

*Is Family Services currently assessing or investigating your children's safety?*

*Are your children in foster care or in the process of being moved to another home?*

*Do you want to be part of important decisions made about your children?*

If you answered YES to any of these questions, ask your Family Services worker about family-centered meetings.

## **Family-Centered Meetings**

Family Services may hold family-centered meetings to:

- Assess your children's safety;
- Better understand your children's needs;
- Understand each family member's feelings and thoughts;
- Discover your family's strengths, supports, and resources;
- Identify extended family supports;
- Focus on specific goals;
- Respect your family's culture, diversity, and values; and
- Make sure your family's voice is heard and reflected in any plan that's developed for your family.

## **Why would we have a family-centered meeting?**

You could hold a family-centered meeting to:

- Create a safety plan;
- Assess safety in your family — in response to a community concern;
- Develop a plan for responding to concerns;
- Make a decision about who can provide support to you and your children; and
- Determine the best living situation for your children.

## **Who may request a meeting?**

You, a family member, your Family Services worker, or a community provider may request:

1. A family safety planning meeting; or
2. A family group conference.

**Family-centered meetings can happen at any time during your work with Family Services.**

## **Family Safety Planning**

- Focuses on a clear goal.
- Is led by a facilitator.
- Typically lasts about two hours.

During the meeting, you'll discuss:

- Why Family Services is involved with your family;
- Your family's strengths and risks;
- The challenges you face;
- Safety that exists; and
- Clear next steps.

## **Who should attend?**

- Family members and friends;
- Family Services staff (e.g., social worker, resource coordinator);
- Guardian ad Litem and/or attorney;
- Mental health providers; and
- School and other community supports.

## **How do I prepare?**

Talk to your social worker about who you would like to invite. The worker will develop the goal for the meeting — with input from you and others who are invited to attend.

## Family Group Conferencing

- ▶ Focuses on a plan for your family.
- ▶ Is led by a facilitator.
- ▶ Has three parts:

### 1. *Information Sharing.*

The social worker outlines the decisions you are being asked to make. Everyone has the opportunity to ask questions, share information, and voice their opinions.

### 2. *Private Family Time.*

Family members discuss the information shared, come to a decision, and create a plan.

### 3. *Agreeing on the Plan.*

The others return to the meeting, and you present your plan for approval.

## How do I prepare?

The coordinator will:

- Help you decide who to invite;
- Talk to everyone who might come;
- Find a time and meeting place that works for your family; and
- Help you plan the meeting so everyone feels safe.

## Who should attend?

Your relatives, friends, and anyone else you consider to be family.

## Family Services Offices

Weekdays from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Central Office:** (802) 241-2131

**Barre:** (802) 479-4260

**Bennington:** (802) 442-8138

**Brattleboro:** (802) 257-2888

**Burlington:** (802) 863-7370

**Hartford:** (802) 295-8840

**Middlebury:** (802) 388-4660

**Morrisville:** (802) 888-4576

**Newport:** (802) 334-6723

**Rutland:** (802) 786-5817

**Springfield:** (802) 885-8900

**St. Albans:** (802) 527-7741

**St. Johnsbury:** (802) 748-8374

[www.dcf.vt.gov/fsd](http://www.dcf.vt.gov/fsd)



## Parent's Guide To Family-Centered Meetings

 **VERMONT**  
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION

05/13 • 10,000

Agency of Human Services