



CDSS

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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
GOVERNOR

March 13, 2018

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE (ACIN) No. I-14-18

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

TO: ALL COUNTY CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM MANAGERS  
 ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
 ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
 ALL TITLE IV-E AGREEMENT TRIBES  
 ALL ADOPTION REGIONAL AND FIELD OFFICES  
 ALL FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES  
 ALL GROUP HOME DIRECTORS  
 ALL SHORT TERM RESIDENTIAL THERAPEUTIC PROGRAM DIRECTORS  
 ALL INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM COORDINATORS  
 ALL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: DISSEMINATION AND USE OF THE “WHAT IS A CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM (CFT)?” BROCHURES DESIGNED FOR YOUTH, PARENTS, AND PROFESSIONALS

REFERENCE: [ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) NO. 16-84/MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 16-049;](#)  
[WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\), SECTION 706.6;](#)  
[WIC SECTION 832; WIC SECTION 16501;](#)  
[PATHWAYS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES – CORE PRACTICE MODEL GUIDE; ACL NO. 18-09/MHSUDS IN 18-007](#)

The purpose of this ACIN is to provide counties and their partners with information about the available Child and Family Team (CFT) brochures designed as a resource for use in providing outreach and support about the CFT process, guidelines, and frequently asked questions for children, youth, nonminor dependents, parents, and professionals. The CFT brochures are posted on the California Department of Social Services’s (CDSS’s) [Continuum of Care Reform](#) (CCR) web site, and provide an

overview of the CFT process, the composition of CFTs and team roles, team meetings, frequently asked questions, and other helpful information for CFT participants.

## **Background**

The CCR made sweeping changes to California's child welfare system, one of which is the fundamental principle that child welfare services, and the necessary supports for success, are most effective when delivered in the context of an authentic engagement between the child, youth, or nonminor dependent, the family, and the professionals responsible for supporting them. The primary communication and engagement process involves the use of CFT meetings, where the shared responsibility to assess, plan, intervene, monitor, and refine services over time occurs.

Implementation of the CCR requires that Child Welfare and/or Probation Departments must convene or provide a CFT meeting to all children, youth, and nonminor dependents who enter foster care on and after January 1, 2017. This requirement also applies to children, youth, and nonminor dependents already in a foster care placement prior to January 1, 2017. Therefore, all children, youth, and nonminor dependents are required to have a CFT according to the requirements outlined in [ACL 16-84](#).

The requirement to provide CFTs builds upon existing family-centered and team-based approaches already in use across California. In further support of the ongoing efforts of CCR and Pathways to Well-Being, the use of a strengths-based, family-centered CFT process is key to engaging children, youth, nonminor dependents, and families in the development of case plans or treatment plans designed to meet their needs. This focus on engagement is also reflected in CDSS's recent selection of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment as the functional assessment tool that child welfare agencies will be using within the CFT process.<sup>1</sup> Research is clear that by sharing decision-making and working together, professionals, children, youth, and nonminor dependents, and families can achieve positive and lasting outcomes.

Aligning with CFT requirements and specific to the needs of each group, three different brochures were developed within CDSS to inform youth, parents, and involved professionals about the CFT process.

The CDSS worked closely with youth partners at the Youth Engagement Project and California Youth Connection, Parent Partners, and other internal and external stakeholders in the design of these brochures.

## **The Child and Family Team Brochures**

Each brochure's front panel is labeled Child and Family Team (CFT) and sub-classified respectively as **Youth Brochure**, **Parent(s) Brochure**, or **Professionals Brochure**.

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<sup>1</sup> [ACL NO. 18-09/MHSUDS IN 18-007](#)

The brochures align with CFT requirements and guidelines and provide guidance specific to the needs of each group.

The inside section of the CFT brochure, page one, includes the definition of a CFT, “What is a Child and Family Team?”, a list of frequently asked questions, and a resource reference to the CCR web site to obtain additional information. The reverse side of the brochure, page two, contains Team member attendance information “Who attends the meetings?”

Additionally, on the back of the brochures, participants are encouraged to write contact information for other Team members and providers. There is also a Quick Response barcode through which the brochure’s information can be readily accessed online via a smartphone.

**Obtaining a Copy of the Brochures:**

The CFT brochures are available as PDF, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant documents for download and printing on CDSS’s CCR website via this link: [Continuum of Care Reform website](#).

