



Transition Age Youth Resource

Supporting Youth Participation in Child and Family Team Meetings: A GUIDE FOR SELF-ADVOCACY AND ENSURING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Child and Family Team and Child and Family Team Meetings

The Child and Family Team (CFT) process is intended to engage the entire extended family system, which includes the child or youth, the youth's parent, the youth's caregiver, the youth's relatives or formal family, and other people important to the family or to the child or youth, with the goal of providing safety and stability for the child or youth and the family. Child and Family Team meetings bring families together with natural supports, service providers, trusted community members, professionals, and others to support the child or youth. The purpose of a Child and Family Team meeting is to assemble the people involved in the youth's life to determine how best to address the youth's needs and achieve positive outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being.

Child and Family Teams must involve the youth in the planning process, particularly when entering foster care or undergoing treatment. Each youth's and family's CFT process should reflect their own unique culture and individual preferences.

Importance of Youth Participation in Child and Family Team Meetings

- **Centrality of Voice:** Youth are considered experts in their own lives and are encouraged to voice their wants, needs, and concerns in a safe, judgment-free environment.
- **Impact:** Active participation helps build relationships, fosters a sense of being valued, and assists in developing realistic, personalized plans for success and stability.
- **Family Perspective:** You provide a unique perspective on your needs, history, and family dynamics. Your input helps the Child and Family Team members make decisions that are more informed.
- **Collaboration:** Child and Family Team meetings promote collaboration among various stakeholders to work together in your best interests.
- **Transparency:** Involving you in meetings promotes transparency and helps build essential trust between you and the child welfare system.

- **Support and Resources:** Child and Family Team meetings can provide you with access to support services, resources, and information to better care for their physical, emotional, and educational needs.

Active Inclusion of Youth in Child and Family Team Meetings

- **Team Selection:** You have the right to help identify team members, including natural supports like friends, coaches, or mentors, in addition to professionals.
- **Meeting Structure:** Your participation includes setting agendas, choosing meeting times/locations, and, in some cases, having "solo" meetings to increase engagement and buy-in.

Preparing and Participating in the Child and Family Team Meetings

Your county social worker (CSW) or probation officer (PO) is responsible for convening a Child and Family Team meeting no later than 60 days after you enter foster care. If you are still living with your parents, a Child and Family Team can be used to develop a safety plan that does not include being removed from your parents' care. Members of your extended family system serve as support for the child and the parents in Child and Family Team meetings and can actively participate in a voluntary safety plan.

Child and Family Team members communicate via phone calls, e-mails, text messages, or during in-person meetings.

Understanding Your Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings

Key Information

INITIAL MEETING & WHO ATTENDS

- A CFT meeting must be convened within 60 days of when you enter foster care including you, your family, your current caregiver, CFT facilitator, your social worker or probation officer and other supports, like healthcare professionals, and your family supports, like friends, coaches, faith-based connections, tribe members, etc., when appropriate.

MEETING FREQUENCY & REQUESTS

- CFT meetings should occur every 6 months, or more often as needed.
- A CFT meeting must occur every 90 days if you are receiving Specialty Mental Health Services or support in an STRTP.
- You, your family, or another CFT member can request a CFT meeting if the plan is not working, services are not being provided, or new needs come up.

SETTING & PREPARATION

- CFT meetings should be convened in a comfortable setting, and members should be able to participate by video conferencing or phone.
- Bring a list of your strengths and any topics you'd like to discuss plus a pen/pencil or take notes on your phone.

Understanding Your Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings

Key Information (Continued)

WHEN MEETINGS SHOULD BE SCHEDULED

- CFT meetings should be scheduled prior to any removal in non emergency situations; during the formation of safety plans, crisis stabilization, placement changes, etc.; during any case planning process, including the initial case plan and a revised case plan, or when there is a change in case status or you or your family requests assistance in resolving other case issues.

TRANSITION PLANS

- Your TILP should be developed, with your input, around age 14-15 and updated every 6 months, with your input, until you exit foster care.
- Your 90-transition plan should be developed, with your input, 90 days before your 18th birthday.

Child and Family Team Member Agreements

- CFT members agree to communicate honestly and respectfully with one another.
- Team members discuss and agree to the decision-making process they will use.
- Team members share feedback about how the CFT process is working for them.

Child and Family Team Confidentiality

State law provides that youth, including youth in foster care, have the right to confidentiality of medical and mental health records, including, but not limited to, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) status, substance use disorder (SUD) history and treatment, and sexual and reproductive health care, consistent with existing law.

