

The Chosen Affirming Family Finding Practice Manual:

A Permanency Model



THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK HAS CHANGED LIVES:

- Young people reconnecting with their families after years of separation
- Hearing that young people felt hope for the future because of their network's support
- A young person identifying that they are finally home
- Young people feeling “powerful” as they lead their network meetings to further develop their YLP plan
- Network members identifying that their love for the young person is far greater than their struggle with LGBTQ+ identities, and wanting to learn how to successfully navigate this journey.



Kinnect believes in this work! We are committed to creating partnerships and to providing the support and technical assistance needed to achieve full implementation of the Chosen Affirming Family Finding (CAFF) model. We are hopeful that other community-based organizations and public child welfare agencies that share the values of the CAFF model and are committed to improving permanency outcomes for LGBTQ+ young people in child welfare will adopt this permanency model. LGBTQ+ young people need affirming networks that provide unconditional support and belonging, now and lifelong.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organizations and people for their work and influence in the evolution of the CAFF intervention.

The Chosen Affirming Family Finding (CAFF) intervention development was part of a project funded by the National Quality Improvement Center on Tailored Services, Placement Stability and Permanency for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Two-Spirit Children and Youth in Foster Care (QIC-LGBTQ2S) at the University of Maryland Baltimore School of Social Work. The QIC-LGBTQ2S is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau under grant #90CW1145.

Co-Founders Shannon Deinhart, LISW-S and Mike Kenney created Kinnect to support young people in foster care in achieving permanency. They saw this demonstration grant as an opportunity to envision how Kinnect could improve permanency outcomes for LGBTQ+ young people in Cuyahoga County and for the county to invest intentionally in serving child welfare-involved LGBTQ+ young people in creating permanent and affirming connections.

Kinnect's Family Development Specialists: Mary Mihevic, William Simpson, Leah Love, MSSA, LSW and Roxana Bell, MSSA, LSW, for their commitment to the CAFF values and their dedication to defining, developing, and shaping this intervention with a focus on supporting the creation of affirming, lifelong networks for the LGBTQ+ young people and the families they served.

National Institute for the Center of Permanent Connectedness: Bob Friend, LCSW, for his guidance in all aspects of the development of the CAFF intervention from its initial stages to the completion of this manual and his tireless conviction to the values and principles of Family Finding.

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services: Cynthia Weiskittel, Karen Anderson, LISW-S, Jennifer Croessmann, LISW, Kori Sewell, and Kathleen Sullivan, for their leadership in creating a supportive environment for the implementation of this intervention. We also want to recognize the child welfare specialists, supervisors, and senior supervisors that partnered with the Family Development Specialists to bring this intervention to the young people and families they serve.

Family Builders by Adoption: Dr. Laura Anderson and Vida Khvar, MA, LMFT provided education, guidance and coaching in the development of our knowledge and skills for serving LGBTQ+ young people and their families, which also informed and refined the adaptations needed to meet the young people and families' needs.

Case Western Reserve University: Dr. Dana Prince, for her support in developing our understanding of implementation science and her contributions to the logic models and LGBTQ+ research section of this manual. In addition, Collective Practice I Students (Joseph Bogart, Jillian Dani, Isabella Hendrickson, Alexander Mickel, Oltea Shahini, and Naomi Wang) for their support in the initial shaping of this manual's outline and the Family Development Specialist onboarding training outline.

Jaymie Lorthridge, MSW, Ph.D. for her contribution, support and feedback in developing and refining the practice profiles, logic model and fidelity tools.

The values and practices from our collective experiences in Youth Centered Permanency Roundtables, Family Group Decision Making, 30 Days to Family© Ohio and Wraparound are woven throughout our development of this model.

And most importantly, **the LGBTQ+ young people and their families** who informed what this work needed to include to meet their needs for connecting, reconnecting, building, and rebuilding affirming relationships and networks to achieve permanency.

The design of this model, its implementation, and evaluation was funded by the National Quality Improvement Center on Tailored Services, Placement Stability and Permanency for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Two-Spirit Children and Youth in Foster Care (QIC-LGBTQ2S) at the Institute for Innovation and Implementation, University of Maryland Baltimore School of Social Work. The QIC-LGBTQ2S is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau under grant #90CW1145. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funders, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A Statement on Language

The term “LGBTQ+” is used throughout this document and is an initialism for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning. The plus sign (+) is used to be inclusive of other identities and sexual orientations beyond LGBTQ (e.g., two-spirit, intersex, asexual, pansexual, gender fluid, etc.). Other terminology associated with the LGBTQ+ community and child welfare will be listed in the Glossary of Terms at the end of this manual.

We want to acknowledge that LGBTQ+ language is generational, culturally specific, and always evolving. There can be disagreement within the LGBTQ+ community on the precise definition of some of these terms. More importantly, folx may have new terms or use some of these terms in different ways. All competent professionals will need to be flexible with terminology when working with young people, families, and stakeholders and should understand that they may need to adapt the language we have outlined for some individuals or that they may need to learn new terms. In this regard, diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) terminology is the same as all language: context, culture, age, and experience matter. When working with families and young people we need to ask what these terms mean to those using them and follow their lead as the experts on their own experiences.

Other terminology referenced frequently in this manual concern the concepts of rejecting, accepting, and affirming behaviors as they relate to LGBTQ+ young people’s experiences. In this work “rejecting” is used to describe individuals that refuse to acknowledge, accept, approve, or support a person’s diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. Rejecting a young person because of their SOGIE has a significant negative impact on physical health, mental health, and well-being. Rejection can lead to loss of relationships, loss of community, shaming, physical abuse, neglect, homelessness, suicide attempts and completions, substance abuse, isolation, and hopelessness. Examples of rejection could include correcting or punishing a young person for the way they speak, not using correct pronouns, isolating a young person, or not allowing them access to an affirming community. Rejecting may also include behaviors that are experienced as hurtful and harmful by the young person, even if the adult doing them is “accepting.” For example, an accepting adult might make a joke about a young person’s identity that is harmful.

Additionally, “accepting” is used to describe individuals who respect and support LGBTQ+ individuals and community through words and actions. Individuals who are accepting can have limitations to what they will “accept” (e.g., a parent may support a young person in being their authentic self through various self-expressions at home, but will not “allow” the young person to express their authentic selves outside of the home, in public). Acceptance is more than ambiguity (e.g., “I don’t have a problem with LGBTQ+ people” or “you do you”) but can at times not rise to the level of affirmation.

Lastly, “affirming” encompasses treating LGBTQ+ people with full dignity and respect. An affirming person embodies constant dedication to creating safe and welcoming spaces

that celebrate and support a young person being their authentic self, free of bias and discrimination. This can look like a family member or important person directly addressing negative attitudes and behaviors by intervening/advocating when they occur. An affirming person will also look for ways to connect young people with peers in these types of supportive settings and the larger LGBTQ+ community. The behaviors associated with the concepts of rejection, acceptance, and affirmation can occur on a spectrum.

Potential CAFF sites, practitioners, and readers will notice that the writers of this manual use “youth,” “young people,” “families,” or “network” when referring to the populations served by this intervention. As an agency, Kinnect has moved away from traditional child welfare and social service language (for example, “client” or “case”) to describe this work. Because families and young people have historically and continue to experience multiple forms of marginalization at the hands of the child welfare system, we use this language as a way to share power and to truly collaborate with families and young people on their own terms and in making decisions that have the possibility of and often do alter their life trajectories.

Thank you for reading this manual and for seeking out an intervention to serve child welfare-involved LGBTQ+ young people and their families. We have learned so much about this work in piloting the CAFF model at Kinnect. This work can be difficult, but the effort is worth supporting young people in building a robust network of affirming family, chosen family, and important individuals who provide a sense of belonging, unconditional commitment, and emotional permanency. If you are implementing this model, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments as you plan implementation, as you implement, or as a follow-up to implementing CAFF. All adaptations of the model should be tracked and approved by the purveyors prior to implementation.

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April 2021, Cleveland, Ohio

¹Folx is a term used to explicitly signal the inclusion of often excluded groups (e.g., women of color, women with disabilities, or transgender women).

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Statement of Purpose And Goals of The Manual

The purpose of this manual is to discuss the Chosen Affirming Family Finding (CAFF) intervention, a Family Finding model that has been adapted for LGBTQ+ young people. Safety considerations vary depending on the specific population; for young people who identify as LGBTQ+, supporting, rejecting, and/or affirming behaviors concerning their identity can impact their safety and well-being. Practitioners need to be equipped with culturally relevant language and an intersectional approach to meet the needs of young people who identify as LGBTQ+. While the core components of the Family Finding model remain the same, the strategies, approach, and skills need to be tailored for this population. This manual provides details and offers a step-by-step guide to implementing this model in your practice setting.

This manual will:

- Offer a comprehensive guide to the intervention for social service professionals as they implement the CAFF model in their own agencies.
- Support professionals in their decision-making processes as they navigate working with a CAFF young person in their practice setting.

This manual is divided into two sections. The first is a detailed explanation of the CAFF model's stages and the steps in each role. This section also provides background on why CAFF was developed and the core principles which make CAFF successful. The second section of this manual will focus on the implementation of the model and cover topics such as readiness assessments, hiring and selection, training, coaching, and data collection for the model.

Throughout the manual, there are references to tools needed to implement the model (also called supplemental materials). Supplemental materials include training materials, practice profiles, practice documents, data collection tools, fidelity assessments, script examples, and a sample job description for the CAFF Family Development Specialist role. These materials are available to any site working with Kinnect to implement CAFF.

Introduction to Chosen Affirming Family Finding (CAFF)²

Organizational Background

Kinnect is the organization that has developed CAFF and provides insight, technical assistance (TA), and training on its implementation. Kinnect is a nonprofit organization based in Cleveland, Ohio that focuses on reimagining the child welfare system. Kinnect develops and implements large-scale evidence-based social service models that work towards the goal of ensuring that every child is raised within a loving and nurturing permanent family. Fundamental to Kinnect's mission are the beliefs that foster care should be a short-term option for young people involved in the child welfare system, that families already possess solutions to their present circumstances, and that through engaging a vast network of social services professionals, institutions, and policy makers, systems-level change can occur.

Kinnect prioritizes permanency in every decision made with the families and young people served in our programs. Kinnect offers multiple programs that operate throughout the state of Ohio, including 30 Days to Family[®] Ohio, the Ohio Kinship and Adoption Navigator Program (OhioKAN), Youth-Centered Permanency Roundtables (YCPRT), and the Chosen Affirming Family (CAF) program. Each program that Kinnect delivers has been adapted and/or developed using the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) PII Approach to Implementation Science and has gone through the six implementation stages outlined in the approach. These stages include Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, Full Implementation, Replication/Adaptation, and Broad-Scale Rollout (Murray et al., 2011; Fixsen et al., 2015). The CAFF story is one of adaptation and culture change in how the child welfare system in Cuyahoga County, in partnership with Kinnect, began changing how identification of and engagement with LGBTQ+ young people and their biological, adoptive, and chosen family occurred.

Traditional Family Finding Overview

CAFF was inspired by the years of work around Family Finding. Family Finding has evolved greatly since its inception in 2003 and was heavily influenced by legislation and policy guidance on connecting young people involved in child welfare to their families. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (2008) dictated that relatives needed to be notified by child welfare agencies when relative children entered foster care. The “reasonable efforts” clause of Title IV-E codified in 45 CFR § 1356.21 (Foster Care Maintenance Payments Program Implementation Requirements, 2012) dictated that agencies receiving Title IV-E funds must make “reasonable efforts” to maintain children within their families of origin to prevent removal and entrance into

²This model was designed and evaluated in partnership with the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services and The Institute for Innovation and Implementation at University of Maryland School of Social Work. It was funded by the Children's Bureau under grant number 90CW1145.

foster care. This provided federal precedent to support the best practices of family preservation, family reunification, and alternatives to out-of-home foster care through relative placement (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). The Children's Bureau's analysis of data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and from the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) data from 2020 found that while 85% of young people who enter the foster care system are achieving permanency (either adoption, guardianship, or reunification within four or five years of entering care), young people are reunited with their families of origin in less than 50% of reunification efforts. Therefore, despite the foundation of these laws, these data demonstrate that states need to make significant improvements in family preservation to improve permanency outcomes for young people involved in the child welfare system (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021).

The Family Finding model was piloted in Washington State in 2003 by Kevin Campbell. Campbell adapted techniques used by disaster relief agencies to reunite families separated by natural disasters and war (Malm, 2016). The Family Finding model was initially designed to serve older young people who had been in foster care for a number of years and who had lost contact with their families. The original stages of Family Finding served as a way to engage kin, with the goal that kin could be supported in providing legal and emotional permanency for their youth relatives. In 2014, the Family Finding model was revised by Kevin Campbell and his colleagues (Campbell & Borgeson, 2014). Central to the revision was the inclusion of and emphasis on the alignment phase. The alignment phase was described as the creation of a shared understanding of the needs, concerns, purpose, and goals of the Family Finding work, and an authentic commitment to pursuing the same outcomes of the work from all parties involved. In the alignment phase there should be agreement that the underlying purpose of Family Finding work is to assemble and support families to be the driving force in planning, decision-making, and evaluating permanency options for their young person. Additionally, agencies should support families in the making of long-term provisions for ongoing support beyond the time that agencies will be involved in the Family Finding intervention. Family Finding work cannot and should not proceed until there is alignment from both the professionals and the families involved in the process. The alignment steps and the seven stages of Kevin Campbell's Revised Family Finding model are detailed below.

Family Finding Alignment Steps

1. *Statement of Needs and Concerns* - the Family Finding (FF) practitioner will need to review and prepare for stating the clear and specific concerns of the participating agency and the needs of the young person as they relate to their well-being and physical and emotional safety. It is important to understand that these needs and concerns from both the agency and the young person may change as the FF work progresses.
2. *Authenticity* - The FF practitioner and the other professionals will need to establish a shared consensus about how authentically they can commit to engaging, hosting, and facilitating the full participation of a young person's relatives and other important

people in a young person's life through the FF work.

3. *Purpose and Goals* - Both the FF practitioner and the other professionals will need to establish a shared commitment and consensus on why they are doing FF work.
4. *Timeframe* - The FF practitioner and the other professionals will need to establish a sense of urgency and shared time frames for the progress of the FF work.
5. *Therapeutic supports* - Throughout the process, the FF practitioner and other members of the professional team will need to continually assess the need for therapeutic support for the young person involved in FF. As the FF process progresses, family members can be engaged to take over supporting therapeutic care for the young person as needed.

