



**Office of Children  
and Family Services**

# **Teaming in Child Welfare: A Guidebook**





# Teaming in Child Welfare: A Guidebook



Office of Children  
and Family Services

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## Preface

Welcome to *Teaming in Child Welfare: A Guidebook*. Teaming is an innovative approach to casework practice in which child welfare agencies can support the effectiveness and morale of their caseworkers and line supervisors. Developing, implementing, and maintaining an effective casework team has shown to be well worth the effort.

In this guidebook we have tried to capture what we have learned since the start of Teaming in New York State in 2007. This guidebook outlines the processes and steps involved in implementing Teaming, explains why these matter, provides recommendations learned from experience, and details how the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and SUNY Buffalo State, Institute for Community Health Promotion (ICHP), Center for the Development of Human Services (CDHS) support child welfare agencies in starting and maintaining teams. This guidebook is intended to be a resource for you and a companion to the training and coaching provided by Teaming Project training staff.

This guidebook is composed of chapters that break down the elements of Teaming into segments for quick and easy reference. Information on Teaming fundamentals is reiterated throughout the chapters to provide context for users who chose to read only those chapters of immediate interest to them. We hope that you find the information in these pages informative and useful.

## Acknowledgements

*The development of this second edition guidebook was a collaborative effort of the Teaming Project training staff at SUNY Buffalo State, Institute for Community Health Promotion (IHP), Center for the Development of Human Services (CDHS) and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Design Team staff. We continue to be indebted to the original developers of teamed child welfare casework, Harry Spence, Eleanor Dowd, Dennis Souza, Charles McCrea, and Mia Alvarado of Massachusetts for their valuable knowledge, support, and enthusiasm.*

*All the county staff across New York State who participated in the Teaming model have contributed to this guidebook. They have continued to manage their work while saving time for team meetings and group supervision. At the same time, they have taken a chance to learn a different way of working, have been willing to trust others to do work with “their” families, have learned to deal with conflict effectively—and they have all come out stronger for doing so! Creative, resilient, and persistent, they can be very proud of their contributions to the creation of a better way of providing child welfare services and a better environment in which to do this difficult work.*

## Chapter 1: Overview of Teaming

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### *What is Teaming?*

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Teaming is an innovative approach to child welfare casework, in which individual casework is supplemented with a team approach on selected cases. For these selected cases, Teaming shifts responsibility for case outcomes and progress from the individual caseworker to the entire casework team. This collaborative approach challenges and changes the traditional paradigm of how casework services are provided to families, how caseworkers are supervised, how casework is distributed, and how activities are conducted in the agency office. Teaming often involves assigning responsibility for accomplishing case tasks to both a primary and a secondary caseworker, along with the input and assistance of other team members. Supervision is transformed into a facilitated group process, with all members of the group contributing their expertise to addressing the needs of the case.

This shift in organizational culture from individual to shared casework develops unit cohesiveness and mutual support. Together, team members can collaborate to accomplish case tasks and to design solutions for the child welfare issues being faced. As a result, families feel more supported because they know that they have a *team* of child welfare caseworkers with knowledge of their family who are readily available to assist them.

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### *How Teaming Enhances Traditional Casework*

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Teaming is more than just cooperation among unit staff or staff occasionally helping each other out with cases. For teamed cases, the decision-making process and the responsibility for task accomplishment is shared among team members. The primary caseworker is ultimately responsible for the quality of the work and the results of that work; however, that caseworker may be assisted by the secondary caseworker(s) in interviewing, assessment, contacting collaterals, and in documentation. In this way, members of the child welfare team are able to rapidly gather assessment information from multiple sources, are able to expedite the arrangement of services, and are better able to manage their responsibilities. Caseworkers truly become part of the team when they develop a sense of shared commitment, a clearly defined purpose, and mutual goals.

The supervisor is integral to Teaming. He or she sets the tone for facilitating the collaborative process, shared decision making, and promoting a sense of shared learning and development. Not all cases are formally teamed through the assignment of primary and secondary caseworker roles, but all cases may be the focus of group supervision. The group supervision process shifts a supervisor's primary focus to facilitating and providing quality assurance for decisions, rather than having to bear the burden of making decisions independently (see Chapter 4: Group Supervision).

