

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

August 21, 2009

M E M O R A N D U M

<u>What's Inside:</u> Placement Stability FSTs

TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS, AND
CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: PAULA NEESE, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: PLACEMENT STABILITY FAMILY SUPPORT TEAM MEETINGS

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to accent the concept of Placement Stability Family Support Team Meetings (FST) and to remind staff of the importance of conducting Family Support Team Meetings prior to taking any action related to a change in placement of a child in the custody of the Children's Division. These meetings should be held any time that a child's placement stability is threatened; whether a request has been made to move the child from the foster home or the placement provider is in need of additional services. Recent studies have found that placement stability is a key predictor of youth success in alternative care. Therefore, it is imperative that our Family Support Team Meetings regarding placement changes are meaningful.

The purpose of the Placement Stability FST is to:

- Help stabilize the child in the current placement by considering the factors contributing to the request for change of placement and addressing those specific factors with the placement provider;
- Assess the child's placement needs, the needs of the placement provider, and identify additional supports or services to maintain the placement;
- Discuss the need for a different placement only if the current placement cannot be maintained, and evaluate service and treatment needs prior to selecting the next placement provider;
- Determine the most appropriate placement for the child and ensure that the receiving placement provider has all the information about the child and child's family (per RSMo 210.566) as well as the services identified by the Placement Stability FST prior to the transition;

- Reduce the amount of placements for the child and increase child stability.

As stated in House Bill 1453, and RSMo 210.762, a Family Support Team Meeting should be held prior to taking any action relating to a change in placement of a child in the custody of the Children's Division. If the change of placement occurs during an emergency and a meeting cannot be held, CD must schedule a Family Support Team Meeting within 72 hours of the temporary placement.

The Placement Stability FST is **NOT**:

- An additional FST. Its purpose has always been to enhance the current FST for placement changes. This memo is simply to remind staff of the central focus of these mandated FSTs;
- Intended to coerce the current placement provider to keep the child in their home. It is possible that a placement change is unavoidable and the voice of the placement provider is crucial.

Individuals who should be invited to Family Support Team Meetings include: parents, legal counsel for the parents, foster parents, the Guardian ad Litem (GAL), and the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). It is critical for the current placement providers to attend the meeting as they can provide the most insight into the child's behavior. It may also be beneficial to have an educational representative and/or the child's therapist present or included by phone.

It is vital for team members to be able to recognize red flags which might indicate that placement stability is at risk and the need to have a Family Support Team Meeting. A recent study found that the behavior of a child is the strongest predictor of placement stability. The Children's Service Worker should be in regular contact with the foster parent and the child to ensure that both of their needs are being met.

Some strategies for improving placement stability include:

- Being observant about the family dynamics during worker visits;
- Making sure that the first placement for the child is the best placement for the child based on his or her needs;
- Ensuring that the placement providers have all the information about the child's strengths and needs at the time of placement and choosing placement providers who can tolerate and effectively cope with problem behaviors;
- Training placement providers to effectively cope with problem behaviors and/or identifying placement providers who have a history of effectively coping with children's problematic behaviors and matching those successful providers to provide insight to newer providers caring for children at risk of placement instability;

- Identifying workers who show success in facilitating stable placements and sharing their insights with other workers;
- Implementing additional services and interventions to meet the child's needs when symptoms of instability begin to emerge;

Staff must ensure that they are entering **all** Family Support Team meetings into FACES within 30 days to ensure case record compliance. Please refer to [Section 4 Chapter 7 Subsection 2](#) of the Child Welfare Manual for additional information regarding Family Support Team Meetings.

NECESSARY ACTION	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review this memorandum with all Children’s Division staff. 2. Review revised Child Welfare Manual chapters as indicated below. 3. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels and directed to: 	
PDS CONTACT Christy Collins (573) 751-9603 Christy.Collins@dss.mo.gov	PROGRAM MANAGER Melody Yancey (573) 751-3171 Melody.Yancey@dss.mo.gov
CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS	
Section 4 Chapter 7 Subsection 2 Family Support Team Meeting	
FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS	
N/A	
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES	
http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/MinimizingPlacements.htm http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/attributes/PDF/publications/Path_BremerReport.pdf .	
RELATED STATUTE	
N/A	
ADMINISTRATIVE RULE	
N/A	
COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION (COA) STANDARDS	
N/A	
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR)	
N/A	
PROTECTIVE FACTORS	
Parental Resilience-N/A	
Social Connections-N/A	
Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development-N/A	
Concrete Support in Times of Need-N/A	
Social and Emotional Competence of Children-N/A	

FACES REQUIREMENTS

N/A