

# Section 3. Working with relatives

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Federal and state laws and administrative rules require a diligent search for a child's relatives and persons with a caregiver to place a child with his or her relatives and place siblings together. Oregon's administrative rules also require that relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship are considered before placement with unrelated and unknown persons. The diligent search is an active and dynamic process to ensure the child knows and can remain connected to his or her family.

Research indicates relative placements are almost always less traumatic for children, and provide continuity and connection with familiar adults and surroundings. Separation from parents is traumatic in and of itself; substitute care with strangers compounds the trauma. Even when a child does not know the relative, the relative still has an important role to play to keep the child connected to family history and culture.

### A. Who is defined as a relative?

Because every family system is unique, the definition of relatives is broad to capture all persons considered as family. Some families consider every blood relative as family while others consider both blood and legal relatives. In yet others, godparents, neighbors, family friends, etc., might be considered family due to the role those persons play in the family system and/or the emotionally significant relationship they have with the child or the child's family.

A relative is defined in Oregon Administrative Rule 413-070-0063(9). The definition is summarized here.

There are four categories in which a person is defined as a relative:

1. A person related to the child or young adult through a parent, including a putative father. This includes:
  - a. Blood relatives that have prefixes of grand, great, or great-great.
  - b. Half blood relatives with prefixes of grand, great, or great-great
  - c. Siblings, including siblings that are related through a putative father, and siblings who would be related but for a termination or other disruption of parental rights.
  - d. Aunts/uncles
  - e. Nieces/nephews
  - f. First cousins and first cousins once-removed (a parent's cousin)
  - g. The spouses of any of the above-listed relatives
  - h. The ex-spouses of any of those persons listed in a–f if the child or young adult had a relationship with the ex-spouses PRIOR to entering substitute care.

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2. A person related to the child but not always through the child's parent. This includes:
  - a. A person defined as a relative by the child's tribe if the child is an American Indian/Alaska Native child under the ICWA or is in the legal custody of the tribe.
  - b. A person defined as a relative of a refugee child.
  - c. A child's step parent or former step parent if the child had a relationship to the former stepparent prior to coming into substitute care.
  - d. The registered domestic partner or former registered domestic partner of the child's parent if the child had a relationship with the former registered domestic partner prior to coming into substitute care.
  - e. The adoptive parent of a child's sibling.
  - f. The unrelated legal or biological parent of a child's half sibling if that half sibling is living with the unrelated parent.
3. A person distantly related to the child. This includes those persons who the family or child identifies, or the person self-identifies, as being related to the child by blood, adoption, or marriage but to a degree other than specified in #1 above.
4. A person not related to the child by blood or through legal means but is identified by the child or the family as a family member. These people must have an emotionally significant relationship with the child or the family prior to the child coming into substitute care and are identified by the child or the family. There is no comprehensive list of such persons but may include godparents, neighbors, close family friends, spiritual advisors, or congregation members, and others identified by the child or family. These are the people who, by the family's, parent's, or child's value system, culture, and beliefs are identified as family members and act as family members.

For the purpose of guardianship assistance eligibility as a relative, there are additional considerations.

First, a stepparent is not a relative, and not eligible for guardianship assistance unless a petition for annulment, dissolution or separation has been filed or the marriage to the child's parent has been terminated by death or divorce. In other words, if a stepparent is still married to the child's parent, a stepparent is considered a "parent" for guardianship assistance and therefore is not eligible for this type of support in a guardianship.

Second, unrelated foster parents may be considered for guardianship and the availability of guardianship assistance when, in addition to the child being eligible:

- a. There is a compelling reason why adoption is not an achievable permanency plan;
- b. The foster parent is currently caring a for a child in the legal custody of the department who has a permanency plan or concurrent permanency plan of guardianship;
- c. The foster parent has cared for the child for at least the past 12 consecutive months; and
- d. A Permanency Committee has recommended the foster parent for consideration as a guardian.

### **B. Who is defined as a person with a caregiver relationship?**

Persons with a caregiver relationship are defined by Oregon Revised Statute. These are persons who have had physical custody of the child and lived in the same household as the child for specific periods of time listed below. The child must have depended upon the relationship to meet the child's needs. This relationship must have existed:

1. For at least 12 months immediately preceding the initiation of a dependency proceeding;
2. For at least six months during a dependency proceeding, if that person is a relative; or
3. For half the child's life if the child is less than 6 months of age.

