



**COLLABORATIVE  
FAMILY  
ENGAGEMENT  
TOOLS**

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A Pocket Guide for Connecting with  
& Searching for Families

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**TEXAS**  
Department of Family  
and Protective Services



**TEXASCASA**  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

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## THANK YOU

for your interest in Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE), and for all that you do to improve the lives of children and families involved in the foster care system. CFE is just one of the ways that the CASA network and Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) here in Texas are working together, and one of the approaches available to the network to enhance advocacy for children and families. CFE is Texas' model of Family Finding, which provides a process and tools to engage with and find parents, families and young people to ensure their voices are heard throughout the case.

The goal of CFE is to work together to ultimately make a lifelong team (which we call a lifetime network) around children, youth, and their families, so that they are sufficiently connected, cared for and safe. We know that children heal in relationships, and that children's outcomes are better in life when they are better connected. This pocket guide provides you information on some of the tools used in CFE that you can start using them today. We hope you are as excited to start engaging with family and connecting children as we are.

If you have any questions about CFE, please contact your supervisor or Texas CASA at [cfeteam@texascasa.org](mailto:cfeteam@texascasa.org).

Thank you for all that you do for Texas children and families,

**Texas CASA**

# CONNECTEDNESS MAP

A connectedness map is a quick and easy tool that uses simple shapes and lines to illustrate a person's connections (or lack of connections).



## HELPFUL TIPS

- This tool is helpful in quickly determining the level of urgency needed for connection
- Utilize with a child or adult by asking who is in their life
- Adaptable to a person's needs or approach (e.g. write out everyone's names, add a check mark or heart for each person named, include lines to show mutual connection, etc.)
- Use different colors to indicate different kinds of connections (e.g. biological, love, spiritual, mental, cultural, etc.)
- If lots of people appear on the map, ask the person where these people are now, how can we contact them, can we invite them to a family meeting? If few people appear on the map, have a conversation about why this is worrisome as everyone needs a team around them and ask who would like to help them become more connected?

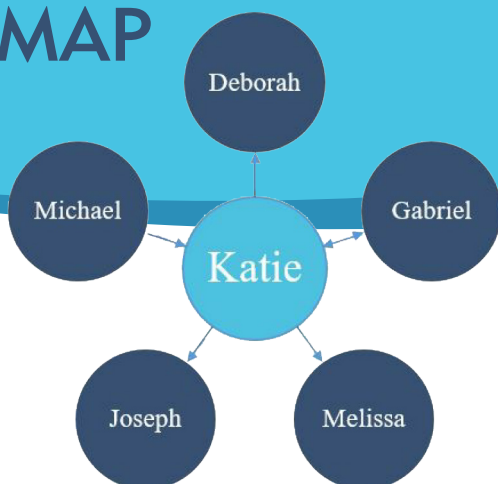
## QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ACTIVITY

- Who loves and cares about this person?
- Who is going to be there for this person after they are no longer in foster care?
- Who cares about you/your family and is a support to you?



# ECOMAP

An ecomap is a diagram that highlights different areas and connections in a person's life.



## HELPFUL TIPS

- Share a blank ecomap with the person you'd like to map and have them complete it with your assistance
- Use arrows pointing toward and away from people on the map to indicate giving and receiving energy
- Arrows can also point in both directions to represent reciprocal relationships
- The ecomap is useful in exploring relationships, involvements and activities in such realms of life as family, employment, friends, religious affiliations, school, sports, neighbors, community, culture, recreation/hobbies, etc.

## QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ACTIVITY

- Who is important in your life?
- Who do you spend most of your time with?
- What groups, activities or memberships do you hold or belong to?
- What does your day/week look like? Each activity would go in a circle, e.g. one activity could be "work" which would then be broken down by who at work the person connects with now or who is an opportunity for a connection in the future. Sample:
  - o Who do you eat lunch with? No one.
  - o Who says hello to you when you come in? Jessie.
  - o Would you consider asking Jessie to eat lunch with you one day?
- Do you give or receive more energy from each of the various people in your life? Discuss each person individually. Watch for themes or an excess of energy moving in only one direction.

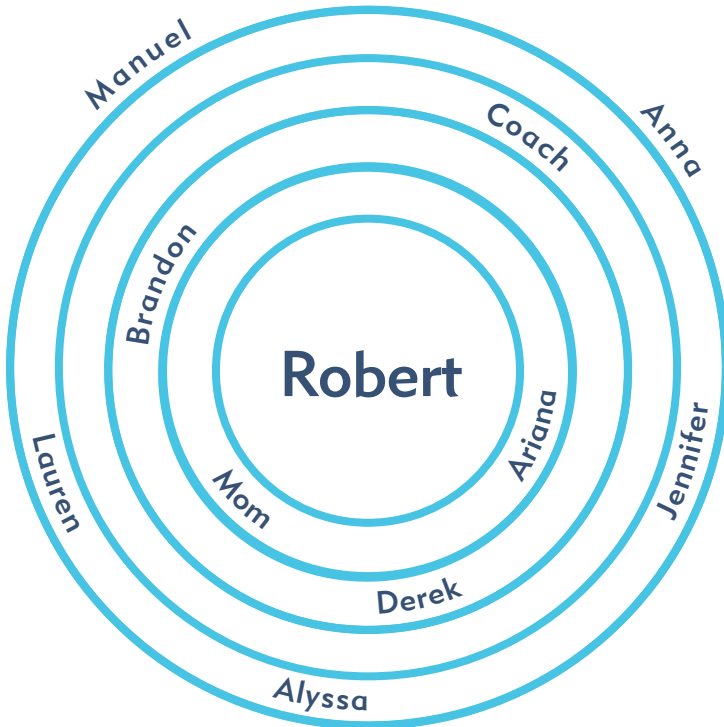


# CIRCLES OF TRUST

A diagram of concentric circles with a person's name in the center and people they are connected to in the same or outer circles.

## HELPFUL TIPS:

- Ask the person to identify people in their life and place them in the circle that best represents how close they are to them
- The closer the people are to the middle, the closer the relationship is, and the more support they provide to the person completing the activity
- Ask the person where they would place CPS or CASA



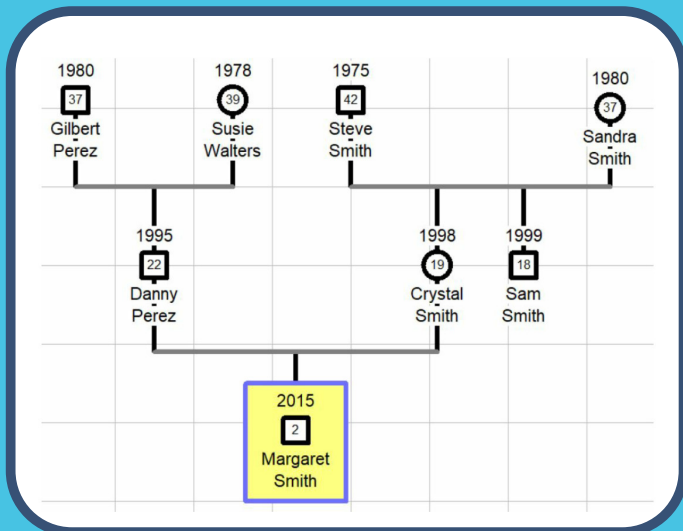
# GENOGRAM



A genogram is a visual map of a person's family and how the members are connected.

## HELPFUL TIPS:

- An initial genogram can be created from information in a case file and expanded upon when meeting with family
- When building a genogram it is helpful to talk to the lead family member who has key insight and knowledge into the family structure
- Texas CASA has a license to genogram software, GenoPro, which is a user-friendly program that quickly produces a genogram without the user worrying about how to draw the different relationships within a family
- Use the GenoPro Quick Tips document created by Texas CASA



GenoPro and the GenoPro Quick Tips are available for download at:

[www.texascasa.org/reminder-genogram-software-available-download](http://www.texascasa.org/reminder-genogram-software-available-download)

# MOBILITY MAPPING

A mobility map is a visual timeline of a person's life created by having them draw places they've lived and people from their earliest memory to the present day.

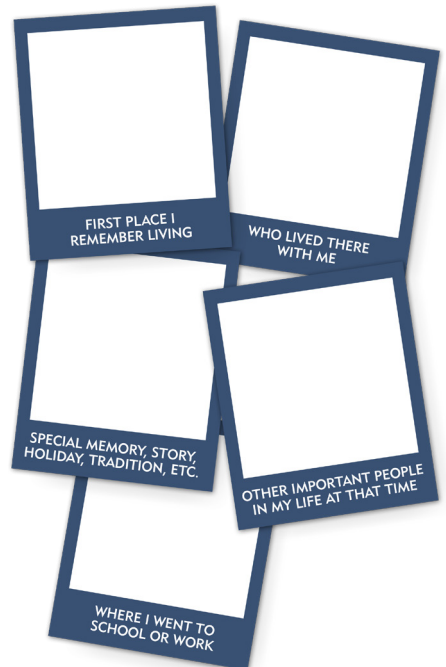
## HELPFUL TIPS:

- Tape flip chart paper on the wall, or use the sample template created by Texas CASA. Encourage the person to stand, if able, and use markers to create/fill out their mobility map
- Start with drawing the first place the person remembers living in, and build from there
- Draw as much as the person can remember about each person and place
- Draw only people that the person identifies as important
- Focus on the positive and good things in that person's life
- Redirect away from negative memories but acknowledge them if they arise
- Ask questions organically as they arise out of what is being drawn
- Schedule one hour for children and two hours for adults to complete this activity
- The map can be built upon at subsequent visits

Texas CASA has mobility map templates available. Request a copy by emailing [cfeteam@texascasa.org](mailto:cfeteam@texascasa.org).



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## SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ACTIVITY:

- Where was the first place you remember living?
- What did it look like? Can you draw it for me?
- Who lived there with you?
- Can you draw them and write their names?
- What school did you go to?
- Did you have a favorite teacher or coach?
- Can you draw the school and the teacher in it?
- What was your favorite holiday?
- What did you do and who did you celebrate it with?

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK AFTER COMPLETING A MOBILITY MAP:

- Pick a different color and note different symbols beside people for each of the following: who has a special place in your heart (e.g. red heart), who are you not fond of (e.g. blue x), who would you like to search for and invite to a meeting to plan for your future (e.g. a yellow check mark). Make a legend to remember what each symbol represents.
- What five things do you need most right now to be the happiest you could be? Try to include the identified needs in the service plan.
- What five things make you awesome?

HEART CONNECTION OR WHO WAS GOOD TO ME

NO HEART CONNECTION OR WHO WAS NOT GOOD TO ME

SOMEONE I MISS, WOULD LIKE TO GET IN CONTACT WITH OR AM CURIOUS ABOUT

WHO MIGHT WANT TO BE A PART OF MY NETWORK OR OFFER SUPPORT

# INTERNET SEARCHING

Texas CASA holds accounts to multiple websites that can be used to search for family information. The sites contain obituaries, death records, census records, contact information and more.

## HELPFUL TIPS:

### **White Pages, [whitepages.com](http://whitepages.com)**

- Search by a person's name, phone number or address
- Get access to phone numbers, current and past addresses, age, birth date and relatives
- Background reports are not included

### **Ancestry, [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com)**

- Search by a person's name, residence and birth year
- Use keywords on search
- Helpful to create or update a family tree

### **People Search, [search.connectourkids.org](http://search.connectourkids.org)**

- Search by a person's name, phone number, address, email, or website
- Get quick access to aggregate information from public databases

Disclaimer: CASA programs are required to follow confidentiality practices regarding cases. Please review your program's policies before using these tools.

Contact Texas CASA at [cfeteam@texascasa.org](mailto:cfeteam@texascasa.org) or your supervisor for login information.



### **Connect Our Kids, [family.connectourkids.org](http://family.connectourkids.org)**

- Texas CASA is piloting this web based, free software designed especially for social workers and CASA
- Useful for making family trees and searching purposes
- Can create an account and log/track your work and searches
- Has access to templates for emails, letters, etc.



# SENECA SEARCH

A Seneca Search is an online tool that searches various databases and produces a summarized report of information in a timely and thorough way.

## HELPFUL TIPS

- The goal of a search is to find names, addresses and contact information for adults connected to the person searched and, ultimately, the child
- A search must be completed on an adult involved in the case, likely a parent or grandparent
- Only people age 18+ will show up on the report
- Show Family Connections Chart to adults and/or youth involved in the case to gather more information
- Utilize social media networks to locate, contact and search for family members

## COMPLETING A SEARCH

Fill out an online form and provide as much of the following identifying information as possible:

- First and Last Name
- Date of Birth
- Last Known Address
- Social Security Number (as many digits as possible)

There is a \$25 fee to run a search, unless it is for a CFE case and has been allotted a search.

Contact Texas CASA at [cfeteam@texasacasa.org](mailto:cfeteam@texasacasa.org) or your supervisor to complete a search for a CFE case.

# OUT OF COUNTRY SEARCH



Family members outside of the U.S. should be considered for connections to the child.

Texas CASA and the Consular Network of Mexico have a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on behalf of children in the care of DFPS. The role of the consulate during child welfare cases is to:

- Locate family members in Mexico
- Act as a cultural broker
- Facilitate home studies when requested
- Assist in the reunification process
- Provide mutual trainings

Also, Texas CASA will work with the organization Find Families in Mexico to complete a search for kin or fictive kin believed to be in Mexico.



# TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life is an approach to working with people who have experienced difficult times. An illustration of a tree is used to guide reflection on aspects of a person's life.

## HELPFUL TIPS

- The person can draw their own tree or be provided a pre-made image or visual
- Roots - where you come from, could be places or people
- Ground - where you live now, everyday activities
- Trunk - skills and abilities, what you give value to
- Branches - hopes and dreams
- Leaves - significant people in your life
- Fruits - gifts you have received
- Seeds - gifts you have given or hope to give







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