



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT  
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

Manual:	CP&P	Child Protection & Permanency	Effective Date:
Volume:	III	Case Management	
Chapter:	B	Case Planning	12-20-2016
Subchapter:	5	Family Engagement	
Issuance:	500	<b>Family Team Meeting</b>	

### Purpose:

This issuance establishes policies and procedures for conducting Family Team Meetings (FTM). In order to strengthen families, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) is committed to teaming with families to support them in achieving their goals.

### Authority:

- N/A

### Policy:

#### A) Engaging the Family

Through the FTM process, CP&P Workers must collaborate with the family to develop a plan to meet the family's goals and the Division's goals.

#### B) Teaming In-Home Cases

Teaming is the process in which CP&P and families plan together regarding the case situation. This encompasses families with both children who are in-home and out-of-home. CP&P staff must partner with our families to build a team of functional supports that will assist them in achieving their outcomes. Every family must have an opportunity to plan and partner with our agency. The Case Plan Family Agreement must be updated at least every six months for in-home families. A Case Plan Family Assessment must remain current and needs to be updated every six months in accordance with policy timeframes.

#### C) Initial FTM

CP&P must conduct an FTM before or within 45 days of a child entering placement. The Worker completes the initial FTM as soon as possible without delay. The expectation is that the FTM **will be completed well before the 45-day mandate**.

#### **D) Subsequent FTMs Within 12 Months**

Within the first twelve months of a child entering placement, he or she will have **three** additional FTMs.

**Note:** The child's FTM schedule is not determined by having an FTM once every 4 months; it is determined by the case situation.

#### **E) Subsequent FTMs After 12 Months – Goal Reunification**

After the first twelve months of a child being in placement, he or she will have **three** additional FTMs.

**Note:** The child's FTM should be scheduled at critical times during the family's life. For example, if the child has disruption in placement, when a parent is discharged from services, or when reunification is imminent etc.

#### **F) Teaming**

The Worker must team with the family when there is a significant family event or when a team member requests a meeting (e.g., Risk of placement of children, at least until permanency is achieved, risk of a placement disruption, a change of placement, movement toward reunification, a traumatic event, or a request by the family and their team).

#### **G) Location of the FTM**

Best case practice suggests FTM's take place in the family's home. If the home is unavailable, the meeting will convene in a safe and neutral setting and always in consultation with the family (e.g., library, church, community center etc.) Holding the FTM in the Local Office should be the last alternative. Local Offices must provide the necessary supplies and materials needed to conduct the FTM (e.g., pens, forms, etc.)

#### **H) Worker Safety**

The safety of DCF staff is of paramount importance to the Department of Children and Families. Please refer to the link provided below regarding potentially dangerous situations.

[Worker Safety and Teamed Field Response \(Buddy System\)](#)

#### **I) Participants Involved in FTMs**

CP&P will seek to, and make every effort to engage families, including missing or incarcerated parents (unless a parent's rights have been terminated or surrendered), children, resource families, other support systems and community partners who the family has identified to work together as a "team" to help the family. If there is a concern of domestic violence please refer to [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100](#), Domestic Violence. The Division must seek to include all known parents, including legal, biological and alleged fathers, in the FTM process. A good faith attempt is required by Workers.

A child 14 years of age or older may invite two or fewer persons to attend the FTM to be a part of the case planning team. These two members will not be his or her Worker or Resource Parent. If it is believed that the invited person(s) will not act in the best interest of the adolescent, the facilitator will inform the participant that he or she must leave the meeting.

The adolescent may select one of his or her designated choices to attend the case planning meeting to be an advisor during the FTM; this person may advise and advocate as necessary applying the reasonable prudent parent standard.

Note: If an attorney requests to attend on behalf of the family, direct the attorney to the Division's DAG.

#### **J) Local Office Staff Participation in FTM's**

If a Worker is a trained facilitator, he or she must facilitate the FTM. If the Worker is unavailable a Supervisor, if FTM trained, may be the facilitator of the FTM. The facilitator must be the person who conducts the preparation interview (PREP).

#### **K) Unavailable Parents**

Parents and legal guardians are expected to participate in FTM. Parents and legal guardians, who do not attend the FTM, can be sent a copy of the Case Plan Family Agreement developed at the meeting (Note: The Worker/Supervisor must consult with the DAG prior to sending sensitive information to the parents). Staff must only use the unavailable value in NJ SPIRIT under these circumstances:

- The parent is missing and CP&P has initiated a legal search;
- The parent is unavailable due to sickness or hospitalization;
- The parent is in a treatment program that prohibits or limits visitation.
- The parent is incarcerated and the facility will not allow access to the parent;
- The parent has cancelled the meeting;
- The parent/guardian schedules the FTM and failed to attend the FTM.

