



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of Social Services

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Permanency Planning Services Track Training

Participant Workbook Day Four

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**PUBLIC
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222 E. 18th Street, Unit C
Cheyenne, WY 82001
www.pubknow.com

info@pubknow.com
(800) 776-4229

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Instructions

This course was designed to guide child welfare professionals through the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to engage with families in need of child protection services. The workbook is structured to help you engage in the lesson through reflection and analysis throughout each week of training. Have this workbook readily available as you go through each session to create a long-lasting resource you can reference later.

If you are using this workbook electronically: Workbook pages have text boxes for you to add notes and reflections. Due to formatting, if you type in these boxes, blank lines will be “pushed” to the next page. To correct this, when you are done typing in the text box, you may use the delete key to remove extra lines.

Course Themes

The central themes of the Permanency Planning Track Training are divided across several course topics.

- Purpose, Practice Standards, and Legal Aspects
- Disproportionality in Child Welfare Services
- Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA)
- Communicating
- Family Engagement
- Assessing in Permanency Planning Services
- Trauma-Informed Practice
- Permanency Plans and Concurrent Planning
- Attachment
- Family Engagement: Family Time and Shared Parenting
- Working with Relatives
- Partners in the Permanency Planning Process
- Permanency Planning with the Family
- Permanency Planning Family Case Plan
- Child and Family Team Meetings
- Authentically Engaging Children and Youth
- Family-Centered Permanency Planning
- Quality Contacts
- Preparing for Permanency
- Engaging Relatives
- Placement
- Placement with Relatives
- Monitoring the Permanency Planning Family Case Plan
- Achieving Permanency
- Termination of Parental Rights
- Adoption
- Documentation
- Worker Safety

Training Overview

Training begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. If a holiday falls on the Monday of training, the training will begin on Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. This schedule is subject to change if a holiday falls during the training week or other circumstances occur. The time for ending training on Fridays may vary, and trainees need to be prepared to stay the entire day.

Attendance is mandatory. If there is an emergency, the trainee must contact the classroom trainer and their supervisor as soon as they realize they will not be able to attend training or will be late. If a trainee must miss training time in the classroom, it is the trainee's responsibility to develop a plan to make up missed material.

Pre-Work Online e-Learning Modules

There is required pre-work for the Permanency Planning Track Training in the form of online e-Learning modules. Completion of the eLearnings is required prior to attendance at the classroom-based training. The following are the online e-Learning modules:

1. North Carolina Worker Practice Standards
2. Safety Organized Practice
3. Understanding and Assessing Safety and Risk
4. Understanding and Screening for Trauma

Transfer of Learning (TOL) Tool

The Permanency Planning Track Training Transfer of Learning (ToL) tool is a comprehensive, collaborative activity for workers and supervisors to identify worker goals, knowledge gains, and priorities for further development throughout the training process. In four distinct steps, the worker and supervisor will highlight their goals and action plan for participating in training, reflect on lessons and outstanding questions, and create an action plan to support the worker's growth. The tool should be started prior to beginning the Permanency Planning Track Training and re-visited on an ongoing basis to assess growth and re-prioritize actions for development.

- Part A: Training Preparation: Prior to completing any eLearning and in-person Track Training sessions, the worker and supervisor should meet to complete Part A: Training Preparation. In this step, the worker and supervisor will discuss their goals for participating in training and develop a plan to meet those goals through pre-work, other learning opportunities, and support to address anticipated barriers.
- Part B: Worker Reflections During Training: There is space in each topic for workers to record their notes. For many slides, questions prompt workers to reflect on why the materials matter and how they will apply them in their practice. Some, but not all, of these questions may be asked by the training facilitator during the training. Each section includes a "Reflections & Check-In" at the end, where the worker will document their thoughts, takeaways, and outstanding questions. This level of reflection serves two purposes. First, the practice of distilling down a full section of training into three takeaways and three remaining questions requires the worker to actively engage with the material, subsequently forming cognitive cues related to the information for future use in case practice. Second, prioritizing takeaways and questions by section allows workers to continually review information to determine if questions are answered in future sessions and supports the development of an action plan by requiring workers to highlight the questions they find most important.

- Part C: Planning for Post-Training Debrief with Supervisor: The worker considers the takeaways and questions they identified in each section and creates a framework to transfer those takeaways and questions into an action plan.
- Part D: Post-Training Debrief with Supervisor: Provides an opportunity for the supervisor and worker to determine a specific plan of action to answer outstanding questions and to further support worker training.

While this ToL is specific to the Track Training in North Carolina, workers and supervisors can review the takeaways and questions highlighted by the worker in each section of training on an ongoing basis, revising action steps when prior actions are completed, and celebrating worker growth and success along the way.

Training Evaluations

At the conclusion of each training session, learners will complete a training evaluation tool to assess satisfaction with the training content and methods. The training evaluation tool is required to complete the training course. Training evaluations will be used to determine the need for revisions to the training curriculum.

All matters as stated above are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances and with approval.

Day Four Agenda

Permanency Planning Services Track Training

- I. Welcome

Working with Relatives

- II. Relational and Identity Permanence

Partners in the Permanency Process

- III. Safety and Support Network
- IV. Legal Aspects of Permanency Planning Services
- V. Juvenile Court System

BREAK

- VI. Juvenile Court System, continued
- VII. Placement Resource

Permanency Planning with Special Populations

- VIII. Planning
- IX. Planning for Change

LUNCH

- X. Engaging Families in Case Planning
- XI. Permanency Planning with Special Populations

Permanency Planning Family Case Plan

- XII. Family Strengths and Needs Assessment
- XIII. PPFCP

BREAK

- XIV. PPFCP, continued

Child and Family Team Meetings

- XV. Child and Family Team Meetings
- XVI. Crucial Conversations: Group Conflict Management

End-of-Day Values Reflection

Day Four Learning Objectives

Partners in the Permanency Planning Process	
•	Learners will be able to explain the role of CFT meetings in achieving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.
•	Learners will be able to identify the important players to include in conversations about permanency.
•	Learners will be able to discuss how the court and child welfare agency work together to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families.
•	Learners will be able to describe the Foster Parent Bill of Rights and their responsibilities in supporting foster parents.
Permanency Planning with the Family	
•	Learners will be able to define the specific positive behavioral change required for reunification based on the unique needs and strengths of the child's parent.
•	Learners will be able to discuss cultural barriers families may face when receiving Permanency Planning Services.
•	Learners will be able to identify and clearly document indicators of behavioral change to support reunification decisions.
Permanency Planning Family Case Plan	
•	Learners will be able to explain how the Permanency Planning Family Case Plan guides case planning and services provision.
•	Learners will be able to discuss the importance of inclusion of the child and family's voice in completion of the Permanency Planning Family Case Plan and will be able to provide examples of how to do so.
•	Learners will be able to describe the purposes of the Permanency Planning Family Case Plan and why the agreement is used in achieving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.
•	Learners will be able to develop plans to transition to reunification that highlight the support needs of the child(ren), parents, and other important case participants.
•	Learners will be able to engage in skill development with children and families before permanency is achieved, so they have skills to consistently meet their needs.
Child and Family Team Meetings	
•	Learners will be able to describe and provide examples of how to include child and family voice before, during, and after CFT meetings.
•	Learners will be able to create case plan goals that balance the perspectives of all team members.

- Learners will be able to engage in collaborative planning for permanency that includes out-of-home care provider voice, as appropriate.

Authentically Engaging Children and Youth

- Learners will be able to identify the child, family, and case-related benefits of educational stability.
- Learners will be able to describe considerations for placement and permanency associated with the identified special populations.
- Learners will be able to demonstrate support strategies for children who are exposed to substances, domestic violence, sexual abuse, human trafficking, and mental health issues.
- Learners will be able to describe options to connect with those supportive individuals to cultivate deeper, supportive relationships with the youth.
- Learners will be able to engage the youth's entire network to build skills for adulthood and a path to independence.
- Learners will be able to describe their role in providing independent living support and the North Carolina policy requirements associated with that support.
- Learners will be able to identify services and make appropriate referrals to support youth transitioning to adulthood.
- Learners will be able to identify services and make appropriate referrals to support youth over 18 years old in foster care.

Permanency Planning Services Track Training Day 4

Working with Relatives, continued

Relational and Identity Permanence

Identity Permanency

Identity Permanency

Having a **strong** and **positive** connection to one's ethnic group is **predictive** of high self-esteem, academic achievement, psychological adjustment, coping abilities, and lower levels of depression and loneliness.

- Identity permanence supports belonging, well-being, and resilience
- Children need connections to family, social groups, community, and traditions
- Foster care and placement changes can disrupt identity development
- Shared parenting, relatives, and kin help maintain ethnic, social group, and family connections
- Caseworkers should intentionally support children's familial, ethnic, and social identities
- The Multiethnic Placement Act
 - Amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provision of 1996
 - Designed to prohibit routine consideration of race, color, and national origin in the foster placement process to improve adoption rates of minority children freed for adoption

Notes

Relational Permanency

Relational Permanency

The existence of one or more **strong, sustainable and supportive relationships** between a youth and caretakers, siblings and other individuals that a youth considers part of their **family**.

- Many youth in foster care do not feel like they belong, feel like they are treated differently, or just generally do not feel like a "normal" child
 - Many youth also report feeling that their environment is too different from the social dynamics they were accustomed to when with their birth family
 - Such feelings can contribute to placement disruptions, high-risk behaviors, and even prevent youth from forming bonds with their caretakers
- Relational permanency is about strong, sustainable, and supportive relationships between a youth and someone they consider part of their family.

Thinking about the youth perspectives shared in this slide, what is one practice or decision you make today that could either strengthen or weaken a child's sense of belonging?

When you consider placement, visitation, or permanency decisions, how can you intentionally support the relationships that a youth identifies as important to them?

Reflect on a child or family you have worked with. What opportunities existed, or could have existed, to build relational permanence beyond finding a placement?

