



1. Does there have to be a full time facilitator?

Generally this Team is facilitated by the youth's assigned social worker/caseworker. It is a case management process which provides for the coordination and accountability of all activities related to the youth's need for safety, well-being and permanence. In rare circumstances, where there may be actual or perceived conflicts of interest, specific Team meetings may be facilitated by the supervisor or other social worker who does not have primary case management responsibilities.

2. What qualifications should the social worker have?

The agency must select the social workers based on skills, values and experience. The staff member should have experience in front-line child welfare as well as experience in permanency planning. He/she should demonstrate knowledge and skills in collaborative, strength-based and solution-focused case work:

- sees the value of each Team member's participation;
- accepts ideas that may be different from their own;
- leads a process that explores all potential permanency options without being tied to a particular outcome

Ideally, this should be a person who holds a strong belief and commitment to legal family permanence.

3. What kind of training does a social worker need to facilitate the Team?

3P practice consultants provide a 2-day training. It is a skills-based training with an emphasis on the core values and concepts of best permanency practices in child welfare, including family search and engagement and relationship-building. The training highlights the critical role of the youth and significant adults in case planning and decision making. Participants are provided opportunities for increased knowledge and skill-building in facilitating a blend of individual, joint and large team meetings which comprise the Teaming process.

4. How does this Teaming differ from other Teaming models?

Youth-Driven, Family-Centered Teaming shares nearly identical underlying values with similar approaches-values such as family empowerment, inclusivity of participants, and a strengths/needs focus. It differs from other approaches in several ways including a blend of individual, small and large group meetings. The Team is built around the youth's needs for safety, permanency and well-being and youth voice is central, regardless of age. A defining characteristic is that this is a continuous process designed to ensure that youth exit the child welfare system to timely and legal family permanence.

5. How much time should we plan on for each meeting?

1-2 hours for large Team meetings, generally held every 6-8 weeks.

Social worker uses individual and joint meetings, lasting 1-2 hrs. to prepare the youth, family members, other significant adults and professionals for coming together in the large Team planning meeting centered on the needs of the youth.

6. Can we promise confidentiality of the meetings to participants?

Not completely. It is recommended that the meetings be framed in terms of respect, privacy, and sensitivity rather than confidentiality. Participants are informed of state-specific provisions around abuse and neglect reporting and any other exceptions to confidentiality.

7. What are the pros & cons of having attorneys attend?

Legal and social work professionals may both gain in their knowledge of each other's roles and can support a collaborative approach to permanency planning. At times, lawyers may be able to clear up confusing legal issues or provide a realistic legal assessment and social workers may be able to enlighten attorneys about matters of risk, safety and permanency. It is critical to be clear about the roles of social work and legal staff, ensuring that each profession is expressing opinions on its area of responsibility and expertise. Participants may not be comfortable speaking freely in the presence of lawyers, and some lawyers may use the meeting as an opportunity for pre-trial discovery. Care must be taken to make sure that meetings do not take on a quasi-legal tone which may put participants on guard about legal ramifications. These Team meetings are designed to be a youth/family-empowerment experience. Each jurisdiction will need to weigh these pros and cons in order to make a decision that is most compatible with their system.

8. What happens if the Team cannot reach consensus?

Ultimately the custodial agency has decision-making power. However, the Team continues to advocate at all levels for the best interest of the youth. Because this Teaming approach is not a single-event, there is time to work with all Team members to build consensus regarding the direction of permanency planning for each youth.

9. What if one of the parents (or their support people) is believed to be mentally ill or violent?

Automatic exclusions from meetings for families with particular problems should be avoided as much as possible. When safety concerns are present, individual and joint preparatory meetings are used to assess concerns and collaboratively determine a level of participation to ensure safety while respecting family voice. If these concerns arise only after the meeting is underway, the social worker must utilize his/her best skills and judgment to determine if a meeting should be terminated, a participant excused, or security personnel contacted.

10. How does Youth-Driven, Family-Centered Teaming help with identifying family and kin for placement & support?

A core component of the process is family search and engagement. Family search is a set of strategies and tools for identifying and locating family members, community members and other adults who are significant to youth in foster care. Engagement is a set of skills to establish or re-establish relationships between the youth and significant adults who can play a variety of roles in the youth's life-from helping

the youth understand their past and history; to planning for their future; providing emotional or tangible supports as well as placement.

11. How can safety and risk assessment information be incorporated into the Team meeting? Doesn't it intimidate families to talk about safety and risk issues in this setting?

A thorough discussion of risk and safety concerns, as well as the youth and adults' strengths and needs, is a part of every meeting. If a safety/risk assessment tool is part of the social worker's assessment process, then s/he is expected to highlight the findings as part of the discussion. Social workers assist in ensuring that safety and risk concerns are described in lay language, not jargon, and that clear connections are made between behaviors and risks to youth. Risk and safety discussions must consider the youth's specific vulnerability and his/her capacity for resilience and self-protection. Similar safety and risk concerns do not necessarily affect every youth in the same way. Every youth deserves individual consideration and a personalized decision. No one formula works for every situation; the key is to remain flexible and view every youth as an individual.

12. Should children be included in the meetings? What age?

This should always be a case by case decision based on chronological age, developmental readiness, and evaluation of a youth's unique needs. There is often a benefit to having the youth's voice at the meeting and their participation can be supported in numerous and creative ways. For youth in their teens, it should be presumed that participating in Team meetings provides an important vehicle for "voice" and "choice". It is important to remember that in many states and jurisdictions, youth 12 and older must consent to adoption and guardianship.

13. What if youth are ambivalent or refuse to participant?

Youth may be at very different places in terms of their readiness and ability to engage in this work. Remember, there are many ways in which youth can be involved in the Teaming process. The issue is not whether or not we involve youth in planning; the issue is *how* the youth will be involved. Some youth are involved every step of the way. Ideally, they are not only attending meetings, but helping to co-facilitate their Team meetings. Others may wish to be informed of the process, have an opportunity to respond, but may not wish to participate in Team meetings. The social worker should actively encourage the youth to participate as much as possible. It is the responsibility of the worker to inform, prepare and offer options for the youth's level of participation. Even if the youth does not attend Team meetings, it is still a good idea to revisit the issue. As the youth becomes more engaged in planning and builds a relationship with the worker, his/her willingness to participate is likely to grow.

14. Do I still do Youth-Driven, Family-Centered Teaming when there is a case crisis?

This Teaming approach is continuous and proceeds whether there is something perceived as significant occurring or not. Safety planning occurs whenever there is a concern about a youth's safety as a result of high-risk behaviors. Permanency planning proceeds concurrently with safety planning even during time of crisis and instability. Crisis does not interrupt the Teaming process or draw it off course; although it could serve to provide momentum for the planning and can be an opportunity to go deeper in conversations about who family will be for this youth.

15. How do you do this on top of case management?

The two should not be seen as separate; rather, it is a reframing, repackaging of time within the casework process. The individual, joint and large team meetings are not new meetings, but can be integrated into what social workers already do with their time. By being planful and prepared for each casework contact, the worker uses every opportunity to ensure the focus on permanence becomes as critical as the focus on safety.