[Click here to view or print Documentation Examples](#)

Parents who are unavailable to participate, in-person, but want to be involved in the planning process, can participate via a conference call.

If a person is identified to be a significant part of the family's life and will be critical to the FTM, and no one knows his or her whereabouts, the Worker initiates a Search for the individual. [CP&P-III-C-4-100](#).

**Note:** When it has been determined by the family and CP&P that the missing person's participation is critical to the meeting, CP&P will make extra efforts to locate this individual; however, searching for this individual must not exceed the 45-day threshold to conduct the initial FTM.

#### **L) Unavailable Adolescents who Refuse FTM's**

When an adolescent does not have a goal of family reunification and does not want to participate in a traditional FTM, the Worker engages the adolescent to find out what support persons he or she may want to assist in planning for him or her in an FTM setting. If the adolescent is unavailable to hold the team meeting the worker can use this value in NJ SPIRIT to document that the adolescent is unavailable

Click here to view or print the [Appropriate Use of an Unavailable in NJ Spirit](#).

#### **M) Parent who Decline to Participate in the FTM**

The Worker uses this value in NJ SPIRIT to document that the family refuses to hold an FTM.

Click here to view or print the [Appropriate Use of Decline in New Jersey Spirit](#).

#### **N) Each FTM must be documented in New Jersey Spirit (NJS)**

The Worker has five days to complete the Case Plan Family Agreement in NJ Spirit. The worker should document what occurred at the FTM in the additional documentation section of the Case Plan Family Agreement.

#### **O) Guidelines for Food Allocation at FTM**

Make food and refreshments available during the Family Team Meeting. Remember to be cognizant of attendees' cultural and medical restrictions and food allergies.

Adhere to budgetary guidelines. Thirty dollars (\$30) is the maximum permitted to purchase food and refreshments for a Family Team Meeting. An FTM can exceed the \$30.00 maximum requirement with approval from the Local Office Manager or designee. See Family Team Meeting Information in Related Information: Family Team Meeting Information; Food Vendor Procedures, including Guidelines for Food Allocations at Family Team Meetings.

## **Procedures:**

### **1) FTM / the Teaming Process / Record Review/Case Conference**

The purpose of the record review and case conference is to gain a better understanding of the family's history, strengths, needs, and supports. The facilitator, Worker, and Supervisor will participate in the case conference and review. All CP&P staff involved in the prep and/or FTM will meet to discuss the information gathered from the record review in a case conference.

CP&P will strategize potential questions to ask family to gather additional information about their story and desired outcomes. If applicable, staff should determine roles for the prep (e.g., facilitator, coach, master coach). CP&P prohibits FTM's with both caretakers when there is active DV, Temporary Restraining Order, or Final Restraining Orders. If Domestic Violence is noted or suspected during the record review/case conference, refer to [CPP-VIII-B-1-100](#), Domestic Violence.

**Note:** The CP&P file may have sensitive information which is unknown to the family particularly in the case of an adolescent. This information may be shared after consultation with a CWS, a Master Coach, or a Case Practice Liaison. Consultation with a mental health consultant or treating therapist may be helpful in determining how to share this information with the family.

### **2) Team Meeting Preparation**

The purpose of the preparation interview (prep) is to get to know the family, explain the FTM process to the family, and plan for the FTM. A sufficient amount of time must be spent obtaining and listening to the family story.

An in-person prep with the parents, adolescent, or caregiver is held prior to the actual FTM.

When the facilitator is not the assigned Worker, the Worker attends the prep with the facilitator. The Supervisor of the case is strongly encouraged to attend as well. At minimum the team includes the Worker, the parent/adolescent/caregiver, and one other support identified by the family. All efforts should be made to expand the team.

The parent, adolescent, or caregiver identifies team members for the FTM and signs [Form 22-41](#), Participants Identified by the Family.

**Note:** If there is a history of domestic violence, there is suspected domestic violence, or domestic violence is present, refer to [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100](#), Domestic Violence.

### 3) Documentation

Information learned at the prep is documented on a Contact Note. If appropriate use multi-select function to capture other events that took place including MVR, Worker Parent Visit etc.

Contact Note includes, but is not limited to:

- Family story (description of childhood, losses or other traumatic events, family's successes)
- Desired Outcomes,
- Identified team members,
- Meeting date, time, location, and food preference.

### 4) Team Formation

The team includes all relevant supports, both formal and informal, to develop a family agreement to support the family in reaching their desired outcome.

