

Topic 2: Family Team Meetings

Link to [Procedure](#)

Evidence-based best practices demonstrate that family team meetings support family-centered practices and are effective in ensuring the participation and cooperation of parents and their support systems in providing for the safety, well-being, and permanency of the child. Family team meetings help support the continuity and congruency of the efforts, services, and supports being mobilized.

A family team decision-making meeting is the focal point for case planning, coordination, communication, and accountability. Family team decision-making meetings should occur throughout the life of the case, with meetings occurring:

- ◆ When the individualized case permanency plan is developed.
- ◆ Whenever goals, strategies, and service needs change.
- ◆ When there seems to be insufficient progress and outcome achievement needs to be addressed.

There are some situations where family team meetings require particular careful thought and preparation, and where meetings may not be advisable. Each case is individual and should be evaluated based on the family's needs and circumstances. Follow local service area protocol in determining whether to hold family team meetings.

Link to [Family Team Decision-Making Evaluation Handbook](#)

Preparing for the Family Team Meeting

1. Consider family team meetings for all families from the assessment phase of the life of the case through case closure.
 - ◆ Use the family team approach in any situation that requires a plan to:
 - Address protective issues (child or dependent adult),
 - Prevent out-of-home placement,
 - Establish concurrent planning or permanency options for a child, or
 - Return a person into a family or community setting.

- ◆ Situations where the family team meeting may not be appropriate include:
 - Cases where parental rights have been terminated.
 - Situations involving sexual abuse, domestic violence, or court restraining orders.
 - Circumstances that place the child or other team members in danger or significantly inhibit attainment of the child's permanency goal.

- 2. Review information for the family team meeting:
 - ◆ Review the CPS referral packet:
 - Life of the Case – Case History
 - [Child Protective Services Assessment Summary, form 470-3240](#)
 - [Safety Assessment, form 470-4132](#)
 - [Safety Plan, form 470-4461](#)
 - [Family Risk Assessment, form 470-4133](#)
 - [Application for All Social Services, form 470-0615](#)
 - ◆ Engage with the family and begin to establish a trust-based relationship and a collaborative tone.
 - Set a positive tone.
 - Promote mutual understanding of the critical safety and risk factors.
 - Agree to what is to be accomplished.
 - Reduce anxiety.
 - Plan how to manage emotions positively.

- 3. Prepare the family for the family team meeting:
 - ◆ Explain the purpose, focus, and scope of the family team meeting and solicit their willingness and cooperation.
 - ◆ Help the family to understand what is expected and what will happen at the family team meeting.
 - ◆ Explain your participation in the family team meeting and your responsibilities for follow-through.
 - ◆ Encourage the family to think about how they see their family functioning using the family functioning domain criteria as a guide.
 - ◆ Help the family identify their support system that should be included in the family team meeting.

- ◆ Assist the family in developing natural supports that will enhance the family's capacity and build a circle of support.
 - ◆ Collaborate with the family to identify other service providers that should participate in the family team meeting.
 - ◆ Complete necessary release of information forms with the family.
 - ◆ Answer any questions the family might have about the family team meeting.
 - ◆ Identify any special considerations that may preclude some individuals' participation in the family team meeting, such as a court restraining order or domestic violence.
4. Identify team members that are critical to identifying strengths, identifying options for accomplishments of goals, contributing their skills and resources as family supports, holding others accountable for commitments, identifying critical decisions and providing feedback about progress. Consider:
- ◆ DHS: When possible the CPW and SWCM should participate in the initial family team meeting.
 - ◆ Family members: Encourage the family to define membership and encourage participation.
 - ◆ Stakeholders: Family support systems, schools or other individuals that will assist the family in its efforts to change.
 - ◆ Facilitator: The facilitator may be DHS staff or others trained to facilitate family team meetings.
 - ◆ Other professionals:
 - Special circumstances in the family such as domestic violence, may require other professionals who have specialized knowledge and skills to meet identified family needs.
 - Consider those people who collectively possess the technical skills, have knowledge of the family, have the authority, and have access to the resources necessary to organize effective services for the child and family.
5. Consider logistics and the family's culture:
- ◆ Arrange for a mutually agreeable and accessible location that maximizes opportunity for family participation.
 - ◆ Explore with the family the best time and date to meet.

- ◆ Identify and address potential barriers for family participation such as child care or transportation.
 - ◆ Determine if a language barrier exists or cultural issues need to be considered and take steps to respond to the family's cultural and language needs as necessary.
6. Prepare family stakeholders and other professionals:
- ◆ Provide the team participants with the time, location, and purpose of the family team meeting.
 - ◆ Explain the purpose of the family team meeting and solicit their willingness to support the family.
 - ◆ Clarify their role to facilitate and support positive outcomes for the child and family.
 - ◆ The family team facilitator will provide background information on the family – their strengths and needs and concerns of the family and child.
 - ◆ The family team facilitator will meet with the family to clarify issues, gain family input, and support the preparation of the family to participate in the family team meetings.
 - ◆ Explain expectations regarding responsibility and follow-through.

Conducting the Initial Family Team Meeting

1. Facilitate the family team meeting process:
- ◆ Introduce family team meeting members and identify the roles of each member.
 - ◆ Ensure that all team members sign a confidentiality agreement.
 - ◆ Establish and agree upon set of ground rules to be used during the meeting.
 - ◆ Review the agenda to ensure that participants understand the focus and purpose of the meeting.
 - ◆ Establish a procedure for recording important topics that surface during the meeting.

2. Identify strengths and needs of family:
 - ◆ Encourage the family to share their perspective on their strengths and needs.
 - ◆ Facilitate open and honest discussion regarding the issues that brought the family to the agency's attention.
 - ◆ Address issues that concern the SWCM that the family may not have addressed.
3. Develop with the family team a case plan – services and strategies:
 - ◆ When possible allow the family to identify the order of needs to be addressed as long as the safety of the child is addressed.
 - ◆ Mutually agree on the goals that address the issues that require the agency involvement.
 - ◆ Discuss service options for the family (formal and informal) and encourage the family to identify what would be most effective for them.
 - ◆ Identify specific steps that state who is going to do what, when, where, how often, and how long to accomplish each goal.
 - ◆ Facilitate and document agreement of the [Family Case Plan, form 470-3453](#):
 - Using the B. *Family Case Plan* form/tool, document the agreed upon plan distribute to the team promptly.
 - Review and affirm agreement of the plan by the participants.
 - Obtain signatures.
4. Affirm the family during the closing of the family team meeting by:
 - ◆ Recognizing the contribution of the team and thank them.
 - ◆ Setting a date for the next family team meeting or to review the plan.

Follow-Up on the Family Team Meeting

1. Write and distribute the plan to the team promptly, ensure that any formal services are initiated, assess the progress with the family to determine if the plan is promoting change, and reconvene the team if steps are not being accomplished or progress is insufficient.
2. It is critical that workers (with supervisory support) agree and follow through with the team decisions. If there are changes required in team decisions, the team should be reconvened.