

# National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness

Seneca Family of Agencies: A Non-Profit Agency for Children & Families  
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## PERMANENCY BLAST

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### Dear Permanency Warriors,

During these past few months we have all been closely watching federal and state budget negotiations along with the sequestration discussions to learn of the real and potential impacts on child welfare services and federal grant funding. While awaiting resolution, we continue soldiering on, striving to establish more effective practices for the changing times to better serve children, youth and families in need.

In support of this effort, we at NIPFC aim to engage in a national dialogue on Family Finding and permanency as well as to be a prime location to find the latest research and learn about current best practices in the field. During the year we will share our plans to upgrade our website, provide forums to discuss new research on Family Finding and permanency efforts nationally, as well as to share models and trainings that focus on front end practice and can be integrated within a variety of Family Involvement Strategies.

In this blast, we bring focus to a new publication, "Unlocking Reasonable Efforts - Kinship is Key," by one of NIPFC's Trainers, Kelly Beck, as well as highlight a Family Finding story supported by the use of a Seneca Search. We also share some information on a new training we will be offering soon!

### New Publication: Unlocking Reasonable Efforts

By: Kelly Beck, J.D., Trainer

"Unlocking Reasonable Efforts - Kinship is Key"

"The situation facing many judges is that family members have not been identified and foster care becomes a necessary fall-back position. Judges can

make a difference on this issue."

"...The agency has an obligation to take steps to prevent removal both before the initial hearing and prior to the dispositional hearing. Failing to identify possible relative placements is arguably a failure to take reasonable steps to find those placements."

- "Family Finding from a Judicial Perspective," Hon. Leonard Edwards

Imagine you are an ILSP case manager working with a 17 year old youth who tells you she doesn't know any of her extended family members or that she misses a former close family friend. Maybe you are the attorney just appointed to represent a young child at an initial hearing or you represent an incarcerated parent. Perhaps you are the Judge or Magistrate conducting the adjudicatory hearing or a post-permanency hearing. What can YOU do to ensure a youth who doesn't need to be placed into foster care is not, that your client has the support he/she needs to reunify, or that the child doesn't lose important connections to the healthy, safe and available family members?

This subject is discussed in the recently published[1] article, written by [Rose Wentz](#) and Kelly Lynn Beck. The notion that family should and must[2] be contacted early and often as a way to meet our reasonable efforts requirements is highlighted.

You can access the article [here](#). It is also highlighted in the [Shriver Blog](#).

Kelly has presented extensively on the topic of reasonable efforts, Family Finding, concurrent planning, engaging fathers and other permanency related issues at national, county and state-wide gatherings in Maryland, Florida, Wisconsin, Texas, Washington and others. To schedule a training, workshop or conference presentation, contact us at [familyfinding@senecacenter.org](mailto:familyfinding@senecacenter.org).

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[1] Originally published in the [Journal of Poverty Law](#), Shriver Institute, and also available on the [Children's Bureau Information Gateway](#).

[2] [Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008](#) [PL 110-351] requires notification to relatives within 30 days of removal.

## **A FAMILY FINDING STORY - Youth Connects with Maternal Family**

By: Clif Venable, Family Search Expert

Seneca Search Services was recently contacted by a caseworker for a youth (Nancy[1]) in California whose parents were deceased. The mother died tragically in 1998 at the hands of a serial killer. Nancy was placed into foster care and thereafter went to live with her father. Sadly, her father died a short time later. Nancy went back into care and floated through the system for several years.

Nancy did have some contact with her father's side of the family, but no contact with

her mother's family. Her worker learned that Nancy's mother had come to California from Georgia before Nancy was born. The worker had the name of a maternal aunt, however the name was very common and her last known whereabouts was in Georgia. We all worked together to gather more information from known relatives and the available files to narrow the aunt's possible whereabouts. I then ran a search and found an individual who was most likely her aunt. The worker called the phone number I uncovered and it was indeed Nancy's aunt! Here is how the worker described the first call:

"I just had the most emotional phone call with the aunt. She thought her niece had passed because of the medical condition she was born with. She said knowing she is still alive and thriving was a blessing. This was a beautiful call. The aunt was very helpful in providing information, and told me that [Nancy] has three siblings, which no one here knew about. In fact one of them lived with the Aunt! [Nancy] was able to get the phone numbers for her other siblings. Yes, it was a beautiful call."

For more information about searching for relatives or siblings of foster youth, you can contact [Clif Venable](#).

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[1] The youth's name has been changed.

## Trainings Coming Soon!

**"Finding Fathers and his Family"** - This is a one-day workshop and will be open to all dependency and delinquency court stakeholders, including attorneys for parents, youth and county Counsel as well as judicial officers, social workers, adoption workers, mediators, probation officers and others. This training incorporates Family Finding as a method to identify, locate and embrace fathers and his relatives so they can safety remain in the child's life and participate as part of the youth's natural support system.

For additional information on this and other training opportunities please contact us at [familyfinding@senecacenter.org](mailto:familyfinding@senecacenter.org) or visit us [here](#).

Sincerely,

### **Bob Friend**

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