

 <p>NH Department of Health & Human Services Division for Children, Youth & Families</p>	DCYF Standard Operating Procedure	
	1515.1 EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND NOTIFY RELATIVES	
	Policy Directive: 21-34	Approved:
	Effective Date: October 2021	
Implements Policy: 1515	Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director	

This SOP defines DCYF's efforts to identify and make notification to relatives for children who have entered placement.

Procedure

The following information is to support the implementation of the above referenced policy. This document shall not preclude staff from using their professional judgement based on individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the policy.

- I. CPSWs/JPPOs talk with families about their extended family and other connections from the onset of DCYF's involvement, with a focus on identifying supports and potential placements should the need arise.
- II. CPSWs/JPPOs gather information about both maternal and paternal relatives during conversations with parents/guardians, when reviewing the Child/Youth Information Sheet (Form 1552) with them, and in their conversations with children (as developmentally appropriate).
 - A. When there is time to plan the placement in advance, the Child/Youth Information Sheet should be completed as soon as possible, or updated as necessary if previously completed.
 - B. The parents/guardians are encouraged to provide as much detail as possible as to how to contact the relatives, the child's relationship to each of the relatives, and who they might prefer as an alternative caregiver for their child.
 - C. If the parents/guardians are reluctant or refuse to provide information, or state that they do not have it, CPSWs/JPPOs:
 1. Engage them around the importance of connections for their child and their reasoning behind not wanting to support relative connections;
 2. Explain the potential benefits to their child, including their child knowing the people who will be caring for them, maintaining their important connections, remaining in their the same school district and community, and having the opportunity for optimal communication and visitation with their parents/guardians;

3. Make additional efforts to obtain the information within 5 days of placement and again at the next meeting with the family; and
 4. Document their efforts to obtain information and the parents/guardians' response in the DCYF electronic information system.
- III. If parents refuse to identify certain relatives because of a history of family or domestic violence, or other history that puts the child or parents at risk of harm, then the relative need not be notified. This must be approved by a Supervisor and documented in the DCYF electronic information system in a collateral for "Relatives Considered" with the details of who was not contacted and why entered into that contact.
- IV. All identified relatives are notified via the Relative Notification Letter (Form 1515) as they are identified unless there are safety concerns for the child or family, even when the child is already placed with a relative in an effort to support the child's permanent connections.
 - A. Each letter is completed, signed, and mailed with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the response.
 - B. Letters are sent regardless of if contact has already been made with the relative or not, unless the child is placed with the relative.
 1. If the child is placed with the relative, the CPSW/JPPO must be sure to review the 3 key points of the notification letter with the relative and document this in the DCYF electronic information system.
 - C. Additional letters may be sent as the CPSW/JPPO determines is appropriate to continue to try to connect with the relative.
 - D. Copies of all letters are maintained in the case file.
- V. If at any point the case is transferred (CPSW to CPSW, or JPPO to JPPO) all efforts to identify, notify, and engage relatives are shared with the newly assigned CPSW/JPPO.
 - A. For joint CPS/JJS cases, CPSWs and JPPOs should work together to identify, notify, and engage relatives to avoid duplication of efforts.
- VI. CPSWs/JPPOs follow-up with relatives who respond to discuss their possibly being a placement or ongoing connection for the child.
- VII. When relatives indicate a desire to care for the child, the CPSW/JPPO notifies the Resource Worker and a plan is created to ensure they receive information on relative care and the licensing process.
- VIII. CPSWs/JPPOs also identify relatives who may want to participate in visiting the child or maintaining a connection in other ways such as phone calls, email, or attending school or athletic events, etc. If more than one relative wants to maintain a connection during and after the child's placement, the CPSW/JPPO and Supervisor consider:

- A. The child’s wishes, as well as their ability to comfortably engage in multiple relative contacts; and
 - B. If contacts with multiple relatives will interrupt the child’s visitation with their parents/guardians or their daily routine, social development, or activities.
- IX. CPSWs/JPPOs advise foster parents of possible relative placement as soon as possible and work with the foster parents and relatives to create a transition plan.
- A. Relatives and foster parents are encouraged to meet before the child moves and to maintain contact post-transition to strengthen support for the child.
- X. Relative connections, and potential placements, are discussed at all Roadmap to Reunification meetings, Permanency Planning Team (PPT) meetings, and court reviews.
- XI. All efforts to identify, notify, and engage relatives are documented in the DCYF electronic information system.
- A. Efforts to engage parents and children in identifying relatives are documented in the appropriate contact logs;
 - B. Letters sent to relatives are documented in the DCYF electronic information system as a collateral under the individuals name with the first line reading “RELATIVE NOTIFICATION SENT”;
 - C. When a letter is not sent to a relative who the child is already placed with, documentation is entered into the DCYF electronic information system as “RELATIVE NOTICE NOT SENT” and the reason needs to be entered into the contact (e.g. child already placed with relative. Relative notified of contents of Relative Notification Letter); and
 - D. Conversations with relatives about being a connection or placement are entered as a collateral contact.

Applicable Forms	
Form	Title
1515	Relative Notification Letter
1552	Child/Youth Information Sheet

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. If the family identifies the relative as a sex offender or threat, do I still have to send the letter?

- A** No. The identifying information regarding the relative must still be collected and documented in the DCYF electronic information system under “Relatives Considered.”

- A The reason the individual was not contacted is noted in the contact log, as well as any information used to support the decision, such as confirmation through the NH Offender Registry (or other applicable state).

Q2. If a child has half-siblings, but the parents were never married, should they still be considered a relative?

- A Pursuant to SSA 471(a)(29), all parents of a sibling to a child, where such parent has legal custody of such sibling, are considered relatives. Even if the common parent of the 2 children has had their rights terminated, the children are still siblings and the parent with custody of the sibling is a relative to the child who is in out-of-home care.

Q3. Can a former stepparent be considered if there is no longer a legal relationship?

- A A former stepparent is still considered a relative for the purposes of relative care placements and should be provided a Relative Notification Letter if they are interested in being a relative placement for the child.

Q4. Do I need to send a letter when a youth is in shelter care?

- A CPSWs/JPOs should use their best judgment if a youth will be discharged from shelter care and will not be reunified with a parent in determining when it is the appropriate time to provide relative notifications. These circumstances should be discussed in supervision, at Permanency Planning Team (PPT) meetings, and other team meetings and are documented in the DCYF electronic information system.

Q5. If the 30 days have passed, do I still need to send notification letters?

- A Yes. Letters should be reviewed and sent periodically until a permanent connection is established. Best practice is to coincide with court reviews, but every case is different with a unique set of circumstances that should be discussed in supervision, at PPT meetings, and other team meetings and documented in the DCYF electronic information system.

Glossary and Document Specific Definitions

A - B C - D E - F G - I J - L M - N O - Q R - S T - V W - Z

Document Change Log

PD	Modification Made	Approved	Date