

WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH CHANGE: YOUTH AND FAMILY MEETINGS IN PRACTICE

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Child Welfare Division | Approved for distribution by Sarah McCamant , Meetings
Program Manager



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

AGENDA

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THE WHY

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CHANGING TO YOUTH AND FAMILY MEETINGS (YFM)

Washington's Youth and Family Meetings model is the result of multi-year system improvement grounded in lived experience, staff feedback, national expertise, and external review.

Rather than maintaining separate meeting types and facilitation models, one consistent, structured process will be used in all meetings across the life of a case. YFM is replacing all meetings under Shared Planning Meetings (SPM), including Family Team Decision Making (FTDM) meetings.

LISTENING TO LIVED EXPERIENCE

Public Consulting Group (PCG) and Think of Us (TOU)

[Stakeholder Facilitation for Systemic Improvements report](#)

Feedback from youth, families, caregivers and partners emphasized a desire for:

- Being involved earlier in decisions
- Meetings that feel purposeful and transparent
- Clear understanding of decisions and next steps
- Consistent follow-through

WHAT'S CHANGING?

- Youth and Family Meetings (replacing all Shared Planning Meetings including FTDM)
- Statewide referral, Meeting Program Consultant (MPC) will be inviting participants
- A safety check in for parent(s) and youth will occur before meetings
- All YFMs are facilitated by trained Meeting Consultants using the 6-stage process
- Transparency in documentation, MPC's will chart the discussion resulting in Action Plans youth, families and plan participants leave meetings with

WHAT'S NOT CHANGING?

- Timely, inclusive meetings
- Commitment to safety, permanency, and well-being
- Focus on youth and family voice and choice
- Collaboration with community and Tribal partners
- Consent and confidentiality

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HOW WE GOT HERE

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MEETINGS HISTORY IN WASHINGTON

Annie E Casey Foundation's Family to Family model of Team Decision Making (TDM) was adopted in Washington State

2006

Washington state received technical assistance from the Annie E Casey Foundation to strengthen FTDM practice

2010

Lack of statewide facilitation structure
Regional autonomy
Covid/ virtual

**MODEL
DRIFT**

2010 to
2025

DCYF agreed to revise FTDM/SPM by gathering feedback from lived experts to inform policy and practice as part of the D.S. Settlement Agreement

2021

DCYF contracted with Evident Change to strengthen practice for consistency in meetings statewide

2025

Updated trainings for meeting facilitators and staff. Renaming: Youth and Family Meetings

2026



D.S. SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

Under the D.S. Settlement Agreement, DCYF is required to review and revise Shared Planning Meeting (SPM) and Family Team Decision Meeting (FTDM) policies and practices, establish a quality assurance processes, and ensure these practices are trauma-informed, culturally responsive, LGBTQIA+ affirming and fulfill the following five system improvement functions:

[D.S. Settlement Implementation Plan](#) (08/02/2023)

[D.S. Data Addendum](#) (02/02/2024)

MEETINGS SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

- Support and encourage active participation of children and youth, their immediate and extended family members, and other individuals who have trusting relationships with the child and family (collectively the “Family Team”) in the SPM/FTDM process, including offering meetings in times and places that are accessible for all members of the Family Team;
- Educate the Family Team about available services and placement options, including family reconciliation services, evidence-based practices, and System Improvements 4.6 Emerging Adult Housing Program, 4.7 Professional Therapeutic Foster Care and 4.8 Hub Homes;

MEETINGS SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

- Elicit and value the child or youth's preferences including, but not limited to, where to live, where to go to school, what treatment or services to receive, what supports are needed for safety, and who is involved in their lives;
- Empower and authorize Family Teams to make and revisit decisions about how and where to best support the child or youth's health, safety, stability, cultural socialization, and relationships with family;
- Provide necessary supports and resources, including those identified in the SPM/FTDMs policies and procedures

WHAT YOUTH WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE WANT YOU TO KNOW

- “Listen to my voice; it is my life that you are taking control of, and I have to deal with the consequences.”
- “Make sure I know what is going on. I just sat there while others talked about my situation and then was told what will happen before I left.”
- “Forgive me if I am upset or emotional. At the end of the day, you get to go home, and I go to a house with strangers.”