Sibling Visitation

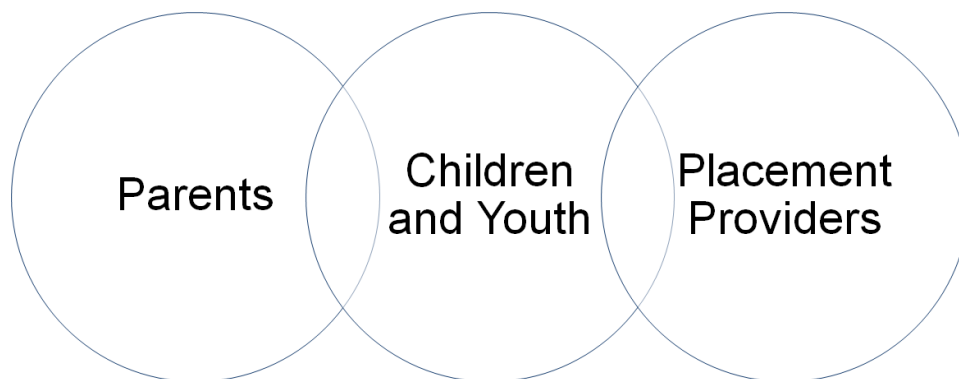
- Sibling bonds are among the strongest bonds
- Siblings must have frequent and ongoing visitation
- Family Time with siblings must occur within seven days of placement
- Preserving connections between siblings who have removed from their families is critical
- Sibling bonds are among the strongest bonds
 - They are emotionally powerful, provide a source of continuity, and help with social connections
- Siblings who are not placed together must have ongoing visitation unless it is contrary to the siblings' safety
- Children who are parentified and separated from their siblings may experience higher rates of anxiety specific to their siblings' care and well-being.
- The federal Fostering Connections Act and the North Carolina Child Welfare Permanency Planning policy require that:
 - Family Time between siblings (if placed in separate placements) must occur within seven calendar days of entering agency custody
 - Family Time and Contact Plan must be developed between siblings (if placed separately) within seven days of the child's placement



calendar
been
significant
maintaining
frequent and
well-being or

Notes

Contributions of Relatives and Non-Relative Kin



- Engaging relatives in the foster care experience is vital to Permanency Planning Services
- Relatives and non-relative kin can support protective factors for parents
- Relatives can be great resources for respite, supervising Family Time, and helping with other tasks, such as transporting children to and from various appointments

How can relatives and kin support the protective factors that help families build safety and stability?

What meaningful contributions can relatives and kin make beyond serving as a placement resource?

How do relatives and kin support relational permanence, identity permanence, and long-term family success?

What opportunities do you have in your role to engage relatives and kin as part of the family's support network rather than focusing only on placement?

Handout: Contributions of Relatives and Non-Relative Kin

Relatives and kin can and should participate in the Child and Family Team meetings. Their knowledge of the family's strengths and areas of need can contribute to sound decision-making. Relatives who participate in Child and Family Team meetings show support for the process, and this involvement gives them an opportunity to contribute to planning. This is also an opportunity to formally identify ways the relatives can support the child and their parents. Relatives and kin can contribute to specific tasks in the permanency planning process, such as providing rides to and from appointments and court hearings. When done with purpose, we can prime relatives to adopt a team approach to support the family after reunification, promoting long-term success.

Relatives can provide respite care. Respite provides a break for the caretaker and an opportunity for the child to strengthen relationships with other family members.

Relatives are a great resource for supervising Family Time. This can be a huge relief for the child's placement providers and caseworkers. Additionally, it could provide the child's parents with support and behavior to model during Family Time.

Relatives can provide emotional support to parents and children. Serving as someone the parents and children can come to talk to, listen to, and get advice from strengthens relational permanence and lets the child know they are not alone. Relatives can also support placement providers in this way by sharing what has worked for them in the past or shedding light on dynamics that provide context for behaviors children may be exhibiting in care.

Celebrating milestones and accomplishments during this difficult time is important. Encourage the relative to attend the child's events, such as school plays, sporting events, or musical performances. It's always great to look up in a crowd or a room and notice people you love there, and this is another way the relative can provide support to the child beyond placement.

Relatives also provide context, stories, and family history. Some relatives and non-relative kin can share a letter, story, or other important information about the family that matters deeply to children. This information can help us understand the family better and refine case plans. It is also an important component of life books.

Relative Notification Knowledge Check: True or False?

Activity Worksheet: Relative Notification Knowledge Check

Circle or mark your response to each statement.

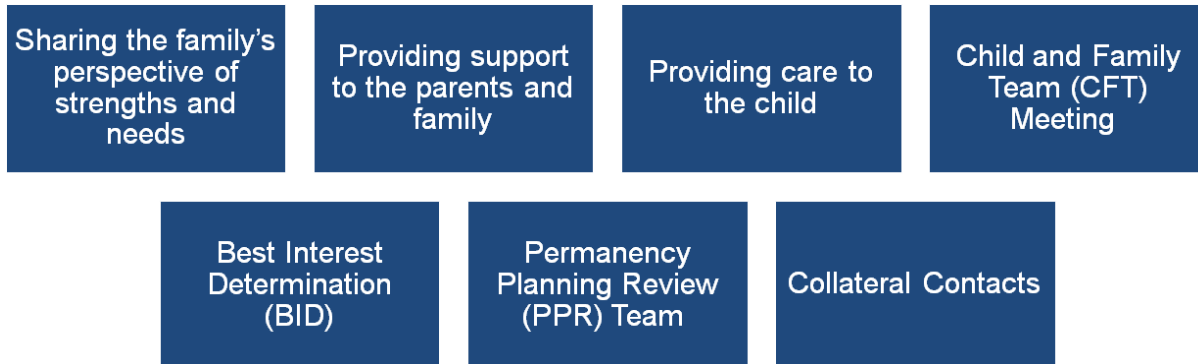
True	False	Efforts to identify and notify all adult relatives must occur within the first 60 days of a child's removal from their parent or caretaker.
True	False	Kin are only those related by blood.
True	False	Adoptive parents of a sibling are considered relatives of the legal child.
True	False	The Relative Notification, the Relative Interest, and the Relative Search Information are the same thing.
True	False	Efforts to engage both maternal and paternal relatives should be made equally, even if both parents are not equally involved.
True	False	Efforts to engage relatives and kin must be made quarterly after the initial efforts.

Notes

Partners in the Permanency Planning Process

Safety and Support Network

Contributions of Safety and Support Network



The Safety and Support Network has a wider responsibility and contribution than just participating in the Child and Family Team Meetings. The network represents the family's support. Each member of the child and family team has individual contributions, unique roles, and specific responsibilities to the permanency planning process.

Sharing the family's perspective of strengths and needs is a role for all network members. This is the primary role of the parents and children within the child and family team. They speak from their experience, voice their knowledge of the concerns and potential solutions, and remain at the center of the process.

Providing support to the parents and family. Informal supports include supervising visits, offering transportation, making recommendations, sharing perspectives, and holding parents and DSS accountable for actions and commitments. For formal supports, such as service providers or the GAL, this means providing therapy, parenting classes, coaching, or other professional services in addition to their assessment of the family's progress.

Providing care to the child, including providing placement, respite, and babysitting services, offering a safe haven for processing and advice, and completing other day-to-day care tasks.

Attending Child and Family Team Meetings and actively participating. This includes contributing history and perspective, generating ideas, committing to actionable steps to promote goals and objectives, weighing in on permanency and concurrent planning efforts, and agreeing to remain open to the possibility of change and hope.

Attending Best Interest Determinations, which includes contributing to the evaluation of educational settings that serve the best interest of the child.

Attending Permanency Planning Review Teams (PPRT), also known as Permanency Planning Action Teams (PPAT) meetings. This requires child and family team members to share input into service needs for parents and children, the efforts to address concerns that led to custody, and the promotion of the most appropriate permanent and concurrent plan.

Sharing information and perspective as collateral contacts. This can include impressions of progress the family is making to address concerns, safety and risk factors, child well-being needs, interactions with family members, and details of events and circumstances.

One way to protect a family's confidentiality is through Informed Consent. This can be handled in several ways.

First, ensure the parents and children have a full understanding of what will be shared with their team. Respect any limitations the family sets, so long as safety is not impacted by withholding details or context.

Second, limit how much information is shared with the network members outside of meetings. When conducting collateral contacts or having conversations outside of the formal meeting environment, ensure that information is shared on a need-to-know basis. Also, make sure the information-sharing source is fully aware that the information shared will be used in a thorough assessment and will likely be shared with parents or children to further assess it and follow up to ensure safety and well-being.

Third, for meetings, confidentiality issues can be addressed by having participants sign a confidentiality form stating that they are aware that information shared during the meeting is confidential and agree not to divulge any information shared without the express permission of the parents, children, or youth.

What types of decisions do Child and Family Teams (CFT) impact?

What input is beneficial from CFT members?

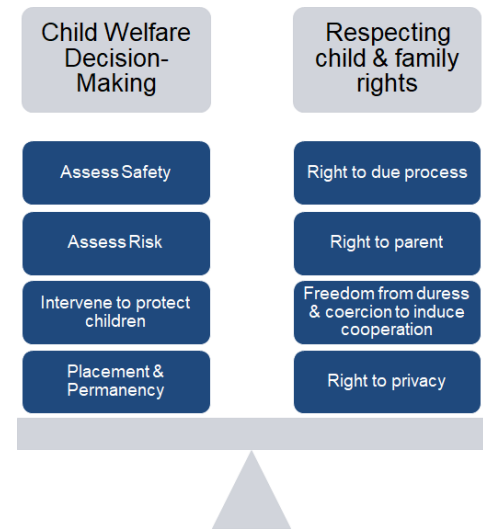
What does this suggest about the importance of information collected from CFT members?

What is one step you can take to ensure the CFTs you attend will include critical information?

Legal Aspects of Child Welfare Services

The Impact of Caseworkers Decisions

- State and Federal Laws protect a person's basic rights during the provision of child welfare services
- The right to privacy, freedom from duress and coercion to induce cooperation, the right to parent, the right to due process, and freedom from discrimination and unreasonable search and seizure
- Caseworkers must balance assessing risk and safety and take appropriate action to protect children, while simultaneously respecting the rights of children and families
- Caseworker decisions may impact families' constitutional and civil rights
- Child welfare case information must be kept confidential, except when learning of crimes against children, which must be reported to law enforcement
- A thorough knowledge of the legal process is essential for caseworkers
- Working in partnership with the courts can support the safety, permanency, and well-being of children more effectively



Looking at the slide graphic, which of these rights do you think would be most challenging to uphold during a high-pressure safety decision, and why?

Looking at the balance between child welfare decision-making and respecting family rights, think of a situation from your own experience, a news story, or a case study where a caseworker's decision may have tipped that balance too far in one direction. What was the impact?

Juvenile Court System

Juvenile Court System

The courts play a central role in making decisions regarding the protection of children who have been maltreated



The Juvenile Court is a branch of the District Court whose primary function is the hearing, evaluation, and disposition of cases involving children alleged to be delinquent, abused, neglected, and/or dependent. In abuse, neglect, and dependency proceedings involving county child welfare agencies, juvenile court represents the power of the State to act in the best interests of children under 18 years of age.

