

LCCS POLICY 600

Family Case Conference (FCC)

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See new Policy #:	

Scope:	The provisions of this policy shall apply to any LCCS staff member participating in a Family Case Conference.
Responsibility:	Case Review Department, Assessment Caseworker, Family Services Caseworker, Adoption Caseworker, Independent Living Caseworker, Supervisors, & Managers, and Case Review Clerical
Purpose:	To enable direct service personnel, parents, and other parties involved in the case to reach consensus regarding placement and/or custody decisions, after considering all information and alternative decisions.
Legal Cite:	O.R.C. § 5153.16, OAC 5101:2-42-09, 5101:2-42-90, 5101:2-39-01, P.L. 113-183

POLICY STATEMENT

LCCS will conduct a Family Case Conference comprised of parties involved in the case whenever decisions regarding custody and/or placement are warranted.

LCCS prohibits the audio and/or visual recording of Family Case Conferences.

PROCEDURE - including required timeframes and documentation

Scheduling Criteria/Responsibilities for All Family Case Conferences by Type:

The **supervisor or manager of the worker of record (WOR)** must schedule all Family Case Conferences with the exception of:

- **The Review FCC for ATC** cases (only), which is scheduled by **the Case Review Facilitator**.
- The **Crisis FCC**, which is scheduled by the **worker/supervisor who makes any initial placements** that occur AFTER normal business hours. This is done by completing all the necessary information in the logbook at the security station prior to 8:00 a.m., on the first business day following the placement. (Emergency Change of Placements MUST be scheduled the next business day by the supervisor.
- **The LCCS Case Review Department** will schedule the Permanency Planning Family Case Conference nine to ten (9-10) months after removal. When it coincides with a Semi-Annual Administrative Review (SAR) or 90 Day Case Review (typically nine (9) months after custody/placement), invitation letters will be sent to all of the parties.
- **If the PPC does not coincide with a 3-Month Case Review**, the Administrative Review Clerk will schedule the PPC and notify the caseworker, supervisor and CASA/GAL. **The caseworker is responsible for notifying other parties.**
- **The supervisor of the WOR** may schedule a PPC at anytime during the life of a case as needed.

The **Agency supervisor scheduling** any FCC must provide the case review scheduler with:

- the case number;
- zip code of custodian (meetings should be held in the community unless the case/situation meets the criteria for not being held in the community);
- type of meeting requested;
- specific children the meeting concerns; and the
- name of the attorney(s) representing the parents (if applicable).

Specific Types of Family Case Conferences and Processes for Each:

1. **Placement Custody FCC, including Agreement for Temporary Custody (ATC) or Permanent Surrender (PS), must** be convened prior to a child's removal from his or her own home and the agency's determination to seek custody, or a court order, transfer temporary custody to a relative, or to accept Agreements for Temporary Custody (ATC) or any Permanent Surrender (PS) of a child from a parent.

All Agreements for Temporary Custody (ATC) **MUST be pre-approved by the Associate Director of Services.**

All Permanent Surrenders are restricted to children under one (1) year of age.

The **worker of record** will invite:

- parents;
- current caregiver;
- children over the age of ten (10) who are the subjects of the meeting, when appropriate;
- community professionals currently or recently involved with the family; and

- others as may be appropriate (e.g. other children in family, relatives or kin, minister).

The **LCCS Case Review Department** will invite:

- attorney for the parents (if applicable);
- attorney for the child (if applicable);
- CASA/GAL;
- LCCS Out-of-Home Care Unit; and
- other agency staff as suggested by the worker/supervisor of record.

1. **Crisis FCC** must be convened the next working day following any custody/placement that occurs after normal business hours.

Notifications of the meeting must be made by the placing worker or as designated by the placing supervisor of record

2. **Change of Placement FCC** must be convened prior to a child's move from one substitute care placement to another placement, excluding moves from emergency foster homes to foster homes and foster homes to adoptive homes.

Note: When a child is potentially disrupting from a foster home/placement, a pre-meeting must occur between the DFS WOR/Supervisor and the Placement WOR/Supervisor prior to a Change of Placement FCC being scheduled. The purpose of this meeting is to create a plan to present to the current caregiver that may avoid the disruption.

