

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management	Effective Date: July 1, 2019
	Section 7: Child and Family Team Meetings	Version: 6

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will facilitate a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting with every family and youth at case junctures beginning in the assessment phase and continuing throughout the life of the case.

DCS will utilize the CFT Meeting to create plans for assessment, safety, service delivery, and permanency. DCS will work with the family and/or youth and placement (if applicable) to form the most effective team to assist with achieving goals. Teams should always consist of at least one (1) or more formal or informal supports identified by the family. DCS will strive to meet the logistical needs of the family and youth, including the time and location of the CFT Meeting. DCS will continue efforts to engage the family and youth in the CFT process throughout the life of the case.

Note: Youth, age 14 and older, may select up to two (2) child representatives. The child representatives must be at least 18 years of age and members of the CFT. Representatives may not be a foster parent or FCM. The youth may select one (1) of the child representatives to also be his or her adviser and advocate. Child representatives are subject to the approval of DCS. Approval may not be granted when there is cause to believe that the representative may not act in the best interest of the child.

A CFT Meeting may fulfill the requirement to hold a Case Plan Conference if all required parties are present. If a family and/or youth chooses not to participate in the CFT process, a Case Plan Conference must be held to develop, update, or revise the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#). If membership of the CFT does not include the resource parent or the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)/Guardian ad Litem (GAL), who are mandatory parties for the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#), a separate Case Plan Conference must be held (in addition to the CFT Meeting) to develop the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#). See separate policy, [5.8 Developing the Case Plan](#) for additional information.

Note: Youth age 14 and older are required to participate in the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#).

DCS will engage members of the CFT regarding the need for a CFT Meeting upon request of any team member (including noncustodial and incarcerated parents), prior to case closure, and at case junctures throughout the life of the case. A case juncture is defined as a new awareness of significant information regarding the child or family's strengths or needs, which

may impact the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) and/or [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#). Case junctures may include, but are not limited to, transition planning and/or positive or negative changes in:

1. Placement;
2. Formal or informal supports;
3. Family involvement;
4. Visitation;
5. Behavior;
6. Diagnosis (mental or physical);
7. Sobriety;
8. Skills acquisition; or
9. Education.

Code References

1. [IC 31-34-15-5: Cooperation in Development of Case Plan](#)
2. [IC 31-28-5.8-6 Updating Case Plan; Transitional Services Plan, Visitation with FCM](#)
3. [42 USC 1305 Preventing Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act](#)

PROCEDURE

For cases where domestic violence has been identified, the FCM will:

1. Seek input from the FCM Supervisor to assess whether to involve the alleged domestic violence offender in the teaming process;
2. Assess whether holding a CFT Meeting with both parents present may be accomplished safely. See Practice Guidance for additional information regarding [domestic violence and the CFT Meeting](#);
3. Consider other options for having the alleged domestic violence offender involved in the meeting without being physically present if there are safety concerns; and
4. Include a domestic violence advocate or another domestic violence service provider(s) in meetings, whenever possible; and

Note: If a CFT Meeting is held with both the non-offending parent and the alleged domestic violence offender present, a plan should be created during CFT preparation meetings to address safety before, during, and after the meeting. This may include, but is not limited to:

- a. Having the non-offending parent and alleged domestic violence offender arrive and leave the meeting at different times; and/or
 - b. Having scheduled breaks throughout the meeting to evaluate the safety of all team members. See [5.A Tool: Domestic Violence and CFT Meeting Considerations](#).
5. Contact the non-offending parent within 24 hours after the CFT Meeting, if domestic violence has been identified as a risk factor for the family and/or youth and both parents were present at the CFT Meeting.

Note: This contact will allow the FCM to assess any impact the CFT Meeting may have had on the non-offending parent's and child(ren)'s safety. See [5.A Tool: Domestic Violence and Child and Family Team Meeting Considerations](#) for more information.

The FCM Supervisor will assist the FCM in creating a plan that addresses safety before, during, and after the CFT Meeting when a CFT Meeting is held with both the non-offending parent and alleged domestic violence offender present.