Obtaining your knowing and informed consent to share information with the CFT or during CFT meetings ensures compliance with state and federal law, encourages and promotes transparent communication within the CFT, and allows for informed decision-making and case planning. Informed consent means having sufficient information about with whom the information will be shared, as well as the purpose, benefits, risks, and consequences of sharing information before executing an authorization to share information. The signing of the authorization must also be voluntary. You have the ability to not share information without being denied access to services, and you have the right to revoke the consent at any time.

It is best practice for a person with whom you have a strong trusting relationship to discuss any related issues with you—in a private, confidential space—prior to the CFT meeting so that you can agree upon an approach for addressing the topic (or not) within the meeting.

Child and Family Team Key Participants

Natural family supports like your family friends, coaches, faith-based connections, and tribe members identified by you and your family should be considered and included in the Child and Family Team and participate in a Child and Family Team meetings as appropriate. Participants can include youth peer partners or parent peer partners.

The CSW or PO or CFT meeting facilitator should contact key participants to explain the purpose of the Child and Family Team and Child and Family Team meetings. The family may invite prospective team members by phone, text, e-mail, in-person, etc. Your and your family's consent is required prior to contacting Child and Family Team participants.

Participants should always include:

- You,
- Your Family,
- Your Current Caregiver,
- A Skilled and Trained CFT Facilitator, and
- Your Child Welfare Social Worker or Deputy Probation Officer.

When appropriate, the following should be included:

- Your/your parents'/your caregivers' Mental Health service provider and other Behavioral Health staff;
- Foster Family Agency (FFA) or Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP or group home) representative, if you were in an FFA home or congregate care;
- Regional Center representative if you are eligible for Regional Center Services;
- Your Court-Appointed Special Advocate, if one has been appointed, unless you object;
- Representative of your tribe or Indian custodian, as applicable;
- Your educational rights holder (parent or court-appointed) (if applicable);
- Substance use disorder treatment professionals (if applicable), and
- Educational professionals (if discussion includes education issues).

You can invite those you know and care about you:

- Friends and Neighbors;
- Faith-Based Supports;
- Coaches;
- Other Natural Supports;
- School Counselor(s);
- Community Members, or
- Youth Peer Partner.

If there is disagreement about the proposed Child and Family Team members list, you, your parents, caregiver, and the CSW or PO should meet to discuss the list and reach consensus before a Child and Family Team meeting. If they cannot agree, the CSW or PO may elect to hold more than one Child and Family Team meeting until consensus is reached.

Child and Family Team Meeting Location

Your family should select an appropriate setting for the Child and Family Team meeting that is most comfortable for them. Options include the family's home or other locations near the family's home that will maximize attendance and participation by the family and community support systems. It should provide adequate seating and facilities to support the meeting. The location should ensure confidentiality, safety, and privacy for the family and all those in attendance. If a family member or other team member perceives that the setting is not safe, an alternate location closest to the site should be identified and discussed with the family.

Options for Child and Family Team meeting locations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Family residence
- Community center or meeting room
- Faith-based organization conference or meeting room
- County welfare agency office
- Child's school
- Other location identified by the family

If a team member is unable to attend a Child and Family Team meeting in person (due to proximity issues or other conflicts), it is encouraged that they participate by video conferencing or phone. This option may be helpful when schedules do not allow in-person participation or when you are placed in another county.

Resources and Documents to Bring to Child and Family Team Meetings

- A list or notes of your strengths and needs and any topics you would like to discuss with the Child and Family Team,
- Any documents requested by the county child welfare agency or probation department, or any documents you may want to reference in the meeting including school reports, health records, visitation records, or therapist information, and
- A notepad and pen or pencil, or electronic device (like a notes app on your phone) to help keep track of upcoming meeting dates, important information, or any follow-up needed.

Follow Up After Child and Family Team Meetings

Child and Family Team meeting participants will receive a copy of the agreement developed at the Child and Family Team meeting. Under most circumstances, subsequent Child and Family Team meetings will be scheduled to discuss the plan developed to adapt services to the family's needs, engage new services, and/or end unneeded services (for example, when family members successfully complete services). Developing and maintaining strong lines of communication between the Child and Family Team members will be a central theme of the Child and Family Team meetings.

After the initial Child and Family Team meeting, subsequent Child and Family Team meetings can be requested by you, your family, or another Child and Family Team member. Child and Family Team meetings may be offered to families as often as necessary to meet their needs. Child and Family Team meetings should, at minimum, be held every six months to inform the case plan throughout the duration of the case.

