worked to search for relatives to care for children or who conducted family finding searches. The interview tool used by the researcher (Appendix A) included questions about the process followed by the social worker once a child is put into foster care and what the roles of the different workers are in the process. The researcher also asked the workers about where they saw the gaps in services offered to relatives and what barriers existed in placing foster children with their relatives.

The researcher also explored what Relative Search and Engagement methods were being employed in other child welfare agencies throughout the state of California. By referring to a list of California counties produced by California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) as having involvement in the relative finding process, this researcher attempted to contact approximately eight counties. This researcher spoke with counties who had been found to have high numbers of foster children placed in relative placements according to Safe Measures statistics. Safe Measures is a data gathering tool used by California child welfare agencies to track vital statistics such as placements numbers, timeliness in social worker contacts and case load numbers (Child and Family Policy Institute of California, 2007). Contact was successful with five counties, three were contacted by phone, one by email and one was contacted in person. They were
asked the following questions to gather information about their current social work practices: What is the process when a case comes into your county for engaging relatives early in the case? Is the family finding/relative location effort at your agency employed at the front end of the case or the back end of the case for searching for relatives? How successful has your agency been in locating and placing children with their relatives? What methods does your agency employ to locate relatives? The responses given by the counties were documented and considered along with research that had been gathered by the researcher.

This researcher also contacted an outside agency called California Program for Youth Permanency (CPYP), as they have been integrally involved with most California child welfare agencies that have had success in finding relative placements for foster youth. They have provided much of the current literature on the topic of family finding and provided very relevant information to this researcher about the process of relative search and engagement and what best practices should look like. The researcher contacted the director of the program and spoke with him by telephone interview. This researcher used an interview guide (see Appendix B) which included the following questions: What are some important aspects of family finding for child welfare agencies? What is needed for a sustainable relative search and engagement program? What are some common barriers to connecting foster children with their family members?

Once this researcher had compiled all relevant research from professionals regarding the current standard of practice for Relative Search and Engagement and relative placement in California, she then began to work with her own agency social workers, to identify challenges and barriers to identifying relatives early in the case. With
the cooperation of agency staff members, several viable solutions were created to address these barriers. These barriers and solutions helped the researcher identify what best practices in an early relative search and engagement program should look like. In collaboration with other agency staff members, the researcher developed and presented a proposal for the agency for a Relative Search and Engagement program including in the proposal the elements that should be an essential part of this program. The proposal for a Relative Search and Engagement social worker was based on research gathered and observations made during this project, as well as, information gathered during interviews.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

When analyzing the research available on kinship care, it reveals that there are immense benefits for children in foster care to be placed with their relatives. While there are challenges that need to be faced and struggles that will inevitably arise, the evidence points to better outcomes for children with their relatives and a more permanent, stable living environment overall. These findings are available in the studies cited in the literature review, but are also evident when raw data is analyzed regarding placement stability for children in out of home care. The data available indicates that when a child is removed from his or her home and placed into foster care, he or she is three times more likely to be placed with strangers than with family members (California Department of Social Services, 2009). Statistics collected for the state of California which provide data for children placed into foster care between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009, indicate there were 5,386 children placed in the care of their relatives as opposed to the 18,309 children placed in foster homes or foster family agency homes. The stability of these placements is also able to be assessed. Statistics pulled from a six month period (January 1, 2008 to June 30, 2008) showed that of the 1,007 children who had been placed in the care of their relatives during that time period, 706 of them were still in their first foster placement. That means that 70.1% of the children placed with their relatives had not moved to a subsequent foster placement and had remained in their primary placement with their
relatives. The numbers were examined for children placed into foster homes and foster family agency homes during the same six month time period. For children placed into care with a stranger, it was revealed that 18.6% were still in their first placement. 20.4% of those children had already moved to their 3rd placement and 7.5% of them were in their 5th placement or higher.

