

New Case Checklist

1. Email FCM

- a. Introduce yourself and ask to be notified of any upcoming CFTM's and/or service provider meetings.
- b. If FCM does not respond in 72 hours, call them on the phone.
- c. If FCM doesn't reply, send Shannon an email telling her so.
- d. Ask FCM's if any services are in place, and if so the names of the service providers.
- e. If you are open to visiting together, let the FCM know that. About half of them like to do this.

2. Email/Call Service Providers:

- a. Often, if this is the beginning of the case, services may not have started. During CFTM's, note the name of therapists, home-based case workers, visit supervisors, etc.
- b. Email service providers and attach your order and notice (located in Optima, or reach out to office staff for). Ask them to tell you about their experience with the parents/children.
- c. If you don't receive an email back, call them instead. Once you make contact, it will be easier to communicate going forward.
- d. Forward any updates to FCM's email.

3. Contact School

- a. If child(ren) are school age, obtain their school records. If you know the name of the teacher, most schools have a database to search for email and you can contact them directly. Ask them how to obtain attendance records (sometimes they will send them.)
- b. You can also have the office fax the school for the records. Reach out to admin and Rebecca to ask them to do this for you. It is nice to add the child's name and DOB in this email request.
- c. Judge often asks for school update, so this is something to strive to complete each semester, especially if the child has had academic struggle in the past.
- d. Try to see the kids at least once at school, you can get good info from the schools. Check in with the school before visiting (child could be

on a field trip, state testing, etc.) and try to go at a time that is least disruptive to learning (lunch, free period, etc.).

4. Visits.

- a. Check the wellbeing tab to see what level the child is. Melissa will be sending emails out with this info in the coming months. It will dictate how often you *have* to see the child.
- b. At the beginning of every month, scan your schedule to see which hearings you have. It is a good idea to try to see the kids before the hearings so you can give an accurate report.
- c. Visits are the fun part! Everyone does them differently. I buy little toys to have on hand (fidgets, etc.) Just be careful not to give information about the case to placement, even if you think they already know. Most questions you will direct toward the FCM. The phrase to memorize, "I'm not sure, let's check with FCM on that!"
- d. Placement (if out of home) will have the most accurate info about how the child is doing. I always try to ask them directly how they feel the child is doing and if they think the child needs anything different or more to thrive.

5. Hearings

- a. Be prepared to wait. A lot.
- b. Over-prepare. Even if you don't think judge will ask you anything, be prepared to answer:
 - i. How the child is doing in school.
 - ii. How the child is doing in placement.
 - iii. What the child wishes to happen (if age appropriate)
 - iv. Your recommendation for the child.
- c. Don't let lawyers get to you or to take it personally. They are doing their jobs.
- d. Address the judge as "judge" or "your honor."
- e. If someone asks you a question you don't know, say you don't know.

6. Reports:

- a. Office staff will send you the court report template before your hearing, along with a due date for the report.
- b. Fill out the court report as you go along, that way it's easier to keep track of any updates.

- c. Keep the child front and center as the primary focus. Keep recommendations focused on the child's needs.
- d. If you are not getting info about team meetings, please include this under "pertinent information" in your report.
- e. If you'd like to attach a picture of your child to the report, you may do so. Please contact Rebecca or Isabella about doing this.
Remember to delete any photos from any device per policy.
- f. Think of reports in terms of reporting period to reporting period. Focus just on telling the court what's happened since the last time we were before the judge (needs of the child(ren) & progress toward their permanency).

7. Pro Tips:

- a. Staff your cases. All the time. Ask questions.
- b. Be patient with FCM's. Be friendly. Be gracious.
- c. Bring gifts to Kathy Stepp, she's the admin at DCS. She rules the roost.