

SPECIALIZED CHILD WELFARE SUBJECT MATTER

Child and Family Permanency Teaming

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Policy

The Department of Children and Families shall actively include all persons connected to any child who comes within its jurisdiction in the process of engaging, assessing and planning for the child's best interests in order to achieve safety, permanency, health and learning. These persons shall comprise the child's Child and Family Permanency Team (CF-PT).

The Child and Family Permanency Team shall be responsible for permanency planning for the child.

Purpose

Permanency teaming shall be the primary means by which Social Workers engage a child's natural network (birth parents, extended family, other important adults) and professional supports and conduct ongoing case management activities.

The purpose of CF-PT is:

- to ensure decisions are made on behalf of the child with:
 - the child's active participation (or the representation of the child's voice);
 - the active participation of parents and family members; and
 - the child's natural support network; and
- to support the continuity of safe family relationship and connections with other caring adults.

Definition

Permanency means having an enduring family relationship that:

- is safe and lifelong;
- offers the legal rights and social status of full family membership;
- provides for physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual well-being; and
- ensures lifelong connections to extended family, siblings and other significant adults, as well as family history and traditions, race and ethnic heritage, culture, religion and language.

Permanency Practice

Child and Family Permanency Teaming shall be an intentional casework process that maintains important relationships for the child and ensures ongoing progress towards permanence.

Social work staff shall proactively engage a child's and family's team on a regular basis, with the result that crisis situations are more likely to be avoided and timely permanency is more likely to be achieved.

Assigned social work staff shall hold regular meetings designed to support the child's team by promoting relationship-building, maintaining a strong sense of urgency and helping to ensure that a strong support network is in place even after DCF is no longer involved with the family.

The CF-PT shall encompass a mix of individual and joint conversations, and ongoing large team meetings.

Cross reference: "Child and Family Permanency Teaming (CF-PT) Practice Guide" and the "Permanency Teaming Appendices" for details regarding timeframes for meetings, purposes and other administrative details.

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Permanency Teaming

CF-PT shall be a collaborative approach to permanency planning for children involved with the Department of Children and Families.

The desired outcomes of permanency teaming are:

- the preservation or identification of a legal parent or permanent guardian;
- the achievement and maintenance of legal permanency for the child; and
- the establishment and strengthening of a natural network of supportive relationships.

CF-PT shall be used for every child served in-home or entering foster care or a congregate care setting, and shall include Juvenile Services and Voluntary Services children, regardless of permanency goals.

CF-PT:

- shall be consistent with the practice of engaging families and community members in safety planning and placement-related decision making; and
- shall include an active family search and engagement practice component.

The CF-PT process shall include a blend of individual and joint meetings as well as ongoing large team meetings throughout the life of the case.

Family Search and Engagement

Family Search and Engagement (FSE) shall be an important tool from the initial point of contact between DCF and the family and throughout the casework process.

In addition, when a child needs foster care services, FSE shall be used to keep him or her connected to the family and to the community of origin.

Social Workers shall explore the interest, willingness and ability of each family member and all significant adults, both related and unrelated to the child, to become members of the child's permanency team.

Trauma-Informed Casework Process and Decision-Making

The CF-PT approach is inconsistent with the essential elements of a trauma-informed system because it attempts to minimize disruptions to safe, healthy relationships as well as to minimize separations from attachment figures, thereby supporting children exposed to trauma and reducing potential secondary trauma.

Joint Conversations

An initial joint conversation between the parents or legal guardians, foster parents and child shall be held within three to five days of placement.

Ongoing joint conversations shall be held periodically throughout the life of the case as detailed in the "Child and Family Permanency Teaming (CF-PT) Practice Guide."

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Individual Conversations In preparation for joint meetings and large team meetings, individual conversations shall occur as soon as possible with the:

- child;
- parents and legal guardians;
- out-of-home caregivers;
- case-related professionals (*e.g.*, attorneys, service providers, therapeutic foster care providers); and
- other members of the child's natural support network.

In particular, when a child has experienced an out-of-home placement, individual conversations shall occur as soon as possible to prepare all parties to come together in a joint conversation.

Large Team Meetings The frequency of the large team meetings shall be based on the individual needs of the case and child, as determined in supervision. Typically, a large team meeting shall be held every six to eight weeks.

Large team meetings strategically bring all members of the permanency team together to:

- plan collaboratively;
 - coordinate supports and services; and
 - share decision making.
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Significant Timeframes for Large Team Meetings Large team meetings are not designed to be event-driven; however, there will be significant points within the life of the case at which team involvement and support is critical to case planning.

The following critical decision points shall require a large team meeting:

- development of initial and subsequent Family Case Plan;
- development of initial and subsequent Child In Placement Case Plan;
- prior to a change in placement or within two business days of an emergency removal;
- prior to a change in the child's permanency goal; or
- prior to a return home to parents or placement in kinship care.

Large team meetings are not required:

- for respite placements; or
 - prior to an:
 - emergency placement; or
 - emergency placement change.
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Documentation The Social Worker shall document:

- the individual and joint conversations in an electronic narrative; and
- Large team meetings under Case Planning in the computer system using the DCF- 901, "Child and Family Teaming Summary Report."

The DCF-3040, "Child and Family Permanency Teaming Sign-In Sheet for Meeting Participants," shall be completed prior to the start of any large team meeting.