Notifications are the same as listed above for a Placement/Custody FCC (exclude parents and parent's attorneys if Agency has Permanent Custody).

1. **Review FCC** must be convened when further information or clarification is needed or has been obtained that affects the outcome of the case, and prior to the expiration of an Agreement for Temporary Custody (ATC).

A Review FCC may be requested by any involved caseworker (via his/her supervisor), involved supervisor or other Lucas County Children Services management staff that have concerns regarding custody or placement issues.

Notification is the same as listed above.

1. **A Permanency Planning FCC** must be convened within nine (9) to ten (10) months of the earlier of either the date of placement or date of custody, for the purpose of identifying one of the following Case Planning Goals:

Note: Prior to the FCC, the caseworker and supervisor must seek their manager's approval of the plan.

- Reunification;

- Temporary Custody Extension;
- Legal Custody to Non-Custodial parent, approved relative or non-relative kin;
- Permanent Custody (including Original PC)
- Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA);

Note: Children must be 16 years old or older for a permanent plan of PPLA, with no exceptions.

Note: When recommending a Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) for a child over the age of 16, the Case Review Manager must be notified so a PPLA Team Meeting can be scheduled prior to the court hearing.

Subsequent PPC's will be held at 15 and 21 months as needed.

Family Case Conference Process

Caseworker/supervisor meets with the facilitator five (5) minutes prior to the conference, if deemed necessary, due to complexity of issues. The purpose of this pre-meeting will be centered around the conference process rather than the content. (i.e., safety issues, excusing individuals, etc)

The LCCS Case Review Facilitator:

- makes introductions;
- reviews the conference format and possible outcomes of the meeting;
- discusses the time frame and confidentiality of the conference; and
- asks the family or caseworker to begin by stating their understanding of the reason the meeting was called and their plans for the safety of the children.

Caseworker/Supervisor:

- states the specific circumstances which necessitated the conference being called and utilizes the Safety, Risk and Family Assessment, including but not limited to:
 - family strengths/resources that may reduce risk or increase safety;
 - risk contributors that increase risk and reduce safety of the children;
 - history of prior CPS involvement;
 - adult protective capacities;
 - child vulnerabilities; and
 - ideas for reduction of risk and safety threats and the development of an action plan to reduce the risk in all Placement Custody and Permanency Planning Conferences;
 - services and reports on services that the family has been or is involved with or has been referred to;
 - presents information that is needed to protect the child(ren);
 - requests information from other people in attendance;
 - makes a recommendation concerning placement and services, including rationale and high risk factors and safety threats;

- brings and discusses the most current information to the conference regarding the child's health and educational information, including educational stability and performance;
- makes decision if consensus cannot be reached.

Other Lucas County Children Services Personnel:

- participates in the discussion regarding the level of risk and safety threats to child(ren) utilizing the Safety, Risk and Family Assessment and ensures respective department staff are aware of any action plan steps arising from meeting which require intervention, monitoring or other action by department staff members.

Parents, Children and Relatives and Other Agency Professionals:

- participates in the discussion regarding the level of risk and safety threats to the child(ren) by clarifying and/or providing additional information, including, but not limited to: family's weaknesses and strengths, service involvement and progress reports, ideas for reduction of risk and development of an action plan to reduce the risk and safety threats.

Case Review Facilitator:

- coordinates with caseworker/supervisor a discussion about the issues presented
- elicits consensus regarding:
 - safety and risk elements that may pose potential harm to a child;
 - whether or not placement is needed as a safety plan;
 - what agency/community services are needed to reduce future risk;
 - a Safety/Service Plan consistent with the overall level of risk, agency policies and legal mandates;
 - advises Lucas County Children Services staff of their right/responsibility to appeal the decision if consensus cannot be reached and they feel the decision places a child at risk (LCCS Policy #601);
 - assists caseworker and other Lucas County Children Services staff in developing and reviewing an action plan prior to the family returning to the conference if excused;
 - completes page 1 of the Family Case Conference Report (LCCS 5611) summarizing the agency's determination on custody, placement and services, and distributes a copy to all participants;
 - completes the report in its entirety within 72 hours and enters the report in an activity log in SACWIS;
 - meets with the caseworker/supervisor (and others as appropriate) immediately following the conference to evaluate the process content (as needed);
 - provides written feedback, within one working day, to an absent line supervisor, regarding any worker of record performance issues (as needed);
 - completes initial removal - reasonable efforts portions of the Case Plan in SACWIS if placement and custody results from the Family Case Conference (FCC).

