

1003.0 Kinship Care

1003.1 Policy Approval Clearance Record

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Policy	This policy supersedes:	Number of pages in Policy: 4
Date Effective: Upon Approval	Kinship Care	
PART Review & Approval	MM/DD/YYYY	Policy Lead: _____
DMG Approval	10/24/2006	Policy Lead: Nancy O'Neill, LSW
DMG Approved Revisions	01/31/2007	Policy Lead: Nancy O'Neill, LSW
DMG Approved Revisions	MM/DD/YYYY	Policy Lead: _____
DMG Approved Revisions	MM/DD/YYYY	Policy Lead: _____
DCFS Administrator Approval:	MM/DD/YYYY	Signature: _____
Review by Representative from the Office of the Attorney General:	MM/DD/YYYY	Signature: _____

1003.2 Statement of Purpose

1003.2.1 Policy Statement: Public Child Welfare agencies have a legal, professional, and ethical responsibility to promote permanent relationships and community connections for every child with whom we work, and in particular, for those in agency custody. Whenever possible, children need to be placed with relatives or someone with whom they have a significant and positive connection. Determining who constitutes family is a critical component of our work. It is a fluid process that needs to begin from the moment we first interact with a family, and must be examined and re-examined throughout the life of the case.

1003.2.2 Purpose:

- A. This policy seeks to emphasize the importance of seeking and supporting kinship placements, as well the preservation of familial bonds by making clear that our preferred practice is to minimize the impact of separation from parents and the familiar environment, taking into account community, church and schools, as well as family. Use of this broad definition of kinship care, implies that "fictive kin" should be given consideration for placement in the absence of appropriate relatives within the third degree of consanguinity, prior to placing with a foster family unknown to the child, if such placement is determined to be in the child's best interest.
- B. Kinship placements provide children with familiarity, comfort, continuity, an understanding of their heritage, and a sense of belonging that cannot be provided elsewhere, when their parents are unable to provide for their safety and well being. Such connections can often help to mitigate the traumatic impact of the abuse and/or neglect and prevent the further trauma which can result from placement in an unfamiliar out-of-home setting.

1003.3 Authority

Social Security Act, Section 471. (19);
 NRS 432B.390.6; 390.7C; .391; .393; .397; .480.2A;
 NRS 127.330

1003.4 Definitions

- 1003.4.1 Caregiver:** Refers to the person or persons providing foster, adoptive or relative care for a child or a person who provides care in a treatment home or residential treatment facility in which a child is placed.
- 1003.4.2 Child and Family Team:** Refers to a team that is comprised of maternal and paternal family members, fictive kin, friends, foster parents, legal custodian, community support specialists, agency staff and other involved and committed people who join together to strengthen and support the family and provide a plan of care that ensures the safety and well-being of the family's children.
- 1003.4.3 Diligent Search:** Means identifying, locating and contacting relatives regarding their interest in providing a temporary or permanent placement for or adopting a child prior to or when the child is placed in substitute care.
- 1003.4.4 Fictive Kin:** Refers to a person not related by birth or marriage who has a significant emotional and positive relationship with the child.
- 1003.4.5 Kinship Care:** A relationship that involves the full-time care of a child or children by an individual or individuals who are related to the child by blood, marriage, adoption, or through close family relationships that are acknowledged by the parents, tribe, or child (i.e. "fictive kin") when the living arrangements are made through the child welfare system and the court process.

1003.5 Procedures

- 1003.5.1** State law requires first preference be given to adult relatives, over non-related care providers, for the placement of children.

A. Diligent Search

1. Exploration of relatives must begin at intake of the initial report and continue throughout the life of the case.
2. Whenever possible, phone numbers and addresses of potential relative resources are to be obtained by the intake worker.
3. Caseworkers must conduct an immediate search for possible non-custodial parents, relatives or fictive kin, who are able to commit to permanency or to providing emotional support/relationship for the child.
4. Placement resources must be considered in ascending order of priority; beginning with relatives. After ruling out placement with relatives within the third degree of consanguinity, fictive kin (if identified) must be given consideration for placement.
5. The agency must engage the family in identifying persons who have a significant and positive relationship with the family and child. Early in the life of the case, families must be asked to cooperate in identifying relatives and/or fictive kin who might be appropriate to care for their children on a temporary or permanent basis in the event the child does not reunify.
6. Investigative workers, during initial interviews, will ask parents, "If you were unable to care for your child(ren) for any reason, such as illness, who would you trust to care for your child(ren)?" Caseworkers will ask for the names, addresses, and phone numbers of these potential resources. In addition,

caseworkers will ask children with whom they feel safe, and who cares for them other than their parents. In some cases it may be necessary to request the court's assistance to persuade a family to identify appropriate relatives.

B. Placement Decision Making

1. Use of Child and Family Teams and/or Family Group Decision Making allows families the opportunity to identify and determine which of the relatives, fictive kin or other child specific resource would be most appropriate to care for the child on a temporary and/or permanent basis.
2. **Any unrelated caregiver (including fictive kin) must be licensed prior to placement.**

1003.5.2 **Timelines:** Beginning at removal and ongoing throughout the life of the case.

1003.5.3 **Forms/Tools:** Diligent Search Handbook

1003.6 Jurisdictional Action

1003.6.1 **Development of Internal Policies:**

7. Each jurisdiction shall establish specific guidelines for determining which placement resource is the most appropriate to meet each child's needs for safety, stability, permanency and well-being; including the evaluation of relative placements in emergency situations which must include at a minimum; a home inspection, a Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/Ns) background check and a criminal records check of all adult members of the household.
8. Relative caregivers should be encouraged to pursue licensure, ensuring access to financial and other supports.
9. Any unrelated caregiver (including fictive kin) must be licensed prior to placement.
10. Whenever possible, relative caregivers should be given priority for expedited foster care training and licensure.
11. Each child welfare agency will explore, identify and foster resources in the community which support kinship caregivers and the children in their care. See "Caring Communities May 2006; Lessons Learned, Challenges and Needs" for ideas on promoting and sustaining kinship placements.

1003.6.2 **Timelines:** To be implemented within 60 days of effective date of this policy.

1003.6.3 **Tools & Forms:** As needed to implement above.

1003.6.4 Documentation:

A. Case File Documentation (paper): N/A

B. UNITY Documentation (electronic):

Applicable UNITY Screen	Data Required
Case Notes	All search activities must be documented in UNITY to ensure diligent efforts were made in order to contact non-custodial parents, relatives, etc. regarding a child welfare case. Search results must be entered into UNITY by the diligent search specialist or caseworker (rural Nevada). Documentation may occur in the case note section or diligent search documentation window. All diligent search records in UNITY may be read and printed by all caseworkers and supervisors.

1003.6.5 Supervisory Responsibility: Ensure that agency protocols are followed when determining the most appropriate placement resource for each child in care.

1003.7 State Responsibilities

1003.7.1 Participants in Policy Development

- A. FPO Staff:** Nancy O'Neill
- B. Jurisdictional Representatives:** Binnie Lopez (WCDSS), Tiffany Hesser, Mark Fitzgerald (CCDFS), Suzanne Wright and Michelle Slaughter (DCFS Rural).
- C. External Stakeholders:** TJ Rosenberg, Vanessa Lindsey and Sandra Grayson (Nevada PEP)

1003.7.2 Technical Assistance

1003.7.3 Clearance Process

1003.7.4 State Oversight

1003.8 Policy Cross Reference

1003.8.1 Policies: 1001-Diligent Search
0204-Case Planning

1003.9 Attachments: Caring Communities May 2006; Lessons Learned, Challenges and Needs