

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management	Effective Date: May 1, 2009
	Section 3: Engaging the Family	Version: 2

POLICY

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will build trust-based relationships with families and other partners by exhibiting empathy, professionalism, genuineness, and respect.

DCS will encourage the parent, guardian, or custodian to utilize the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting as the primary means for assessment of the individual strengths and needs of the child and family in determining case and service planning. DCS will explain the benefits of utilizing this process to each family. See Related Information. See separate policies, [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#) and [5.8 Developing the Case Plan](#).

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will communicate to family members that active participation is wanted, needed, and valued in all aspects of the case as members of the CFT. DCS will, to the extent possible, engage both maternal and paternal family members equally in the assessment and case planning process from the first point of intervention.

DCS will demonstrate sensitivity and empathy to the crisis and emotions that family members may be experiencing, especially if they are separated from their child(ren).

DCS staff will strive to identify and value the cultural context in which the family operates. See Related Information for further details.

[NEW] DCS will engage all parents to be involved in the lives of their children, even when there is domestic violence present. DCS believes that all parents have a right and responsibility to be involved in their children's lives always considering the safety of the child(ren) and non-offending parent. See Related Information.

Code References

N/A

PROCEDURE

The FCM will¹:

1. Utilize CFT Meetings to encourage participation;
2. Clearly communicate DCS expectations to the parent, guardian, or custodian, to:
 - a. Actively participate in (CFT) Meetings;
 - b. Keep appointments;

¹ Illinois Best Practices Manual, 8.5.5, Engagement of the Kinship Network, <http://dcfswebresource.prairienet.org/bp/kinship/placement-04.php>

- c. Make every effort to involve the parent, guardian, or custodian in recommended services; and
 - d. Communicate openly and honestly.
3. Communicate updates regarding all aspects of the case in a timely manner to the court, CFT, parent, guardian, or custodian, and service providers;
 4. Recognize that family members may be new participants in the child welfare and juvenile court system. Take the time to explain how these systems work and answer any questions asked by the family. Ensure the family understands that events can occur at certain timelines during the life of the case, (i.e., filing of termination petition at 15 months of child being in substitute care);
 5. Respect the pace at which the family moves. Intervention is a traumatic time and the family may need time to process what is happening. Don't rush discussion and be sure to convey the importance of each and every contact;
 6. Recognize the value of the family members and value their expertise on the family history; and
 7. Assess family strengths, then engage the CFT or Case Plan Conference to determine how these strengths can be used to provide for the child's safety and well-being;

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

N/A

FORMS AND TOOLS

N/A

RELATED INFORMATION

Engagement

Engagement between a child, family, and FCM is the first step in creating invested relationships and assessing family strengths and underlying needs. When families are engaged in collaborative decision making and case planning, they understand their roles and are more empowered and motivated to make the long-lasting changes necessary to protect the children in their care. Engaging is the skill of effectively establishing a relationship with children, parents, and essential individuals for the purpose of sustaining the work that is to be accomplished together.

Benefits of the CFT Process to the Child(ren) and Family

When the FCM finds it necessary to encourage the family to utilize the CFT Meeting process, the following benefits of the CFT process can be shared:

1. Reduces the need for substitute care;
2. Increases the use of relative care;
3. Increases placement options in the child's own community;
4. Reduces the need for of institutional and group home care;
5. Reduces number of placement moves and disruptions;
6. Increases sibling placements;

7. Reduces court involvement;
8. Reduces length in out-of-home care;
9. Increases reunification and permanency rate;
10. Increases child and family visits;
11. Reduces incidence of repeat maltreatment;
12. Better outcomes for children;
13. Empowers parents which results in lasting change;
14. Better follow-through with services because parents make more decisions;
15. Validates the strengths of parents because DCS staff, service providers, and family members identify and discuss the strengths of the family;
16. Builds and improves important relationships and informal supports that continue long after DCS involvement;
17. Shared responsibility: family members and workers come together to make important decisions;
18. Concerns and issues are discussed: workers discover that family members are often concerned about the same issues that workers are concerned about;
19. Family specific service plans: CFT Meetings provide opportunities to develop service plans that are specific to the needs of the child and family; and
20. Establishes hope that families are willing to care for their own.

Cultural Competence & Family-Centered Practice

In family-centered practice, the child welfare agency and its staff strive to be culturally competent and ensure that services provided to children and families are respectful of and compatible with their cultural strengths and needs. Culturally competent agencies and practitioners are able to view a family's strengths and needs within a cultural context and integrate culturally relevant information in helping the family develop a meaningful plan of action. Cultural competence is a skill learned by the individual and the organization, fostered by a commitment to provide services that are culturally appropriate and that make a positive difference for children and families.

The culturally competent worker is guided by the following principles:

1. Respect for the client's home and family is of utmost concern;
2. Local etiquette should prevail in the worker's behavior as he or she enters the family's environment;
3. Careful work in establishing the role of the worker as a partner in helping is essential to establishing trust; and
4. The family remains in charge of their own lives while the worker motivates, facilitates, and creates a climate of respect and caring.²

Becoming culturally competent is considered a lifelong process that requires continual study and effort.

[NEW] Domestic Violence Service Providers and Child Protection Services (CPS)

Differences in mission, mandates, and development of child welfare and domestic violence agencies have contributed to a history of tension, a lack of collaboration, and even mistrust between domestic violence and CPS workers. However, during recent years, these two systems have begun to partner together effectively to support families and children facing domestic violence. Domestic violence agencies typically focus on safety and empowerment for adult victims, while the primary focus of child welfare workers is the protection of children.

² <http://www.childwelfare.gov/supporting/cultural.cfm#one#one>

Although there can be tension between these two systems, there are important similarities in values:

1. Both want to end domestic violence and child maltreatment;
2. Both want children to be safe;
3. Both want adult victim to be protected – for their own safety and so their children are not harmed by the violence;
4. Both believe in supporting a parent's strengths; and
5. Both prefer that children not be involved with DCS, if avoidable.

Building on these existing similarities will enhance the ability of each DCS local office to collaborate with local domestic violence service providers.

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