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## *The Rationale for Teaming in Child Welfare*

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Traditional approaches to child welfare casework often result in extreme stress and leave caseworkers with feelings of isolation and lack of support. Utilizing a Teaming approach to casework alleviates the stress of single ownership of casework and decision making and promotes an environment where multiple viewpoints and complementary skills can result in the following improved benefits for team members and families:

- Families have more than one caseworker that they can contact for support.
- Caseworkers can take time off, feeling confident that if a family crisis occurs it will be handled by others in the unit who are familiar with the family.
- Caseworkers support one another when working with families facing multiple challenges and collaborate in brainstorming strengths-based solutions and in identifying and taking appropriate actions.
- There is an ongoing sharing of knowledge, expertise, and experience among the team members, thus enhancing the effectiveness of each team member.
- Supervisors can have confidence that, even in their absence, the team can use their Teaming skills to effectively manage their work and shared decision-making responsibility.
- The team takes on a greater degree of responsibility with regard to case decision making and supervisors can focus more on coaching and staff development.
- Child welfare staff satisfaction and feelings of support increase, thereby lowering the risk of burnout and staff turnover.

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## *A Brief History of Child Welfare Teaming Projects*

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After the first Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and as part of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) developed in 2003, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) focused on two main areas: strengthening supervision to improve child welfare practice and addressing workforce concerns related to retaining qualified child welfare staff. The New York State Teaming Project grew out of an effort to make substantial changes and improvements in the way that the child welfare workforce is developed and supported.

In 2006, OCFS met with members from the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (now the Department for Children and Families) to discuss the experiences of those staff members in developing and implementing their model of teamed casework.

OCFS decided to support a pilot of the Teaming model in New York State and invited interested local departments of social services to participate.

During the initial phase of implementation in 2007, OCFS solicited interest in developing phase one of the pilot, and six counties volunteered to participate. A Design Team (DT) was developed as a collaboration between OCFS and CDHS/ICHP staff that met weekly to provide organizational support for the Teaming Project. After a three-year period in which OCFS continued to solicit and support interested counties for participation, it was determined that the Teaming Project should continually be supported. The project continues to solicit interest in participation on an annual basis from each local district within the state through an application process. Teaming can be effective in any program area. Currently, Teaming is incorporated in the following service units:

- CPS Investigation and FAR
- Blended (CPS, Long-Term Preventive, and Foster Care)
- Family Support (Preventive, Foster Care, and Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement: APPLA)
- Foster Care—Adult Services (APPLA-focused)
- Foster Care—Adoption

OCFS continues to support the Teaming Project through annual Teaming symposiums and through its work with the CDHS/ICHP Teaming Project staff, who provide training and support to new and existing teams.

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### *The Roles of CDHS/ICHP and OCFS in Supporting Teams*

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The CDHS/ICHP Teaming Project staff and members of the OCFS Design Team work collaboratively to plan for the support and ongoing development of teams enrolled in the project. The actual provision of this support is carried out in the following ways:

- Teaming Project training staff meet with individual teams (both at their local district offices and off-site) to provide individualized training and coaching. Training topics are tailored to meet the needs of each team, and include team-building, group dynamics, communication, conflict management, and group supervision. Coaching is provided to assist supervisors and their teams as they implement and enhance the skills developed during training, as well as to address any obstacles to team development. This process begins with an initial orientation for team members and administrative staff where mutual expectations are discussed and a training plan is developed. *Teaming 101* provides new teams with intensive foundational support as teams develop cohesiveness and strategies to work more collaboratively. Initially, Teaming Project training staff

members meet with teams several times a month in person or by phone. Thereafter, support is provided regularly as teams become more self-sufficient.

- Annual child welfare Teaming symposia have been held in Albany since the inception of the Teaming Project pilot in 2007. In 2014 this format changed to a series of one day regional symposia. The regional symposium is an opportunity for county teams and administrators to come together in a collaborative learning environment where they are able to share ideas, learn about best case practices, and attend workshops and presentations that support the Teaming work in their agencies. It allows team members to network with other team members and to learn new skills, offering an excellent opportunity for revitalization of existing teams and providing valuable focus and guidance for the new teams.

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### *Beginning and Expanding Teaming Initiatives in Local Districts*

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OCFS conducts an annual solicitation process in which local district commissioners are invited to submit an application to participate in the project if interested. The application consists of a rationale for implementing or expanding Teaming, the service focus of the proposed unit, resources that the agency would make available to support the team, and a description of how participation would best support the agency's goals.

The counties who apply are invited to participate in a conference call with the OCFS-CDHS/ICHP Design Team to discuss the implementation process and to reach mutual understanding on the foundational requirements of successful teams. Then CDHS/ICHP Teaming Project staff arrange for a mutually convenient time and date to begin working with the new team.

Local districts and voluntary agencies can also contact their OCFS Regional Offices to request information and/or to express interest in participating in the Teaming Project. Those local districts interested in expanding Teaming can reach out directly to the Teaming Project staff as well.

