

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		91
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 1 of 17
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Purpose

To emphasize the importance of identifying, locating, informing, and evaluating a child’s relatives and fictive kin. Such individuals may be appropriate to consider as a placement resource or to have a continuing positive role in the child’s life.

Table of Contents

Purpose.....	1
Table of Contents.....	1
Related Policies	1
Introduction	1
Policy	2
Identification and Notification of Relatives.....	2
Initial and Ongoing Contact with a Relative	6
Engagement of Relatives as Temporary and/or Permanent Placement Resources.....	8
Reviewing Placements and Continued Contact with Relatives	11
Ongoing Connection with Relatives in Support of the Child/Youth	13
Appendix I: Guidance for Assessing Suitability for Conditional Custodians and District-Approved Unlicensed Placements	15

Related Policies

- Family Services [Policy 82](#): Juvenile Court Proceedings – CHINS
- Family Services [Policy 84](#): Conditional Custody Orders (CCOs)
- Family Services [Policy 90](#): Placement Overview and Definitions
- Family Services [Policy 94](#): Resource Family Care
- Family Services [Policy 221](#): Foster Care Licensing

Introduction

The preservation of family, kin, and a young person’s other important connections (such as neighborhood, community, faith, language, extended family members, siblings, tribe, school, and peers/friends) is essential to a child’s well-being. Children and youth need to have a sense of belonging – of who they are and from whom they have come. Research indicates relative placements are almost always less traumatic for children and provide continuity and connection with familiar adults and surroundings. Even when a child or youth does not know the relative, the relative still has an important role in keeping the child connected to their family history and culture.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 2 of 17

Kinship care often:

- Allows children and youth to live with individuals they know and trust;
- Allows siblings to be placed together or remain closely connected;
- Reinforces children's personal and cultural identities through connection to their family history;
- Encourages families to cultivate and rely on their own resources and strengths;
- Enables families to participate as essential members of the child and family's team and safety network; and
- Expands the division's available resources for children and families.

Policy

Identification and Notification of Relatives

The identification of a child's relatives and important connections begins immediately and continues throughout the division's involvement with the child and family. The diligent search for relatives who could serve as temporary or permanent placements or for ongoing connection and support is an intentional and ongoing process to ensure the child knows and can remain connected to their family. An early and immediate search and identification of relatives can help prevent the child from entering DCF custody, or if they do enter DCF custody, reduce the number of placement moves, allow siblings to be placed together, and keep the child connected to their family.

Within the First 72 Hours

The division has information brochures for custodial parents, non-custodial parents, and relatives:

- [Information for Custodial Parents](#)
- [Information for Non-Custodial Parents](#)
- [Information for Relatives & Friends](#)

The information brochures contain relevant information about the temporary care hearing and options to become involved in caring for the child(ren). For non-custodial parents and relatives, the brochure also provides an authorization form for background checks for all household members age 16 and older. Family services workers and/or resource coordinators will provide a brochure to parents and known relatives or persons with a significant relationship with the child before the temporary care hearing.

33 V.S.A. § 5307(e)(5) requires the division to provide to the court the identity and location of a noncustodial parent, a relative, or a person with a significant relationship with the child who may be appropriate, capable, willing, and available to assume

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 3 of 17

temporary legal custody of the child. The division is required to assess the suitability of the person to care for the child. The assessment must include:

- Consideration of the person's ability to care for the child's needs;
- A criminal history record check; and
- A check of allegations of prior child abuse or neglect by the person or by other adults in the person's home.

The *Assessment of Suitability to Care for a Child* is the form used to present suitability assessment information to the court at the temporary care hearing or at other stages of the case where suitability assessment is needed. Within the first 72 hours, it is not necessary for the division to assess every person who might potentially care for the child in the future. This form is completed for individuals interested in caring for the child who are known to the division prior to the hearing. Both the interested caretakers and all household members are included in the assessment. If additional relatives attend a hearing or are identified at a hearing, division staff may refrain from making a recommendation until an updated suitability assessment is completed. Per 33 V.S.A. § 5307(e)(5)(B), the court may continue the hearing, if necessary, to permit the department to complete the assessment.

