

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY (CFSA)

2007 Quick Reference Guide

FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS



Family Team Meetings (FTMs) are structured decision-making meetings that use skilled and trained facilitators to engage families, family supports, and professional partners to develop strategic plans for securing a child's safety, well-being and permanency.

Criteria for Holding Family Team Meetings

According to CFSA policy, FTMs shall ideally be held prior to the removal of a child from his/her home or within the 72-hour period following a removal. In cases involving a criminal investigation, an FTM may be delayed at the discretion of the Child Protection Services (CPS) program manager. FTMs shall also take place prior to any anticipated change in a child's placement. Additional criteria for FTMs are detailed in the CFSA [Family Team Meetings Policy](#).

Goals and Purposes of Family Team Meetings

All FTMs have the following goals and purposes:

- a. To make placement decisions that will promote permanency and keep children safe.
- b. To create a continuum of care while developing a network of support to reduce the trauma of removal for the child.
- c. To address natural behavioral response to removal, and to support a solution-based approach to services accordingly.
- d. To develop thoughtful and mutually respectful relationships between all concerned parties.

All FTMs shall involve assessments of the safety and needs both for children and for parents, especially focusing on plans for safety and permanency.

Meeting Preparation, Structure and Content

FTM coordinators have primary responsibility for the logistics of the FTMs, including identification of and invitations to all appropriate participants. FTMs may last anywhere from 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours, depending on the purpose and number of participants. After introductions and an explanation of confidentiality agreements, the FTM facilitator shall guide the family team towards development of a strategic plan for securing the child's safety, well-being and permanency. All FTM participants are encouraged, and indeed expected, to participate in the development of a plan that takes into account all pertinent facts related to the child, birth parents, and resource providers. Decisions made during the FTM shall supersede any other decisions made prior to the FTM. If at any time a team member does not concur with a plan that is agreed upon by the other team members, that team member may appeal to the program administrator to change the decision of removal or placement.

Family Team Meeting Follow-Up

It is crucial that all decisions made during the FTM are recorded and communicated succinctly in order to promote any necessary subsequent action. Within 24 hours of the FTM, the assigned FTM unit staff member shall document the results in FACES. Social workers shall take the responsibility of updating the case plans, as well as contacting the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) to determine if there are any necessary legal actions required. Social workers and their supervisors shall follow up on FTM action steps on an ongoing basis, including initiation of services or scheduling additional meetings.

Evaluation and Monitoring

The FTM coordinator is primarily responsible for follow-up on any actions intended to be taken immediately but no later than 10 days after the FTM is held. As stated above, the social workers and supervisors also follow up, including information shared during court mediation meetings and administrative reviews. The Agency examines FTM data for analyzing outcomes while monitoring the process, as well as recommending improvements.

Implementing FTMs continues to enhance the Agency's mission while establishing the foundation for strong permanency outcomes through incorporation of family-based decision-making strategies. Additional details are described in the official CFSA [Family Team Meetings Policy](#).