When printing the brochure from the link, it will display best when printed using legal-sized, 8.5”x14” paper.

Once printed, fold paper in half with the family group picture and title in the front. Fold in half again, so the brochure is now in fourths and ready to distribute.

For additional information regarding CFTs, please contact the Integrated Services Unit at (916) 651-6600, or by e-mail at [CWSCoordination@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CWSCoordination@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By:***

MARY SHEPPARD, LCSW, Chief  
Child Protection and Family Support Branch  
Children and Family Services Division

Attachments

c: California Alliance of Child and Family Services  
County Welfare Directors Association  
Chief Probation Officers of California  
Judicial Council of California

## Who attends the meetings?

The CFT composition always includes the child or youth/nonminor dependents, family members, the current caregiver, a representative from the placing agency, and other individuals identified by the family as being important.

### Required:

- Child or Youth/Nonminor Dependents
- Family Members
- Current Caregiver(s)/Resource Parent(s)
- Skilled and Trained CFT Facilitator
- Child Welfare Social Worker and/or Deputy Probation Officer

### Required as Applicable:

- Behavioral Health Staff
- Community Service Providers
- FFA Social Worker or STRTP Representative
- Regional Center Staff
- School Staff
- Child or Youth's Educational Rights Holder
- Tribe or Indian Custodian

### Suggested Team Members:

- Friends/Neighbors
- Youth Partners
- Parent Partners
- Faith Based/Spiritual Supports
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)
- Coaches
- Daycare Providers
- Community Members
- Other Natural Supports

## The CFT

- Honoring the voice, choice, and preferences of the child or youth/nonminor dependent and family are integral to the success of the CFT.
- Professionals should consider the family's ideas before making their own suggestions. The CFT process is predicated upon the premise that the child or youth/nonminor dependent and family are experts of their own lives and should be heard.
- CFT meetings will be documented and are a driver of trauma-informed case plan development.



## Team Members

OUR TEAM MEMBERS	
Name	
Phone	

OUR NEXT MEETING	
Date	
Time	
Location	

## Child and Family Team (CFT)



## What is a Child & Family Team?

Child or youth/nonminor dependents, family members, trusted adults, and caring professionals who work together in achieving goals for positive change and improving child safety, permanency, and well-being.

### Child and Family Teams seek to:

- Recognize children and youth/nonminor dependents and families as the experts in their lives
- Develop plans to meet child or youth/nonminor dependent's and family's goals
- Value and respect the child or youth/nonminor dependent's and family's culture
- Foster independence and begin transition planning from the beginning of care
- Plan and coordinate to ensure there is only one process for the child or youth/nonminor dependent and family
- Ensure the plan of action and services are aligned among service providers

### How often do meetings occur?

Effective practice dictates that meetings should be held as frequently as needed to address emerging issues, provide integrated and coordinated interventions, and refine the plan as needed.

The frequency of meetings should be decided by CFT members and based on, or dictated by, the family's needs. At a minimum, the

law requires a meeting at least once every six months.

Professionals should rely on the CFT for development and decisions made regarding the case plan.

For children or youth/nonminor dependents who are receiving specialty mental health services such as Intensive Care Coordination (ICC) or Intensive Home-Based Services (IHBS) or Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC):

CFT meeting must occur at least once every 90 days.

### Where do meetings occur?

CFT meetings are held in a location and time which are most convenient for the family.

Family homes are the preferred location, but meetings can take place elsewhere, including agency meeting rooms, religious organizations, conference centers,

community based centers, or foster family agency sites.

If a CFT member cannot be physically present, alternatives such as conferencing should be considered.



## Professional staff at meetings seek to:

- Honor family's unique culture by including familiar language and ideas in the case plan
- Establish "ground rules" to make sure there is safe, honest, and confidential communication within the CFT process
  - » Use trauma-informed approaches when talking with children, youth/nonminor dependents and family members so they feel heard and not judged
- A trained and skilled facilitator will define a clear purpose for the Team through a vision statement which will guide planning and be upheld by all Team members
- Work to build relationships that support the development of trust
  - » Encourage hope by conveying belief that each family member can achieve success
- Support and facilitate the family's capacity to advocate for themselves
  - » Child or youth/nonminor dependents and family voice and choice are central to the CFT process
- Explain the CFT process to the CFT members and have an agenda prior to CFT meetings
  - » From the beginning and throughout the process, engage with families in formal and informal safety and risk assessments and permanency planning
- Cross-system planning and coordination will ensure that there is only one team process for a family, making access to care easier and quicker for the child or youth/nonminor dependent



## What is a Child & Family Team?

Child or young adult, family members, trusted adults, and caring professionals who work together in achieving goals for positive change and improving child safety, permanency, and well-being.