Division staff will use Appendix I of this policy to guide the assessment of suitability of temporary caregivers and the division's recommendation to the court. If behaviors or circumstances described in the unsafe/dangerous category of Appendix I are present, the division will recommend against temporary conditional custody to the individual/household.

If behaviors or circumstances indicate further assessment is needed per Appendix I, the division will gather the necessary information, have a discussion with the individual/household members, and determine the current relevancy as it pertains to their suitability to care for the child(ren) based on their needs and vulnerabilities. The timeframe required to complete this work will vary and, in some instances, the division may request that the court continue the hearing to allow for deeper assessment of the identified concerns. If the court requests supplementary information on areas of concern, additional time will be needed and may require a future hearing.

If relatives express a preference between conditional custody and serving as a placement for the child(ren) while they are in DCF custody, the relative's preference should be considered in the division's recommendation. [Vermont Kin As Parents](#) (VKAP) is available to support relatives in discussing and understanding the differences between conditional custody and foster care to determine the best option for their families.

District directors or their designees must approve the division's recommendation and

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 4 of 17

sign the *Assessment of Suitability to Care for a Child* form.

At the temporary care hearing, recommendations may include:

- Temporary conditional custody to a custodial or noncustodial parent; or
- Temporary conditional custody to a relative or person known to the child; or
- Against temporary conditional custody to an individual if the person, their circumstances, or other household members are deemed to be unsafe or dangerous; or
- Temporary custody to DCF; or
- Time for further assessment if any risks or concerns are identified.

Within the First 30 Days

Federal law requires a diligent search for a child’s extended relatives. When a child enters DCF custody, the division has an obligation to identify all individuals with parental rights and conduct a diligent search for relatives within the parents’ families.

Not all families are created by a mother and a father; therefore, there may not always be a legal “maternal” or “paternal” side of the family. [The Vermont Parentage Act](#) provides equal protection for all children – particularly those born to LGBTQ parents, never-married parents, presumed parents, or those born with the help of surrogates or assisted reproduction. Questions about [The Vermont Parentage Act](#) or complicated or unclear parentage should be brought to the attention of the assigned assistant attorney general (AAG) and policy and operations manager. Additionally, special care must be given to ensuring that fathers and the paternal side of the family are included in these diligent search efforts.

[The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008](#) (PL 110-351) directs child welfare agencies to exercise due diligence to identify, locate, and notify all grandparents, all parents of a sibling of the child where such parent has legal custody of the sibling (including adoptive parents), and other adult relatives (including, but not limited to, adult relatives suggested by the parents) within 30 days of the child’s removal from their home. The notice to relatives must:

- Specify that a child has been or is being removed from the custody of their parent(s);
- Explain the options relatives have under federal, state, or tribal laws to participate in the care and placement of the child, including any options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice;
- Indicate if the child is placed with another relative;
- Describe the requirements to become a licensed foster home;
- Describe the additional services and supports that are available for children in

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	
		Page 5 of 17

DCF custody;

- Indicate that the relative may be eligible for adoption assistance or guardianship assistance if they provide permanency for the child in the future;
- Request that the relative identify the role and relationship they would like to have with the child, and the types of support they can provide; and
- Include the division’s brochure titled [A Child You Know May Need Temporary Care: Information for Relatives & Friends](#) which contains an authorization form for background checks.

Family finding efforts and responsibilities may be shared across roles within the district office team and contracted partners. For written notification to relatives, the division’s *Relative Notice Letter Template* (FS-91A), *Relative Response Form* (FS-91B), and brochure titled [A Child You Know May Need Temporary Care: Information for Relatives & Friends](#) should be utilized as a package and distributed together.