This may include an unrelated foster parent only when the relationship has continued for at least 12 months.

The department's responsibility to search for persons with a caregiver relationship for the purpose of placement should only apply to those who fall under number 1 and 3 above since any caregiver with whom a relationship has existed during the course of dependency proceeding will inherently be known to the department already.

### **C. Search for and identify relatives**

Identification of relatives is an ongoing activity that may begin as early as screening, and must begin during the CPS assessment when it is determined a child is unsafe. The values and principles of family-centered practice provide the framework for conducting relative searches. Use the family's knowledge of their history, strengths and resources in your decision-making to provide individualized, culturally responsive safety services, substitute care placement and/or ongoing connections for the child.

The search for relatives must begin without delay when taking protective action to manage child safety, whether that protective action is in-home or out-of-home. Include both the mother's and the father's family in the search. This early and immediate search and identification of relatives can help prevent the child from entering substitute care, reduce the number of placement moves when a child is in substitute care, and keep the child connected to his/her family system, history and culture. The identification of relatives continues throughout the case and is reviewed periodically as described later in this section.

### **Procedure**

- Search for and identify relatives and persons with an emotionally significant relationship with the child or the child's family. Information can be gathered through the following contacts or activities:
  1. Parents

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2. Children
  3. Other family members
  4. During various family meetings or the Oregon Family Decision-making Meeting
  5. School teachers or other school staff
  6. Persons participating in the shelter hearing
  7. Day care or other child care providers
  8. The family's spiritual or church leaders
  9. Search of previous child welfare records
  10. Search of other available state database records such as Self Sufficiency records, Vital Statistics, Department of Motor Vehicles, or Support Enforcement records
  11. Internet search engines such as Intelius, Accurint, Family Finder, US Search, Ancestry or Daplus.us
- When the family is initially unwilling to provide contact information for possible relative resources, explain the reasons why identifying a child's relatives is important both to support the parents and to support the child during a difficult time. Explain the search can use the above-listed resources but the best way to connect a child with his/her family is by gathering information from the parent and/or child themselves. Furthermore, assure them that you will keep them informed of all relatives you contact unless doing so would compromise the safety of another person. Share how children and young adults benefit from permanent connections with and support from relatives. Explore the reasons for unwillingness to share family information and whether they can be assisted in overcoming any barriers. Possible barriers may include:
    1. Embarrassment or shame about child welfare involvement;
    2. Concern about how much information will be shared with their family members;
    3. Concern about particular relatives being contacted for safety reasons; or
    4. Belief the family will not be supportive.

When the parents continue to be unwilling to provide contact information, request the court to order the parents to provide this information. Inform the parent that DHS has a responsibility to seek out relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship and will continue these efforts even when parents object.

### **D. Initial and ongoing contact with a relative**

#### **Procedure**

The department is responsible for contacting identified relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship during the CPS assessment and on an ongoing basis. These persons should be contacted

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as soon as they are identified, but must be contacted within 15 business days of receiving a person's contact information.

- Make an initial contact with relatives in person or by phone when a telephone number is available. Make an effort to locate the phone number. A relative is likely to experience a lot of emotions and have a lot of questions that can be answered immediately when the contact is in person or by telephone.
- Be prepared to answer all the questions you can. Federal law allows the department to tell an adult relative that a child is in substitute care.
- Provide information. Let the relative know how you will be following up with him or her. Send a follow-up letter telling them whether there will be someone else from the department contacting them, if certification is a possibility, how they can send cards or letters through you to the child, other contact arrangements you may be making as a caseworker, and where they can find more information on our website.
- A grandparent who is the legal parent of the child or young adult as defined in ORS 109.119, has additional rights. Notify that grandparent of options for involvement (see Options for Relatives DHS 9360 for a more inclusive list) that the department will tell them of the date and time of court hearings unless they have been present at court and have already been notified of the date and time of the hearing, or the court has relieved the department of the responsibility to provide such notice, after making a finding of 'good cause'.
- Provide notice of court hearings regarding any child or young adult, from the point of shelter hearings forward, to any grandparent who is the legal parent of a child's legal parent, unless the person has been at a court hearing and already been provided the date and time of the next hearing by the court, or the court has relieved the department of the responsibility to provide such notice, after making a finding of 'good cause'.
- When a telephone number is not provided or available, send the relative a letter. There are five letters available on the forms directory that can be sent. At least one of the letters can be sent to possible relatives or persons with a caregiver relationship. Each letter is a bit different and addresses some of the most frequently encountered situations in a child welfare case. Some of the letters may be sent as part of ongoing contact with relatives. Choose the letter that meets the case situation for each person child or young adult. These letters cannot match every situation, and there are times when you will need to write a personalized letter.