Additionally, they are to be held:

- If possible, prior to any removal in nonemergency situations;
- During the formation of safety plans, crisis stabilization, placement changes, etc.;
- During any case planning process, including the initial case plan and a revised case plan, or
- When there is a change in case status or you or your family requests assistance in resolving other case issues.
- If you are receiving Specialty Mental Health Services such as Intensive Care Coordination, Intensive Home-Based Services, or Therapeutic Foster Care services, a CFT must occur at least once every 90 days.
- If you are receiving support in a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP), you must also have a CFT every 90 days.

Integrated Practice-Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (IP-CANS)

Assessment and the CFT

The IP-CANS is a team communication tool that helps identify strengths and areas where help is needed. It is completed when the initial case plan is developed and again at a minimum of every six months.

The IP-CANS tool supports the CFT process in several ways:

- Reflects input from all members of your CFT;
- Helps identify your strengths and needs for support in areas such as school, family relationships, and interests;
- Helps the team create a plan to help you, and
- Helps everyone on the CFT see if their work is helping you reach the goals you and your family identified.

Child and Family Team Meeting Discussion Topics

Child and Family Team members, most importantly, you, provide input into the development of a child and family plan that is strengths-based, needs-driven, and culturally relevant. The Child and Family Team recommendations must be considered in any placement decision made by the child welfare agency or probation department and the services to be provided to support you.

You may have questions on how best you can be supported. The following questions may be useful to you in engaging in Child and Family Team meetings.

Case Plan Development

- Completion of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) to guide the assessment and service planning, creating the case plan for parents/guardians and youth.
 - When will the CANS assessment be completed? What is my role in completing the CANS assessment?

CFT Plan/Case Plan Improvements

Sometimes parts of the plan may not be implemented as agreed upon. This might include services not starting, agreed-upon supports not being provided, or concerns continuing even after they were raised. You may want to talk about the plan between CFT meetings, raise new concerns or reevaluate existing agreements, action plans or goals.

CFT Plan/Case Plan Review

- You should receive a copy of the CFT agreement or action plan. You should review it following the meeting and before the next meeting. If something is missing or delayed, contact your social worker or probation officer to ask about next steps, timelines, or barriers to implementing the plan.
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to get the supports and services we agreed on started? I don't think the agreement/action plan reflects the discussion at the last CFT meeting. How can we best discuss what I recall from the discussion? What is the timeline for starting the supports or services? What is the best way to express my frustration when supports and services are delayed or missing?

Asking for Support from your Team

- You can reach out to a trusted CFT member, such as your caregiver, attorney (minor's counsel), CASA, therapist, or youth peer partner, and ask them to support you in following up on the plan or raising a concern again. Developing and maintaining communication among CFT members is a key part of the CFT process, and it is appropriate to ask for help with follow-up.
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to get the supports and services we agreed on started? What is the best way to express my frustration when supports and services are delayed or missing? When is the appropriate time to raise this again? What is the timeline to get the supports and services started?

Requesting Another Child and Family Team Meeting

- You, your family, or another CFT member can request another CFT meeting if the plan is not working, services are not being provided, or new needs have come up. CFT meetings can happen as often as needed to respond to what's going on in your life.
 - I would like to discuss an issue with the plan. Can you schedule a CFT meeting to discuss [whatever issue you'd like to raise]?

- At the next CFT meeting, ask the team to review what didn't work, update the plan, and clearly identify who is responsible for next steps and follow-up.
 - I'd like to talk about what didn't work with the plan. When is the appropriate time to talk about that today? I'd like to talk about updating the plan. When is the appropriate time to talk about that today? Who is responsible for helping me with next steps? What is the timeline for implementation? What can I do to help with implementation? When will we review the plan?

Raising a Concern

- If you raised a concern and it was not resolved, you can raise the concern again. You can explain that the issue is ongoing and how it is affecting you. Raising a concern again is part of advocating for your safety, stability, and well-being, and does not mean you did anything wrong.
 - I brought this up before, and it's still a problem for me. When is the appropriate time to raise this again? What is the best way to resolve this issue? Who is responsible for ensuring the plan is being implemented? When will we review the plan to see if changes are necessary?

Strengths and Goals

- Identification of strengths and goals.
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to help me identify my strengths and goals? What is the best way to express my agreement or disagreement during discussions of my strengths and goals?