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### *The Teaming Start-Up Guide*

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The Teaming Start-Up Guide is a tool for team development (see Appendix A: Teaming Start-Up Guide). The guide was created as a reference that provides useful direction in developing a successful team. Teaming Project training staff will provide copies of the guide to each team member during the *Teaming 101* phase of team development. The guide provides a structured work plan of developmental paths that outlines the specific steps to be taken to form effective and cohesive teams.

The chart is divided into the following four columns:

1. **Task** that needs to be completed during team devolvement. The initial tasks are completed during *Teaming 101* with the assistance of the Teaming Project training staff. The continuation/revisions tasks are completed periodically to accommodate changes in team membership or revise how members work as a team.
2. **Target Date** for accomplishing key team development activities and milestones, which may be impacted by time constraints and the demands of the child welfare casework setting.
3. **Responsible Party**
  - Teaming Project training staff meet with the team to complete various tasks and provide guidance on a frequent basis during the initial start-up and regularly thereafter.
  - Supervisors and their team work together to accomplish various tasks (such as development of their team's mission statement and operational agreement) with guidance and support from the Teaming Project training staff.
4. **Date Completed and Comments on Progress**, which helps teams document the progress they are making and any additional work that may need to be done.

In this way, team supervisors and Teaming Project training staff maintain and share updated information regarding the progress and needs of the team to plan for progressive developmental activities.

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### *Levels of Team Development*

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Learning to function as a team is a developmental process that does not happen overnight. OCFS and CDHS/ICHP have created descriptions of the indicators or benchmarks for each of the four levels of team development in order to help current and future teams set clear goals and to help teams self-assess their current level of progress. The benchmarks for team development at each level can be used by team members, supervisors, administrators, and Teaming Project training staff to assess growth and functioning and to determine where additional supports are needed.

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### *Benchmarks for Teams*

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The descriptive indicators associated with the various levels of team development included here were developed based on the Teaming Project's experience with actual teams. They have been revised several times as additional knowledge was gained about team development over time and how it is impacted by various factors (e.g., turnover).

These are meant to be a guide, and teams may find themselves “straddling” between two levels or moving across levels based on a variety of influencing factors (e.g., when a new team member is added).

### **Level 1 Team Development**

Level 1 is the first stage in the development of Teaming. During this time, the team members work closely with Teaming Project training staff and their local administration to build a successful foundation for Teaming. The team develops its mission statement and each member completes the Social Styles Profile, which helps team members understand their individual work style as well as those of their peers and how this impacts team functioning and decision making. At the same time, the team is receiving management support to accommodate their needs for meeting space, time, and proximity of seating.

Team development depends on the team meeting on a weekly basis for group supervision and team-building activities. Criteria for choosing cases to be “teamed” are developed; primary and secondary workers are assigned to identified cases; and other team members assist with tasks associated with the case. Operating agreements are developed, based on shared discussions about how the team works together during team-related work and in order to address conflict when it occurs.

### **Level 2 Team Development**

Level 2 team members have a sense of team identity, have established relationships with other members, and have demonstrated collective responsibility for teamed case outcomes and activities. When sitting in close proximity to each other, the team members engage in informal case discussions about both teamed and non-teamed cases. Team members are beginning to address conflicts with one another and successfully resolve them. Operating agreements are reviewed and, if necessary, further refined. The team has implemented a successful process for acclimating to changes in the team membership. The team may practice rotation of facilitation roles during group supervision and is moving towards each team member having at least one teamed case.

### **Level 3 Team Development**

Teams functioning at Level 3 are regularly using a structured approach to presenting and addressing case issues during group supervision that are solution focused and action oriented. They are taking initiative to brainstorm approaches to working with non-teamed cases. (For example, several counties maintain a short daily morning meeting, at which time they discuss cases that are not “officially” teamed but which are often referred to as “small t” cases, as opposed to the “big T” cases involved in actual Teaming activities.) Team members are demonstrating skill in handling multiple roles during group supervision, and the team is seeking feedback from families and service

providers regarding their team work. As applicable, team members incorporate other child welfare practices, such as family meetings, engaging fathers, FAR, and KEYS into their daily Teaming practice and group supervision discussion.

### **Level 4 Team Development**

Teams that have reached Level 4 development are successfully incorporating new casework approaches learned in training and group supervision into daily practice and are utilizing such approaches in their engagement with families. There may be an opportunity for mentorship for Level 4 teams to offer their guidance as expansion occurs within their agency. They also serve as “voices of experience” and, where opportunities exist, they volunteer to participate in workshops to educate other teams, agencies, and interested parties on the benefits of Teaming. Level 4 teams integrate both formal and informal Teaming into their daily practice.

