

Policy Title: Revised Family Team Decision Making Conferences (FTC) - 2020
Applies To: All Child Welfare Operations Staff (DHS/CUA)
Replaces: All previous departmental FTC policies;
2017 or earlier CUA Guidelines pertaining to FTCs

OVERVIEW:

The Family Team Decision Making Conference (FTC) serves as one of the Department's essential sources of engagement of families that have been accepted for service. The meeting model elevates the voices of children, youth, and their families to ensure their perspective guides any case plans and coordination of services. The FTC meeting model is based on the following values: quality family engagement, consistent and clear communication, and thoughtful and thorough preparation.

This policy revision is intended to improve and strengthen engagement by increasing focus on involving families with creating and supporting success with Single Case Plan.

POLICY**Policy Statement**

It is the Department's policy that children, youth, and families must be engaged consistently by all staff to ensure the child's or youth's safety, well-being, and permanency.

Meeting Types And Time Frames

The FTC meeting types and time frames have been modified as follows:

- **The Initial Conference** is the first FTC meeting. This meeting is required to take place **within 20 calendar days** of the official CUA referral date.
 - **The CUA begins case management services upon receipt of the CUA In-home or Placement Service Referral.**
- **Ongoing Conferences** are follow-up meetings that are required to occur **within six months** after the initial conference and every six months thereafter. These meetings serve as an ongoing review of the family's Single Case Plan to determine progress towards achieving established case plan goals for permanency and safe case closure.
- **Supportive Conferences** are conferences held on an as needed basis according to the time frames indicated in the Procedure below, and are triggered by a change in CUA services (such as new safety concerns/threats) which requires a new teaming to revise the current plan; when the child's or youth's placement could be potentially disrupted; or when the case is ready to be closed and there are no longer any safety threats present.

Meeting Participants

The FTC model requires a team of stakeholders to partner with the family to develop and implement the Single Case Plan, including the objectives and actions steps. Age and developmentally appropriate youth, their parents or guardians, family supports, and resource parents or kinship caregivers must be encouraged

Revised Family Team Conferences (FTC) - 2020

For questions about this policy or its related documents, please contact Policy & Planning at (215) 683-4108 or DHSPolicy@phila.gov.

to participate in and invited to attend the FTC meetings. **If there are domestic violence (DV) concerns, separate conferences must be scheduled so that the DV victim and DV perpetrator are not present together in the safe conference.** The team of required stakeholders includes the following:

- Assigned DHS FTC Practice Facilitator.
- DHS Team Coordinator.
- DHS Investigations SWSM or their Supervisor.
 - The DHS Investigations SWSM or their Supervisor must attend the initial 20-day conference even if the investigation or assessment was disposed prior to the initial conference. Such disposition can only occur with the approval of the Social Work Administrator in consultation with the Investigations Director.
 - If a new report is received regarding the family, the investigation or assessment will be assigned to the Investigation Social Work team that is waiting for the initial conference.
- CUA Case Management (CUA CM) teams.

Additionally, family natural supports, the child's or youth's attorney or advocate, the parents' attorneys, medical and behavioral health professionals, educational decision-makers, Prevention Diversion Case Managers, or other providers should be encouraged to attend the meetings.

Meeting Invitations

It is the responsibility of the DHS Team Coordinator, DHS Intake Worker, and CUA CM team to initiate and fully engage in outreach efforts to attendees, especially to the youth and their biological parents or guardians, prior to the scheduled conference. Such efforts should encourage attendance and active participation in the conferences and be used as an opportunity to identify any potential barriers to attendance or engagement.

Depending on the meeting type, invitations or notifications must be sent by the DHS Teaming Staff to all identified conference participants:

- At least ten calendar days prior to the Initial Conference.
- At least fifteen calendar days prior to any Ongoing Conference.
- At least five calendar days prior to Special Circumstances Conferences, Placement Stability Conferences that occur within ten calendar days, or Closing Conferences.
- At least three calendar days prior to "emergency" Placement Stability Conferences.

If unusual or extraordinary circumstances arise that may prevent the FTC meetings from occurring the FTC Administrator must be notified as soon as possible to explore other available conferencing options to engage and support children, youth, and families.