Examples are below:

Completed by	Task
Worker	<p>Asks the family who can support them in achieving their desired outcome(s).</p> <p>Attends the FTM to be able to plan with the family. The Supervisor is encouraged to attend the FTM to assist in the planning. Other CP&amp;P support staff, such as the nurse, Domestic Violence Liaison (DVL), Resource Parents may be relevant team members. The facilitator should explain the benefits of their participation to the family, when appropriate. These persons can serve as FTM co-facilitators.</p>
Facilitator	<p>Makes suggestions of possible team members if the family struggles to identify supports. If the family declines</p>

	to invite a support who the facilitator feels would be beneficial, the facilitator explores the barriers. Ultimately the family chooses the participants.
Worker	<p>Identifies team members should be documented on the Participant's identified by the Family; CP&amp;P <a href="#">Form 22-41</a>. The family signs the form to give the facilitator permission to call each team member.</p> <p>Identifies team members should be documented in the prep activity contact note for the prep. (See Documentation section in prep below.</p>

### 5) Prepping the Team Members:

Team members must be aware of the identified outcomes, prepared with strengths and needs for the family, and be willing and able to be a positive, functional support.

Completed by	Task
Worker	<p>Contacts all team members identified on the Participants' List to prepare them for the FTM.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Most team members can be prepped over the phone, however, there are some circumstances where a in person prep is preferable such as, but not limited to, an adolescent team member, non-custodial parent, or anyone else who may benefit from an in-person conversation.</p> <p>Identifies formal Supports (service providers, CP&amp;P staff and support staff, etc.) should be prepped thoroughly to ensure they understand the family's outcomes and their role in the meeting.</p> <p>Documents all information learned on a Contact Activity Note in NJ Spirit under "FTM prep."</p>

## 6) Preparing for the FTM

The facilitator is primarily responsible for preparing for the FTM. Prior to the meeting the facilitator must do the following (ensure the following is complete):

- Order the food from an approved vendor contract.
- Confirm location with the family.
- Collect the necessary forms (Agreement to Confidentiality, Agendas, Surveys and The Case Plan Family Agreement). Prepare the charts with the appropriate agenda headings.
- Refer to the following documents when processing requests for the purchase of items to facilitate and support the holding of a Family Team Meeting, such as drinks and food, utensils, and paper supplies. Both exhibits were developed by the Office of Accounting to guide field staff:
  - Exhibit A - Food Vendor Procedures, including Guidelines for Food Allocations at Family Team Meetings. [Click here to view Family Team Meeting Food Vendor Procedures.](#)
  - Exhibit B - Sample PV 6/93, State of New Jersey Payment Voucher.

Click here to view sample [PV 6/93](#), State of New Jersey Payment Voucher (Vendor Invoice).

## 7) Cancellations and No Shows

Employees partake of food and refreshments as active participants at Family Team Meetings. When an FTM is cancelled, however, it is imperative that perishable food, purchased exclusively for that meeting, be donated to a worthy cause rather than consumed by staff.

If a family cancels a Family Team Meeting, or fails to appear -- If an FTM must be cancelled last minute, after refreshments and food are purchased, the Facilitator/Worker proceeds as follows:

- Keep non-perishable items for future FTMs; and
- Donate perishable foods to:
  - a) Client family or a resource family home,
  - b) Local youth shelter or group home, or Local charity.

## 8) Facilitating the Meeting

The Worker facilitates the FTM by:

- Identifying a co-facilitator to chart the team's responses on the easel paper.
- Welcoming teams, facilitates team member introductions, and distribute copies of the Agenda.
- Circulating [Form 22-42](#) Agreement to Confidentiality. Explain to the team that while the notes for the meeting will be kept in the DCP&P case record and shared with the courts, the team members should not discuss what happened at the meeting with non-team members. Obtain signatures from each person in attendance.
- Asking the family to share their outcomes with the team.
- Inviting the team to establish ground rules to set a positive tone for the meeting. Ground rules are established by the team in order to keep the meeting on task. Examples of ground rules may include placing cell phones on vibrate, one team member speaking at a time, being respectful of other's opinions and
- Explaining to the team members that there are certain things that cannot be negotiated at the meeting (**non-negotiable**). These include court orders, child safety, safety of team members, etc.
- Asking the family to share their story. A family story is more than just the family's current involvement with CP&P. A family story is a natural conversation including but not limited to (e.g., gaining information about the family, their upbringing, their education, job history, source of income, disabilities, health information, substance abuse history if any, their family supports, ability to cope, discussions of when things went well, past trauma and loss, and what their hopes and dreams are for the future (long term view). When we are teaming, the family's story should be shared through their perspective. Staff should be mindful to be respectful of the family and be seated while listening to the family story.