<b>Form number</b>	<b>Letter is sent to:</b>	<b>Letter solicits the following information</b>
CF 264	Current relative caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Names and contact information of other relatives</li></ul>
CF 265	Relatives of child in permanent foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interest in placement or contact</li><li>• Names and contact information of other relatives</li></ul>

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CF 266	Other relatives when child currently placed with a relative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in contact or potential placement in future</li> <li>• Names and contact information of other relatives</li> </ul>
CF 267	Relatives when child in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in placement or contact</li> <li>• Names and contact information of other relatives</li> </ul>
CF 268	Relative to solicit information for contact/support but not placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in contact</li> <li>• Names and contact information of other relatives</li> </ul>

- During the initial contact, the caseworker is responsible for providing specific information to relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship in the person's own language and in a format the person can understand. The relative pamphlet (DHS 9360 Options for Relatives) and all the letters have been translated into the languages most commonly spoken by our families. Be sure to clearly explain information in a way that makes sense to the relative, respecting his/her role in the family, and the family's cultural perspective and values. The following must take place during initial contact:
  1. Explain the department's goal is to manage child safety within the child's home if possible and the relative may have a role to play if safety can be managed in the child's own home.
  2. If the child has been placed in substitute care, the department must let the relative know the child is in substitute care.
  3. Explain to the person whether the child is placed with another relative.
  4. Explain the department's efforts to keep a child safe and when it is possible to keep the child safe in his or her own home with help from others, a relative may be involved with specific responsibilities. Let the relative know the department assesses everyone who assists in managing a child's safety and this assessment, at a minimum, involves a check of the person's criminal history and any previous records of child abuse and neglect. Reassure the relative that the department will do everything it needs to do to ensure child safety.
  5. Explain the rights of relatives as described in Child Welfare Policy I-A.4.5, Rights of Relatives.
  6. Provide information about the availability of guardianship assistance and how the child meets eligibility requirements.

Culture is one of the lenses that help us interpret, interact and respond to others and to situations. Understand the family's culture to effectively communicate and develop a relationship with the family members. Be mindful of the role culture may play in a relative's perception of what the relative is being asked to do. Openly discuss options, roles and responsibilities to help reduce misunderstandings.

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- There may be occasions when it is not safe for a family if a particular relative is contacted. These reasons are outlined in administrative rule and include family/domestic violence or when contact may compromise the safety of the child, young adult or another person. When the caseworker knows a specific relative is unsafe or believes there is enough information that another person's safety would be jeopardized, the caseworker should consult with his or her supervisor, then contact a program manager who must approve any decision not to contact a relative for these reasons.

### **E. Document ongoing relative search efforts**

#### **Procedure**

- Document all identified relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship in the department's electronic information system. Document the following information as part of the diligent search efforts made by Child Welfare:
  1. Name and contact information of each person the department tried to contact;
  2. The relationship to the child or young adult;
  3. The method of contact;
  4. Each person's response when a response is received; and
  5. Reasons for not contacting a relative when one has been identified but not contacted and the program manager that gave approval for not contacting them.
- Include information in each court report on the progress and results of the diligent search, assessment activities underway, and efforts to place the child with relatives and place siblings together.
- Document all contacts and assessment activities in case notes.

### **F. Engagement of a child or young adult's relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship**

Children and young adults need families. They need a sense of belonging, of who they are and from whom they have come. Whether their case plan involves in-home safety planning, out-of-home care, reunification or other permanency options, children need relationships with family to be successful. Engagement of relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship means building partnerships between the child's family system and the Child Welfare system with the goal of meeting the child or young adult's needs for safety, permanency and wellbeing.