Family Finding Model Revision I

1. *Engagement* - Engage a young person and their family to support identifying additional family members and other important adults in order to create a permanent network for the young person.
2. *Searching* - Within the United States, the FF practitioner will conduct extensive searches for families in accordance with federal law and regulations. Depending on the procedures of the agency implementing FF, if family searching has already occurred, the FF practitioner may begin engagement with family members that have been previously identified before finding additional members of the family. If no previous family searching has occurred, the FF practitioner will undertake a comprehensive search for a young person's family and will notify identified family that a young person who is related to them is in foster care.
3. *Preparation* - After initial engagement with the young person, family, and other important adults, the FF practitioner will convene a Blended Perspectives meeting to introduce the FF work and goals. In this preparation, the agency will vocalize any limitations or concerns for safety that the agency has before moving the FF work forward. This meeting should focus on sharing any concerns with transparency and working towards authentic commitment from both sides in order to move forward.
4. *Planning and Decision Making* - Within the FF revision, this stage is dedicated to family-centered planning and decision-making with a commitment to urgency in pursuing FF from both network members and professional staff. This is the stage where a collective goal statement is created and the Lifetime Network meeting is scheduled.
5. *Lifetime Network* - If a commitment has been made by the agency, network members, and the youth, then a lifetime network has been formed and is in its initial stages. The FF professional will work to support the development of this network in taking over the continual care and decision-making in regard to the young person through shared activities, goals, and action steps. It is the hope that this "intentional community" will then become the chief planners and support in the care of the young person. The professional FF team will slowly move into adjacent supporting roles as the family network becomes the central driving force in the process.
6. *Healing and Development* - As the process moves forward, there will be continual assessment of the therapeutic supports (both internal and external) needed by the

youth, with the insight that a committed lifetime network can provide some of the most profound healing for a young person who has been separated from them. While decisions about mental health and other care will initially be made with support from FF and other agency staff, it is the hope that the lifetime network will resume control and responsibilities for this part of a young person's ongoing care.

7. *Legal Permanency* - Network members will be supported in working with their young person to create a plan for permanency until legal permanency is achieved. Even if the youth is matched eventually with a legal guardian outside of this network, this network must not be dissolved, but must remain an active support network for the young person.

Kevin Campbell has articulated the Family Finding model from a step perspective, but much of the work of engaging young people and their networks in Family Finding is not linear. It is imperative that the establishment of alignment between the young person and the agency staff occur before anything else can or should proceed for a young person. Once alignment is achieved, it should be reviewed periodically to ensure that alignment remains throughout the work. It is important to note that the course of action for two different young people can vary dramatically based on their individual needs, permanency goals, and the state of their current connections/networks. For example, some young people require hours of discovery work to find and engage their families, while others require very little. Many times, while in the planning or decision-making phases, additional discovery or engagement is needed to support contact with a young person's network. Engagement and searching are inexorably intertwined and while they are presented in a sequenced order, they often overlap and can be non-linear. Every engagement opportunity is a potential for additional searching, and search results create the opportunity for family engagement.

Also inherent in Campbell's model is a lens towards physical and psychological safety. The CAFF model is intended for LGBTQ+ identified children and young people ages 5 to 21 who are currently in foster care and who are at risk of losing contact with their networks and/or who are estranged from their biological, adoptive, or chosen family networks. Safety looks different depending on the specific population; for young people who identify as LGBTQ+, it includes the level of supporting, rejecting, and/or affirming behaviors regarding their SOGIE. Importantly, practitioners need to attend to the full range of intersecting identities and needs of this population. For example, young people that identify as LGBTQ+ may have a broad spectrum of needs in relation to safety based on developmental stages and a variety of other factors including race, socioeconomic status, physical location, and history of trauma experiences. Practitioners will need to be equipped with culturally relevant language and an intersectional approach to meet the needs of young people who identify as LGBTQ+. While the core components of the Family Finding model remain the same, the strategies, approach and skills need to be tailored for this population.

- The CAFF adaptations to the Family Finding model were identified and implemented over time and should be revisited as new needs emerge. The adaptations include:

- Learning what affirmation looks like for the young person and what (if anything) they need from their network to feel affirmed.
- Ensuring that there is a shared commitment to following the young person's direction on how, when, and with whom their SOGIE is discussed in the work.
- Identifying immediate safety issues around their SOGIE and assisting the young person in creating a safety plan.
- Providing opportunities and support to the young person to help plan around disclosing their SOGIE ("coming out") to their family or chosen family. Providing opportunities for the young person to process and feel supported if they choose not to "come out" to family or chosen family.
- Providing LGBTQ+ specific education and coaching to the network and the child welfare team.
- Providing referrals for LGBTQ+ competent and affirming services and supports to the network.

Research Guiding the CAFF Model

When compared to the general population, young people who identify as LGBTQ+ are overrepresented in the child welfare system and in unstable housing (Baams et al., 2019). In a 2018 cross-sectional study conducted in California, 30.4% of young people living in foster care and in 25.3% in unstable housing identified as LGBTQ+ which was significantly higher when compared to LGBTQ+ young people in a national sample (11.2%). More recent studies in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland, Ohio) and New York City report that more than 30% of young people in foster care identify as LGBTQ+ (Matarese et al., 2021; Sandfort, 2020). Upon entering the child welfare system, LGBTQ+ young people were twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to report poor treatment by the system itself, incurring additional psychological trauma (Wilson et al., 2014). For example, young people who identify as LGBTQ+ may be excluded from group living settings due to unsubstantiated and stereotype-driven fears that they might be sexually inappropriate with heterosexual and cisgender young people and/or with other young people who identify as LGBTQ+ residing in group care. Additionally, LGBTQ+ young people report being blamed for the SOGIE-related harassment and abuse they experience in these group living settings (Wilber et al., 2006). Even more distressing, research has found that LGBTQ+ young people are twice as likely to be placed in residential facilities and three times as likely to be hospitalized for severe mental health conditions when compared with their heterosexual and cisgender peers (Wilson et al., 2014). Taken cumulatively, mistreatment from the child welfare system, a lack of affirming placements, and higher levels of placement instability (a 2002 study found that LGBTQ+ young people had on average 6.35 placements once they entered care), leaves LGBTQ+ young people in foster care at an increased risk of homelessness, disconnection from affirming adults, lower educational attainment, and financial instability once they are system-involved (Mallon 2002; Baams et. al, 2019).

While many LGBTQ+ young people enter foster care for similar reasons as their heterosexual and cisgender peers (e.g., abuse, neglect, interpersonal family issues and conflicts, etc.), it has been documented that LGBTQ+ young people often face additional trauma from being rejected or harassed within their families because of their diverse SOGIE (Wilson et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2009). Through the assessment of 224 in-depth interviews with LGBTQ+ young people and through the creation of quantitative scales, Ryan and colleagues found that youth who reported high levels of family rejection during adolescence were 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide, 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to be at high risk for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases when compared with their peers who did not experience this type of family rejection (Ryan et al., 2009). Ryan and colleagues also found that male-identified Latinx young people in their survey reported the highest instances of rejecting behaviors from their families due to their sexual orientation during adolescence. They concluded that this type of family rejection may be a determining factor for a wide range of negative physical health outcomes for LGBTQ+ young people. While not stated specifically, it can be inferred from these findings that meeting the needs of the LGBTQ+ youth population needs to be approached in an intersectional way given the convergence of LGBTQ+ identity and the race and culture of these young people and their families. Indeed, over a decade later in a 2019 survey of New York City youth currently in foster care, 34.1% of young people identified as LGBTQ+ and tended to primarily identify as youth of color: Black (58.1%) and Latinx (43.9%) (Sandfort, 2019).

While the prevalence of negative outcomes associated with family rejection and poor interactions with the child welfare system among LGBTQ+ young people has been high, Ryan and colleagues found that family acceptance was positively associated with better outcomes for young people's mental and physical health in their sample group (Ryan et al., 2010). Therefore, specifically tailored interventions for LGBTQ+ young people and their families both within and outside the child welfare system may provide opportunities to minimize negative outcomes and promote family acceptance. Ryan and colleagues reimagined a future in which the positive impact families can have on their children—including LGBTQ+ children—is harnessed, via the evidenced-based framework of The Family Acceptance Project® (FAP) (Ryan, 2014). Within the FAP framework, practitioners support families in understanding how their rejecting and accepting behaviors impact their children's well-being. The framework shifts professional response to LGBTQ+ young people's distinctive needs from a harm reduction lens to a prevention focus that includes centering the profound importance of family connectedness. When families are provided with accurate information and are approached with cultural humility by the professionals providing services, this can increase understanding within families that may be outright rejecting and/or ambivalent about their young person's SOGIE. These efforts could keep families together as they work through navigating the disclosure of their young person's identity (Wilber et al., 2006). The FAP has created a wide range of [evidence-informed](#)

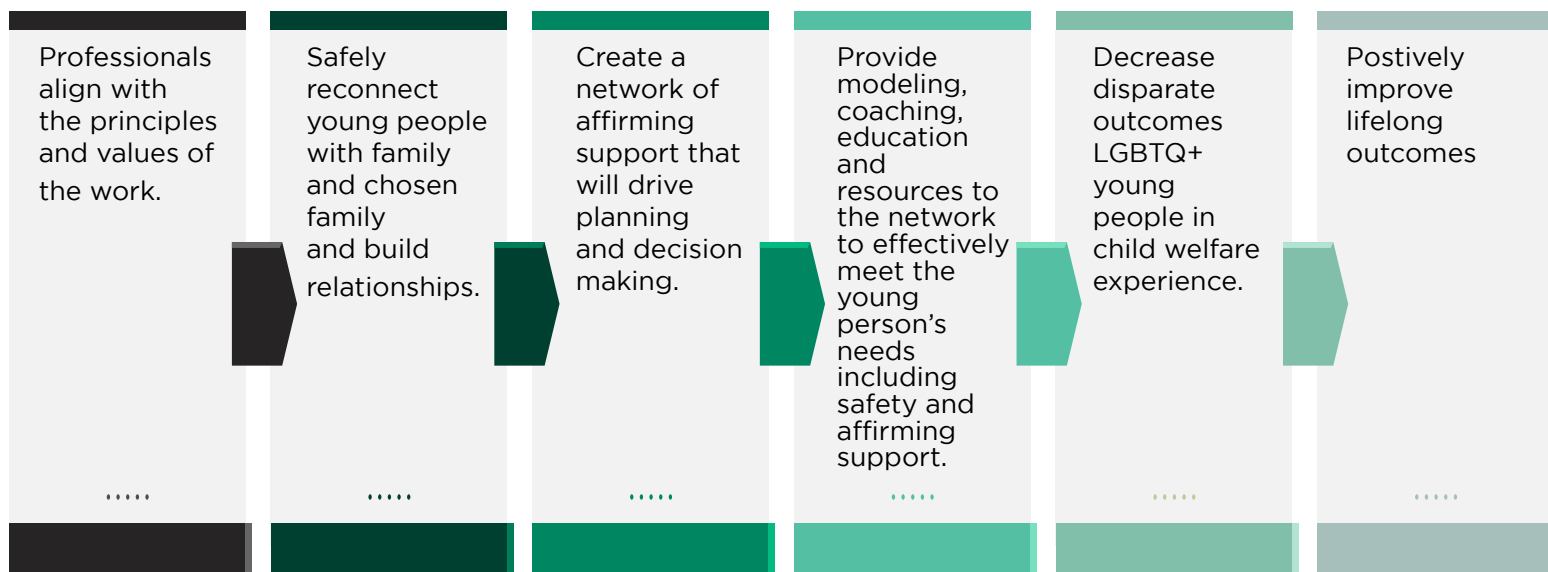
³ Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the term “intersectionality” to describe how race, class, gender, and other social identities interact in both spaces of privilege and oppression.

[resources for multicultural families](#), including LGBTQ+ family education materials in multiple languages, educational materials using faith-based themes, assessment tools to assess for risk of rejecting behaviors from families, training kits for providers at all levels from schools to mental health, and a series of educational videos directed at families (Ryan, 2014).

Finally, while the evidence base to support the effectiveness of the CAFF model is in its early stages, there is very limited but potentially positive evidence for Kevin Campbell's Family Finding model. A 2015 brief summarizing findings from 13 Family Finding evaluations across the country reported that three non-experimental evaluations found positive impacts on legal permanency for young people engaged in the intervention (Vandivere & Malm, 2015). However, the rigorous experimental evaluations summarized in this review were inconclusive. More research is required to draw generalizable conclusions about the effectiveness of the Family Finding model as of the writing of this manual in 2022.

Theory of Change

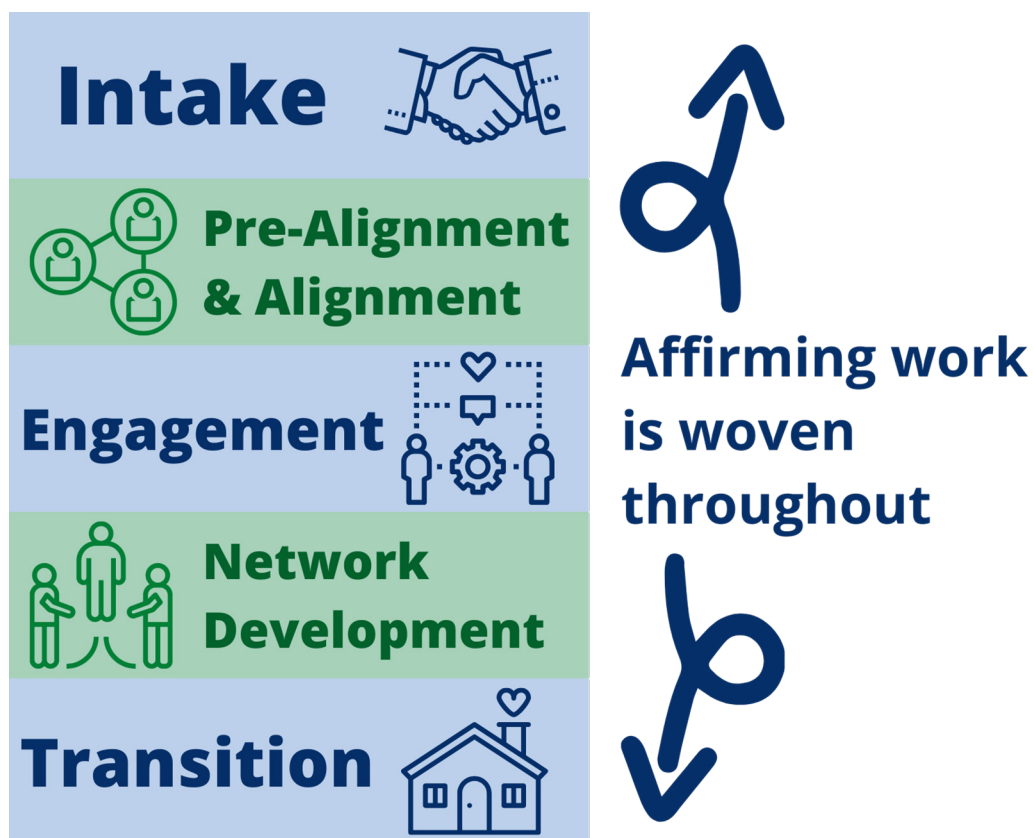
The CAFF Theory of Change asserts that LGBTQ+ young people in foster care who find a network of family, chosen family, and important people who are able to provide support, a sense of belonging, and unconditional commitment will experience improved well-being and a decrease in disparate outcomes.



