



## EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR FAMILIES, YOUTH AND AGENCIES TO USE FOR CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

The NC Collaborative for Children, Youth and Families is a forum for sharing best practices being used in our State. It oversees and provides technical assistance around Child and Family Team training. Families, youth and agencies are using innovative strategies to promote health and safety considering the current restrictions in place with COVID-19. Child and Family Team Meetings are expected to continue to be held every 30 days and more often in crisis situations when necessary. **The following should be collectively approved by families, youth, and your agencies.**

**Child and Family Team Meetings:** When convening CFT meetings in person face-to-face is not possible, CFT participants/invitees will need and should have access to the internet, compatible electronic devices that support the technology platform chosen as well as access to use of those virtual platforms. The use of technology platforms such as, but not limited to: Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Zoom Pro, WebEx, Go To Meeting, FaceTime, Google Meet, phone conferences and/or other secure agency approved platforms can be utilized. This will allow us to continue to work in partnership and maintain inclusive communication for transparency. Please note that with proper use of masks and physical distancing, team meetings can be held in places approved by the family and agency that ensure confidentiality.

**Maintaining authenticity when we are not meeting face to face,** the following strategies may better support the Child and Family Team Meeting when using any of the above-mentioned technology platforms:

### **1) Comfort agreement additions:** *(Developed at the beginning of the meeting)*

- Add “patience with technology” to the comfort agreements. Often, technology is new to some participants and it takes coaching each other on the best methods for communicating by phone or internet.
- Add “be aware of your tone of voice, facial and body language” in order to be sensitive to the differences between face to face contact, internet and phone contact.

### **2) Prior to the CFT meeting**

- Research features of technology that 1) can be used on technology devices available to family, youth and participants; 2) allows for needed accommodations for inclusion of all participants (e.g. 711/TTY accessible, closed caption text, etc.); 3) allows sharing of documents and paperwork on the screen.
- Collect best contact information from all team members. This will be helpful in case of technical mishaps.
- Allow time before and during the meeting to prepare families, youth and agency partners in the use of the technology platforms chosen for the CFT meeting.
- Some families may not have space in the home to conduct private meetings. Honor the family’s decision of what is private to them with few distractions.
- Consider accessibility and accommodations to support participant inclusion.
  - Have translators/interpreters available for the family or youth who use ASL/711/TTY and/or who are English learners. Best practice is to never utilize any child or youth as the interpreter.

-Be aware of needed accommodations for physical, vision and hearing that may need to be addressed to support an inclusive CFT meeting.

### **3) Before, during and after the meeting**

- Be sure time for introductions including roles/responsibilities/relationships of those present happens. For example: CFT facilitator, note-taker, timekeeper, family advocate, grandparent, teacher, CPS social worker, etc.
- To ensure confidentiality make sure that the team does not share the link or phone number to anyone not connected with the meeting.
- Check-in and debrief with the family, youth and other participants to make adjustments for effective process and outcomes. Remember your check in may include location, time, technology format, etc.

**Follow up:** The NC Collaborative for Children, Youth and Families Training Committee Co-chairs invite you to give us feedback on how this resource has been helpful to you. If you need strategies beyond what we have covered, please contact Training Committee Co-chairs, Teka Dempson [teka15demp@yahoo.com](mailto:teka15demp@yahoo.com) or Joanne Scaturro at [Joanne2653@aol.com](mailto:Joanne2653@aol.com), or your local System of Care Coordinator and local Family Partner.

## **Resources**

**Consumer, Family Members and Community Stakeholder Calls**-Joint DMHDDSAS and DHB (NC Medicaid) COVID-19 Update Call For BH/IDD Consumers, Family Members and Community Stakeholders-(Recurring every Monday at 2:00; same call in number and access code unless otherwise informed.)-

<https://www.captionedtext.com/client/event.aspx?EventID=4444453&CustomerID=324>

**NC Collaborative for Children, Youth and Families (State Collaborative)-**

<https://nccollaborative.org/>

**NC Families United**-<https://www.ncfamiliesunited.org/> or

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/58044924427/>

**When COVID-19 Gives You Lemons: Pivoting to Virtual Community Engagement-**

<https://www.chcs.org/when-covid-19-gives-you-lemons-pivoting-to-virtual-community-engagement/?ct=t%28CPP+Virtual+Engagement+05%2F19%2F20%29>

**Alliance Health-** <https://www.alliancehealthplan.org/>

**National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health-** [www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org) or

[ffcmh@ffcmh.org](mailto:ffcmh@ffcmh.org)