SYSTEM LEARNING AND ALIGNMENT

1. Permanency from Day One Grant (PFD1, October 2018-September 2023)
2. Evident Change, Policy and Practice Review Report & Implementation Support (March-September 2025)
3. DCYF CW Meetings Leads Workgroup (October-December 2025)

Through statewide analysis and partner consultation, we identified:

- Variation in meeting practices
- Inconsistent invitations and preparation
- Different expectations across regions
- Documentation that did not always reflect how decisions were made or clear Action Plans

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YOUTH AND FAMILY MEETINGS

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YOUTH AND FAMILY MEETINGS MODEL

Partnership

All families deserve to participate in agency decisions and be included in plans about their own lives.

Inclusivity & Transparency

Acknowledging individual differences helps participants attend to power imbalances. *Early inclusion sets the stage for ongoing engagement.*

Engagement

Meetings tap into the group's energy and creativity, embody team collaboration, and involve proactive planning for next steps with youth, families, kin, and caregivers.

Equity & Fairness

The same process is offered to everyone. MPCs manage the process, modeling respect and interpersonal skills. Community partners share the responsibility of supporting the best decisions with the family and agency.

Adapted from © 2023 Evident Change Implementation Guide

Washington's Youth and Family Meetings model is adapted from Evident Change's Team Decision Making (TDM) model using six-stages to guide teams through collaborative decision making and planning.



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KEY ELEMENTS



Parents and youth are involved in **all** decisions about removal and placement



Meeting happens **before** removal/move



Includes formal and informal supports



Skilled, available, and experienced Program Consultants (Facilitators)



Data-informed evaluation

PURPOSE



Equality



Engagement



Equity, inclusivity, and transparency



Fairness



Self-evaluation and sustainability

EXPECTED OUTCOMES



Shorter stays in out-of-home care



Fewer Q RTP care placements



Increased likelihood of parent–child reunification in one year



Increased likelihood of permanency with kin within one year



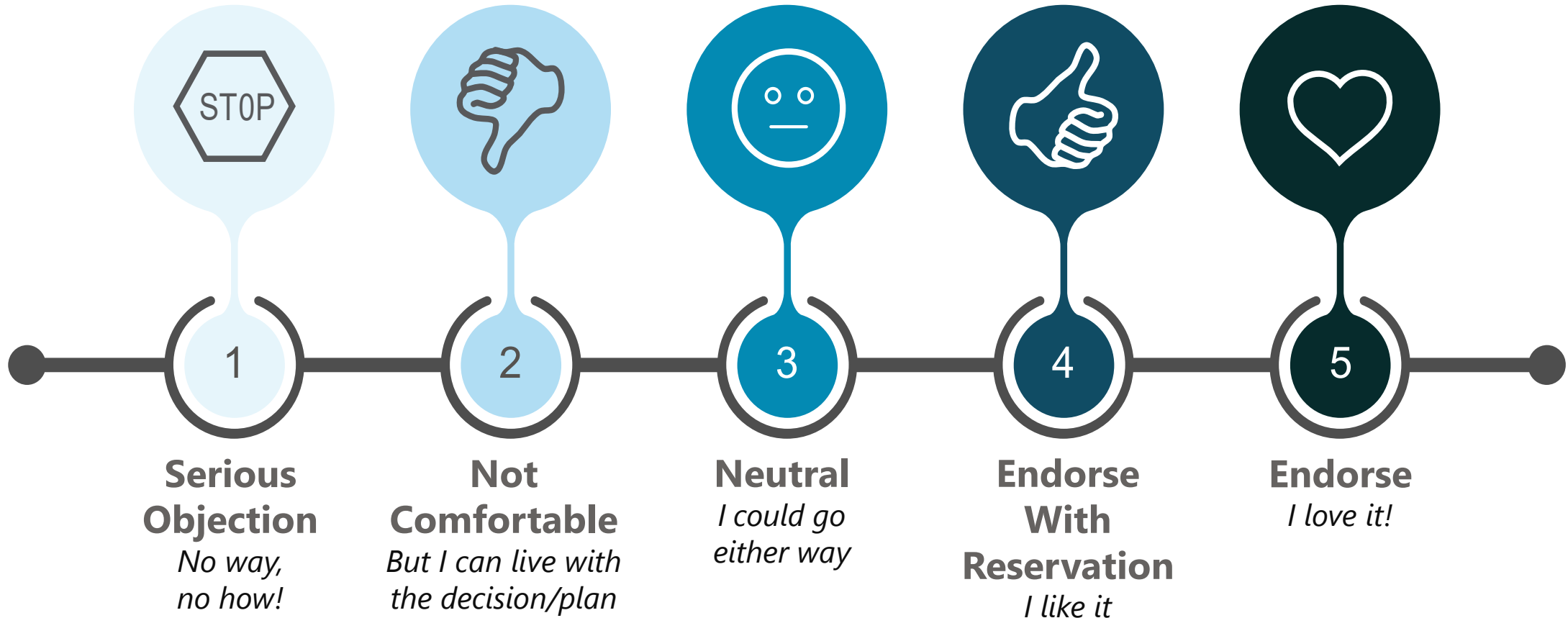
More initial placements in family settings (kin and foster)