Federal law permits exceptions to relative notice in cases involving violence that may endanger a child or another family member. Reasons to waive relative notice may include a history of or allegations of perpetrating domestic violence, family violence, gang violence, or human trafficking. Division staff will use the information available to them (criminal history, police reports, child protection databases, other records, or reports from credible sources confirming the allegations) to determine whether it would be unsafe to contact a relative. Consultation with a domestic violence specialist, the staff safety manager, or the ICPC deputy compact administrator is recommended. Vague or unconfirmed allegations about a person or entire side of the family are **not** sufficient to waive relative notices. Additionally, a parent’s request for no contact with relatives is **not** a reason to waive relative notices. When a relative is unsafe or there is information to suggest another person’s safety would be jeopardized by contacting a relative, the family services worker should consult with a supervisor and the district director. If the district director agrees there is a safety-based rationale for waiving relative notice, the reason the relative was not contacted or considered will be documented in case notes.

The family’s knowledge of their history, strengths, cultural connections, and resources should factor in to the division’s search and decision-making. Staff will take active steps to identify a family’s kinship resources and supports by gathering information from the following individuals:

- The child’s parent(s);
- The child or youth;
- Siblings;
- Other known maternal and paternal family members; and
- Other people with a meaningful connection to the child.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 6 of 17

The best source of initial information about extended family is from the child’s parents and the child/youth themselves. If parents are initially unwilling to provide contact information for possible relative resources, family services workers will explain the reasons why identifying a child’s relatives is important to support the parents and child(ren). Family services workers should assure parents that the division will keep them informed of all relatives contacted unless doing so would compromise the safety of another person. Staff should explore the reasons for unwillingness to share family information. Possible barriers may include:

- Embarrassment or shame about child protection system involvement;
- Concern about how much information will be shared with their family members;
- Concern about particular relatives being contacted for safety reasons;
- Worries about the possibility of reunification if family members are identified; or
- Belief the family will not be supportive.

If parents continue to be unwilling to provide contact information, division staff may request that the court order the parents to provide this information. The division has a responsibility to seek out relatives and the division must continue efforts to identify, locate, and notify relatives even when parents object.

Staff should ask other persons who know the child about potential kinship care providers. This may include doctors, school personnel, neighbors, service providers, and other community members.

In instances of post-permanency discontinuity or situations where a child or youth reenters DCF custody after adoption or guardianship, a diligent search for relatives will occur on all sides of the young person’s families (family of origin and family formed through adoption/guardianship). There are limitations to contacting the family of origin in closed, private adoptions that occurred outside of prior child protection involvement. If the division has information within its own records about a family of origin from a previously open case, this information should be utilized to identify, locate, and notify relatives.

Initial and Ongoing Contact with a Relative

The division may have contact with relatives as part of a child safety intervention (CSI) to develop a safety network with the parent’s support. If an out-of-home safety plan is needed during a CSI, division staff must be cautious if the relatives reside out-of-state. If the child enters DCF custody during the CSI or following the CSI, the child cannot remain out-of-state with the relatives until an ICPC home study is completed and approval is granted by the ICPC deputy compact administrator and the other state.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 7 of 17

The division is responsible for contacting identified relatives when a child is initially removed from their home and on an ongoing basis. Once a child is in DCF custody, relatives shall be contacted as soon as they are identified and their contact information is obtained. For written notification to relatives, the division’s *Relative Notice Letter Template* (FS-91A), *Relative Response Form* (FS-91B), and brochure titled [A Child You Know May Need Temporary Care: Information for Relatives & Friends](#) should be utilized as a package and distributed together. The *Relative Response Form* may also be shared with relatives who were contacted in person, by phone, or email.

Family finding efforts should be documented in the family’s file and/or case notes, including:

- The name, relationship to the child, and contact information of each relative the division has identified;
- The method utilized to contact the relative and the date they were contacted;
- Each relative’s response to the division’s outreach; and
- Any safety-based reasons the division did not contact a relative.

Understanding a family’s culture is one of the lenses that helps the division interpret, interact, effectively communicate, and develop a relationship with family members. Staff should be mindful of the role culture may play in a relative’s perception of what they are being asked to consider or do. Staff should openly discuss options, roles, and responsibilities to help reduce misunderstandings.