- The juvenile court decides whether children have been victimized by maltreatment, as defined by State law
 - Then assumes responsibility for ordering services and monitoring cases to ensure that its interventions are as beneficial and effective as possible
- The juvenile court has several powers, including:
 - Subpoena witnesses, documents, and records
 - Making reasonable efforts determinations
 - Holding individuals in contempt
 - Order treatment
 - Inherent power of the position

What was something new to you regarding the juvenile court system?

How might you anticipate the powers of the court impacting the child welfare process?

The Court Process

In-Home Services (County DSS does NOT have custody of children)



Permanency Planning Services (Children in County DSS custody)



Non-Secure Custody Hearings frequently co-occur during Permanency Review Hearings.

- Juvenile court cases for child welfare interventions follow a prescribed path: petition, pre-adjudication hearing, adjudication hearing, disposition hearing, and permanency planning hearings
- Non-secure custody is a legal process when the County DSS agency requests custody of the children, or when a judge places a child into the County DSS agency's custody
- Not all DSS-involved cases involve non-secure custody
- Each hearing holds a different purpose
- Caseworkers begin the court process when they file a petition requesting court intervention on behalf of the County DSS to provide for the children's safety
- Caseworkers are then responsible for testifying and reporting to the court throughout the lifetime of the case

Notes

Handout: The Juvenile Court Process

	Purpose	What the Court Decides	Key Activities	Caseworker Focus
Petition	Start the court case	Whether the court has jurisdiction to hear the case	Petition filed by DSS	Start the court case
Pre-Adjudication	Ensure early legal protections and planning	Custody status and immediate safety	Review the need for nonsecure custody	Ensure early legal protections and planning
Adjudication	Determine whether allegations are true	Whether the child is abused, neglected, or dependent	Formal hearing (trial)	Determine whether allegations are true
Disposition	Decide what should happen next	Placement, services, and case plan	Court reviews reports	Decide what should happen next
Permanency Planning	Achieve a long-term, permanent outcome	Permanent plan (reunification, adoption, etc.)	Ongoing review of progress	Achieve long-term, permanent outcome

While the court process follows a prescribed path, there is nuance in the timeframes depending on when a child enters custody.

It is possible that DSS initiates court proceedings during In-Home Services by filing a juvenile petition without filing for non-secure custody. When this occurs, the process is followed as outlined. It is possible that during the disposition or at a subsequent review hearing, the court may order that the child enter foster care. When this occurs, the case continues in the established court process and the review hearings become “Permanency Planning Review Hearings.”

If the child enters foster care by way of a non-secure custody order, a separate court process is enacted. This process can occur at either the CPS Assessment or In-Home Services stage of the child welfare process.

Proceeding	Timeframe	Overview
Non-Secure Custody Order	Initiates entry into foster care	Accompanies a petition alleging abuse/neglect/dependency and immediate safety needs of the children
Initial Hearing/Non-Secure Custody Hearing	Within 7 days of non-secure. May continue up to 10 business days with the consent of the parent and GAL, if appointed	The main purpose of the initial hearing is to determine whether the child should be placed in substitute care or remain with or be returned to the parents pending further proceedings. The critical issue is whether measures can be put in place to ensure the child's safety.
Second Hearing on Continued Non-Secure Custody	Within 7 business days of the initial non-secure hearing	Determine the need for continued non-secure custody. Inquiry as to the location of parents, engagement of relatives to provide placement, the safety of children who remain in the removal parents' home, MEPA, and ICWA
Subsequent Non-Secure Custody Hearings	Occur at least every 30 calendar days after the second hearing until the dispositional hearing Subsequent hearings can be waived only with the consent of the parents and GAL.	Same as the second hearing outlined above.

Handout: Indian Child Welfare Act Requirements

The Indian Child Welfare Act: A Family's Guide

Answers to Your Questions About ICWA

A publication of the National Indian Child Welfare Association

This brochure is not a substitute for legal counsel. You should always contact a lawyer for advice on any legal matter relating to ICWA or child custody issues.

WHAT IS ICWA AND WHY WAS IT PASSED?

"ICWA" stands for the Indian Child Welfare Act, which is a federal law passed in 1978. ICWA was passed in response to the alarmingly high number of Indian children being removed from their homes by both public and private agencies. The intent of Congress under ICWA was to "protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families" (25 U.S.C. § 1902). ICWA sets federal requirements that apply to state foster care, guardianship, termination of parental rights, and adoption proceedings involving an Indian child who is a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized tribe. You can ask your caseworker or lawyer to find out what court proceedings are coming up for your family.

HOW DOES ICWA PROTECT AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES?

When ICWA applies to an Indian child's case, the child's tribe and parents or Indian custodian have an opportunity to be involved in decisions affecting services and placement decisions for the child. A tribe or a parent can also petition to transfer the case to the tribal court of the tribe of which the child is a member or eligible for membership.

ICWA has federal requirements for states regarding removal and placement of Indian children in foster care, guardianship, or adoptive homes and allows the child's tribe to intervene in the case (e.g., participate in court proceedings, access court information, share information with the court).

Note: The terms "Indian" and "American Indian/Alaska Native" are used interchangeably throughout this document. Additionally, the term "tribe" includes all federally recognized Alaska Native villages and tribes located in the United States.

WHO IS COVERED BY ICWA?

Indian children involved in state foster care, guardianship, termination of parental rights, or adoptive proceedings

are covered by ICWA. This includes status offenses involving a juvenile offense that would not be considered a criminal violation if committed by an adult (e.g., truancy, incorrigibility). A person may define themselves as Indian, but in order for ICWA to apply, the involved child must be an Indian child as defined by the law.

ICWA defines an ICWA eligible child as:

- Unmarried;
- Under age 18; and
- Either a member of an Indian tribe OR is eligible for membership in an Indian tribe and is the biological child of a member of an Indian tribe (25 U.S.C. § 1903).

Only the child's tribe can determine the child's eligibility for membership in their tribe.

ICWA does not apply to:

- Custody disputes between parents (e.g., divorce proceedings or cases determining which parent has custody of a child);
- Juvenile delinquency proceedings (e.g., proceedings involving a criminal violation by a juvenile that would also be a violation if the juvenile were an adult); or
- Cases in tribal court.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS ELIGIBLE FOR MEMBERSHIP IN A TRIBE?

All tribes have the right to determine who is a citizen or member of their tribe, and different tribes have different requirements for eligibility. In order to understand these requirements for the child's tribe, please contact the tribe's enrollment office. For more information on how to contact the child's tribe, please visit the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) website at www.bia.gov/bia/ojs/dhs/icwa.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS INDIAN BUT IS NOT A MEMBER OF A FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBE?

If your child does not meet the definition of "Indian child" outlined in ICWA (see response to the question "Who is covered by ICWA?" above), ICWA would not apply to your child's case. Other federal and state laws, however, may provide other protections, including support for placing your child with relatives and the opportunity to be heard in court. Ask your attorney or caseworker about these laws.

WHAT CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD BE MADE IN AN ICWA CASE?

Caseworkers must make several considerations when handling an ICWA case, including:

1. Providing active efforts to the family (see section on "What are active efforts?" below);
2. Finding a placement that fits the ICWA placement preferences;
3. Notifying the child's tribe and the child's parents or Indian custodian of the child custody proceeding; and
4. Working actively to involve the child's tribe and the child's parents in the proceedings.

Your caseworker should be able to explain your rights under ICWA and any other case actions for you.

WHAT ARE ACTIVE EFFORTS?

States are required to provide active efforts to families of Indian children, and the court will be asked to determine whether active efforts have been made. Under the federal regulations, "active efforts" mean the active and engaging, thorough, and timely efforts intended primarily to maintain or reunite an Indian child with his or her family. They also address the unique culture of the Indian child and family and extended family (25 C.F.R. § 23.2). The federal regulations give 11 examples of active efforts, including providing culturally appropriate services, actively engaging and consulting with the Indian child's extended family and community (e.g., inviting them to family team meetings, involving them in the development of the case plan), and supporting regular visitation with the parents.

ICWA mandates the state make active efforts in every ICWA case in two areas:

1. To provide services to the family to prevent removal of an Indian child from his or her parent or Indian custodian, and
2. To reunify an Indian child with his or her parent or Indian custodian after removal.

A cornerstone of active efforts is active and early participation and consultation with the child's tribe in all case planning decisions. Additionally, active efforts are different from "reasonable efforts."

For example, reasonable efforts might be only a referral for services, but active efforts would be to arrange for culturally appropriate services and help families overcome obstacles (e.g., transportation, finances, childcare, etc.) in order to engage in those services. ICWA and the federal regulations (25 C.F.R. Part 23) apply whether or not the child's tribe is involved in the child custody proceedings.

HOW DOES ICWA APPLY TO FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS?

ICWA requires that any Indian child placed in foster care be placed according to ICWA's foster care placement preferences. ICWA defines foster care as any foster care, guardianship, or institutional/residential placement that is temporary and the parent cannot have their child returned upon demand.

The foster care placement preferences are:

1. a member of the Indian child's extended family,
2. a foster home licensed or approved by the Indian child's tribe,
3. an Indian foster home licensed or approved by a non-Indian authority (state), and
4. an institution approved by the Indian child's tribe.

While the Indian child's tribe may assist the state in locating a placement preference home, it is the responsibility of the state to identify and secure the placement preference home.

HOW DOES ICWA APPLY TO VOLUNTARY ADOPTIONS?

ICWA requires that in a voluntary adoption of an Indian child, the parent's or Indian custodian's consent to the adoptive placement must be executed in writing and provided before a judge to be valid. This means the consent must be performed in front of the state court judge. The judge must certify that the terms and consequences of the consent were fully explained and understood by the parent(s) or Indian custodian. The consent will not be valid if given sooner than 11 days after the birth of the child. The parent(s) or Indian custodian may withdraw their consent prior to the termination of their parental rights for any reason, and the child shall then be returned to them.

ICWA also requires that an Indian child placed for adoption be placed within ICWA's adoptive placement preferences, which are:

1. a member of the Indian child's extended family,
2. a member of the Indian child's tribe, or
3. another Indian family.

These requirements help ensure that parents have good information that can inform their decision to place their child for adoption and to consider the lifelong importance of the child's connection to their tribe and tribal culture. If you are involved in a voluntary adoption and don't feel that ICWA's requirements are being complied with, contact the Indian child's tribe or an attorney.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT IF YOU FEEL THAT YOUR RIGHTS UNDER ICWA ARE BEING IGNORED?

