

Considered Removal: Child and Family Team Meetings 25-3-1

Policy

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) 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), in consideration of the ABCD Safety Paradigm. When a safety factor is identified and an Alternative Caregiver Arrangement is being considered, a CR-CFTM will be held prior to the Alternative Caregiver Arrangement occurring, or within 2 business days of the Alternative Caregiver Arrangement.

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

Cross Reference: DCF Policy 21-21, Alternative Caregiver Arrangement

Cross Reference: ABCD Child Safety Practice Model and Safety Planning Guidance

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.
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CR-CFTMs, continued

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.

Cross Reference: ABCD Child Safety Practice Model and Safety Planning Guidance

Considered Removal Require- ments

A CR-CFTM shall be offered to parents in 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, except for circumstances of immediate, imminent danger 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 separation, and prior to the filing of a Motion for Order of Temporary Custody (OTC) in Superior Court for Juvenile Matters.

If the family's Safety Plan developed during the CR-CFTM needs modification, a Permanency Teaming Meeting will be held to adjust the plan as necessary. If the Safety Plan ends and there are similar safety concerns, consultation with the program supervisor is required to determine whether there is a benefit in conducting a CR-CFTM or whether Court intervention will be pursued.

If significant changes occur within the family following the CR-CFTM, consultation with the Program Supervisor and/or Considered Facilitator is required to determine whether a CR-CFTM would be appropriate.

Following a CR-CFTM, if a new SDM Safety Factor is identified, a CR-CFTM is required.

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Considered Removal Requirements,
continued

CR-CFTMs shall be held in all cases in which an OTC has been issued by the 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.

Concerted efforts shall be made by DCF to engage parents and legal guardians and support their attendance at the CR-CFTM. A parent must be present in order to document this meeting as a 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 DCF is considering removing the child from the household, except, if immediate removal of a child from the 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 CR-CFTM facilitator outside of the chain of command of the assigned staff. The facilitator will conduct the meeting in adherence to the six stages of the CR-CFTM process.

The facilitator shall:

- ensure that the DCF-3037, "Considered Removal Sign-In Sheet for Meeting Participants" is completed at the start of the meeting
- shall document the meeting using the DCF-3035, "Child and Family Team Meeting Agenda"
- 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 of 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.

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When the Case is Court-Involved, continued

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.

Managerial Approval

Prior to approving the removal of a child from his or her home, the program supervisor provides consultation leading up to the CR-CFTM and is informed of the outcome of the meeting. During the CR-CFTM, the program supervisor may provide consultation to determine whether the proposed interventions that are developed during the meeting are sufficient to ensure child safety.

The program supervisor shall document the supervisor's consultation and review and the outcomes in the DCF electronic case management system (LINK/CT-KIND).

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")
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Documen- tation, continued

- parents who are offered but refuse to participate in a CR-CFTM
- parents who agree to a CR-CFTM but do not attend
- 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 the 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.

Respon- sibility of Area Office Legal Staff

When removal of a child from home is deemed necessary, the area office legal staff shall include a discussion of CR-CFTM in their legal consult.

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 and capacities 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 Notifica- tions

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 separation 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: C.G.S. section 17a-101g(b)
