

For Immediate Release

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Children's Home Society To Expand Family Finding Program State-Wide

January 6, 2012 - At CHS we believe every child deserves a permanent, safe, and loving family. Our Family Finding program is a highly effective method of fulfilling that goal for hundreds of children. A recent grant awarded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation will now allow CHS to expand the Family Finding program across North Carolina. This is an exciting opportunity to help fulfill our vision—to transform families and communities so children can thrive.

Family Finding

There are over 400,000 children living in America's foster care system, many of whom are isolated from family connections. These children are at risk of aging out of foster care and suffering poor adult health and social outcomes. Family Finding was developed by internationally recognized permanency expert Kevin Campbell. This innovative program works to ensure children in foster care are connected into a lifelong family.

Family Finding uses a combination of techniques and technology to locate relatives and other adults who can meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of children in foster care. Family Finders are skilled professionals with extensive training. They dedicate an average of four months per case focused on intensive search, discovery, and engagement. Their goal is to build a team of committed and capable adults who can meet the child's most unmet needs, unconditionally.

Family Finding has demonstrated success across the country and a growing body of research led by Child Trends is showing that it can strengthen children's support networks. [Child Trends' recent report](#) examined two sites, one that implemented family finding with children "new to out-of-home care" (Approach A) and another that implemented family finding for children who have been "lingering" in foster care (Approach B). In both cases Family Finding was successful in increasing connections.

Number of Family Connections		
	Approach A	Approach B
One or more connections made through Family Finding		
	91%	87%
Average number of family members or other supportive connections		
At Baseline (before FF begins)	6	7
Discovered (through FF activities)	22	35

¹ Graph data from Child Trends Research Brief, October 2011

Children's Home Society's pilot project in North Carolina has shown that Family Finding can increase the number of relatives and other adults who can provide an ongoing relationship or commitment to legal permanency.

Family Finding Pilot Program Results	
Children Served Since July 2008	88
Average Number of Known Relatives/Resources at Referral	8
Average Number of Current Connections at Referral	3
Average Relatives/Resources Discovered during Family Finding	59
Percentage of Cases with Relatives/Resources Committing to Ongoing Relationships	86%
Percentage of Cases with Relatives/Resources Committing to Adoption or Guardianship	52%

Now that CHS has moved into the next phase of implementing Family Finding statewide, program goals include:

- *An average of 70 family members and other important people identified for each child.*
- *Permanent placement with family whenever possible.*
- *Children learn their family story and develop a sense of self-history and identity.*
- *Children have a higher probability of permanence and well-being now and into adulthood.*

Partnering with County DSSs

Children's Home Society (CHS) recognizes the importance of partnerships as we grow Family Finding throughout North Carolina. It is our commitment to provide our County partners with ongoing communication related to program implementation and case outcomes.

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Here are a few testimonials from current partners:

"Pitt County has been awed with the way Children's Home Society moved forward with forming a partnership with our county to implement Family Finding. CHS staff are exceptionally knowledgeable about their services and their expertise went a long way in harnessing staff buy-in to the Family Finding effort. CHS staff support has made all the difference in a smooth and successful implementation."

-Margaret Dixon, Pitt County DSS

"Wake County Human Services was part of the Family Finding initiative that was funded by a Duke Endowment Grant in 2008 thru 2011. We were delighted by the number of relatives we engaged for older foster youth who committed to being long term supports or even placements. When CHS received a grant to continue Family Finding in North Carolina, we were impressed with the enthusiasm, experience and responsiveness of the staff they brought on to implement the program. We are excited and pleased to be partnering with CHS to continue providing family finding services to improve permanency outcomes for our Wake County youth in foster care."

-Warren Ludwig and Jean Hagen-Johnson, Wake County DSS

For more information about bringing Family Finding to your county, contact Donna Henderson, MSW, Divisional Director/Family Finding, at 704-936-8156 or dhenderson@chsnc.org

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Since 1902, Children's Home Society has been one of North Carolina's leading resources ensuring that every child has a permanent, safe, and loving family. CHS works with public social service agencies and many community partners to help parents create a safe, positive setting for children to grow and thrive, to preserve families, and when necessary, to provide children with a healthy family setting through foster care or adoption. CHS is committed to our vision of being a leader in transforming families and communities so children can thrive. CHS staff and programs serve children and families in 60+ North Carolina counties each year. For more information, please visit www.chsnc.org.