If you feel that ICWA is not being applied correctly in your child's case, you should contact the following people as soon as possible:

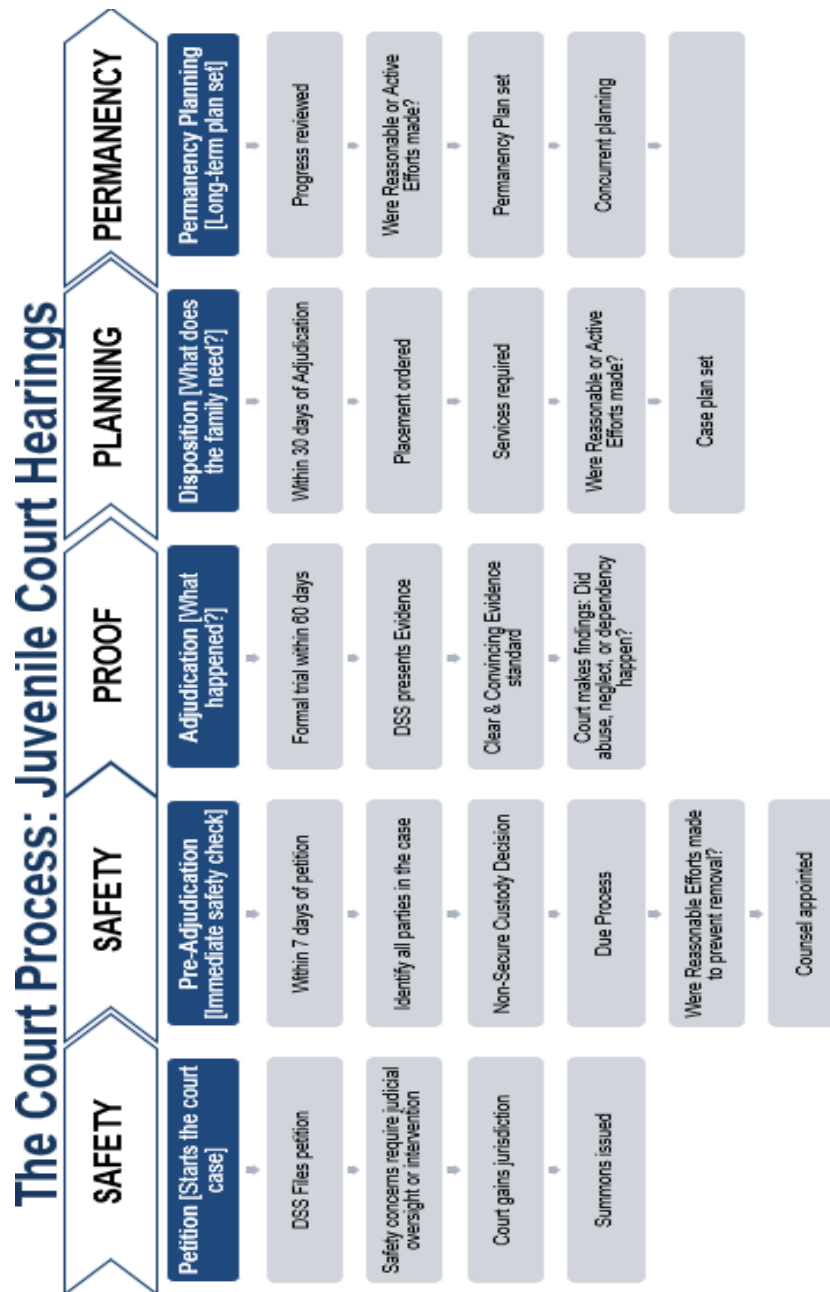
- A lawyer (with Indian law experience preferred)
- The child's tribe (ICWA tribal contacts are listed on the BIA website, www.bia.gov/bia/ois/dhs/icwa)

You may also contact your caseworker's supervisor or a state ombudsman liaison that hears complaints about state child welfare cases. Ask your caseworker or caseworker's supervisor for information regarding a state ombudsman or related position that handles complaints. The court may order additional hearings, different services, or a different placement if it decides that ICWA is not being applied correctly.

For more information on ICWA and a list of Frequently Asked Questions, visit us online at: www.nicwa.org.

The Court Process: Juvenile Court Hearings

- Caseworkers must be familiar with what happens at and the purpose of each hearing



Handout: Filing a Petition

What Happens When a Petition Is Filed:

Filing a petition starts the court case. It tells the court what is happening, explains why intervention is needed, and begins the legal process to determine what should happen next for the child and family.

Legal Start of the Case

- The petition is the formal legal document that begins the court case
- Filing the petition brings the case under court jurisdiction

Who Files the Petition

- Only the county Department of Social Services (DSS) can file the petition
- The DSS director or authorized representative initiates the case

When a Petition Is Filed

- Filed after DSS completes an assessment and determines court action is needed
- Used when safety concerns require judicial oversight or intervention

Required Information in the Petition

- Identifies the child and all parties (names, addresses, and basic details)
- Includes factual allegations of abuse, neglect, or dependency
- Provides information sufficient for the court to exercise jurisdiction

Notice to Parties

- Petition works with a summons to notify parents and other parties
- Ensures all parties understand the allegations and court involvement

Framing the Case

- Defines the issues the court will review at adjudication
- Sets the scope of the legal case moving forward

Triggering Court Action

- Leads to scheduling of hearings (custody, adjudication, and beyond)
- Moves the case from agency involvement to court oversight

Legal Notes

The petition supports fairness and due process by clearly stating the concerns and parties involved.

Handout: Pre-Adjudication Hearing

Purpose: This hearing prepares the case for adjudication. The court addresses procedural and legal readiness, not the merits of the allegations. The pre-adjudication hearing is a readiness check. It ensures all legal, procedural, and logistical requirements are met so the adjudicatory hearing can proceed fairly and efficiently.

A Pre-Adjudication Hearing must be held within 7 days of the filing of the petition.

What the Court Must Review

Case Setup and Parties

- Identify all parties in the case
- Determine paternity or efforts to establish paternity
- Identify and locate any missing parents
- Ask if ICWA applies [Determine if the child is an “Indian Child”]

Legal Representation

- Confirm or release provisional counsel
- Appoint guardian ad litem, if needed

Petition Validity

- Confirm the petition is properly verified and invokes jurisdiction

Notice and Due Process

- Verify service of process and notice requirements are met

Relative and Placement Options

- Confirm relatives and placement resources are identified and notified

Pretrial Motions

- Appointment of guardian ad litem
- Discovery motions
- Amendment of petition
- Requests to continue the adjudication hearing

Other Preliminary Matters

- Address any additional issues appropriately before adjudication

When DSS has requested Non-Secure Custody, the Non-Secure Custody hearing may be held concurrently [

- Determine if the child should be placed into DSS County non-secure custody
- Determine that DSS has made reasonable efforts (or Active efforts for ICWA cases) to prevent removal or that an immediate emergency existed that precluded reasonable efforts

Handout: Adjudication Hearing

Purpose: This hearing is the trial phase, where the court determines whether the allegations in the petition are proven by clear and convincing evidence. The adjudication hearing is the trial. The judge reviews the evidence, applies a high standard of proof, and decides whether the child meets the legal definition of abuse, neglect, or dependency.

The Adjudication Hearing must be held within 60 days of the filing of the petition.

What Happens at the Adjudication Hearing

Formal Court Hearing (Trial)

- Judge conducts a formal hearing on the allegations in the petition
- Court ensures due process rights for parents and the child

Presentation of Evidence

- Witness testimony, reports, and documents are presented
- Parties may enter stipulations (agreements on facts)

Standard of Proof

- Allegations must be proven by clear and convincing evidence

Judicial Decision

- Judge determines whether abuse, neglect, or dependency is proven
- If proven, the child is adjudicated abused, neglected, or dependent
- If not proven, the court dismisses the petition

Written Court Order

- Court issues written findings of fact and conclusions of law
- Order is typically entered within 30 days

Additional Notes

- If the petition is dismissed, the child must be returned to the parent or custodian if in nonsecure custody.
- If adjudicated, the case moves to disposition for planning and services.

What This Hearing Does NOT Do

- Does not decide long-term placement or services (handled at disposition).
- Does not focus on case planning or progress updates.

Handout: Disposition Hearing

Purpose: This hearing determines what should happen next for the child and family after adjudication, based on the child's needs and best interests. The disposition hearing is the planning phase. The judge reviews the child's needs, decides where the child will live, orders services for the family, and sets the direction for the case moving forward.

A Disposition Hearing may take place immediately after the Adjudication Hearing, and no more than 30 days after Adjudication.

What Happens at the Hearing

Timing and Purpose

- Held immediately after adjudication and completed within 30 days
- Focus shifts from what happened to what the child and family need

Informal Court Process

- Hearing may be less formal than a trial
- Court reviews reports, records, and other relevant information

Presentation of Information

- Parents, caregivers, and the juvenile may present evidence
- Parties may recommend what they believe is in the child's best interests

Assessment of Needs

- Court determines the child's safety, placement, and service needs
- Considers family strengths, risks, and supports

Verification of Family Information

- Confirms parent identity, location, and paternity status
- Ensures relatives and placement resources are identified and notified

Court Orders (Disposition)

- May order in-home supervision or services
- May place the child with a parent, relative, or suitable person
- May place the child in DSS non-secure custody

Parent Requirements and Services

- Court may order parents to participate in treatment or services
- Court may require actions to address conditions that brought the case to court

Reunification Planning

- Determines whether reasonable efforts for reunification are required or should stop based on specific findings
- Court determines whether reunification efforts are required
- In some cases, reunification may not be required based on findings

Handout: Permanency Planning Hearing

Purpose: This hearing reviews case progress and establishes or updates the permanent plan to achieve a safe, stable, and permanent home for the child when the child is not in the custody of a parent. The permanency planning hearing keeps the case moving toward a permanent outcome. The judge reviews progress, evaluates placement, updates the permanent plan, and decides whether reunification or another permanency option should be pursued.

Permanency Planning Hearings must be held within 90 days of the initial dispositional hearing and thereafter at least every 6 months for the lifetime of the case.

