

Guideline on Unaccompanied and Separated Children including Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) and Alternative Care

This guideline is developed in anticipation for Cyclone Mocha in May of 2023. In an emergency situation such as this, it is likely that many children will become separated from their parents/ caregivers. Therefore, this guideline is intended to support caseworkers and CP workers in responding to these children.

Cases of children being separated from families should be identified in a timely manner (try to initiate coordinated responses in the first 24 to 48 hours) and prevent further cases of separation. Unaccompanied separated children should be identified and provided with suitable, safe alternative care, preferably family-based alternative care and have individual child case management/ care plan. In collaboration with other mandated agencies, UASC should be registered, safely reunified and reintegrated with primary caregivers or other family members.

This service should be carried out only by trained staff / case managers to avoid unnecessary stress for children and confidentiality of the child's information should be preserved throughout.

Definitions:

Separated Children: “Separated children are those separated from both parents, or from their primary caregivers, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.”

Unaccompanied Children: “Unaccompanied children (also referred to as unaccompanied minors) are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.”

Missing Children: In the event that a parent or a caregiver reports, during an emergency situation that they are unable to trace their child, the child can be registered as missing. It may not be practically possible to determine whether the child had run for safety with other community members, or got abducted, severely injured or even killed. Such children are documented as missing so that tracing processes can be initiated.

Steps to follow;

Step 1: Identification and Registration: Register a child identified in need of FTR services using CM service step to have proper recoding of a child's basic data for family tracing.

Step 2: Conduct initial assessment and arrange for child's immediate needs re. temporary care and protection, preferably in family settings. Identify child's potential protection risks through a coordinated case management approach and provide required support such as MHPSS, etc.

Step 3: Conduct comprehensive assessment for family tracing. Short term temporary safe shelter need to be arranged for UASC while collecting information and before and during carrying out family tracing and reintegration.

Follow the FTR process as per below:

1. Tracing: After obtaining informed assent/consent, where a child is not with their primary caregiver or parents, tracing will begin with information of a child collected in Where a child's family has migrated, attempts will be made to ensure to set up a family links and a regular communication. Where the child's primary caregiver or parent is deceased, tracing shall begin to another family member,- extended family members. Keep a child informed of the progress of a tracing.
2. Verification: Once a match has been proposed, the Case Manager runs verification and cross check to ensure information corroborates and provides a successful match of a child and adults. More in-depth checks may be needed for infants, young children and children with difficulty in communicating. For the best interest of a child, both sides need to have willingness to reunify and individual action plan must be developed to support the child to move back into the family. Depending on the child's history in the family or the cause of the separation, it may be necessary and appropriate to mediate between the child and family member.
3. Reunification: . Reunification is determined ensuring that the child's best interest is taken into full consideration and that it is safe. An assessment of the situations of the reunification location must be completed. Knowing and addressing the root causes of separation are valuable when preparing family reintegration and remember – safe and effective reintegration is a tailored process, not a single event.

Step 4: If the FTR process is not successful, provision of alternative care in accordance with the continuum of care is considered. As much as possible, family based care should be prioritized and prior assessment should be conducted to best determine the most suitable placement for children. Depending on the maturity and age, children's opinions should also be taken into consideration when arranging for care option for them. The placement identified as most appropriate should provide a child with a protective environment free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect as much as possible.

➤ **Option 1**

Kinship care: Case Managers identify extended family members/ relatives who are willing and are appropriate to provide care for the child. Arrangement of a placement should be in consultation with the child, where possible.

➤ **Option 2**

➤ Foster care: Identify trained families on foster care or family interested to provide short-term family-based care for children, when no extended family members can be traced for the time

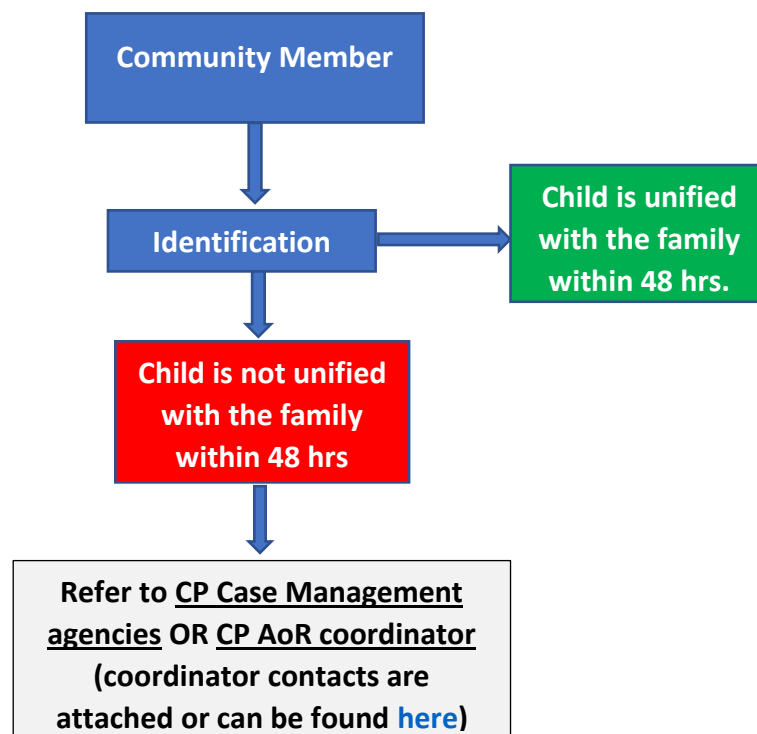
being or are unable to provide care. Foster care is best served for temporary purpose and thus family reintegration should be an ultimate aim for the child who is under foster care placement.