These findings are significant and should compel child welfare agencies to take action to increase permanency for children in out of home care. Kinship care is one potential strategy to increase placement stability; however, placement with a relative is not the only way to increase permanency as stated by California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP). Often times, a healthy connection between a child and their family member can help to reduce many issues that result in a child being moved from one home to another (Louisell, 2006). The issue that is important to consider is the attachment or disruption of an attachment that children have with their caregivers. Children who have been removed from their parents’ care experience a disrupted attachment with the ones who care for them. Their ability to attach can be further damaged by multiple moves through the foster care system (Goldstein, Openheim, Wanlass, 2004). A child with a secure connection or attachment with a loving family member exhibits greater self-reliance, ability to have social interactions, a sense of belonging and self-efficacy which can reduce behavioral, academic and even mental health issues for a child (Bretherton, 1995; Carlson & Sroufe, 1995; Mash & Wolfe, 2002). The connection can also lead to placement in the future or at least give the child a place to come home to after they age out of the foster care system.
In order to form this connection, the relatives must be located, and the sooner they are located, the less damage the foster child will sustain. This is the challenge that faces child welfare agencies and other organizations that care about the well-being of foster children today. In the world of family finding, the emphasis has been put into finding family for children who have been languishing for many years in foster care with no permanent connections. These children are facing the prospect of aging out of the system and the urgency to find family members for these youth is paramount. Currently, in Los Angeles County, there are 75 part time social workers employed to find family members for children in long-term foster care. These workers utilize US Search as a search tool to locate relatives for 12-18 youth per worker. The program has been extremely successful. Permanent placements for approximately 40% of their youth have been found and permanent relative connections had been made for about 70% of their youth (personal communication with S. Pierce, September 15, 2009). Most of the family finding efforts have been developed on the back-end of the system; however, Los Angeles County has recently begun to develop a proposal for a front-end family finding social worker to look for family members immediately after children are placed into foster care. The major challenge in achieving this new program was funding, or more accurately a lack thereof, and where to use the resources they have. Even among one of California’s largest child welfare systems, the process of developing a comprehensive relative search and engagement program on the front end of the system is still in the very early stages of development and implementation.

This dilemma raises the classic question of whether it is more beneficial to put resources into preventing the fire or putting it out once it has started. There is a need to
improve outcomes for foster children aging out of the system as well as increase permanency for children entering the system and prevent placement instability. Both these needs seem to point to the importance of implementing family finding practices in order to develop a child welfare system that really works proactively for the best outcomes of its clients.

The researcher spoke with another social worker from a smaller county in Northern California to contrast what was happening in two different California counties that were very different in size and demographics. The worker explained that an important step on their journey to improving their relative placement process was partnering with California Youth Permanency Project (CPYP) about three years ago. They started with a pilot of 18 youth that had severe at-risk behaviors. They worked to find relative placements or connections for these youth. Their contact with CPYP has since ended and they are working to extend their program with other grants and funding sources. The worker stated that they are always “trying to find ways to move this effort to the front end of the system.” Currently they have one full-time social worker who works as a Relative Placement worker. This position began in 2001. Each time a child was placed in foster care, the Relative Placement worker would go to the detention hearing and meet with the parents. The judge would actually order the parents to meet with the worker and provide names and contact information of any possible relative placements. This exchange is a normal part of every detention hearing in this county. The worker’s job, when meeting with the parents, is to make the process as friendly and congenial as possible. The worker works hard to interact in a caring and sensitive manner with the families while gathering the information. The worker also reaches out to the youth and
gets information on relatives and non-related extended family members (NREFM). The worker contacted stated that she feels that for a county without any type of relative engagement program “a Relative Placement Worker is a very natural place to start building a program” (personal communication with C. Albee, September 21, 2009). The worker also mentioned that their county has recently submitted a proposal for an additional grant to start the family finding process at the detention hearing. This would expand the range of possible relatives from the information given by the parents to information gleaned during a formal search process. The worker stated she feels that this work requires a full-time social worker to be successful and is not something an intake or ongoing worker can do in addition to all their current responsibilities. The worker identified one barrier encountered during this process as workers who were resistant to the process and to the change that it entailed. She stated that through implementing these programs in her county, it has “completely changed my outlook on social work.” During this conversation, the researcher was told about a federal law that would change the process for locating and notifying relatives that their family members were in foster care.

On October 7, 2008, the 110th Congress passed Public Law 110-351, also referred to as the “Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008.” The law encompasses many areas that will improve outcomes for foster children; section 103 addresses the “Notification of Relatives.” The law states that:

Within 30 days after the removal of a child from the custody of the parent or parents of the child, the State shall exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents), to exceptions due to family or domestic violence. That notice would include the following: specify that the child has been removed from the custody of their parent or parents, explain the options that the relative has under Federal, State and local law to participate in the care and placement of the
child, including any options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice and
describe the requirements under paragraph (10) of the subsection to become a foster
family home and the additional services and supports that are available for children
placed in such a home. (p.3956)

There is also a section (D) which addresses making all payment assistance programs
available to the relatives.