CAFF Model (Family Finding Intervention and LGBTQ+ Best Practices)

The Chosen Affirming Family Finding (CAFF) model helps to engage the biological, adoptive, and chosen family of young people who have been separated from them by out-of-home foster care and/or young people who are at risk of family separation. The overall goal of family finding within the CAFF model is to locate and engage as many family members and significant adults as possible for the explicit purpose of identifying committed, life-long, and positive connections. These connections lead to a robust network of affirming individuals who provide emotional and potentially legal permanency for LGBTQ+ young people. This effort takes unwavering persistence.

CAFF Model Stages



Intake

The CAFF model starts with a referral from the public child welfare agency. If the young person meets the screening criteria, an intake meeting will be scheduled. Once the intake meeting is scheduled, the Family Development Specialist (FDS) will contact the child welfare staff with a “Welcome Packet” (included in the supplementary materials), will request the current family tree/genogram, and will ask the child welfare staff to be prepared to identify which professionals and current connections are aware of the young person’s SOGIE at the intake meeting. The FDS will explain why having this information is critical. The purpose of the intake meeting is to provide the child welfare worker and supervisor with education on the CAFF model, explore the referent’s goals for the referral, and begin to assess the child’s welfare staff’s needs and readiness regarding implementing the intervention with the young person. In addition, the FDS will assess the staff’s LGBTQ+ knowledge and competency. It is important to note that regular, repetitive education on the model is necessary throughout the life of CAFF work.

During the initial intake meeting, the FDS will complete an intake form (included in the supplementary materials) and will explain the steps of the program to the child welfare staff and supervisor. At this step, all professionals involved will learn more about the young person, their SOGIE, and who is aware of the young person’s SOGIE in their biological, adoptive, and chosen family networks as well as among the service providers currently working with the young person. This first step is critical in laying the foundation for collaboration between the FDS, FDS supervisor, and child welfare staff. It is also where initial information is gathered on the Family Finding work completed to date, the young person’s current connections, and the makeup of the professional team (e.g., therapist, case manager, foster care provider, mentor, etc.).

During the intake meeting, it is the FDS and/or the FDS supervisor’s responsibility to do the following:

- Assess the authenticity of the group’s support for finding, connecting, and obtaining the full participation of the young person’s family in this process. This is asked on a scale of 0-10 (0=absolute inability by public child welfare to authentically support the parents, siblings, relatives, and community members’ access and full participation and 10=absolute ability and authentic commitment to the young person’s opportunity to have meaningful access to and support from the community organized on their behalf through Family Finding). Explore what is in the way of having a higher number (e.g., practice philosophy, perception of agency policy, etc.) (Campbell, 2014).
- Identify the public child welfare agency goal for CAFF. The FDS explains that understanding the child welfare agency’s knowledge of CAFF gives clarity, focus, and commitment to the work.
- Facilitate working towards consensus on the public child welfare agency’s intentions and purpose for engaging in CAFF.
- Reach consensus about the degree of authenticity with which public child welfare will commit to supporting, inviting, facilitating, and safely sustaining the full participation of the young person’s parents, siblings, relatives, and other concerned adults.

- Begin to explore if child welfare staff have specific conditions (“non-negotiables”) for the young people engaging in the work that may impose parameters around aspects of the work (i.e. FDS cannot engage former foster caregiver).
- Obtain releases of information for all current professionals working with the young person.
- Tentatively schedule an alignment meeting.

The FDS establishes their needs from child welfare staff:

- The FDS needs strong communication and working relationships with child welfare staff.
- The FDS needs openness to engaging and/or reengaging family members that may have a history with the agency.
- The FDS needs and helps develop a sense of urgency for the work (i.e., the professional team needs to approach this young person’s need for a network as it would approach a crisis).
- The FDS needs flexibility from the professional team (e.g., meeting the family at days and times that will work best for their schedules).
- The FDS and the professional team need to assess safety, including identifying and completing any assessments necessary that could lead to further contact between a young person and their family (including placement and legal custody).
- The FDS needs timeliness in the professional team’s responses to communication, scheduling meetings, assessing safety, etc.

It is **ESSENTIAL** to identify and document how many current connections a young person has at the time of intake, including name, relationship, contact information, and type of contact. Additional questions to ask are: Is there a current network present? What does it look like? What will it take to create a robust and forever network?

The CAFF model defines connections as family, chosen family, or other important people that the young person has a relationship or contact with. Knowing about a young person’s supportive and/or not supportive relationships, from the referent’s perspective, at the onset of the intervention will assist in engagement with the young person, development of the young person’s genogram, supporting the young person in Family Finding, and in establishing the young person’s network.

Defining Network:

1. A group of people that meet and keep the young person's needs and goals present in conversations (i.e., providing active and continual involvement, including visiting, phone contact, and on-going emotional support). These people are present and actively involved, and are valued by the professional team as being experts on family dynamics and on the young person's strengths and needs.
2. They monitor and stay on top of the progress of relational and legal permanency efforts on an ongoing basis.
3. They are actively engaged and leading all planning and decision-making meetings that impact the young person's and their family's lives.
4. A network is not loosely connected individuals who have occasional or historical relationships with the young person, but rather individuals who are active, present, and engaged throughout the youth's life.

Developing a CAFF Genogram Using File Mining

File mining can be defined as the reviewing, or “mining,” of the young person's child welfare hard copy and/or electronic case record to discover potential family members and other connections. Documents that may be reviewed by the FDS include abuse/neglect referrals, current and previous placements, file narratives/summaries, court reports, and school records. In Ohio, CAFF team members have access to SACWIS (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System), which enables the FDS to access the child welfare records directly and learn about the young person's involvement with the system. Through file mining the FDS assesses what is currently known about the family of the young person and examines it with a new perspective in order to deeply understand the context of the biological, adoptive, and chosen family and begin identification of as many familial and kin connections as the FDS can uncover. The CAFF genogram is created simultaneously with the FDS's process of file mining. The CAFF genogram potentially offers further insight into the dynamics of the young person's biological, adoptive, or chosen family (see supplementary materials for example of a de-identified CAFF genogram). The replicating site will want to invest in genogram tools (e.g., GenoPro).

Questions to ask public child welfare staff about file mining:

- Where is the case record (file) housed? Is it an electronic file? Is there a paper file, and if so, has it been scanned? Is the case record old enough to have parts of the file in a previous public child welfare information database?
- What can be copied and provided at the intake meeting, or shortly thereafter?
- If these documents are not electronically accessible, can the FDS schedule a time to access and review the file(s) at the public child welfare agency?

LGBTQ+ Considerations:

Identifying and addressing the professionals', network's, and young person's needs around issues of SOGIE is an ongoing process throughout the CAFF work. The FDS may need to regularly provide modeling, coaching, education, and support to effectively meet the young person's needs including safety and competent and affirming support and care. A process for elevating concerns around ongoing negativity and/or rejection by professionals (e.g., not using the correct pronouns) will need to be established with the public child welfare agency.

Pre-Alignment and Alignment

A critical task of the FDS is to coordinate the young person's professionals into a team that strategizes ways to increase the young person's core network of connections and shows its commitment to the young person's relational and legal permanency. The lion's share of this task is steering these professionals towards a shared understanding of, commitment to, and active participation in the work needed to build the young person's affirming chosen family/network and to authentically support the family to create a relational and legal permanency plan. The FDS needs to take significant leadership in guiding this team and advocating for family engagement on behalf of the young person. It is critical to the alignment stage that all parties, including the members of the young person's professional team, the FDS, and the public child welfare staff, agree on the direction of the CAFF work. If there is no agreement, the process will need to immediately discontinue to allow time for further team engagement and development before moving forward with the CAFF work.

Engaging Professionals to Participate in the Work

The engagement of members of the young person's professional team is essential during the Alignment phase. The goals and FDS activities for alignment with the professional team are outlined below.

Major goals for engaging professionals in the work⁴

Goal #1 - Ensure that the professional team has a clear understanding of the CAFF referral process, the overall goals of the CAFF intervention, and an overview of the work of Family Finding.

⁴ Adapted from Walker et al. (2004).

FDS Activities for Goal #1 - Engagement activities include the FDS meeting personally with and interviewing all members of the professional team. In these meetings, the FDS provides team members with a brief overview of the CAFF work and its goals (an elevator speech works wonderfully here). During initial meetings between the FDS and the professional team members, **IF** the professional team knows about the young person's LGBTQ+ identity, it is key to establish the "why" behind the work and to build empathy around the LGBTQ+ youth and their needs and experiences.

Goal #2 - The FDS needs to prepare the professional team for the work of the CAFF intervention.

FDS Activities for Goal #2 - The FDS builds up excitement for the work by highlighting the benefits of the CAFF intervention during preparatory individual meetings. Additionally, the FDS learns each team member's perspective about current relationships in the young person's life. Most importantly, the FDS learns from the professional team members about the young person's hopes and dreams for the future.

Goal #3 - The FDS assesses authenticity in the professional team, including assessing shared agreement for the work and assessing values/assumptions specific to creating a lifelong affirming network. Additionally, the FDS assesses how the professional team views authentically engaging and partnering with biological, adoptive, and chosen family and what they feel their potential role in CAFF work will be.

FDS Activities for Goal #3 - The FDS discusses and identifies values related to the work and guiding principles of the CAFF model during individual meetings. In conversation with other professional team members, the FDS addresses concerns they have about the young person engaging in Family Finding and the broader work of the intervention. The FDS confirms that they have the support and approval of key decision makers involved with the young person, including the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian ad Litem (GAL).

Goal #4 - Engage team members to gain their active participation and set the stage for genuine collaboration in a manner that will be consistent with the CAFF principles.

FDS Activities for Goal #4 - The FDS describes the CAFF process and clarifies the potential roles and responsibilities of each person on the team. The FDS asks professionals if they are willing to participate fully in the process. If so, the FDS talks with them briefly to learn their perspectives on the young person's strengths and needs as they relate to emotional support and relationships. These conversations begin to establish what the team is willing to commit to in order to support the young person and move forward. It is imperative for the FDS to solicit buy-in from the other professionals. If they cannot buy in completely, can these professionals agree not to interfere with or sabotage the process? It will be necessary for the FDS to clarify what is needed from each member of the professional team during the alignment meeting.

Goal #5 - The FDS makes necessary arrangements for the alignment meeting with the professional team.

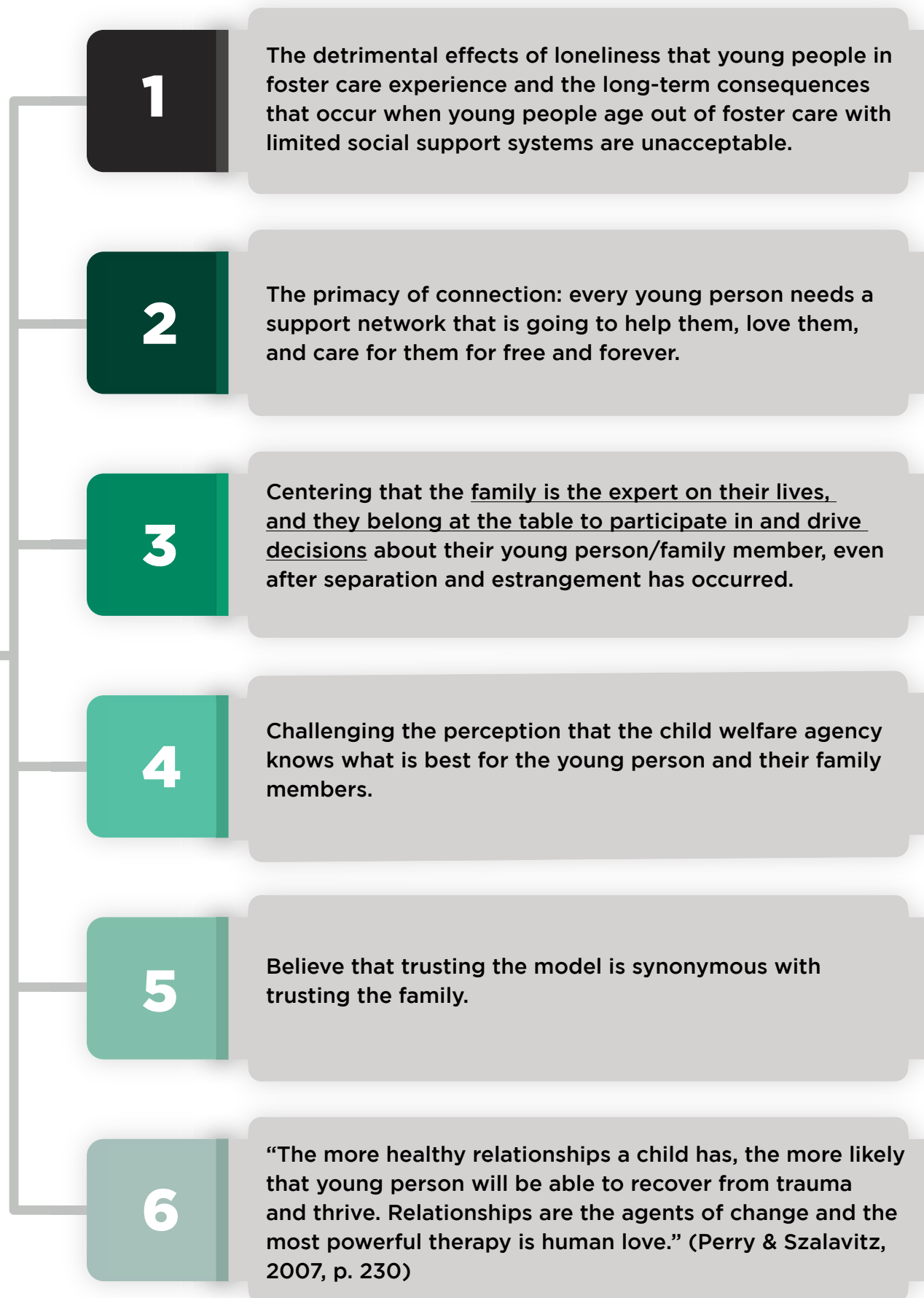
FDS Activities for Goal #5 - The FDS asks team members to be prepared to discuss the young person's strengths, family strengths (if known), and their top three to five positives and concerns about the young person specific to current support and relationships. The FDS integrates the information gathered from all sources and arranges a time and location for the alignment meeting. Additionally, the FDS asks other professionals to reflect and be able to share needs and concerns as they relate to the physical and emotional safety and well-being of the young person.

