

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services
(CCDCFS)
Policy Statement**

Policy Chapter: Case Requirements
Policy Number: 5.01.04
Policy Name: Family Team Meetings

Original Effective Date: 01/24/2000
Revision Date(s): 10/01/2015, 3/31/2011, 1/14/2008, 4/01/2004, 4/1/2000
Current Revision Date: 04/01/2019
Approved By: Cynthia G. Weiskittel

PURPOSE: Family Team Meetings are necessary and when issues for discussion do not meet the criteria for a Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting/staffing and/or fall outside the parameters for discussion at a Semi-Annual Administrative Review (SAR). The policy outlines the procedure for those instances.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all CCDCFS staff who provides direct care to children and families; it also applies to Family Team Meetings (FTMs) that do not meet the criteria for a TDM/staffing and/or fall outside the parameters of an SAR.

POLICY

In child welfare, actively involving children, parents and families – often called “engagement” – is believed to improve child and family outcomes. FTMs are a primary family engagement strategy. This places more families and young people at the table when decisions are made.

FTMs are utilized to engage families in case planning, service identification, assessing progress, and safety planning. FTMs are also utilized to assist with a child’s adjustment into substitute care, maintaining relationships between children and birth family, and assisting with permanency goals.

I. When to hold a FTM

- A. A FTM is convened by any team member to craft, implement, or change a child and family plan.
- B. Meetings are voluntary and can be utilized, continuously, throughout the family’s involvement with the agency.
- C. Mandatory triggers for agency to schedule a meeting include:
 - 1. Placement change - A TDM is required for all discussions of possible placement changes. In addition, a FTM is required within 7 days of a child’s

new placement. The purpose of this meeting is to share information about the child with the new caregiver. An "All About Me" form is completed during this meeting. This form is shared with the new caregivers.

2. Visitation planning - Visitation planning includes input from all team members. A FTM is scheduled to create or amend visitation plans unless the plan was already developed in a team decision making (TDM) meeting or semi-annual administrative review (SAR).
3. When a case is being closed and the agency is making recommendations for services, the Child Protection Specialist (CPS) convenes a Family Team Meeting to discuss the recommendations, provide resources, and link the family members with appropriate services.

- D. When a family refuses to participate in a FTM, the refusal is documented in the activity log and no meeting is held. Information sharing (e.g. "All About Me") between team members is still completed as long as confidentiality requirements are maintained.

II. Who to invite to a FTM

- A. The CPS makes every effort to contact and invite all pertinent parties, including (but not necessarily limited to):
 1. Parents, guardians, or custodian
 2. Extended family members
 3. Alternative care providers
 4. Members of the family's support network
 5. Community resources and professionals (e.g., Wrap Specialist, Collaborative members, school personnel, medical staff)
 6. Guardian Ad Litem
 7. Other involved agency staff (e.g., foster home resource manager, prior workers)
 8. Youth's plans are developed with strong child involvement, age appropriate. Younger children may be involved for some discussions depending on the issues.
- B. All applicable releases of information are signed prior to the meeting taking place. The confidentiality of the parents is respected.
- C. Parents must be in agreement for each participant to attend the meeting.

III. Location of the FTM

- A. The FTM is held in a location most convenient for the family. It is preferable that FTMs take place in the family home (if a safe location) or in their community. Suggested locations include a parent's home, a relative's home, an alternative caregiver's home, a neighborhood collaborative site, or any mutually agreed upon location or community setting.

PROCEDURES

I. FTM Process

- A. A specific structure guides the meeting: CPS ensures introductions are made, ground rules determined and explained, family goals are defined, family strength / concerns are identified, resources are identified, and plan is developed.
- B. CPS facilitates the meeting unless FTM is taking place as a TDM or SAR. In those instances, the agency has an assigned facilitator.
- C. Decisions are made by the team within existing non-negotiable parameters such as requiring child safety and recognizing court orders. The family's goals are expected to be paramount in reaching team consensus.
- D. New Placements - Visits and frequent child-parent contact are the focus of FTMs for new placements, with the ultimate goal of stability and permanency. It is important that all participants address all issues pertaining to the child's adjustment with his or her new caregiver. CPS completes the "All About Me" form with input from all parties and distributes a copy of the form to the new caregivers.
- E. All About Me
 1. At the time of a new placement, the CPS identifies a time and date for an initial family visit and an "All About Me" meeting. This meeting takes place as soon as possible and within one week of the initial removal or placement move. Every effort is made to hold the meeting at a time that is convenient for the family and substitute caregivers.
 2. CPS informs the family about the purpose of the meeting, providing reassurance of care for their child and stresses the importance of the child maintaining stable, continuous care. The CPS is empathetic to the family's pain of separation and asks them to be prepared to provide information about the child. Information includes but is not limited to:
 - Names, address, phone numbers of relatives or individuals with a strong connection to the child
 - Information about the child's diet, routine, habits, etc.
 - Information regarding any medical care, special needs, behaviors, or school needs
 - Critical cultural informationThe "All About Me" report form is used during the meeting to share important information. The CPS can share this form with the parents prior to the meeting to assist in preparation.
 3. CPS encourages information exchange between parents and substitute caregivers.
 4. CPS speaks positively about all caregivers.
 5. CPS schedules regular and frequent visitation.

6. CPS attempts to arrange phone and / or internet contact between the two sets of caregivers. CPS determines each parties preferred avenue for communication.
 7. Information is shared with all caregivers.
 8. If siblings are placed in separate homes, CPS encourages caregivers to host sibling visits.
 9. CPS serves as a liaison between the caregivers.
 10. CPS identifies all parties preference for terms of address – first name or “Mr. Brown; Miss, Mrs. or Ms.
 11. CPS listens carefully to all parties (including the child’s) concerns, issues, and questions regarding the child and / or placement. Avoids interrupting.
 12. CPS shares and discusses the child’s lifebook and its importance to the child.
 13. CPS provides a copy of the completed “All About Me” form to the new caregivers.
- F. CPS completes the “Family Team Meeting Report” and obtains attendance signatures from all participants. CPS reviews the activities agreed upon at the meeting and the summary with all participants.
- G. CPS documents the completion of a FTM in the SACWIS activity log. CCDCFs does not utilize the Family Team Meeting tool in SACWIS. When completing the activity log, the CPS uses the following data entries:
- Contact type:* Team meeting
Category: Meetings / Conferences
Sub Category: Family Team Meeting

SEE ALSO:

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual

Policy No. 5.02.01 – TDM/Staffings

FORMS

Family Team Meeting Report
All About Me