### Child and Family Teams

- Your strengths and your family's strengths are the focus in finding solutions
- Your family culture is respected
- You and your family are recognized as the experts in your lives
- Your voice and choice, as well as your family's, are central to the CFT process
- Develop plans to meet your goals and your family's goals



## What should I expect at a meeting?

- A strengths-based approach to find out how to help your family
- Your Team establishes "ground rules" to make sure there is safe, honest, and confidential communication within the CFT process
  - » A facilitator will lead the group discussion
  - » Certain members may take confidential notes
- Your Team has a clearly stated goal for every meeting
- Your Team brainstorms options and action steps, with all Team members (which includes you) having a voice
- All Team members agree to complete specific tasks and responsibilities

For more information visit:

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Continuum-of-Care-Reform>

## Questions I may have:

### How is a CFT meeting scheduled?

Your child or young adult and your family are the most important members of a CFT!

All CFT members make a commitment to attend meetings. Meeting times and locations are scheduled so that they are convenient for you and your family. Your Team will also work with you to communicate meeting information most conveniently: with a phone call, a text, or an email.

### Will I need to pay for this?

No. All children and young adults in foster care and juvenile probation will be provided a CFT at no cost.

### Who can come to the meetings?

Parents, caregivers, friends, and other people you identify as important may attend.

The child welfare social worker or deputy probation officer may need to obtain court approval for parents who have had parental rights terminated before inviting them to attend CFT meetings.

### When will the CFT service end?

The CFT will be an active part of your child or young adult's plan as long as he/she is in the child welfare system and/or the juvenile probation system.

### How often does the CFT meet?

You, your child or young adult, and the Team will decide how frequently the group will meet depending on your child or young adult's needs and the needs of your family.

### How will I know what services are available for me as a parent?

Your Team will work with you to identify each family member's strengths and needs to develop a case plan that is centered around your child or young adult and family. The case plan has specific strategies for achieving your child or young adult's and/or family's goals based on identified needs.

A Team member, such as the social worker, deputy probation officer, and CFT facilitator will help coordinate services that are needed.

### What happens if I am not getting along with members of my Team or if I feel uncomfortable with a Team Member?

CFT meetings are facilitated by professionals trained and skilled in dealing with different situations that might arise.

The Team will work with you and everyone involved to resolve issues.

## Who attends the meetings?

The CFT composition always includes the child or young adult, family members, the current caregiver, a representative from the placing agency, and other individuals identified by the family as being important.

### Required:

- Your Child or Young Adult
- Your Family Members
- Your Child or Young Adult's Current Caregiver(s)/Resource Parent(s)
- Your CFT Facilitator
- Your Child or Young Adult's Social Worker and/or Deputy Probation Officer

### Required as Applicable:

- Behavioral Health Staff
- Community Service Providers
- FFA Social Worker or STRTP Representative
- Regional Center Staff
- School Staff
- Child or Young Adult's Educational Rights Holder
- Tribe or Indian Custodian

### Suggested Team Members:

- Your Friends/Neighbors
- Your Child or Young Adult's Youth Partners
- Your Parent Partners
- Your Faith Based/Spiritual Supports
- Your Child or Young Adult's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)
- Your Child or Young Adult's Coaches
- Your Child's Daycare Providers
- Your Community Members
- Your Other Natural Supports

## What is my role as a member?

- Your family is at the center of this process and the most important part of the team.
- Attending every meeting is part of the plan so the Team can hear from you and your child or young adult directly.
- The Team needs and wants to hear what you say! Share your opinions, thoughts, and concerns.

Who do you count on as a support person? A friend? A neighbor? Invite them to be part of the Team, too!