Communication with relatives may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Making an initial contact in the relative’s own language and in a format the person can understand. Initial contact may occur by letter, in-person, or by phone when a telephone number is available. A relative is likely to experience emotions and have questions that can be answered immediately when the contact is in-person or by telephone.
- Responding to outreach from relatives, answering their questions, and remaining in contact with them as needed.
- Providing relevant information to relatives, which may include:
 - Sending a follow-up letter telling them whether there will be someone else from the division or a contracted partner agency contacting them;
 - Explaining how they can be in touch with the child and/or family;
 - Providing a link to where they can learn more information on the division’s website; and
 - Providing updates as the case progresses.

Efforts to engage relatives should be continuous. Even if a relative does not respond to the division’s initial inquiry, the person should be contacted again at the next critical

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 8 of 17

juncture of the case (i.e., case plan reviews, change in case plan goal, change in placement, or other significant change in the case).

Engagement of Relatives as Temporary and/or Permanent Placement Resources

Conversations with relatives about placement and long-term permanency options are ongoing. It is important to distinguish between temporary and permanent placement when discussing options with relatives. While one relative might be available and best matched to the child for temporary placement, another might be available and best matched to the child to achieve permanency through adoption or guardianship.

Children will be placed with kin when the placement supports the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child or youth. Kinship caregivers should be considered as licensed foster families and/or conditional custodians. To care for children or youth in DCF custody, kinship caregivers are required to become licensed foster families. The training requirements for kinship caregivers are the same as the training requirements for other foster families; however, some specialized training for kinship care is available. Licensed kinship foster parents are reimbursed and have access to the same supports as any other licensed foster family.

As mentioned earlier in this policy, kinship caregivers may also become the conditional custodian for their kin or a child known to them. Caregivers should be fully informed of the benefits and differences between DCF custody and conditional custody orders (CCOs). If a relative is considering assuming custody of a child or youth through a CCO, it is important to inform relatives of the following realities:

If the court grants custody to a relative (CCO):	If DCF-FSD places the child with a relative (DCF custody):
The caregiver is not licensed.	The caregiver is licensed.
The caregiver controls most of the decisions made about the child (except those ordered by the court).	DCF-FSD controls many of the decisions made.
If the caregiver can no longer care for the child, they must ask the court to change the order.	DCF-FSD may remove the child from the relative's care if there are concerns about the child's safety or well-being.
A Family Services Worker will help the family to achieve the permanency goal and action steps identified in the case plan.	A Family Services Worker will help the family to achieve the permanency goal and action steps identified in the case plan.
The caregiver is responsible for carrying out the plan for contact between the child and their parents (e.g., transporting the child to visits and getting needed supports such as child care).	DCF-FSD will help the caregiver carry out the plan for family contact (e.g., reimbursing mileage costs, helping with needed supports, and paying for services such as child care).

Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 9 of 17

If the court grants custody to a relative (CCO):	If DCF-FSD places the child with a relative (DCF custody):
The child may be eligible for a Child-Only Reach Up Grant, which would also make the child eligible for Medicaid. Any public benefits the caregiver receives may be affected. These benefits are offered and managed by the Economic Services Division of DCF.	The caregiver will receive a foster care reimbursement for each child placed with them and each child is eligible for Medicaid. Any public benefits the caregiver receives may be affected.
The caregiver may receive child support; however, if the child is on public assistance, most or all support paid will go to the state.	Any child support paid will go to the state to offset the cost of the child's care.
If the judge awards the caregiver permanent guardianship or the caregiver adopts the child, they may be eligible for ongoing financial support (e.g., Reach Up or adoption assistance) through DCF.	If the judge awards the caregiver permanent guardianship or the caregiver adopts the child, they may be eligible for ongoing financial support (e.g., guardianship assistance or adoption assistance) through DCF.
The child can stay in their school until the disposition hearing. If the caregiver lives in another town, they will be responsible for transportation. Educational stability is encouraged; however, the child may have to change schools.	The child will stay in their current school unless it is not in their best interests. DCF-FSD is responsible for transportation costs if the child attends school in another town. See Policy 72 .

