To: Directors, Public Children Services Agencies

From: Jeffery Van Deusen, Deputy Director
Office of Families and Children

Date: December 3, 2021

Subject: Connect Our Kids

Background

On November 30, 2021, Ohio Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted and Director Matt Damschroder held a press conference announcing that Ohio is the first state to implement two technology tools from Connect Our Kids. Connect Our Kids is a non-profit agency that is pioneering technology to find families, build connections, and create community for children in the foster care system. The Office of Families and Children (OFC) is excited to partner with Connect Our Kids to provide technology for children services professionals to connect foster youth with their forever family.

Attached you will find information about the Connect Our Kids software capabilities. Additionally, the links below offer quick video overviews of tools currently available.

- People Search Tool
- Family Engagement Center (video under development)
- Family Connections for Family Search and Engagement
- Family Connections for Mentor Programs
- Connect Our Kids Mobile APP

Connect Our Kids in partnership with Kinnect, will soon make training available to all PCSA staff, including front-line team members, supervisors, and administrative staff. They will support PCSA teams in the application of family search and engagement technology, such as the LexisNexis Accurint Government Plus tool, social media, and genogram-building tools offered by GenoPro and Connect Our Kids including the Family
Connections Tool. This tech support will include training, navigation tips, policy explanation, and workflow development, as well as learning labs to support implementation of best practices.

The trainings will be offered from January through September 2022. Details and registration information will be provided later this month.

**Contact**

For more information, visit [kinnectohio.org/seek](http://kinnectohio.org/seek) or send an email message to [kinnectofamily@kinnectohio.org](mailto:kinnectofamily@kinnectohio.org).

Agencies interested utilizing these tools should go to [https://www.connectourkids.org/tools](https://www.connectourkids.org/tools) and complete the form to request access.
Our Software Tools

- **People Search**: a simple search tool that scans 300 public data websites and returns emails, phone numbers, addresses, names of potential additional relatives, and social media pages.
- **Engagement Templates**: basic templates and scripts for getting started on a phone call, email, or snail mail letter.
  - Vision for 2022: We would like to expand this into an **Ideas and Best Practice Center** to include additional language versions, and user-driven ideas and tips on approaches to difficult cases and outreach challenges.
- **Family Connections**: a secure cloud-based tool that imports the People Search tool’s data discovery into visual, drag-and-drop connections mapping format.
  - **Templates** for family trees or groupings, mentor support maps, visual placement histories, or school special needs support maps
  - **Team collaboration** on cases in real time, seeing each others’ work, phone call logs, email logs, notes, and search efforts
  - **Supervisor visibility** of team’s activity and where individual members might need assistance; allows teams to back each other up easily and helps make staff turnover much easier with less data loss. Team level reports provide accountability and transparency to supervisors.
  - **Document and webpage organization**, attached to the relevant individuals in the case for easy locating later when needed. (For example, an uncle’s Facebook page can be easily made into a pdf and seamlessly attached to the uncle in Family Connections, for future reference.)
  - **Exporting and printing** of all data and images as well as ability to email, store offline, or attach to state case management systems.
  - **Secure cloud hosting** on Google Cloud Platform, a secure, FedRAMP High rated system. Additional details about our extensive privacy and security measures here: [https://www.connectourkids.org/security](https://www.connectourkids.org/security).
  - **Guided functionality** (coming in 2022!): For users less familiar with family search and engagement techniques, a “TurboTax style” guided functionality will ask the user questions as it walks them through adding and then reaching out to family members.
  - **Accurint integration** (almost complete): Accurint account holders (purchased through LexisNexis) will be able to search, view, and import Accurint results into Family Connections in seconds, allowing for much greater usability of this extremely valuable data. Imported data will be
Family Connections is NOT a case management tool. It can be used with little to no data about the child entered. The focus is on the adults around the child.

Family Connections is NOT a program. While it can be used outside a program, it is especially designed to make existing programs even more powerful and effective. The Guide Me feature will give those without a special program a helping hand with basic search and engagement techniques. We dramatically scale up family search programs such as Wendy’s Wonderful Kids, 30 Days to Family, etc.

- **Connection Matter Academy** (coming in 2022!): a trauma-informed video series using “gaming style” videos in 3-5 minute segments focused on engaging youth 14-26 years old. The goal is to introduce these youth to the concept of trauma, what it does to your brain, and to your relationships, and how you can take steps to start healing trauma by building a support network around yourself. While CMA will not be a video game itself, we have partnered with a gaming company to make the style of videos that this age group enjoys in video games.

- Our pilot found that this software cuts in half the time typically needed for family searching, at the same time increasing by 6x the number of connections per youth.

**Our Company**

- Connect Our Kids is a 501(c)(3) company, incorporated in Virginia and headquartered in Falls Church, VA. We work with operational child welfare partners nationwide.

**Our Co-Founders**

- Our co-founders, Dr. Jennifer Jacobs and Jessica Stern, launched Connect Our Kids in 2017.
- Jennifer is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, an Army veteran and a former White House Fellow. She is a nuclear engineer who was working in national security when she noticed parallels between software used in the intelligence community to map out terrorist networks, and what was needed to connect foster kids to supportive family networks.
- Jessica lived with a foster family as a child, and experienced firsthand the impact of a supportive community and extended family. She has a background in communications and project management and is a published author. She met Jennifer and the idea for Connect Our Kids took off.

**Our Awards**

- We took first place in the 2018 Innovate for Good Challenge, sponsored by Accenture.
- We were selected as the Scores for Kids recipient for the 2017-2018 Washington Capitals hockey season, sponsored by Burke & Herbert Bank.
- Our co-founder, Jennifer Jacobs, was selected as a Breakthrough Leader by the venture philanthropy organization, New Profit, in 2019.

*Hello@ConnectOurKids.org  www.ConnectOurKids.org*