- The caseworker must make every effort to engage family members at each stage of case planning to successfully build a partnership with the family system. Family members may distrust the Child Welfare system or government agencies in general. It is important to

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recognize this distrust as a normal reaction to a large government agency intervening in a family's life. If a family's response to the intervention is perceived by Child Welfare workers as uncooperative or resistive, the perception may negatively impact the caseworker's goal to build a partnership with the family.

- There are many strategies to build trust with a child's relatives. Some of these include:
  1. Perseverance: Do not give up on your efforts to engage relatives. Even if a person does not respond to your initial inquiries, contact that person again at the next critical juncture and/or during the periodic review of the case plan and the substitute care placement of the child. Many families are later grateful a caseworker did not give up trying to engage them.
  2. Acknowledge imperfection: Child Welfare systems are not perfect. Often, allowing the relative to express his/her concern about the department's actions and/or decision-making and validating that which can be validated can express respect and humility.
  3. Provide many opportunities for family participation in decision-making. Provide formal opportunities such as Family Decision Meetings and informal opportunities such as a phone call to get a relative's input.
  4. Honor the family's culture and background. Integrate their cultural practices and beliefs into plans for the child's or young adult's care.
  5. Look for ways a relative can be involved with the child. Can the relative attend school functions, religious or sporting activities, or events? Can the relative offer transportation to visits? Are there opportunities for visitation, phone, email or other contact? Can the relative offer other resources such as providing information on family history, family medical or cultural practices; family mementos and other important connection with a child's history; music lessons or sporting equipment; mentoring; vacations or other types of family connectedness?
- It is important the department engage relatives in case planning throughout the life of the case. Engage relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship:
  1. During a CPS assessment, if a protective action needs to be taken, always consider whether persons in the family system can participate in managing child safety within the home. Ask the parents/child/other family members for family members' names and contact information and contact them right away. Follow the procedures for assessment of safety service providers.
  2. When the child is entering substitute care. Use the Child Specific Expedited Certification procedures described in Chapter 7 whenever possible to avoid the child going to the home of an adult unknown to them or their family. Administrative rule allows for the emergency certification and placement with any relative or person with a caregiver relationship who is assessed to meet certification requirements and be able to meet the child's need before searching for and contacting all relatives.
  3. While developing the ongoing safety plan by inviting their participation in a child safety meeting and stressing the importance of their input.

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4. While developing the child's case plan by inviting their participation in an Oregon Family Decision-making Meeting and while developing concurrent permanency plan options.
5. During the 90-day case plan review.
6. When a child in substitute care must move.
7. When the department is considering reunification.
8. When the department is considering recommendation of moving to the concurrent plan other than return home.
9. At all critical junctures in the case plan and in the child or young adult's life.

### **G. Engagement of relatives as temporary and/or permanent placement resources**

- When making placement decisions for a child, always seek input from the child or young adult and their parents or guardians regarding their preferences and make every attempt to engage and collaborate with them when determining the best temporary and/or permanent placement resource.
- In addition, when considering the adults who can provide substitute care, adhere to the following order of placement preference:
  1. Relatives as defined in OAR 413-070-0063(8)(a-): blood or legal relatives related through the child's parent or through the child.
  2. Relatives as defined in OAR 413-070-0063(8)(d): persons identified by the family or the child as a relative.
  3. Persons with a caregiver relationship
  4. Persons known to the child or family
  5. Foster parents unknown to the child or family when none of the above is available or able to meet the child's needs.
- There may be more than one relative or person with a caregiver relationship interested in being considered for placement. These are some of the most difficult decisions the department makes and can impact the child in a lasting, life-long way. In these situations, partner with the family system to make this decision together. Ultimately, the department is responsible for placement decisions but using the family's input as a guide and collaborating with family members whenever possible is imperative.
  1. Use the placement matching order of preference above as a guide and consider each person's ability to:
    - a. Provide safety for the child or young adult;
    - b. Support the implementation of the permanent plan;
    - c. Meet the child's physical, emotional and educational needs; and
    - d. Which person has the closest existing relationship with the child.