The assessment of placements involving children and youth in DCF custody includes the licensing process, which determines whether a home can be licensed to provide foster care. All placements (both CCOs and DCF custody) are evaluated through the district-level assessment process, which determines the most appropriate placement for a child or youth.

Factors considered for all foster care/DCF custody placements include:

- The ability of all household members to pass background checks;
- An assessment of the home environment to meet safety requirements;
- The caregiver's ability to provide safety for the child;
- The caregiver's ability to meet the child's physical, emotional, and educational needs;
- The caregiver's ability to provide age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate supervision;
- The caregiver's willingness and ability to maintain sibling connections and/or assume care for all siblings; and
- The caregiver's willingness to collaborate with the division and the child's team in support of the case plan goal.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 10 of 17

For kinship foster care placements, the division also considers:

- Family dynamics that may have contributed to dangers or safety concerns;
- The caregiver’s ability to prioritize the child’s needs over the needs of the parents;
- The caregiver’s current relationship with the child; and
- The caregiver’s current relationship with the parents.

Consideration of Sibling Relationships

Relationships children have with their brothers and sisters are often the longest lasting relationships of their lives. These relationships can take on even more importance for children removed from their parents’ care. Federal law requires reasonable efforts to place siblings together unless a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings. When making a placement, division staff should view separating siblings as a last resort. If it is not possible for a kinship caregiver to provide a home for all siblings in a family, it is crucial for siblings to maintain contact through a variety of means such as visits, phone calls, video calls, emails, and social media. These ties can provide some stability and permanency for children.

There may be some circumstances where it is not safe or in a child’s best interests to be placed together with their sibling(s). In those circumstances, efforts should be made to support those siblings in maintaining contact to develop a safe, healthy relationship.

Out-of-State Relatives

The consideration of placement with a relative who resides out-of-state with a significant geographic distance is a complicating factor and one that is revisited on an ongoing basis throughout the division’s involvement with the child and family. When there are relatives who reside out-of-state that are potential resources to the child, the division will contact them promptly (within 30 days of the child entering DCF custody as required by federal law) and remain in communication with them about the child. Division staff should encourage relative participation on the child’s team if they are willing and committed to the child. Out-of-state relatives may participate in team meetings by phone and receive email updates about the child and family’s case.

When reunification is the case plan goal, close geographic proximity in the child’s placement is likely necessary to support family time. However, efforts to nurture all relative connections is vital for ensuring family connections throughout the child’s life and to maintain communication in the event of a placement change or a change in the permanency goal or family time schedule.

Out-of-state placement requests for children in DCF custody and CCOs must be made through the [Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children](#) (ICPC) process. Despite

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 11 of 17

geographic barriers to placement, the ICPC process should begin immediately if the identified relative is a potential placement or permanency option for the child in the future. Prior to submitting an ICPC request, the relatives should be asked to review the ICPC cover letter and confirm the minimum requirements are met. Expedited ICPC requests should only be submitted when the relative is a parent, stepparent, grandparent, adult uncle or aunt, adult brother or sister, or the child's guardian and there is a plan for immediate placement. If there is some flexibility in the timeframe of requesting an out-of-state placement with a relative, a standard ICPC request (as opposed to an expedited ICPC request) should be made because the home study is often more thorough.

The amount of time it takes another state to conduct a home study and fully evaluate a placement request varies. On average, there is wait time of several months between the time of submitting the ICPC request and receiving the approval or denial. ICPC home study approvals are valid for six months. The timing of the home study should be planned with the estimated timeframe for a potential placement change. In instances where the division plans to change the case plan goal to adoption and file a termination of parental rights (TPR) petition and there are relatives out-of-state, ICPC requests should be made at the same time or in advance.

The division does not have the authority to cross state lines to practice child protection work or conduct home visits. The child cannot visit the relative's home in another state during the ICPC home study process without prior approval from Vermont's ICPC deputy compact administrator and the other state. During this time, visits may occur in Vermont to support contact between the child and the relative(s).