LGBTQ+ Considerations: The FDS should have an understanding from the referent, as part of the intake meeting, regarding whom the young person has disclosed their SOGIE to ("come out to"). If certain professionals engaged with the young person are not aware of the young person's SOGIE, the FDS amends their talking points during pre-alignment conversations (including how the intervention is described) so as to not "out" the young person. For the professional team members that are aware of the young person's SOGIE, the FDS needs to obtain individual team member's commitment to the young person indicating how, when, and with whom their SOGIE is discussed in the CAFF work during pre-alignment conversations.

Important considerations in engaging other professionals

Pre-alignment conversations and the initial alignment meeting with other professionals are paramount to the success of the CAFF intervention with the young person. As stated previously, it is **critical** to build consensus and a shared vision around the work of Family Finding. If this does not occur, the intervention will not move forward.

As the FDS explores the willingness of the professional team to move away from public child welfare "business as usual" and to move forward into the establishment of shared agreements around the CAFF work, any implementing body doing this intervention may come up against significant pushback against reuniting and engaging young people's biological, adoptive, and chosen family networks. *Much of this pushback comes out of fear that reconnecting and engaging family will be traumatic or re-traumatizing for the young person.* In conversations where pushback occurs, the FDS will find it helpful to keep reminding other professionals of the research and data underpinning Family Finding and positive LGBTQ+ youth outcomes when young people are connected and affirmed by those closest to them. The FDS will learn more about the other professionals' viewpoints by creating shared agreements around the foundational approaches to the CAFF work outlined here:



It is key for the FDS to acknowledge the enormity of the shift potentially taking place for the other professionals in moving away from professional leadership to young person/family leadership, and in moving conversations from a treatment or service orientation to a focus on relationship and life orientations. As the FDS conducts these pre-alignment conversations, they are not only obtaining the other team members' perspectives, but beginning to consider the strengths of the various team members and envisioning what building a team together might look like.

In final preparation for the alignment meeting, the FDS needs to ask the other professionals to reflect on and be able to share needs and concerns as they relate to the physical and emotional safety and well-being of the young person. The FDS supports the other professionals in considering the following items in preparation for the alignment meeting:

- The FDS supports the other professionals in assessing their own capacity to commit to the work (i.e., help them by not asking for more than they can give to the process).
- The FDS creates excitement for the work and exemplifies **why** other professionals need to be present for the initial alignment meeting.
- The FDS supports the other professionals in understanding the value of their presence at the alignment meeting and helps them explore the relevant knowledge they bring to the table.
- The FDS supports the other professionals in understanding their connection to the work and their current and future vision for the young person in the care of a public child welfare agency.
- The FDS is explicit in telling each professional **why** they are needed on the CAFF team.
- The FDS explores the other professionals' visions for what they want to see happen with the CAFF work so the FDS can begin strategizing ways to build consensus for the whole group in the work.

After the FDS integrates all the information gathered from file mining and pre-alignment conversations with members of the professional team, the FDS sets the time and location for the initial alignment meeting of the entire professional team. It is important to note that this meeting does not include the young person, but is simply a meeting to bring all the professionals together to create a shared vision and to forge group alignment in order to move forward.

Facilitating an Initial Alignment Meeting

After the major work of intake and pre-alignment occurs with a young person's professional team, it is time to conduct the alignment meeting. The FDS organizes the alignment meeting in service of two objectives: (1) the FDS uses the meeting to obtain a shared understanding of, commitment to, and active participation from the professional team which is needed to build the young person's affirming chosen family/network and

to support the family in creating a relational and legal permanency plan; (2) the FDS works towards the creation of a professional team that strategizes ways to increase the young person's core network of connections and shows their commitment to the young person's relational and legal permanency. During the alignment meeting it is vital that the FDS establishes a sense of urgency amongst the professional team for the work of Family Finding.

The FDS begins the alignment meeting with introductions that include the names of the professionals and their relationship to the young person. The FDS may choose to include an icebreaker to begin the introductions if that feels appropriate and genuine for the FDS. Next, the FDS introduces the Chosen Affirming Family Finding (CAFF) model, explains the WHY around doing this work, introduces Family Finding, and explains the role of the professional team. Then, the FDS goes over the essential components of the CAFF model and briefly describes what those components mean, including the sense of urgency needed for the work, the expanded definition of permanency, effective relative search, the family-driven process, and the development of multiple plans in pursuit of permanency. Next, the FDS describes the purpose (objectives) of the alignment meeting and why alignment is essential for the success of this intervention. Because the FDS is explaining complex and potentially new information for the professional team, it is important to have a brief moment at this time for the FDS to take initial questions from the professional team about the information just covered before moving forward.

The next section of the meeting is the heart of the alignment process. The FDS opens up the meeting and facilitates brainstorming and open discussions among team members around identifying the strengths of both the young person and their family. Additionally, the team brainstorms what they think it will take to achieve permanency for this young person, including discussion of what has already been tried before and if there were any insights from previous file mining. Obtaining the professionals' knowledge and perception of the young person's current contacts and relationships is another way to gain as much information as possible about connections and the potential need for healing relationships. The team then discusses what new things they might try to engage the family, focusing particularly on what has not been tried before. The FDS then pivots the conversation from the family to engaging the young person in planning for their own permanency and discussing how the professional team can support this. Lastly, the FDS opens up the conversation to concerns that the professional team and the agencies they represent may have about the physical and emotional safety and well-being of the young person and their participation in the intervention.

Optional: *The FDS may ask the professional team to draft a team goal statement that is clear and focused and reflects a collective commitment to Family Finding. An example of a team goal statement is, "Through regular communication, collaboration and teamwork, we will actively engage, prioritize and integrate the CAFF work in our current support of [young person] so [Young Person's Name] has an affirming network. We will work with the network and support family- and youth-centered decision making and permanency planning."*

After the creation of the optional goal statement and commitment to the work by the team, the FDS wraps up the meeting, offers clarity on next steps, and closes the meeting. The primary goal of this meeting is to leave with a commitment to supporting the young person in developing an affirming network of family, kin, and chosen family that is able to provide support, a sense of belonging and unconditional commitment and that is fully engaged in the planning and decision making necessary to achieve emotional and legal permanency. The nuance of this meeting centers around the professionals agreeing to a family-centered practice and to fully move away from agency-centered decision making. Additionally, the professional team needs to leave the meeting with an understanding of the potential negative impact on the young person's future of not having the presence and full inclusion of a chosen family team/network. Outlined below is a summary of the essential outcomes the FDS needs to leave the alignment meeting having completed before the intervention can proceed to the next phase:

Essential alignment meeting outcomes

- Obtain a shared understanding of, commitment to, and active participation from professionals in the work needed to build the young person's affirming chosen family/network and support the family in creating a relational and legal permanency plan.
- An authentic commitment to invite, host, convene, facilitate, and safely sustain the full participation of parents, siblings, relatives, and other concerned adults.
- Create a team that strategizes ways of increasing the young person's core network of connections and shows their commitment to the young person's relational and legal permanency.
- Establishes a sense of urgency with the CAFF work and the necessity of the team's commitment to urgency.
- A shared team commitment by the professionals that the young person will direct how their SOGIE is discussed (**IF** all professionals are aware of the young person's SOGIE).
- Establish child welfare's specific conditions ("non-negotiables") within the CAFF work and ensure everyone has an awareness of these parameters.
- Optional: A team goal statement that reflects collective clarity, focus, and commitment to Family Finding.

Professional understanding of what being part of the CAFF team requires:

- Active participation in the alignment phase (i.e., before, during and after the meeting).
- Supporting youth voice and family/chosen family voice through words and actions.
- Recognizing that the family is their own expert. This does not mean that professional and child welfare staff do not have expertise in relevant areas, but that the family is the primary source for detailing their strengths and areas of need.
- Prioritizing the young person's need to build relationships, build a network, and maintain connectedness to that network.
- Helping the young person to feel safe, seen, and supported.
- Supporting the restoration of dignity to the young person and their family.

- Assessing how the values of the professional may differ from those of CAFF and what the professional will do to come into alignment with the work.

The alignment meeting is documented in the Alignment Meeting Form with team agreements that are signed by all meeting participants (this form can be found in supplementary materials). It is important to remember that this is the **first and last** meeting that the FDS will facilitate without the young person. If the professionals or the FDS feels more time is needed to discuss concerns, strategy, etc., then the FDS needs to schedule a continuing alignment meeting before engaging the young person.

An important note on alignment with other professionals: the FDS and their supervisor is continually gauging commitment and alignment to the process as it moves forward. Enthusiastic commitment is needed from all members of the professional team in this initial phase, but this will NOT be the end of these types of conversations. Indeed, in our pilot site, we found ourselves continually working with other professionals to bring them back into alignment with the model as the work progressed and grew more complex.

LGBTQ+ Considerations: The FDS needs to be clear as to which professional team members are aware of the young person's SOGIE in order to know to what extent SOGIE can be discussed in the alignment meeting. The referent will need to confirm this with the young person and have this information available at intake. As noted earlier, if not all professional team members are aware of the young person's LGBTQ+ identity, then it is not discussed in the alignment meeting. The FDS needs to obtain individual team members' commitment to the young person regarding how, when, and with whom their SOGIE is discussed during pre-alignment conversations. The FDS provides modeling, coaching, education, and/or support to the professionals throughout the alignment meeting to address any SOGIE-specific barriers that could impact moving the CAFF work forward or the young person's safety and access to competent and affirming support and care.

After the main brainstorming part of the alignment meeting, the FDS segues into discussing SOGIE and the importance of having the young person direct how their identities are discussed in the work. The FDS reviews their role in providing education and support to both the professional team and the young person's network around diverse SOGIE.

Engagement

If after the alignment meeting, the FDS (in conversation with their supervisor) feels that the meeting outcomes detailed above have been achieved, the FDS will move the intervention forward into the Engagement phase and begin the initial work of engaging the young person. The main goal of the engagement phase is to establish rapport, explain the CAFF intervention, and gather information about the young person's family, kin, and

support in an effort to identify potential and desired network members.

If this engagement goal cannot be attained through engagement strategies and activities alone, additional meeting(s) will be scheduled. The goal of these meetings is to bring the current network and newly identified connections together in order to brainstorm ways to locate and engage additional network members and support the young person.

Ongoing rapport building with public child welfare staff and professionals working with the young person continues throughout this phase of the CAFF Model.

First Contact and Conducting the Initial Youth Assessment

After the young person is accepted into the CAFF intervention, the intake process has been completed, and the professionals in the alignment meeting have committed to the work, the FDS meets with the young person for the first time to conduct the Initial Youth Assessment (see the form in the supplementary materials). During the initial assessment and meeting, the FDS begins the work of building a professional relationship with the young person. The main components of the Initial Youth Assessment (IYA) are outlined below:

- The IYA gathers basic information from the young person's perspective, including the name and pronouns they use.
- The IYA asks the young person to provide their own permanency goal at the start of the CAFF process.
- The FDS explains the work of CAFF, clearly outlines their own role for the young person, and sets professional boundaries with the young person.
- The FDS asks the young person to verbalize their understanding of the program and to offer their consent to participate in the intervention.
- The FDS has the young person define what support means to them and identify who they feel supports them currently.
- The FDS has the young person identify who they feel is their family, including biological, adoptive, and chosen family members.
- The FDS has the young person identify who they would like to have support from in their lives, and who they may have lost contact with.
- The FDS asks the young person to voice any current safety concerns they may have at home, school, or community specific to their SOGIE. The young person is also asked to anticipate any safety concerns they have as a result of participating in the CAFF work.
- Lastly, the young person identifies current safe and affirming connections within their network.

It is important for the FDS to facilitate this first conversation in such a way that the young person has the opportunity to voice any concerns about the work (either regarding Family Finding or their SOGIE) and to ask questions about the process. As discussed previously, this process is led by the young person and their active participation is critical to the success of the intervention. The initial conversation is foundational to building trust and rapport with the young person. It is vital that the FDS knows who the young person is

or is not “out to” in order to avoid “outing” the young person as the FDS engages with them and their network simultaneously. Sample scripts are available in the supplementary materials.

Exploring the Young Person’s Experience and Needs

After the initial engagement meeting with the young person, the FDS continues engagement in order to more fully understand the young person’s experiences, their perspectives on familial and chosen connections, and their vision of permanency. The FDS continues exploring if or when the young person has envisioned contact with biological, adoptive, and chosen family, and what those experiences looked like for the young person. As the FDS spends time with the young person it is important for the FDS to utilize active listening skills and validate the young person’s perspective. It is important to note that just as the professional team is making the shift to a young person and family-led process, the young person may also have to work through adjusting to being the lead and directing the work. With the support, advocacy, and continual identification of the young person’s strengths by the FDS, both in one-on-ones with the young person and in meetings with other professionals, this profound shift can occur.

As the engagement continues, the FDS and the young person identify their strengths, family’s strengths, visions of permanency, and develop needs statements specific to familial and kin relationship development, support, SOGIE affirmation, and achieving permanency. These are documented in the Youth-Led Permanency Plan (YLP Plan). It’s important to note that as the work moves forward, strengths, permanency, vision, and needs statements may evolve or change over time with the input of the young person and their network. A YLP Plan example is provided in the supplementary materials that support this manual.

Engagement Phase Timeline and Goals

Outlined below are the CAFF engagement phase and timeline goals that the FDS needs to complete during the initial engagement with a young person:

- The FDS schedules a meeting with the young person within 5 business days of successful completion of the alignment meeting.
- The FDS identifies immediate safety issues around their SOGIE and assists the young person in creating a safety plan at the IYA meeting. The FDS works with the young person to explore vision and goal setting for their permanency plan within 30 days of the initial meeting with the young person.
- The FDS completes a genogram with the young person within the first 30 days of the initial meeting with the young person.
- The FDS identifies **at least 40** additional individuals as a result of the FDS’s searches to identify more family, chosen family, and kin within the first 30 days of engaging the young person.⁵
- The FDS works with the young person to identify and engage **at least two** non-paid

supports in face-to-face meetings within 30 days of engagement.

