

CHAPTER VII - CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS

I. Philosophy and Purpose

What makes a Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting different from a case staffing or traditional approach to planning and decision-making in child welfare is that it applies the principles of family-centered practice and the System of Care (SOC) values to the group decision-making process.

The purpose of a Child and Family Team is to:

- Reach agreement on which identified child welfare issues will be addressed and how they will be addressed throughout the life of the case,
- Develop a Family Service Agreement that is created using the best ideas of the family, informal, and formal supports that the family believes in, the agency approves of, and also lessens risk and heightens safety for the child/youth and family, and
- Plan for how all participants will take part in, support, and implement the Family Service Agreement developed by the team.

A CFT meeting is a way to engage and partner with all the people who surround a family and to support the family in building a support network that will eventually sustain it after the case is closed. A CFT meeting is a way for county child welfare agencies to share responsibility for protecting children/youth with their families and the community.

It is the responsibility of the county child welfare worker and/or the facilitator to assure that the ideas of the family and its natural supports will be considered with the same weight as those of the professionals in the room. If the family and its natural supports are not given the power to make choices and put forth ideas, they may not feel respected or heard, and may find the meeting to be a waste of time. This may also affect the extent to which the family invests in the plan that results from the meeting, potentially adversely affecting child welfare outcomes.

A. Definition

The definition of a Child and Family Team has been developed and adopted by the North Carolina Collaborative for Children, Youth, and Families. This definition is broad, and should be used to guide the use of Child and Family Teams.

Child and Family Teams are family members and their community supports that come together to create, implement and update a plan with the child(ren), youth, and family. The plan builds on the strengths of the child(ren), youth and family and addresses their needs, desires and dreams.

At all times, Child and Family Teams shall be a family-led, youth-guided, and agency-supported process. The primary focus must always be the safety and well-being of the child(ren) and youth.

The use of the Child and Family Team is both a philosophy and a practice. As a philosophy, it reflects the belief that families can solve their own problems, most of the time, if they are provided the opportunity and support. No one knows a family's strengths, needs and challenges better than the family. The Child and Family Team decision-making approach is also a practice in that it describes the basic method by and through which [county child welfare agencies](#) seek to serve children, youth and families. A child welfare supervisor's participation in a CFT is an opportunity to assess the [county child welfare](#) worker's use of family-centered practice.

What constitutes a Child and Family Team Meeting

CFT meetings are structured, guided discussions with the family, the natural supports, and other team members about family strengths, needs, and problems and the impact they have on the safety, permanence, and well-being of the family's child(ren) and youth. The [meetings](#) share the following components:

- A clear but open-ended purpose,
- An opportunity for the family to be involved in decision-making and planning;
- Options for the family to consider and decisions for the family to make,
- The family's involvement in the development of specific safety or permanent plans and in the development of services and supports, [and](#)
- The outcome of the meeting will be reflected in the development or revision of a Family Services Agreement.

A CFT meeting shall always be tailored to the needs of the individual family with whom it is being held. Some of the things that shall be taken into account include:

- Are family members encouraged and assisted in inviting the natural supports that they feel will be helpful to developing their plan? (Note: In some cases it may be helpful to use genograms, ecomaps, and other tools to assist the family in identifying these people.)
- If the meeting is [concerning](#) a youth or young adult whose biological family is minimally involved in planning, has the youth been encouraged to bring his or her natural supports to the meeting?
- Is there a clear, open-ended purpose identified and shared with all participants?
- Has the family been consulted as to time, place, opening, and/or closing customs?
- At all times, is the family treated as a partner?
- Are family members safe before, during, and after the meeting?
- If the family/youth/child are involved in other planning meetings (i.e., Individualized Education Plan, Person Centered Plan, etc.) has every effort been made to invite everyone involved so that these multiple meetings can be combined?

When is a meeting NOT a CFT meeting?

- When a decision or plan has already been made and there is no room for input from family and natural supports either in deciding the plan or how to achieve the plan,
- When the family and natural supports (either biological or fictive) are not present, and
- When the goal of the meeting is primarily information gathering, rather than case planning. While these fact-finding meetings are important and useful, they are not CFT meetings, and they may hinder the family's trust in county child welfare staff and services and ultimately negatively affect child welfare outcomes.

B. Guiding Principles and Values

While each Child and Family Team meeting should be tailored to the needs of each family, there are certain principles that should guide the preparation and implementation of every Child and Family Team meeting. The first two sets of principles are those that North Carolina's Child Welfare system is built upon--the Principles of Partnership and the System of Care Principles. Those principles are as follows:

Family-Centered Practice	System of Care Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone Desires Respect • Everyone Needs to be Heard • Everyone has Strengths • Judgments can Wait • Partners Share Power • Partnership is a Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and Family Involvement • Interagency Collaboration • Cultural Competence • Individualized Strength-based Care • Community Based Services • Accountability

These principles should be integrated into every service to child(ren), youth, and families. This includes interactions with family members, as well as, community partners and internal partners.

The following principles are specific to Child and Family teams:

- Families are experts about themselves.
- Families and community members should be partners in determining solutions and making decisions.
- Meetings should be set up in a way that fits with and honors the family's culture.
- The dual role of the county child welfare worker is both to ensure child/youth safety and permanence, and to help the family.

Each time a CFT meeting is planned; these principles should be followed and explored to assure that the meeting is truly family-driven. Below is a table that illustrates how

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Family Centered Practice is applied in Child and Family Team meetings.

PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY CENTERED PRACTICE	APPLICATION IN CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS
<p>The principles of family-centered practice reflect the belief that the family is its own primary source of intervention and determines who comprises its members.</p>	<p>The parents or legal custodians of the child(ren) and youth decide with the <u>county child welfare</u> worker which family members and friends will be invited to the meeting. At most family-centered meetings the goal is to have the number of family members and natural supports exceed the number of service providers.</p>
<p>The family is viewed as a system within a larger social and environmental context. As a result, interventions focus on accessing the family's immediate and extended community in needs assessment, resource identification, and service delivery.</p>	<p>The <u>county child welfare</u> worker and the family work hard to widen the circle of support for the child(ren), youth, and family by preparing for the meeting and making sure the right people are invited. This may include relatives and other natural supports such as friends, pastors, and neighbors. At the meeting, the family and its natural supports are encouraged to share their concerns; identify the needs and resources as they see them; and come up with solutions that meet needs utilizing both informal and formal resources.</p>
<p>Family-centered practice respects the family member's right of self-management and <u>his or her</u> capabilities; and it assumes <u>he or she</u> has the capacity to grow and change when provided the proper supportive interventions.</p>	<p>Although the <u>county child welfare</u> worker must approve the <u>Temporary Parental Safety Agreement and/or the Family Service Agreement</u> and ensure it meets the safety, permanence, and well-being needs of the child(ren) and youth, the family is encouraged to create the Agreement. This is accomplished by the professionals first encouraging and considering the family's solutions prior to making their own recommendations. Depending on safety needs, private family time may be used to encourage the family's development and ownership of the service agreement.</p> <p><u>County child welfare</u> workers employ a strategy of asking for the family's input rather than telling them what to do.</p>
<p>Family-centered practice extends into the provision of Child Placement Services by involving the family in developing and implementing a plan for reunification; partnering with the <u>placement provider</u>; and if necessary, working to preserve the child(ren) and youth's placement in a new, permanent adoptive family.</p>	<p>Family-centered meetings include all of the people important in the life of the child(ren) and youth. This brings together biological, foster, and adoptive family members.</p>

PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY-CENTERED PRACTICE	APPLICATION IN CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS
Family-centered practice develops strengths, enhances potential, and empowers families to identify and resolve their own problems.	Family-centered meetings focus on and identify the strengths of the child(ren), youth, and family. Showing respect for the family makes it possible to develop Family Service Agreements that will work. Families are encouraged to identify their own solutions because it is assumed that they are the best experts on their family situations. Although the family identifies solutions and plans, the <u>county child welfare</u> worker must share the critical concerns and make sure the Family Service Agreement meets the child(ren) and youth's safety, permanence, and well-being needs.

II. Required Timeframes Throughout the Life of the Case

A. CPS Assessment

A CFT meeting may be held during a CPS Assessment to address issues of safety planning and to make initial plans and decisions about services. It, however, is not intended for investigatory purposes.

Extra care must be used in planning a CFT meeting during a CPS Assessment. Attention should be paid to what the true goal of the meeting is. Preparation of the family is very important if a CFT is being held during a CPS Assessment. The family, as well as, its supports and agency staff must all understand that the meeting is focused on the family making a plan for safety and services, rather than on information gathering in order to reach a case decision. If the goal is to gather information in order to make a case decision, this can be an important and helpful meeting, but it is not family driven and shall not be called a CFT meeting. If, on the other hand, the meeting is focused on how the family can make plans and decisions about the safety and well-being of the child and there is a real opportunity for the family to make the plan, then this is a good use of CFT meeting.

A CFT meeting shall be held during a CPS Assessment if:

- It appears that the child(ren) and youth may need to be taken into nonsecure custody, or
- If a parent's access to his or her child(ren) will be restricted. A parent's access may be restricted when any type of separation, supervision, or visitation intervention is suggested as a way to maintain safety for a child.

A CFT meeting shall be held to explore other safety arrangements and possible Temporary Safety Providers. If holding a CFT meeting is not possible as it would compromise the safety of the child or is not feasible due to the circumstances, then the child shall be made safe (through the filing of a non-secure petition or implementing a Temporary Parental Safety Agreement that involves separation or restriction) and a CFT shall be held as soon as possible.

Initial planning for a CFT shall begin during the [CPS Assessment](#) whenever it appears that the case will be opened for CPS In-Home Services. As described in Section III: Preparing for A Child and Family Team Meeting, engaging families in the CFT process and fully educating them about their rights and responsibilities takes several conversations and happens over time.

B. CPS In-Home Services

The CPS social worker shall engage the family and continue to discuss the CFT meeting planning that has begun. It is also important to begin identifying team members early. This can begin during the [CPS Assessment](#) when the Structured Decision Making tools and information gathered begin to indicate a need for involuntary services. At the face-to-face meeting within seven days following the case decision, the [county child welfare](#) worker shall continue the discussion about a CFT meeting that was begun during the [CPS Assessment](#). Input will be gathered from the parents as to who they want on their team. Child and Family Team meetings should be discussed during contacts thereafter to assist the family in identifying appropriate supports. A CFT meeting shall be held at the following points during the life of the case:

- When the family requests one,
- Within 30 days of a case decision of either Substantiated or Services [Needed](#),
- Quarterly while the case remains open for CPS In-Home Services (or as often as needed to update the service agreement),
- Critical decision points in the case (removal of a child(ren) and youth from the home or a change in [Temporary Safety Provider](#)),
- Any time a significant change in the [CPS In-Home Services Agreement](#) is needed to ensure the safety of the child(ren) and youth,
- Prior to any petition or court action,
- To address the unique characteristics, and possible resolutions for “stuck cases”,
- Prior to case closure, that are repeat recipients of CPS In-Home services. This CFT will address the plan the family will follow to prevent repeat maltreatment, and
- Case closure (when requested by the family). No [CPS In-Home Services](#) case should be closed before all appropriate collaterals have been contacted to assess the family’s progress from their view. While case closure should be guided by decrease in risk, it is important that before closure all members of the team be comfortable with the supports put in place to sustain the progress made by the family. If this is the first time the family has received CPS In-Home Services, the decision to hold a CFT meeting at case closure is left to the family, since it is their meeting. When the [county child welfare](#) worker begins to discuss case closure with the family, the family should be encouraged to think about whether it would like to have a closing CFT meeting.

C. Foster Care and Adoption

If the child(ren) and youth enters the legal custody of the county child welfare agency during a CPS Assessment, the worker shall immediately begin exploring who the family would like to have on the team. If a child(ren) and youth enters the custody of the county child welfare agency after having been served in CPS In-Home Services, a team should have already been formed, although there will be new members.

A CFT meeting shall be held at the following times:

- Within 30 days of entering the custody of the county child welfare agency,
- Within 60 days of entering the legal custody of the county child welfare agency,
- Within 90 days after the 60 day meeting, but not more than 150 days after entering the legal custody of the county child welfare agency,
- Every 6 months thereafter throughout the life of the case, and
- When there is a change in the plan or family circumstance and it is necessary to reconvene the team to discuss progress.