This Federal law recognizes the importance of notifying relatives early in the
case, stating relatives should be notified within the first 30 days of the child’s placement
into out of home care. While the measures set forth in the law are significant and a
milestone for child welfare advocates, some are recognizing that it will be up to the state
to decide how they will implement these federal laws (Geen, 2009). For example, the
measure that mandates the state to do “due diligence” to find and notify relatives, how
will the state define “due diligence”? Another portion of the law states that relatives
should be informed of “their options to participate in the care and placement of the child”
(p. 3956). Many relative advocates have stated that many relatives are not properly
informed of their options when children are removed from parental homes (Green, 2009).
It will be important, as states begin to implement this federal legislation, to monitor what
changes are made on the part of child welfare agencies to increase their efforts in
locating, notifying and informing relatives, specifically looking at how states are defining
due diligence and specific efforts being made to notify relatives of their participation
options.

Implementation in Child Welfare

As part of this exploratory study to discover what best practices in relative
search and engagement should look like, the researcher worked among front-end social
workers in one Northern California child welfare agency to observe their current Relative Search and Engagement Practice and to implement new possible practices within the agency while observing their effectiveness. As part of this project, the researcher worked with program managers and supervisors within this agency to develop a new position on the front end called the Relative Placement Social Worker. This position would assist front end workers in the process of seeking out and engaging relatives for placement. During this process of development and implementation of this pilot project, many barriers to relative placement were identified and solutions created accordingly.

While working among front end social workers, the researcher found that the workers within the agency had not been aware that there was a public law in existence requiring that child welfare agencies conduct due diligence in locating relatives and notifying them that their relatives were in foster care. This is likely due to the very recent adoption of the law by the state of California. Part of implementing change within child welfare agencies will be to make workers aware of this law and what it means for their social work practice. Not only do child welfare agencies need to respond to all relatives who come forward requesting placement, but they have a responsibility to ask parents about possible relatives who might be available and to follow up on contacting any relatives that are identified. While this law is very important and clearly can help improve outcomes for children, it also puts extra stress and work on an already overloaded staff of child welfare social workers. During the researcher’s observations, it was observed that in the first week of the child’s placement into foster care, the worker rarely has time to seek out relatives, spend time with them explaining how to apply for placement and then assess whether a placement with them would be appropriate. The researcher observed
that a thorough assessment of relatives who stepped forward for placement was not always the common practice. The researcher observed that the paperwork was not given to all relatives and that often paperwork that had been filled out by relatives was put into the back of the case file rather than passed to the appropriate assessment social worker, thus slowing down a possible placement for a child in foster care. This break in services appeared to be due to many factors. Workers are very busy and assessing relatives was not a high priority in the investigation. It was also observed that there is often confusion among the workers as to their duty to look for and assess relatives for placement. False beliefs existed that someone else would be doing this at a later point in the case or that it was someone else’s job to give the relative the proper paperwork. Some workers also falsely believed that it was their choice whether to give paperwork and assess relatives based on whether they thought the relative was appropriate. Unfortunately many contacts have been lost with many viable relative caregivers due to misinformation exchanged between relative and social worker.

One solution to this situation is to employ one or two front end Relative Placement Social Workers whose duty would be to assess and interview each family as they enter the system, talk to the children about their relative connections (and connections with Non-Related Extended Family Members as well), engage these relatives by phone or in person, give them the appropriate paperwork and walk them through the process and then complete the necessary steps to determine whether the relative is appropriate for placement or not. These social workers would lift the burden from the front end social workers’ shoulders while helping the state comply with the laws set forth that require due diligence be done to locate relatives within 30 days.
It is also important to communicate with and educate social workers not only on their responsibility to notify relatives and educate them on their options as relatives to apply for placement, but, also to educate social workers on the benefits to children of placing with relatives. One way that this researcher has worked to do this was to create a brochure for the social workers that outlined the law and also some research based outcomes that show benefits to children who were placed with relatives. (See Appendix C) This ensures that all workers are receiving the same information. The brochure was then dispersed throughout the agency and the information was presented at unit meetings for the social workers.

