

The Kinship Engagement Unit (KEU) Pilot

Frequently Asked Questions: Family, Extended Friends, and Community Partners

- **What is the purpose of the KEU Pilot Project?**

The purpose of the KEU Pilot is to implement a child kinship focused family finding model to identify and engage class members of the DS Settlement and their extended family members and friends to support families to safely reunify or stay together.

- **What does the KEU do?**

The goal of the KEU is to build connections and possible placements through five functions:

1. **Family Engagement:** Conduct initial and on-going family engagement that enlist support of extended family members and family friends that the child/and or family have identified as trusted and familiar individuals to be considered as possible connections, placement, and/or support to the youth/family.
2. **Resource Information:** Provide details on available support and resources for immediate and extended families. Offer evidence-based practices and information on programs like the Emerging Adult Housing Program, Hub homes, and Professional Therapeutic Foster Parent options.
3. **Peer support and system navigation:** Connect families to the CaRES Program and other community Kinship support programs to address barriers and assist in accessing resources and support.
4. **Aiding a person through the licensure process.** Collaboratively work to assist the family in navigating the home study and licensure process.
5. **Assist extended and chosen family placements with the requirements of RCW 13.34.065 or 13.34.130.** In other words, help with the background check process.

- **Who will the KEU be engaging with?**

Engagement will include the child or youth, relatives and extended family identified through the child/youth, family, and relative search unit, in alignment with current DCYF policy. Engagement efforts may also extend to biological parents, child's attorney, CASA and/or GAL, mentors and coaches, school personnel, child's therapist, current and past foster parents, treatment team members, former social workers, respite care providers, older siblings and other adults with whom the child or youth has a connection.

- **Where are the locations of the KEU Pilot?**

Region 1 – the Spokane Area and Region 6 – the Vancouver Area

- **Who are the contact persons for each Region and at HQ?**

Region 1 – KEU Coordinators

✓ Jennifer.Ellentuch@dcyf.wa.gov

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✓ Jennifer.Borthwick@dcyf.wa.gov

Region 6 – KEU Coordinators

✓ Rona.Young@dcyf.wa.gov

✓ Leanna.Kochie@dcyf.wa.gov

HQ Program Manager:

✓ Geene.Delaplane@dcyf.wa.gov

- **Who does KEU Serve?**

KEU only serves identified DS class members.

- **Who is a class member of the DS Settlement?**

Generally speaking, a class member includes individuals who are:

1. Under the age of 18,
2. In DCYF's placement during a dependency proceeding until the proceeding is dismissed, and
3. One or more of the following who have:
 - a. Have experienced five (5) or more placements, excluding trial return home, in-home dependencies, and temporary placements, or
 - b. Have been referred for or are in out-of-state group care placement, or
 - c. Have experienced a hotel or office stay in the past six (6) months, or
 - d. Are awaiting a Children's Long-Term Inpatient Program (CLIP) bed.

- **How will we know if the youth/family is part of the KEU Pilot?**

Check in with the case worker. A case worker and their supervisor are notified if one of their cases has been co-assigned to the KEU. We are a team and a support to the case worker and family. The KEU is excited to partner everyone involved in the case.

- **How can we best partner?**

Communication and collaboration will be key to our success!

Family:

- By being a rock-solid support system, you can make a significant impact on a child and family's life.
- Engage with the Kinship Search and Engagement Coordinators
- Involve the KEU in critical incidents, team decision meetings, court dates, and reviews.
- Maintain contact with the KEU Search and Engagement Coordinator to assist with progress and help resolve any difficulties that affect permanency.

Outside partners/Stakeholders:

- By working together, professionals can create a holistic support system that prioritizes the child's well-being and helps them achieve stability and permanency in a loving home.
- Involve the KEU in critical incidents, team decision meetings, court dates, and reviews.
- Maintain contact with the KEU Search and Engagement Coordinator to assist with progress and help resolve any difficulties that affect permanency.

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- Provide timely feedback to the KEU Search and Engagement Coordinator. Your input is valuable! The KEU cannot do this without you.

KEU Search and Engagement Coordinator:

- Collaborate with the case worker or individuals who have been identified as having or had a relationship with the child.
 - Provide timely feedback for proposed engagement activities and possible placement and support for the child or youth.
 - Provide engagement efforts for your reports to the courts on our efforts of continued engagement with relatives and suitable others.
 - Be there to support the placement process.
 - Serve as the contact for the kin, helping them navigate complex systems they may run into while working with DCYF and other agencies.
- **Are there other things a relative or friend of the family can do to support a youth that isn't placement?**

Absolutely! Placement is not our goal. Keeping a child or youth connected to their family and community is important too. Other ways you could assist:

- **Offer Emotional Support:** Be a stable, loving presence. Let the child know they can always count on you for comfort and encouragement.
- **Maintain Communication:** Keep in touch regularly. Phone calls, video chats, or letters can make a huge difference in making them feel loved and connected.
- **Be Involved in Their Life:** Show genuine interest in their activities and progress.
- **Create a Safe Space:** Ensure your home is a safe, welcoming environment. Consistent routines and clear boundaries provide a sense of security.
- **Advocate for Them:** Work closely with case workers, therapists, and teachers to ensure their needs are met. Be their voice in meetings and decisions.
- **Support Their Interests:** Encourage hobbies and interests. Whether it's sports, arts, or reading, these activities can provide a positive outlet for their emotions.
- **Stay Informed:** Learn about the foster care system, trauma, and any specific needs the child might have. Knowledge is power when it comes to supporting their well-being.
- **Be Patient and Understanding:** Adjusting to new environments and routines can be challenging. Patience, empathy, and understanding go a long way in helping them feel secure and loved.
- **Keep an Open Heart:** Love them unconditionally, just as they are. Your unwavering support can help them heal and thrive.

- **How do you make a referral?**

Referrals cannot be accepted. The KEU has a team that reviews the class members and selects youth that fit the KEU criteria. For the pilot, the KEU will be serving class member children and youth who are not already placed with relatives and not working with Wendy's Wonderful Kids.

For more information about the DS Settlement in general go to: [D.S. Lawsuit and Settlement | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#) or contact Geene Delaplane geene.delaplane@dcyf.wa.gov.

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