

SPECIALIZED CHILD WELFARE SUBJECT MATTER

Considered Removal: Child and Family Team Meetings

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Policy

The Department of Children and Families shall actively include all persons connected to a child who comes within its jurisdiction in the process of engaging, assessing and planning for the child's best interests in order to achieve safety, permanency, health and learning.

A Considered Removal Child and Family Team Meeting (CR-CFTM) shall be required for all cases in which a child is being considered for immediate removal from his or her home based on the identification of a safety factor (as indicated by the SDM Safety Assessment).

CR-CFTMs are consistent with the practice of engaging families and community members in safety planning and placement-related decision making.

Cross Reference: "Considered Removal Child and Family Team Meetings Practice Guide"

CR-CFTMs

The purposes of CR-CFTMs are to:

- bring family members to the table when DCF is initially considering removal of a child from the home using families' natural networks as resources for safety planning and, when necessary and able, for placement;
- provide an opportunity for collaborative planning with parents, legal guardians, children and professionals involved with the family to develop specific, individualized interventions for children and families;
- expand services and support for families at the community level; and
- develop specific safety plans for children at risk of removal from their homes.

This approach is consistent with the essential elements of a trauma-informed system as it attempts to minimize disruptions to safe, healthy relationships as well as separations from attachment figures, thereby supporting children exposed to trauma and reducing potential secondary trauma.

Considered Removal Requirements

A CR-CFTM shall be required for all cases in which a child is being considered for immediate removal from his or her home based on the identification of a safety factor (as indicated by the SDM Safety Assessment).

CR-CFTMs shall occur prior to a legal or administrative decision initiated by DCF to assume custody of a child, with the exception of circumstances of immediate, imminent risk that would compromise the safety of the child if immediate protection were delayed.

Note: In the event of unmitigated imminent danger requiring emergency removal of a child before a CR-CFTM can be held, the meeting shall be held within two business days of the removal, and prior to the filing of a Motion for Order of Temporary Custody (OTC) in Superior Court, Juvenile Matters.

Note: CR-CFTMs shall be held in all cases in which an Order of Temporary Custody has been issued by a court at the request of a party other than DCF or on the court's own motion (bench order). This will provide for timely consideration of the issues that resulted in the court granting the OTC and discussion of treatment and placement options.

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Considered Removal Requirements (Continued)

Concerted efforts shall be made by DCF to engage parents and legal guardians and support their attendance at the CR-CFTM. With a parent's or legal guardian's consent, additional efforts to include relatives, natural support persons, attorneys and service providers shall be made. If the child is represented by an attorney or guardian ad litem, the child's attorney or guardian ad litem shall be notified in writing not less than five days prior to the date of any meeting in which the department is considering removing the child from the household, except, if immediate removal of a child from his or her household has been authorized.

Attendance by the assigned Social Worker and Social Work Supervisor shall be mandatory.

The CR-CFTM shall be facilitated by a designated Considered Removal Facilitator outside of the chain of command of the assigned staff.

The Facilitator shall ensure that the DCF-3037, "Considered Removal Sign-In Sheet for Meeting Participants" is completed at the start of the meeting.

The Facilitator shall document the meeting using the DCF-3035, "Child and Family Team Meeting Agenda."

The Facilitator shall fill out the DCF-3036, "Considered Removal Child and Family Team Meeting Summary Report" and provide a copy to each participant as soon after the meeting as is practicable.

When the Case is Court-Involved

If a judge in any court has entered an order regarding custody, placement or visitation, including an Order of Protective Supervision, DCF shall seek the permission of the court before any changes are made to the court-ordered arrangement, even if all the parties are in agreement.

In cases in which the family is already involved in the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters, the Social Worker shall notify the Assistant Attorney General of the planned CR-CFTM and the child's appointed attorney of the planned CR-CFTM.

In cases in which the family is already involved with the Probate Court, the social worker shall notify the court and invite the participation of court staff in the CR-CFTM.

If Consensus cannot be Reached

If the attendees at the CR-CFTM cannot reach consensus on the next steps to protect the child being considered for removal, the Facilitator shall attempt to bring at least the DCF staff to a consensus decision. If it appears that DCF staff cannot reach a consensus decision, the assigned Social Work Supervisor shall confer with the assigned Program Supervisor who shall make the agency decision.

Note: DCF maintains the legal responsibility to make the decision if agreement by the full team cannot be achieved.

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Managerial Approval

Prior to approving the removal of a child from his or her home, the Program Supervisor shall ensure that a CR-CFTM occurred. A review of the DCF-3035, "Child and Family Team Meeting Agenda" and the outcomes of the CR-CFTM shall be conducted by the Program Supervisor prior to proceeding with removal or other legal intervention in support of removal.

The Program Supervisor shall document his or her consultation and review and the outcomes in LINK.

Documentation

The following shall be documented timely in the computer system:

- all concerted efforts to engage and include parents, guardians, children, extended family, natural support persons, providers, attorneys and DCF staff in the CR-CFTM (documented on DCF-3038, "Considered Removal Participants and Concerted Efforts");
- when and where the CR-CFTM occurred;
- names of all attendees and other forms of participation by team members in the CR-CFTM;
- safety and action plans developed at the CR-CFTM; and
- final decisions and outcomes.

CR-CFTMs held during the course of an intake process shall also be referenced and documented in the Investigation Protocol or Family Assessment Response protocol.

CR-CFTMs shall also be incorporated and documented in the Family and Child in Placement Case Plans.

Responsibility of Area Office Legal Staff

When removal of a child from his or her home is deemed necessary, the Area Office legal staff shall ensure that a CR-CFTM has been held and document this by inclusion on the DCF-2012, DCF-2013 or DCF-2149 (Order of Temporary Custody, Neglect Petition and Cotermious Petition Checklists). If the Social Worker has not submitted proof that a CR-CFTM was held, the Area Office legal staff shall immediately bring this to the attention of the assigned Program Manager.

Trauma-Informed Decision Making

The CR-CFTM shall focus on the direct impact of maltreatment on the child. The CR-CFTM process shall identify individual and family strengths that can be used as protective factors in addressing the specific harm and danger to the child.

Maintaining safe family relationships is crucial to minimizing traumatic stress and reducing the negative impact of maltreatment and trauma to the child. The consistent and effective use of the CR-CFTM process promotes family engagement and can restore safety, social and emotional well-being and secure family permanency for the child.

Written Notifications

The child's attorney or guardian ad litem shall be notified in writing not less than five days prior to the date of any meeting in which the department is considering removing the child from the household, except, if a 96-hour hold has been issued, DCF shall not be required to provide advance notice.

Legal Reference: Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101g(b).