What Happens at the Hearing

Information from Key Participants

- Court hears from parents, the juvenile (age 12+), caregivers, DSS, and guardian ad litem
- Placement providers may address the court about the child's well-being
- Determines if reasonable efforts are being made

Flexible Review of Information

- Court may consider reports, testimony, and other relevant information
- Evidence rules are flexible to allow a full understanding of the case

Review of Progress and Services

- Court reviews services provided to support reunification or permanency
- Evaluates whether services are appropriate and effective
- At each permanency planning (or review) hearing, the court must consider if DSS made reasonable efforts to reunite the juvenile with a parent

Assessment of Placement and Safety

- Court determines if the current placement is safe and appropriate
- Considers the child's well-being and stability

Permanent Plan Decisions

- Court establishes or updates the permanent plan
- Plans may include reunification, adoption, guardianship, or custody with a relative

Concurrent Planning

- Court may set a primary and secondary permanent plan
- Reunification remains a plan unless specifically eliminated

Key Permanency Determinations

- Court decides if the child can safely return home
- May determine whether to continue reunification, move to another permanency option, or consider whether termination of parental rights is needed

Handout: Termination of Parental Rights

The Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights process follows a similar court process outlined above.

Proceeding	Timeframe	Overview
TPR Petition	Initiates TPR proceedings Within 60 days of the hearing setting adoption as the permanent plan If a child has been in out-of-home placement for 12 of the most recent 22 months if no exception exists	Outlines reasonable efforts to reunify with parents, continuation of safety threats, and the ways in which TPR is in the best interest of the child.
TPR Hearing	No later than 90 days from filing the petition or motion	A termination of parental rights (TPR) hearing is divided into two stages, adjudication and disposition. At adjudication, the party requesting TPR must prove to the judge by clear and convincing evidence that grounds exist for termination. If the judge decides that grounds do not exist, the judge will dismiss the case. If the judge decides that the grounds do exist, the judge moves to the disposition stage and must decide whether TPR is in the child's best interest.
Post TPR Hearing	Within 6 months after the TPR order has been entered and ongoing every 6 months thereafter	Ensure that every reasonable effort is being made to finalize the permanent plan for the child.

Foster Care 18-21 Program

When a young adult enters the Foster Care 18-21 program by signing a Voluntary Placement Agreement (DSS-597), court reviews continue. The initial court review hearing occurs within 90 days of signing the VPA, and additional hearings may be held at the court's discretion, though the young adult or DSS may request them at any time. No GAL is appointed for Foster Care 18-21 cases.

When the child or children involved in the case are determined to be an "Indian Child" under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), the case will follow the same process and have additional requirements. There are specific requirements for notification and inclusion of the child's Tribe and Tribal court, for active efforts rather than reasonable efforts, and placement that aligns with the child's Tribe's placement preferences.

Activity: The Court Process: Juvenile Court Hearings

What to do:

- Refer to the “Juvenile Court Process” handouts earlier in this section
- Each group will be assigned one hearing type:
 - Pre-Adjudication (Initial)
 - Adjudication
 - Disposition
 - Permanency
- Complete the “Juvenile Court Hearings” Worksheet on the following pages
- Spend five minutes on the Understanding the Hearing section
- When five minutes are up, move to the Prepare for the Hearing section
- Complete the section Prepare for the Hearing for your assigned hearing type
- Answer the small group discussion questions
- Prepare to share your group's:
 - 1-minute overview
 - Top five preparation actions
 - One common mistake

Activity Worksheet: Juvenile Court Hearings

My group's assigned hearing type:

Understanding the Hearing

Your group will become the experts for your assigned hearing type. Use the following prompts to learn about your assigned hearing:

What is the purpose of this hearing?

What decisions will the court make at this hearing?

What information matters most at this hearing?

Prepare for the Hearing

Create two lists to develop practical, real-world preparation steps for your assigned hearing. Use the space below for notes and record your lists on a flipchart paper.

Caseworker Preparation	Practice Quality Indicators

Small Group Discussion Questions

What must be documented?

What might the judge ask?

What weakens your case if missing?

What would a supervisor expect?

Guardian ad Litem Program

- The Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is a key partner who works to promote safety, permanency, and well-being for the children they are assigned
- GALs offer a unique responsibility in that they are court-appointed and are mandated to report to the court the wishes and preferences of the child they represent
- GALs have a variety of responsibilities, including:
 - Investigating facts, the needs of the child, and available resources
 - Settlement of disputed issues as appropriate
 - Can offer evidence and examine witnesses at adjudication
 - Explore options with the court at the dispositional hearing
 - Conduct follow-up investigations to ensure the orders of the court are properly executed
 - Report the status of the child's needs to the court
 - Protect and promote the best interests of the child
- It is critical that DSS and the GAL collaborate by communicating their perspectives with each other, their intentions, and their recommendations prior to court, in an effort to resolve any areas of disagreement prior to any court hearing

How have you experienced GAL volunteers effectively or productively carrying out their duties?

What about their duties have been eye-opening to you?

What will you do to actively collaborate with GAL volunteers?

Partnership with Families and the Court



- Juvenile court utilizes various experts to understand children and their families better, why events occurred that necessitated court intervention, and how to prevent recurrence
- Juvenile courts attempt to look beyond individual and family deficits to understand the family and child as a whole and to make well-informed decisions to address needs that impact safety
- Unique to the juvenile court are the frequent reviews of parents and the assessment of agency performance
- Partnership between child welfare, families, and the court is possible, yet often characterized as adversarial
- Practices that reduce animosity are based on North Carolina's core values of family-centered, trauma-informed, safety-focused care
- Caseworkers should work with families to clearly know what to expect in court and to prepare families for court, so they are not surprised by DSS recommendations or information
 - This includes what to wear, how to behave, what to expect, who the other professionals in the courtroom will include, and holding transparent conversations with parents

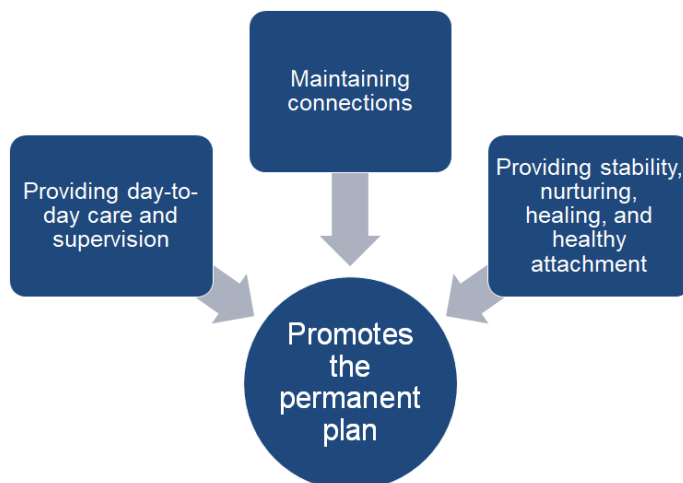
What had you not considered about your power before now?

How might your role in preparing families for court aid in your relationship with them?

What might you need to pay attention to so you mitigate bias in your court reports?

Placement Resource

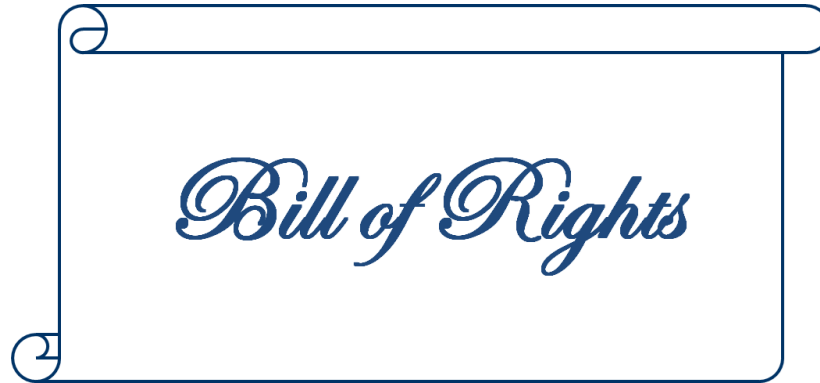
Supporting the Permanent Plan



- Placement providers are pivotal CFT members and play a critical role in supporting permanency
- Placement providers' roles go beyond daily support to the child, and include supporting the family as a whole, including:
 - Maintaining connections between the child and family, the child's community, and their social groups

Notes

Foster Parents' Bill of Rights



- The Foster Parent Bill of Rights seeks to ensure that foster parents are treated with dignity, respect, and trust as they care for children
- The Foster Parent Bill of Rights includes expectations for county child welfare agencies to provide all known and relevant information that supports foster parents to better care for the children in their care, including:
 - Emergency contact information for the child welfare agency
 - Consultation with foster parents regarding various meetings, appointments, visitations they may need to participate in, attend, or transport a child to attend
 - Reasonable notice of removal or inclusion in transition plans
 - Information regarding any professionals working with the child
- Placement providers hold valuable information and should be prioritized when it comes to meetings, home visits, therapy, or other meetings where feedback about the child is discussed
- 2025 legislation extended the right to file a petition or motion for termination of parental rights to relatives and non-relative kin placement providers

What are some of the important meetings where a placement provider's contribution is necessary?

What might make it challenging to ensure the rights of foster parents are consistently met?

What might you do to mitigate those challenges?

Handout: North Carolina Foster Parents' Bill of Rights

§ 131D-10.9C. Foster parents' Bill of Rights.

(a) The State recognizes the importance of foster parents in the vital role of supporting children and families experiencing foster care. When children are removed from their parents or legal guardians, families are almost immediately integrated into a team, including child welfare workers, resource parents, a guardian ad litem, attorneys, and others who are working together to address the issues leading to the foster care.

(b) In an effort to ensure that foster parents are treated with dignity, respect, and trust in their work for the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, with this team, the State supports and promotes the following for foster parents in the provision of foster care:

(1) To serve as a respected member of the child welfare team. Foster parents will also honor children placed in their homes in accordance with G.S. 131D-10.1.

(2) To receive information about the responsibilities of foster parents and access to support services, including all of the following:

a. Required training and resources to ensure preparedness for caring for children experiencing loss and trauma.

b. Access to the Division of Social Services and licensing agency policies, including traveling with children in- and out-of-state, family visits and time, supervised and unsupervised, complaint and grievance policies, and confidentiality.

c. Any known information to help better care for children, including health and behavioral health history, disability, exposure to trauma, and educational needs.

d. Additional or necessary information that the county department of social services has that may be relevant to the care of the child when the child is placed with the foster parents.

e. Advance notice of scheduled meetings and appointments regarding case planning and care of the child.

f. Reasonable notice, subject to the circumstances of each particular case, to a foster parent with regard to the removal of a child from the foster home.

g. Participation in transition planning when it is in the best interest of the child. 24/7 emergency contact information in the event of crisis or emergency.

h. Referral to resources for dealing with loss and separation when children return home to their parents.

