



Washington State Department of **CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

Parent Advisory Group (PAG)

Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2024 -7:00pm-8:30pm

Virtual Meeting

Welcome, Virtual Meeting Protocols and Introductions

Executive Committee Chair, Janel Waterman, and Community Engagement Manager Emily Morgan welcomed attendees and initiated introductions.

Relative Search Unit and Process

Relative Search Supervisor, Kelly Lutes, and Provider Supports Administrator Heidi Walker provided a brief overview on the Relative Search Unit. The presentation included federal and state requirements, definition of 'relative', and how the process plays out within DCYF.

[Relative Search Process Presentation](#)

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I received this form and completed it but didn't hear back. Do this happen (a no follow up)?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ We are definitely working on better response timing and we do receive them all. We share the results with social workers (and supervisor and area administrator) as well. Social workers are overloaded, and response timing is slower, and we're hoping by including a larger group will elicit a response. All this information is modulated in case notes for case purpose and there's always a record of it.• And there's a variety of reasons why people don't respond, and our mail does get returned. For initial relative search family members may wait for other family members to answer first, sometimes relatives will respond at a second relative search inquiry. We can get increased responses in subsequent searches.• I was contacted for relative search for my brother's son, and I reached out but I was never contacted again.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Were you stuck at the social worker level?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Yes, I tried to bring his brother to let him see him and it never happened. It's really sad, I want to know how to help the social worker in this process.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sometimes contacting the constituent relations, we have an obligation to reconnect these families. I'm not saying it's an intentional reason from the social worker.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ In another situation with a social worker, I was helped with a blood relative child. It's frustrating.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Do you have the social worker's info?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ No and the social worker is gone.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Please contact us and we will pass along the information/ case.• As a foster parent I'm trying to keep a connection for my daughter and her biological family. We weren't given any relative information for a long time.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Those decisions are your choices to make (once the case is closed and you're the legal guardian) and I would encourage you to ask. Disclosure also depends on the offices.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ And I advocated for her, and eventually it happened.• Do you know the extent of relative placement/ Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) that DCYF can mandate a legal stay?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ It's a case by case, and we encourage caregivers to ask social workers. And there are cases where children have been moved and not.○ You have 10 days to respond to the relative inquiry.○ And we do have cases that track in and out of state process and barriers with out of state placement.• What if a parent doesn't want their child placed with a certain relative?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ It's important that the court knows about all possibilities on behalf of the child.• Parents are allowed a say in the case of child's placement unless one of the parents' is responsible for the displacement (it's a RCW law). So in my case why is the child's father allowed to have say?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ There's a lot of focus on parental preference (written in the law), and the court and commissioner should be aware of the other options of placement for this child.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ No one told me I was supposed to submit a caregiver report.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I would reach out to the supervisor and keep going up the line (constituent relations).<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ I have, and it's gotten a little bit better.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thank you for being such an advocate for this child. • Does DCYF honor wills and testaments when there is a DV/CPS protection order for a child placement (for example if something happens to me, like death)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I can't for sure what would happen, it would depend on the will, the court, and relatives. • Can you clarify the timeline with relative search team? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The department is supposed to make contact within the first 30 days for a child in out of home care, and paternal search is within 5 days and then annually. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In my case, this child was placed for 5 years, and we didn't know about her. ▪ We had a child placement for one year, and she went back to her aunt in Arkansas. Then we received a letter from DCYF asking whereabouts of the child. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfortunately, this does come up, and our unit was developed 7 years ago and there are placements that aren't put in timely. Also, a paternal request could have been put in or a court process. If a child is born out of state and we don't have that birth certificate that can cause another delay (a lot of factors). • Social workers can place with an alleged father's family, we can move forward with the legal relative search until paternity has been proven. • Are adoptive families included in the relative search? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes, we would contact all the caregivers of children so the siblings can stay in contact.
Follow up	Please reach out to Kelly Lutes kelly.lutes@dcyf.wa.gov or Heidi Walker heidi.walker@dcyf.wa.gov for any follow up questions.

Closing Remarks/Adjourn

Next Steps/Follow Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement Framework listening sessions. • Reflection survey • Next meeting July 17, 7:00pm-8:30pm
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