

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



Parent's Guide To Family-Centered Meetings

