

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services  
(CCDCFS)  
Policy Statement**

**Policy Chapter:** Case Requirements  
**Policy Number:** 5.01.04  
**Policy Name:** Family Team Meetings

**Original Effective Date:** 01/24/2000  
**Revision Date(s):** 03/31/2011, 01/14/2008, 04/01/2004, 04/01/2000  
**Current Revision Date:** 10/01/2015  
**Approved By:** Thomas D. Pristow

**PURPOSE:** Family Team Meetings are necessary and when issues for discussion do not meet the criteria for a Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting/staffing and/or fall outside the parameters for discussion at a Semi-Annual Administrative Review (SAR). The policy outlines the procedure for those instances.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to all CCDCFS staff who provides direct care to children and families; it also applies to Family Team Meetings that do not meet the criteria for a TDM/staffing and/or fall outside the parameters of an SAR.

**POLICY**

In child welfare, actively involving children, parents and families – often called “engagement” – is believed to improve child and family outcomes. Family Team Meetings are a primary family engagement strategy. This places more families and young people at the table when decisions are made.

Family Team Meetings are utilized to engage families in case planning, service identification, assessing progress, and safety planning. Family Team Meetings are also utilized to assist with a child’s adjustment into substitute care, maintaining relationships between children and birth family, and assisting with permanency goals.

I. When to hold a Family Team Meeting

- A. A family team meeting is convened by any team member to craft, implement, or change a child and family plan.
- B. Meetings are voluntary and can be utilized continue throughout the family’s involvement with the agency.
- C. Mandatory triggers for agency to schedule a meeting include:
  - 1. Placement change - A TDM is required for all discussions of possible placement changes. In addition, a Family Team Meeting is required

within 7 days of a child's new placement. The purpose of this meeting is to share information about the child with the new caregiver. An "All About Me" form is completed during this meeting. This form is shared with the new caregivers.

2. Visitation planning - Visitation planning includes input from all team members. A Family Team Meeting is scheduled to create or amend visitation plans unless the plan was already developed in a team decision making (TDM) meeting or semi-annual administrative review (SAR).
  3. When a case is being closed and the agency is making recommendations for services, the WOR convenes a Family Team Meeting to discuss the recommendations, provide resources, and link the family members with appropriate services.
- D. When a family refuses to participate in a Family Team Meeting, the refusal is documented in the activity log and no meeting is held. Information sharing (e.g. "All About Me") between team members is still completed as long as confidentiality requirements are maintained.

## II. Who to invite to a Family Team Meeting

- A. The WOR makes every effort to contact and invite all pertinent parties, including (but not necessarily limited to):
1. Parents, guardians, or custodian
  2. Extended family members
  3. Alternative care providers
  4. Members of the family's support network
  5. Community resources and professionals (e.g., Wrap Specialist, Collaborative members, school personnel, medical staff)
  6. Guardian Ad Litem
  7. Other involved agency staff (e.g., foster home resource manager, prior workers)
  8. Youth's plans are developed with strong child involvement, age appropriate. Younger children may be involved for some discussions depending on the issues.
- B. All applicable releases of information are signed prior to the meeting taking place. The confidentiality of the parents is respected.
- C. Parents must be in agreement for each participant to attend the meeting.

## III. Location of the Family Team Meeting

- A. The Family Team Meeting is held in a location most convenient for the family. It is preferable that Family Team Meetings take place in the family home (if a safe location) or in their community. Suggested locations include a parent's home, a relative's home, an alternative caregiver's home, a neighborhood collaborative site, or any mutually agreed upon location or community setting.

## PROCEDURES

### I. Family Team Meeting Process

- A. A specific structure guides the meeting: WOR ensures introductions are made, ground rules determined and explained, family goals are defined, family strength / concerns are identified, resources are identified, and plan is developed.
- B. WOR facilitates the meeting unless Family Team Meeting is taking place as a TDM or SAR. In those instances the agency has an assigned facilitator.
- C. Decisions are made by the team within existing non-negotiable parameters such as requiring child safety and recognizing court orders. The family's goals are expected to be paramount in reaching team consensus.
- D. New Placements - Visits and frequent child-parent contact are the focus of family team meetings for new placements, with the ultimate goal of stability and permanency. It is important that all participants address all issues pertaining to the child's adjustment with his or her new caregiver. WOR completes the "All About Me" form with input from all parties and distributes a copy of the form to the new caregivers.
- E. All About Me
  1. At the time of a new placement, the WOR identifies a time and date for an initial family visit and an "All About Me" meeting. This meeting takes place as soon as possible and within one week of the initial removal or placement move. Every effort is made to hold the meeting at a time that is convenient for the birth family and substitute caregivers.
  2. WOR informs the birth family about the purpose of the meeting, providing reassurance of care for their child and stresses the importance of the child maintaining stable, continuous care. The WOR is empathetic to the family's pain of separation and asks them to be prepared to provide information about the child. Information includes but is not limited to:
    - Names, address, phone numbers of relatives or individuals with a strong connection to the child
    - Information about the child's diet, routine, habits, etc.
    - Information regarding any medical care, special needs, behaviors, or school needs
    - Critical cultural informationThe "All About Me" report form is used during the meeting to share important information. The WOR can share this form with the parents prior to the meeting to assist in preparation.
  3. WOR encourages information exchange between birth parents and substitute caregivers.
  4. WOR speaks positively about all caregivers.

5. WOR schedules regular and frequent visitation.
  6. WOR attempts to arrange phone and / or internet contact between the two sets of caregivers. WOR determines each parties preferred avenue for communication.
  7. Information is shared with all caregivers.
  8. If siblings are placed in separate homes, WOR encourages caregivers to host sibling visits.
  9. WOR serves as a liaison between the caregivers.
  10. WOR identifies all parties preference for terms of address – first name or “Mr. Brown; Miss, Mrs. or Ms.
  11. WOR listens carefully to all parties (including the child’s) concerns, issues, and questions regarding the child and / or placement. Avoid interrupting.
  12. The WOR shares and discusses the child’s lifebook and it’s important to child.
  13. The WOR provides a copy of the completed “All About Me” form to the new caregivers.
- F. WOR completes the “Family Team Meeting Report” and obtains attendance signatures from all participants. WOR reviews the activities agreed upon at the meeting and the summary with all participants.
- G. WOR documents the completion of a FTM in the SACWIS activity log. CCDCFS does not utilize the Family Team Meeting tool in SACWIS. When completing the activity log, the WOR uses the following data entries:
- Contact type:* Team meeting  
*Category:* Meetings / Conferences  
*Sub Category:* Family Team Meeting

**SEE ALSO:**

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual**

Policy No. 5.02.01 – TDM/Staffings

**FORMS**

Family Team Meeting Report  
 All About Me