Placement/Permanency/Exiting Care

- Addressing a change in placement or case plan.
 - What types of concerns would result in a change in placement or case plan? How do I best express my thoughts about a change in placement or case plan? When would these changes take place? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me during the transition if there is a placement change or a change in my case plan? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me after the transition if there is a placement change or a change in my case plan?
- Develop and implement a placement preservation strategy as a result of a request for a youth to be moved either by the caregiver or the agency.
 - What types of concerns would result in a change in placement or case plan? How do I best raise my concerns?
- 14-day notice of placement change.
 - What are my rights when there is a 14-day notice of placement change? What assistance can you identify or provide to prevent a placement change? How best should I provide input on my placement transition? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me before the transition if there is a placement change? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me during the transition if there is a placement change? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me after the transition if there is a placement change?

- What assistance can you identify or provide to assist me in maintaining contact with my siblings and other relationships (like other relatives or friends)? What assistance can you provide to assist me in filing a complaint with the Ombudsperson if I was removed from my placement between the hours of 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. (unless there is mutual written waiver agreement between the youth, current and prospective caregivers, and the social worker)?
- Assessment and action plan for establishing permanency in a timely manner.
 - What are my long-term permanency options, including guardianship or adoption? What are my Extended Foster Care options? What are the plans for continued/renewed engagement with family members following permanency?
- Placement at a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP or congregate care), if applicable.
 - How long will I be in the STRTP? What is the "step down plan" for a return to my placement from an STRTP? What is the visitation policy, for example, who can visit and when? Does the visitation policy/plan include day-long visits or overnight visits? What happens if I voluntarily leave an STRTP? What happens if I am kicked out of an STRTP?

Transitional Independent Living Plan (developed, with your input, around the time you're 14-15 and updated, with your input, every 6 months until you exit foster care)

- Developing your Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP).
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to help me develop and achieve my TILP goals? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me graduate from high school? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me obtain a part-time job? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me open a bank account? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me invest savings from part-time job? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me identify resources available for youth in foster care to obtain a college degree? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me obtain a scholarship to attend college? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me complete drivers training? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me complete applications from my Driver's license or State identification card? When is the next time we'll update my TILP? What can I do to help prepare?

90-Day Transition Plan (developed, with your input, about 90 days before your 18th birthday)

- Developing your 90-Day Transition Plan.
 - Education.
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to help me graduate from high school? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me identify resources available for youth in foster care to obtain a technical or college degree? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me obtain a scholarship to attend technical training or college?

- What assistance can you provide to help me complete technical training or college applications, including financial aid applications?
- Employment.
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to help me obtain a part-time or full-time job? What resources are available to help me find employment? What assistance can you provide to help me find internships or employment opportunities? What assistance can you provide to help me complete applications and write my resumes and cover letter? What assistance can you provide to help me practice interviewing? What opportunities exist for mentoring and continuing support services?
- Housing.
 - What are my housing options? What resources are available to assist me in finding housing? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me find housing? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me complete rental or other housing applications?
- Health Care.
 - What are my health care options? What resources are available to assist me in securing health care? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me find health care?
- Independent Living Skills.
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to help me participate in Independent Living Program (ILP) or other skills building programs?
- Maintaining relationships with individuals who are important to you including your siblings or other family members.
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to help me identify where my siblings are? What assistance can you identify or provide to help me re-establishing or building existing relationships with family members, including my parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.
- Developing and achieving goals.
 - What assistance can you identify or provide to help me develop and achieve my goals?

Personal Documents (as needed, like when you are being hired at a job, and prior to your exit from foster care)

- Obtaining your personal documents.
 - Your Social Security card.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me get my Social Security card?
 - Certified copy of your birth certificate.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me get my birth certificate?
 - Your Driver's license or State-issued identification card.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me get my Driver's license or State-issued identification card?
 - Your Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card.

- What assistance can you provide to help me get my Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card?
- A letter prepared by the county welfare department that includes your name and date of birth, the dates during which you were within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, and a statement that you were a foster youth in compliance with state and federal financial aid documentation requirements.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me get my Dependency Letters (also called Verification Letters or Ward of the Court Letters)?
- If applicable, the death certificate of your parent or parents.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me get death certificate of your parent or parents?
- If applicable, proof of your citizenship or legal residence.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me get proof of my citizenship or legal residence?
- An advance health care directive form.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me complete an advance health care directive?
- Form (JV-366 and SOC 163) that you would use to file to re-enter foster care (participate in Extended Foster Care).
 - What assistance can you provide to help me understand my options related to Extended Foster Care?
- Written information notifying you that you may be eligible to receive CalFresh benefits, and where you can apply for CalFresh benefits.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me understand my eligibility for CalFresh benefits and how to apply?
- Your credit report.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me get my credit report from all three credit reporting bureaus?
 - If needed, what resources can you identify or assistance can you provide to help me get errors in my credit report resolved?
- Your educational records.
 - What assistance can you provide to help me get my education records?