Procedure Title:	Family Team Decision Making Conferences (FTC) - 2020
Applies To:	All Child Welfare Operations Staff (DHS/CUA)
Related Policy:	Revised Family Team Decision Making Conferences (FTC) - 2020

PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

The revised Family Team Decision Making Conference process utilizes three meeting types to engage families supporting a child and/or youth's safety, well-being, and permanency goals:

- The Initial Conference.
- Ongoing Conferences.
- Supportive Conferences.

These Procedures offer detailed information about meeting types, documentation requirements, and roles and responsibilities.

PROCEDURE and PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (*what happens, who does it, what are the time frames, how is it documented*)

MEETING TYPES

The following describes the revised FTC meeting types and important time frames:

- The **Initial Conference** is the first FTC meeting and must be held **within 20 calendar days** of the official CUA referral date.
 - The Initial Conference must be held after a joint visit with the family has been completed by the DHS SWSM and CUA CM. The joint home visit must occur within no more than five calendar days of the CUA Placement Referral or CUA In-Home Services Referral.
 - **Note:** If the assigned CUA CM or DHS SWSM is not available to complete the joint visit, their Supervisor or CUA CM Director or DHS Social Work Administrator must assign someone to attend the joint visit or be available to complete the joint visit themselves so that the initial conference is not delayed.
 - The topics that must be discussed at this meeting include, but are not limited to:
 - The concerns that brought the family to the attention of the Department, including information arising from completed assessments.
 - Transition Plans for older youth in out-of-home placement.
 - FTCs will identify issues and connect identified cases to services or other options to ensure that these issues can be addressed directly through case management.
 - Permanency Plans, including concurrent or alternate plans, for the child or youth and their family.
- **Ongoing Conferences** occur **within six months** after the Initial Conference has been held, and every six months after while the case remains open. The purpose of this meeting serves as an ongoing review of the Single Case Plan to determine the family's progress towards achieving established case plan goals for permanency and/or safe case closure. The Transition Plan for older youth is reviewed during Ongoing Conferences. If issues are identified such as an older youth, aged 18 or 21, with a primary or concurrent goal of APPLA, who is nearing imminent discharge, a Transitional Planning Review will be triggered.

Revised Family Team Conferences (FTC) - 2020

For questions about this policy or its related documents, please contact Policy & Planning at (215) 683-4108 or DHSPolicy@phila.gov.

- **Supportive Conferences** occur on an as needed basis.
 - **Special Circumstances:** This conference is triggered by a change in CUA services (e.g. new safety concerns/threats, change from in-home to placement) which requires a new teaming to revise the current plan. Special Circumstances FTCs must be held **within ten calendar days of the triggering event** but may be held sooner.
 - **Placement Stability:** This conference is triggered when the child's or youth's placement could be potentially disruptive. Placement Stability FTCs must be held:
 - **Within ten calendar days for routine requests or pursuant to 30/90-day provider removal notices to the DHS Central Referral Unit** but may be held sooner.
 - **Within five business days for "emergencies" pursuant to Child Care Room contacts** but may be held sooner.
 - **Closing Conference:** This conference is triggered when the case is ready to be closed and there are no longer any safety threats present. Closing FTCs must be held **within ten business days of the decision that there are no longer any safety threats present** but may be held sooner.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following specifies the roles and responsibilities of the partners who attend, participate, and contribute to the FTC meetings:

Departmental (DHS) Staff

- **Teaming Staff**
 - **Practice Facilitators** guide the discussion at FTC meetings to assist with the development of critical recommendations and decisions about the child's or youth's safety, well-being, and permanency. Practice Facilitators must:
 - Remain objective and strength-focused throughout the process.
 - Review the assigned case file to gain an understanding of the accept-for-service reasons prior to the convening of FTC meetings.
 - Facilitate the meeting to address the concerns that brought the child or youth and their family to the attention of the Department.
 - Summarize all decisions to ensure a consensus has been reached with the input of all conference participants.
 - **Team Coordinators** (TC) support the FTC model by organizing and scheduling the FTC meetings as well as documenting in Teaming and Management Interface (TAMI) all final decisions made at the meetings. Team Coordinators must:
 - Collaborate with the DHS SWSM and CUA CM to identify meeting participants.
 - Contact the family (i.e., parents, legal guardians, youth) and any other support network identified by the family, by telephone and in writing to provide information about the FTC model and meeting details.
 - Schedule all initial conferences and ongoing conferences within the prescribed time frames at the convenience of the family and in the community where the family resides.
 - **Initial Conferences** must be scheduled to take place within 20 calendar days of the official CUA Referral date.