As previously identified the workers are very busy in the first few days of an investigation and seeking out relatives for placement is not always a high priority on the list of things to do. This is understandable due to time constraints for investigations and for writing and submitting court reports placed upon the social workers. Social workers this researcher spoke with had different opinions about the appropriateness of placing children with their relatives and many have had difficult experiences with relatives. In order to address this barrier, the researcher worked with intake supervisors to make the identification of relatives on the front end of the system a mandatory part of the procedure. The thought process behind this decision was that relative assessment should not be left to the decision of each individual worker, but should be a standard part of the investigation process. This was attempted by adding a check box to the standard intake checklist that each intake worker fills out before passing their case to an ongoing worker. The check box states that “this case was discussed with the Relative Placement Social Worker.” It also became a standard procedure to include the Relative Placement Social
Worker in all staffing of cases. This ensured that a worker was present to receive information about possible relatives for placement and follow up on these leads so that the intake worker did not have to do this in addition to their other duties. The researcher worked with supervisors to devise a Relative Placement Checklist (See Appendix D) which would log all attempts at communication and successful communication with possible relatives interested in the placement. The Relative Placement Social Worker also documented whether a background check was run on the relatives (run by the Relative Placement Social Worker), a placement packet was given to them and whether the relative was approved as a viable placement (based on county procedure for relative approval). The intake worker still retained the ability to decide whether the child was moved to the relative placement or not; however, every step along the way was documented and much of the work was done for them. The checklist was then included in the case file before passing the case to the ongoing/primary case worker. This was important because then the next social worker was aware of what work had been done on the front end to locate relatives for placement.

A very significant barrier to placing with relatives within the county of observation is the lack of communication within the agency and among social workers. What often happens is that front end social workers work hard to find relatives and get them in the beginning stages of the placement process; however, when the case passes to the next social worker (ongoing/primary social worker) much of the work is lost. There is not a consistent form of communication to let the new social worker know which relatives have been contacted and where they are in the placement process. The opposite can also happen where the intake social worker does not pursue relatives and then the
ongoing worker tries, but finds they are starting from scratch when this should have begun on the front end. By this time many children have often entered their second placement. A solution being implemented for this problem is to create the Relative Placement Checklist document which is filled out by the Relative Placement Social Worker and passed along in the case to the ongoing social worker. This check list gives all information gathered about relatives in one place and shows which steps have been taken or completed in the placement process. The hope is that intake workers, intake supervisors, ongoing supervisors and ongoing social workers will all review the information and that information will not be lost. This will also hold the ongoing social worker accountable to follow up with relatives who are in the midst of the placement process.

One difficulty that many agencies have faced when trying to find appropriate relatives for the placement of children, is the fact that many relatives live out of town. This becomes a problem when the agency is required to offer the parents reunification services and the child must stay local in order to accommodate visits with the parents. It is a frequent occurrence that the social worker will locate an appropriate and willing relative care giver who lives in another state and the possibility for placement is dismissed due to the mother needing the child to be local. There are a few possible solutions to this scenario. The first is that the mother can be given a choice between participating in reunification services through juvenile court (with the risk that her parental rights could be terminated at the end and the child could be placed in adoption) or allowing the child to go into a family court guardianship with the out of town relatives and the mother would be responsible for moving herself closer to the child if she so
desires and pursuing services in another city or state. This can often be an advantageous move for the birth parent especially if the parents are deep in the throes of addiction and the child is under three years of age as, according to California law, the parents would have six months to reunify with the child before the agency can place the child up for adoption (California Welfare and Institutions Code). Another benefit is that the child will not remain in foster care, but will be with a loving family member.

A second option would be to facilitate a close relationship between the child and the out of town relative including extended visits, visits over holidays and frequent phone calls and letters. If this relationship is cultivated properly the child can maintain the connection and if the parents fail to reunify with the child, the child can then be placed with the relatives. This, nevertheless, requires more work and effort on the part of the agency and the social worker and is something that can easily fall by the wayside when staff and funding are cut.