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2. The person's ability to provide substitute care for siblings to keep them placed together. Consider the child's proximity to school and ability to remain in his or her home school, proximity to parents for the purposes of visitation, or whether the relative being considered is able and willing to transport children to school or to visits.
  3. Consider the person's ability to keep siblings together.
  4. A Family Decision Meeting is a great way to seek family participation in placement decisions. Family meetings do not have to be facilitated by a third party and do not have to follow a specific format.
  5. Recontact even those relatives that did not respond or were not interested in participation before, and invite the family to help plan for the child or young adult.
  6. Consult with your supervisor when making placement decisions.
- Distinguish between temporary and permanent placement when engaging family systems in the placement decisions. A particular relative might undergo the expedited certification process to provide placement for a child on the first day of substitute care. This is a temporary placement. Stress this to the relative providing placement and to other relatives who wish to be considered for placement. While one relative might be available and best matched to the child for temporary placement, another might be available and best matched to the child for adoption or guardianship. It is also important to minimize a child's moves in substitute care. Even when moving a child from one relative to another, this decision should not be taken lightly. Always weigh what is in the child's best interests and which placement resource will best meet his/her needs for safety, permanency and well-being.

What constitutes a "best match" for a child with a relative? The answer to this question will be different for every child and based on each child's individual needs and strengths combined with the potential placement resource's ability to meet those needs and build upon those strengths. Input from parents, the child, relatives, service providers and others on the child's team will be important in making the decision. The caseworker should consider (this list is not inclusive):

- Contact between the child and birth parents and/or other family members
- Proximity to community, school, and other needed services
- Placing with siblings
- Cultural connections
- Supervision needs
- Mental health needs
- Child's strengths
- Child's medical needs

### H. Assessment of relatives as a substitute care resource

When a relative or person with a caregiver relationship wants to be considered as a placement resource and the child is not placed with a relative, the person must be assessed. A child-specific expedited certification can be used to assess the person. This is an expedited process to certify a relative or unrelated adult to provide the least restrictive environment to meet the child's needs, avoid substitute care placement with persons unknown to the child, and minimize trauma to the child.

- Begin the child-specific certification assessment on initial contact with the person being considered for child-specific certification. In some local offices, assessment and certification responsibilities remain solely in the certification units. In other local offices, a CPS worker performs these functions during the CPS assessment. In either case, explain the certification process and begin the assessing the adult's ability and interest in providing a substitute care placement and/or identification of other possible relatives who may be interested in providing a substitute care placement for the child. The expedited certification process can be accomplished in one working day.
- Discuss the role and responsibilities of a substitute caregiver with the prospective caregiver. Explain certification standards and requirements for assessing whether the adult has the ability and willingness to provide safe substitute care. Complete the procedure described in Chapter 7, Section 5A Expedited certification process.
- After being given information about the certification requirements and process, a person who is interested in being considered as a placement resource must complete an Application for Approval to Care for a Child in DHS custody (CF 1260A) before any background checks or assessment decisions. The department may not make a fitness or suitability determination without taking an application. If the child/young adult is already placed with a relative assessed by the department and family to be the best match, it will be important to explain that although the person has an interest as a placement resource, a placement change may not be considered at this time. Offer the person other ways to be connected to and provide for the safety and well-being of the child or young adult. If the person still wants to be assessed, give the person an application.
- If there is any documented child welfare or criminal background history, this information must be assessed except for certain circumstances where the person's crimes or actions against a child preclude further assessment. In other words, when an applicant has a criminal conviction, for example, is not enough information in and of itself to determine the application will be denied unless that conviction is one for which no approval can be granted or one can be granted but it has been determined an approval will not be granted. Refer to OAR 413-120-0400 thru 0470, Child Welfare Policy I-G.1.4.
- If a decision is made not to certify a person who has applied to provide care for a specific child, verbally notify the person as soon as possible. When doing so, inform the person of the reasons for the decision and explain that the person has the option of withdrawing his/her application or of exercising his/her right to have an external review of the decision after receiving a letter

informing him/her of the department's intent to deny the application. Be sure to explain that a withdrawal would not preclude the person from applying again at some future date if/when circumstances for the denial have changed or been mitigated in some way. On the other hand, if a denial is the final order after a contested case hearing process upholds that decision, it is the department's discretion whether to accept another application from the person regardless of circumstances for a period of up to five years. When explaining these options, be clear that regardless of the applicant's decision, as a relative he/she will continue to have opportunities to be connected to the child in other ways, if safe and appropriate. These specific opportunities will be dependent upon the child's needs and best interests and the relative's ability and willingness to participate in the child's life or case planning.