Education

- Education rights and decision making.
 - What is my role related to education decision making? What education records do I have access to?
- Changing schools from the school of origin.
 - What input can I give to help determine whether it is in my best interest to change from my school of origin? How and when is it best to express my participation in special education services, extracurricular activities, sports, clubs, and other connections to my school that make a change even more difficult? If I remain in my school of origin, what is the transportation plan for me to attend my school of origin and any available extracurricular activities?

- If I am placed in an STRTP, how will I be transported to my school of origin?
- High school completion (for high school aged youth).
 - If I attended more than one high school, did I receive full or partial credits for all classes I passed while attending each school? If I changed schools in 11th or 12th grade, am I on track for high school graduation? If not, has my education record been evaluated for AB 216/minimum state graduation option? If so, what is the educational rights holder's decision about whether utilizing AB 216/minimum state graduation option is in my best interests? How do I best express my thoughts and concerns about my graduation options?

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Service and support planning to address your mental health and wellbeing needs.
 - What services and supports are available? How do I access the services and supports in a timely fashion? How do I raise concerns about the quality of services?
- Discussion of psychotropic medication recommendations.
 - What are the medications? How do we know if they are working? What are the medication side effects? When should we talk to someone about medication side effects? What if I don't want to take the medications? What are the medication interactions with marijuana or alcohol?

Expectant and Parenting Youth

- Resources and supports.
 - What services and supports are available if I am expecting or parenting? How do I access the services and supports in a timely fashion? What assistance can you provide to help me access the Expectant Parent Payment? What assistance can you provide to help me access the Infant Supplement? Are Expectant and Parenting Youth conferences available in my county? If yes, how do I access the conferences? Is the Emergency Childcare Bridge Program (ECCB) available in my county? If yes, how do I access ECCB support? What assistance can you provide to help me identify and secure childcare? What assistance can you provide to connect me to a Foster Care Public Health Nurse for additional health planning support? What assistance can you provide to connect me to a doula? What assistance can you provide to connect me to a home visitation program? What assistance can you provide to connect me to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)?

Visitation

- Planning for sibling and family visitation.
 - What is my sibling and family visitation plan? Can I get the visitation plan in writing, including the agreed upon rules prior to the visitation? Who provides visitation transportation and supervision? What is allowed during each visit? Who can be present at the visitation? When does the visitation need to/should occur?

- How do I best express that I don't want to go to the visitation? Can anyone else attend/participate in the visitation?
- Sibling visitation, post-adoption, if applicable.
 - How can you help me keep in contact with my siblings before, during, and after the adoption? How can you help bring everyone together to talk about whether we should voluntarily create a sibling contact agreement prior to the adoption? When is the appropriate time to convene a meeting between me, my siblings (related by blood, adoption, or affinity through a common legal or biological parent), the prospective adoptive parents, and a facilitator to decide whether to voluntarily execute a postadoption sibling contact agreement?

Foster Youth Bill of Rights

- Identifying if your rights have been violated and resolving issues.
- How can I get a copy of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights? What support can you provide to help me identify if my rights have been violated and if so, help me to resolve the issue? How do I best express my concerns that my foster care rights have been violated?

Team Members

- Adding or removing Child and Family Team members.
- How do I suggest new members of the Child and Family Team prior to or after a meeting? What is the best way to navigate when new members are added by the child welfare agency/probation department that I or my family do not want to participate? Who is responsible for those communications?

Resources

CFT Youth Brochure

in: [English](#) | [Arabic](#) | [Armenian](#) | [Cambodian](#) | [Chinese](#) | [Farsi](#) | [Hmong](#) | [Korean](#) | [Russian](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Vietnamese](#)

Youth Privacy Brochure Available in: [English](#)

CFT Parent Brochure

in: [English](#) | [Arabic](#) | [Armenian](#) | [Cambodian](#) | [Chinese](#) | [Farsi](#) | [Hmong](#) | [Korean](#) | [Russian](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Vietnamese](#)

Parent Privacy Brochure Available in: [English](#)