These timeframes are the same as the requirements for the Permanency Planning Action Team (PPAT) meeting. The goal of these timeframes is for a CFT to be held at any time that a Family Service Agreement is developed or reviewed. A CFT meeting could meet the requirements of a PPAT when family agrees to invite the Guardian Ad Litem, and a community representative. Because the PPAT requires that the GAL and a community representative attend the meeting, a discussion must be held with the family to explore the willingness to have these people at the CFT meeting. Often the family will agree to invite these people in order to be able to combine the meetings and to be able to address the concerns face to face. If the family agrees that these participants may attend, the meetings can be combined and the PPAT forms completed and signed at the CFT meeting. If, after discussing the benefits of combining the meetings and the concerns the family may have about including these participants in the meeting, the family does not agree to invite them, then the PPAT must still be held as required by federal regulations. It may be best if the meetings can be held consecutively so that the family can attend both without further interruption of the normal schedule.

It is also important at this stage of the case to continually educate any legal partners including judges, agency attorneys, Guardians ad Litem and parent attorneys, so that they understand the CFT meeting process. While it may seem that a court order makes a CFT meeting moot, if the judge understands the process, he or she can make orders that still allow for the team to decide how the orders will be enforced and what additional plans may be made to support the children's and youth's safety, permanence, and well-being.

A CFT meeting may be useful to discuss and strategize for concurrent planning options at various points throughout the life of a Child Placement or Adoption case. While primary plans must reflect reunification, early inclusion of family in understanding and planning for concurrent long-term placement options can be an appropriate use of the

CFT process. In this instance, families should be informed about and allowed to plan for all the options they feel can support permanence for the children. The development of concurrent plans to include reunification and a legal alternative with family input can often provide options that keep children connected to their culture, family, and history.

As the case progresses the team may change, especially if the primary goal changes. A CFT meeting shall still be held after reunification is no longer the goal. The team may not include the birth parents, but will still include the current placement provider, any possible placement providers who might assume custody, guardianship, or a potential adoptive family. A broad definition of family should be used in these cases and children/youth should always be consulted as to whom they would like to have on their team, and this is especially important if the birth parents are no longer attending the meetings.

D. Family Support

While there is no requirement for a CFT meeting during the provision of Family Support Services (low risk cases), they can often be useful. A family that has accepted these voluntary services will benefit from bringing its natural supports together to make a plan for achieving the goals. This type of meeting will strengthen the support network that will sustain the family after the agency has closed its case.

III. Preparing for a Child and Family Team Meeting

Preparation is vital to the success of the CFT meeting. This preparation shall begin as soon as possible in the life of the case (preferably during the CPS Assessment) and continue through the meeting and beyond, as subsequent meetings are planned. The following areas are a guide for effectively and efficiently preparing for a CFT that meets the principles of partnership and System of Care values.

A. Introduction of CFT meeting to family

Early introduction to the e CFT process allows all involved parties an opportunity to begin preparing for the meeting.

Families are often initially resistant to inviting others to their meeting due to issues of privacy, embarrassment, safety, prior bad relationships and many other reasons. Introducing the idea early leaves time for the county child welfare worker to explore these concerns and support the family in developing ways to remove these barriers. It is imperative that the family's concerns about inviting others be discussed and solutions explored, as having all important supports present at CFT meetings leads to better outcomes for children and youth.

B. Referral for CFT Meeting

Many counties employ a referral system for CFT meetings. This may mean that a written referral will be made for facilitation of a CFT meeting; or a verbal referral may be

used. During the referral process, it is imperative that the facilitator be given the information necessary to prepare for the meeting. At a minimum, the following information should be given to the facilitator when making a referral:

- Why the agency is currently involved with the family,
- Any safety issues that may affect the family or other participants during the meeting,
- The strengths of the family,
- Critical concerns, for which the agency has some non-negotiable needs;
- General idea of when family is available for the meeting,
- Proposed focus of meeting (this will be finalized after consultation with facilitator, family and other team members), and
- Number and age of children, and any special circumstances that would affect child(ren)'s attendance.

C. Who Will Attend

While parental wishes concerning who is invited or not invited shall be considered and respected, it is also important that the county child welfare worker use diligence in supporting the family as it expands the circle that will sustain it as wide as possible. A broad and comprehensive circle of support is more likely to keep the child(ren) and youth and family safe. Widening the circle involves a great deal of skill in working with families who are reluctant or resistant. When parents or caretakers are reluctant to hold a family meeting, county child welfare workers must seek to understand what this reluctance is about and how the safety and comfort of the parents or caretakers can be achieved while still ensuring the presence of people critical to the lives of the child(ren) and youth. It should always be remembered that while this is the family's meeting, the general goal, is always the safety and well-being of the child(ren). As county child welfare agencies work to widen the circle, the child(ren)'s wishes must also be considered. There may sometimes be a conflict between who the parent is comfortable with inviting and who the child may desire to have present. This is an area that should be explored when planning who into invite, and there must be a balance between the parents' wishes and those of the child(ren), for whom this meeting is being held. This is something that may need to take place over several conversations.

Some questions that might be asked at this point:

- What are the hopes for the meeting?
- Who can help achieve your hopes for the meeting?
- What concerns are present about participating in a CFT meeting?
- What could be done to alleviate that concern?
- What concerns are present about a specific person attending?
- Is there something that would alleviate the concern about that person attending?
- Who is trusted?
- Who is called when there are struggles or when advice is needed?
- Who is able to help explain things?
- Who has been there in the past?

- Who are the people the child/ren and youth need, trust, and love?
- Who is supportive?

By definition, a CFT meeting is a group process. It requires that the circle of influence and decision-making involves those people most important in the life of the child(ren) and youth. This could include numerous family members such as parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, but also such people as neighbors, friends, mentors, pastors, godparents, and other family-like contacts. Agency staff must keep an open mind when families are deciding whom to invite. When there are concerns about a particular person, the agency must evaluate what these concerns are and then discuss them with the family. Together the agency and family can weigh the advantages and disadvantages of this person's involvement. Often, with some thought, the concerns can be alleviated and the benefit to the family can be realized.

Invitations should be over the phone or in person by the county child welfare worker or designated agency staff in order to facilitate a thorough explanation of the CFT meeting process; the purpose of the meeting; and the role each person will play in the meeting. A written follow-up may be helpful to reinforce the purpose and ground rules, as well as give a reminder of time and place, particularly for the first CFT meeting.