Another contact made by the researcher during this project was with the director of CPYP. He was very willing to give several practical steps to a child welfare agency that is looking to improve their relative search and engagement practices. His first point, however, was that establishing permanency does not always mean placement with the relative. The first step to permanency might be a connection with a relative who can provide family history and connection to the youth (R. Friend, Personal communication, September 23, 2009). The director suggested that an important place to start a project such as this would be to create a team of internal and external support people who will invest in this mission of making permanency for children and youth a priority within the agency. He suggested that some of these support people might include Court Appointed
Special Advocates or CASA workers, Foster Family Agency (FFA) social workers, internal social workers, program managers, counselors, etc. These stakeholders will ensure that the movement continues and is not spearheaded by only one individual. He stated that working to find permanency for youth is not just about family finding, but encompasses many facets of the youth’s situation including grief and loss, working with siblings, family finding, engaging and maintaining connections with the family and independent living programs (ILP). Another important aspect of permanency work is to engage the youth themselves and encourage them to be their best advocate for permanency.
Permanency for children and youth who are in foster care should be the ultimate goal for child welfare workers and others involved in the well-being of these vulnerable young people. Searching for and engaging relatives for connection or placement can play a very important part in achieving this permanency. The above findings reveal several practices that have been found to be effective and beneficial to accomplishing the goal of permanency and better outcomes for our youth in foster care. Further exploration as to how to implement these “best practices” within child welfare is needed. Child welfare work is shifting in a new direction and it is an ideal time for agencies to re-evaluate their current practices regarding placement with relatives. What are workers’ attitudes towards relative placement? Are practices concerning relatives consistent from case to case? Are children and parents being asked about possible relatives or non-related family members available for placement? Are we utilizing the internet to search for relatives for those children and youth who seem to have no family connections? Asking these questions within an agency can help to guide the agency as to where to implement improvements in this area.

A recommendation for the future would be that more empirical research be done on the effectiveness of front-end Relatives Search and Engagement. There is a lack of research relating specifically to this topic and the topic merits more study as to
whether this does result in better outcomes for foster children. Long-term studies as to the
benefits for foster children to be placed with relatives who were identified early in the
case would be especially beneficial to child welfare agencies looking to reduce foster
care placements and increase placement stability.

As a result of this project, there have been significant improvements made to
the Relative Search and Engagement process within the county that the project took
place. The researcher developed the informative brochure (Appendix C) which is being
utilized to educate and train social workers on this topic. The researcher also created the
checklist (Appendix D) which is being incorporated into practice on a regular basis. Also,
the Northern California County in which the project took place is now considering
utilizing a Relative Search and Engagement Social Worker on a permanent basis. A
proposal has been presented outlining the barriers described in this project and the
solutions proposed to overcome those barriers. The proposal recommends that a full-time
staff position be dedicated to a front-end Relative Search and Engagement Social Worker
who can begin searching for relatives from the moment the child is placed into foster
care, assist social workers with the placement process, conduct family finding on behalf
of children languishing in the foster care system and perform other similar tasks to
enhance placement stability for foster children.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A
1. How do you see Relative Placement as an asset to a child or family?

2. What challenges have you experienced in the Relative Placement Process?

3. What changes would like to see made in the Relative Placement process here in Shasta County?

4. What concerns do you have about changes being made in this process?

5. Are you familiar with a Relative Locater Tool? Do you see this being helpful in your work?

6. How do you think Relatives could best be engaged at the beginning of the case?

7. Do you have any questions, concerns, suggestions on this topic?
APPENDIX B
1. What is the process once a child enters the system of looking for relatives?

2. Are the parents interviewed? If so, how soon after the child is removed? Who interviews the parents? Where are they interviewed and do they use a standard interview tool?

3. Is the child interviewed? Is so, where, by whom and with what interview tool?

4. Do you use a Relative Locator Tool? If so, which one?

5. Have you had success in locating family members using this tool?

6. What is the involvement of the assigned social worker in this process?

7. How are different agency partners involved in the process of relative search/engagement/placement?

8. Do you hold a Family Conference or placement meeting? What does that look like?

9. Even if a relative is unable to take placement of a child, do you facilitate a continued relationship between the child and the relative?

10. What is the standard procedure if the most appropriate (or only appropriate) placement option is out of state?

11. What are some of the challenges you’ve found to exist in the relative placement process?

12. What are some of the benefits to the child/family that you’ve discovered through the relative placement process?
APPENDIX C
The Road Map to Relative Services

- **Stephanie Barczynski** - Relative Placement Specialist
  Yukon Street Office-223-5968
  Stephanie can assist social workers in obtaining family history, conducting family finding searches, contacting relatives, running preliminary screening checks to facilitate placement, and facilitating Family Placement Meetings.

