

Family Engagement Policy

Policy Statement:

Community Policy and Management Teams (CPMTs) are responsible for developing policies and procedures, including those that govern any Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) and/or authorized multidisciplinary team (MDT) within their jurisdiction, to “provide for family participation in all aspects of assessment, planning and implementation of [CSA] services” (COV § 2.2-5208). The State Executive Council (SEC) maintains that any reasonable definition of this legislative requirement to provide for family* participation must go beyond simply inviting family members to attend FAPT/MDT meetings and informing them about the decisions made through the FAPT/MDT process. The decision-making process, as supported by the Virginia Children’s Services Practice Model, is a family driven process. This policy statement presents a model by which the CSA legislative intent to provide for family participation in all aspects of assessment, planning and implementation of services will be adopted locally.

1. The legislative requirement to provide for family participation in CSA is based on fundamental, underlying values of CSA, values which are shared across the agencies represented on the SEC and which are reflected in the Practice Model (http://vafamilyconnections.com/practice_model.shtml) that has been developed through the Children’s Services System Transformation. These values include the following beliefs:
 - a. All families have strengths;
 - b. Families are the experts on themselves;
 - c. Families deserve to be treated with dignity and respect;
 - d. Families can make well-informed decisions about keeping their children safe when supported;
 - e. Outcomes improve when families are involved in decision-making; and
 - f. A team is often more capable of creative and high-quality decision-making than an individual.

2. CSA services are directed at achieving safety, stability, and well-being of children and their families, in the least restrictive, most family-based and most community-based way possible. Therefore, family members whose participation must be provided for through CPMT policies and practices include those who are impacted by or involved in the delivery of such services. Efforts must be made to include:
 - a. Children and youth receiving CSA services;
 - b. Their parents and caregivers, which may include birth parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, legal custodians, and any other primary or secondary caretakers, including prospective caretakers in the case of children who are in the custody of a child-serving agency;
 - c. Their siblings, which may include half-siblings and adult siblings;
 - d. Their grandparents and other adult relatives identified by either the family or a child-serving agency;
 - e. Other members of their household; and

* For purposes of this document ‘family’ is defined to include birth families, adoptive families, foster families, resource families, and households in which a child resides with a legal custodian.

CPMTs that adopt MDT policies complying with these requirements may implement them, with full authority provided under § 2.2-5207 and § 2.2-5209, provided that they notify OCS of their intent to do so and make their MDT policies available to OCS for review.