



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

Family Finding Collaboration Report

**As Required by the
2024-25 General Appropriations Act,
House Bill 1, 88th Legislature,
Regular Session, 2023
(Article II, Department of Family and
Protective Services, Rider 19)**

December 1, 2024

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Executive Summary

The 2042-25 General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Article II, Department of Family and Protective Services [DFPS], Rider 19 requires DFPS to report on the success of the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) initiative collaboration and its impact on improving permanency outcomes, increasing family involvement and support for children in state care, and improving child well-being to the Legislative Budget Board, the Governor, the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and the permanent standing committees in the House of Representatives and the Senate with jurisdiction over health and human services by December 1, 2024.

The CFE initiative is a partnership between Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and DFPS. CFE aims to create a family support network for children and youth in care and their families. This partnership works toward connecting children and youth with their familial ties and keep them connected to their communities or to help them build these connections.

These connections can assist children and families as they navigate the child welfare system and provide a pathway for DFPS to improve their engagement with families. CFE focuses on building connections and allows family to have more participation in a DFPS case and creates more opportunities for children and youth to maintain their family connections.

In fiscal year 2024, there were 10,427 children and 6,117 families involved in CFE work, including those who were involved in CFE engagement activities using 31 tools¹ to help with searching, engagement, family meetings, and connections. This was a 53 percent increase in children and 55 percent increase in families served, respectively, over fiscal year 2023.

Additionally, 6,055 CFE tools were utilized, 3,307 family meetings were conducted, 9,151 family and child connection activities were completed. CASA made a total of 59,118 parental contacts.

CFE continues to be a valuable tool for CASA and DFPS to improve collaboration, family engagement, and increase the amount of family support for a case. CFE supports placement with kinship or fictive kin caregivers and assists DFPS in engaging potential placements. The CFE family-centered approach creates a pro-family environment, which can also support reunification efforts.

¹ Engagement tools include Mobility Map, Circles of Trust, Connectedness Map, Ecomap and Genograms. Searching tools include File or Case Mining, White Pages, Connect our Kids, Seneca Searches, Non-US based and Social Media Searches. Connection Tools include Connect and Engage 100, Rapid Appraisal and Fire House Intervention.

Introduction

The 88th Texas Legislature approved and continued funding for a family finding program to evaluate promising practices for a more comprehensive approach to engaging families in child protection cases in Texas. This funding covered personnel, curriculum development, training, and other necessary costs to support family finding efforts. Through the CFE program, Texas CASA and Child Protective Services (CPS) have worked collaboratively to implement a structured approach for extensively searching for and engaging adults to support children in care.

For generations, extended families have played significant roles in raising children when parents are having a difficult time. CPS refers to this as kinship care. Relatives and other people who the child or family have a significant relationship with can often provide children with stability when they cannot live with their birth parents.

The benefits of kinship care are:

- Provides love and care in a familiar setting;
- Provides parents with a sense of hope that children will remain connected to their birth families;
- Enables children to live with people they know and trust;
- Reinforces a child's sense of cultural identity and positive self-esteem;
- Helps a child make and sustain extended family connections;
- Continues lifelong family traditions and memories;
- Supports the child in building healthy relationships within the family;
- Supports the child's need for safety and well-being; and
- Creates a sense of stability in the life of a child².

DFPS recognizes family-finding is not limited to relatives able to provide kinship care. CFE helps to coordinate family-engagement, family-finding, and bringing together a family group. This group can consist of relatives or fictive kin³ and other connections to children, youths, and their parents. This can also include those who may not be currently connected to the youth, such as absent parents or paternal relatives who are often excluded or unknown.

² https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Kinship_Care/default.asp

³ This term refers to close family friends.