The FCM will:

1. Utilize the initial preparation meeting to explain the CFT process to the parent(s), guardian, or custodian(s), youth (when appropriate), and other team members. Subsequent meetings in preparation for the CFT Meeting are utilized to gather information relative to the team members' observations of the family's and/or youth's progress and to discuss any questions or concerns. All discussions held with team members should be documented in the case management system;

Note: Preparation with the parent and youth should be completed in person prior to and separate from the CFT Meeting. Face-to-face contact is generally the best communication method for gathering and evaluating information. Consequently, it is beneficial to meet team members in person whenever possible

2. Utilize the [Authorization to Contact Child and Family Team Meeting \(CFTM\) Members \(SF 54341\)](#) form to determine the list of members to be included in the CFT;

Note: The family and/or youth should select all CFT members, with the exception of DCS staff.

3. Encourage the parent, guardian, or custodian to include any residential placement staff, resource parents, and CASA or GAL as members of the CFT by explaining the benefits to case planning;
4. Ensure youth age 14 and older have the opportunity or are encouraged to select up to two (2) child representatives. The child representatives must be at least 18 years of age, members of the CFT, and may not be a foster parent or FCM. The youth may select one (1) of the child representatives to also be his or her adviser and advocate. See [Practice Guidance](#);

Note: Child representatives are subject to the approval of DCS. Approval may not be granted when there is cause to believe that the representative may not act in the best interest of the child.

5. Send a [Confirmation Notice of a Child and Family Team Meeting \(SF 54338\)](#) to all team members to notify them of an upcoming meeting;
6. Coordinate and implement the CFT Meetings following the [Child and Family Team Meeting Agenda](#) (Available in the case management system);
7. Ensure that all CFT members sign a [Child and Family Team Meeting \(CFTM\) Attendance and Confidentiality for Limited Use of Agreement for Access to Confidential Department of Child Services Client/Case Information \(SF 54339\)](#) and that the family and youth understand the limits of the confidentiality of team members;
8. Gather essential family and community connections to document in the GenoPro software;

9. Ensure that individualized plans based on the family and/or youth's personal goals are developed during the CFT Meeting to connect the family and/or youth with the appropriate services and resources;

Note: Ensure available community services (including those available to incarcerated parents) are considered. Visitation should also be discussed and included in the plan.

10. Complete the [Child and Family Team Meeting Notes \(SF 54601\)](#). The Family Story is not included in the notes. If a safety concern is raised during the Family Story regarding allegations of abuse and neglect, a 'Contact' titled "family story" must be entered in the case management system. The information about the safety concern must be entered and a safety response should be documented (e.g., a report was made to the Hotline regarding new allegations);

Note: All CFT Meeting notes must include a current plan for safety, which includes the youth's current level of safety in placement, visitation, school, age appropriate programs and/or extracurricular activities etc.

11. Ensure the CFT Meeting notes are distributed to all appropriate parties and entered in the case management system within seven (7) calendar days of the CFT Meeting;

Note: Distribute CFT Meeting notes to the CASA/GAL if they were not included as part of the CFT. They do not need to request the notes, they must be sent automatically as they are a party to the case.

12. Complete a summary of all CFT Meeting notes including significant changes that occurred in the [Progress Report](#) to the court;

13. Contact an FCM Supervisor, Peer Coach, or Peer Coach Consultant for assistance with all families who agree to have a CFT Meeting but cannot identify informal or formal supports to form a team. If formal or informal supports are unable to be identified, the reason for this lack of team formation must be staffed with the FCM's supervisor. In order to be considered a CFT there should be at least one (1) formal or informal support identified by the family to participate in the CFT Meeting.

The FCM Supervisor will complete all responsibilities outlined in the [Case Practice Reform Goals and Expectations for Supervisors](#) at the [Indiana Practice Model SharePoint](#).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Preparation Meeting

The preparation meeting is the critical first step in the CFT Meeting process to engage the family and/or youth and other team members by providing them with details about the CFT Meeting process. During this meeting, the FCM should obtain a list of potential team members and make a list of outcomes identified by the family and/or youth for a safe/sustainable permanency plan for the child. Once potential team members have been identified, the facilitator will contact them to invite them to the meeting, prepare them for the CFT Meeting process, and discuss with them their role during the meeting. Preparation of team members is

not a one-time event, but should happen consistently, throughout the life of the case or the family's involvement with DCS.