YOUTH AND FAMILY MEETING PROCESS

- The same six stages are used for all meetings.
 - The purpose of the meeting determines how stages are facilitated.
- Decision-making meetings require a formal consensus-based process for recommendations for safety and placement.
- When not making placement decisions, collaborative discussions are driven by the purpose of the meeting.

All meetings will include discussions on cultural, relative, and kin connections for engagement and relational permanency.

BUILDING CONSENSUS: GRADIENTS OF AGREEMENT



For more information on how to use this type of scale, see Sam Kaner's website: www.communityatwork.com

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SIX STAGES

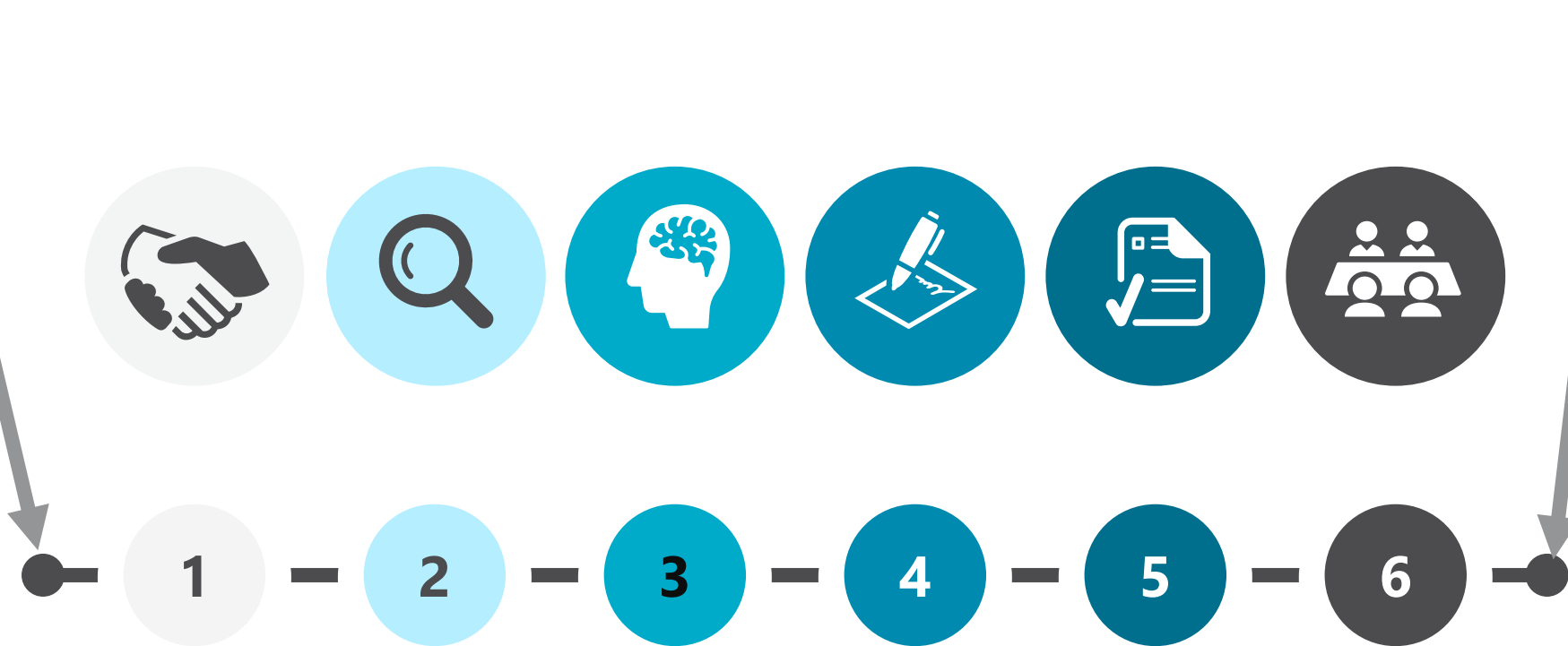
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STAGES OF THE YFM MEETING

