



Family Engagement: A Collaborative Process for Systems Change

This session explores the question of how to change a system designed to protect children from their families to one that supports families to keep their children safe and healthy. The session examines the question from several perspectives, including that of a mother and son with lived experience and leaders who set the tone and direction for putting families at the center of child welfare work through strategies such as family finding, father engagement, and icebreaker conversations. Finally, the session highlights the literal and spiritual interconnection of Native families and how to engage families in a trauma-informed manner.

Session Resources

1. [**National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse \(NRFC\)**](#)

The NRFC is an Office of Family Assistance-funded national resource for fathers, practitioners, programs and federal grantees, states, and the public at large who are serving or interested in supporting strong fathers and families. The NRFC's goals are to provide, facilitate, and disseminate current research and proven and innovative strategies that will encourage and strengthen fathers, families, and service providers.

2. [**Working with Child Welfare Agencies to Improve Outcomes for Families**](#)

This 2017 webinar from the NRFC discusses opportunities to help fathers and families involved in the child welfare system and reviews the potential benefits of engaging nonresident fathers to help improve the safety and well-being of children and families.

3. [**Exploring the Bias Against Fathers in the Child Welfare System**](#)

This issue of *Reaching Out* from the Northern California Training Academy is devoted to looking at the subject of fatherhood and child welfare. Along with spotlighting current research and statistics, several articles give concrete tips to dads, administrators, and social workers.

4. [**Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast: Engaging Fathers Part 1**](#)

Fathers and paternal family members play a crucial role in children's growth and development. Child welfare agencies, however, may have difficulty connecting with and engaging noncustodial fathers and paternal family members. Child Welfare Information Gateway developed a three-part podcast series on engaging fathers and working with fatherhood organizations. Part 1 features a conversation with leaders of local fatherhood organizations to share their perspectives and insights.

5. [**National Indian Child Welfare Association \(NICWA\)**](#)

NICWA works to support the safety, health, and spiritual strength of American Indian and Alaska Native children along the broad continuum of their lives. NICWA supports tribes in

building the capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect through positive systems change at the state, federal, and tribal levels.

6. Annie E. Casey Foundation Icebreaker Meetings Toolkit

Building working relationships between birth parents, foster parents, and caseworkers can be extremely important for foster children, and using Icebreaker meetings can be an effective mechanism for doing that. This toolkit provides resources for holding Icebreaker meetings between birth and foster parents

7. Annie E. Casey Foundation Icebreaker Meetings Training Video

This training video shows how to implement Icebreaker meetings to connect foster and birth parents when a child is placed in the child welfare system.

8. Kansas Icebreaker Conversations Video

This video describes the successful use of Icebreaker conversations in Kansas.

9. National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness

The mission of the National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness is to advance permanency for all children and youth, with family finding as a core strategy and a method that adds value to service systems.

10. Podcast: Let's Have a Conversation (Episode 10)

In this episode of the Let's Have a Conversation podcast series from the National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness, Director Bob Friend connects with Kelli DeCook and Renaux Swancutt of Family Service Rochester and Laurie Tochiki from Epic 'Ohana to discuss how they have maintained 20 years of quality practice in family conferences.

11. Defining Due Diligence: Identifying Relatives for Foster Youth

This article from the National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness provides information about the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 and the effects on youth impacted by the foster care system. It highlights strategies to comply with legal mandates and explains the overall meaning and intent of due diligence to identify relatives for youth who are in care or at risk of entry.

12. How "Reasonable Efforts" Leads to Emotional and Legal Permanence

This article describes the leadership and oversight provided by courts via reasonable efforts findings with the innovative practices that child welfare agencies, advocates, and partners can take to advance and secure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children, parents, family members, and communities.

13. What is Family Finding

This article explains family finding, including the purpose, perspective, and intentions behind building a safety network for youth impacted by the child welfare system.

14. The Lifelong Connections Initiative: An Examination of Exemplary Engagement Practice

This learning brief explores the evolution of exemplary practice, along with the elements and conditions primarily responsible for its development, in a combined Family Finding and Family Group Decision-Making model implemented by a partnership between San Francisco Human Services Agency and Seneca Family of Agencies.