Reviewing Placements and Continued Contact with Relatives

Ongoing searches and identification of relatives will occur:

- During the child's initial removal from their home;
- Prior to a planned move to a non-kin community foster family;
- When the case plan goal is changed to adoption; and
- When the child is legally free for adoption and there is not an intended adoptive or pre-adoptive family identified for the child(ren).

If the current placement is not meeting the child or youth's needs for safety, permanency, or well-being, the division will consider how other relatives might assist in meeting these needs (respite care, transportation, participation in extracurricular activities or events, visitation, other connections with the child, etc.) or whether other relatives should be considered as placement resources.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		91
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 12 of 17

It is not uncommon for relatives to be unsure about their ability to support their family members when there is an open case with the division – particularly as it relates to deciding whether they could serve as a placement resource for a child. Discussions with identified relatives shall occur on an ongoing basis. Division staff should encourage dialogue with relatives about their desire, willingness, and capacity to support their family members.

When the child is going to experience a placement change, staff will review all relatives that have been identified, fictive kin and other connections, and when they were last contacted by the division. Additional considerations include:

- Could there be more relatives that have not yet been identified?
- Are there additional family finding efforts that could be done?
- Who in the family could provide more information?
- Who in the family has indicated they could not be a placement resource previously?

Relatives who previously indicated they could not be a placement resource should be contacted again to inform them of the impending placement change. Staff should inquire about whether their circumstances have changed to an extent that they might consider being a placement resource or offer support to the child as they transition to a new placement.

When there are multiple relatives identified as placement resources or permanency options, consideration of compatibility of the child and prospective caregiver should be based on, but not limited to, the following factors:

- Connection and commitment to the child (with consideration of the child’s wishes and preferences);
- Motivation to adopt a child with special needs (even if the child may not be displaying any current concerning behaviors or issues);
- Ability to provide for the safety of the child, including protection from all persons and situations that brought the child into care;
- Ability to acknowledge and meet the child’s individual needs;
- Consideration of the caregiver’s circumstances:
 - Mental health status
 - Physical health
 - Family history
 - Trauma history
 - Substance use history
 - Financial stability
 - Attitudes and beliefs about the child

Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 13 of 17

- Access to and willingness to access community resources to meet the child’s and family’s needs;
- Knowledge of child development;
- Willingness to cooperate with any restrictions recommended by the division on contact between the child and others;
- Ability to commit to the child on a permanent basis, even though challenging times;
- Household residents;
- Ability to keep the child safe without division support and monitoring;
- Capacity to understand the importance of and maintain the family connections to the child;
- Ability and willingness to assist the child to develop or maintain a lasting relationship with their siblings;
- The extent to which they will maintain connections with other extended family and other relatives;
- Understanding and honoring a child’s need for a sense of connection to their family of origin, even if the child does not have direct contact with all relatives;
- Ability to be optimistic;
- History and approach to dealing with significant setbacks, crises, and difficulties;
- Problem solving ability; and
- Flexibility.

There are times when the division or the child’s team may recommend no contact or no visitation with particular relatives. This is considered in decision-making and should be reevaluated periodically as circumstances for the young person or for the relative may change over time. Even when it is not in the child’s best interests to have contact with a relative, there are times when the relative can be engaged in other ways. Staff may consider:

- Including the relative in family meetings when safe;
- Asking the person to provide contact information for other relatives who may not be known to the division;
- Utilizing information provided by the relative regarding the family history, genealogy, traditions, and culture; or
- Allowing the relative to provide meaningful family items such as photo albums, letters, or family mementos.

Ongoing Connection with Relatives in Support of the Child/Youth

The engagement of a child or youth’s relatives is about more than placement. There are many other roles the relative can play in meeting the needs of the young person.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>91</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives	Page 14 of 17

Division staff will consider ways in which the relative can support the child and the existing placement through activities such as:

- Babysitting or respite care (planned breaks for the caregiver);
- Transportation for the child to family time with parents, siblings, or other family members;
- Transportation to appointments, services, or extra-curricular activities and events;
- Regular contact through phone calls, video calls, mail, email, or through social media;
- Regular visits or overnight/weekend visits with the child;
- Invitations to the child’s important life events (school functions, sporting events, concerts, plays, awards or other recognition, religious events, etc.); and/or
- Visits or vacations with the child on holidays or breaks from school.

