

KEY ELEMENTS OF FAMILY PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS

➤ Goal	To involve birth families and community members, along with resource families, service providers and agency staff, in all placement decisions, to ensure a network of support for the child and the adults who care for them.
➤ Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child deserves a family • Every family needs the support of the community • Public child welfare agencies need community partners
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group can be more effective in decision making than an individual. • Families are the experts on themselves. • When families are respectfully included in the decision making process, they are capable of identifying and participating in addressing their needs. • Members of the family’s own community add value to the process by serving as natural allies to the family and experts on the community’s resources.
➤ Key Elements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A family partnership meeting, including birth parents and youth, is held for ALL decisions involving child removal, change of placement, and reunification/other permanency plan. 2. The family partnership meeting is held BEFORE the child’s move occurs, or in cases of imminent risk, by the next working day, and always before the initial court hearing in cases of removal. 3. Neighborhood-based community representatives are invited by the public agency to participate in all family partnership meetings, especially those regarding possible child removal. 4. The meeting is led by a skilled, immediately accessible, internal facilitator, who is not a case-carrying social worker or line supervisor. 5. Information about each meeting, including participants, location, and recommendations, is collected and ultimately linked to data on child & family outcomes, in order to ensure continuing self evaluation of the family partnership process and its effectiveness. 6. Each family partnership meeting resulting in a child’s removal serves as a springboard for the planning of an “icebreaker” family team meeting, ideally to be held in conjunction with the first family visit, so that the birth-foster parent relationship can be initiated.

Adapted from the Annie E. Casey Foundation
Family to Family Initiative