



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

**Work Aid: Child and Family Team Meeting Preparation Tool-**  
***How DCS Workers Can Help Prepare Families for the Meeting***

**Supplemental to DCS Policy: None**

The purpose of this document is to be used as a guide for workers to help prepare the family for the Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM).

1. Explain what a CFTM is, what the process is to the family, and the role of each participant.
2. Help the family understand why the meeting is occurring based on the context you provided when you explained the CFTM process and purpose. Questions you can ask to ensure understanding could be:
  - a) What things do you think we need to cover in the meeting?
  - b) What decisions need to be made in your meeting?
3. Identify the best setting and time for the meeting by understanding the family's preferences. Questions you can ask to determine this are:
  - a) Where would be the best place to have your meeting where you would feel most comfortable?
  - b) Is there a time of day that would work best considering work or school schedules or your family and supports?
4. Help the family understand who they can invite and why those people are important to the process. Questions you can ask to help the family identify team members are:
  - a) Who are the people that care about you?
  - b) Who are the people that care about your family and/ or your child?
  - c) Who do you call when you need help?
  - d) Who has helped you in the past?
  - e) Who would you like to be at your meeting?
  - f) If we invited all the people who care about your family to come to a meeting, what would be some good things that might come from their participation?

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5. Be sure to talk with all members of the family who are participating, e.g. mom, dad, other relatives so that each person understands the process and an opportunity to ask questions before the meeting.
6. Ask the family about relatives. Identify who is missing from the team, and find out as much as you can about their whereabouts. Make sure to at least discuss the whereabouts of the mother, father, maternal and paternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, informal supports for each child if they are not already confirmed to be attending. Questions you could ask to help this conversation are:
  - a) Would you tell me about your relatives?
  - b) Would you tell me about your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, etc.?
  - c) What do you know about the other parent's family?
  - d) Do you have any relatives who live out of state?
  - e) Do you have any relatives who are incarcerated?
  - f) Are there relatives that you have, but do not know where they live or how to get in touch with them?
  - g) Are there relatives that we can help you locate?
  - h) If anyone is absent, you could ask, what information do you know about them? Tell me about the last communication you had with them.
7. Talk to the youth (if age appropriate) and ask them who they would like to include. Encourage them to invite at least two supports to the meeting. These individuals could be teachers, coaches, pastors, neighbors, a friend's parents or any other significant relationship. If they have trouble identifying people, ask them questions such as:
  - a) Who are adults in your life who you can trust?
  - b) Who are adults who know something about you that not everyone knows?
  - c) Who are adults that you could call for help? At school? At home?
  - d) Do you spend time at friend's houses or other adults' homes?
  - e) Who would you like to be at your meeting?
8. Explain to the family that we will talk about both their strengths and their needs. Help the family prepare to identify those for and during the meeting. Questions you can ask to help could be:
  - a) What do you see as your strengths?
  - b) What things do you do well at or what makes you proud?

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- c) What strengths can you think of for your child(ren)?
  - d) What things do they do well? What things do you talk about when you get a chance to brag on your child(ren)?
  - e) What is success for your family?
  - f) What could be done to achieve success in your current situation?
  - g) What do you need or what are needs that you have?
  - h) What can make this situation better?
  - i) Are there things that your family has already started doing to improve your situation?
9. If any assessments have been completed, explain to the family the purpose of the assessment, and how it will be used in the meeting. If results are available, let the family know what those results are prior to the meeting so they can be aware of what will be shared. To help the family identify if they have had assessments before, you can ask questions like:
- a) Have you ever had services before?
  - b) Have you ever met with someone who made recommendations about things that might be helpful?
  - c) Has there ever been someone who has come to your home to work with your family?
10. Help the family identify what has worked in the past, and if they have any ideas to address the purpose of the meeting. Questions you can ask to help the family identify what has worked or ideas are:
- a) Has there ever been something you have done or participated in that has made your situation better or worse?
  - b) Have you ever worked with someone that has improved your situation?
  - c) Have you had these issues before, and how did you resolve them then?
11. Ask and encourage the family to talk in the meeting about what their goals are, their concerns, and ask questions. Encourage them to talk about the issues since they are the experts on their family. Help them understand that we need them and their input. Questions you can ask to help encourage the family could be:
- a) The team really wants to hear from you about what your priorities are, what are ways we can help you feel comfortable talking about that?
  - b) Do you think it would be helpful to write down some of your priorities and goals so that you can reference those in the meeting, or in case you get nervous, I can help by reading them?
  - c) What would you like to see happen as a result of the meeting?

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12. Help the family identify any safety issues or information that should be considered in the meeting. Questions that you might ask to help understand if there are issues that should be considered could be:
  - a) Is there anything about you or your family that might be important for us to know before having the meeting (difficult topics, relationship dynamics, etc.) ?
  - b) Is there anything that you want to remain private from others or that you don't want your children to know about?
  - c) Are there any safety issues for you or others that we should know about or can help with?
  - d) Considering we are bringing together a lot of folks, what can go wrong? What are your concerns?
  - e) Since CFTM's can be emotionally charged, what might be some of your concerns?
  - f) Are there any court orders or previously identified safety plans put in place that we should be aware of?
  
13. Once you have gone over the meeting and helped the family to understand what to expect and be prepared for, check back in to make sure that the family understands and is as comfortable with the process as possible. Questions you might ask are:
  - a) Do you have any concerns about your participation on the team?
  - b) What value do you see yourself bringing to the team process?
  - c) Do you have any questions about the meeting?
  - d) Do you feel like you have a good idea of what to expect?