BEFORE

DURING

AFTER



Introduction

Identify
Situation

Assess
Situation

Develop
Ideas

Reach
Decision

Recap/
Close

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WHAT MEETINGS ARE

- Youth and Family Meetings are :
 - » Collaboration with children, youth, parent, relatives, kin, Tribes, and natural supports to gather information and inform least restrictive decisions
 - » Facilitated and structured
 - » Focused on safety, well-being, stability, and permanency
 - » Designed to elevate youth and family voice
 - » A space where attorneys, providers, and other professionals may support their clients

WHO PARTICIPATES IN MEETINGS?

- Children based on age and appropriateness
- Youth age 12+ and 2 supports of their choice
- Parents
- Placement caregivers
- Family members and kin
- Facilitator, caseworker, supervisor, other DCYF staff
- Tribal representatives
- Community partners
- GAL and CASA
- Court Partners (Attorneys and OPD social workers)

PARTNERS AT MEETINGS

- Support persons identified or invited by the family
- Service providers
- Grassroots community representatives



TRIBAL PARTNERSHIP

- Tribal representatives and communities play a critical role by:
 - » Informing and supporting culturally responsive planning and resources
 - » Helping maintain, strengthen, and build relationships and permanent connections

PLACEMENT CAREGIVERS AS KEY PARTNERS

- Placement caregivers are necessary team members by providing:
 - » Daily insight into the child or youth's strengths, needs, and daily routines
 - » Strategies to help the child or youth feel safe and supported
 - » Ideas for stability and continuity to minimize disruptions

COMMUNITY PROVIDER COLLABORATION

- Community providers are essential to successful meeting and may be invited to:
 - » Share insight and expertise
 - » Support Action Plan tasks
 - » Help identify resources
 - » Strengthen connections for youth and families

LEGAL PARTICIPATION AND ADVOCACY

- Attorneys bring value to the meetings by:
 - » Encouraging their client to attend and participate in the meeting
 - » Supporting and advocating for their client's voice and preferences
 - » Respectfully stating disagreement and offering alternative ideas

WHAT CAN ALL PARTNERS EXPECT

- Children, youth, and families may experience strengthened:
 - » Consistency in structure across meetings
 - » Equal opportunity to be heard
 - » Understandings of safety concerns and next steps
 - » Early and ongoing identification of relatives, kin, and informal supports
 - » Transparent decision making and planning

IN PERSON VS. REMOTE PARTICIPATION

- In person meetings are encouraged whenever possible, because they support strong connection, trust-building, and shared understanding among all members of the youth and family team.
- Meetings will be offered in person unless a family or youth requests a virtual meeting due to accessibility, safety, or logistical needs.
- The preference of the youth and family is central to this decision.