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## *Benchmarks for Teaming Supervisors*

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The four levels of development for supervisors described here were developed for supervisors to use as indicators to assess and measure their own level of effectiveness in their supervisory role.

### **Level 1 for Supervisors**

The supervisor plays a critical role in supporting and providing structure for the developing team unit, which includes scheduling regular group supervision. During this phase, the supervisor facilitates discussion about the unit’s criteria for Teaming a case, helps the team choose an appropriate first case to team, and may assign primary and secondary roles and tasks on that and other cases. During this initial phase, the supervisor’s role includes helping incorporate the operating agreements developed by the team into their daily practice, as well as facilitating the completion of Tasks 1–11 in the Teaming Project Planning Guide.

### **Level 2 for Supervisors**

Supervisors at this level promote the Teaming of more than one case; foster a supportive, inclusive environment; identify and address conflicts between staff; and model conflict resolution. The supervisor develops a structure for rotation of facilitation roles during group supervision and initiates and models the process for integrating new members and saying “goodbye” to departing team members. In addition, the supervisor identifies the developmental needs of the team, uses that information to develop or obtain appropriate training for the team, and supports the use of solution-focused practice among team members.

### Level 3 for Supervisors

The supervisor at this level enhances team functioning by encouraging discussions regarding the emotional impact of case events and circumstances on family members and caseworkers. The supervisor models the use of critical thinking and encourages the transfer of learning from a teamed case to other cases. Additionally, the supervisor develops confidence in the team members' ability to share responsibility with each other and actively participate during team discussions.

### Level 4 for Supervisors

The supervisor at this level is a "big picture" thinker. The benchmarks include facilitating team discussion about lessons learned through Teaming, along with how the team can share the lessons they have learned with other teams and units in the agency. The supervisor may provide mentoring/coaching to new teams. In addition, the supervisor works with the team to identify best practice goals. The workload is managed collectively and the unit's work meets best case practice standards in a timely manner. The supervisor encourages team members to assume leadership roles by volunteering to present their Teaming practice in workshops and other venues.

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## *What Has Been Learned So Far*

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Data from several sources were compiled in order to assess the viability and efficacy of Teaming from multiple points of view, including outside evaluation, individual responses, and team reactions. Some of the highlights are included below.

### Evaluation

In March 2007, OCFS contracted with the New York State Social Work Education Consortium (NYS SWEC), School of Social Welfare, State University of New York at Albany to conduct an independent evaluation of the Teaming Model Project piloted in local districts. This independent evaluation of the Teaming Model Project employed an annual, longitudinal design over a three-year period. The study compared survey responses from round-one county staff participating in the Teaming Model Project to a similar unit from the same county that is not participating in Teaming. In this way, the Teaming model can be assessed for its ability to improve participating supervisors' and caseworkers' perceptions of their team cohesion, job satisfaction, professional quality of life, professional self-efficacy, and perception of supervision, along with the caseworkers' intention to stay in child welfare.

Preliminary evaluation results (conducted one year after the Teaming Model Project implementation) compared all Teaming units with similar units that were not Teaming. Year one findings indicated that Teaming groups were showing signs of movement toward more cohesive functions than the comparison groups with regard to

psychological safety, clear direction, shared vision, and commitment. Teaming groups were significantly more satisfied with supervision and were significantly less likely to interview for a job at another social services agency.

The final Teaming Model Evaluation issued at the conclusion of the three-year study found that the Teaming group reported more cohesive functioning than the comparison group and a greater sense of self-efficacy and ability to have a positive impact on the families they work with. In addition, the Teaming group spent more time in group supervision and less time in scheduled and unscheduled supervision, suggesting better time management and more efficient use of supervision. Supervision itself was less focused on task completion and more on the quality of work and developing creative solutions.

A subsequent evaluation was conducted in 2011 on phase 3 and phase 4 Teaming units (those units that began Teaming in years 2009 and 2010). This evaluation, while measuring the same areas of focus as the initial study, did not utilize comparison groups. Similar results were noted in the follow-up evaluation: teams that were cohesive or moving in that direction felt a sense of psychological safety and compelling direction, a reduction of isolation and stress through shared case responsibility, an acceleration of the learning curve for new caseworkers, and a sense that clients felt their needs were better served by a team of child welfare workers.