(3) Be notified of any costs or expenses that may be eligible for reimbursement.

(4) Have timely allocation of resources, including submission of child care vouchers and a monthly stipend that meets or exceeds the rate established by the Division of Social Services.

(5) Receive notice of hearings regarding the child placed in the foster home and to be heard in court, either verbally or in writing, as provided for in G.S. 7B-906.1.

(6) Receive timely information pertinent to the day-to-day care of the child, including educational and health needs.

- (7) Have input in court and be included as a valued member of the child's team, including the right to be informed by the clerk of court of periodic reviews of the juvenile case of a child in foster care at least 15 days before each review, and the right to provide input, verbal or written, during periodic reviews of any Page 1 G.S. 131D-10.9C
 - (8) information that may be relevant to a child's best interests so that the court may use that information in forming its opinion on the case. Provide input to, advocate for, and seek out support from the supervising agency without fear of reprisal, including the right to request respite as needed or to request a break between placements.
 - (9) Be allowed reasonable opportunities to be consulted with and considered in the scheduling of home visits, therapies, and other meetings related to the child that the foster or resource parents are allowed or required to attend.
 - (10) Request a change in licensing workers.
 - (11) Be considered as prospective adoptive placement after a termination of parental rights hearing or relinquishment pursuant to G.S. 7B-1112.1.
 - (12) Utilize the reasonable and prudent parent standard in determining whether a foster parent can allow a child in the foster parent's care to participate in educational field trips and extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities. This standard is characterized by careful and thoughtful parental decision-making that is intended to maintain a child's health, safety, and best interest while encouraging the child's social, emotional, and developmental growth.
 - (13) Request a shared parenting agreement that includes clear expectations and appropriate boundaries for all parties.
 - (14) Request contact information be kept confidential by the supervising agency when safety concerns are present.
- (c) A violation of this Bill of Rights shall not be construed to create a cause of action under this section against the State, the Department of Health and Human Services, private supervising agencies, local county departments of social services, or an entity providing foster care pursuant to this Article. Nothing in this Bill of Rights shall override existing law or administrative rule. (2021-144, s. 1.)

Updates to this Bill of Rights were made in Session Law 2025-16, H.B. 612, as follows:

SECTION 1.5. G.S. 7B-401.1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 7B-401.1. Parties.

(h) Intervention. – Except as provided in G.S. 7B-1103(b) and subsections (e1) and subsection (e2) of this section, the court shall not allow intervention by a person who is not the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, but custodian. The court may allow intervention by (i) a current caretaker or current foster parent, as defined in G.S. 131D-10.2(9a), providing care for the juvenile only if the current caretaker or current foster parent has authority to file a petition to terminate the parental rights of the juvenile's parents under G.S. 7B-1103, or (ii) another county department of social services that has an interest in the proceeding. This section shall not prohibit the court from consolidating a juvenile proceeding with a civil action or claim for custody pursuant to G.S. 7B-200."

Notes

Permanency Planning with the Family

Planning

Self-Care Health Plan Check-In

Activity: Self-Care Health Plan Check-In

What to do:

- Review and complete the Self-Care Health Plan worksheet handed out by the training facilitator

Notes

Planning Core Activities



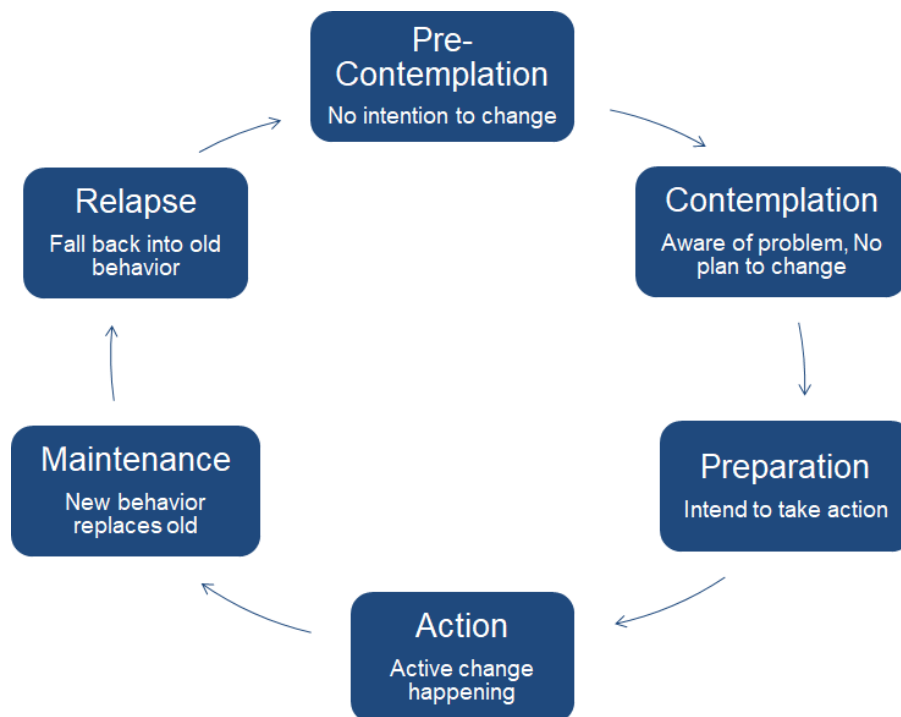
- Planning involves working with families, communities, tribes, and team members to set goals and strategies based on ongoing assessment of safety, risk, strengths, and needs
- Plans are reviewed regularly for progress and adjustments
- There are four core activities within the Planning function:
 - Synthesizing and integrating current and previous assessment information and family history to inform plans
 - Preparing families for the teaming and planning process
 - Conducting Child and Family Team meetings with children, youth, and families
 - Completing and revising behaviorally based case plans
- Families are actively involved in understanding assessments and shaping plans
- Practitioners share information openly and allow families to correct inaccuracies, ensuring plans reflect their input
- Plans should address root causes, focus on achievable goals, and demonstrate family participation rather than using generic templates

What has your experience been with facilitating or participating in Child and Family Teams, also called CFTs?

What do you think it means to “synthesize and integrate current and previous assessment information and family history to inform plans?”

Planning for Change

Stages of Change



- Safety planning focuses on addressing harm, supporting accountability and repair, and reducing the risk of future maltreatment
- Caseworkers facilitate a change process that promotes safety while helping families remain connected
- The change process varies for each family and individual
- Understanding this dynamic cycle helps practitioners show empathy, adjust support during setbacks, and set realistic expectations
- Based on the Stages of Change Model:
 - Precontemplation: No intent to change; unaware of problem
 - Contemplation: Aware of the problem; no commitment yet
 - Preparation: Intent to act; requires buy-in and confidence
 - Action: Active behavior modification
 - Maintenance: Sustained change; risk of relapse
 - Relapse: Return to old behaviors; may cycle back to earlier stages
- Caseworkers should tailor engagement and support each stage of change. Different moments in the journey require different strategies, skills, and levels of accountability

Activity: Stages of Change

What to do:

- Think of a time when you were forced to change
- It could be a pleasant change, like becoming an older sibling or becoming a parent, or an unpleasant change, like the death of a parent, spouse, sibling, or child, or a health diagnosis causing a great change in your daily life, diet, or habits.
- Share with your partner:
 - The change you were forced to make
 - How you experienced the stages of change.
 - What and who was most helpful to you in making the change
 - What or who was least helpful in supporting the change

What helped you move into action when you experienced change?**How does this activity relate to the experiences of families involved with Permanency Planning services?**

Ambivalence

Ambivalence is predictable and natural

Emotional reaction to feeling forced to change

Occurs as a response to feeling vulnerable, out of control, or threatened

Many caregivers in the families you serve will experience ambivalence

- Ambivalence is natural
 - People often feel both a desire to change and resistance to change
 - This conflict is a normal emotional response to fear, loss, or difficulty associated with change
- Change is hard
 - Common reasons include fear of losing something, feeling powerless, lack of coping skills, absence of support, and the challenge of overcoming addiction
- Parents/Caregivers may want to keep children safe but struggle with the painful steps required for change.
- Trauma, denial, and maladaptive coping behaviors often intensify ambivalence
- Signs of ambivalence are when words and actions conflict, lack of progress or inconsistent progress, hostility, defensiveness, or rationalization
- Caseworkers should validate emotions, highlight observed struggles, and maintain empathy while promoting accountability
- Ambivalence is common in Permanency Planning services and should be anticipated daily.

Notes

Activity Worksheet: Ambivalence

Pairs Activity Discussion Questions

What are some examples that you have seen or felt of ambivalence?

Why do you think we struggle to change?

In families who are involved with child protective services, when might their feelings of ambivalence be at their highest?

How will you know when you are encountering ambivalence?

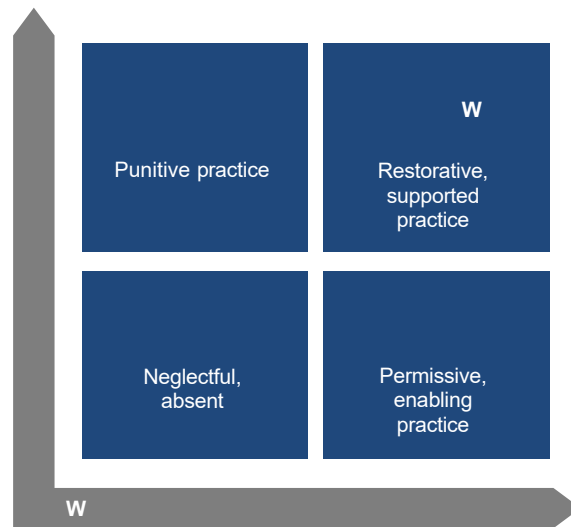
What have you seen of ambivalence from caretakers or parents?

How did you, as the child welfare caseworker, respond?

How often do you think you will encounter ambivalence in your work with children and families?

What is one thing you want to remember to do or think of when you encounter ambivalence?

Accountability and Support



- Accountability and support are essential for facilitating behavioral change in families
- Accountability means being responsible for actions, setting limits, and applying consequences
 - Caseworkers support accountability by helping parents understand harm, updating plans, and using measures like TSP or custody when necessary
- Support involves engagement, encouragement, collaboration, clear communication of expectations, highlighting progress and working alongside families
- The Accountability–Support Continuum includes the following:
 - Low Accountability + Low Support = Neglectful Practice
 - High Accountability + Low Support = Punitive Practice
 - Low Accountability + High Support = Permissive Practice
 - High Accountability + High Support = Restorative Practice

Restorative Practice is Ideal. Most change occurs when caseworkers “do with” families, balancing high accountability and high support. This approach requires mutual commitment and aims to help families become self-sufficient.