- The number of family/chosen family members engaged in the work will have increased due to the Family Finding work within the first 60 days of engagement.
- If the FDS supervisor determines a robust network is not identified within 30 days of the engagement stage starting, the FDS schedules a meeting within two weeks in efforts to reconvene the professional team, the young person, and identified supports to strategize ways to find family, engage family, and further grow the young person's network.

This proposed timeline is fast-paced and relentless for the FDS carrying out the CAFF work. That being said, sometimes, the Engagement phase timeline can be extended due to unforeseen obstacles that occur in a rigorous search process. It is critical for the FDS and their supervisor to know *when* to adapt and move in a different direction as the work evolves. Additionally, the Engagement phase timeline can also be sped up or slowed down, as it is fluid and individual to each young person and family. Despite this, the FDS must have relentless curiosity and a sense of urgency to continually move the work forward in order to achieve these goals within the proposed time frame.

Exploring Relationships

In order to further explore familial and chosen family connections with the young person during the initial engagement process, the FDS collaborates with the young person on developing their genogram. If the young person has difficulty remembering or is unable to identify family or chosen family, the FDS engages the young person in Family Finding exercise(s) such as Mobility Mapping and the Tree of Life (which will be explained in greater detail in the following sections). These exercises are meant to explore the young person's knowledge about their biological, adoptive, and chosen family networks. Per the timeline suggestions above, the creation of the genogram (as well as Mobility Mapping, and Tree of Life activities, when applicable) is completed within the first few weeks of engagement with a young person. These activities also help the FDS to understand the narrative the young person has about their story and their connection to their family members, which may differ significantly with the professional team's narrative about the young person and their family. A description of each activity follows.

Collaborating on the Genogram

The initial drafts of the genogram and family tree are completed after file mining. The Family Finding work needs to be completed in collaboration with and with the complete buy-in of the young person. The FDS and the young person should go through the genogram together and talk about each connection on the genogram. The FDS should get the young person's perspective and insight into the family dynamics and who may be missing that the young person remembers. It is also useful to add chosen family/fictive kin to the genogram and not just biological and adoptive relatives. The young person can help

⁵ Replicating agencies need to approach search and engagement with relentless curiosity in order to find as many individuals as possible and engage them in relationship development when found. Questions about the necessity of identifying a specific number of family/chosen family can be further discussed in initial implementation.

to identify important fictive kin relationships during the session. As the young person and the FDS discuss the genogram, the FDS also assesses who the young person has disclosed their SOGIE to and who may be affirming and/or rejecting of the young person's SOGIE within their network.

Mobility Mapping

The FDS leads the young person in a Mobility Mapping exercise which allows the young person to rediscover important people and places from their past. The process can reveal a young person's daily activities and significant relationships, as well as distinctive community or neighborhood features and structures, and important geographic locations. Having the young person participate in this exercise gives the FDS opportunities to reach out to the people identified and encourage connections with the young person. It is important to note that this activity can take a few hours to complete depending on how many times a young person has moved in their past. The FDS must keep reminding the young person to create this map through the recollection of *positive* memories and events; the FDS needs to monitor closely and redirect the activity if necessary as it progresses. The FDS needs markers, tape, a big blank sheet of poster paper, and a blank wall or large table for the activity. Outlined below are the steps for Mobility Mapping (the handout for Mobility Mapping is available in the supplementary materials):

- Ask the young person to remember each location they have lived in their past. Have the young person draw the location and ask them to fill in as many details as possible, including who lived with them at this location, who the neighbors were, etc.
- Repeat this process and ask about each location where a young person has lived. Try to gather as much information as you can until you arrive at the young person's present location.
- After the young person has completed their own Mobility Map, the FDS can instruct the young person to go back and mark locations and people with whom they felt safe and unsafe. After identifying safe people, the young person can mark who they want to reconnect with from their past on their map.

As stressed earlier, it is important for the FDS to keep directing the young person to focus on positive memories and connections during this activity. Even with the best of intentions, this exploration process may be triggering for some young people. This exercise may need to be completed over several sessions and coordinated with the therapist to ensure the therapist is available to support and process as the young person needs.

Tree of Life

The Tree of Life exercise was created by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough (Ncube, 2006) and adapted for young people in foster care by Mike Mertz (Mertz, 2017). The FDS supplies big pieces of paper and a variety of colored markers for the young person to use. The FDS lets the young person know that they will be creating a tree on the paper. The FDS assures the young person that their tree can look like anything they want and that it doesn't need to look like a tree. The FDS begins explaining the different components of

the tree—roots, ground, trunk, branches, leaves, fruit, and seeds—and what they represent in the activity.

- **Roots** - the roots in this exercise represent where the young person is from. This can include people, places, ideas, social movements, etc.
- **Ground** - the ground represents where the young person is now and the activities in the young person's everyday life that they choose to engage in.
- **Trunk** - In the trunk of the tree, the young person is invited to identify what is important and valuable to them. This can include skills, abilities, purposes, and other commitments.
- **Branches** - On the branches the young person can describe their hopes and dreams, and what they envision their future to be.
- **Leaves** - The leaves on the tree represent important people, alive or dead, who have contributed in some way to the life of the young person.
- **Fruits** - The fruits on the tree represent gifts the young person has received from other important people in their life.
- **Seeds** - The seeds represent the gifts the young person has given or hopes to give to others.

There are significant considerations for the Tree of Life activity and its use within CAFF. This exercise centers the young person's perspective about their history, instead of looking for and centering the traumatic and/or negative narratives that may be in the story that is continually repeated by the child welfare system. The Tree of Life activity "invites the formation of alternative storylines of identity" to be voiced by the young person (Mertz, 2017, p 4). It can be profoundly healing to ask a young person questions about what is important to them in their life, especially as a person in a professional role within a system that both historically and currently does not put the young person at the center.

Locating and Engaging Family and Chosen Family

As the FDS engages the young person in exploring their perspectives and permanency goals, they should *simultaneously* begin locating and engaging family and chosen family identified to date. It is important to note that these relationships need the same level of engagement, rapport building, care, and exploration as the relationship the FDS is forging with the young person. Just as with the engagement activities conducted with the young person, engagement with the biological, adoptive, and chosen family members offers the FDS an opportunity to hear the family's narrative of their history and relationship to the young person—which is oftentimes different from the narrative provided by the public child welfare agency. Indeed, much of the work of developing the young person's network is about facilitating the opportunity for the family to connect, reconnect, and repair their own relationships.

The FDS uses a variety of search engines (e.g., Google, Accurant) and social media searches to identify and locate more family and chosen family members. Once contact information is in hand, the FDS contacts the family member or kin by phone, email, social media, or by visiting the last known address. Sample scripts on how to introduce the FDS and CAFF work are available in the supplementary materials.

Once a biological, adoptive, or chosen family member is correctly identified, the FDS focuses the initial conversation on soliciting support in building the family genogram. Again, this is where relentless curiosity is imperative. In addition to asking about parents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, friends, etc., the FDS should also ask if there is anyone identified as the matriarch and/or the patriarch of the family, the family historian, and/or anyone who coordinates the family reunions. It is important to ask individuals contacted to provide their memories of the young person, and if there is any message they would like the FDS to relay to the young person. Such information and messages have helped young people remember family members they were disconnected from and may spark interest in making contact. The FDS then lets the biological, adoptive, or chosen family member know that the FDS will share this information with the young person and that the young person will identify next steps in reaching out to that individual. It is important to end the contact with the FDS establishing with the individual that it is okay for the FDS to call back and follow up.

**“...relentless
curiosity is
imperative.”**

As the number of interactions grows, the FDS uses the same tools of active listening and validation to understand the knowledge and story that the family/chosen family members may share with the FDS. The FDS engages these connections with the same level of commitment that they bring into engagement with the young person. Important considerations as a FDS engages families include:

- Developing relationships with the family and chosen family members is equally as important as developing the relationship with the young person.
- Maintaining an understanding that historically, family/chosen family member engagement has centered around placement of the young person and legal permanency, not relationship development. The FDS may need to regularly explain the goal of network development and process/validate concerns and fears about placement and legal custody.
- Supporting family members in processing feelings of guilt, loss, anger, and fear in connecting or reconnecting with the young person.
- Supporting family members as they navigate fear, anxiety, and anger with engaging or reengaging with the public child welfare system.
- Supporting them in elevating their voice in spaces where there is a history of discounting, racism, or marginalization.
- Not “outing” the young person and being mindful of who may have been rejecting and/or accepting of the young person.
- Continual checking-in and following-up after communication and visits with the young person.

The FDS should approach these conversations with relentless curiosity in learning about the family and in engaging them in the CAFF work.

LGBTQ+ Considerations: It is important to note that when the FDS introduces themselves to family members and explains the reason for the contact, references to the Family Finding work being specific to LGBTQ+ young people is omitted. Also, it is essential that the FDS and young person identify which names and pronouns the FDS will use when engaging with family members and kin. When cold-calling individuals that the FDS is exploring as potential familial connections, the FDS follows the lead of the individual as to the name and pronouns they use to describe the young person. These considerations need to be processed with the young person to ensure the young person is aware of the FDS's commitment regarding how, when, and to whom they disclose their SOGIE. The young person should be assured that there is no shame or secrecy associated with any decision not to disclose their SOGIE.

Network Development, Permanency Development, and Implementation

Goals and Timeline of the Network and Permanency Development Phase

Engagement and relationship development between the FDS and the young person, and between the FDS and family members, continues throughout this phase of the work. Opportunities for the young person and family members to communicate, meet, and spend time together are facilitated with the support of the FDS and public child welfare staff.

The overall goal for this phase of the work is the development of a network of at least five to seven (ideally more) affirming family members, chosen family members, and/or important people who have been explored and identified as wanting to provide support, a sense of belonging, and unconditional commitment now and lifelong. It is important to note that historically, family/chosen family engagement in public child welfare has centered around placement of the young person and legal permanency, not relationship development. Because of this experience, many family/chosen family members may be reluctant to engage or reengage in network development. The FDS must continuously communicate the overall goals of the phase. Placement and legal custody are potential outcomes of having a strong, committed network; however, this is not the focus or purpose of network development.

An outcome of this phase is a Youth-Led Permanency (YLP) Plan, which is created by the young person with input and feedback from the network and supported by public child welfare staff and the rest of the professional team. In this phase, public child welfare staff are prepared to integrate the YLP Plan into existing child welfare permanency planning, and to engage and collaborate with the young person and family in all decision making. The public child welfare agency and staff are prepared and agreeable to work with the network to achieve relational and, when possible, legal permanency. The FDS continues with ongoing rapport building, discovery, engagement activities, and assessment of the willingness and capacity of all members to support the young person as a network.

Outlined below are the CAFF Network and Permanency development phase and timeline goals that the FDS needs to complete with the young person and their network:

- The FDS works with the young person to identify at least two non-paid supports to engage in a network meeting.
- The FDS prepares the network for the youth-led permanency process and meetings.
- The FDS works with the young person to set an agenda and goals for the meetings prior to each meeting.
- The FDS identifies the core network within 90 days of the initial meeting with the young person.
- The network meetings support the further development of the YLP plan and create measurable objectives and action steps that move the network towards permanency.
- The YLP Plan is reviewed and updated after each young person and family centered process meeting.

Preparing for a Network Meeting

After the FDS and young person complete the YLP Plan, and family members and kin have verbalized a willingness to support the young person and engage in network development, the preparation for a network meeting commences. The main objective of this network meeting is to bring the young person, their family, and the professionals together to further develop the YLP Plan and put the plan into action; this meeting is an opportunity for the young person to present their plan to everyone with the support of the FDS. Additionally, in talking through the initial permanency plan the young person has developed, this meeting serves as a brainstorming session in ascertaining what the young person needs each group member to do in order to move the plan forward. The group needs to come prepared to talk about myriad options and ideas.

In order to prepare the young person, the FDS will want to create an agenda with the young person and identify what they need from others in the group. To further support this young person-led process, the FDS can offer areas for choice and decision making for the young person including identifying who will be invited, what will be discussed, and even where family members and professionals will sit in the meeting. This can also include giving the young person agency over speaking or not during certain parts of the meeting. For example, in past meetings the FDS provided the young person a “pass” sign at the young person’s request for use when they did not want to talk or answer questions. Because this meeting should be less formal than meetings held within public child welfare, the location of the meeting should be what feels most accessible and comfortable for the young person and family. Again, the young person determines what they feel they need to have in place to support their leadership in the meeting.

Prepping Network Members

Much of the work developing the network is done outside of the network meetings. The FDS spends time before meetings preparing team members for the following:

1. Learning about the network member (e.g., culture, relationships, experiences) in order to better understand and begin to highlight functional strengths that will support

network development and permanency planning.

2. Sharing information the network needs to know about the child's experiences to date and allowing the network member time to process what has happened in the past.

3. Learning about the network member's understanding or perception of the young person's needs specific to support, affirmation (if the young person is "out" to the member), relationship development and permanency. Examples of questions to discuss:

- What are their hopes/dreams/vision for the young person's future?
- What are they worried about?
- What is working well [for the young person]?
- What needs to happen [for the young person, themselves, and the network]?

4. Being clear about any commitments that the network member might make and emphasizing that the commitments they make to the child/young person are not time-limited but are for the rest of their lives. Process ideas, concerns, and hopes in this space.

5. Discuss what needs to be in place to maintain the focus on the young person when family members/network members do not get along or have a contentious relationship.

Reminders prior to the start of the meeting:

- The purpose of the meeting is to process relationships, strengths, and needs specific to relational permanency; it is not an opportunity to discuss concerns or needs specific to behaviors, school performance, etc.
- Public child welfare staff are not the decision makers in these meetings. If child welfare staff feel that they do not have the authority to agree to the YLP Plan, the person who has that authority must be in attendance.

Strengths-Based Perspective

How the FDS discusses and models the importance of young person and family strengths throughout each phase of the work is critical. The FDS models a strengths perspective when discussing, supporting, and building upon the young person's and the family's strengths before and during each meeting. Working from a strengths perspective is critical because it supports a significant shift in how the strengths of families and young people have historically been identified and discussed within child welfare. Engaging families' and young people's strengths helps identify the functional assets that can be used in creating a foundation for strengths-based objectives, and for building strategies that can address the young person's needs, support healing, and achieve permanency.

With the CAFF model, we adopt the strengths perspective of Wraparound:

Strengths are best discovered by listening to the family or individual's story about the ups and downs of their life up to this point. Rather than ask people directly about their strengths, hearing their story provides concrete examples of the coping strategies that they have used to deal with the challenges in the past, what they have learned about what does and does not work well for them, how their culture shapes the way they see and deal with the world, and their individual preferences—the things that make them happy. (Miles & Franz, 2012, p.3)

It is the responsibility of the FDS to actively listen and observe the strengths rather than ask the family member or young person to report their strengths. The FDS also has a responsibility to create a “strengths scaffolding” to move abstract strengths to a strength description that evokes the family’s practices, intentions, values/beliefs, hopes and dreams, and commitments (Vygotsky, 1986; White, 2007; Madsen & Gillespie, 2014).