Absent parents (may or may not be non-custodial parents) shall be involved in the CFT meeting unless there is a valid conflict or safety issue, and this must be clearly documented in the case record. The county child welfare agency shall use alternate methods to involve the absent parent in case planning if it is determined that the parent cannot participate in the CFT meeting due to a conflict or safety issue. Some alternate methods that might be used include:

- The absent parent can participate over the phone,
- The absent parent can send written concerns and ideas for case planning,
- The absent parent can choose a proxy who will represent his or her concerns and wishes,
- A separate plan can be completed with the absent parent,
- The absent parent should be given the opportunity to share in the case planning and should be encouraged to do so throughout the life of the case, and
- In cases where there are volatile relationships among family members, one strategy that has been successful in some cases is the use of meetings done in "stages". This involves having one group of family and supports meet to discuss ideas for addressing safety and risk; they would then be excused and the other family group would discuss ideas. If possible, both groups are then brought together to look at the common areas and finalize the plan.

Using Mentors or Support Persons

Family members, child and adult, often want and need a support person or mentor to help them through the process. They should be offered the opportunity to have a support person, mentor, or both.

A support person is usually someone whom the family members select from its own network such as a relative or friend. Support persons require preparation for his or her role so that he or she stays by the family member throughout the CFT process without taking over for the family member. Because he or she is already part of the family member's network, he or she feels more like family at the meeting and continues to engage with the person whom he or she is supporting over the long term.

Unlike the support person, a mentor does not need to be someone the parent, child(ren), or youth knows but should be someone who has personal experience participating in CFT meetings. While some communities have an organized group of parents who have been through this process and may be willing to fill this role, many communities will need to develop and nurture a group of mentors. Families who have successfully completed work with the county child welfare agency or another agency can be asked if they would be willing to talk with other families about their experiences and perhaps attend meetings with families to support the family through the process. While parents, child(ren), and youth will also draw support from family, friends, and others they choose to invite, the mentor has the added advantage of having successfully participated in a CFT meeting and can provide guidance in that area. Mentors can be very helpful in the preparation for a meeting, in that they can assist the county child welfare worker in explaining the process and helping the family develop its team. The role of the mentor should be thoroughly explained to the family and only used if the parent chooses. The role of the mentor will be different in each case and will depend on the needs and desires of the family, child(ren), or youth. A secondary benefit to this strategy is that it can further the confidence and strength of the mentor themselves.

Involving Children and Youth

Involving children and youth in the CFT meeting is a critical and complicated issue. However, it is not a question about whether the child(ren) and youth should be involved in the process, but rather how they should be involved in the process. Children and youth often have information to offer and can benefit from seeing the process of the meeting. This allows them to know that many people care about them and are working together for their benefit. It is important to remember that while it is natural to want to protect children and youth from hearing traumatic details, it will be helpful to remember that they have already lived through much of what will be discussed. There are several things to take into consideration when deciding how the child(ren) and youth will be involved in a CFT meeting.

- The child(ren) and youth's own wishes shall be the first consideration. It is important that children and youth know that although they may be mandated to receive services, they still drive the planning process. An honest conversation is the best way to achieve this.
- The child(ren) and youth's developmental and cognitive abilities shall be considered. This will be important in deciding how much of the meeting and in which parts of the meeting the child(ren) and youth might participate.

- If the child(ren) and youth is in counseling, the therapist shall be consulted about what kind of involvement is best.

Having the child(ren) and youth take part in a CFT meeting will not look the same in every meeting. There are many options about how they can participate. Below are a few suggestions:

- Full participation in the entire meeting--preferably with a support person and/or mentor,
- Partial participation in the beginning or the end. Some children and youth will want to tell the group what their concerns and wishes are; others may be more interested in the outcome so that they will understand what to expect,
- Attendance, but with little participation. Some children and youth may want to be present but may not be comfortable speaking. In this case they can have someone speak for them or write a letter,
- Participation without attendance. This also can be achieved in several ways. The child(ren) and youth may choose a spokesperson to speak for them or read a letter they have written. The child(ren) and youth could record a message for the group or perhaps be available by phone,
- For very young, pre-verbal children, having their picture in the room can be a powerful way to keep the meeting focused on the child.

When a child and/or youth participates in a CFT meeting, it will be very important to prepare them, as the adults are prepared. Determination of the child(ren) and/or youth's level of participation and of the child(ren) and/or youth's input must be clearly documented in the case record.

Service Providers

Various service providers can be asked to attend the meeting to explain the services that they can offer the family, youth, and/or children. For this reason, which providers will be invited shall be decided after a discussion with the family about the needs that have been identified during the CPS Assessment and the types of services the family feels would be helpful. These service providers may or may not attend the entire meeting, but will be invited at a specific time to provide information for the team members as the plan is developed. If a service provider becomes a part of the plan, he or she would be asked to sign the Family Service Agreement along with the family members, county child welfare worker, and natural supports.

D. Preparing to Hold the Child and Family Team meeting

Preparing the family and participants

The preparation of all participants is very important to the success of a CFT meeting. Counties will differ in regards to who is responsible for this preparation. Some will have the facilitator do much of the preparation, while in other counties it will fall to the assigned social worker. The most important thing is that the preparation be made a

priority. A meeting shall not take place without proper preparation. Below is a guide to some of the things that shall be addressed with participants before the meeting is held.

- Is there a clear and open-ended purpose for the meeting? In general, the purpose will usually be about the safety, well-being, and permanence of the child(ren) and/or youth involved. However, the purpose should be crafted specifically for each family's unique needs and circumstances. The stated purpose should be free of jargon and acronyms and easily understood by all participants. The purpose should remain as open as possible leaving room for the group to discuss goals and solutions. If there are safety issues that must be addressed in the purpose, those should be clearly identified and shared with the family before the meeting.
- Do the participants agree to the purpose? When developing the purpose, the family shall be consulted. If the family and its natural supports cannot agree on the purpose, they are not likely to invest and follow through on the plan. All participants--family members and service providers alike--should understand the purpose prior to the meeting.
- Do all participants have a clear understanding of the ground rules? Ground rules should be discussed in advance so that all participants know what to expect and how to prepare to present their concerns. Families should be consulted on what ground rules they want at their meeting. If a county child welfare agency has a set of ground rules already prepared, families should be given the opportunity to add to or modify those rules within the bounds of safety.
- Do all participants have a clear understanding of confidentiality and informed consent? Family members need to understand their rights to privacy and the limits of confidentiality. Participants should understand what will be discussed and consent to the purpose and the process.
- Do all vulnerable participants have a support person in the meeting and afterward? It is important that anyone who may feel at risk, especially victims, have adequate support before, during, and after the meeting. In some cases, it might be helpful to have the therapist for the child(ren), youth, and/or parent on stand-by in case they are needed after the meeting.
- Does each participant have a clear understanding of his or her role in the meeting? Each participant, including both family and the natural supports, should have a good understanding of their role in the meeting, which might be different from the role they are used to having. Specific descriptions of these roles will be discussed later in this chapter.
- Do all participants appreciate the importance of full disclosure during the meeting? Service providers and other professionals involved in the meeting should be educated on the importance of fully disclosing their concerns with the family in a straightforward, respectful manner. It should be made clear that any concern about the family should be shared in the meeting, as opposed to before or after the meeting.
- Do all participants know who will be involved in the meeting? Each participant should know ahead of time who is invited to the meeting.
- How will the child(ren) and youth be involved in the meeting? This needs to be explored before the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