Preparation of team members facilitates active participation by helping them to:

1. Focus on [functional strengths](#) as well as [underlying needs](#);
2. Understand the family and/or youth's identified outcomes;
3. Report observations of the family and/or youth's progress and child safety;
4. Explore any potential conflicts and preparing ways to manage emotions positively; and
5. Determine how they can help meet the identified needs and identify what they can do to help contribute to accomplishing the family and/or youth's desired permanency outcome.

CFT Meeting Process

The CFT Meeting is a process and it should be based on the needs of the family and/or youth. The CFT Meeting is a shared decision-making and a strength-based approach to assist with the initial and ongoing assessments of children and their families. The CFT Meeting process includes gathering formal and informal supports to assist the family in achieving goals identified by the family. This process allows DCS to hear and understand the family's voice and to assist the family with building a support system that will remain in place after the DCS assessment or case has closed.

Teaming with the Child/Youth and/or Placement

It is important to remember that the composition of CFTs will vary depending on each case. FCMs may facilitate CFT Meetings with the youth and/or their caregiver or placement provider. Prior to teaming with the youth only, efforts should be made to team with the child's parent, guardian, or custodian. However, there may be reasons that support youth only CFT Meetings. For example, termination of parental rights (TPR) has occurred for a parent of the youth or the discussion at a CFT Meeting may be detrimental to the youth. FCMs should seek supervisory input prior to proceeding with teaming with the youth only.

Teaming with Youth age 14 and older

All youth age 14 and older must have the opportunity to attend and participate at a CFT Meeting or Case Plan Conference that will address or create the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) for the youth. The youth should also have the opportunity to have two (2) child representatives added to the team with one (1) being the youth's advisor. The child representatives must be at least 18 years of age and members of the CFT. Representative may not be the foster parent or FCM. The youth may select one (1) of the child representatives to also be his or her adviser and advocate. The child representatives and advisor are subject to the approval of DCS. Approval may not be granted when there is cause to believe that the representative may not act in the best interest of the child.

Teaming with Older Youth (17.5 and Older)

Older Youth CFTs may be composed of the youth, his or her service providers, DCS staff and informal supports, depending on the housing or placement status. These CFT Meetings are youth driven and youth focused in order to develop and adapt the case plan, address any issues that may arise in the life of the case, and discuss issues at case junctures. See separate policy, [11.6 Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood](#) for additional information.

Domestic Violence and the CFT Meeting

Due to the extreme power and control, that one partner typically exhibits in a relationship where domestic violence is present; it may be unsafe and/or unproductive to have both the non-offending parent and alleged domestic violence offender present at the same CFT Meeting.

Reasons why a joint meeting would be inappropriate include, but are not limited to:

1. The non-offending parent does not want a meeting because he or she feels that they or the youth would be in danger;
2. The non-offending parent does not want a meeting because he or she feels intimidated and is therefore unable to represent what he or she feels is in the youth's best interest;
3. The non-offending parent has secured a "no contact order" and the CFT Meeting would be a violation of the order;

Note: If it has been determined that is in the best interest of the family to convene a CFT Meeting, DCS may request the court to lift the "no contact order" during the time of the meeting.

4. The offending parent denies that DV is an issue or that DV has not occurred when evidence states otherwise (e.g., police reports, visible bruises, etc.);
5. The FCM believes the non-offending parent or the youth could be placed in danger if the meeting took place; or
6. The family of the non-offending parent or the alleged domestic violence offender either denies or enables the abuse.

Note: It may initially be inappropriate to have the non-offending parent and alleged domestic violence offender attend the same CFT Meeting. Prior to each meeting, DCS should evaluate the option of having the non-offending parent and alleged domestic violence offender attend the same CFT Meeting. Other options may be considered, such as a conference call with the offending parent. If there is a court order in place, permission can be sought from the court for the offending parent to be on the phone for a CFT Meeting. See [5.A Tool: Domestic Violence and Child and Family Team Meeting Considerations](#) for more information.

Informal Supports

Informal supports refer to connections, such as family members, friends, or neighbors, in the home or in the community that may provide support, assistance, or care to the family/child and could serve in this capacity in a sustainable way once the DCS case is closed. Informal supports are generally unpaid supports, however if a situation arises regarding determining if a support is informal or formal it should be staffed with the FCM Supervisor.

