



Your Child and Family Team
Tool Kit

What Families Say They Want

Going Forward -- 5 Essential Questions

Information Sharing at the Meeting (example)

Information Sharing at the Meeting (blank)

CFT Outline and tips (2 pages)

CFT Meeting Agenda



What Families Say They Want



Before the meeting:

- Give me a chance to share my story.
- Help me to find my informal supports so that they can come to the meeting.
- Educate yourself about my child's illnesses or my situation, don't just say you don't know
- Listen to my needs and my families needs.
- No surprises-make sure I know before hand what we will be talking about at my meeting.
- Don't have the meeting unless I can come if it is about me.
- Work with me to set up a time that I can be present at the meeting and be sensitive to my needs.
- Recognize my feelings as a parent i.e. Angry, scared and tired of the mess.
- Help me understand how the meeting works and what are my options.
- Listen to what I am saying and explore why I am saying it.

At the meeting:

- Allow me to introduce myself to the team.
- Talk to me, not about me.
- Monitor your tone of voice.
- Call me by my name not "mom", "dad" or "the youth".
- Make sure I have someone at the table I feel will support me.
- Use words I can understand.
- Use humor to make me feel safe.
- Give me a chance to share my story.
- Help me to meet my immediate needs first like housing, transportation, childcare, food, lights.
- Remind me of my family's strengths and build on them.
- Ask me how my situation looks in my child and families life...How it impacts us.
- Provide services where needed not just mandated services. Don't waste my time on services that will not help my family.
- Know what the family has to do in all of the agency plans so we can come up with one plan.
- Listen to my needs and my families needs.
- Use visual prompts so I can follow better.
- Tell the truth.
- No surprises-make sure I know before hand what we will be talking about at my meeting.
- Let me explain why I behave the way I do.
- Lets us speak more.
- Be open to questions and our opinions.
- Make the meeting more active and fun.
- Everyone come like they said they would.
- Speak to the me and my child like we are a part of the solution not like we are the problem.
- Ask for information; don't assume you know the answers.
- Provide access to resources and services.
- Respect me, and that I am doing what I know to do.

After the Meeting:

- Respect my confidentiality-don't talk about me to others.
- Allow me the opportunity to call meetings when I feel I need to.
- All team members need to be held accountable, not just the parents.

Going Forward with Child and Family Teams – Five Essential Questions

There are 5 key questions that help us think through the preparation and planning process for child and family teams so that we are offering the most helpful, efficient process we can. The person coordinating a child and family team planning process should use these questions to guide preparing families and team members for the child and family team meeting.

1. **What are the safety considerations?** It is imperative that participant safety (both that of family and professional participants) is ensured at all times. In deciding whether to go forward with a CFT, the coordinator/facilitator must consider with the participants how to ensure that safety is not compromised by the CFT process.
2. **Is there a clear, open-ended purpose?** The purpose should be written simply, without jargon. It should also be open-ended with many possibilities for planning, decision making, and action. The coordinator/facilitator may have to help rewrite the stated purpose of the meeting so that it meets these criteria.
3. **Do the invited participants, especially family members, agree to the purpose?** CFT's are voluntary processes; people can choose whether to attend or not attend. It is critical that the purpose be crafted in such a way that participants can both get their interests met and feel as comfortable with the process as possible. In other words, a successful CFT will be one where the participants want to be there and see it as relevant to them and their lives. (Remember the adage "*people tend to support that which they themselves create.*")
4. **Is the agency representative open and willing to consider the family's ideas at this time?** Sometimes the facts of the case determine decisions and actions that need to be taken. If a decision is already made, it is imperative that the meeting not be held for the purpose of making/justifying that particular decision or simply getting the family to agree with it. Likewise, if there is only one outcome that is potentially acceptable to the agency representative, then it is likely not a good time for a CFT. Remember that family-centered practice is all about choice and empowerment.