How the FDS models speaking with and about the young person in meetings with other professionals and family members is tremendously impactful to the success of the CAFF work and to empowering the young person and their network.

Identifying Needs, Purpose, and Areas of Conflict

The young person’s individual unmet needs are identified prior to the network meeting in discussion with the FDS about the young person’s permanency plan. As this is happening, the FDS is engaging the family/chosen family networks and ascertaining their needs and their perceptions of the young person’s unmet needs prior to the network meeting. As stated previously, the FDS will also have talked through the needs of the other professionals within the alignment meeting. The FDS, the young person, the family members, and the professionals all will have had the opportunity to state their needs and parameters before the scheduling and facilitation of the network meeting. The young person determines who among their professional team, family, and chosen family they want to be involved in the network meeting. Additionally, any individual attending the network meeting needs to fully understand the purpose of the meeting, their role within the meeting, what they can offer the young person in terms of support and permanency, and be prepared to identify what next steps need to occur to realize the young person’s permanency plan (i.e., what needs to be in place for success?).

Lastly, the FDS and the network meeting facilitator need to have a nuanced understanding of the potential areas of conflict that could arise by bringing these diverse groups of people together for the network meeting. Through prior engagement work with the young person, the family, and the professional team members, the FDS will have an understanding of what the relational dynamics are. The FDS should come to the meeting prepared with a general sense of what potential areas of tension exist and having set the intention with all the attendees that this space has the potential to bring to light resolutions and repairs.

It is important to note that if the family is able and willing to come together in a more informal manner, the FDS should provide the support necessary for this to occur. The FDS will then advocate for the family’s more informal type of meeting and not the formalized gathering of a network meeting as previously described. If the formation of a more informal gathering does not happen naturally, then there is flexibility for the more formalized meeting approach outlined in this section. In the event that a family is willing to initiate this process amongst themselves, the FDS’s role will then be to become more of a support person who might offer space and food for the gathering. However, in the event that a young person’s network needs extra support in coming together, the network meeting process will be instituted by the FDS.

The First Network Meeting/The Blended Perspectives Meeting

The first network meeting, also called the Blended Perspectives Meeting, brings together the young person, family, chosen family, and professionals for the purpose of gaining a clear understanding of the young person's support, connection, and permanency needs, as well as their strengths and concerns, so that further development of the YLP plan can begin. The goal is to get as many network members as possible thinking similarly about the young person's need for connection, now and lifelong.

It also allows potential network members to reflect on and consider whether they can provide what is needed for the young person. Those who are struggling with their own life challenges may decline involvement in the network once they have clear information about the commitment that is required, or may need to reconsider the level of involvement or support they are able to provide. Kevin Campbell reminds us that it is important to respect these decisions and "honor the no's".

As the FDS is preparing each network member for the meeting, the FDS introduces the benefit of establishing meeting guidelines both prior to and as the meeting begins and encourages the young person and their network to define those guidelines. The FDS helps set the tone that this meeting will focus on reviewing the young person's permanency plan through the lens of nurturing relationships. It is imperative to set this intention with all attendees and the young person. As the group begins the meeting and the permanency plan is presented by the young person, the FDS explores relationships by asking the young person and their family who else should be in the room and what barriers exist to getting more network members at the table (Campbell and Borgeson, 2014).

Ongoing Network Meetings

The purpose of ongoing network meetings is to develop, with a sense of urgency, a commitment from network members to offer frequent and meaningful support to the child or young person and to discuss progress or barriers to the YLP Plan.

In these meetings, the young person and network continue to develop the YLP Plan by identifying measurable objectives and actionable tasks that utilize strengths to address and resolve the identified unmet needs as well as highlight what network members can offer and commit to in supporting the young person now and lifelong. The FDS also seeks to understand what the network's plans are for the young person's safety and future and helps the network members strengthen their relationships with one another.

As the group discusses the young person's permanency plan, the FDS facilitates discussion on needed action steps, ensures that all action steps have a responsible party with a specific deadline, and prepares to review all of these at the end of the meeting. The style of these meetings is heavily influenced by the processes associated with Family Group Conferencing (New Zealand, 1988; American Humane Association, 2010) and involves handing the decision making back to the network. When possible, the planning, scheduling, holding and/or facilitating of these meetings should be done by the network and the young person.

Eliciting and Implementing Feedback

As has been emphasized previously, the intention of the network meeting is not to allow it to become a professional meeting, but to offer a space for it to be truly family- and youth-led. In the feedback stage, after the young person has presented their permanency plan to the group with the support of the FDS, the family and the other professionals have an opportunity to offer feedback on it. *This is a critical juncture as this is where we need the other professionals to agree to support whatever plan the family may propose* and not to offer up impediments that have not already been voiced within the alignment meeting. The FDS offers a reminder that all the professionals in the room made a previous commitment to the work in the alignment meeting. If child welfare or other professionals do have specific conditions (“non-negotiables”), everyone should be aware of the parameters imposed by them prior to this meeting. The network meeting is NOT the place for bringing these issues to light; the FDS should have provided space for these to be heard previously and every person in the meeting should be aware of these conditions. Assuming this is not an issue in the network meeting, this is the place where the family and other professionals offer constructive feedback on the young person’s plan and collaborate to further develop and refine it.

When to Transition to Family-Facilitated Network Meetings

As was suggested earlier, it is ideal for families to take ownership of the work and to begin forming their own network meetings with the young person. For example, if a family has taken control of the youth-led permanency process, the FDS should encourage this and let the family move forward as it occurs. The FDS steps back to a less centralized support role in the process with the young person and their family. As implementers of this intervention, we want families to move towards ownership and independence through their experience of having their perspectives and the perspectives of their young person centered in the process. In terms of transitioning to this stage, families determine how and when they take over and lead the permanency process.

Closing the Network Meeting

The network meeting concludes when there is consensus around a clear, youth-led permanency plan with assigned action steps and deadlines for completing the action steps. The next network meeting is scheduled based on the family’s (and not the professionals’) availability.

Network Meeting – Facilitator’s Role

Network meetings are facilitated by the FDS or by a neutral, third-party facilitator. The benefits of having a neutral, third-party facilitator include:

- Creating an atmosphere of neutral or unbiased facilitation.
- Bringing fresh perspectives and new questions to the discussion.
- Willingness to ask difficult questions and confront assumptions.
- Moving the group forward when barriers are encountered and difficult conversations are needed.

The challenges of having a third-party facilitator are:

- A significant amount of time is needed to prepare the facilitator for the meeting. Because much of the Family Finding work is done outside of network development meetings, the facilitator will need to be “brought up to speed” so they can effectively move the conversation, permanency planning, and work forward and not spend meeting time recapping or reviewing updates.
- Some young people are not comfortable with having someone they do not know facilitate their meetings. This requires opportunities for the facilitator and young person to meet and build rapport. For young people ready and willing to assume some of the facilitation role, this will also require time for the facilitator and young person to collaborate and plan for co-facilitation.
- Skilled, trained facilitators may lack public child welfare knowledge. Facilitators may not have knowledge of the public child welfare system and can struggle to fully understand language, family marginalization, power dynamics, etc. This would require additional training.
- Additional cost of having a facilitator.

The facilitator’s role is to engage all network members and young people in the process of building the network’s relationships, collaboratively developing the YLP Plan, and creating an atmosphere focused on strengthening supportive and affirming connections between the family and the young person. The facilitator uses a strengths-based approach and focuses on developing a positive view of the future by incorporating a variety of activities during meetings. The facilitator develops a partnership, joins with each member of the team, and makes an effort to understand their respective points of view, challenges, and strengths. Modeling effective communication, the facilitator supports the adults surrounding a young person in order to develop and use their strengths to problem solve, develop their own plans, access their own resources, and manage their own crises. During meetings, the facilitator works with all identified adults to increase their knowledge and understanding of their young person and emphasizes the importance of connections and a natural support network for them.

LGBTQ+ Considerations: The FDS continually assesses and develops the LGBTQ+ competency of the entire professional team and the familial network. In addition, throughout this work the FDS should be conversing regularly with the young person about safety specific to their SOGIE and creating a safety plan. Conversations should also include how the young person defines accepting and affirmative language and behavior and how they need family members and professionals to demonstrate acceptance and affirmation. Having this understanding allows the FDS to provide support, education, or additional modeling as needed. For young people that are not “out” to their families, the FDS processes and helps the young person plan disclosing their LGBTQ+ identity (“coming out”) to their family/chosen family when they are ready. The FDS can utilize roleplay or identify other resources to support the young person on this journey. The FDS should also provide opportunities for the young person to process and feel supported if they choose not to “come out” to family.

For family/chosen family that know of the young person's SOGIE, the FDS approaches conversations around LGBTQ+ knowledge and feelings with relentless curiosity, active listening, and empathy. This allows the FDS to understand the family's perspective and be in a better position to help the family move from rejecting to affirming behaviors (if rejection is present) more effectively. As relationship development progresses between the FDS and members of the network, the FDS begins offering education surrounding SOGIE and LGBTQ+ identities, opportunities to process feelings and questions specific to SOGIE, and offers local resources to the family in partnership with the young person and network.

Transition

Goals of the Transition Phase

Family Development Specialists who are public child welfare staff and have the ability to make recommendations and decisions specific to placement and permanency may not require this phase. There are three distinct possible trajectories for transition:

- The young person achieves legal permanency with family or chosen family.
- The young person is living with family or chosen family, or is living independently, AND has the support of the network.
- The network of five to seven family members, chosen family members, and/or important people are actively engaged and supporting the young person. Public child welfare staff support the YLP Plan, engage the network in all planning and decision making processes, and ensure that young people- and family-led decisions are supported.

When one of these scenarios is in effect, the FDS, FDS supervisor, the public child welfare worker, and the worker's supervisor meet to review the CAFF work, discuss any recommendations (e.g., following up on referrals, supporting the family access services), and ensure commitment to supporting and engaging the network (when legal permanency is not achieved). The FDS provides the child welfare staff a written closing summary with successes and recommendations, the contact information for all network members, community resources, and the most updated family tree/genogram.

It is important to note that the work done by the FDS will continue. The public child welfare staff need to be committed to conducting family-centered practice and not resorting back to agency-centered decision making. The public child welfare staff must also demonstrate commitment to the success and goals of the CAFF model throughout the work or the FDS may be reluctant to transition. The key is that relational permanence is the forerunner to legal permanence.

Providing the CAFF Model Virtually

The CAFF model work is intended to be implemented in person. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has provided insight into how this model can be implemented virtually,

“The key is that relational permanence is the forerunner to legal permanence.”

particularly in relationship development, network meetings, and data collection. In the event that elements of the model need to be implemented virtually (e.g., rural settings, out of state family/chosen family), the recommended adaptations can be made.

Relationship Development

We have found that many young people do not want to or do not like talking on the phone. Many young people prefer messaging via text or social media. It is necessary to support young people’s access to technology, meet their communication needs, and build relationships virtually. This may also require assessing and adapting current placement

policies and procedures around social media access and educating others on the necessity of using these media for relationship development. Being creative with virtual activities (e.g., playing video games, eating lunch together) to further build relationships and connection should be explored regularly. In addition, the ability of child welfare staff to conduct “virtual” safety checks of relatives’ homes can help increase young people’s opportunities to spend time with family and chosen family safely and reduce wait time for these assessments to occur.

Network Meetings

When choosing a virtual platform to host meetings, it is important to consider a number of potential barriers and to have a plan to resolve those barriers to ensure the young person and all family members can attend and actively participate. First, the virtual platform must have a call-in number that will allow network members to join from any type of phone. Further, there can be no cost to users to download the application. It is essential that when preparing network members for network meetings that there is discussion about the platform being used and which is the best way for them to join and participate. Some questions to consider are:

1. If you have a “minute phone,” do you have enough minutes to join our meeting for one hour? If not, can you use someone else’s phone to call into the meeting?
2. Do you have a smartphone?
 - If yes, do you have the space on your phone to download the virtual meeting application?
 - Do you have access to Wi-Fi? If not, are you familiar with places where you can access Wi-Fi for free? Can you access one of these locations for our meeting?

It is also important to discuss privacy and what the network member needs to ensure they have the private space to fully participate in the meeting. The FDS may consider testing the virtual meeting platform with the network member prior to the first network meeting for practice and to address any technical difficulties. Network members should be encouraged to be on camera when attending the network meeting when possible.

It is critical to prepare the young person for a virtual meeting and discuss their concerns, hopes, and fears around having a virtual meeting. Whenever possible, the FDS (or other

supportive network member) should physically be with the young person for the virtual network meeting as a support and to offer guidance if needed. We have found that young people were not as engaged or participatory when the FDS was not physically present with them.

The FDS needs to review virtual meeting “etiquette” as part of network meeting participation including limiting background noise and distractions, identifying yourself before you speak, putting yourself on mute when not speaking, and giving extra pause in order to limit interrupting or talking over others. The FDS needs to review these virtual meeting expectations prior to starting every virtual meeting. The FDS must take the lead in facilitating the call (e.g., providing a lot of verbal prompts, asking each person by name to respond to a question or provide a summary) if there is not a designated facilitator present.

Virtual network meetings require more time to conduct. The FDS should initiate the virtual meeting at least five minutes before the scheduled start time, allow for extra time for people to join the meeting and, if possible, assign someone to follow up with late attendees and troubleshoot network members’ technical difficulties. Initial meetings could require an extra 25 minutes as network members learn to navigate this medium and work collaboratively. For more tips on working virtually, see [“LGBTQ+ Youth Engagement Virtually & In-Person”](#) and [“Working Virtually with Families of LGBTQ+ Youth.”](#)

Documentation and Data Collection

Some of the documents used in the CAFF model require signatures. A replicating site should have a tool (e.g., DocuSign) to have documents signed electronically via email as well as have access to email encryption programs that allow for sensitive documents to be sent securely. It is important to utilize programs that have clear instructions and minimal steps in order to reduce technical difficulties. Being able to share documents (e.g., via Google Docs) is important when needing to highlight or read a document with individuals that may have literacy challenges and/or when the FDS is unable to sit with someone “elbow to elbow” to review documents.

Adaptations to data collection can also be made when survey information cannot be gathered in person. The FDS or survey administrator works with the person being surveyed to ensure they have the technology, support, and privacy necessary to complete the survey remotely.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Sites implementing the CAFF model will be required to engage in a fidelity and coaching model to assure improvement and adherence in delivery. These steps are discussed in the sections below.