**Note:** There are times when a family member is not comfortable sharing his or her story. If this occurs, the Worker will not pressure the family member into disclosing information that the family member is uncomfortable sharing. We are obligated to make reasonable efforts to have a person or persons identified by the family to be in attendance at the FTM. However, the Division must not exceed the 45-day requirement to conduct the FTM because the person(s) cannot be located. [See CP&P III-C-4-100](#), on how to conduct a search.

- Asking the team to identify functional strengths of the family and the strengths of individual family members.
- Asking the team to identify what needs change or what needs to happen in order to achieve the desired outcome. See handout in appendix.
- Brainstorming with the team members about ways to meet the family's needs.

- Developing a family agreement identifying who will do what task and establish timeframes to complete the tasks in order to meet the identified needs.
- Asking the team how they will know when progress toward meeting each need is met. (Shared View-How will the team know this plan is working? Asking the team what could go wrong with the developed plan and brainstorm a concurrent plan.
- Utilizing Flex-Funds for identified exceptional services, if warranted. See [CPP-IX-F-1-400](#), Local Office Bank Account (LOBA): [CPP-IX-F-1-300](#), the Flexible Fund.
- Identifying any and all family members residing outside of the United States who may help to provide permanency for the child. [See CPP-IV-C-9-200](#), International Social Service.
- Completing the Family Agreement **during** the family team meeting. Each team member signs the Case Plan Family Agreement and receives a copy (Note: Sensitive health information and drug history information is not to be shared with anyone who has not signed the [Form 22-42](#)).
- Document the Case Plan Family Agreement in the Case Plan in NJ Spirit. The significant events that occur at the family team meeting can be documented in the additional information section within the agreement.

#### **9) Accommodating Team Members:**

CP&P should provide services to support the participation of parents and relatives in the FTM process. The FTM members may need services including, but not limited to:

- Transportation,
- Childcare,
- Interpreter services, and
- Any other services that would facilitate and support the family's participation.

#### **10) How the Worker Documents into NJS:**

Document each FTM in NJ SPIRIT, in Contact Activity Notes, within these prescribed values:

- **FTM Prep**

The Worker must document information learned at the prep in a contact note. The contact note must include the family story, desired outcomes, identified team members, food preference, and the proposed date, time and location of the FTM. The Worker must also include any other pertinent information gathered during the FTM preparation process.

- **FTM**  
The Worker must document the Case Plan Family Agreement in the case plan window in NJ SPIRIT. The Worker must also document what happened at the FTM in the additional documentation section of the Case Plan Family Agreement. For example, significant or new elements of the family story, significant interactions between team members etc.
- **FTM Declined**  
The Worker must use this value to document in NJ SPIRIT that a family is unwilling to participate in an FTM. The Worker must document in this contact sheet the efforts he or she has made to engage the family in the process. It is required that CP&P make at least two attempts to engage the family in the process and that at least one of those attempts be face to face. When a family is resistant to the process, the Worker must seek assistance from a Master Coach or CP&P leadership (e.g., Supervisor, CWS, or LOM who has been trained in the teaming process) to attempt to engage the family.
- **FTM Did Not Occur/Parents Unavailable**  
The Worker must use this value to document in NJ SPIRIT that a parent is unavailable to participate in an FTM. The Worker must document in a contact sheet the efforts he/she has made to engage the family in the process. Please note that the value may only be used in the following circumstances:
  - The parent is missing and a legal search has been initiated in an attempt to locate them.
  - The parent is sick or hospitalized and the facility will not allow the agency to have access to them.
  - The parent is incarcerated and the facility will not allow the agency to have access to them.
  - The parent schedules the FTM and then cancels it or fails to attend it

**Forms and Attachments:**

- Complete required form, [PV 6/93](#), State of New Jersey Payment Voucher (Vendor Invoice), to process payment for food and refreshments.
- CP&P Form [22-41](#), Participants Identified by Family,
- CP&P Form [22-42](#), Participant List and Agreement to Confidentiality, and
- CP&P Form [26-81](#), Case Plan Assessment

- CP&P Form [26-24](#), Intake Family Agreement
- CP&P Form [26-25a](#), Family Agreement (with team)
- CP&P Form [26-26a](#), Family Agreement (without team)
- CP&P Form [26-25b](#), Family Agreement (with team)
- CP&P Form [26-26b](#), Family Agreement with Family (without a team)