- Is there a need for an interpreter for any of the participants? If anyone will need an interpreter, those arrangements will need to be made in advance of the meeting.

Preparation of the Social Worker

CFT meetings require that all participants be properly prepared. For the county child welfare worker, this means examining his or her own beliefs and values and being aware of how they might influence the work he or she does with families. The values of the county child welfare worker should never be imposed upon the family. In order to achieve this, it is first necessary that the county child welfare worker be aware of those values, and then plan for how he or she will assure that he or she does not press them on the family.

Is the county child welfare worker/agency representative open and willing to consider the family's ideas at this time? Sometimes the facts of the case determine decisions and actions that need to be taken. If a decision is already made that is non-negotiable, it is imperative that the meeting not be held for the purpose of making/justifying that particular decision or simply getting the family to agree with it. Likewise, if there is only one outcome that is potentially acceptable to the agency representative, then it is likely not a good time for a CFT meeting. This should be a rare occurrence. This area should be explored between the county child welfare worker, the county child welfare supervisor, and facilitator when developing the goal of the meeting. Remember that family-centered practice is all about choice and empowerment. Again, county child welfare workers will need to be intentional in their preparation for their meeting and pay particular attention to looking for ways to support the family's ideas so that they can be implemented whenever possible.

Also in preparation for the meeting, the county child welfare worker/agency representative should prepare for how he or she will present both the strengths and needs of the family in a respectful and non-judgmental fashion.

Agency Preparation

Effective and productive Child and Family Teams that result in successful outcomes depend upon having the right partners at the table. Sometimes the need for people to be present outside of the family members and the family's own circle of natural support is not necessary. Often though, many of the families served by the county child welfare agency are also involved with or need to be connected with other formal and informal supports within the community. Using a family-centered System of Care approach to coordinate service design and delivery can be an important tool for developing strong mutually beneficial relationships with community, agency, and family partners. Employing a System of Care approach means building community collaboration, which increases active and ongoing participation in Child and Family Team meetings and results in better outcomes for families. With all the right partners in attendance, Child and Family Team meetings can produce effective, family-driven plans, reduce duplication of

services, streamline service delivery, and simplify the number of meetings the family has to attend and plans the family has to complete.

Agencies might utilize many resources for building support for Child and Family Teams and improving interagency collaboration within the community. Some that might be considered are:

- County or regional local community collaboratives with formal and informal partner agencies and family members whose purpose is to assess community needs, help coordinate services for families, and reduce barriers to service delivery within the community,
- Regional System of Care Coordinators located in every Local Management Entity/[Managed Care Organization](#),
- The School Based Child and Family Team Support Initiative within identified schools,
- Juvenile Court Counselors and the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council in each region,
- Community Child Protection Teams, [and](#)
- Other local inter-agency groups in your area.

Bringing these groups together to pool ideas, resources and meetings can improve outcomes for families while easing the burden on separate agencies.

By developing a System of Care in a community, the number of meetings required of professionals, many who are members of more than one of the above mentioned groups (or similar groups), can also be reduced.

E. Logistics and Safety

Logistics

CFT meetings provide many opportunities to individualize the process for each family. While many of these choices may seem minor, they are crucial to successful outcomes for the parents, youth, and children for whom these meetings are held.

Where the meeting is held can be one of the first decisions that really allow^s the family [members](#) to feel that this meeting will be theirs. The family may have an idea where [it](#) would like to hold the meeting, but [if not](#), the agency should develop a varied list of resources that can be offered to the family as a location for the meeting. Agencies can prepare themselves by developing relationships with other community agencies and groups that can provide space for CFT meetings. Some ideas to be explored include:

- Churches,
- Community Centers,
- Family Resource Center,
- Schools,
- The family's home or the home of a team member,

- Therapist or doctor office,
- Library,
- YMCA, and
- Cooperative Extension.

When the meeting is held can be very important to the family members, as they may not be able to easily take time off from work, and they may be working around activities and perhaps appointments that are part of the Family Service Agreement. Equally important in these considerations is the schedule of the child(ren) and youth. If the child(ren) and youth is involved in afterschool activities or is working, the meeting should be held at a time that does not conflict with these important events. CFT meetings shall always be held at a time that takes all of these issues into account. County child welfare workers shall work with the family to decide on a time that meets the family's needs.

Transportation and childcare may need to be arranged for some participants. Childcare is important not only for the children involved, but also for any natural supports who may want to attend but need assistance with childcare. It is critical that support persons and mentors not be kept from attending due to these logistical issues. Agencies may want to develop resources for assisting in these areas in advance. This may be an opportunity for the community to be involved with the CFT meeting by assisting in this area.

Addressing the special needs of all participants is another meaningful way that the agency illustrates its commitment to collaborating with the family and the natural supports. The special needs of any participant should be addressed. These may include making sure that the location is accessible for participants with mobility issues; providing a speaker phone for participants that are unable to attend in person; and planning for the developmental or language challenges of all participants.

In addition to planning for these practical issues, other elements are crucial to engaging families. In planning for a CFT meeting, a discussion should be had with the family about traditions or customs that the family might want to include in the meeting. This might be a song, a prayer, a poem, or remarks by a family leader that the family might want to include in either the beginning or end of the meeting. Many agencies find it helpful to have some refreshments available during the meeting. Setting a welcoming atmosphere at this stressful time for the family helps establish trust and promotes engagement; thereby enhancing the meeting's effectiveness. Again, the family should have input into what food or drinks will be served. Supporting the family in thinking about these details adds to the development of partnership between the county child welfare agency and the family.

