



House Bill 1075 – Family Finding 2013 Fact Sheet

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The Need for Family Finding

Pennsylvania's child welfare system has the critical responsibility of protecting our children, but government can't and shouldn't do it alone. When families are in crisis their relatives and kin or extended family should be called on to help. Short-term child welfare interventions can only be successful in the long-term if the resources and supports within families are identified and engaged by child welfare professionals.

HB 1075 recognizes the needs of children are best met within their families and communities. It would require county child welfare agencies to routinely conduct "*family finding*" or common-sense activities to look for and engage extended family when a child and their immediate family are in need of child welfare services. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare provides an electronic search resource to all counties to assist them in conducting family finding.

Current law only requires county child welfare agencies to notify relatives (to the fifth degree of affinity) and any known kin within 30 days of children entering foster care, although most children who receive child welfare services don't ever enter foster care. HB 1075 would assure agencies are identifying extended family whenever a child is accepted for services and before they are placed in foster care. Oftentimes, these family resources help avoid placing children in foster care.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly should adopt and the governor should sign into law HB 1075. This legislation would require county children and youth agencies to routinely search for and identify extended family members who may be willing to support children and their families who need help.

Family finding could help prevent the removal and placement of children into foster care, and shorten the overall length and intensity of government interventions by:

- Requiring at least annual searches for extended family while accepted for services unless it threatens the safety of the child or is no longer in the child's best interest.
- Encouraging extended family involvement in service planning and delivery.
- Fostering a network of extended family support to promote the safety and well-being of children.
- Identifying extended family members willing to be a short- or long-term placement resource if removing a child from their home becomes necessary.