### **I. Engagement of relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship in ongoing connections with and support of the child/young adult**

Engagement of relatives is about more than placement. There may be other roles the person can play in meeting the needs of the child or young adult.

- Consider ways in which the relative or person with a caregiver relationship can support the child and the existing placement through activities such as:
  1. Respite care;
  2. Transportation for the child to visits with parents, siblings or other family members;
  3. Transportation to services or extra-curricular activities;
  4. Regular contact through phone calls, mail or email; or
  5. Regular visits with the child.
- Consider ways in which the relative or person with a caregiver relationship can support the child and the existing placement through providing other resources such as:
  1. Monetary support for extra-curricular activities;
  2. Mentoring;
  3. Providing family history, family photos or family mementos;
  4. Financial support for particular items or activities; or
  5. Access to special family events, holidays, religious or cultural ceremonies, or other rites of passage.
- There are times when a child's team may recommend no contact or no visitation with a particular relative or with all relatives. Consider this in decision-making but also re-evaluate periodically as circumstances for the child/young adult or for the relative may change. Even when it is not in the child/young adult's best interests to have contact with a relative, there are times when the relative can be engaged in other ways. Consider including the relative in family meetings (if safe), providing contact information for other relatives, providing meaningful information regarding the family history and culture, or providing meaningful family items such as a photo album.

### **J. Substitute care review and recontacting identified relatives**

Because the relative search is dynamic and people's circumstances change, the department must continually consider ways in which relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship can be engaged in case planning, safety planning, placement and ongoing support.

- A review of the department's diligent efforts to place with a relative or person with a caregiver relationship must take place periodically. This review must include:
  1. Whether the child or young adult is placed with relatives and whether siblings are placed together. If not, why not and what could be done to place them together? What is being done to maintain contact between the siblings?
  2. What are the current efforts to identify relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship. Is it time to search again or to recontact relatives who responded previously?
  3. What additional contact with relatives and persons with a caregiver relationship needs to take place to achieve placement with a relative?
  4. If a child is already placed with a relative or person with a caregiver relationship, the review includes to what extent that person is meeting the child or young adult's needs for safety, well-being and permanency.
- The department's diligent efforts may require a review of the file, a staffing with your supervisor, or a conversation with the parents, family members, child/young adult and/or current substitute care provider. Consider whether the child/young adult has been given every opportunity to be returned home with an in-home safety plan, be placed with a relative and/or siblings, or to have ongoing connection to his/her family system.
- Required reviews:
  1. The caseworker first reviews the substitute care placement within 30 days of the child's placement. This is a good time to review all the attempts made to contact identified relatives, including those who have already responded, and invite their participation in a child safety meeting and/or Oregon Family Decision Meeting. If you find not all relatives have been contacted yet, do so at this time. Look for ways to find more relatives and/or to connect the child with the relatives that have been found. Consider whether an in-home safety plan could be achieved by engaging the relatives in managing child safety.
  2. Include a review of the department's diligent efforts to identify, engage and place with relatives during the 90-day case plan reviews. This may include:
    - a. A relative search coordinator or other community partner help find identified relatives or search further for relatives if the child or young adult is not currently placed with a relative.
    - b. Seeking another placement resource if the current placement resource is unable to meet the child's needs or is not a relative.