Planning for Safety

It is vital that participant safety (both that of family and professional participants) be paramount in minds of the county child welfare worker and facilitator. In deciding whether to go forward with a CFT meeting, the facilitator and county child welfare worker shall consider with the participants how to ensure that safety is not compromised

by the CFT meeting process. A CFT meeting should not go forward if participants' safety is a concern.

In planning for safety at the CFT meeting, both physical and psychological safety should be considered. Safety cannot be accurately assessed without an in-depth discussion with all participants in advance of the meeting. The following are some guidelines for assuring everyone's safety before, during, and after a CFT meeting.

- a) Be sure the planning process for CFT meetings includes the question of whether there is a history of violence amongst family members. This question should be on the referral form, if one is used and a matter that the county child welfare worker, the county child welfare supervisor, facilitator, and family members discuss in planning for the meeting.
- b) Be sure the planning process for CFT meetings includes the question of whether there are any court-sanctioned protective orders between family members. Ask family members if there is a protective order. Do not conduct a meeting that violates protective orders. This may mean that a perpetrator cannot attend a CFT meeting. It may be helpful to consult an attorney about whether a person who is the subject of a protective order may participate by phone. In some cases involving domestic or family violence, there will need to be separate CFT meetings held in order to develop Family Service Agreements for both parties or the participation of the alleged offender and non-offending parent can be staggered at the meeting.
- c) Discuss the history of both conflict and violence with the family members prior to the meeting. To assess volatility and plan for safety at the meeting, the county child welfare worker and facilitator should ask questions such as:
 - What is needed to help make the meeting go smoothly?
 - What happens when people in the family disagree about something?
 - How do family members deal with feeling worried?
 - How do family members deal with feeling angry?
 - Are there any worries for the meeting? What are they?
 - Are there any concerns that people may get upset at the meeting? What might cause that to happen? What might happen if they do?
 - Is there anybody who does not get along with anybody else? What is that like? What happens?
 - Has anyone in the family ever hit or hurt anyone else? What happened?
 - Is there a history of violence in the family?
 - What ground rules should be set for the meeting in order for everyone to be safe and feel comfortable?
 - What can be done to help make sure that everyone is safe and feels comfortable?

- d) Where there is a history of violence or a concern for potential violence, make special arrangements, including:
- Have the purpose of the meeting include making a safety plan for all family members,
 - Choose a safe, neutral location,
 - Have support people or mentors for threatened or potentially volatile family members,
 - Use a co-facilitator,
 - Create specific ground rules ahead of time, along with consequences,
 - Have some members participate through pre-meeting interviews, written statements, or conference calls, instead of being physically present at the CFT meeting,
 - Arrange for a private check-in after the meeting with any vulnerable participants,
 - Arrange for vulnerable family members or those in conflict with one another to arrive at and leave the meeting separately,
 - Arrange for vulnerable family members and participants to leave the meeting escorted by staff or security personnel,
 - Arrange for the [county child welfare](#) worker to do a follow up face-to-face visit with vulnerable family members within 24 hours of the meeting,
 - Arrange for the presence of security [and/or](#) law enforcement, and
 - Decide not to convene the meeting.

Special Considerations

- a) **Cases Involving Domestic Violence**
- b) **Cases involving domestic violence can be very complicated and must be treated with the appropriate care. The best source of information for what needs to be addressed is the family. For specific policy on holding CFT meetings in cases of domestic violence, please see Chapter VIII, [Family Services Manual Volume I; Section 1409 - Domestic Violence](#) in which the birth family is no longer available or involved**

“Family” is a term that should be defined by the members. This is especially true when working with cases where the birth parents are no longer involved. When this is the case, there shall be an in-depth conversation with the child [\(ren\) and/or](#) youth about whom [he or she considers](#) as family. Knowing that the people chosen for the team are likely to sustain the child [\(ren\) and/or](#) youth after the agency is no longer involved, it is important to keep an open mind and be creative in finding ways to support not only the child [\(ren\) and/or](#) youth but also those seen as family.

This important conversation is not a one-time situation. It is an ongoing conversation that includes not only exploring those who are currently important in the child(ren)'s and/or youth's life but also those who have been supportive and important to the child(ren) and/or youth through the years.

IV. Using a Facilitator

A. When a facilitator is required

A facilitator, who is neither the county child welfare worker for the family nor the supervisor of that county child welfare worker, shall be used in cases with a current risk rating of high. Use of a neutral facilitator is best practice for all CFT meetings. While a facilitator is not required in moderate risk cases, it is best practice as there are many benefits to a facilitated meeting. Below is a list of circumstances in which a facilitator might be especially helpful:

- Cases in which there is conflict or volatility,
- Large or complicated family systems,
- Difficult issues in accessing family members due to distance, incarceration, disability or other factors,
- Strained relationships between family members and agency workers,
- Complex situations such as those involving multi-generational abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, substance abuse, domestic violence, or mental illness,
- Extensive cultural and language differences between the county child welfare worker and the family or within the family system

B. The Role of the Facilitator

It is critical that experienced staff be chosen as facilitators. Facilitators outside the agency may be used as long as they understand the process and issues of developing safe and acceptable plans. (See the section on Required Training below.) Because facilitators play such a key role in the CFT meeting, careful consideration should be given to the skills required to fulfill this position. A successful facilitator must be able to:

- Manage conflict,
- Foster participation by all,
- Remain neutral and fair,
- Promote collaboration and consensus,
- Engage in the meeting while remaining outside of the actual planning,
- Engage people with a wide range of values, interests, and cultures, and
- Build trust in the process.

In addition to managing the meeting, the facilitator models the respectful and inclusive process of the team decision-making model. Here are some of the specific tasks of a facilitator:

- The facilitator builds trust in the team process,
- Makes sure that all points of view and all participants are heard,
- Assures that all participants understand what is being discussed,
- Encourages the team to generate creative ways to keep child(ren) and youth safe and maintain family attachments, while building consensus among the group,
- Skilled facilitators help individual [county child welfare](#) workers see the team decision-making process as a way to support their own work and as an active resource for their families,
- Helps identify common ground among diverse individuals so they can focus the group on building the family's strengths, negotiating services, and developing safety plans, and
- Assures that the meeting is with the family, not about the family.

