



COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT™ FAQs

What is CFE?

Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) is a two-year Family Finding collaboration between Texas CASA and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). This new partnership builds on the fact that foster children have many blood relatives and other important connections who can be identified and located, and engaged with a child when he or she enters foster care.

How does CFE work?

Using tools and techniques focused on connection, engagement and an understanding of trauma, family members and other committed adults have the opportunity to become involved in a child's future when he or she first enters foster care. They are encouraged to participate in the planning and decision-making during the course of his or her care. While CFE can benefit and be applicable to all children in foster care, the initial focus is on those entering care, with the hope of lowering the number of children growing up in the foster care system.

Why find and engage family and other connections of foster children?

Studies have shown that one of the strongest indicators for child well-being is the number of committed adults in a child's life. For children in foster care, having even one positive adult support person is a deterrent against future drug use, involvement in the criminal justice system and homelessness.

What is Family Finding?

Founded in 2002 by Kevin Campbell, the Family Finding model offers methods and strategies to locate and engage relatives of children currently living in out-of-home care. The goal of Family Finding is to connect each child with a family, so that every child may benefit from the lifelong connections that only a family provides.

Core beliefs inherent in this approach are:

- Every child has a family, and they can be found if we try
- Loneliness can be devastating, even dangerous, and is experienced by most children in out-of-home care
- A meaningful connection to family helps a child develop a sense of belonging
- A distinct factor most closely associated with positive outcomes for children is meaningful, lifelong connections to family.

How is CFE different from Family Finding?

Team approach

CFE is an integrated or embedded approach that establishes a true team between CASA and Child Protective Services (CPS) to work together to complete the steps of Family Finding. This differs from the traditional implementation model where the work and results fall to one Family Finding specialist.

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FAQs

How is CFE different from Family Finding? *(continued)*

Focus at the beginning of a case

Family Finding often starts with children who have lingered in the system in Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC), or long-term foster care. CFE begins as early as possible in the life of a case, based on recent studies showing the success Family Finding can have when started early on. CFE works toward achieving permanency earlier, bolstering child well-being by keeping children better connected from the start of care.

Authentic engagement of family and other connections

CFE takes the “finding” of the family much further by ensuring an authentic commitment from CASA and CPS to actively engage with found connections through their active involvement in permanency planning and decision-making. While the program focuses on finding family, the program also considers involving important adult connections who may not be biologically related to the child.

Ongoing coaching and support

In addition to two days of Family Finding training, all involved in CFE complete two supplementary days of training focused on CFE tools. Ongoing coaching, consultation and feedback is then provided by the CFE Manager during the life of a case.

Evolving model

The CFE model will incorporate real-time feedback received from the pilot programs. Having this data and learning what is working from on-the-ground staff will allow the model to further evolve and grow.

Who is part of the CFE team?

- Child Protective Services (CPS) employees
 - A CPS worker is assigned to a child’s case when they enter care. A CPS worker will identify problems that contribute to child abuse or neglect and visit regularly to help family members address these issues.
- CASA volunteers
 - A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer is an everyday citizen who is appointed by a judge to represent a child’s best interests in court.

Who is part of the CFE team? *(continued)*

- CASA employees
 - All CASA volunteers are supervised by a CASA employee, who guides the volunteer through the life of a case. Naturally, these employees are supportive as volunteers become involved on the CFE team.
- Found connections
 - Connections can include family members and other committed adults connected to the child.

What is the role of a CASA volunteer on the CFE team?

A CASA volunteer is actively involved on the CFE team, utilizing the tools and techniques of the CFE program to research and find connections. Once connections are engaged, the CASA volunteer works to foster a community of support around the child and his or her family.

What technologies are involved in the process?

Along with tools to increase engagement and creative information gathering, members of the CFE team also utilize GenoPro, a proprietary genealogy software, Seneca Search Services and Find Families in Mexico to search multiple databases and provide customized search reports. This multi-faceted approach provides the most comprehensive information available to connect children and youth with their support networks.

Where has the program been implemented?

CFE kicked off in 2016 in two CPS regions with three CASA programs, and will incorporate additional programs in 2017. Pilot CASA programs include those in Corpus Christi, Fort Bend County and Montgomery County.

What does the success of this program look like?

Success of the program and wider implementation could fundamentally change the face of foster care. The amount of time children spend in the system could potentially decrease and outcomes for children leaving the system would be much more positive.

How is success of the program being measured?

Data will be collected by researchers at The University of Texas at Austin to determine whether outcomes were improved for children involved in the CFE initiative.

