

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

STANDARDS FOR ONGOING PROTECTIVE SERVICES

3.9 FAMILY CASE CONFERENCE

Council on Accreditation Standards

The Council on Accreditation Standards G3 (Advocacy); G4.14 (Team Delivered Services); G8.4 (Service Planning); S10 (Child Protective Services); and S10.5 (Family Services) link to and support Standard 3.9 *Family Case Conference*.

Administrative Code

There are no Ohio Administrative Code Rules that directly address Standard 3.9 *Family Case Conference*.

I. Philosophy

Optimal child welfare decisions are made in an open, inclusive process by bringing together the family, extended family, agency staff, private providers and the community stakeholders. Outcomes are focused on reducing risk to children and expediting permanency. The Family Case Conference (FCC) is a model of team decision-making that is strength based. At the Family Case Conference, everyone involved in the child's and family's life have the opportunity to contribute to designing supports that protect the child's safety while stabilizing the family unit (both birth or foster). This forum provides for team decision-making and designs a plan in which consensus is reached.

II. Outcome

A plan to reduce risk to the child is developed and agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Strengths, resources and supports for the family are identified.

Stakeholders agree to participate in the implementation of the plan.

III. Evaluation

FACSIS events, CPOE and the Federal Health and Human Services outcomes may be considered when evaluating this standard. In addition, the CFSA may consider the following:

- the number of family case conferences per family/child case held prior to removal;
- the number of family case conferences per family/child case after removal until case is closed;
- the number of participants (family, family support, service providers, relatives, staff, etc) who attend each family case conference;
- the number of children prevented from coming into care;
- the median length of stay for children prior to returning home, emancipation or prior to adoption finalization;
- the number of out-of-home placement moves;
- the number of children reunified with their family;
- the number of children who recidivate within 12 months of exiting care.

IV. Standards for Implementation

Prior to implementing Family Case Conference, all involved agency staff and the designated facilitator(s) should be trained on the purpose, philosophy and process of the FCC. Facilitators should obtain additional training on how to facilitate Family Case Conferences.

A. Criteria for convening and scheduling a Family Case Conference

FCC should be convened at, including, but not be limited to:

- a. case planning, safety planning, and/or concurrent planning;
- b. facilitating child safety, permanency, family stability, and/or child and family well-being.

B. Agency's Pre-Conference Activities

- 1) The worker explains to the family the purpose of the FCC, what will happen at the forum, discusses who should be invited and any cultural norms of the family. The worker should give the parents an opportunity to discuss their concerns about this process.
- 2) The worker should help the family identify additional individuals (such as community support persons or extended family members) they would like to have invited to the FCC.
- 3) Prior to contacting prospective participants, the worker needs to receive permission from the family (this does not preclude the social worker from making necessary collateral contacts or inviting critical participants).
- 4) The worker should contact prospective participants explaining to them the purpose of the FCC, what will happen at the forum, and inviting them to the scheduled FCC. All of the prospective participants should be encouraged to attend. The worker should also discuss with the prospective participants additional individuals who may be able to provide information and support to the family. It is important for the worker to give the invited persons an opportunity to discuss their feelings about the family.
- 5) The agency should remove as many barriers as possible to maximize participation and attendance, such as child care, transportation, scheduling, etc.
- 6) Worker should schedule the FCC in a neutral, family-friendly location, if possible.
- 7) Refreshments should be arranged for and be available for the FCC.

C. Family Case Conference Facilitator

FCC should be conducted by a skilled, third party, neutral facilitator who is a staff member of the agency and who is impartial to the case. The facilitator should possess the following:

- a. ability to engage participants;
- b. good communication, listening and reflection skills;
- c. ability to stay on task;
- d. good understanding of group dynamics;
- e. knowledge of family systems;
- f. good interpersonal skills;
- g. conflict resolution/mediation skills;
- h. be detailed-oriented;
- i. have knowledge of, and experience with, community resources and child welfare system;
- j. patience;
- k. objectivity;
- l. good organizational skills;
- m. flexibility; and
- n. sense of humor.

The responsibilities of the facilitator are as follows:

- a. discuss the current situation, perceptions and hopes for the family with the child's caseworker and supervisor, prior to the conference;
- b. review any available information regarding the family's involvement with the agency;
- c. aid in completing agency's pre-conference activities (see Standard 3.9, *Family Case Conference*);
- d. prepare all conference materials, including name tents, that should be prepared with participant's name and relationship to the child;
- e. facilitate the FCC;
- f. discuss next steps with participants regarding follow-up (if needed).