In some counties, the facilitator may take on some of the preparation duties. This can be particularly helpful when there are serious safety considerations. Check [the county child welfare](#) agency protocol to determine what role the facilitator plays in [individual counties](#).

V. Holding the Meeting

While each CFT meeting will be unique to that family on that particular day, most meetings will share some elements. Below [is](#) a description of these elements. Remember that this is a guide and that each meeting should be planned specifically for the family that will be attending.

A. Elements/Phases of the Meeting

1) Welcome – The facilitator and/or family members make opening remarks. This is when a special song, prayer, poem or other words from the family might be used to honor a family tradition. This is also an opportunity for the facilitator to recognize family or community leaders, and to greet each team member in order to begin engagement of the team.

2) Introductions - Everyone introduces [himself or herself](#) and identifies [his or her](#) relationship to the family, child(ren), and youth.

3) Review of Purpose - The facilitator makes sure that all are in agreement with the purpose of coming together. Sometimes the written purpose is revised or added to at this point. It can be helpful to have the agreed upon purpose posted where all can see, such as on a flipchart or white board.

4) Ground Rules – The facilitator makes sure that everyone is in agreement with the ground rules as written and planned for with the family. The general ground rules should not come as a surprise to anyone as they should have been discussed during preparation. Going over the ground rules at the beginning of the meeting emphasizes them and allows for adding any rules that the family may see as important. Ground

rules usually include versions of the following and can be specifically crafted to meet the group's needs:

- One person talks at a time.
- Be courteous to each other.
- Everyone has a right to his or her own opinions and feelings.
- Agreement with all that is said is not needed.
- Everything said here will be kept confidential and private to the family members. No information will be shared outside of this meeting except:
 - (a) Any threats to harm oneself or others,
 - (b) Anything requiring a new report of child abuse, neglect, and /or dependency;
and
 - (c) General information that will be included in the written agreement and given to all the participants.

5) Confidentiality – The facilitator makes sure that everyone understands and agrees to the ground rules about privacy, confidentiality, and limits of confidentiality. All county child welfare agencies shall use a written release of information form, and have all participants sign a confidentiality agreement.

6) Information Sharing - All participants are invited to identify the strengths seen in the family and the concerns for child(ren), youth, and family safety, permanence, and well-being. The facilitator should encourage participants to list strengths first. The county child welfare worker and service providers report about the circumstances that have led to the involvement with the family and to the purpose of the CFT meeting. During this phase of the meeting, it is important for county child welfare workers to be able to respectfully communicate matters that cannot be negotiated. These non-negotiables may be the result of a prior court order or an agency decision. For instance, a relative with a history of child sexual abuse cannot serve as the caretaker for the children.

7) Options to Consider for Addressing Safety and Risk of the Child(ren) and Youth - All participants are invited to brainstorm solutions and ideas for planning. Professionals are encouraged to identify options for the family to consider rather than prescribing the agreement and making recommendations. If a suggested solution is not acceptable for any reason, the county child welfare worker should carefully explain why it is not acceptable. This full disclosure is important, and no suggestions should be dismissed without everyone having a clear understanding of why they cannot be used. Often it can be helpful to explore options more fully with the family before determining that they are not feasible. When pushed to develop options, families either determine themselves that it is not the best option or develop plans that are far more creative and resourceful than those provided by the agency alone.

8) Finalizing the Agreement - Sometimes private family time is used so that the family and the natural supports can develop a plan in privacy without the facilitator and service providers present. Private time would be planned ahead of time with clear expectations and assurances for participant safety. Private time may sometimes jumpstart a family

who seems to want to let the professionals take the lead; or it may be especially helpful when the family and [county child welfare](#) agency have a history of tense relationships or when wide discrepancies in culture exist between the family and [county child welfare](#) agency representatives. If private family time is not utilized, the facilitator should encourage the family to identify [its](#) own solutions. The [county child welfare](#) worker provides feedback to the family about its solutions and works until a plan is developed that makes sense to the family and is approved by the [county child welfare](#) worker. The finalized agreement is written up, and should be signed by anyone who has a role in the agreement, and copies should be distributed to all participants.

9) Getting Feedback - Using written forms or other formats for collecting information, the facilitator seeks feedback from participants about their experience in the meeting process. This information is used to promote learning and enhance meeting effectiveness.

10) Closing - The facilitator and/or family members make closing remarks, sometimes involving family tradition. It is important to thank all participants for their time and assure that all participants who have tasks on the Agreement have a copy of the completed document. At this point in the meeting, there should be a discussion of when and where the next meeting will be held, even if the plans are tentative at the time. The facilitator should also remind all participants that anyone can ask that the team be brought back together if the plan is not being implemented or if new issues arise. The family should be given the option of making the closing remarks, and this should be discussed during preparation.

11) Follow-Up – Once an agreement is made and approved by the [county child welfare](#) agency, it is equally important that there be follow-up to assure that the plan is being implemented. The [Temporary Parental Safety Agreement or Family Services Agreement](#) that is developed by the team should be a working document that is used on each visit with the family to assess progress and identify barriers to the plan. It may be necessary to bring the team back together sooner than planned if it becomes clear that the Agreement is not working or if new issues arise. Follow-up should be made with all participants of the meeting to assess how each feels the plan is going. In high risk or complex situations, it is advisable to set a tentative follow-up date for the CFT meeting.

B. Roles of the Participants

Each participant at a CFT meeting is a valued partner working toward child(ren), youth, and family safety, permanence, and wellbeing. Each participant also has a distinct role and function.

Family members contribute knowledge and wisdom about family resources, concerns, history, relationships, and culture. They provide long-term involvement. Their role at a family-centered meeting is to create a plan for safety, permanence, and well-being that works for them and can be approved of by the [county child welfare](#) agency.

Children and youth are the focus of the family-centered meeting and should be closely involved in the process. The following questions will help the family members and the [county child welfare](#) worker make decisions about how the child(ren) and youth should be involved:

- How old is the child(ren)/youth?
- How does the child(ren)/youth want to participate?
- What special needs are there to consider about the child(ren)'s/youth's involvement (cognitive, behavioral, developmental, emotional, etc.)?
- How does the family want the child(ren)/youth to participate?
- Is there potential for the process to be helpful for the child(ren)/youth?
- What kinds of supports need to be put in place for the child(ren)/youth to participate safely?