What helped you make or sustain a difficult change in your own life?

What does “high accountability and high support” look like in permanency planning practice?

What might punitive, permissive, or neglectful practice look like in a case planning situation?

How can a caseworker hold a parent accountable without increasing shame, defensiveness, or disengagement?

What is one strategy you can use to “do with” families while still being clear about safety concerns, expectations, and next steps?

Engaging Families in Case Planning

Engaging Families in the Case Planning Process

- The initial Permanency Planning Family Case Plan (PPFCP) must be developed during a CFT meeting
- At a minimum, case planning requires the following parties to be involved:
 - All parents, including incarcerated parents and non-resident parents
 - Children
 - Any other significant family member
- When parents are not present, the case plan must still be completed to meet federal case planning requirements
 - In these circumstances, it is not considered a CFT
 - Document diligent efforts to engage the parents and continue updating the child's safety, well-being, and permanency needs

Who do you think is required to be engaged in the permanency planning process?

Principles of Partnership

Principles of Partnership

- Everyone desires respect
- Everyone needs to be heard
- Everyone has strengths
- Judgments can wait
- Partners share power
- Partnership is a process

Permanency Planning Values

- Family voice and choice
- Shared power
- Respect for each parent's role
- Relational and identity permanence
- Full disclosure and transparency
- Behaviorally specific planning that families can understand and act on

- When parents are engaged and have a significant role in case planning, they are more motivated to actively commit to achieving the case plan
- The Principles of Partnership include:
 - Everyone deserves respect
 - Everyone needs to be heard
 - Everyone has strengths
 - Judgments can wait
 - Partners share power
 - Partnership is a process

Notes

Activity: Principles of Partnership

What to Do:

- Each group will be assigned one of the following roles:
 - Resident parent
 - Non-resident parent
 - Incarcerated parent
 - Step-parent
 - Partner who lives with the parent
- Consider the principles of partnership and then:
 - Identify strategies you would use to engage and partner with your assigned parent type
 - Identify and discuss what considerations need to be made for partnering with your assigned role
 - Identify one strategy that supports engagement
 - Identify one permanency value the strategy reflects
- Be prepared to share with the larger group

What was your assigned role?**Which principle of partnership would you use to engage and partner with this person?****What strategies would you use to engage this person?**

What considerations need to be made for partnering with your assigned role?

Identify one strategy that supports engagement.

Identify one permanency planning value that the strategy reflects.

Full Disclosure

Information
provided to the
family by the child
welfare agency
regarding

- the steps in the intervention process,
- the requirements of the case plan,
- the expectations of the family,
- the consequences if the family does not fulfill the expectations,
- and the rights of the parents to ensure that the family completely understands the process.

- Full disclosure means openly sharing information about the child welfare process, case plan expectations, rights, and potential outcomes
- Transparency helps families understand their case and participate meaningfully in planning and decision-making
- Honest conversations about permanency options, even difficult ones, build trust and reduce surprises
- Full disclosure should occur throughout the life of the case, not just at the beginning

How is full disclosure a component of engaging families in the case planning process?

What are the consequences of not fully disclosing the case planning process?

What challenges might you have to overcome to ensure full disclosure occurs?

Permanency Planning with Special Populations

Key Factors Impacting Families



Notes

Activity Worksheet: Key Factors Impacting Families

What to do:

- With your group, create a poster that shares case planning considerations specific to your assigned key factor
- The goal is not to identify everything possible, but rather to begin formulating ideas that will help support families who are experiencing the identified key factor

Specific policy requirements related to this factor:**Important distinctions to make in planning:**

Name stereotypes or biases that impact planning around this factor:

Common recovery behaviors or services that may be associated with this factor:

List considerations for assessing behavior change regarding this factor when children are placed out of the home:

Permanency Planning Family Case Plan

Family Strengths and Needs Assessment

NC Family Strengths and Needs Assessment



- The purpose of the FSNA is to identify and prioritize the needs of a family to be addressed in a case plan
- The FSNA informs case planning over time and supports understanding the family's needs in relation to danger and risk

Notes

Activity: FSNA Knowledge Check: True or False?

Circle or mark your response to each statement.

True	False	All Permanency Planning cases require completion of an FSNA.
True	False	FSNA is completed for all parents and caretakers, including non-resident parents.
True	False	The Child Strengths & Needs Assessment is only completed for children in foster care with an identified medical or mental health diagnosis.
True	False	The initial FSNA is completed by the Permanency Planning caseworker at case transfer.
True	False	The FSNA is updated every 60 days throughout the life of a Permanency Planning case.
True	False	The purpose of the FSNA is to identify and prioritize the needs of caretakers and children for inclusion in the PPFCP.

Notes

Permanency Planning Family Case Plan (PPFCP)

Components of the PPFCP

The PPFCP is a structured document that covers a range of components that outline the path to permanence. Components include:

- Family information
- Family strengths and supports
- Reasonable Efforts to prevent removal
- Objectives and behavior changes to address identified needs and barriers
- Objectives to address barriers to identified Permanency Plans
- Parents' well-being and additional needs
- Child/youth specific plan, well-being needs, and review
- Court-ordered services and recommendations for parent/child/youth
- Placement provider
- Signatures

The signatures section provides attendance documentation for those present at the CFT meeting, PPRT, or other PPFCP meetings and includes a confidentiality statement and agreement.

Notes

Permanency Planning Family Case Plan Bulletin

Activity: PPFCP Bulletin

What to Do:

- With your partner or small groups, create a brochure, flyer, or bulletin that could be given to families to give an overview of the PPFCP
- The training facilitator will give each pair or small group a piece of paper and drawing materials to create a brochure, flyer, or bulletin
- Include the following information:
 - Purpose and definition of PPFCP
 - Policy requirements, such as the components, timeframes, and who is included
 - Connection to safety, permanency, and well-being
 - Impact on families
 - Why families should be involved in the process
- Use the following resources to create your bulletin:
 - Policy
 - The PPFCP, DSS-5240
 - Professional experience
 - Credible internet resources

Notes

Permanency Planning Family Case Plan Objectives

Case Plan Objectives and Behavior Changes to Address Identified Needs	Description of Behaviors of Concern & Desired Outcome	Activities Related to Identified Needs
• Permanency Plan- primary and secondary • Prioritized Needs from FSNA	• What has happened? • What we worry will happen next? • How will we know if the worry is resolved?	• Services to be offered or provided to address the need • Details of service provision

- It is important that the family understands the reason for child welfare involvement and what must be addressed to safely reunify with their child(ren)
- The objectives/goals and activities must be developed in partnership with the family and written in the family's terms
- The priority needs are identified from the most recent FSNA
- For each need, describe the behaviors of concern:
 - Document what has already happened using a harm statement
 - Document what DSS is worried about will happen next using a worry statement
 - For the objective/Desired behavior, document how DSS will know if the worry is resolved using a goal statement
- Activities related to the identified need must be behaviorally specific and clearly describe observable actions
 - Services to be offered or provided to address the need
 - Specifics of service provision

When completing the Permanency Planning Family Case Plan (PPFCP), it is essential to follow the instructions to ensure alignment with best practices.

Each objective on the PPFCP should be tied to a primary or secondary permanency plan identified for the child(ren) by the court, as well as to the prioritized need from the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA).

It is important to ensure the family understands the reason for child welfare involvement and what must be addressed to safely reunify with their child/children. To ensure clarity, using harm, worry, and goal statements throughout the PPFCP is best practice.

Notes

SMART goals in the Case Plan



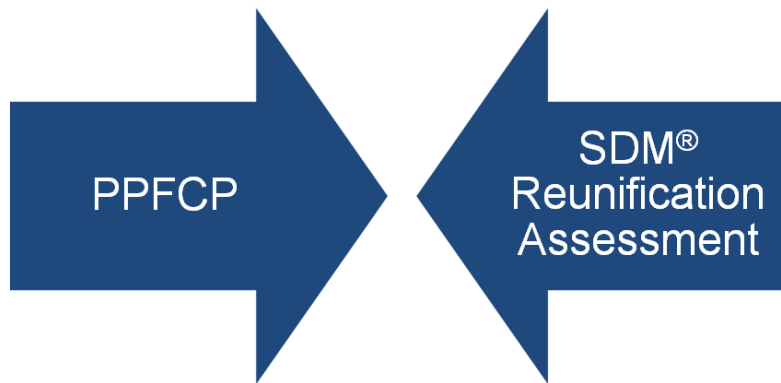
SMART stands for:

- Specific: Goals should be written simply and clearly outline exactly what is expected.
- Measurable: Goals must identify ways to gather tangible evidence that change has occurred.
- Achievable: Goals must be possible and feasible, given the resources and circumstances.
- Realistic: Goals should matter to those involved and focus on things that relate to why the family is involved with child welfare. Sometimes the “R” is also referred to as relevant, which has the same intent as realistic.
- Timely: Goals should be linked to a timeframe.

A few other important things to remember when writing SMART goals for a case plan:

- Address people by their name, not their role, in case plans. Do not say “mom” or “dad.” Use actual names.
- Write on a 4th- to 6th-grade reading level. Avoid acronyms, jargon, or vague terms like “appropriate” or “mental health” or “substance abuse” whenever possible. Instead, describe what you mean in behaviorally-specific terms.
- Objectives are outcomes and should be written in the future tense to describe the behaviors that parents will need to ensure safety. For example, “Susan will have at least three adults who have an ongoing relationship with the children who can babysit when needed.”
- Specific services, such as therapy, parenting classes, NA or AA meetings, are the last component of the case plan and are not part of the objective or desired outcome. When including services, it is best to avoid naming specific providers in case the parent is unable to enroll in those services or if it is not a good fit.

Case Planning & the SDM® Reunification Assessment



- The SDM® Reunification Assessment works in partnership with the PPFCP

The reunification assessment should be introduced to the family at the same meeting, after the permanency planning family case plan is created together.

Section Two of the Reunification Assessment assesses caretaker progress on the family case plan by:

- Recognizing behavioral change as the key measure of progress
- Distinguishing between compliance and demonstrated change
- Using clear thresholds to guide consistency in decision making

It is important to explain the SDM® Reunification Assessment in plain language so that the family understands how the tool will support assessment of reunification efforts.

When working with families, measuring progress toward case plan goals is important. The SDM® Reunification Assessment offers an opportunity to use system-two thinking to assess progress on case plan goals. When the PPFCP is created, the Reunification Assessment should be introduced to the family, and the tool must be explained in plain language so that the family understands exactly what will be used to assess reunification potential.