Building Informal Supports

1. **Location:** Families may identify a potential informal support but are concerned they may not be able to be physically present at the CFT Meeting. We should encourage this person to participate via conference call or speakerphone. Efforts should be made to accommodate the best time and location for the family and the identified informal supports.
2. **Situation:** Families may not invite someone because they feel the person already has too much going on or they are too busy, or because they have a strained relationship. DCS

should encourage them to invite these people regardless of what their schedule might be or what has occurred in the past.

Questions to Assist Family in Selection of Team Members:

1. Who do you list as an emergency contact on the school paperwork for your children?
2. Who do you list as an emergency contact person for yourself?
3. Who would you trust to make decisions for you if you could not do this for yourself?
4. If you could not care for your child, who would you want to care for him/her?
5. Name the activities in which your children are involved. Who are the people at those activities who you find to be helpful? (Church, Missions, Sports, School, YMCA, Big Brothers/Sisters, Mentors, etc.)

Resolving Potential Differences (Addressing Potential Conflicts)

When potential differences arise while facilitating a CFT Meeting, the facilitator should assess and decide if all family and team members should discuss the issue or differences. To make this decision some questions to consider are:

1. Does the issue or difference involve the whole team?
2. How might this issue or difference influence the development and implementation of the family's plan?
3. Does this issue or difference impact the ability of the team or family to ensure safety, well-being, stability, and permanency for the child?

The goals and requests of the parent must never come before ensuring the safety of the youth.

For additional practice support, see [Indiana Practice Model SharePoint](#).

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Confirmation Notice of a Child and Family Team Meeting \(SF 54338\)](#)
2. [Authorization to Contact Child and Family Team Meeting \(CFTM\) Members \(SF 54341\)](#)
3. [Child and Family Team Meeting \(CFTM\) Attendance and Confidentiality for Limited Use of Agreement for Access to Confidential Department of Child Services Client/Case Information \(SF 54339\)](#)
4. [Child and Family Team Meeting Agenda](#) -Available in the case management system
5. [CFT meeting Debrief Forms](#) – Available on [Indiana Practice Model SharePoint](#)
6. [Child and Family Team Meeting Notes \(SF 54601\)](#)
7. [5.A Tool: Domestic Violence and CFT Meeting Considerations](#)
8. [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#)
9. [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#)
10. [GenoPro Software](#)
11. [5.B Tool: Family Network Diagram Instruction Guide](#)
12. [Progress Report](#)
13. [Incarcerated Parent Letter-Assessment](#)
14. [Incarcerated Parent Letter-Permanency](#)
15. [Incarcerated Parent Demographics \(SF 56538\)](#)
16. [Incarcerated Parent Information \(SF 56539\)](#)

¹ The Child Welfare Policy & Practice Group, *Engagement and Facilitating the Child and Family Team Meetings*

RELATED INFORMATION

Engagement with the Incarcerated Parent

The [Incarcerated Parent Letter – Assessment](#), [Incarcerated Parent Letter – Permanency](#), [Incarcerated Parent Demographics \(SF 56538\)](#), and [Incarcerated Parent Information \(SF 56539\)](#) have been developed for use as tools for contact with incarcerated parents and for gathering information. These forms do not replace appropriate engagement and regular contact with the parents.

Functional Strengths

Functional strengths are ‘the buildable’ strengths of our families; they help us build toward goal achievement. Exploring those strengths beyond the surface level provides a great deal of information when trying to match the strength (asset) to meet a need in the planning process. For example, saying someone is good at soccer doesn’t provide much to work with; however, identifying that they are able to participate in group activities, follow directions from a leader and the ability to work towards a clear goal.

Underlying Needs

Underlying needs are the root source of an individual and/or family’s challenges, which determines the appropriate use of services or interventions. In order to identify the underlying need, the question of what the family needs or what needs to change in order to achieve the family’s outcomes should be answered. The FCM will assist the family and the team to identify these needs.

The ability to identify an underlying need is a crucial step in engaging a family and promoting safety, permanency, and well-being. Addressing underlying needs allows DCS and the CFT understand the root of the problem and provide accurate/effective services to address the needs. This method supports safe sustainable case closure.