

# Collaborative Family Engagement Tools

A Pocket Guide for Connecting & Searching with Families



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OF CASA STATEWIDE

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

The goal of CFE is to work together to ultimately make a lifelong team (which we call a lifetime network) around children and youth, 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 today. We hope you are as excited to get started finding family and connecting children as we are.

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



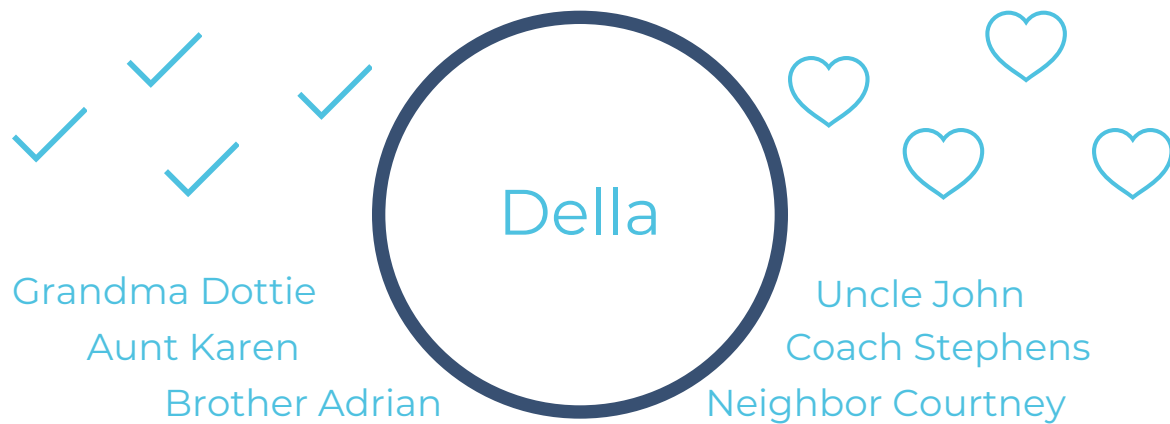
Thank you again,

Texas CASA



# Connectedness Map

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



## 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 meet person's needs or approach (i.e. write out everyone's names, add a check mark or heart for each person named, include lines to show mutual connection, etc.)
- You could also make use of color to indicate different kinds of connections (i.e. biological, love, spiritual, mental, cultural, etc.)
- Questions to ask: Who loves this person unconditionally? Who is going to be there for this person forever?



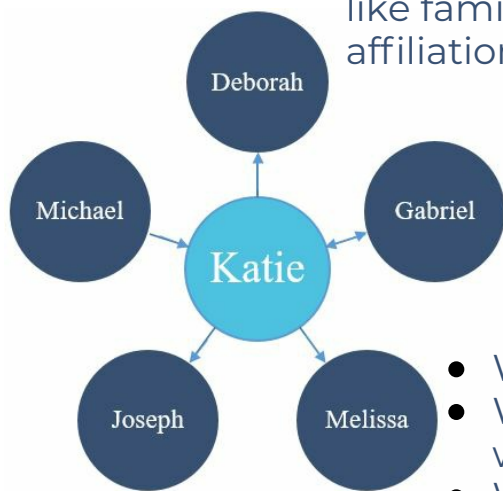
# Ecomap

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 then 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 like family, employment, friends, religious affiliations, school, sports, neighbors, etc.



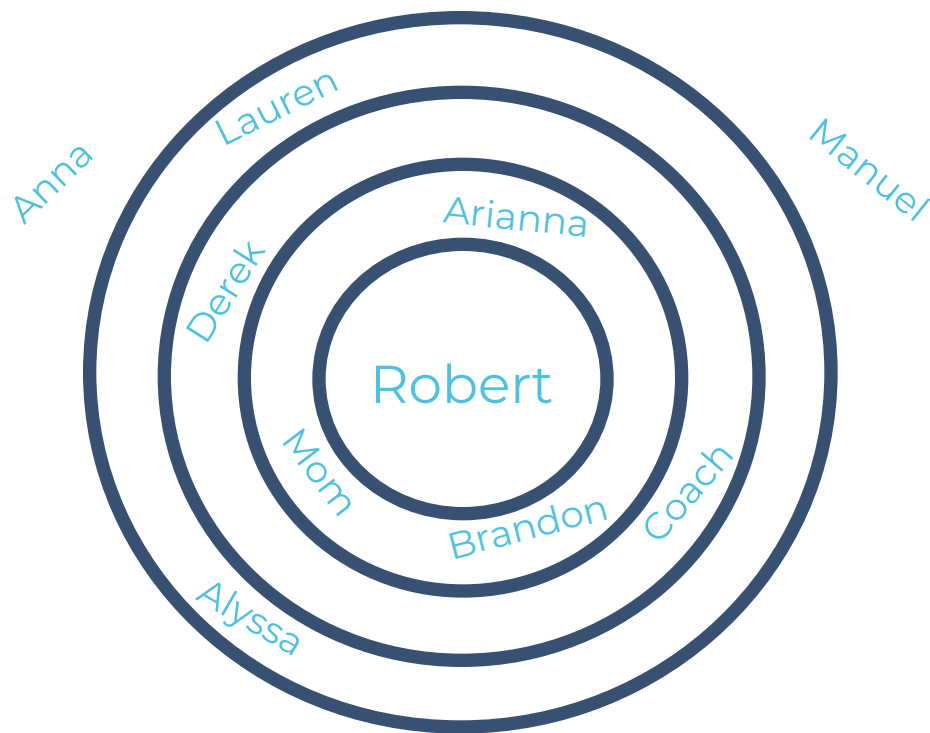
## Questions to Guide Activity

- 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?
- Do you give or receive more energy from each of the various people in your life? Discuss each person individually.



# Circles of Trust

A diagram of concentric circles with the 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
- Ask the person where they would place CPS or CASA



# Mobility Map

A mobility map is a visual timeline of a person's life by having them draw homes and people from their earliest memory to present day.



## Helpful Tips

- Tape flip chart paper on the wall, and empower the person to stand and use markers to create their mobility map
- Start with drawing the first house 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
- Schedule one hour for children and two hours for adults to complete this activity
- The map can be built upon at subsequent visits



# Mobility Map

## 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?
- What five things make you awesome?



# Genogram

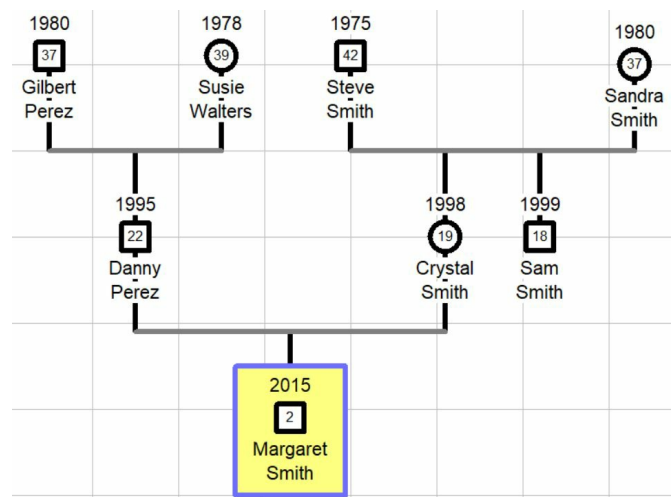
A genogram is a visual map of a person's family and how the members are connected.

## 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
- There is a GenoPro Quick Tips document available for download

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

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







# Internet Searching

Texas CASA holds an account 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

- Search by a person's name, phone number or address
- Access to phone numbers, current and past addresses, age, birth date and family members

### Ancestry

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

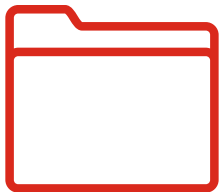
Contact Texas CASA or your supervisor for login information.



# 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/youth involved in the case to gather more information
- Utilize the 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)

Contact Texas CASA or your supervisor to complete a search.

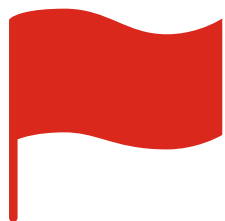


# Out of Country Searching

Family members outside of the USA should be considered for connection to the child.

Texas CASA and the Consular Network of Mexico have a MOU to work together on behalf of children in the care of CPS. 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 one'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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