



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Child Welfare Policies and Procedures: Chapter 16: Special Topics

Subject:	1649 Concerted Efforts – Locating and Engaging Families
Authority:	S.C. Code Section 63-7-10; 63-7-1640(A); 63-7-1650; 63-7-1660 and 63-7-1670; Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351)
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards Practice Model (GPS)
Application:	Child Welfare Services Case Managers and Supervisors; CLEAR® Seat Designees
Purpose Statement:	
To detail the varying ways and points in time during agency involvement in which South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) Child Welfare staff must make concerted efforts to locate and engage children and families as a means to: 1. identify the parent and children's support system, fictive kin, extended family, and network of support; 2. find and engage absent and/or non-custodial parents and their extended family 3. seek placements with relatives, extended family and fictive kin when out of home care is needed; 4. encourage all parents, children, youth and their support systems to be part of the child and family team and; 5. help children and parents maintain connections to each other and extended family to help provide stability.	
Policy Statement:	
At least once every calendar month, SCDSS Child Welfare case managers make concerted efforts to identify, locate and engage parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and any other significant adult connections who may provide a support to the child and family. Concerted efforts by SCDSS begins at initial contact with the child and family and continues throughout the child and family's involvement with SCDSS. Concerted efforts will include a thorough search, identification and engagement of parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and any other significant adult connections, including those located in-state or out-of-state. Concerted efforts will be documented as part of SCDSS permanency planning within the calendar month the concerted efforts are made.	
Definitions:	

Adult Connections: Individuals identified by the child or the family that have an emotionally significant relationship with the child

Case File/Record: A written compilation that describes the client and the services delivered. Records are in hard copy and electronic format

Child and Family Team (CFT): A group of family members, fictive kin, friends, professionals, and other invested stakeholders who join to strengthen a family and provide protection and a Family Permanency Plan for the child or youth to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being. The family chooses the members of the team. The team also includes the child or youth when developmentally appropriate

Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM): Child and Family Team Meetings are family-centered, culturally-responsive, goal-orientated and problem-solving processes that bring together the Child and Family Team to make decisions about the safety, permanency, and well-being of their children or youth in the development of an individualized Family Permanency Plan. CFTMs are planned so that meaningful participation by all members is possible, including virtual attendance for those that cannot attend in person and scheduling interpreter services, if interpreter services are needed

Concerted Efforts: The Case Manager's coordinated and repeated actions designed to achieve Family Permanency Plan goals. For example, Case Managers must put forth concerted efforts to:

1. locate children, youth and families,
2. gather information from children, youth and families to complete informal and formal assessments,
3. prepare children, youth, and families for important events such as court, Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), or Foster Care Review Board (FCRB),
4. engage children, youth and families in active participation in case planning and services,
5. determine whether other entities or caregivers have completed requirements such as health care visits or follow up treatment,
6. reinforce family strengths and accomplishments, and;
7. facilitate lasting change.

CLEAR®: An investigative tool used to locate individuals. The CLEAR® search may include current/previous addresses, social security numbers, telephone numbers, email addresses, criminal history, relatives, associates, etc.

Engagement: Developing a successful working relationship through honesty, respect, empathy, and active listening.

Fictive Kin: A person who is not related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption but who prior to his or her placement in foster care is known to the family, has a substantial and positive relationship with the child, and is willing and able to provide a suitable home for the child.

Guardian: An adult, other than a parent, from whose placement and care the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification.

Non-Custodial Parent: The parent who does not have custody of the child. This is a parent who is not the primary custodian of the child if there is a joint or shared parental relationship.

Parent: Mother or father, whether biological or adoptive, from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification.

Relative: A person related to the child by blood, marriage or adoption, including the spouse of any of those persons even if the marriage was terminated by death or dissolution.

Procedures:

A. Concerted Efforts	1. The case manager makes concerted efforts at initial contact with the child and family and continues to make concerted efforts throughout the life of the case until positive permanency is achieved for the child. 2. The case manager gathers contact information for parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and other significant adult connections by completing comprehensive activities such as: a. Interviewing the child/parents b. Interviewing relatives or fictive kin c. South Carolina Responsible Father Registry Check d. CLEAR® Search e. CAPSS Search f. CHIP/SCOSA Search g. Education Contacts 3. The case manager lists the various comprehensive activities completed for an individual party that is unable to be located on DSS Form 2632, Concerted Efforts Guide – Unable to Locate. 4. The case manager assigned to the child's case has the primary responsibility of completing concerted efforts to
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	identify, locate, and engage parents (absent and non-custodial), including parents of a sibling, half-sibling or step-sibling that have legal custody of the sibling, maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and other significant adult connections identified by the parent or child. 5. The case manager adheres to SCDSS confidentiality policy when contacting and engaging parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and any other significant adult connections who may provide a support to the child and family. Refer to SCDSS Confidentiality Policy 6. The case manager consults with their supervisor when contact with parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and other significant adult connection may cause a significant safety issue for the child or parent; or substantially limit SCDSS ability to work with the parent to the detriment of the child. The supervisor will determine how the case manager should proceed.
B. Recognizing a Need	1. At least once every calendar month, the case manager initiates or continues concerted efforts when the child, parents (absent and non-custodial), and/or guardian is unable to be contacted or located by SCDSS. The case manager will document the concerted efforts within the calendar month the concerted efforts are made. 2. The case manager initiates or continues concerted efforts at the following key decision points in a case: - When it is likely that a child will be placed in out-of-home care - When the child is placed in out-of-home care - Prior to child and family team meetings (CFTM) - CFTM Staff are responsible for doing CLEAR® searches prior to a facilitator-led CFTM. Case Managers should complete all other comprehensive activities. - Case Managers are responsible for completing CLEAR® searches prior to the CFTM they will facilitate. Refer to Work Aid 16.5 Child and Family Team Meeting. - When it is likely that a child's placement will change - When a concurrent plan is established and prior to an adoption services referral - When reunification is no longer the primary permanency goal

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	g. Prior to court hearings when no identified permanent resource for the child is known. i. Judicial Review ii. Permanency Planning iii. TPR iv. Plan of APPLA is established
C. Family Engagement in Concerted Efforts	1. The case manager will involve the child and family team (CFT) in concerted efforts to identify, locate, engage parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and any other significant adult connections. 2. The case manager engages the parents (absent and non-custodial) and guardian (if applicable) by: a. explaining what concerted efforts involves, the importance of concerted efforts, and how the child and family can benefit from the support of parents, relatives and fictive kin; b. obtaining addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of any identified persons; c. inquiring about any tribal affiliation d. obtaining the child's current school information or the last school attended (if applicable) e. gathering any other information that would be helpful in locating permanency resources and supports for the child. 3. A parent's objections do not negate the case manager's obligation to make concerted efforts. The case manager considers the parent's objections to SCDSS making concerted efforts to identify, locate and engage the non-custodial parent, maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and other significant adult connections. The case manager discusses with the parent the benefit that concerted efforts has in permanency planning for the child. 4. The case manager involves the child in the concerted efforts process when developmentally appropriate. The case manager explains the concerted efforts process to the child in a manner that the child can understand and answers any questions. The case manager engages the child in identifying parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and other significant adult connections in the child's life and provides the benefits of finding family to support the child while they in are in an out-of-home placement or foster care. The case manager keeps the child informed on who was located, contacted and the next steps.

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	5. The case manager provides timely notification to parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin and any other significant adult connections whose information was gathered through concerted efforts. Refer to DSS Form 37634 Concerted Efforts- Family Finding Letter. 6. The case manager consults with their supervisor when contact with parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relative, fictive kin and any other significant adult connection may cause a significant safety issue for the child or parents or substantially limit SCDSS' ability to work with the parent to the detriment of the child. The supervisor will determine how the case manager should proceed.
D. Documentation	1. The case manager will use the DSS Form 2632, Concerted Efforts Guide – Unable to Locate to track concerted efforts for an individual party that is unable to be located by the agency. The case manager details the various comprehensive activities completed within the calendar month. 2. Documentation of all concerted efforts and the results are placed in the physical case file and into the electronic case record in CAPSS (Exception: CLEAR® search results reports). a. The case manager prints a CLEAR® search results report to place into the associated physical case file. CLEAR® search results reports must not be uploaded into CAPSS nor saved to the :G Drive or the case manager's computer.
E. Supervisor Case Consultation	1. The supervisor discusses concerted efforts and provide guidance where required during monthly case consultations with the case manager. 2. The supervisor monitors ongoing concerted efforts by the case manager by reviewing concerted effort data reports, conducting monthly case consultations, and completing qualitative case reviews. The supervisor continues to assess concerted efforts made by the case manager throughout the life of the case. 3. The supervisor provides guidance and direction to the case manager when contact with parents (absent and non-custodial), maternal and paternal relative, fictive kin and any other significant adult connection may cause a significant

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	safety issue for the child or parents, or substantially limit SCDSS' ability to work with the parent to the detriment of the child.
Forms:	DSS Form 2632, Concerted Efforts Guide – Unable to Locate DSS Form 37211, CLEAR® Search Request DSS Form 37634 Concerted Efforts: Family Finding Letter
Resources:	
Related Management Reports:	