## Team Members

OUR TEAM MEMBERS	
Name	
Phone	

OUR NEXT MEETING	
Date	
Time	
Location	

## Child and Family Team (CFT)



Parent(s)



## Who attends the meetings?

The CFT composition always includes you, family members, the current caregiver, a representative from the placing agency, and other individuals identified by the family as being important.

### Required:

- You
- Your Family Members
- Your Current Caregiver(s)/Resource Parent(s)
- Your CFT Facilitator
- Your Social Worker and/or your Deputy Probation Officer

### Required as Applicable:

- Behavioral Health Staff
- Community Service Providers
- FFA Social Worker or STRTP Representative
- Regional Center Staff
- School Staff
- Your Educational Rights Holder
- Tribe or Indian Custodian

### Suggested Team Members:

- Friends/Neighbors
- Youth Partners
- Parent Partners
- Faith Based/Spiritual Supports
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)
- Coaches
- Daycare Providers
- Community Members
- Other Natural Supports

Who do you count on as a support person? A friend? A neighbor? Invite them to be part of the Team, too!

## What is my role as a member?

- You are an important member of a Team who comes together to help you and your family.
- The Team needs and wants to hear what you say! Speak up and share your opinions, thoughts, and concerns.
- You and your family are at the center of this process. Attending every meeting is part of the plan so the Team can hear from you directly.



## Team Members

OUR TEAM MEMBERS	
Name	
Phone	

OUR NEXT MEETING	
Date	
Time	
Location	

## Child and Family Team (CFT)



Youth



## What is a Child & Family Team?

You, family members, trusted adults, and caring professionals who work together in achieving goals for positive change and improving child safety, permanency, and well-being.

### Child and Family Teams

- Your strengths and your family's strengths are the focus in finding solutions
- Your family culture is respected
- You and your family are recognized as the experts in your lives
- Your voice and choice, as well as your family's, are central to the CFT process
- Develop plans to meet your goals and your family's goals

### Questions I may have:

#### Am I able to share information from the CFT with my attorney?

Yes, you are able to share information about the CFT with your attorney. The Team is there to help you and your family.

#### What happens if my Resource Parent(s) and Parent(s) are not getting along?

The Team will work with you and your family to develop a plan to address this and move towards achieving the plan goals.

#### How is a CFT meeting scheduled?

You are the most important member of a CFT! All CFT members make a commitment to attend meetings. Meeting times and locations are scheduled so that they are convenient for you and your family.



#### Can I see my case plan?

Yes. Information sharing is an important part of the CFT, so talk with your social worker or deputy probation officer about wanting to see your case plan.

#### What if my parents' rights have been terminated? Can they still come to the meetings?

In some cases, biological parents may be able to attend CFT meetings. Check with your Team, since your social worker or deputy probation officer may need to go to Court for approval.

#### What happens if I am not getting along with members of my Team?

Make sure you tell a trusted Team member so you can all work together to develop a plan to address this and move towards achieving the plan goals.

#### Can I ask for a CFT meeting if I'm worried about a circumstance in my life?

Yes. A CFT meeting may be requested by you to address issues and brainstorm options for action steps. Your Team will work together to help you and your family with your needs.

Some reasons why a CFT meeting is requested include:

- You have concerns about your placement
- You are not able to attend regular sibling or family visits because of distance, transportation, or supervision
- You are not able to participate in after-school activities, such as sports or school functions
- You are missing your Independent Living Program (ILP) classes
- Your needs have changed

## What should I expect at a meeting?

- Your Team establishes "ground rules" to make sure there is safe, honest, and confidential communication within the CFT process
  - » A facilitator will lead the group discussion
- Your Team has a clearly stated goal for every meeting
- All Team members have a voice
- Your Team brainstorms options and decides on specific actions steps
- All Team members agree to complete specific tasks and responsibilities



#### Can I have my CASA/Guidance Counselor/ Youth Partner/Spiritual Advisor go to a CFT meeting?

Yes! You are encouraged to request that the people in your life who are important to you and willing to support your goals be invited to participate in the CFT.

#### How will I know what services are available in my county?

Your Team will work with you to assess your needs and explain what services are available in your county. A Team member, such as your social worker, deputy probation officer, and CFT facilitator will help coordinate services that are needed.

#### If I feel uncomfortable with any part of the process, what can I do?

If you feel worried or upset about any part of the process, you can communicate directly with one or more of your Team members.