Option 3

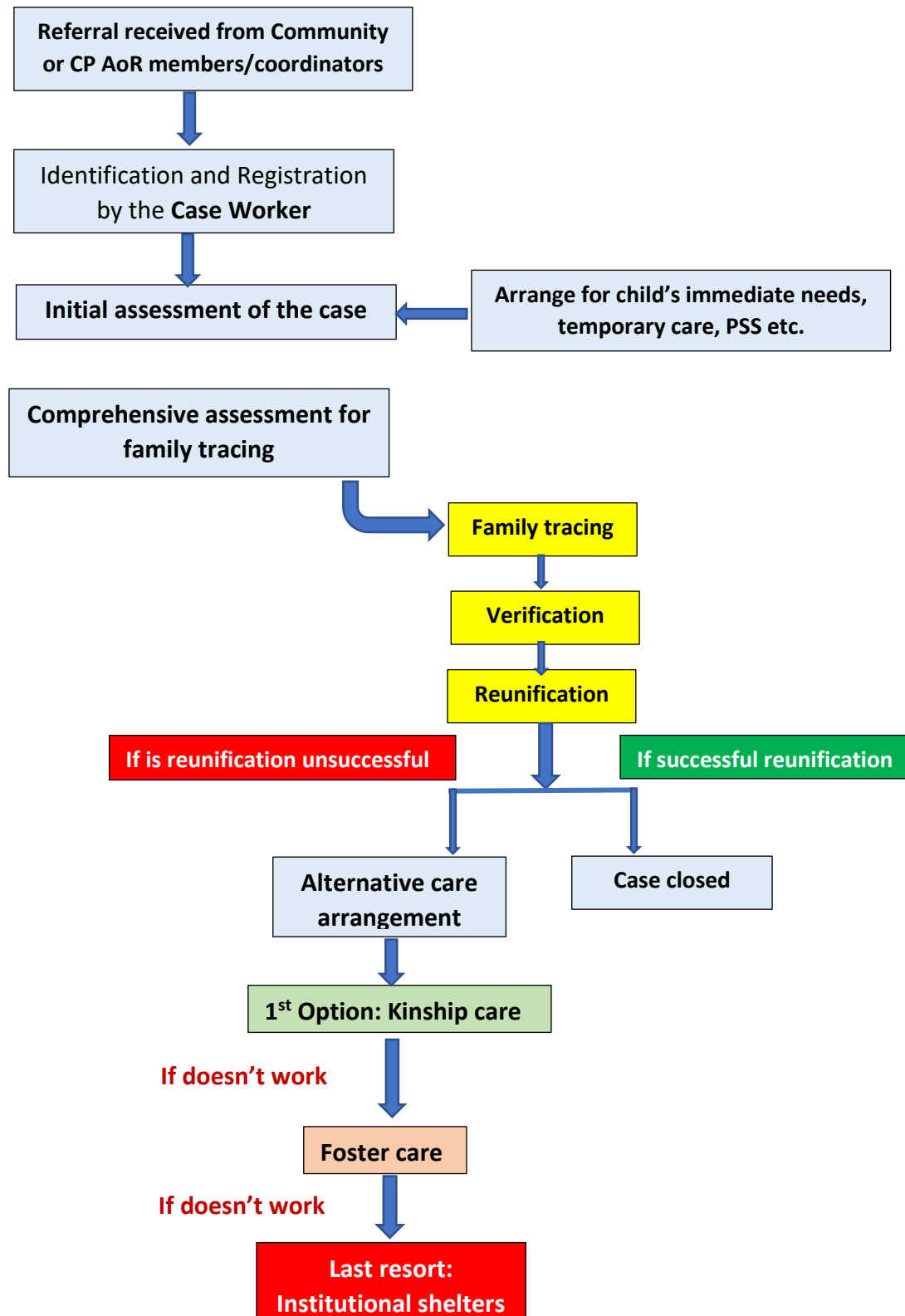
Institutions/shelters: As the last resort, if option 1 and 2 are exhausted, provide safe shelter/accommodation in coordination with DSW case managers at township level. Note, this must be a temporary option until the child is reunified with families or relatives or arrange a foster family as appropriate.

Note: Case worker/CP actors will adhere to case management steps, instruments (forms), and principles when delivering services.

Pathway 1. Informal Family Reunification process by Community members.



Pathway 2. Family Tracing and Reunification process by FTR-trained Agencies.



References

A practice handbook for family tracing and reunification in Emergencies, Save the Children

https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/fttr_handbook_4web_002.pdf/

Myanmar Inter-agency Case Management Handbook

https://alliancecpha.org/sites/default/files/technical/attachments/cpha012_-_fttr_and_covid_19_v2.pdf