

What is a Pre-Meeting Discussion?

A Pre-Meeting Discussion is an opportunity for child welfare staff and team members to prepare for the Family Team Meeting. It is a time for the child welfare staff to give an overview of the flow of the Family Team Meeting as well as discuss agenda topics, attendees, ground rules and an agreed upon location and time for the upcoming Family Team Meeting.

The goal of the Pre-Meeting Discussion is to prepare the family and/or youth (11 years or older) to be active participants in conversations during the actual Family Team Meeting. They will also be encouraged to take a lead in discussions surrounding their case planning.

What is a Family Team Meeting?

A Family Team Meeting is an opportunity for child welfare staff to involve youth, families, caregivers, informal supports and other team members in case planning and decision-making. The Family Team Meeting should be strength-based, youth-focused and family-lead. Building on the family/youth's strengths and including their voice in the decision-making process will help them take ownership of their case plans.

What happens at a Family Team Meeting?

The family/youth will have the opportunity to share their Family Story and lead the discussion about developing and reviewing their goals, with the assistance of the child welfare staff. The goals will line up with the Child Protection Law, Child Welfare Policy, and court orders (if applicable).

During the Family Team Meeting, child welfare staff will inform participants that information shared in the meeting is confidential. There will be confidentiality statements for both the parent(s) and team members to review and sign. They will also make sure all participants are heard and that the ground rules are being followed. Strengths and needs/concerns of the family/youth as well as their goals will be discussed. The primary goal of all Family Team Meetings is for participants to agree on the best interest of the family/youth moving forward. Adjustments may be made to the family/youth's case plan based on the recommendations made during the meeting.

Who can be part of the Family Team?

Team members are mainly identified by the family/youth themselves to support them throughout their case and beyond. In addition to child welfare staff, other team members may include: Extended family, friends, foster parents, church/community members, school staff, service providers, attorneys, etc. These team members should be invited to meetings whenever they are held. If they are unable to attend, their voice should still be captured in the meeting by someone in attendance. (Team members may change over the life of the case.)

NOTE: In an effort to build stronger support for parents with youth in care, relative caregivers and foster parents are strongly encouraged to attend Family Team Meetings. These caregivers are important team members who support long-term stability for the youth in their care. They also assist in making key decisions about the youth's safety and well-being. They are encouraged to develop working relationships with the parent(s) by sharing information about the youth in their

care and learning previous routines prior to the youth entering care. It is also important for caregivers to assist in developing and supporting visitation plans, as well as help coordinate safe and appropriate contact between the youth and their parent(s), with the guidance of child welfare staff and service providers working with the family.

When are Family Team Meetings held?

Family Team Meetings are held as part of the case planning process. Depending on the life of the case, they are held at least quarterly (every three months) to assess and address the family/youth's needs. (The family/youth may request a Family Team Meeting at any time.)

Tips for a productive Family Team Meeting:

- Follow the ground rules at all times.
- Participate in developing solutions based on the family/youth's needs.
- Provide ideas regarding supports/services, as needed.
- Listen and seek to understand others' points of view.
- Be honest, respectful and fair in what you say.
- Speak directly to group members, not about individuals as if they are not present.
- Provide ideas on how to support visitation plans.
- Be willing to be part of the solution.

KEY TERMS

Family Story:

Information shared by the family/youth about what led to their involvement with the agency. Additional family information shared can help team members better understand their strengths/needs for better case plan development and long-term success.

Confidentiality:

Discussions from the Family Team Meeting will only be shared with those involved in the family/youth's case planning process. There will be confidentiality statements provided for everyone to sign during the Family Team Meeting.

Ground Rules:

Rules decided between child welfare staff and the family/youth to keep the Family Team Meeting on track and to help participants feel safe.

Non-Negotiables:

Actions and/or services outlined in the Child Protection Law, Child Welfare Policy and court orders (if applicable) that child welfare staff and the family/youth must follow.

Informal Supports:

Persons, primarily identified by the family/youth, that are willing and able to contribute to their success throughout the life of their case and beyond case closure.

Keep as a reminder of the agreed upon details for the upcoming Family Team Meeting:

Family Name: _____

Family Team Meeting Type: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Potential Team Members:

Name	Relationship

Contact Information:

Worker: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Contact your worker right away if you have additional questions or need:

- Transportation,
- Child Care (will help brainstorm options), or
- Translation Services.

Worker Initials _____

Date of Completion _____

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MDHHS-Pub-1160 (11-15)



**A Family's Guide to
Pre-Meeting Discussions
and Family Team Meetings**