D. Conducting a Family Case Conference

Facilitator should open the meeting with introductions and how each participant is related to the family and child. Name tents should also be available.

If the family identified cultural norms that they would like to address, the facilitator should take time to do so.

Facilitator should explain the purpose of the meeting and the process and ask the members if they have any questions, issues or concerns before moving forward.

The team develops ground rules and reach consensus. This is recorded and will then be distributed at future meetings (if applicable).

The facilitator should review with the members the roles and responsibilities of the Stakeholders represented in the forum. This allows each participant to understand and agree to their roles and responsibilities, as well as gain

knowledge of the other participants' roles and responsibilities. Examples of the participants' roles and responsibilities would include, but not be limited to:

- a. Facilitator: To model a strength based approach and maintain a strength based focus; manage the group's review and dialogue regarding the family and to plan for stabilizing the family so the child can remain in/return home; assure, whenever possible, that consensus is achieved among meeting members; move the process along and assure the Ground Rules are followed; assist the members in arriving at a plan all can agree to and sign off on.
- b. Parents: To actively participate in the family case conference process. Responsibilities include identifying what they want for their child and what they are willing to do towards that end; identify areas of family strengths that they can use to assist them in providing for the safety and well-being of the child; agree to participate in follow-up meetings.
- c. Family Members: To actively participate in the family case conference process. Responsibilities include identifying what they want for the child and what they are willing to do towards that end; commit to those things they are willing to do to assist with both reduced child risk, child safety and family stability; agree to participate in follow-up meetings.
- d. Social Worker/Agency Staff: To participate in the family case conference process and support the family; when previously developed, to review the case plan, progress to date and continued barriers to case plan completion; help identify family strengths and areas that, in his/her professional opinion need to be addressed for child safety and family stability. Responsibilities include identifying what the worker would like for the child and what he/she is willing to do towards that end; agree to participate in follow-up meetings.
- e. All Other Stakeholders (i.e., foster parents, kinship family, attorneys, service providers, CASA, GALs, family support persons, neighborhood partners): To actively participate in the family case conference process; assist in the development of case plan goals and objectives and share perspectives on the child's needs and how to partner with birth parents in advocating for the children's needs; identify/share community resources and natural supports that will assist the family in achieving stability and reducing risk to the child; agree to participate in follow-up meetings and provide reports to the social worker.

To begin discussion of achieving stability and reducing risk to the child, the facilitator needs to ask each member what their perception of the situation is and what they want (outcomes) for the child. The facilitator should begin with the participants with the closest long-term connection to the child and move to those most distant. The reported outcomes for the child should be recorded.

The social worker provides an oral summary of the agency and family activities to date. The worker presents the risk assessment components to the group.

The facilitator should request that each participant identify family strengths that can assist in providing for the child's safety and stabilizing the family. After strengths have been identified, the facilitator should challenge the participants to dialogue with each other on what is needed for child safety and family stability. After the facilitator develops a list of ideas from the participants, the group should begin to identify what is most important to work on first, second, etc., that will become the objectives of the action plan.

The group then develops activities and realistic time frames for accomplishing the objectives. This becomes the basis for the family's plan. Facilitator assesses the group's movement toward consensus and states the agreed-upon decision, with accompanying action steps, when it

appears a consensus decision is at hand. Each participant is invited to comment on their support for the plan.

If consensus cannot be reached, facilitator asks the social worker/supervisor to weigh all the information that has been discussed and make a decision on behalf of the agency. This becomes the agency's official decision and plan.

If agency staff object to the worker's decision due to belief that it places the child at serious risk or violates a critical policy, staff may request a higher level agency administrator to review and make the final decision. This becomes the official position of the agency.

The facilitator should ask parents if they are clear on the objective and are willing to commit to each objective. This should also be done with all the other participants.

Facilitator verbally, and in writing, summarizes the team's decision, including safety plan (if applicable) and action steps, which identify who will do what by when. Each participant signs a summary report, which is distributed to all prior to the end of the meeting.

The facilitator should discuss possible follow-up meetings and receive agreement from the participants on attending follow-up meetings.

A written evaluation of the FCC process (not outcome) should be requested from all the group members.

V. Financial Implications

Costs associated with Standard 3.9, *Family Case Conference* would include such activities as preparation, collateral contacts, client contact, assessment of risk and case plan update at the Family Case Conference, documentation, travel (if held outside of agency), as well as cost of Family Case Conference facilitator, clerical support, supplies (including refreshments), cost of room (if in community).

Agency Preparation Work and Attendance at the Family Case Conference
8 hours x \$81.21/hour = \$649.68 per Family Case Conference