Other resources relatives might be able to offer include:

- Mentoring;
- Financial support for extra-curricular activities;
- Providing family history, family photos, or family mementos;
- Providing information about family medical history; or
- Access to special family events, holidays, religious or cultural ceremonies, or other rites of passage.

Appendix I: Guidance for Assessing Suitability for Conditional Custodians and District-Approved Unlicensed Placements

<p>AREA OF ASSESSMENT</p>	<p>SAFE – Examples of placement situations determined to be safe. The division can be in support of conditional custody in these circumstances. District-approved unlicensed placements can occur.</p>	<p>FURTHER ASSESSMENT NEEDED – Examples of placement situations where a concern or risk has been identified that requires us to PAUSE and conduct a deeper assessment of the potential caregiver, household members, or circumstances before recommendations are made. This may entail gathering additional information, having further conversation with the individual/household members, and using the information to make a recommendation.</p>	<p>UNSAFE/DANGEROUS – Examples of placement situations determined to be unsafe or dangerous. The individual cannot be licensed as a foster home. District-approved unlicensed placements shall not occur. The division will oppose conditional custody in these circumstances. The person should not be used as a temporary caregiver through an out-of-home safety plan.</p>
<p><i>Activities or events described in the FURTHER ASSESSMENT NEEDED category are indicators of a point within someone’s life where their behavior or circumstances may have interfered with their day-to-day functioning and responsibilities. For the purposes of this assessment, the following questions need to be explored for potential caregivers and household members 16 years of age and older prior to making a recommendation or placement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What is the historical context relevant to the concerns? What was going on in the person’s life at the time that caused them to experience consequences?</i> ➤ <i>Is the behavior or circumstance that requires further assessment still active and present in the person’s life?</i> ➤ <i>Does the situation present risk? Is the situation relevant as it pertains to caring for this child (and their specific needs and vulnerabilities)?</i> ➤ <i>What has the person done since that incident or difficult time in their lives to mitigate those circumstances or behaviors? Are there protective factors?</i> 			
<p>Criminal History</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No criminal history • Only civil convictions • Civil DUI convictions older than 10 years with no additional infractions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil DUI convictions within the past 10 years • Misdemeanor criminal convictions • Non-violent felony convictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felony convictions of child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, a crime against children (including child pornography), or a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide • Felony convictions of assault, battery, or a drug-related offense within the past 5 years • Current/pending charges of the crimes listed in the two bullets above • The parties or victims of a charge/conviction are related to the CHINS case (i.e., the child’s parents)
<p>Department of Corrections (DOC) or Parole Board Supervision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No current/active DOC or parole board supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOC or parole board supervision anticipated to successfully finish in the next 6 months for crimes other than those listed in the UNSAFE/DANGEROUS category 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOC or parole board supervision for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Felony convictions of child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, a crime against children (including child pornography), or a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide ○ Felony convictions of assault, battery, or a drug-related offense within the past 5 years • Active DOC or parole board supervision with violations of probation or parole (VOPs) • DOC or parole board supervision not anticipated to successfully finish in the next 6 months