BEFORE THE MEETING

- Caseworker will collaborate with children, youth and families before the meeting, and encourage them to:
 - Identify family, kin, and other supports to include for invites to the meeting.
 - Discuss the preferred date, time, and location for meeting to be held (in-person or remote).
 - Discuss needs for language access, translation services and ADA accommodations.



INVITATIONS

Meetings Program Consultants (MPCs) will ensure participants identified by the case worker on the referral are invited, including professionals working with the family.

PARENT SAFETY CHECK-IN

- In child welfare, DV is a common factor; therefore, safety is critical for both parents and the children
- The following are general questions to ask both parents.
 - » Are you concerned about your safety or the safety of anyone else in the room today?
 - » Are any court orders in place that prohibit contact between any participants?
 - » Is there anything else that you feel you need to have a safe meeting?
- Safety check-ins are meant to be **BRIEF**

CHILD OR YOUTH SAFETY CHECK-IN

- A safety check-in is required for any child or youth attending a meeting.
 - To ask about their physical and emotional safety and answer any questions about what to expect in a meeting.
 - To provide alternate options for them to communicate during the meeting (e.g., texting, notepad, nonverbal signal).
 - To discuss the child or youth's preferred names and their pronouns.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MPC, WORKER, AND SUPERVISOR

- **MPC** is the expert on the meeting process
- **Case worker** is the expert on the content, supporting the family to share their story
- **Supervisor** participates and supports worker.




Caseworker and Supervisor are driving the content of the meeting.



MPC guides the content being presented through the process.

CHARTING WHITEBOARD EXAMPLE

<p><u>CHILD/YOUTH INFORMATION</u> Names: Ages: Where and with whom they live:</p>	<p>WHAT'S WORKING WELL/STRENGTHS?</p>	<p>WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT?</p>
<p>WHAT ARE WE WORRIED ABOUT/NEEDS?</p>		<p><u>BRAINSTORM/IDEAS</u></p>
<p><u>SAFETY CONCERNS, BARRIERS, NEEDS</u></p>	<p><u>CONNECTIONS/RESOURCES</u></p> 	<p><u>PLACEMENT DECISION</u></p> <p><u>ACTION PLAN</u></p>

ELICIT AND VALUE YOUTH AND FAMILY PREFERENCES

Including but not limited to:

Voice and preference



PLACEMENT
OR WHERE TO
LIVE

Inclusion in decisions



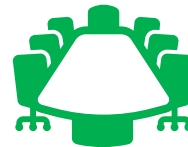
WHERE TO
ATTEND
SCHOOL

Engagement in their plan



WHAT
SERVICES TO
PARTICIPATE IN

Safety and well-being



WHAT
SUPPORTS ARE
NEEDED

Relational connections



WHO IS
INVOLVED IN
THEIR LIVES

How information is shared



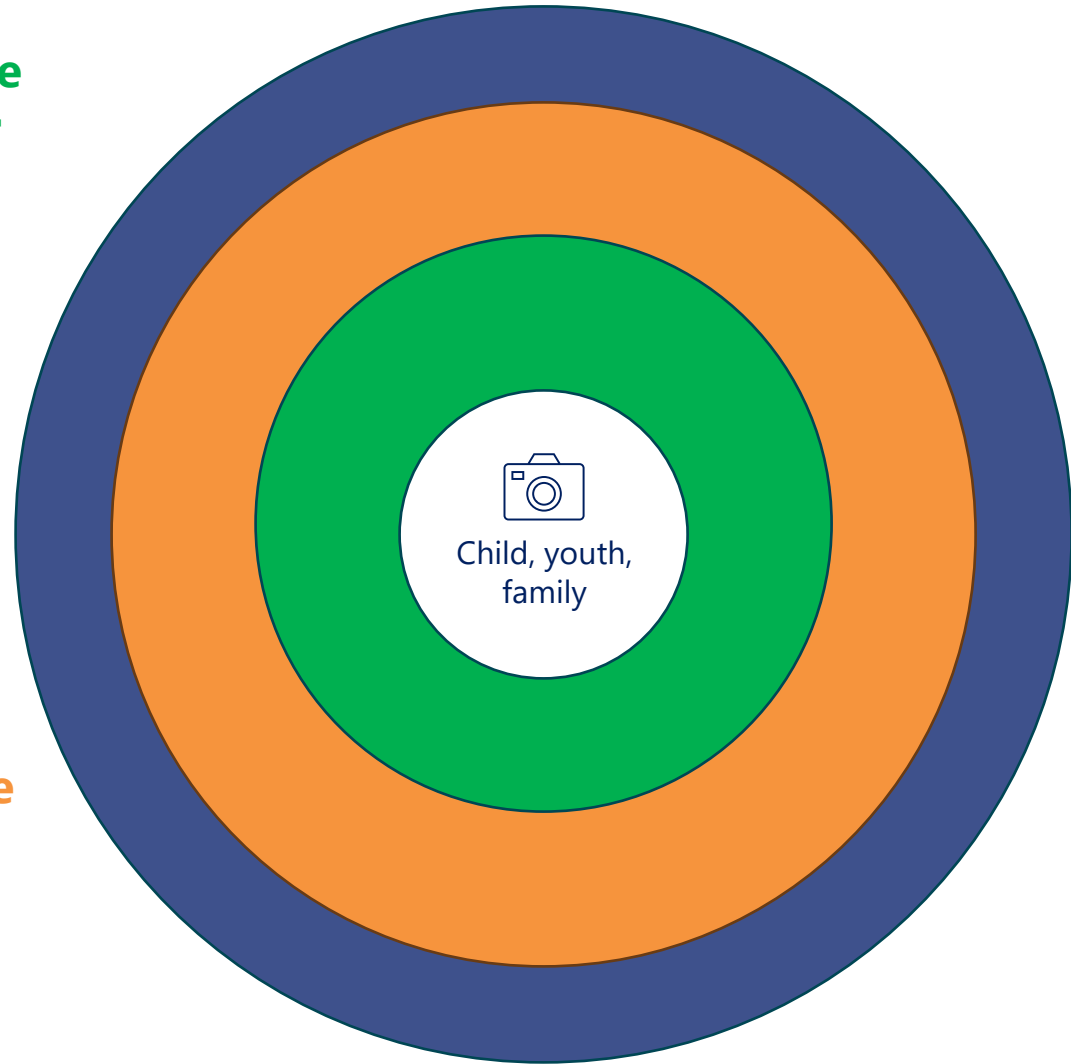
HONOR AS
MUCH AS
POSSIBLE



CIRCLES OF SUPPORT-INFORMAL FAMILY MAPPING

Who do the children or youth and family feel most connected with?

Who do the children or youth and family feel some connection with?



Who are the people that don't support the family now but maybe could in the future?

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TYPES OF MEETINGS

- Initial
- Placement Stability
- Permanency

MEETING TYPES CROSSWALK

SHARED PLANNING MEETINGS	YOUTH & FAMILY MEETING
FTDM-Imminent risk of placement & Emergency Placement or VPA	Initial
FTDM-Change of Placement	Placement Stability
Behavior Rehabilitative Services (BRS) Staffing	Placement Stability
Multiple Placement Staffing/DS Meetings	Placement Stability
Shelter Care Case Conference	Permanency
CHET	Permanency
Permanency Planning Staffing	Permanency
FTDM-Exit from Placement	Permanency
Foster Care Assessment Program (FCAP)	Permanency
Developmental Disability Community Service (formally DDA) Staffing's	Permanency
Multi-Disciplinary Staffing (17.5 & 20.5)	Permanency
Adoption Planning Review	Permanency



WHAT IS AN INITIAL MEETING?



- A meeting to determine if removal can be prevented through engagement in prevention services.
- The meeting seeks to make a live decision and is intended to occur:
 - Prior to recommending removal, including VPAs.
 - Before the initial Shelter Care hearing.
 - As soon as possible following a Protective Custody.

WHAT IS A PLACEMENT STABILITY MEETING?