CASE PRACTICE GUIDES

Special consideration should be given to LCCS Policy 175 – Employee Safety when inviting individuals to conferences. Persons with documented threats of violence toward staff will not be invited to the agency for meetings, conferences, and/or Administrative Reviews.

Parents and non-LCCS attendees may have their bags checked by security and security may wand them prior to the meeting. Individuals refusing to have their bags checked or to be wanded will be prohibited from attending the conference.

All LCCS staff participating in a Family Case Conference has responsibility to ensure decisions are made with respect for diversity of culture and sensitivity to alternative lifestyle choices.

All LCCS staff participating in a Family Case Conference has responsibility to bring to the table his/her thoughts, concerns, support for or objection to decisions during the conference where safe and reasonably possible.

Risk to the victims of domestic violence can increase dramatically when information about the disclosure or documentation is shared. The Agency must be vigilant in their protection of such information, especially the address of the adult victim.

If there are recent concerns of domestic violence, untreated domestic violence, and/or protection orders, the meetings **MUST** be held at the Agency and parties brought in separately to assist in the protection of the target of the domestic violence. The WOR/supervisor and facilitator may wish to meet with Security to discuss safety arrangements in advance of the meeting.

Parents are to be encouraged to invite a support person to family case conferences, but parents rights to confidentiality of their personal and case information should be carefully considered when such information is being presented in meetings where other parties are present. These include but are not limited to: agency employees, foster parents, children, services providers, a GAL or CASA, or relatives/kin.

Both parents must consent to the presence of support persons during the sharing of information that may pertain to them. If either parent does not consent, the support person(s) can attend only the portion of the meeting where information about the consenting parent is being shared.

Due to the sensitive nature of the information being shared in family case conferences, all non-LCCS employees in attendance at any family case conference will be required to sign a confidentiality statement prior to the start of the conference stating that the information shared during the meeting will not be discussed with anyone not present at the case conference. The parent(s) will also be asked to sign a release of information form. In addition, all attendee's cell phones (with the exception of Court Staff, Attorneys and Guardian Ad Litem) must be registered at the LCCS security desk prior to the family case conference and can be retrieved from security at the conclusion of the meeting. Recording devices cannot be used in any LCCS

meeting. Any refusals or violations of these expectations will result in an individual's exclusion from LCCS family case conferences and case reviews.

Confidentiality should also be considered when completing case documentation concerning the meeting that will be shared with attendees.

If a Family Case Conference results in the decision to recommend to the Court that a child be removed from the home, all known relatives of the child as well as any adult who has legal custody of any of the child's siblings, including blood, half-blood, or adoption, must be notified that the child has been or is being removed from the home, options to participate in the care and placement of the child, and requirements for becoming a licensed foster caregiver. These notifications must take place within 30 days of removal and must be documented in SACWIS. Relatives or other adults with a history of family violence are an exception to the requirement for notification and do not have to be notified, but the reason they are not notified should be documented in SACWIS.

The Planned Permanent Living Arrangement Caregiver Notice (JFS 08101) must be signed by the caregiver when PPLA has been obtained.

RELATED POLICIES and FORMS

LCCS Policy #175 (Employee Safety)

LCCS Policy #640 (Semi-Annual Administrative Reviews)

LCCS Policy #601 (Internal Appeal of A Family Case Conference Decision)

LCCS Form #5611 (Family Case Conference Report)

ODHS Form #1444 (Case Plan Part B-1)

ODJFS Form #1443 (Child's Education and Health Information)

ODJFS Form #08101 (Planned Permanent Living Arrangement Caregiver Notice)