



INFORMATION FOR FOSTER PARENTS

A Family Team Decision-Making Meeting (FTDM) is a type of family meeting used by Children's Administration to make critical, placement-related decisions in an inclusive and strength-based way. An FTDM develops a Plan for a child to be placed safely in the least restrictive, least intrusive placement possible.

When is an FTDM held?

An FTDM is held whenever an out-of-home placement or placement move of a child is possible.

- An IMMINENT RISK FTDM may be held if there is a risk of placement. Hopefully, a Plan can be developed to keep the child safely at home.
- An EMERGENT FTDM is held within 72 hours of a child being placed in protective custody or a court ordered placement.
- When an out-of-home placement is at risk of disrupting, a PLACEMENT STABILIZATION FTDM is held and a Plan to support the placement or identify a new placement for the child is developed.
- An FTDM is also held when a child is returning to his parents' care or a move to an adoptive home is planned. This is called a RETURN HOME FTDM or a PERMANENCY FTDM.

Who attends an FTDM?

The parents of the child will attend, as will the child if the child is old enough (generally 12 or 13 years old or older.) The parents and child may invite members of their family, people who are supportive of them and people who may be possible placement resources for the child. The parents' and child's attorneys, if they have them, may attend. The social worker and supervisor will be present as will the child's CASA or GAL, caregivers, service providers and professionals who have something to contribute to the conversation. If the family has Native American heritage, a representative of the Tribe will be present in person or by telephone.

What happens at an FTDM?

The meeting is led by a facilitator who will discuss the purpose of the FTDM, ask those present to introduce themselves and their relationship to the child, explain the ground rules for the meeting, and obtain the parents' consent for those present to participate. A confidentiality statement will be signed by everyone at the FTDM.

The facilitator will lead the group in identifying the safety threats and other concerns related to the child in their current situation and will list the protective capacities that the parents or current caregivers offer to mitigate these risks. The facilitator will chart these on a whiteboard. Next, the group will brainstorm possible placements for the child and attempt to achieve consensus in identifying where the child will stay. If consensus cannot be reached, the social worker and supervisors will make the decision.

When a placement has been identified, the group will list the tasks required to support the placement and assign these tasks to the social worker, parent or other individual. Everyone in attendance in person will receive a written copy of the Plan the group developed at the end of the meeting. Those present by phone will receive a copy via mail or e-mail.

As a foster parent, when would I participate in an FTDM?

Foster parents may be invited to an FTDM to share information about a child in their care at an Emergent FTDM, a Return Home, or Permanency FTDM. Foster parents would attend a Placement Stabilization FTDM to seek support to maintain a placement in their home or to assist in transitioning a child to a new placement.

Can I ask for a FTDM to stabilize a placement in my home?

Yes, make the request to the social worker assigned to the child in your home or to the social worker's supervisor. It is most effective to ask for an FTDM when you first begin to be challenged by a placement and before you are frustrated or seriously considering asking for the child to be moved.

I want my information about the child in my home to be available at the FTDM but I am reluctant to be there in person. Is that okay?

Sure, you can write a statement to be read at the FTDM or you can ask the social worker to share your observations. The facilitators are trained and are very skilled at maintaining a peaceful, non-threatening environment to discuss the placement needs of children.

If I attend an FTDM what should I know?

It is helpful to remember that the focus of the meeting is to develop and support a plan for a safe and appropriate placement for a child. This is a time to be open and honest in sharing your observations of the child's needs and about what support you need as a caregiver. It is not the place to engage in blaming or shaming of the child's parents or to work out differences you may have with the assigned social worker or Children's Administration.

If I have questions about an FTDM involving a child in my care, who can I ask?

Your licensor and liaison have information about the FTDM process and can answer questions and offer you support if you want them to. You can discuss the specifics of the FTDM with the assigned social worker or supervisor. If you have general questions, not specific to the child's case, you can post these on the Making FTDM Work for You Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/makingftdmworkforyou>.