



February 12, 2025

**DCS Specialist Roles:**

A Family Engagement Specialist (FES) will be coordinating efforts to locate and reach out to family members/fictive kin. The goal is to assist all connections to build a supportive network for the children by sharing of information and planning for the child(ren).

- Communicate DCS plans and concerns so the FES can support the case plan goals.
- Collaborate with the FES regarding search and engagement efforts to assist in the development of a supportive network.
- Participate in any Collective Viewpoint Meetings, facilitated by the FES; schedule and attend TDM meetings (if applicable) to assist in the decision-making process and development of a plan outlining supports leading to permanency.
- With the FES assistance, coordinate any transition efforts to a family-like setting; facilitate service referrals to in-home, community, or behavioral health services when needed; and determine with the FES and supportive network the type of follow-up contact needed and at what intervals.

## Fostering Sustainable Connections

**Description of Service**

Fostering Sustainable Connections (FSC) seeks to improve family engagement to foster connections and support for children/youth in out-of-home care. The goal is to reduce the length of stay for the children/youth in these settings while increasing family involvement in the decision-making process. Family includes those who may have a significant relationship with the child; related or fictive kin.

**Four Stages of FSC:****1. Discovery and Engagement**

- Family Engagement Specialist (FES) assists locating and engaging family/fictive kin.
- The FES works with the child/youth utilizing engagement activities that are tailored to the child/youth's age, development, and interests. The activities assist to identify family/fictive kin.
- The FES utilizes different search engines and tools to locate family/fictive kin.
- The FES shares information, as needed, to assist in building a lifelong supportive network

**2. Planning**

- A FES facilitates a Collective Viewpoint Meeting (CVM), a child/youth focused meeting which explores the child/youth and family strengths.
- The CVM is held when identified kin/fictive kin or an adult with a significant relationship have shared agreement to being a life long connection to serve as a foundation to the family/fictive kin to determine how they can be a support to the child/youth.
- The child/youth's needs are discussed and participants during the meeting make commitments to the child/youth which can assist in supporting their unmet needs.

**3. Decision Making/Action Plan**

- A Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting which may be requested by the DCS Specialist to make a decision that increases placement stability, ensures positive transition and identifies services and support for the child/youth and the family/fictive kin. The meeting should include a diverse group: the family, the child, friends, extended family, the out-of-home caregiver, DCS staff, service providers, community partners and others.

**4. Follow-up**

- A FES will coordinate with the DCS Specialist to ensure formal and informal supports are in place, accessible, timely, and meeting the needs of the child/youth and family before closure.
- A variety of in-home, behavioral health, and community services are available to support the child/youth and the family.



## Fostering Sustainable Connections

**What to expect from FSC Provider**

- Initial contact is made within 14 calendar days of receipt of the referral.
- The FES will meet with the youth at least two times a month for minimum of 60 minutes a visit, and attend CFT, TDM meetings, or staffing's when needed.
- The FES will consult, make requests and update the DCS Specialist throughout the life of the case.
- The FES will consult with the DCS Specialist about the child/youth's needs.
- Monthly Case Notes, Summary of CVM and Summary of Closure notes will be input into Guardian.

**Service Eligibility**

Children/Youth who meet the following qualifications are eligible for Fostering Sustainable Connections:

- The child/youth is currently living in Congregate Care setting, a Higher Level of Care setting or a Foster Home (if appropriate).
- The child/youth is not living in a relative home, Residential Treatment Center, hospital, or correctional facility; and
- *The child/youth is NOT actively involved with Child-Specific Recruitment Services.*

*Note:* An FSC referral can be made if the child/youth's permanency goal is reunification and FSC engagement activities may assist to locate and/or engage a parent.

**Service Referral Process**

A Service Referral is to be submitted by the child/youth's assigned DCS Specialist or Supervisor into Guardian.