- **Michelle Thomas** - Kinship Navigator
  AOD Office-229-8225
  Michelle can assist relatives in filling out the Relative Placement packet, connecting to services and offering additional support.

- **Gary Montgomery** - Relative/NRFNM Home Study Contact
  LINGC Office-225-5963
  Gary is responsible for approving the Relative Placement Application, conducting home visits and communicating with the social worker and relatives/NRFNM.

- **Tracy Baker** - Kinship Liaison
  AOD Office-223-5967
  Tracy supports and educates Relative Care Providers by helping them maneuver through the dependency court system. Tracy’s gentle manner calms and reassures our families that their anxieties will be lessened.

Source: Microsoft Clip Art

Relative Search and Engagement Services

Source: Microsoft Clip Art

Making Lasting Family Connections for Our Kids

Source: Microsoft Clip Art
Common Myths:

1. "This child has no family." Often professionals believe the child has no family because there is no record of relatives or the parents state there is no family. It is estimated that the average American has conservatively between 200-300 living relatives. Through family finding, workers have often located as many as 40 relatives for each youth. The child may have Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) with whom the child has a connection and who would care for the child.

2. "If the family truly cared, they would have come forward earlier." In many situations children become lost in the system due to broken family connections, multiple placements in foster care, or multiple family moves. Some relatives may fear system involvement and simply have never been contacted and informed that their relatives are in foster care. Many relatives are separated from their family members to maintain appropriate boundaries.

3. "This child has too many behavior problems for kinship care." Children in Relative Placements are less likely to change placements than children in foster care. They have been found to have less withdrawn behaviors, fewer disruptive thoughts and attention problems and less likely to be expelled or suspended from school than children in foster care. Children with pre-existing behaviors are at high risk of making multiple placement changes if placed into foster care.

When to Start Looking for Relatives/NREFM

Relative Search and Engagement has historically begun later in the case. Brian Samuels of the Relative Search/Lifelong Connections Project states:

"Success will be achieved for more children if work is begun early in the case both in terms of availability of family information and making connection before the youth is damaged by years of changing placement and separation from family."  

 Relatives/NREFM can be sought and engaged beginning the moment the child is placed into custody. There are many benefits for the child to be placed with their relatives or even just maintaining a connection with their relatives:

- The child's culture and family history may be preserved
- The child may be already familiar with the family member before placement and the trauma of separating the child from the parents is lessened
- The placement may be more stable for the child resulting in less disruption in the child's attachment
- The child is less likely to be disrupted from their school or community of origin
- The child is more likely to stay in contact with other extended family members including siblings and be involved in family reunions and activities
- The child is more likely to maintain family connections after their exit from foster care as a young adult

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008

As part of this Act (Public Law 100-515, 101st Congress), SEC. 103 (209) "Provides that, within 20 days after removal of a child from the custody of the parent or parents of the child, the State shall exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents), that:

A) specifies that the child has been or is being removed from the custody of the parent or parents of the child;
B) explains the options the relative has under Federal, State, and local law to participate in the care and placement of the child, including any options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice;"

What does this mean for social workers?

We have a responsibility to search for and notify relatives of a child and give them the opportunity to apply for placement of the child as soon as the child comes into our custody. Luckily, here in Shasta County, we have social workers who can help us with this endeavor! See the Roadmap to Relative Services in this brochure for contact info and further information.
APPENDIX D
Relative Placement Checklist

Family Name: ____________________________ Ongoing Social Worker: ____________________________

Relatives were located (see below for details): Yes ☑ No ☐

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<th>Viable Relative for Placement: Yes ☑ No ☐</th>
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<th>Name:</th>
<th>Contacted:</th>
<th>In Person ☐ Phone ☐</th>
<th>Relation:</th>
<th>Packet:</th>
<th>Given: ☐</th>
<th>Completed: ☐</th>
<th>Ph/Address:</th>
<th>Home Study Completed: ☐</th>
<th>CACI: ☐</th>
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A Family Placement Meeting was Conducted: Yes ☑ No ☐

Family Search/US Search was Completed: Yes ☑ No ☐

Letters Sent to Possible Relatives: Yes ☑ No ☐

SW has gathered Family History (Attached): Yes ☑ No ☐

Relatives have been introduced to a Kinship Liaison: Yes ☑ No ☐

Other Services Offered:

Notes: