



Guidelines for Family & Kinship Reintegration

PUBLIC document – 2015 version

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Introduction:

This guidebook is about supporting children to live with their family through the support of *Friends International* (FI) reintegration services. When safe and possible, the ideal place for a child or young person is with their family (parents/main caregiver). The objective of family reintegration is to ensure that all children are able to live in a supportive and safe family environment. If reintegration with direct family is not possible or safe, priority should be given to community or family-based alternative care options such as extended family, foster care, independent living (for youth over 15) and, as a ***last*** resort, residential care. Please see relevant Guidebooks for further information on these options.

Children can become separated from their families for many different reasons. Family reintegration is the return of a child to their family when the caretaker is able to keep the child safe and meet their needs.

Why Family Reintegration?

Where possible and safe, it is in the child's best interests to live and be raised in a family environment because:

- Children need a primary caring adult, consistent love and attention to grow, learn and develop into healthy adults. This level of care cannot be provided in institutions/orphanages.
- Almost all parents want to do their best to care for their children. Given the right conditions/support, parents can make great changes so that even the most serious issues can be overcome.
- Under the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child children have the right to be raised with their family, culture and community whenever possible. FI staff have a responsibility to support this.

NGO's / institutions cannot replace family. FI works to support family not replace them.

What if no Family?

When a child has no safe or willing family, alternative care options must be considered. These are:

- Foster care (most foster care is transitional only, a safe place for child until a long-term carer is found)
- Group home
- Independent Living
- Domestic Adoption

Workers must understand a child's needs, history and wishes before deciding which option is best. Every child will have different needs. Every family is different.

Family Reintegration 6 Steps

Family reintegration generally requires staff to follow these 6 steps:

1. Open Case
2. Trace Family
3. Assess Family
4. Support Family
5. Reintegrate children to the family
6. Follow up

Step 1 → Case Open:

Case manager opens a new case file for the child and completes all necessary paperwork.

Step 2 → Family Tracing:

The aim for family tracing is to locate a child's family or caregivers. Children are separated from family for many reasons.

Step 3 → Family Assessment

Once you have found and contacted a child's family an assessment should be completed. Undertaking a family assessment is not just about completing the forms, but is an opportunity to build a relationship between children and families and make plans for the future.

Step 4 → Future Planning and Support

Whilst undertaking the family assessment, it is important to work with the family on a Family Support Plan to clearly agree any support the family will need to ensure a successful reintegration.

Step 5 → Family Reintegration

When the assessment is positive, both the child and family agree to a return home and a family support plan has been agreed the formal reintegration process can begin.

All family reintegration need to be agreed in collaboration with the relevant government bodies and local authorities. Both FI and government reintegration forms should be used when formalizing a reintegration.

Step 6 → Doing Follow Up

Follow up frequency and approach will depend on a child's individual needs and circumstances.

Other Alternative Care Options

When reintegration to direct family is either not possible or not in the best interests of the child other alternative care options can be considered.