

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,

We are excited to announce that Pat O'Brien has joined NIPFC as a consultant and trainer! 18 years ago, Pat founded and subsequently led [You Gotta Believe](#), a visionary agency that finds permanent families for youth in New York City. Now that Pat has entrusted You Gotta Believe to new, very capable hands he is eager to return to the work of directly inspiring others to find permanent families for children and youth through training and coaching.

Pat's current training repertoire focuses on finding permanent parents for teens, developing unconditional commitment for parents, and teaching stress reduction through laughter and play, and he is eager to expand his training menu to include Family Finding and other permanency offerings through NIPFC.

We are thrilled to welcome Pat to our team! To learn more about Pat O'Brien, you can read a short biography [here](#) and learn more about the trainings he offers [here](#).

Family Finding and Family Connections Grant Activity

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (FCSA) of 2008 has established Family Connections Grants, issued by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families, which serve to support the incubation of innovative and cutting-edge practice in child welfare sites across the country. The 2012 round of Family Connections grants support the integration of Family Finding into local practice models. Their provisions through the Children's Bureau serve as an incubator for practice research and reform initiatives. This allows us to learn which combination of essential elements are most successful and gives us the flexibility to incorporate with and tailor to the needs of various child welfare practices across the country.

In 2012, five sites were awarded grants to integrate Family Finding into their Family Involvement Strategies. Seneca Family of Agencies was awarded one of these grants in partnership with San Francisco County to integrate Family Finding and Family Team Meetings. The site is now also working to incorporate Safety Organized Practice into its practice model as well.

In two of the additional grant sites (Olmstead County, Minnesota and Portland, Oregon), NIPFC and Kevin Campbell are providing training and consultation to incorporate Family Finding into their practice models as well. In order to determine the effectiveness of these approaches, rigorous evaluation standards have been developed and employed, and we look forward to the insights these evaluations will provide. We will keep you posted as further details emerge on lessons learned and results obtained at each of these grant sites.

Upcoming Webinar!

We are also excited to announce a webinar that will examine research results on Family Finding, lessons learned regarding implementation, what's working, and where current ongoing research.

The webinar will be held on Thursday, August 15th from 10:30am - 12:00pm PT (1:30pm - 3:00pm ET). I will moderate a panel with noted participants:

- **Karin Malm, MS**, Director for Child Welfare and Senior Research Scientist at Child Trends
- **Kevin Campbell**, Expert Consultant/Trainer and Author of the Family Finding Model with Seneca Family of Agencies
- **Melissa Martin-Mollard, PhD**, Director of Research at Seneca Family of Agencies

This informative webinar will review and discuss the implications of practice, fidelity, implementation and their ramifications on future research design.

Look for details on how to register for this webinar soon!

A Family Finding Story

NIPFC trainer Mike Mertz recently conducted training in Calgary, Alberta Canada on Family Finding and Permanency. Mike introduced The Tree of Life exercise as one of the important tools Social Workers can use to learn more about the lives of the children they work with. The Tree of Life exercise was created by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough as a means to help vulnerable children. This exercise has been used in many contexts to assist people in connecting with what they hold as important in the world, to identify how they have responded to difficult situations and to allow them to be seen in ways that they prefer. In a permanency context this helps to reduce the effects of shame that people might be experiencing and positions us in the 'system' as people who are

interested in who others are beyond the problems that they face. It also allows people to be seen as more than just a resource to be tapped into. The Tree of Life exercise opens up space for clients to identify important people in their lives and connect these people to cherished values.

Brandi, a case manager from a private agency in Calgary, used the Tree of Life exercise recently with a young boy (age 9) who was rather isolated and lacking supports who weren't professionals. This boy was described as one who had no friends and very few connections. It was said that he didn't engage with others and therefore it was difficult to find lasting meaningful relationships. Brandi met with this youth and invited him to construct a tree following the Tree of Life guidelines. She found that he saw himself as "having many friends" because people liked him. He called himself outgoing and identified several people who appreciated him. The youth identified one former teacher in particular who he really liked and stated that this teacher also liked him a great deal. He went on to describe some of his values and to provide a glimpse of what he wanted for his future. All of this from a boy who had been described as not willing, or able, to engage.

When this tree was shared with his treatment team they were in awe of what he had drawn and the ways he saw himself. This new information helped them shift their view of who he was and could be and what was possible for his future. They felt inspired, invigorated, and hopeful in ways that had eluded them with regards to this youth. Most importantly, when told about how she was experienced by this youth, the former teacher decided to join his team as an unpaid, lifetime support member.

(For more on the Tree of Life you can go to dulwichcentre.com)

Sincerely,

Bob Friend

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