Fidelity

The CAFF fidelity methods include:

- CAFF Reviewer observation (via observation of youth-led permanency meetings and/or documentation review)
- Post-Meeting Participant Survey (administered by the FDS)
- Self-Assessments (completed by the FDS).

Kinnect (purveyor) conducts observations and/or file reviews once a month for the FDS using the CAFF fidelity tools. Files are pulled randomly for fidelity review. Kinnect receives the intake form, initial youth assessment, youth pre-meeting checklist, pre-meeting and post-meeting reports, progress notes, consultation forms/reports, monthly CPS reports, CAFF assessments, Youth-Led Permanency (YLP) Plans, participant surveys, self-report surveys, and meeting reports. All scores and fidelity tools are reviewed with the FDS and FDS supervisor on a monthly basis by the purveyor. The FDS supervisor reviews the Self-Report Checklists and Post-Meeting Participant Surveys as needed or on a scheduled basis with the FDS.

Individual coaching/consultation occurs weekly upon initial implementation. The frequency of coaching sessions is reassessed periodically in conjunction with fidelity reviews to determine ongoing frequency. Coaching/consultation includes the application and synthesis of previous training and materials, coaching around delivery and engagement, where to be flexible and where to be stricter to the model, and where to be tempered versus urgent. Topics also include how to use creative search strategies, both to enlist and prepare the young person for the work, and how to engage and involve newly “found” people.

The FDS supervisor conducts coaching/supervision on general SOGIE competency, cultural humility, adherence to CAFF fidelity, meeting CAFF phase milestones, general engagement and relationship building, clerical tasks, system issues, and areas where coaching is not resulting in progress. Supervision with the FDS should occur weekly or more often when needed. A CAFF supervision tool is available. This tool is completed by the FDS prior to supervision and provided to the supervisor for review if there are challenges in moving the work forward. In these cases, an assessment of the work completed to date is needed to identify and resolve barriers. This supervision tool can also be helpful in identifying areas of focus for each young person. The tool can be time-consuming to complete, and can be done monthly if the work is moving forward and milestones are met in a timely fashion. For more information on implementation, see

Conclusion

LGBTQ+ young people in child welfare require permanency efforts that meet the unique needs specific to their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and elevate the necessity of affirming relationships and strengthening networks of support. The CAFF intervention has adapted Kevin Campbell's Family Finding model in support of this particular population of child welfare-involved young people and their families.

Through our three years developing and piloting the CAFF intervention, we have learned many lessons that have furthered our knowledge and understanding of what it takes for an intervention to be successful. At the foundation of this work is identifying and supporting an evidence-informed implementation approach focused on the commitment of community-based organizations and public child welfare leadership that aligns or works to align with the core values of the CAFF intervention. Core elements for the Family Development Specialist's are:

- Ability to remain flexible, yet work with direction.
- A sense of relentless curiosity, and a sense of urgency when moving through (and sometimes back through) the intake, pre-alignment and alignment, engagement, network development, permanency development, implementation, and transition phases of the intervention while centering the young person's need to define what affirmation means and looks like for them.
- Addressing immediate safety issues related to SOGIE, directing SOGIE conversations, supporting if/when they want to "come out," and engaging the network in accessing the education, support, and resources they needed to be affirming for their young person.

The impact of our work has changed lives:

- Young people reconnecting with their families after years of separation
- Hearing that young people felt hope for the future because of their network's support
- A young person identifying that they are finally home
- Young people feeling "powerful" as they lead their network meetings to further develop their YLP plan
- Network members identifying that their love for the young person is far greater than their struggle with LGBTQ+ identities and wanting to learn how to successfully navigate this journey.

Kinnect believes in this work! We are committed to creating partnerships and to providing

Appendix: A Planning for Implementation

This appendix will focus on the implementation of the model and covers topics including readiness assessments, hiring and selection, training, coaching, and data collection for the model.

Program Implementation Stages

Sites implementing the CAFF model are encouraged to use an evidence-informed method of implementation. The following section will describe recommendations for that approach using an implementation science framework. Implementation science uses a systematic and scientific approach to identify the range of factors which are likely to facilitate successful administration of a program or intervention. Describing the implementation stages, the National Implementation Research Network identifies that:

Implementation is not an event. It is a mission-oriented process involving multiple decisions, actions, and corrections designed to make full and effective use of effective innovations [...]. Change at the site, local, community or state level does not occur all at once. Research suggests it can take from two to four years to fully and successfully operationalize an evidence-based program, practice, or effective innovation [...]. The timer starts when an organization begins to consider change and ends when the change is fully in place and producing intended outcomes in all programs or sites in the community or state. The process includes four Stages that can lead to the long-term survival (sustainability) and continued effectiveness of any innovation in the context of a changing world. (NIRN, n.d.)

The stages of implementation—Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, and Full Implementation—are not linear, and there is not a crisp beginning and end for each one. For example, there are times when an organization will move amongst these stages due to changes in staff, funding, leadership, or unsuccessful attempts at deploying the innovative program with high fidelity. There are key components and processes to pay attention to during each of the stages. These key components can guide a systematic and intentional approach to managing system change and building sustainability for the new EBP/EI (evidence-based practice/evidence informed innovation).

Full implementation is achieved when the new practice or approach has stabilized, evaluators are seeing its consistent use, and the new practice is resulting in improved child outcomes. Additional indicators of full implementation include when implementers can see that strategies to gather feedback for improvement by using improvement cycles are functioning well, including providing routine information on how the new practice is going and how the supports are functioning.

Exploration

The beginning phase of program implementation is exploration. This is the time where replicating sites explore what it might look like to install a new program or intervention. During this time, the replicating site should take time to assess if the CAFF model is a good fit for the current internal organizational structure and culture. The site exploring replication of the CAFF model will need to:

1. Compare the organizational values and practices at their own organization to the CAFF intervention. This comparison will help inform the organizational assessment process and begin to incorporate the necessity of alignment.
2. Understand how the potential replicating organization will live the values of CAFF, including how the model is predicated on family-centered, rather than agency-centered practice, and recognize the harm inflicted when children and young people are separated from their families and communities of origin.

Recommended Practice Settings

Potential CAFF practice settings include community-based social service organizations (CBO) and/or public child welfare agencies (PCSA) with experience serving LGBTQ+ young people, and/or with experiences serving young people engaged in the foster care system. In the absence of experience serving LGBTQ+ young people, an agency that has a history and organizational commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can also be considered. CBOs and PCSAs considering implementing CAFF should demonstrate a commitment and organizational culture that supports and emphasizes relational and legal permanency with family and chosen family, a commitment to the guiding principles of the CAFF model, and a commitment to the idea that LGBTQ+ rejecting families can and do change when presented with nonjudgmental engagement and accurate information. The CAFF model is intended for LGBTQ+ identified children and young people ages 5 to 21 who are currently in foster care and who are at risk of losing contact with their networks and/or who are estranged from their biological, adoptive, or chosen family networks.

Any PCSA and/or LGBTQ+ youth-serving agency considering implementing the CAFF model should be prepared to conduct a comprehensive agency self-assessment prior to initial implementation of the model. During this process, the agency assesses its executive leadership and practice-level areas to determine how well the agency's previous work and values align with the CAFF model. In particular, the agency self-assessment helps PCSAs and CBOs assess how the CAFF model fits into the agency and/or if there needs to be significant work done across the agency prior to initial implementation.

It is paramount that the CBO and/or PCSA that would seek to implement the CAFF model and/or partner with agencies implementing this model align with the principles outlined here across all levels of the agency from executive leadership to frontline staff.

Guiding Principles for a Youth Engaged Permanency Process

Some of these guidelines have been borrowed and adapted from national organizations such as [Impact Justice](#) and the [National Center for Lesbian Rights \(NCLR\)](#):

- All young people have the right to know and to be connected to their legal and

fictive family.

- Families have the right to know their young people and to be connected to them.
- Regardless of their personal beliefs, the staff and contractors of public systems of care are ethically required to work to connect young people with their families.
- Families can change when presented with accurate information and support.
- The majority of young people involved in the child welfare system experience loneliness which can be devastating and even dangerous; therefore, establishing meaningful connections can help young people achieve a sense of belonging.
- Healing happens in relationships. Therefore, primary importance is placed on building trust with young people and their family members through transparency, shared decision making, partnering, and the leveling of power differences among staff, young people, and families.
- Young people's and family members' strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon: the experience of having a voice and choice is validated and new skills are developed.
- Variations of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression are part of the normal spectrum of human diversity.
- The increased risks faced by LGBTQ+ young people are not inherent to their identities, but stem from the stresses of prejudice, discrimination, rejection, and mistreatment.
- Like all young people, LGBTQ+ and Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) young people thrive and succeed when their families, schools, and communities support and nurture their evolving identities.
- Efforts to change a young person's sexual orientation or gender identity are harmful, unethical, ineffective, and unnecessary.
- LGBTQ+ and GNC young people are not a homogenous group, but embody multiple identities that confer unique and intersecting stressors and strengths.
- Regardless of their personal beliefs, the employees and contractors of public systems of care are ethically required to treat LGBTQ+ and GNC young people equitably and respectfully.

System Readiness

Research has shown that establishing organizational readiness is imperative to the successful implementation of change efforts and new programs (Weiner, 2009). Readiness can mean a staff or system's ability and willingness to implement change, evidence-based programs, or LGBTQ+ initiatives. "When organizational readiness for change is high, organizational members are more likely to initiate change, exert greater effort, exhibit greater persistence, and display more cooperative behavior. The result is more effective implementation" (Weiner, 2009, p. 1). The willingness to change is of great importance in the social services field because of the type of demanding work that social service professionals do (e.g., crisis management and high caseloads). Without organizational leadership and staff willingness to change, change will likely be slow or unsuccessful. Therefore, a great deal of attention and resources should be allocated to assessing system readiness prior to implementing new initiatives or new programs, such as the CAFF model. The CAFF Logic Model may be helpful in assisting interested parties in measuring their

readiness to implement CAFF.

Additional Exploration Considerations

CBOs or PCSAs seeking to implement CAFF may consider adopting tools designed by Kinnect and seek technical support. The CAFF Readiness Assessment is designed to: (1) Provide in-depth information about features of the CAFF model, core components, and requirement for implementation; (2) Aid the replicating site in determining whether CAFF is a good fit for the agency; (3) Aid the replicating site in beginning to identify, at an early stage, the opportunities, challenges and practice issues to be addressed should the site decide to implement the CAFF model.

The replicating site and Kinnect will have exploratory phone calls to get a better understanding of the interested site and how CAFF may fit into the existing system. From there, the replicating site is encouraged to use the CAFF Readiness Assessment (provided by Kinnect) to reflect on the site's capacity to implement the CAFF model. Further conference calls are scheduled if the replicating site finds they would like to proceed with Exploration. Additional aspects of the CAFF model are reviewed with guidance on how to move forward. From there, Kinnect determines whether to extend or not extend the replicating site an invitation to apply to become a CAFF model site.

Installation

Implementation Team

In addition to Kinnect's implementation support staff, the replicating site needs to designate a small implementation team to continue progress in installing the CAFF intervention. After considering the installation needs and the scope of work and activities, the replicating agency needs to identify staff that have the knowledge, skills, and passion to elevate the initiative. The implementation team staff needs to have experience with project management, data collection, and working with populations who have experienced trauma and discrimination. Installation activities include (but are not limited to) screening, interviewing, and hiring the FDS and supervisor, coordinating training, and managing organizational communications. A point of contact outside of the supervisor of CAFF should be designated within the replicating site. This person must have the authority to make decisions related to the intervention's implementation. Additionally, a member of the replicating site's leadership team should be included so that staff can see the site leadership's commitment, involvement, and investment in the success of the model. If the replicating site is not a public child welfare agency, a liaison from the public child welfare agency should be designated. This person must have the authority to make decisions, manage contracts, and implement external programming for the agency; they should also have a direct line of communication with public child welfare leadership.

Family Development Specialist and Supervisor

The Family Development Specialist (FDS) is the direct practitioner of the CAFF intervention and works directly with young people and families. A sample FDS job description is available if needed. The description below is meant to be a guideline that can be modified as needed by the replicating site.

The FDS needs to have a designated supervisor within the replicating site. The supervisor should be chosen with the competencies, qualities, and time needed to effectively supervise, coach, and lead the intervention and the FDS. It is also important to keep in mind that, at times, the supervisor may also have to implement the intervention; therefore, the supervisor needs the same strong direct practice skills as the FDS. Kinnect can assist as needed in the screening, interviewing and selection processes of the FDS and the FDS supervisor.

Staff Selection

Candidates for the positions of FDS and FDS supervisor should be screened for education, licensure, experience in public child welfare, leadership, and connections to the work. During the interview process, it is strongly advised to ask questions that will elicit how a candidate's values align with the CAFF work, including exploring beliefs around a family member's ability to change and a candidate's ability to recognize that there are other narratives to the family's history beyond what public child welfare has created. Candidates must have demonstrated LGBTQ+ competency, including the ability to help individuals navigate negative feelings around LGBTQ+ identities. Candidates must be able to provide in-depth education on sexual orientation and gender identity with those they serve. In addition, candidates must be able to demonstrate a desire and ability to engage families that have a history of abusing or neglecting their young person, or who may have historically not been involved with their young person and/or are rejecting of their young person. The interview process should elicit the reasons for wanting to engage in and lead this type of work. Candidates that are focused on wanting to support and affirm young people may have difficulty with engaging family and supporting relationship development with family, especially if that family is exhibiting rejecting behaviors and attitudes. It is important to incorporate behavioral and appreciative inquiry interview questions that focus on the candidate's engagement strategies, exceptional partnership ability, leadership, group facilitation, adaptability, relentless curiosity, flexibility, and the ability to manage multiple priorities. The selection process should utilize the CAFF Practice Profile to help guide the hiring process because the practice profile outlines the specific values, knowledge, and skills needed to be successful in the FDS role. The process for selecting the FDS is one of the first and most critical steps in moving the implementation forward at your organization. The CAFF Practice Profile is available in the supplemental materials.

Training

It is essential to create a training plan to address any gaps between current practices and the expectations of the CAFF model. CAFF training plan topics can include any needs identified through the initial agency assessment and/or any needed agency culture shifts focusing on CAFF principles and values development within the organization. Leadership buy-in, support, and active participation is needed to ensure the success of integrating changes identified in the training plan throughout the organization.