<p>Relief from Abuse (RFA) Orders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No RFAs An RFA not granted by the court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other active RFAs (both defendants and plaintiffs of RFAs) Expired RFAs (both defendants and plaintiffs of RFAs) Multiple non-granted RFAs (both defendants and plaintiffs of RFAs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defendant of an RFA order in place to protect a child or parent in the home Defendant of an RFA order in place due to active/current domestic violence
<p>Substantiations of Child Abuse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No substantiations No pre-1992 findings of child abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-1992 findings of child abuse (<i>will need to request the paper record and review</i>) Substantiations eligible for expungement where the individual is expected to promptly pursue the expungement review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious physical injury substantiation (regardless of eligibility for expungement) Adult-to-child sexual abuse substantiation (regardless of eligibility for expungement) Emotional maltreatment substantiation (regardless of eligibility for expungement)
<p>DCF-FSD Involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No open DCF-FSD case No prior adjudication in a CHINS proceeding (no CHINS findings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open DCF-FSD (DP or UY) Recent DCF-FSD involvement Significant past DCF-FSD involvement Prior adjudication in a CHINS proceeding (CHINS findings) Foster home licensing history, including a previous foster home that was closed and flagged, revoked licenses, or denied applications (<i>will need to request review by RLSI staff</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open DCF-FSD child safety intervention (CSI), DCF custody, or CF case Situations where the individual being considered as a caregiver is unwilling to work with DCF-FSD because of their past experiences
<p>Residency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have stable housing (home ownership or current lease for rental properties) Situations where relatives or others reside together with adequate living space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situations where relatives or others reside together temporarily without adequate living space Imminent plans to move into stable housing Residing in a hotel or motel on a short-term basis due to a significant event (i.e., house fire, damage from a natural disaster, moving to Vermont and looking for housing, landlord selling residence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No identified housing; lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence Living in a place not meant for human habitation Residing in an institution, assisted living facility, correctional facility, or treatment facility Residing in a hotel or motel paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs Residing in emergency shelters Imminent risk of homelessness Current eviction notice or home foreclosure Relatives residing in another state without ICPC approval (<i>must consult and receive approval from ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator</i>)
<p>Home Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No obvious safety hazards (including water hazards, fire hazards, unsecured firearms, or general sanitation concerns) present in the home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of apparent safety hazards (including water hazards, fire hazards, unsecured firearms, or general sanitation concerns) in the home that can be mitigated or resolved promptly (prior to placement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obvious and significant safety hazards (including water hazards, fire hazards, unsecured firearms, or general sanitation concerns) present in the household that cannot be mitigated or resolved

<p>Substance Use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No historic substance use disorder concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained sobriety and commitment to recovery Any past substance use concerns Sanctioning event related to substance use in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active substance use disorder and reliable knowledge of recent substance misuse or observation of behavioral indicators of substance use Less than one year of abstinence
<p>Physical & Mental Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant health concerns that impact the ability to care for a child No significant mental health concerns that impact the ability to care for a child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical limitations associated with meeting the age and developmental needs of the child Mental health diagnosis of a mood disorder, psychotic disorder, or dissociative disorder (i.e., major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, dissociative identity disorder) requires third-party verification of treatment and ability to meet child's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnosed disability with an evaluation that has determined the individual is unable to care for children
<p>Financial</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered has sufficient income to support the child(ren) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered does not have sufficient income to support the child(ren) without additional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered is experiencing significant financial instability (as indicated by inability to make payments towards rent/housing expenses, utilities, transportation, or inability to make payments against debt) Current bankruptcy
<p>Relationship to Child(ren) or Youth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child/youth agrees to or is in support of residing temporarily with the potential caregiver The child/youth has a strong relationship or bond to the individual The child/youth expresses no opinion about the potential caregiver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child or youth has expressed they would prefer to live with a different relative or person whom the division knows is appropriate and available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child or youth is unwilling or refuses to live with the person being considered as a caregiver The child or youth is fearful of the person being considered as a caregiver The child or youth's therapeutic needs indicate placement with this individual is not in their best interests
<p>Collaboration <i>(willingness & ability to work with parents, DCF-FSD, and/or the court)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered as a caregiver has demonstrated or indicates that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will work with parents, DCF-FSD, and court partners; Will follow court orders, including coordinating and monitoring family time; & Will provide transportation to school, extracurricular activities, medical appointments, therapy, family time, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered has refused to work with DCF-FSD in the past The ability to provide transportation may be a limitation or barrier Relationship dynamics where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual's opinions or behaviors towards or about the parents may impact reunification efforts or the safety of the child(ren); or The parent's opinions or behaviors towards or about the individual being considered as a caregiver may impact reunification efforts or the safety of the child(ren) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual being considered as a caregiver openly refuses or is unable to work with the parents, DCF-FSD, or court partners