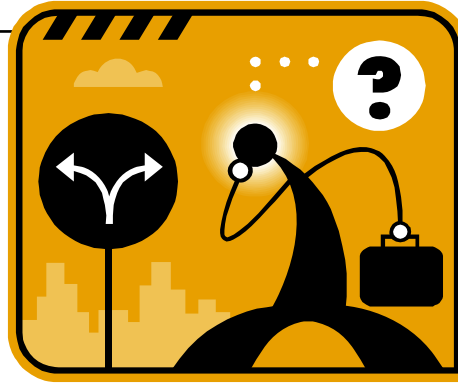


# Virginia Family Engagement Model

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**“Connecting kids and families for life”**

# How Did We Get Here?



- Recommendations from CORE
- Survey of current practice
- Child and Family Services Review



# Recommendations from CORE

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- State should move forward with the implementation of Team Decision Making (TDM)
- State should take into account varying locality resources and allow for locality flexibility
- State should provide training on family engagement both within social services and across child serving agencies



# Current practices related to family engagement

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- o A 2009 survey of foster care, adoption, and CPS supervisors found that 48% of local departments across the state are incorporating family engagement into casework practice
- o The survey revealed inconsistent practice related to engaging families with meetings occurring at different points throughout the family's involvement with the agency
- o The results of both the 2009 and 2003 Child and Family Services Review found that Virginia is not adequately involving children and families in the case planning process

# What is family engagement?

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A key building block of the Transformation that identifies a structured and deliberate approach to partnering with families. Family engagement recognizes that:

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



# Family engagement requires...

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- A shift in the belief that agencies alone know what is best for children and families
- Allowing the family to fully participate in decision-making
- Using straight talk to communicate with others

# Family engagement is not...

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- ❑ A service/treatment planning meeting where services have been pre-determined
- ❑ Minimizing valid concerns for safety
- ❑ An additional CPS investigation or foster care hearing



# Family Partnership Meetings

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- Purpose -A team collaboratively develops ideas and establishes a decision making process for the child or family to use throughout the family's involvement with the agency
- Structure- A meeting facilitated by a trained individual that is not the social worker for the child or family



## Critical Decision Points: When Should Family Partnership Meetings Occur?

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- ❑ High or Very High Risk Assessment
- ❑ Emergency or Considered Removal
- ❑ Prior to Change of Placement
- ❑ Prior to Change of Goal
- ❑ At the request of the parent, foster parent, or social worker, if connected to one of the other decision points



# What is the role of the facilitator?

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- ❑ Focus the group on an identified task
- ❑ Move the group through the problem solving decision-making process
- ❑ Strive to develop a consensus with all participants, but always with agency staff in attendance
- ❑ Committed to encouraging professional development in agency staff



# Facilitator Options

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- ❑ Full-time facilitator within the agency, that does not carry a caseload
- ❑ Part-time agency facilitator within the agency (i.e. supervisor or social worker)
- ❑ Contracted position
- ❑ Regional facilitator with locally pooled resources to share a staff person



# Who attends the meeting?

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- ❑ Parents
- ❑ Child, if age appropriate
- ❑ Relatives
- ❑ Friends or relevant supports identified by the family
- ❑ Caregivers for the child
- ❑ Professionals involved with the family
- ❑ Relevant community partners



## Strategies for Engaging Youth and Families

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- ❑ **Advocate for youth and families to be involved in the decision-making process from the very beginning (before its too late for them to be a part of meaningful change).**
- ❑ **Create a safe environment.**
- ❑ **Listen... really listen to what youth and families are saying and be willing to assist other participants in hearing and learning from them.**
- ❑ **Provide youth and families with the information and support they need to succeed at the decision making table.**

# How do we incorporate this model into our current family engagement practices?

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Assess and identify current practice to determine fit with critical decision points

Expand current practice to include other decision points



## What is the expectation for implementation?

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The plan is to provide training in three phases so all localities receive training during 2010.

With training and TA provided, the expectation is that by December 31, 2010 each locality will have family partnership meetings in at least one of the critical decision points.

# Family Engagement in CSA

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- Engaging family members & youth has always been an emphasis in CSA statute, but less so in practice
    - Statute is more explicit about multi-agency participation in FAPT → family member & youth participation too often overlooked
  - Transformation is leading DSS & CSA in the same direction
    - Family Partnership Meetings (FPM) employ practices that FAPTs can & should be using as well
    - Shared practice model must be the foundation for improvement across all child-serving agencies
  - Going our separate ways is not an option
    - Collaboration is good practice, and it's the law
    - We'll go down this path together, or we'll fail separately

# Family Engagement in CSA

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- SEC has directed us to take a closer look at how to promote family engagement practices throughout CSA
    - Policy / administrative barriers that could be removed
    - Resources & supports that could help localities build capacity & manage change
  
  - Workgroup being formed to address family engagement in CSA across three levels:
    - State leadership & statewide support for localities
    - CPMT policies that engage & empower families, and promote their participation in decision making & service planning
    - Practices and behaviors that FAPTs can adopt that have been shown to engage families and promote real collaboration

# Family Engagement in CSA

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- Examples of areas where the workgroup could produce recommendations:

State Leadership	CPMT Policies	FAPT Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Policy</u>: Reinforce central importance of engaging families, clarify policies e.g. CSA pool \$ for facilitation</li><li>• <u>Training</u>: Support family engagement competencies across agencies</li><li>• <u>Technical assistance</u>: Help locals implement e.g. guidance on aligning FAPT w/ FPM</li><li>• Gather <u>statewide data</u> to gauge progress &amp; enable quality assurance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Rules for the FAPT process</u>: Require family participation, provide resources for family engagement practices, adopt rules for data-sharing</li><li>• <u>Rules for other CSA processes</u>, e.g. dispute resolution, UR/UM, community-wide service planning</li><li>• <u>Outreach</u> to families &amp; community groups that work with them</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Core practices</u> that ensure family voice &amp; meaningful participation e.g. meeting at convenient times &amp; places, using facilitators &amp; family advocates, no redundant meetings</li><li>• <u>Enabling practices</u> e.g. family finding, notice &amp; due process</li><li>• <u>Collaboration</u> to make the family experience more engaging <i>and</i> more consistent cross-agencies</li></ul>



# What is the impact for CPMT?

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- ❑ Determination of how FAPT and family engagement will integrate on a local level
- ❑ Assessment of current FAPT process to identify how it supports family engagement
- ❑ Possible increase in the requests for community based services



# Strategies for moving forward

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- Local CPMT may develop a waiver process that must be approved by the State Executive Council
- Technical assistance from the Office of Comprehensive Services



# Benefits of Family Engagement

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- ❑ Shared decision-making
- ❑ Family more likely to comply with a plan they helped to develop
- ❑ Prevent kids from coming into foster care
- ❑ More relative and community placements

# Questions

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## Contact

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