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- Additional times to review:
  1. When the child or family members participate in a family meeting and recommend a relative for substitute care or permanency, and that relative has not yet been assessed, review efforts to locate and assess the relative. Contact the relative and explain the child's current circumstances, the requirements and responsibilities of providing substitute care, and give them an Application to Care for a Child in the Department's Custody if they wish to be considered. Consider whether the child is already placed with a relative and where that relative falls in the order of preference. Consider the extent to which the current placement resource relative can meet the child's needs for safety, permanency and well-being. Seek family input and supervisor guidance in your decision-making.
  2. When the child is going to experience a placement change, take another look at all relatives that have been identified and when they were last contacted. Might there be more relatives that have not yet been identified? Who in the family could provide more information? Who in the family has indicated they could not be a placement resource? Recontact relatives to inform them of the impending placement change and find out if their circumstances may have changed to an extent that they might consider being a placement resource or can offer support to the child or young adult as he/she transitions to a new placement.
  3. If the current placement resource is not meeting the child or young adult's needs for safety, permanency and well-being, consider how relatives might assist the placement resource in meeting these needs (respite, connections with the child, visitation, etc.) or whether other relatives should be considered as placement resources.
  4. At least annually when a child is in an Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) plan. Review the relatives identified, recontact any relative who is not currently in regular contact with the child to assess willingness for contact, connection and support, or possible availability as a placement resource. For additional information on APPLA, refer to Chapter 5, Section 16.
  5. Ask relatives who have not yet been assessed whether they might be willing to be assessed as a placement resource.
  6. Ask relatives who in the past have said they are not available or able to provide placement to see if their circumstances are now such that they could do so.

### **Role of the supervisor**

The role of the supervisor and of clinical supervision in search and engagement of relatives is critical. Engagement of relatives in safety planning, case planning, placement opportunities and connections with the child/young adult are some of the most complex casework activities. Assisting caseworkers in creatively using a child's family at all levels of case planning and involvement and to recognize their own biases and values regarding relatives is one of the most critical roles for a supervisor.

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- The supervisor should ask about relative search and engagement at the following times:
  1. When a worker is taking a protective action
  2. During a transfer staffing
  3. When planning for a child safety meeting
  4. When approving the ongoing safety plan
  5. When planning for a Family Decision Meeting
  6. When approving the case plan
  7. When conducting the 90-day case plan staffing
  8. At all times when staffing a case with a worker
- Direct the caseworker to recontact relatives whenever additional information is needed for case planning, placement matching, permanency options, or other information or resources are needed from relatives for the child's placement, safety, permanency or well-being needs.
- Ensure the department has provided grandparents (legal parent of the child or young adult's legal parent, as defined in ORS 109.119) notice of the date and time of court hearings regarding a child or young adult who is committed to the custody of the department unless they have been present at court and have already been notified of the date and time of the hearing by the court or the court has relieved the department of the responsibility to provide such notice, after making a finding of good cause.
- The specific questions a supervisor asks the worker to consider and decisions the supervisor helps the worker make will be unique depending upon the current circumstances and decisions points of the case. Consider:
  1. Has the worker asked all known family members for the names of more relatives?
  2. In what ways has the worker included the family members in decisions and case planning?
  3. In what ways has the worker used the family's input in the case plan?
  4. Are there family members that could assist in managing child safety in an in-home safety plan?
  5. Are there family members that could assist with visitation for the child, siblings and parents?
  6. Are there other times relatives can be allowed to visit?
  7. What efforts are currently being made to place the child with a relative when a child is not currently with a relative?
  8. How have relatives who can't or won't be placement resources been included in case planning? Have relatives been asked for names of additional relatives? Have they been invited or offered ways to provide family history, or to maintain connections for the child?
  9. If the child is currently placed with a relative, in what ways is that relative meeting the child's needs for safety, well-being and permanency? What supports may the relative need? How is the department supporting the relative's new role in the family?

## Chapter 4 - Services to children

10. If alternate relatives have been identified as permanent placement resources but not for substitute care, such as a relative living in another state/country, what efforts are being made in assessment of these relatives for permanency and what arrangements have been made for ongoing contact and relationship-building?
11. If there was a relative or person with a caregiver relationship that previously was not allowed to have contact with the child/young adult, have the circumstances of that decision changed and if so, how might the child benefit from contact with that person now?
12. Have accurate and thorough records of relative contact been maintained in the case file?
13. What external resources and searches have been tried? What degree of success resulted from these efforts?

### Forms and references

#### Forms

- CF 264
- CF 265
- CF 266
- CF 267
- CF 268
- CF 449
- CF 448
- CF 148
- DHS 9360, Options for Relatives

#### Legal references

- ORS 419B.116
- ORS 419B.192
- ORS 419B.875

#### Oregon Administrative rules

- Rights of Relatives, [OAR 413-010-0300 to 0340](#)
- Search for and Engagement of Relatives, [OAR 413-070-0060 to 0087](#)
- Assessment of a Safety Service Provider, [OAR 413-015-1200 to 1230](#)

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