

The What, Who, When and Why of Family Partnership Meetings

? What?

A Family Partnership Meeting, often called an FPM, is a structured group meeting, led by a neutral facilitator, designed to increase your input in decision-making, and find out how to provide you with the right kind of supports for you.

? Who?

You are encouraged to invite as many supports as you like. Neighbors, family, friends, employers, school staff, counselors, and church members may provide valuable input and support. Your Social Worker will attend and may have ideas about who else could help. Depending on the age of your child, and the specific situation, they may also attend. An FPM can be requested by parents/guardians, youth, current caregiver, or agency staff.

? When?

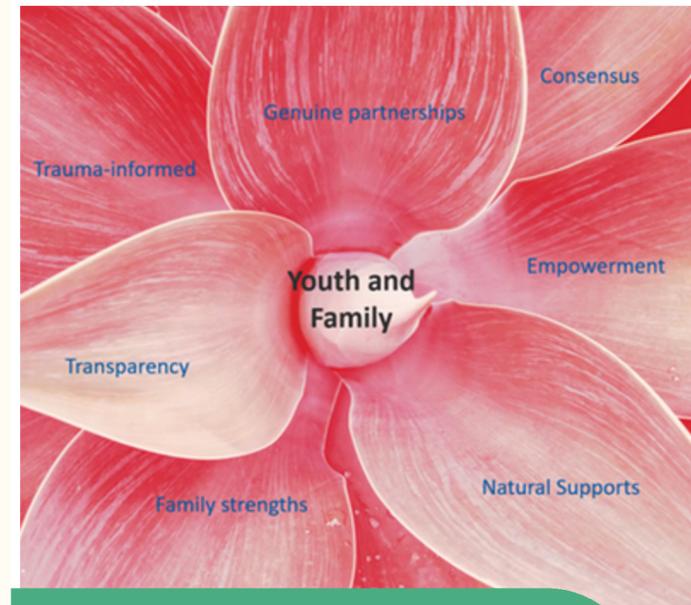
FPMs are held at specific points in a case, but can be requested any time. Specific points, called "critical decision points" include: When a Child Protective Services Worker identifies a child/family to be at high risk; When there is a threat of child removal from the home; When a child in Foster Care changes placements; or when a Foster Care goal-change is approaching.

? Why?

FPMs are part of Virginia's Children's Services Practice Models. The Model has identified several goals to make better outcomes for families and children involved with the Child Welfare System. One of those goals is giving a stronger voice to families. FPMs are a tool and an opportunity to try and reach that goal.

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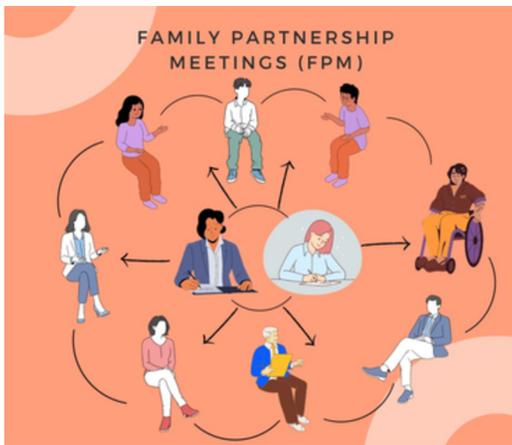
Family Driven Decision Making!

Family Partnership Meetings

1835 Industry Drive
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Family Engagement Based on Principles!

All families have strengths.

Families are the experts on themselves.

Families deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Families can make well-informed decisions about keeping their children safe when supported.

Outcomes improve when families are involved in decision making.

A team is often more capable of creative and high quality decision making than an individual.

What Happens in the Meeting?

Before the meeting: You will meet with your Social Worker and decide what you want to accomplish and who you want to invite. Be sure to tell your Social Worker about anyone who could be supportive, and they will get an invitation.

During the meeting: A trained facilitator guides the group through a structured process. This facilitator is a neutral party, and is not involved in your case. The facilitator is there to make sure your voice is heard, and that the solutions work for everyone!

There are six general stages of an FPM:

1. **Review:** First, you will have a chance to explain the situation and your goals for the meeting.
2. **Strengths:** Your family's strengths and successes will be identified.
3. **Concerns:** Specific concerns to be solved, and needs that you have will be listed.
4. **Brainstorms:** Then, the group will BRAINSTORM! Everyone puts their heads together, to come up with as many ideas as possible for solutions. Don't over think it; any idea is a good idea. Try to be creative and think about your family's strengths and supports and what you're good at!
5. **Consensus:** With all the ideas on the table, the facilitator will help the group reach a consensus and decide on solutions that work for everyone.
6. **Plan:** Once there is consensus on solutions, those solutions will be turned into a specific plan for how to get them done.

After you leave the meeting: You will get a copy of that plan, and come back periodically to review and update it, until all the goals have been met.

Meeting Location and Time

We believe that Family Partnership Meetings should be conducted at a mutually agreeable and accessible location/time that maximizes opportunities for family participation. Please let us know your preferences regarding the time and location of your meeting.

You have the right to....

- Have your rights explained to you in a manner which is clear.
- Receive written information or interpretation in your native language.
- Read, review, and receive written information regarding your child's record upon request.
- Understand how to access needed services and your rights to choose the provider for those services.
- Understand that written consent must be provided before you or your family members begin services as part of their Service/Care Plan.
- Understand the responsibilities of all parties to maintain confidentiality.
- Receive assessments, services and notifications in a timely manner.
- Understand the right to review, disagree, and/or appeal.
- Participate during the entire process when your child/family situation is being discussed.