



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Policies and Guidelines: Child Welfare Services

Title	Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meetings
Document No.	1639
Authority	42 USC § 671(a)(15) and S.C. Code § 63-7-640
Standards	Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model
Application	All Child Welfare Services Staff in Greenville, Anderson, Spartanburg, and Richland Counties
Purpose	
Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meetings aim to: (1) provide all children and families with access to preventative processes and interventions; (2) create a standardized front-end teaming approach that engages children and families in safety and placement-related decisions; (3) enable children to be safely and successfully served at home and in their communities; (4) promote greater use of extended family and fictive kin as resources for safety interventions, support, and placement; (5) identify and document short-term action steps to manage safety, rather than ongoing case planning and promoting longer-term change; and (6) prevent unnecessary entries of children into foster care and deeper system involvement.	
Policy Statement	
DSS makes reasonable efforts to prevent removing children to foster care (DSS custody) unless making such reasonable efforts is contrary to health and safety. To accomplish this objective, DSS utilizes Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meetings as a core strategy to engage family and community members in safety and placement-related decision making, consistent with the GPS Practice Model. This process is designed to improve DSS front end decision-making, encourage the support and buy-in of the child, family, extended family, and community, and develop individualized interventions to meet the immediate safety and placement needs of the child. Meetings are led by full-time certified Child and Family Team Meeting facilitators within the Office of Family Engagement and System Alignment.	
Policy Administration	
The Division of Child Welfare Services' Office of Family Engagement and System Alignment is the owner of this policy. The Senior Director of Child Welfare Services, or designee, shall review this policy annually from the date published in the Child Welfare Services Policy Manual, or as needed due to changes in law or practice.	
Policy Guidelines	
A. Referral Criteria	1. A referral for a Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meeting (RP-CFTM) must be made for all 13-17-year-olds in Greenville, Anderson, and Spartanburg counties who due to abuse or neglect and/or their behavior/parent-child conflict: a. Are at high risk of entering foster care; or b. Have just entered care.

Subject: Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meetings

	2. A referral for a RP-CFTM must be made for all children in Richland County who due to abuse or neglect and/or their behavior/parent-child conflict: a. Are at high risk of entering foster care; or b. Have just entered care. 3. Any child in Richland County and children between 13-17-years-old in Greenville, Anderson, and Spartanburg counties shall be considered the primary focus of the RP-CFTM. Other children in the home shall be included in the meeting process if younger siblings: a. Are deemed at risk of foster care entry; or b. Have just entered care with the child who is the primary focus of the RP-CFTM. 4. Referrals may be made when there is no open DSS service line.
B. RP-CFTM Occurring Prior to Foster Care Entry	1. When DSS has an open Investigation or Family Preservation service line with a family, a RP-CFTM must occur when DSS is considering placing a child into foster care. 2. A RP-CFTM is required if any of the following circumstances or situations are met: a. If a Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) assessment results identify a safety concern and/or a high-level of risk and suggest an actionable next step; b. The family has not made progress toward addressing the safety concern(s); c. All efforts to manage safety have been exhausted and are not providing adequate protection to mitigate the safety concern in the home; d. DSS has assessed alternate placement, and no appropriate caregiver has been identified; or e. Law Enforcement is considering placing a child into Emergency Protective Custody. 2. The RP-CFTM must occur prior to: a. DSS staff requesting assistance from Law Enforcement, specific to placements into Emergency Protective Custody; and b. Filing an Ex-Parte complaint for emergency removal to foster care, a non-emergency removal complaint, or other motion that may result in a child's entry into foster care.
C. RP-CFTM Occurring After Foster Care Entry	1. A RP-CFTM must occur when a child has been placed into foster care on an emergency basis and it was not possible to convene a meeting before foster care entry. 2. The meeting must occur immediately following, but no later than 24 hours after the removal and always prior to the Probable Cause Hearing to: a. Review the removal and placement decisions;

Subject: Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meetings

	b. Assess whether safety concerns still exist following the removal and whether appropriate safety interventions can be implemented immediately following a safe return home; and c. Identify, assess, and prioritize kin and fictive kin placement options.
D. Referral Process for DSS Involved Children	1. The case manager's team leader shall make a referral for all children who meet the above criteria. Note: <i>For children who are placed into Emergency Protective Custody (EPC), the referral must be made as soon as possible, but no later than two (2) hours following the child being placed into EPC.</i> 2. Once a referral is completed, the CFTM team leader shall verify the referral is: a. Reviewed; and b. Assigned to a CFTM facilitator. 3. When a referral is assigned, the CFTM team leader and assigned CFTM facilitator shall consult to determine an appropriate response time.
E. RP-CFTM for Non-DSS Involved Children	1. A RP-CFTM may be initiated on behalf of children who: a. Are not currently involved with DSS; and b. Do not have an open service line. 2. The meeting may be coordinated when the following situations are present/occur: a. Upon notification of the likelihood of an imminent EPC placement to DSS; b. A judge's request; c. The judge agrees to recess a hearing (in which no CFTM trigger was identified prior to the hearing) and is considering EPC placement into foster care; or d. The need for bringing child and family serving agencies together is determined during an Interagency Staffing (IAS).
F. Staff Roles	Refer to Work Aid 1639.1: Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meeting Process for practice guidance regarding DSS staff roles and responsibilities before, during, and after the RP-CFTM for children with and without DSS involvement.
G. Ongoing CFTM Process and Timeframes	When a RP-CFTM is completed and a child enters non-relative foster care within seven (7) days for the same circumstances that were discussed in the RP-CFTM, the case manager shall: 1. Facilitate a CFTM within 10 days of entry to begin development of the Family Permanency Plan (FPP); 2. Submit a referral for a 25-Day facilitator led CFTM within 24 hours of foster care entry;

Subject: Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meetings

	3. Refer to Work Aid 16.5: Child and Family Team Meetings, Section N for the 25-Day CFTM process; and 4. Refer to Policy 511: Group Care Utilization Management (GCUM) in circumstances where a child meets the GCUM criteria.
--	--

Forms and Related Documents	DSS Brochure 559: Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meeting DSS Form 37650: Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meeting Summary
Related Management Reports	N/A

Glossary
Child and Family Team: a group, chosen by the members of the team, of family members, fictive kin, friends, professionals, children (when age and developmentally appropriate) and other invested stakeholders who join to strengthen a family and provide protection for children to keep them safe Removal Prevention Child and Family Team Meeting: a structured front-end meeting with the child, family, extended family, and natural supports where specific safety plans and a “live” placement decision is made with the goal of preventing unnecessary removal to foster care