

2012 Family Connection Discretionary Grants:  
Combination Family Finding/Family Group Decision Making

**Project Abstract/ Summary**

**Grantee Name: Olmsted County Child & Family Services**

**Grantee City and State:** Rochester, Minnesota

**Grant Project Title:** *Found, Engaged, and Connected: Innovating for Olmsted County's Most Vulnerable Children*

**Summary of Grant Project:**

***Found, Engaged and Connected: Innovating for Olmsted County's Most Vulnerable Children & Youth*** is a project of national significance that combines the expertise and tenured experience of Olmsted County Community Services with the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect, and two other national partners, to test the effectiveness of an integrated family finding and family group decision making (FGDM) model to increase connections and improve social and emotional well-being for a highly vulnerable group of children and youth. The target population includes at-risk children served by Child Protective Services, Children's Mental Health, Adolescent Behavioral Health, and Juvenile Corrections.

Olmsted County has over 13 years of experience implementing family finding and FGDM models, and in fact, is considered a national pioneer transforming child welfare practice through these innovations. With the support of the American Humane Association, the Kempe Center has assumed national leadership for the family group decision making program, and brings 16 years leadership in training, technical assistance, consultation and research in FGDM, including experience with the 2011 FGDM grantee cluster, funded by ACF. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency brings expertise in integrating a trauma-informed lens into training activities, and will support additional data mining. The National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness will partner to weave the core elements of Family Finding into strategic planning activities, training and program installation.

A cornerstone of this project is the quasi-experimental design that utilizes a propensity score matching approach. This project leverages Olmsted County's Family Involvement Strategies database, a robust administrative data set that includes trauma screens, and other tools to measure the process, outcomes and costs of implementing an integrated family finding/FGDM model. A new fidelity tool that combines family finding and FGDM is another noteworthy contribution.

Moreover, this rigorous evaluation will be supplemented by advanced training, technical assistance and coaching within the Olmsted community; peer networking; and an effective dissemination strategy to reach thousands, with new knowledge showcased and shared with multiple audiences at the county, State and national levels. In addition, embedded in this project is the engagement of the broader Olmsted community to support the philosophical alignment of services and resources with an integrated family finding/FGDM model.

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