

# Locating & Engaging a Child’s Relatives



*This job aid will help you locate and engage non-custodial parents and relatives for children who are unsafe and going into out-of-home care or have already been placed in out-of-home care. CPS looks first to place a child with a relative whenever possible.*



## Identifying relatives and the non-custodial parents for support



CPS is required to make diligent efforts to search for non-custodial parents, alleged fathers and relatives. A diligent search includes the identification, consideration, and determination of these relatives either as resources or placement options for children and their families.

Below are examples of possible questions you might ask to gather the information.

Questions to ask parents	Questions to ask children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Tell me about your family.”</li> <li>• “Who watches your kids when you work late?”</li> <li>• “Who are three people you have the best relationship with?”</li> <li>• “Can you provide the location and contact information for ___ (the absent or non-custodial parent) and their relatives?” [See <b>Relative and Non-Custodial Caregiver Engagement Job Aid</b> for definition of a relative including the ICWA definition for a child with American Indian Heritage.]</li> <li>• “If not you, then who do you trust to care for your children?”</li> <li>• Ask if the family has tribal heritage and if so, which tribes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “How big is your family?”</li> <li>• “Who do you feel connected to?”</li> <li>• “Who are three people in your life that you have the best relationship with?”</li> <li>• “Who from the past or present do you want to stay connected to?” “How?” “Why?”</li> <li>• “Who do you love?” “Who loves you back?”</li> <li>• “Who cares for you when your parent or caregiver cannot?”</li> <li>• “Who do you share holiday or special occasions with?”</li> <li>• “Have you ever stayed overnight at someone else’s house?” If so, “Who are they?”</li> <li>• “If your parent or caregiver can’t take care of you, who do you want to be with?”</li> </ul>

If a child has American Indian heritage, contact the tribal Indian Child Welfare, or ICW professional. They are a helpful resource to locate and engage relatives.

*These questions are just the beginning. Remain curious about informal supports and connections. This curiosity will uncover potential resources.*

Another tool to engage families is the genogram. A genogram is a quick way to get families to open up. It also helps organize the information on the extended family. Please see the **Genogram Job Aid and Genogram Example** for guidance to use this resource.

## Locating Non-Custodial Parents

<b>Ways to identify and locate non-custodial parents and their relatives</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the parent or child, if appropriate.</li> <li>• Check the child’s birth certificate.</li> <li>• Check Paternal Interest Register in the Department of Children and Families.</li> <li>• Partner with tribal ICW worker in identifying tribal resources.</li> <li>• Check the eWiSACWIS case record.</li> <li>• Check the KIDS system using the child’s name or Social Security number.</li> <li>• Contact the local economic support agency to check the CARES system.</li> <li>• Contact the local child support agency.</li> <li>• Conduct an internet-based search.</li> <li>• Conduct an online Circuit Courts Records Search (CCAP) <a href="http://www.wicourts.gov">http://www.wicourts.gov</a></li> <li>• Check Inmate registries at <a href="http://www.vinelink.com">http://www.vinelink.com</a>.</li> <li>• Contact the child’s school to see if there are additional emergency contacts listed.</li> </ul>

Non-custodial parents have the right to know when CPS is involved with their children, receive services and make decisions about their children.

## Engaging Relatives

Initial contact with relatives requires compassion and empathy.

<b>Tips</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow them time to vent, ask questions, and talk to their significant others or spouse</li> <li>• Give them time to reflect</li> <li>• Simple gestures are powerful for creating a positive working relationship with them</li> </ul>

These conversations are not about abuse or neglect but rather about sharing enough information so that the person can decide about what their future involvement with the child will be.

<b>Having the Conversation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce yourself, the agency and your role.</li> <li>• Describe the purpose of the call is to find some additional information about how you might be able to support the family.</li> <li>• Explain the child’s status. Let them know the child is currently unsafe and needs to stay somewhere other than the family home. You are looking for a possible placement and connections for the child.</li> <li>• Ask what way they might be able to support the child.</li> <li>• Ask for their questions and concerns. (Give time for the relative to process the information.)</li> <li>• Ask for further information like other relative contact information, family photos and anything else they think is pertinent.</li> <li>• Provide the agency contact information (phone number and e-mail address) so the relative can call with any questions.</li> </ul>

## Documentation

**What to document:** *Check with your CPS professional on where to document the information.*  
*You will need to include:*

<input type="checkbox"/> Date, time, and duration of the visit	<input type="checkbox"/> Whether or not you met with the child in private
<input type="checkbox"/> Method (e-mail, phone, in-person)	<input type="checkbox"/> Notes on what was discussed, and
<input type="checkbox"/> Participants involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Tasks completed
<input type="checkbox"/> Location of the visit	
<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose of contact	