Notes

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Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings

Purpose and Policy

Case Planning

- PPFCP
- Permanent and concurrent plans

Changes

- Placement
- Family circumstances
- School
- Permanent plan

Requested

- Child or youth
- Family

- Policy and practice define CFT meetings as "when family members and their community support that come together to create, implement, and update a plan for the child(ren), youth, and family"
- CFTs are decision-making meetings
- CFTs allow engagement and partnering with those who surround and support the family with the intention of building a support network for the family after child welfare is no longer involved
- Policy requires that CFTs be used to monitor the PPFCP, designate and change permanent and concurrent plans when family changes occur, and, as necessary, to discuss other changes that affect the child

What are the benefits of having Child and Family Team input at these points during the life of a case?

Why might policy be necessary to outline the who, when, and why of CFT meetings?

How can you engage CFT members to attend?

Family Group Conference in Camden – Community Co-Design in Child Protection

Video: Family Group Conference in Camden – Community Co-Design in Child Protection

Video: Family Group Conference in Camden – Community Co-Design in Child Protection

What moments stood out to you that you would like to create in your CFT meetings?

What was it about that moment that made you want to create it in your own CFT meetings?

How might you create these moments in CFTs?

Caseworker Role During CFT Meetings



What is your role in a CFT meeting?



Which cases require the use of a facilitator?



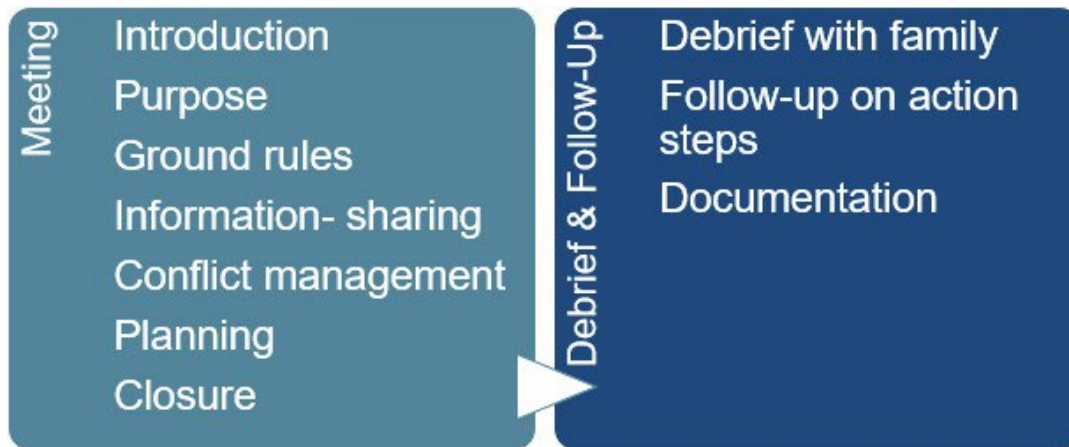
What are the benefits of using a facilitator?

- Before, during, and after a CFT Meeting, the caseworker is responsible for:
 - planning and preparing for the meeting
 - taking notes
 - documenting in the PPFCP
 - managing conflict
 - soliciting ideas and input from all involved during the meeting
 - following up and debriefing after the meeting
- Cases with a current high-risk rating require a CFT facilitator
- There are benefits of using a facilitator include:
 - they are a neutral person in the case
 - organizing the meeting
 - guiding: helping individual family members participate
 - observation of body language, tone of voice, and underlying meanings
 - emphasizing consensus decision making: Ensuring that plans and decisions benefit the child by integrating multiple perspectives

Which cases require the use of a facilitator?

What Does it Look Like?

Activity: What does it look like?



What to do:

- Each group will be assigned a section:
 - Meeting Process and Agenda Flow
 - Meeting Debrief and Follow-Up
- Discuss the following topics with your group and record your notes on a flipchart paper:
 - Potential challenges
 - Best practices for engaging families
 - Considerations for safety, inclusion, and follow-through

Mark your group's assigned topic:

- ☐ Meeting Process and Agenda Flow
- ☐ Meeting Debrief and Follow-Up

Potential challenges

--

Best practices for engaging families

--

Considerations for safety, including child and family voice, and follow-through

Which strategies help Child and Family Team Meetings be successful and move from discussion to action?

What challenges are most likely to occur during the meeting process?

How does follow-up increase accountability and trust with families?

What strategy will you employ in your next Child and Family Team Meeting process?

Child and Youth Voice in CFT Meetings

Things to consider when deciding how children and youth will be involved in a CFT meeting:

- Development abilities
- Child's wishes
- Cognitive abilities



- It is not a question of whether children and youth should be involved in the process, but Federal law requires opportunities for youth involvement in case planning
- Authentic youth engagement supports permanency and healthy development
- The question is not whether children and youth should be involved, but how they should be involved
- Children and youth should be prepared and supported so they can participate meaningfully in planning and decision-making
- Child and youth voices should be incorporated into CFT meetings in developmentally appropriate ways
- Authentic youth engagement promotes empowerment, permanency, and successful transition to adulthood

How do you incorporate child and youth voices in the CFT meeting?

What are the potential consequences of not incorporating youth voice?

What will you commit to doing to ensure youth voice is present during your CFT meetings?

Gathering Perspective

Lived: acquired from our life experiences

Learned: acquired from formal learning processes such as education, trade school, workshops, apprenticeships, or informal processes such as reading or listening to books, articles, instructions

Vicarious: acquired through secondhand experiences, such as witnessing, in relationships, through media and art

Formal: acquired through service through your work such as a profession or specialty role

- Effective case planning and decision-making require gathering multiple types of knowledge and perspectives.
- Gather multiple forms of knowledge to understand children and youth holistically.
- Prioritize direct engagement with children and youth to understand their experiences, perspectives, and needs.
- Use families, relatives, kin, and placement providers as important sources of perspective about the child.
- Continue learning through professional resources, research, media, and training to strengthen practice.
- Integrate information from multiple sources to support informed, child-centered decision-making.

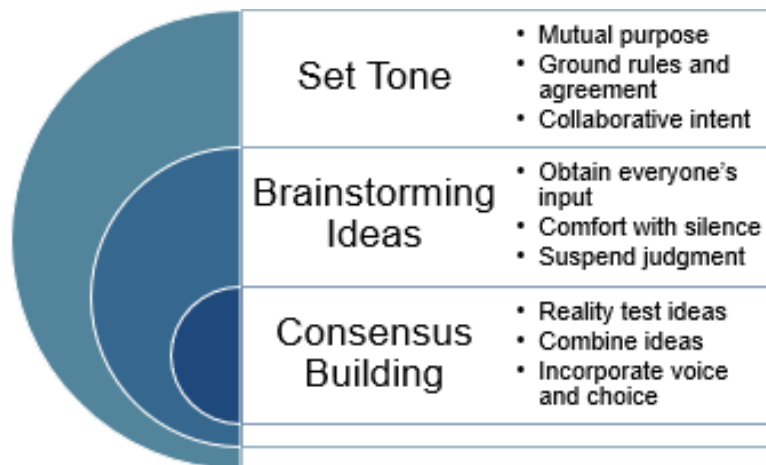
How do you gather lived-experience perspectives from children and youth?

How do you learn about the experiences of children and youth in foster care to gain perspective?

How do you gain perspective through vicarious knowledge?

How do you gather formal knowledge and perspective about the experiences of children and youth in foster care?

Team Decision-Making and Balancing Perspectives



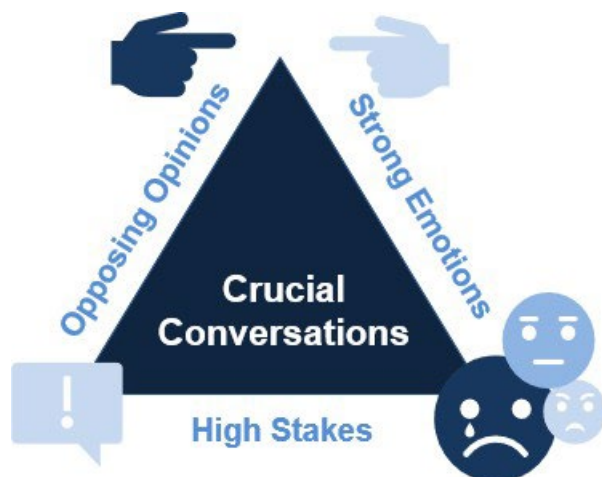
- Joint or collaborative decisions are the intended outcome for CFT meetings
- Full agreement is not necessary; consensus is
- Setting the right tone is critical to achieving success
- Clear ground rules and agreements, along with reviewing the mutual purpose, can be helpful tools
- All voices and perspectives need to be heard, and the use of brainstorming can help to achieve this

Our plan should reflect the family's voice and choices. If it does not, where might you build voice and choice?

If a family member becomes upset or noticeably agitated, what would you do?

Crucial Conversations: Group Conflict Management

Managing Crucial Conversations



- Family engagement is central to children's services work, and all SDM tools should be completed in partnership with families
- Crucial conversations can be challenging because they involve high stakes, opposing opinions, and intense emotions

Think about a difficult conversation you have had with a parent, caregiver, or team member. What made it a crucial conversation?

What helped the conversation move toward a productive outcome?

What hindered the conversation from moving toward a productive outcome?

When strong emotions arise in a meeting, what strategies help you stay engaged, respectful, and focused on safety while honoring the family's perspective?

Crucial Conversations in CFT Meetings



- Conflict is a normal part of Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings because multiple people with different perspectives, experiences, and opinions are making important decisions together
- CFT meetings naturally create conditions for crucial conversations because they often involve:
 - High stakes
 - Opposing opinions
 - Strong emotions
- Validation is a key conflict-management skill
- Validation helps reduce defensiveness and maintain engagement
- Caseworkers can validate perspectives and feelings without validating harmful behavior; this helps reduce defensiveness while maintaining clear focus on safety, accountability, and next steps
- When conflict escalates, redirect to purpose and agreements

What crucial conversations have you seen arise in CFT meetings?

Why might CFTs include the need for crucial conversations?

What can help your confidence in navigating crucial conversations during CFTs?

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Day Four

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Appendix

Reflections and Check-In

Reflections and Check-In Sheet		
		
Self-Values Reflection	Reasonable Efforts	Two-Level Decision-Making

Reflections and Check-In Sheet		
		
Self-Values Reflection	Reasonable Efforts	Two-Level Decision-Making