Children and youth should be present at the meetings whenever possible. If it is decided that child(ren)/youth will not attend the whole meeting or part of it, the following are some options for ensuring that their views are heard:

- Audio/video tapes,
- Designating a spokesperson for the child(ren) and youth,
- Conference calls,
- Writing letters/drawing pictures ahead of time,
- Participating in only parts of the meeting,
- Having pictures of the child(ren) and youth at the meeting,
- Empty chair technique to remind the group of the child(ren)/youth (This is simply a technique in which a chair is left empty at the table to signify the child(ren)'s/youth's place at the table. This serves to remind all participants that the child/youth is the reason everyone is at the table.)

Extended family, friends, and natural supports also contribute knowledge and wisdom about family resources, concerns, history, relationships, and culture. They provide long-term involvement. Their role at a CFT meeting is to help create and identify resources for a plan for safety, permanence and well-being that works for the family and can be authorized by the [county child welfare](#) agency. The family members, [the county child welfare](#) worker, and [the](#) facilitator will decide together which extended family, friends, and natural supports should be included in the CFT meeting.

The [county child welfare](#) worker with case management responsibility contributes knowledge about agency and community resources and relays both the strengths seen in the family system and the critical concerns that must be addressed in the family's agreement. The [county child welfare](#) worker may be called upon to answer questions about agency interventions or provide information. It is very important for the [county child welfare](#) worker to be able to share information about strengths and concerns in a manner that is honest and respectful. This may include honesty about non-negotiable matters about which the [county child welfare agency](#) does not feel there is flexibility in regards to safety of the child(ren)/youth. Clearly identifying the mandate as ensuring

that children/youth are cared for in a safe manner can help establish the need for identifying these non-negotiables. It will be important for the county child welfare worker to examine closely his or her ability to allow true input by the family regarding how to meet the safety mandate. The county child welfare worker must approve and support any Temporary Parental Safety Agreement or Family Service Agreement that goes forward from the CFT meeting. The county child welfare worker must approve the Temporary Parental Safety Agreement or the Family Service Agreement in terms of meeting children's/youth's needs for safety, permanence, and well-being and authorizing agency resources to carry out the course of action.

Other service providers inside the county child welfare agency and in the community also contribute knowledge about resources and relay both the strengths seen in the family system and concerns for family members. They are encouraged to provide information and options for the family to consider rather than make recommendations.

The facilitator contributes knowledge and skills related to making sure that the meeting process is safe and fair. While the responsibility of preparing family members and other participants may fall to the county child welfare worker in many counties, the facilitator will make sure that each participant is heard and given the same consideration as others during the meeting. The facilitator guides the process of the meeting but does not participate in the decision-making, make recommendations, or offer opinions.

VI. Documenting a Child and Family Team Meeting

The documentation of the CFT meeting is as important as the meeting itself. While the plan that comes out of the meeting should be documented on the Temporary Parental Safety Agreement or the Family Services Agreement, the process of the CFT meeting should also be documented in the case record. The following are the areas that need to be captured:

- The introduction of CFT meeting to the family--when and how CFT meetings were explained to the family,
- The development of the team members. During discussions with the family about the CFT meeting process, how did the family and county child welfare worker work together to identify possible team members? Were there disagreements, and if so, how were they resolved? The identification of each team member shall be recorded in the documentation along with their relationship to the family,
- How the child(ren)/youth's level of participation and input was determined shall be clearly documented in the case record. How absent parents were involved and his or her subsequent level of participation shall be clearly documented in the case record. If the absent parent did not participate due to safety concerns, those shall also be clearly and objectively documented,
- The preparation of all team members. It is important to document that all team members were prepared by having their role explained, the focus of the meeting discussed, and for family members, their ideas for how the meeting should look (for example: opening and closing rituals, food, where and when

the meeting will be held),

- The process of the actual meeting. Documentation must include a good summary of what happened during the CFT. It should be clear to anyone reading the documentation what the strengths of the family are; what each participant feels is the best way to address the issues before the team; and how decisions were made about what will actually be in the plan,
- The plan for follow-up. How will team members know that the plan is being implemented accurately? Who will follow up and what will happen if the plan is not working?
- When will the next meeting be held?
- What worked and did not work in the meeting and how will those issues be addressed in the next meeting in order to improve the meeting when necessary?

The team will answer these questions together.

Documentation should be ongoing from the first time the CFT meeting is introduced to the family through the completion of the meeting. For each subsequent meeting, documentation must include the identification of any new team members, the development of the focus of the meeting, and the actual processes and outcomes of the meetings.

Documentation of CFT Meetings must be completed on the Child and Family Team Meeting Documentation Instrument.

VII. Required Training

As part of the child welfare policy and practice expectations, Child and Family Team meetings are an integral part of how child welfare services are conducted with families and community partners in North Carolina. CFT meetings are distinct from other meetings and the meetings can be quite complex. In recognition of this, the following trainings are required.

A. Social Workers and Supervisors

All child welfare social workers and child welfare supervisors hired on or after February 1, 2008, shall complete Step by Step: An Introduction to Child and Family Teams.

Child welfare social workers and child welfare supervisors hired before February 1, 2008, shall meet this requirement in one of two ways. Either:

- Successful completion of Step by Step: An Introduction to Child and Family Teams, OR

- Successful completion of both Setting the Stage for Family-Centered Meetings: County Orientation and Caution: Family Centered Meeting ahead! A guide for Social Workers Attending Child and Family Teams. (Note: These two former courses have been combined into the current course, Step by Step: An Introduction to Child and Family Teams.)

If either of these options have been completed before this policy was implemented, then the requirement has been met.

B. Facilitators

For anyone taking on the role and responsibility of facilitating Child and Family Teams in cases where the risk is high, they shall have the following training--Anchors Away! How to Navigate Child and Family Teams: The Role of the Facilitator. If facilitation duties began on or after February 1, 2008, then this requirement shall be met within the first 12 months of employment.

This training is also strongly recommended for those facilitating meetings in cases where the risk is moderate.

For additional training on Child and Family Teams from a cross agency community perspective, a county [agency](#) may request training through the Technical Assistance and Learning Support (TALS) provided by the Center for Family Engagement and North Carolina State University.

This training utilizes a System of Care approach to introduce family, agency, and community partners to the purpose and importance of child and family team meetings, as well as their role in the meetings.

All trainings sponsored by the North Carolina Division of Social Services can be accessed at <http://www.ncswlearn.org>.