Without choice and the power to make plans and decisions, participants will feel that the meeting is a waste of time; this makes for a very frustrating experience. CFTs should always be centered on issues where families can participate in the decisions that affect them. For example, if the decision is already made that a child must be placed into foster care, then the focus of the meeting should not be to get the family to go along with this already made decision. Rather, the meeting's purpose could be to make plans for how to make the transition to foster care go smoothly, how the family might stay connected to the child, or what services the child and family might engage in during the foster care placement.

5. **Can the right people be there?** By definition, a child and family teams is a group process. It requires that the circle of influence and decision involve those most important in the life of the child. This would include numerous family members like parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, etc., but also such people as neighbors, friends, mentors, pastors, godparents, and other non-biological relations.
Also by definition, a child and family team will be more heavily weighted in attendance by family and natural supports than by professional ones. It is difficult for family members to feel empowered when they are outnumbered at meetings. (Consider the typical IEP, court hearing, or case conference.)



Information Sharing at the Meeting

Strength (intention) (something the parent, family or child has done that is positive or shows positive intent)	Concerns (safety, stability, legal, educational)	Bottom Line Issues	Strength (hope) (something that the parent, family or child has done that may be helpful to them as they develop a plan)
<p><i>I appreciate that you feel protective of your brother and stick up for him in school.</i></p> <p><i>It is encouraging that Betty (mom) has been willing to allow her family members to join us here today to discuss a safety plan for her children.</i></p>	<p><i>However, I am concerned that you decided that you needed to beat up the boys you felt were teasing your brother.</i></p> <p><i>We are still quite concerned that despite positive drug testing results, Betty continues to resist any type of formal drug treatment programs.</i></p>	<p><i>In our school there is a no tolerance policy for violence and this kind of behavior requires immediate disciplinary action.</i></p> <p><i>We are unable to support any plan in which Betty is the primary caretaker for the children until we have some sort of documentation that she is engaging in some sort of drug treatment program.</i></p>	<p><i>I am hopeful that in your plan, you are able to think of other ways to protect your brother that will not result in getting you in trouble at school</i></p> <p><i>With so many family members present, I feel certain that we can establish a plan that supports contact between Betty and her children in a way that makes sure the children are kept safe whether Betty is in treatment or not.</i></p>

- Tips:**
- 1) When sharing concerns, try to be as clear and concrete as possible. The concern should be expressed in terms of a behavior that the family can address rather than as a global issue (i.e. the concern should not be poor parenting but specifically what parenting behavior is putting the child at risk).
 - 2) It can be helpful to prioritize concerns as “immediate risk”, “secondary issues” (concerns but not an immediate risk) and “complicating issues” (concerns that address wellness needs and would be considered low risk).



Information Sharing at the Meeting

Strength (intention) (something the parent, family or child has done that is positive or shows positive intent)	Concerns (safety, stability, legal, educational)	Bottom Line Issues	Strength (hope) (something that the parent, family or child has done that may be helpful to them as they develop a plan)

- Tips:** 1) When sharing concerns, try to be as clear and concrete as possible. The concern should be expressed in terms of a behavior that the family can address rather than as a global issue (i.e. the concern should not be poor parenting but specifically what parenting behavior is putting the child at risk).
- 2) It can be helpful to prioritize concerns as “immediate risk”, “secondary issues” (concerns but not an immediate risk) and “complicating issues” (concerns that address wellness needs and would be considered low risk).



Child and Family Team Outline and Tips



Family Meeting

Child and Family Team Meeting

- Displaying the family or young persons name on a flip chart at the beginning of the meeting can visually reinforce that the meeting is to support the family or young person

Introductions

- To feel safe in the room and to encourage partnership, it is important that everyone in the room identify themselves and how they are connected to the family or the young person. This reinforces that all participants have been invited to act as potential supports for a good family plan.