- **Ongoing Conferences** must be scheduled at least fifteen calendar days before the meeting is required to take place (six months after the previous conference).
 - At least five calendar days prior to Special Circumstances conferences, Placement Stability Conferences that occur within ten calendar days, or Closing Conferences.
 - At least three calendar days prior to “emergency” Placement Stability Conferences.
 - Schedule separate conferences when there are domestic violence concerns so that the DV victim and the DV perpetrator are not present together in the same conference.
 - Send invitations to the family and other identified conference participants including, but not limited to:
 - The child’s or youth’s attorney/advocate.
 - The parent(s) attorney.
 - Service providers.
 - Resource parent.
 - DHS Nurses, CBH, and other professionals as required by DHS policy.
 - Community supports.
 - Complete Conference Tool:
 - After each conference the TC is responsible to complete the conference tool, including documenting the discussion of the agreed-upon goals and action steps in the electronic case management system and provide participants with a printable copy. If not, it must be sent by email or certified, regular mail by the TC.
 - **Note:** If there is any indication of domestic violence, a Protection From Abuse order, or other order limiting contact between any of the parties, the TC must ensure that an abusive partner will not have access to information that would be harmful. Examples of this information would include disclosures of abuse and a description of where an individual will be at any given time.
 - **The Teaming Administrator** monitors and provides managerial oversight of the FTC process; provides additional structure and mediation during disputes; supervises the facilitation teams, including observing and providing feedback during and after conferences; and is the identified contact for Supportive Conference requests from CUA Case Management Directors.
- **Investigations Team**
- The DHS Investigations Team is responsible to arrange case transfer in a timely manner to assigned CUA CM Team by ensuring the electronic case management system is updated with complete, current information about the child, youth, and family.
 - **DHS Social Work Services Managers (SWSM)** serve as the first point of contact to engage with the child or youth and their family. SWSMs must:
 - Partner with the assigned CUA CM Team and the family to ensure timely case handoff by:
 - Informing all parents, guardians, and the child or youth that the CUA CM Team will be joining the process to provide case management service.
 - Scheduling a joint visit with the CUA CM and the family within no more than five calendar days of the CUA Service Referral to discuss next steps with the case, FTC process, etc.
 - Communicate in a timely manner with the assigned FTC Team Coordinator to:

- Identify who should be invited to the initial 20-day conference.
- If known, identify whether there is domestic violence, a Protection From Abuse order, or any other order limiting contact between any of the parties.
- Share current contact information for the child's or youth's parents or guardians and other conference participants.
- **Social Work Supervisors (SWS)** respond to the Team Coordinators' inquiry and invitation and attend the conference when the SWSM has been recently assigned or is unable to attend.
- **The Social Work Administrator** is responsible for oversight and coordinates with the SWS when the SWSM or SWS are unable to attend.
- **Prevention Diversion Case Management Services** provide in-home diversion case management services to support families in which children or youth are currently safe but have issues that put them at risk for child abuse/neglect. They are responsible to provide information about the service provided to the family prior of CUA referral and to attend FTC as needed.
- **Supportive Services Staff** review cases and offer their expertise - whether legal, educational, psychiatric, or medical - to assist the DHS SWSM and CUA CM in making informed decisions and ensuring that the SCP will be effective in support of the child or youth and their families and are comprised of:
 - Law Department
 - Nurses.
 - Psychologists.
 - Community Behavioral Health.
 - Domestic Violence.
 - Addiction Services.
 - Health Management Unit.
 - Education Support Center.
 - Early Intervention.
- **CUA Case Management Team**
 - As a collective, the CUA CM Team is responsible for the following to assist with the FTC process:
 - Emphasizing that the FTC meetings provide an opportunity for the family, including age and developmentally appropriate youth, to share their story and guide the intervention planning for a successful outcome; and encouraging families to participate in the process to share their expertise.
 - Ensuring all demographic and contact information is updated on PFDS and the electronic case record.
 - Encouraging families to participate in the process, identifying their needs, share their expertise, and help guide their successful journey through the agency intervention.
 - Outlining the plan for services to support the child or youth and their family, following FTC, and completing the necessary assessments to assist in clarifying needs.