- A meeting to ensure safety and stability for children and youth in out of home care
- Intended to occur at the first sign of placement instability
- Used to develop specific, individualized, and appropriate responses to:
 - Stabilize placements
 - Develop a transition plan when a move is deemed necessary, for example a move to kin, or a more culturally supporting and affirming placement

WHAT IS A PERMANENCY MEETING?

- A meeting to discuss safe, stable, and timely permanency.
- An opportunity to build and maintain children and youth's cultural and community connections to include relatives, kin, Tribes, and others important to the family.
- Meeting to discuss permanent plans and any recommendations to make changes to the permanent plan.

MEETING SUMMARY

CASE NAME		CHILDREN DISCUSSED	
CASE WORKER NAME	TELEPHONE NUMBER	SUPERVISOR NAME	TELEPHONE NUMBER
<p>STRENGTHS / RESOURCES</p> <p>Summarize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths • Protective capacities • Child/youth well-being • Connections and resources • Placement and service information provided as relevant to meeting purpose <p>SAFETY CONCERNS</p> <p>Summarize the safety threats, or concerns related to child/youth well-being and/or permanency (safety threats and concerns that correlate with action plan tasks).</p> <p>PLACEMENT DECISIONS</p> <p>Indicate the placement decision if that is the purpose of the meeting, and summarize how the team got to that decision to include child, youth, family, and kin voice.</p>			



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RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

RESOURCES

[D.S. Lawsuit and Settlement Agreement | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)

[Youth and Family Meetings | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)

[Youth Guide for Decision Making and Transition Planning Meetings](#)

Youth Guide for Decision-Making and Transition Planning Meetings

This is **your** time to be heard. DCYF staff want to make sure **you** feel supported and have a voice in decisions being made about **your** future.

All parts of you are respected, including culture, gender identity, pronouns, and anything you are comfortable sharing.



Types of Meetings

1. Family Team Decision-Making Meetings:

- **When?** For a change in **your** living situation, like moving to a new home, staying somewhere temporarily, or plans for returning to live with your family.
- **Why?** To talk about what's going well, things that may not be working, and ideas from you and the team to develop a plan together with **your** input.

2. Permanency and Transition Planning Meetings:

- **When?** To discuss **your** needs to make sure your permanent plan is working for **you**.
- **Why?** For support in planning for **your** current safety, well-being, and future.

This meeting is all about you, you choose how involved you want to be

- Want to speak up? Go for it!
- Feeling shy? That's okay too.
- Sharing things can be difficult, **you can talk with a trusted person ahead of time and have them share for you during the meeting.**
- Got questions or ideas? Bring them, we're here to listen!

Help us understand what really matters to you:

- **School:** What's working? What's not? How can we help?
- **Employment:** What are your passions?
- **Where You Live:** What makes a place feel like "home"?
- **People Who Matter:** Let's talk about the relationships that are important to you and make you feel supported.
- **Your Well-Being:** How are you? Is there anything on your mind—health, mental health, or just your everyday needs. What makes you happy? What are your interests? Hobbies? Sports?

Who is invited to meetings?

You: Youth (12 and older) and **your** choice of two people who are supportive of **you**. Other people that you may see at meetings include:

- Parents/Legal Guardians
- Caregivers
- Tribal Representatives
- Attorneys
- Guardian Ad Litem, Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Service Providers

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REGIONAL MEETINGS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

Region 1: Angela Pelfrey & Olivia MacMaster

Region 2: Denise Hannon

Region 3: Anna Nielsen

Region 4: Jessica Mavica

Region 5: Julio Serrano

Region 6: Ana Schultz

HQ MEETINGS PROJECT TEAM

Training and Development Specialists:

Regions 1 & 2: Jen Thomason

Regions 3 & 4: Sunshine Nelson

Regions 5 & 6: Gracia Hahn

Data Analyst: Vacant

Program Manager: Sarah McCamant

CW QA/CQI Research Administrator: Matt Burrows

CW Programs Administrator: Alissa Copeland



Q&A

Sarah McCamant (she/her)
Child Welfare Meetings Program Manager
Sarah.McCamant@dcyf.wa.gov
509.680.9102

THANK YOU