Family Connections Research Capsules

Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/childfamily_welfare

Part of the Social Work Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Citation Details
Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services, "Family Connections Research Capsules" (2015).
Child Welfare. 7.
https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/childfamily_welfare/7

This Report is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Child Welfare by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.
The following information was summarized from the Child Trends Research Brief #2011-27 “Family finding: Does implementation differ when serving different child welfare populations?” (Malm & Allen, 2011). This FCO Research Capsule highlights differences in Family Finding practice and outcomes when conducted on the front end vs. the back end of a child welfare case.

**Family Finding at front end vs. back end of case:**
- Slightly more family meetings at the front-end (avg 2.1 vs. 1.6).
- Twice as many contacts with new family and kin connections (avg 45 vs. 21).
- Larger proportion of family members invited to a family meeting actually attended (92% vs. 57%).

**At the front-end, there is more focus on birth parents:**
- Case is more likely to have a reunification goal; children are more likely to already be placed with relatives compared to youth lingering in care.
- Focus on increasing supports for the child by engaging relatives and expanding network, and improving relationships and developing supports for the parents (support reunification, create back-up plans).
- Rely on parents for information about relatives (back-end cases rely on administrative records).
- More potential for tension between birth parents and relatives.
- Front-end cases are sensitive to parent readiness for relative involvement.

**Challenges to front-end caseworkers:**
- More pressure to act quickly, may have less time to collaborate with additional, specialized family finding workers.
- May feel it intrudes on reunification efforts or caseworker rapport-building with the birth parents, especially if parents are not ready to cooperate with family members.
- May be accustomed to doing relative searches primarily for placement, less likely to focus on ongoing involvement if relative is not a potential placement.
- May not feel they have time to coordinate with relatives or arrange visitation.
- Can be confusion where relatives want to be placement resources, but reunification is the primary case goal (this could account for increased contact with new connections in front-end cases, to explain the various purposes of family finding and ongoing relative involvement)

**Implications for agency administrators:**
- Family Finding at back end more comprehensive than the relative searches at the front end.
- By actively engaging relatives who are not placement options, agencies balance a child’s need for both legal and emotional permanency. Efforts to strengthen family networks to provide long-term support to children may need to be prioritized as an ongoing agency goal.