A family can be many things – a group consisting of parents and children, and all your relatives, including your grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, related by blood or marriage. A family can also be a group of people in your household, people who you care about and consider family, such as friends or neighbors. Each family is different.

**How do you define “family”?**

**VOCABULARY**

- **Ancestor** — a person from whom one is descended and who lived several generations ago
- **Immigrated** — to come to live permanently in a country where one was not born
- **Ancestry** — one’s ancestors collectively; line of descent; one’s family background
- **Generations** — the period of time between the birth of parents and the birth of their children; the entire group of people born around the same time
- **Genealogy** — the techniques and methods of determining ancestry
- **Genealogist** — a person who traces or studies the lines of family descent

*Family Diversity Vocabulary*

*Learn the story of your family!*

What’s your story? Were you born here in Delaware? Do you have any siblings?

What about your parents? Where were they born? How about your grandparents? Your great-grandparents or other people you care about?

When tracing family history, most people will find that some of their ancestors immigrated to America from other countries. Except for Native Americans, like the Lenape and Nanticoke tribes of Delaware, everyone in the United States came from somewhere else at one point in history.
The history of your **ancestry** over many **generations** lies buried in different sources and places. The facts — names, dates, events — that a **genealogist** gathers are pieces of a puzzle. When you put the pieces together, they create an image of a family, its many members, and its unique history.

**How can you learn about your family history?**

There are many ways that you can learn about your family history. The first is to ask questions! Interview family members and older relatives asking about their life growing up. Another way is to create a Family Tree!

A family tree is a chart or diagram that shows the relationships between members of a particular family. The research that goes into filling out a family tree can reveal many interesting stories about ancestors and life in the past.

Anyone can make a family tree! Look below for steps on how to make your own.

**Recommended Supplies:**

- Paper
- Family Tree Template*
- Pens
- World Map
- Markers or Colored Pencils
- Binder
- Computer

*Check out **Alternatives to traditional family tree projects** on the **Family Tree Resources** page at the end of this packet for more ideas and templates to design a tree that best fits your family. Or get creative and draw your own!
1. Filling Your Tree:

Once you’ve gathered your supplies and drawn or downloaded the Family Tree Sheet, you can begin filling in your family tree. Start by adding your name. This space will be marked “Me” or left blank, depending on the Family Tree template you are using.

Next, add the names of the individuals you reside with to the Family Tree in the appropriate spaces. Be sure to include their Birthdate and Birth Location under their name.

Once this is complete, ask your parents or guardians about their parents and brothers and sisters. Then their grandparents, maybe even their great grandparents. Add this information to your Family Tree. It may begin to get more difficult, but see how many generations back you can go!

2. Learn More:

Now that you have the tree filled out, it’s time to learn more about your family!

Ask your parent’s and guardians what they know and remember. What did your ancestors look like, what jobs did they do, where did they live?

But what if they don’t have the answers? Like a detective, a genealogist searches for the pieces of a family's past in many sources. They must be patient and imaginative. The search can take years and involve a string of clues that lead to new sources.

Here are a few places you can look for information about your ancestors:

- BOOKS
- LETTERS
- JOURNAL/DIARIES
- BIRTH/DEATH CERTIFICATES
- PHOTOGRAPHS
- JEWELRY/CLOTHING
- UNIFORMS
- HOME MOVIES
- INTERVIEWS WITH RELATIVES

If you do not have access to these materials in-person, ask family members to help by sharing these items using e-mail, video or digital photos.

Where else can you find information about your ancestors?
It’s very important to keep track of your research. Save what you find and any notes and materials in a binder or a folder on your computer. You should also include all photos, printed or scanned documents, video files and audio files that you have come across during your search.

3. Mapping Your Family’s Journey:

After all of your searching you may have come across some ancestors that immigrated to America. Use a World Map to plot where your ancestors were born. If you have photos of family members, use them to mark their birthplace on the world map.

Want to include selfies of yourself and your family members? Ask them to take a photo and send it to you and your family to add to your Family Tree!

Don’t have a world or U.S. map handy? Use our DHS Google My Maps Genealogy template!

If the ancestors you have documented were all born in the America, go ahead and plot them on a map of the United States!

4. Save and Share:

Congratulations! You have completed a Family Tree! Keep your Family Tree in a safe place and be sure to update it as you learn more. While it is important to save and preserve your family history, it is also important to share it so future generations can continue to learn about the past. What are some ways you can share your Family Tree project with others??

Learning about your family and your past doesn’t have to stop here!

You can take what you’ve gathered during this Family Tree Project and Create Your Own Genealogy Exhibit. Or maybe you still have some questions you would like answered? Go ahead and keep interviewing family and friends and do your own Oral History project.
Family Tree Resources

Delaware Genealogy resources

The Delaware Historical Society Research Library genealogy collections
http://dehistory.org/research-collections/collections-genealogy

The Delaware Historical Society other sources for Delaware genealogy

The Delaware Genealogical Society
https://delgensoc.org/

The Delaware African American Historical and Genealogical Society
http://www.deaahgs.com/

Alternatives to traditional family tree project:

Inclusive Family Trees Templates
https://www.familytreetemplates.net/category/nontraditional


The Family Houses Diagram: use houses instead of trees to show connections between birth, foster, adoptive, and step-family members. Source: Rainbow Kids Adoption and Child Welfare Advocacy

The Rooted Family Tree: the tree’s roots represent the birth family, the child is the trunk, and the foster, adoptive, and/or step-family members fill in the branches. Source: STEAM Powered Family

The Caring (or Loving) Tree: the child fills the branches or leaves with all sorts of important people in their life. Source: STEAM Powered Family

The Family Wheel Diagram: the child is in the middle and the outer rings of the circle represent the birth, foster, adoptive, and step-family relationships. Source: STEAM Powered Family

VIP Tree: create a Very Important People tree! The child writes the names of all the important individuals in their lives on the branches and positive characteristics about them on the attached leaves. Source: STEAM Powered Family
Sample Family History Interview Questions

- Where is your mom's family from? Where is your dad's family from? Where are your grandparents from?
- Who were your favorite relatives?
- What family traditions do you hope that we will carry on?
- What were the biggest milestones in your life?
- What are your dreams for your descendants?
- How did you meet your significant other?
- Who was your best friend in grade school?
- What are your best memories of school? Worst memories?
- Was there ever a time in school or at home where you got into trouble?
- Did you have a favorite pet growing up?

Directions for using the DHS Google My Maps Family Map Template

- Go to the DHS Google My Maps Genealogy Template
- Take a look around the map to see the sample locations.
- Make a copy of the template by clicking on ☑ and selecting Copy Map.
- Name Your Map.
- Your new map will open in another tab on your browser.
- You can delete the pre-loaded markers by clicking on a marker and then selecting 🗑.
- To add a location, navigate to the specified location. You can zoom in and out by scrolling.
- Once you have found the location, select 📍, then click on the location. When you add your pin you can now add text and images to your location by typing in the boxes and clicking on the 📸.