- **CUA Case Managers (CMs)** provide ongoing support, including engagement, and services for children and youth and their families. CUA CMs must:
 - Continue engagement efforts initiated by the DHS Investigations Team with the family starting with the joint visit meeting with the family and when first meeting with the child or youth.
 - This engagement effort must include a discussion of the FTC model and the case management process.
 - Communicate in a timely manner with the assigned FTC Team Coordinator to:
 - Identify who should be invited to the six-month ongoing conference.
 - Share detailed contact information for the child's or youth's parents or guardians and other conference participants.
 - Prepare and complete the Single Case Plan (SCP) and SCP reviews in accordance with regulatory requirements within seven days after the initial or ongoing conferences, with the participation of the family and youth.
 - **Note:** If there is any indication of domestic violence, a Protection From Abuse order, or other order limiting contact between any of the parties, the CUA CM must ensure that an abusive partner will not have access to information that would be harmful. Examples of this information would include disclosures of abuse and a description of where an individual will be at any given time.
 - Engage with the family and youth to develop specific action steps for each SCP objective, which have been agreed upon.
 - When the family and youth are not present at the teaming, the CUA CM and CMS develop objectives and action steps for the SCP.
 - The CUA CM reviews the objectives and necessary action steps with the parents during the next visit after the FTC.
 - When necessary, add additional objectives and actions steps to the SCP which were determined to be necessary after the teaming.
 - The CUA CM reviews the objectives and necessary action steps with the parents during the next visit after the FTC.
- **Case Management Supervisors (CMS)** are responsible to ensure, via supervision prior to a conference, that CMs are prepared for the FTC; attend the FTC if necessary; and ensure the Single Case Plan is completed.
- **Case Management Directors (CMDs)** provide oversight for CMS, provide direction as to proper disposal of a case and provide the final decision-making when there is conflict or lack of consensus during conferences. Additionally, CMDs are the identified staff responsible for requesting needed FTC Supportive conferences on active cases, e.g. Court discharges/closings, placement stability and special circumstances.
- **CUA Outcomes Specialists** are responsible to assist the CM to achieve permanency or case closure.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

The following identifies the documentation required for the FTC meetings:

- Documentation about the child or youth and their family in preparation for referrals or case transfer should be accurate and complete **before** any case transfer by the initial 20-day conference.
- Such documentation may include, but is not limited to:
 - All parents' or guardians' contact information.
 - The child's or youth's birth certificate, social security card, and records pertaining to their educational, medical, dental, and behavioral health needs.
 - Demographic information of the children or youth and their biological parents or guardians, including race, expressed gender identity, religion, and chosen name, among other things.
 - Safety Assessments and/or Risk Assessments.
 - Safety Plans.
 - Preliminary Service Plans.
 - Relevant court orders.
- Documentation must be reviewed for accuracy and updated as needed. Any information requiring updates should be shared between DHS and CUA staff in a timely manner, prior to the initial conference **and** throughout the duration of the case.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS AND
RESOURCES:**

Attachments:

Forms:

- Family Support Teaming Invitation (initial)
- Family Support Teaming Invitation (ongoing)
- Child Permanency Teaming Invitation (initial)
- Child Permanency Teaming Invitation (ongoing)
- Permanency Conference Invite for Youth age 17.5 or over Regarding Board Extension
- Placement Stability Teaming Invitation

Related Policies or Procedures: IOC CUA Practice Guidelines, issued August 2017, except as revised by this Policy and Procedure Guide.

Other Resources:

POLICY AND PROCEDURE REVIEW AND APPROVAL

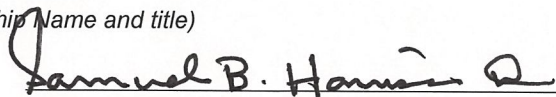
APPROVED BY: Samuel B. Harrison III, Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare Operations
Staci Boyd, Operations Director, Improving Outcomes for Children
Carla Sanders, Operations Director, Front-end Services
Tyrone Harvey, Director, Family Team Conferencing

REVIEWED BY: Luis A. Santiago, Policy and Planning Administrator

APPROVAL SIGNATURE

(Authorizing Leadership Name and title)

Signature:



Date: 8/11/2020

Name:

Samuel B. Harrison III

Title: Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare Operations