Implementation Training

Organizations implementing the CAFF model will be collaborating with their local public

child welfare agency to carry out the model. To prepare, both the replicating site and the public agency must demonstrate that their staff have had foundational training covering basic LGBTQ+ competency. (Kinnect can provide their SOGIE 101 training if training is needed.) Implementers must attend Kinnect's training on the CAFF values and principles and the CAFF model. For a detailed agenda of the training, please see Appendix A.

Establishing a Safe Identification Process

In order to identify young people with diverse SOGIE, the replicating site needs to implement a process that includes strategies to educate staff, build staff confidence and comfort in asking about SOGIE, and explicitly advertise the replicating site as an affirming agency. Areas of focus:

1. Creating tools to assist staff in asking young people about their diverse SOGIE.
2. Providing education and statistical data to help staff understand the importance of addressing this target population.
3. Revising policies to reflect best practices for young people with diverse SOGIE.
4. Creating marketing materials for the initiative.
5. Identifying a process to safely identify young people with diverse SOGIE.

Kinnect can assist the CAFF replicating site in creating a safe identification process.

Establishing a Referral Process

Once a safe identification process is in place, the implementation team needs to identify how public child welfare staff refer young people for the CAFF intervention. The implementation team also needs to identify a point person within the public child welfare agency that manages referrals, screens referrals, and serves as a liaison with the replicating site. The point person should champion the CAFF intervention, be able to effectively describe the intervention to staff, and hold a position within public child welfare that is viewed by child welfare staff as approachable and knowledgeable.

Interagency Referral & Screening Process

Referrals to the CAFF intervention are received from the public child welfare staff via a safe identification process or procedure. Guiding questions for the referral screening process can include: Who is eligible for CAFF services? How do eligibility criteria differ for young people of different ages and developmental stages?

General CAFF Eligibility Requirements:

- Young people currently in foster care between the ages of 5–21 with diverse SOGIE (or questioning their SOGIE) who do not have a permanency plan.
- Child-welfare involved young people with diverse SOGIE who have a permanency plan, but who could benefit from reengaging with familial connections.
- Young people who come into foster care directly because of their diverse SOGIE. Different categories for this include young people with diverse SOGIE who have left their caregiver because of their diverse SOGIE, and young people with diverse SOGIE who are at imminent risk of coming into foster care because of their diverse SOGIE.

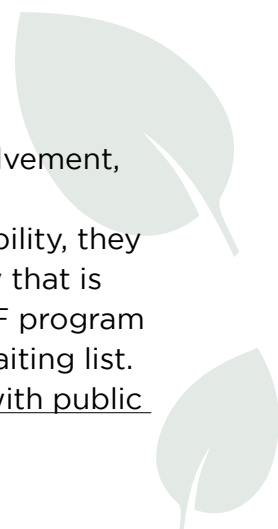
- Young people, in foster care, with diverse SOGIE who could benefit from an expanded network.

Signs of gender expansiveness in younger children (around ages 5, 6, or 7) can be recognized safely in the context of program eligibility even if a very young child cannot verbalize their diverse SOGIE. Young people in adolescence often can verbally express diverse SOGIE to safe and affirming adults in their network, but staff will need to be trained in how to ask these questions in a culturally responsive way. Staff training and alignment with safe and LGBTQ+ competent concepts and language are imperative to the success of the CAFF model.

Overall, the goal of screening eligible child-welfare engaged young people into this program is to identify young people with diverse SOGIE that have been disconnected from their family and to support them in reconnecting safely with their family through taking part in the intervention. If young people meet the eligibility requirements outlined in this section, an intake meeting is scheduled between the public child welfare staff (referent), child welfare staff supervisor, the FDS, and the FDS supervisor.

When a referral is received, CAFF program eligibility requirements are reviewed and a screening process is initiated. Outlined below are the steps/processes to screen and identify a referral for the intervention:

1. Referral forms for the CAFF intervention should be made available to public child welfare staff as well as contracted providers who have received LGBTQ+ competency training. (See the supplementary materials for a sample referral form.) Staff completes the referral form and provides it to the designated CAFF program referral point person within the public child welfare agency. The point person reviews the form and contacts the referent for more information. The form should be limited in the information it requests in an effort to not feel overwhelming for staff to complete and to make the referral process easier across different professional teams. Replicating sites can work with purveyors to adapt the form if there is other information the agency needs to collect. The referral point person asks the following follow-up questions to determine and confirm program eligibility:
 - Provide a general overview of the young person's current situation, the professional and/or agency concerns, and what is known of the family dynamics.
 - How do family members (or removal parents/parties) affirm the young person?
 - What does this look like?
 - Who are these parties involved?
 - Provide examples of concerns around family members not being accepting or affirming of the young person.
 - Does the young person have any contacts, supports, etc.? Who are they?
 - What special needs does the young person have?
 - Are there any concerns around the safety of the young person, potential workers, etc., that needs to be known before work can start?
 - What discussions have staff had with the young person and/or the family about



the CAFF referral being made?

- Note any other topic that may be pertinent.
- Clarify any missing referral information in regard to SOGIE, court involvement, etc.

2. When a referral point person completes the assessment and confirms eligibility, they then share the referral with the FDS's supervisor (or the contracting agency that is implementing the intervention) who reviews the current availability of CAFF program staff. If there is a waiting list, the assessed young person is placed on the waiting list. The following criteria demonstrate how the replicating site, in partnership with public child welfare, may determine priority among referrals on the waiting list:

- Discharge/Emancipation date
- Number of current connections
- Young person's age (older young people have priority)

It is highly recommended that the replicating site, in partnership with the public child welfare agency, identify and establish their priorities based on the scope and intent of the intervention (e.g., legal custody, affirming network, both, etc.).

3. It is recommended that the implementation team identify a person who makes the final decision as to who is prioritized and served when there is a waiting list for the intervention.

CAFF Data Collection Design

Data collection for CAFF is clearly defined by the intervention's purveyors prior to the launch of implementation and in conjunction with the evaluation protocols and fidelity tools. The FDS and supervision team must have a clear understanding of all tools involved in their work including the Intake Form, Alignment Meeting form, File Mining report, Initial Youth Assessment (IYA), progress notes, genogram, Youth-Led Permanency (YLP) Plan, Post Network Meeting Survey, Contact List, closing transition summary, and how to collect and manage data entry. The FDS is responsible for entering data about their contacts, connections, meetings, and intervention tools on an ongoing basis. If a replicating site would like to implement pre- and post-surveys, it is recommended that the survey administrator use an electronic web-based data source (e.g., Qualtrics). This allows for secure data collection, unique identifiers, and built-in red flags for responses that indicate the young person could be unsafe or needs immediate assistance. Incentives should be used to increase response rate, recognize the length of time and emotional energy needed to complete regular surveys, and elevate the value of the young person's and caregivers' voice and input.

CAFF Intervention Implementation Logic Model

Challenge: In order for a new program or intervention to be successful, community-based organizations (CBO) and public child welfare agencies (PCSA) need to prepare and create a foundation of change readiness, value alignment, and collaboration that supports the implementation of the model. CBOs and PCSAs must work collaboratively for the success

of the CAFF intervention. Without value alignment, leadership, communication, teamwork, training, and stakeholder and staff buy-in, the CAFF intervention will not be successful at meeting its intended goals and outcomes.

Target Audience: Agencies that are exploring and/or implementing the CAFF intervention

Target Audience Needs: An understanding of and adherence to the program implementation process and its impact on the success of the intervention.

Ongoing Technical Assistance/Coaching

To implement this model, Kinnect requires methods of continuous quality improvement for initial implementation and full implementation. This includes consistent fidelity monitoring and coaching with Kinnect staff. The expectations of this requirement are customized based on the needs and capacity of the adopter, determined at the time of purveyor engagement, and are included in any agreement or contract prior to serving the first

Appendix B: Detailed Agenda of the CAFF Training

Main Topics for Day 1

1. Conceptualize a history of child welfare practices: How did we get here?
2. Review research related to outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth connected to child welfare
3. Learn about the “why” behind the CAFF model, including foundational values (includes an overview of Kevin Campbell’s Family Finding model)
4. CAFF in the context of social justice (e.g., intersectionality)

Learning Objectives:

- New CAFF staff will gain a working knowledge of the history of child welfare as it relates to BIPOC populations and LGBTQ+ families and young people, including how the formation of child welfare practice supported family separation, especially amongst communities of color. Staff will be able to connect historical trends to current child welfare practices.
- Staff will gain a working knowledge of what it looks like for LGBTQ+ youth in foster care today, including current trends and both long- and short-term outcomes for this population.
- Staff will be able to articulate the shift in practice (“the why”) and begin to align with foundational values of the CAFF model.

What We Will Cover:

- Present historical context as it relates to BIPOC & child welfare & LGBTQ+ youth in care currently.

- Lay a foundation for understanding of the importance of empowering and engaging young people and families to participate in case assessments and service planning activities for their current and future safety and well-being.
- Understand the importance of and rationale for engaging young people and their families in making placement and permanency decisions, as well as planning to receive their ongoing feedback.
- Begin to learn how to empower and collaborate with young people to identify and assess potential resources and supports among people the young people already know, along with learning ways to engage and prepare young people and their supports during the permanency process.
- Begin developing competency in partnering with other team members in efforts to be youth driven through the modification and adjustment of meeting approaches based on young people's input.
- Demonstrate research outcomes in which young people are connected to affirming family and chosen family.
- Lay a foundation for supporting child welfare-involved LGBTQ+ young people through culturally responsive practice.

Main Topics for Day 2

1. Understand the foundational elements of the CAFF intervention, with special attention to the importance of alignment with other professionals.
2. Learn about the importance of preparing young people and their family, kin, and chosen family for this work.

Learning Objectives:

- Ability to explain the CAFF model (including intervention goals and intended outcomes) to families, young people, and other professionals.
- Ability to articulate the profound importance and impact of alignment with other professionals throughout the CAFF process.
- Gain a working knowledge of the initial engagement steps with CAFF youth and their families.
- Ability to work towards answering the key questions: How do we prepare youth who have been systematically disempowered to take ownership of this CAFF process? How do we prepare families to engage in this work?

What We Will Cover:

- The CAFF Theory of Change and Logic Model overview.
- CAFF intervention milestones, goals, and intended outcomes.
- Establish the core direct service competencies of the FDS, FDS supervisor, the CAFF host site, and professional partners.
- Begin to unpack the role of the FDS in relation to other professionals: preparing them, building trust, understanding their perspective, and learning to challenge them within the working relationship to support shifting narratives as related to a family's history with DCFS.
- Supporting other professionals in processing, addressing worries/fears, and

- aligning with CAFF values as initial steps of the engagement process.
- First contact with youth & conducting an Initial Youth Assessment.
- Exploring the young person's experience & needs.
- Benefits of utilizing Appreciative Inquiry.
- Exploring the family's history from the youth and family's perspective (and not from the child welfare history).
- Emphasizing the importance of relationships and fostering trust with the FDS.

Main Topics for Day 3

1. Essential elements of the CAFF intervention (what does this look like in practice?)

Learning Objectives:

- Begin to develop a working knowledge of the sequence of steps involved in initiating the CAFF intervention with the professionals, the young person, and their family, including organization readiness, eligibility criteria, and the intake process with the public agency.
- Begin to understand the trajectory of the young person and their family's journey when they undertake the work of the intervention from start to completion (i.e., the phases of the CAFF intervention).
- Begin to understand how Kinnect offers both technical and direct service support and coaching for agencies and staff as they implement this intervention within their agency.

What We Will Cover:

- The necessity of organizational readiness.
- Eligibility & intake from the child welfare agency.
- Work through the "lifetime" of service delivery from start to completion for a CAFF young person and their family, including Intake, Pre-Alignment and Alignment, Engagement, Network Development and Permanency Plan Development, and Transition and Closing.
- Examine milestones and service progression of CAFF.
- Examine what "success" looks like for a CAFF young person.
- Learn what support you can expect from Kinnect as you implement CAFF.
- Learn what technical assistance looks like.
- Understand both implementation and direct practice supervision.

Post-Onboarding Staff Development

- Key questions: How do we develop an ongoing training plan for the site supervisor and the staff in order to build a regular schedule of training to address staff needs? How do we continue to build on the existing foundational skills?
- Skills that will need significant and continuous training for CAFF staff
 - Youth and family engagement skills
 - Family search & engagement
 - LGBTQ+ competence
 - Group facilitation to engage both professionals and families

- Working through resistance from other professionals (and also from families – as we recognize the disempowerment that has occurred in their interactions with the child welfare system)
- The ability to think outside the box and to change directions (pivot) – “the art” of this work

Final note: We will identify other learning goals as we move forward. This is an initial onboarding training, and ongoing skill development will be individualized for CAFF staff as they progress in their practice with CAFF young people and their families.

Appendix C: Glossary of Key Terms

Key Term	Definition
CAFF (Chosen Affirming Family Finding)	The adapted Family Finding model for LGBTQ+ young people.
Chosen Family	Non-biological or adoptive kin or “fictive kin” known by the young person beyond the immediate family and/or a person with a strong bond with the young person or their family who has a willingness to build a relationship with the young person (e.g., coach, teacher, neighbor, religious leader).
Fine Mining	Reviewing, or “mining,” the young person’s child welfare hard copy and/or electronic case record to discover potential family members and other connections. Documents reviewed include abuse/neglect referrals, current and previous placements, file narratives/summaries, court reports, school records, etc.
LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning+)	We primarily use this term when talking about the young people we serve as it is the most recognized term (compared to diverse SOGIE). The + encompasses multiple identities and expressions.
Network	A group of family members, chosen family members, and important people in the young person’s life that collectively work together to support a young person now and lifelong. This support will outlast professional involvement and continue for free and forever.
Permanency	Having positive, healthy, nurturing relationships with adults who provide emotional and moral support, a sense of belonging, and other kinds of support with lifelong unconditional commitment. Ideally, permanency takes the form of a relationship that has a legal component that provides a parent-child relationship.

Key Term	Definition
Relentless Curiosity	A desire to always be in a space of constant learning: asking questions and seeking information. Wanting to know as much as possible about our young people and their families, chosen families, and important people, including who they are, their history, identities, culture, traditions, etc.
SACWIS (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System)	A comprehensive Case Management System that assists county staff in managing their workloads and provides accurate & current data to assist in decision-making and program modification for young people and families served.
SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression)	Term used to describe the young people that were the population of focus for this grant. We use this acronym internally and with those familiar with the CAFF work.
YLP Plan (Youth-Led Permanency Plan)	A plan that serves as a roadmap with measurable objectives to achieve permanency. The young person is actively engaged in creating this plan with the input of their network. It includes the young person's vision of permanency, the network's vision of permanency, and functional strengths of the young person and network with specific action steps that will lead to permanency.

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