

CHILD and FAMILY TEAMING

“NO DECISIONS ABOUT US, WITHOUT US”



The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) has made the decision to move from a private provider conducting Family Team Meetings and Family Group Conferences to internal facilitators and agency staff conducting these meetings as Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM). SCDSS believes this will improve the quality, timeliness, and effectiveness of CFTMs while also increase SCDSS’s ability to support and improve care to children and families, relationship with community partners, and ultimately, the ability to increase safety and permanency for children.

How are successful Child and Family Teams formed?

Family Teaming creates opportunities to bring families with their formal and informal supports together to a common table where they discuss goals, identify strengths, assess progress, and create an action-driven plan that meets the family’s individual and collective needs for safety, permanency, and well-being.

What will this look like for my family?

Membership and Ownership - This is your family team, your support system, and your plan for successfully achieving agreed-upon goals. Your family team contains all important supporters and decision makers, *including informal supports*. All team members feel integral to the team and the family considers the team its own.

Common View and Effectiveness - No one knows your family better than you! All of the family team members share a common view of the issues affecting the child and family and gain a consensus on the case direction and goals. *Services and supports are always coordinated*. There is an optimal working team. *Your Team is succeeding for your family!*

Meeting and Participation: Meetings are held frequently and at critical points during your case to develop short-term and long-term plans. Regular, face-to-Face meetings are held and have most (if not all) team members present. You and your family will have input on when and where the meetings are held.

When will we have these meetings?

When SCDSS becomes involved with your family, there are several different types of Child and Family Team Meetings that are determined by the type of case you have as well as by case timelines and meeting the needs of your family. Here is a brief overview of some of the different meetings.

Initial CFTM (for Foster Care cases): This meeting occurs when a child enters DSS care, ideally before the Probable Cause Hearing. Your team will focus on immediate safety concerns and any kinship placement options.

14-Day CFTM (for Family Preservation cases): This is the initial meeting held after the transition from Investigations to Family Preservation. In this meeting your Team begins to identify supports and resources as well as begin development of the Family Permanency Plan.

25-Day CFTM (for Foster Care and Family Preservation cases): This meeting occurs 25 days after a child enters DSS care and ideally, before the Hearing on the Merits. Your Team will address the safety, permanency and well-being of the child. Visitation and assessment plans will also be updated.

90-Day CFTM (for Family Preservation cases): This is a status meeting in which your Team convenes to evaluate the progress made on the Family Permanency Plan and make any needed updates to the Plan ahead of the 6-Month Permanency CFTM.

Special Call CFTM (for Foster Care and Family Preservation cases): This meeting can be called by you, your family, or your Case Manager at any point a concern may arise. The concerns will be addressed by the team using a strengths based approach. Examples include: family concerns, permanency, medical needs, placement change, educational concerns, etc.

Closure CFTM (for Foster Care and Family Preservation cases): In this meeting, your Team will meet to discuss resources and gather supports for ongoing safety, permanency, and well-being after your case is successfully closed. This plan will assist you in preventing the need for future DSS involvement.

Placement CFTM (for Foster Care and Family Preservation cases): This meeting occurs when there are issues or barriers to placement stability.

What are the benefits of Child and Family Teaming?

- ◆ Reduction of length of time that children are involved in systems
- ◆ Lessens length of time in foster care and leads to more stable living arrangements
- ◆ Improves relationships between families and DSS, builds partnerships
- ◆ Strengthens family involvement
- ◆ Families are more invested in their plans as they created or helped to create those plans
- ◆ Draws upon family strengths and resources
- ◆ Provides a unique opportunity to create enhanced visitation plans to maintain connections and bonds
- ◆ Facilitates a more creative, detailed and complete plans for children and families
- ◆ Improves outcomes and resources for families within their own families and within their communities
- ◆ Helps reconnect families



What can we expect during these meetings?

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** The CFTM Facilitator will welcome everyone, talk about Confidentiality, explain Group Agreements (ground rules) and their purpose, and everyone will introduce themselves and their relationship to your child. The CFTM Facilitator will also explain the purpose of a CFTM.
2. **Identify the Situation:**
 - ◆ **The Family's Story:** You will be given an opportunity to speak on what brought your family to the attention of DSS, what your hopes are for the meeting, and needs you would like to have met. This is optional but would love to hear from you and your family.
 - ◆ **Strengths and Resources:** What are the strengths and resources that your family currently have? These are the positives about your family. Developmentally appropriate children are also encouraged to participate in this.
 - ◆ **Agency Concerns:** The DSS Case Manager will state the reasons why DSS became involved with your family.
3. **Assess the Situation:**
 - ◆ **Explore Challenges & Needs** - These are things that need to happen so that reunification can occur or get your child into a relative placement and out of foster care.
4. **Brainstorm Solutions:** Openly reflecting on the strengths and resources that were identified by your family and DSS and determine how to use these to develop your plan.
 - ◆ **Desires & Possibilities:** This is another opportunity to have your voice heard—to share what would you like to see for your family in the near future and how it will make you feel. Developmentally appropriate children are also encouraged to participate in this. (This activity does not occur in the initial CFTM.)
 - ◆ **Private Family Time:** During this time, all professionals not in your family will leave the room. You and your family will write your plan on what all will be accomplished as well as who will help support and monitor during completion of the goals.
5. **Develop the Plan:** After Private Family Time, the Facilitator and DSS Professionals will return to the room. The plan will be reviewed and discussed in order for DSS and your family group to be in agreement.
6. **Closing and Recap:** Everyone will sign required forms to confirm attendance and agreement, complete a survey, and the Family Team will be given the plan created during the meeting. The next CFTM will also be scheduled.



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For more information on Child and Family Team Meetings, please contact your DSS Case Manager or the Regional Family Engagement Services Regional Supervisor in your area.

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