

# What is Family Connections Oregon?

**Family Connections Oregon (FCO)** is a demonstration project funded by the Children's Bureau in which a co-located FCO Coordinator provides a package of services (intensive family finding and engagement, family group conferencing, and follow-up) within the first 60 days of a child's out-of-home placement.

## How does FCO benefit DHS and families?

- Extra person provides family finding and family group conferencing services.
- Support to and collaboration with caseworkers.
- A family-focused service that results in a pre-jurisdiction Action Plan.
- An opportunity to provide evidence of better outcomes for children and families that could result in a permanent funding stream.

## Who is eligible for Family Connections Oregon?

- Families with a child placed out-of-home within the past week (*NOTE:* Multnomah County requires that families self-identify as African American); and
- At least one child is likely to stay in care for at least 60 days; and
- Family is **randomly selected** to receive FCO services.



## Why random selection?

- A randomized control trial is a classic, rigorous research design that can establish a service as evidence-based.
- The outcomes for families who received the service are compared to the outcomes for a group of similar families (**control group**) who did not receive the service.
- Once a service is established as evidence-based, it becomes eligible for various funding streams and is more likely to be funded.

**What is a control group?**  
A group of families similar to the families who received the service (the intervention group).

## Is random selection ethical?

We don't know yet whether FCO services work and we don't know which families will benefit most, so we assume that all families deserve an equal chance. We don't have resources to serve every eligible case so randomly selecting a case for service is an ethical way to distribute resources.

## What is the caseworker's role?

Caseworkers might be asked to participate in the following activities:

- Help determine which children are likely to be in care for at least 60 days.
- Invite control group families to share contact information with PSU for evaluation purposes (i.e., ask families to sign a release of contact information for PSU).
- Provide child well-being information about one "focus child" for FCO and control group cases on their caseload.
- Provide feedback on FCO family meetings they attend.

Questions? Contact Carrie Furrer at Portland State University  
cfurrer@pdx.edu, (503) 725-2138

Portland State University  
www.pdx.edu/ccf  
Oregon DHS  
www.oregon.gov/dhs

