



NH Department of Health & Human Services
Division for Children, Youth & Families

DCYF Standard Operating Procedure

1503.05 MAINTAINING COMMUNITY AND OTHER IMPORTANT CONNECTIONS

Policy Directive: **20-32**

Effective Date: **August 2020**

Implements Policy: **1503**

Approved:

Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director

This SOP defines procedures for maintaining community and other important connections for children and youth involved with DCYF through an open case.

Procedure

The following information is to support the implementation of the above referenced policy. This document shall not preclude staff from using their professional judgement based on individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the policy.

- I. CPSW/JPOs are expected to work with the family to help their child develop and maintain strong community connections, regardless of placement status.
- II. When children remain in their home, this may include a variety of approaches such as encouraging parents to help their child explore cultural, faith, or recreational connections and providing information on various clubs or organizations that may be appropriate for the child.
- III. CPSW/JPOs will explore any Native American cultural connection and identify the Tribe(s) through:
 - A. Discussions with all family members about any Native American heritage;
 - B. Any family history of residing on a reservation or Alaskan Native village;
 - C. Any documentation that the child is, or has been, a ward of a Tribal Court; or
 - D. Possession by a parent or the child of identification indicating tribal membership.
- IV. Efforts to identify and maintain community and other important connections for children who have been removed from their home should include, whenever possible:
 - A. Identifying placement options that will allow the child the best opportunity to maintain their connections, given the child's specific needs;
 - B. Keeping the child in, or close to, their community and/or in their school district and if this is not possible, placing them no further than one hour from their community;
 - C. Returning them to their community as soon as possible when placement outside their community was necessary;

- D. Providing opportunities for children to continue to participate in any school or extracurricular activities they engaged in prior to entering placement or to engage in new activities if they choose (in consultation with the sending school district) when it is appropriate for them to do so;
 - E. Maintaining them with their current therapist, pediatrician/medical team, and dentist;
 - F. Providing opportunities to continue to participate in faith-based activities they engaged in prior to entering placement;
 - G. Encouraging and supporting children/youth in having visits/contact with extended family and participating in family events and traditions, including cultural events; and
 - H. Providing opportunities to have visits/contact with friends, including participating in birthday parties and other life events as appropriate.
- V. Factors to be considered when determining the appropriateness of maintaining children in their community include:
- A. The location of the child's significant connections;
 - B. Any safety (physical/psychological) concerns;
 - C. The availability of a placement outside their community which could assist them in maintaining connections, such as:
 - 1. A relative caregiver;
 - 2. A foster family home, which would afford the opportunity for the child to be placed with a sibling; or
 - 3. A foster family home, which would afford the opportunity for the child to be close to relatives; or
 - D. The need for specialized care or intensive services to meet specific needs (such as mental/physical health, behavioral/developmental needs, or substance use treatment) that cannot be obtained within their community.
- VI. These efforts may include, as appropriate:
- A. Regular visitation with their immediate family and other relatives, either in their community or by encouraging their connections to visit where the child is placed;

- B. Regular telephone/videoconferencing, email and other written correspondence, or social media contact with important connections (as appropriate); and
 - C. Creating opportunities for the child to attend various life/cultural events in their community and/or where their connections will also be in attendance.
- VII. The CPSW/JPPO will promote the child maintaining their connections until permanency has been achieved. These efforts should include, but are not limited to:
- A. Assessing needs/barriers and utilizing caregivers, family, and community supports, and if necessary, paid services, to facilitate contact with community connections; and
 - B. Setting the expectation with caregivers that children will have regular visitation with their extended relatives and friends (as appropriate) and they will celebrate holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions together (to the extent that safety can be assured), and supporting them in understanding the importance of these connections to the child's well-being.
- VIII. Efforts to support youth in maintaining important connections are documented in the DCYF electronic information system.
- A. Efforts to identify tribal membership and support children in establishing/maintaining tribal connections as appropriate will be documented in the DCYF electronic information system and reported to the Court.
 - B. Any information obtained that confirms or denies the child's membership (such as a tribal membership card), or eligibility for membership, must be filed, as applicable, with the Court.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What do I do if a family identifies Native American Heritage?

- A If a family identifies a connection to any Tribe, support the cultural connection like any other cultural connection.
- A In addition, if a family identifies a connection to a federally recognized Tribe (state recognized tribes and unrecognized tribes excluded), the Division must explore the connection according to SOP 1510.1 Determining ICWA Applicability. ([25 CFR § 23.107](#))

Glossary and Document Specific Definitions

A - B C - D E - F G - I J - L M - N O - Q R - S T - V W - Z

Document Change Log			
PD	Modification Made	Approved	Date