

PREPARING FOR A MEETING WITH YOUR CHILD'S CASEWORKER/ CASE MANAGER

Thinking about what will happen, what you want, any worries and ideas, and handling stress and emotions

Thinking about and answering these questions is one thing you can do to have a successful meeting. Preparation is everything!

What is the purpose of the meeting?

This helps you prepare in a focused way. *If they invited you*, ask them to explain the purpose of the meeting and to provide you with an agenda (list of what they want to discuss). *If you requested the meeting*, be clear about your purpose before you ask for the meeting. Keep it tight and focused – you may have a lot of things you want to cover but it is best to focus on one or two to make sure you get them covered.

What supports do you have?

It can help to have someone to support you before and after the meeting, e.g., to talk through your plans based on questions on this sheet. Sometimes, it may help to have someone in the meeting, if available. If someone is going to support you in the meeting, it is very important that you both prepare together beforehand so you are both on the same page.

What do you want to happen in the meeting?

What outcomes (e.g., decisions, actions) are you looking for? How do you want people to talk to/ relate to you? How do you want to talk to/ relate to others?

What do you want to say during the meeting?

Think about the most important points you want to make about (1) your purpose, (2) the outcome you are looking for, and (3) your ideas for achieving the outcome. Think about how you will say it, e.g., what words and language you will use, how you will connect to the domains of wellbeing and other ways of showing you are child-focused, how you will say it calmly, etc.

What do you want to ask during the meeting?

Prepare some questions to ask the caseworker/ case manager. Think about how they are phrased and the emotion behind them. Try and ask open-ended questions (to get more than one-word answers). Be curious about their actions or decisions, e.g., what I would like to know more about is...; it would be great to hear a bit more about how you got to that decision...

What worries or concerns do you have about the meeting?

Be clear during preparation about what you are most worried or concerned about. Think about what you could do if those things happen – what do you know are the best ways for you to deal with those worries or concerns?

What will you do if there is an issue related to your worries or concerns during the meeting? What will you need if that happens?

What if there is some tension during the meeting (e.g., between one or more participants, if the focus is on your behaviour), how might you handle negativity towards you, or how will you handle your own feelings during the meeting?

How will you make sure you are clear about what is being asked and decided?

Think about a couple of statements or questions that you are comfortable with to ask others at the meeting for them to clarify what they mean, or to repeat what they said. It is absolutely fine for you to do this so that you are clear about what is being said and done. It is another way of showing you are engaged in the process.

What do you think others in the meeting might expect of you?

What are some examples of what you think they might expect of you? How will you handle those expectations? Will you be able to meet them? Should you meet them? Can you challenge them in a way that keeps you in the loop of decision making about your child?

Do you want to raise concerns about what has been happening?

This may include other people's behaviour, or something else that you think is getting in the way of you participating in planning, decision making and actions around your child as much as you would like. What would you like that conversation to look like in the meeting, e.g., if you raised that, what would you say? What do you need to prepare to be able to raise it?

What are your ideas for change or actions?

Think ahead about what you want to propose happens with you and/ or your child. Do your best to link your ideas to being child-focused, e.g., domains of wellbeing, your children's rights, one or more types of permanency.

How will you plan and negotiate during the meeting (if applicable)?

Before the meeting, think about planning and negotiating points such as, What you are willing to do? What are you not willing to do? What would you compromise on? What's working for you and your child? What's not working for you and your child? What are the barriers or reasons for struggles and issues? What is getting in the way of you communicating with the worker/others?

What records do you think you might need?

You might need to read something before the meeting or take something to the meeting, for example, child's most recent case plan, your most recent family action plan, records from previous meetings with tasks and responsibilities, reports, photos, etc. This may or may not be necessary, but think about it in terms of the meeting purpose.

They were both organised and presented on time. It was impressive to see that they had made comments and consideration of the current FAP.

(Feedback from DCJ worker post-meeting, 2022)

AFTER THE MEETING

It is really important to take some time after the meeting to reflect and think about how it went. This helps you prepare for future meetings and to keep getting better with your approach. Think about:

- What happened during the meeting; what stood out, what was hard, what was great
- What it was like for you
- What worked well
- What could be improved
- Ideas for future meetings, what could be changed or stay the same
- Your positive contributions and ways you handled yourself well
- Additional support you might need for actions decided or for future meetings
- Feedback you would give to the worker or others at the meeting