Review of the Purpose

- It is VERY IMPORTANT that the purpose of the meeting has been determined WITH the family or young person BEFORE the meeting.
- Participants are more likely to arrive at the meeting ready to support a collaborative process if they know why they are being asked to come.
- Family should be in agreement with the purpose or general goals of the meeting before they arrive. An agency and a family may have different goals but this must be discussed before the meeting.
- It is in the conversations with the family prior to the meeting that the family should be made aware of any “bottom lines” that the agency has for the plan. (bottom lines are the things that any agency is unable to compromise at the present time. This may be because of a court order, safety constraints, licensing regulations, etc).

Family Opening

- The family should be asked prior to the meeting if there is anything they would like to do at the start of the meeting to support their family in coming to a successful plan. Often times this can be a prayer, a poem or a song that unites the family.

Review of Ground Rules for the Meeting

- When contacting participants for the meeting, there should be a discussion about any ground rules that should be in place for the meeting that would support the family in feeling safe to plan for their children.
- The ground rules collected when contacting participants should be listed and shared at the meeting to confirm that they still apply and see if additional ground rules might make the meeting a safer place to work together.

Information Sharing

- All participants should be invited to share strengths and concerns in this part of the meeting.
- It is important that everyone be able to see the family or the youth as having potential by acknowledging strengths and understanding that it is the strengths that will ultimately resolve concerns and build effective strategies in their family plan.
- When sharing concerns, it is important to invite the family to start. This reinforces that you have invited them to the table to be heard and intend to address some of their concerns in the plan rather than just putting together a plan that address the agency concerns.
- Do not let the concerns outnumber the strengths. Concerns should be related to the purpose of the meeting. Additional concerns can be noted but may need to be addressed in follow up Child and Family Team meetings that may involve different participants (based on the actual purpose of the meeting).
- All participants should be encouraged to share honestly with the family their concerns and any bottom lines they must see in place to support the family plan. Using the “sandwich worksheet” provided can help participants prepare for how to best share difficult information in a way that provides clear guidance for the family without limiting the potential creativity of the planning process.

Coming Together to Make a Plan

- Building a collaborative plan can begin through the identification of Family's desired outcome. Some of this conversation will have occurred during the set up of the meeting when coming to agreement on a shared purpose.
- Allowing the family to identify where they want to start (either through identifying their desired outcome or identifying the concern they would like to see addressed first in the plan) supports the development of a plan that places the family in a leadership role.
- Brainstorming together to determine all possible strategies that fit with a desired outcome or concern assists in the development of creative plans that should not overburden any one person or agency.
- Listening to the family first allows agency and other supports the opportunity to examine how they can best support the plan. Professionals should resist the urge to propose solutions before allowing the family to clearly express what they would like to see in a potential strategy or solution.

Plans For Follow Up To This Meeting

- Child and Family Teams can be seen as an opportunity to provide on-going support to family plans and thus should not be viewed as a one time event.
- The group should be offered the chance to decide how they would like to follow up on the plans developed at the meeting (either formally through follow up meetings or informally through contacts and conversation).
- Everyone should be held accountable for what they have offered to do to support the family plan. This does not mean that changes to the plan do not and will not occur. This is what makes follow up plans critical to the success of the Child and Family Team.

Closing Thank You and Acknowledgements



Family Meeting Agenda

Child and Family Team Meeting

Welcome

Introductions

(Who are we and how are we connected to the family?)

Review of the Purpose

(What brings us all to the table today?)

Family Opening

(An opportunity for the family to start the meeting in a way that honors their family)

Review of Ground Rules for the Meeting

Confidentiality

(Request that family and their natural supports keep what is said in the meeting private, Professionals are bound by law to do so.)

Information Sharing

(An opportunity to celebrate strengths and acknowledge concerns)

Coming together to make a plan

(Brainstorming and working together to determine all possible strategies that fit with what we are all able to do at this time)

Plans for follow up to this meeting

(When should we meet again? How much time do we need to see how this plan will work?)

Closing thank you and acknowledgements