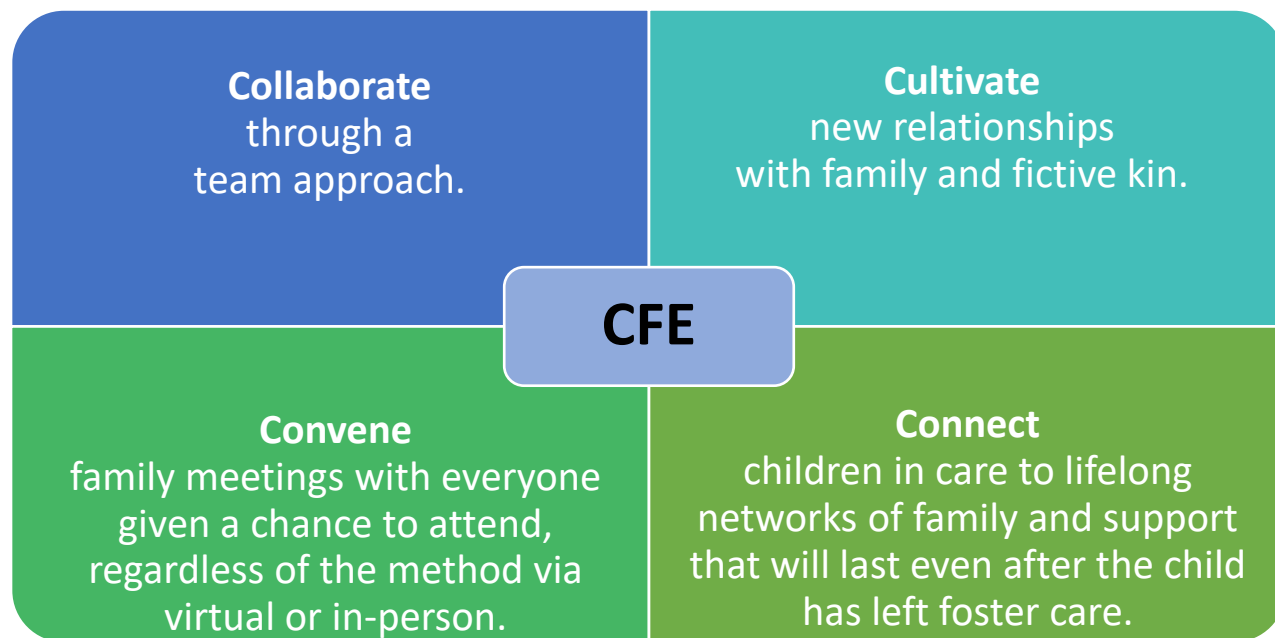
Background

CFE is Texas' model for collaborative family finding work between Texas CASA and DFPS based on Kevin Campbell's Family Finding model. The model aims to establish lifelong support networks for disconnected youth by identifying relatives and supportive adults willing to form lasting connections and assist the youth in their transition to adulthood.

The Texas CFE initiative began in fiscal year 2016 with only three of the local CASA programs and has now expanded to 194 counties across Texas. At the end of fiscal year 2024, 74 CASA programs and their affiliated DFPS regions and Single Source Continuum Contractor partners were trained on the CFE model. Travis County is the only county excluded, as it has a long-standing model of its own for family searching and engagement and has not been part of the CFE expansion.

Figure 1 emphasizes the 4Cs of CFE:

Figure 1. The 4Cs of CFE



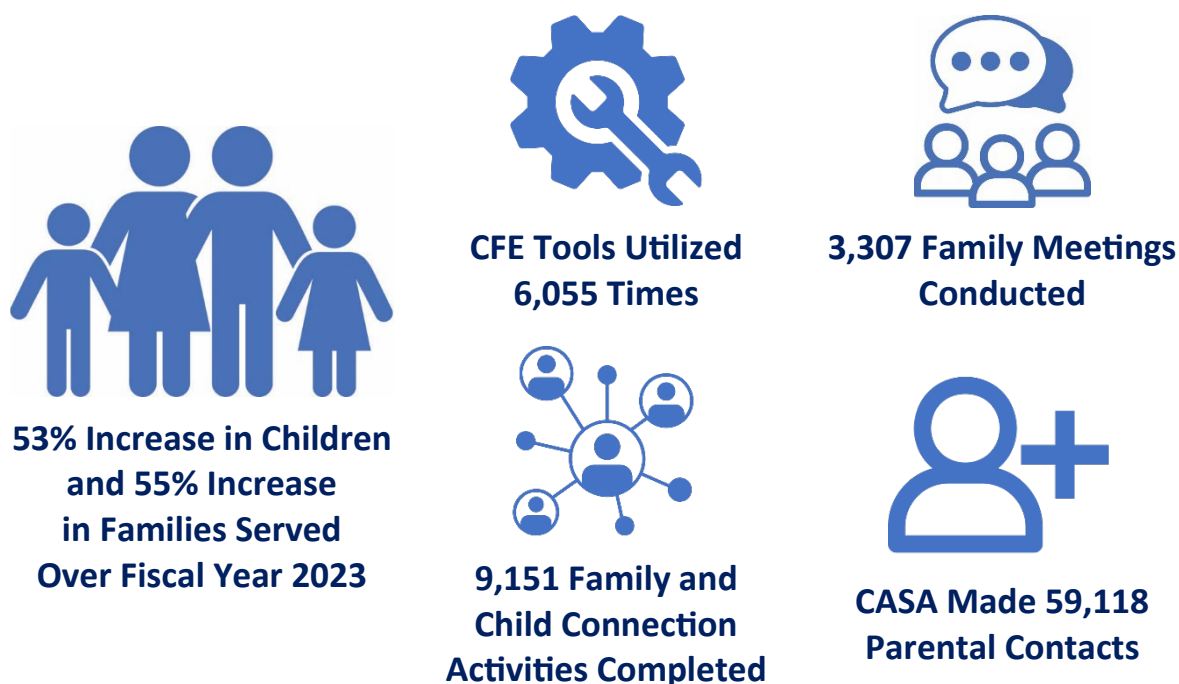
The CFE strategies are available in every case. DFPS staff and CASA volunteers or supervisors have access to CFE engagement tools and the resources and training to utilize them when implementing family finding in their work.

CFE Outcomes

In fiscal year 2024, there were 10,427 children and 6,117 families involved in CFE work, including those who were involved in CFE engagement activities using 31 tools to help with searching, engagement, family meetings, and connections. This was a 53 percent increase in children and 55 percent increase in families served, respectively, over fiscal year 2023.

Additionally, 6,055 CFE tools were utilized, 3,307 family meetings were conducted, 9,151 family and child connection activities were completed. CASA made a total of 59,118 parental contacts. Figure 2 below illustrates fiscal year 2024 CFE outcome data.

Figure 2. Fiscal Year 2024 CFE Outcomes



In addition to CPS staff, CASA continues its engagement efforts in cases shortly after a child is removed. This includes using CFE to find and engage family members soon after a child comes into DFPS conservatorship. From a best practice standpoint, the more involved a family is from the onset of a child entering DFPS conservatorship, the better permanency and well-being outcomes for the child.

Conclusion

The CFE initiative is a partnership between CASA and DFPS to build a support network for children and youth in care, connecting them with family and community. By fostering these

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ties, CFE helps families navigate the child welfare system, improves DFPS engagement, and provides children with more opportunities to stay connected and engaged.

CFE continues to be a valuable initiative for CASA and DFPS to improve collaboration, family engagement, and increase the amount of family support. CFE supports placement with kinship or fictive kin caregivers and assists DFPS in engaging potential placements. The CFE family-centered approach creates a pro-family environment, which can also support reunification efforts.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
CASA	Court Appointed Specialist Advocates
CFE	Collaborative Family Engagement
CPS	Child Protective Services
DFPS	Department of Family and Protective Services