### **Anecdotal Observations**

Through years of experience in working with teams, CDHS/ICHP and OCFS have recognized certain elements of Teaming that enhance group cohesion and successful Teaming, including the following:

- Team members who sit in close proximity to each other and to the supervisor form strong personal and working alliances more quickly and begin to share information regarding teamed and individually managed cases more readily.
- Having team members meet at least once per week for group supervision (at which time staff discuss case issues and assignments, as well as their successes and challenges in Teaming) enables optimal team development and builds group cohesion.
- The first four months of a team's development is vital to its success moving forward. This includes meeting with CDHS/ICHP Teaming Project training staff regularly based on the Teaming 101 schedule and the team's individual needs.
- Strong supervisory skills enhance team development, including supporting the use of critical thinking skills, solution-focused practice, appropriate setting of boundaries, and setting expectations for professional collaboration during the group supervision process.

- Minimizing staff turnover supports the building of a cohesive team that learns how to work together to achieve the best outcomes for children and families. Frequent reorganizations and transfers of staff in and out of Teaming units can make it difficult for a team to become cohesive and perform at a high level

## Feedback from Teams

The overall reaction on the part of the team members regarding the Teaming model has been very positive. Team members cite reduced stress, shared decision making, and the opportunity to share the challenges of working with high needs families. Teaming allows staff to take needed sick leave or enjoy a vacation with confidence that the families they serve will have their needs met and concerns will be addressed by their team members.

When the Teaming process unfolds successfully, team members have reported personal positive experiences such as the following:

- A primary worker was unable to engage with the biological father on a long-term case. Although the primary caseworker was initially reluctant to share the case due to a sense of commitment to the case and family, once the case became a teamed case another team member was able to engage with the father, which promoted positive change in the family.
- In many instances, caseworkers admitted to being skeptical about sharing their assigned cases until team trust had formed. Building trust among team members allows them to focus their efforts on achieving family goals and outcomes. These caseworkers observed that it became much easier for them to relinquish full control over cases once trust was established.
- One caseworker stated, “I don’t wake up in the middle of the night anymore,” noting that before she became a team member she often worried so much about her cases that she could not sleep at night for fear that she may have missed something. She went on to relate that after Teaming was instituted she realized that she would have more help with her cases and others would be assisting with the decision-making process. She then began to relax and get the rest she needed.
- During another team meeting, team members shared their observations regarding how Teaming has helped them to gain a better sense of confidence in their work, both within their team as well as in other outside endeavors. They reported that successful Teaming rejuvenated their attitude regarding their work and noted that Teaming helped them to enjoy a greater sense of satisfaction from doing their job.
- One team member shared a revealing fact, saying that while she had started at the same time as another new worker in her county that their individual experiences were quite different. The new team member related that—as a result of the Teaming experience—she had received ample support and guidance during her first months with the county, while the other new worker had to wait for

experienced caseworkers to have the time necessary to answer her questions and provide the guidance she required. The new team member related that she was more readily able to acclimate to the child welfare culture and made a much faster and smoother transition into that culture than the co-worker who was hired at the same time but who did not have the same opportunities to discuss casework issues directly and on a timely basis in the course of her work.

The original Schenectady County team volunteered to share their work and its positive impact on a family by creating a video on DVD. In this video, a family whose children were in foster care discussed the significant shift in the relationship they had with their caseworkers as a result of the team approach. The family felt more supported by having one of the team members always available to assist them to address the many challenges they faced. Along with the family, a foster parent, attorney for the children, and agency management expressed the personally realized benefits of Teaming, as well as the impact of Teaming on achieving permanency for children and families.



## Chapter 2: The Role of Agency Management in Supporting Teaming

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### *How Administration Can Support Teaming*

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The agency administration's support for its Teaming unit(s) has a direct impact on the team's success. Teaming engages staff in developing their interpersonal skills, in improving their conflict management skills, and in building a sense of trust in each other. This requires time for staff to focus on team development, as well as on learning how to work together on the cases they have chosen to team.

Supervisors need support from their managers in order to make the transition to group supervision, a process where team members collaboratively discuss cases on a regular basis to assess families' needs and develop strategies to meet them (see Chapter 4: Group Supervision). Supervisors also need to learn how to effectively manage the interpersonal issues that may emerge as teams evolve. Since administrative support is essential to successful team development, CDHS/ICHP and OCFS look for indicators that teams are receiving the necessary support from them.

Administration and managers can provide the active leadership and support necessary for successful Teaming in the following ways:

- Assist the prospective Teaming unit supervisor to self-assess his/her strengths and needs regarding supporting change in the unit culture and transitioning to group supervision on selected cases.
- Enable team staff to sit in a location that supports their working together.
- Make it possible for team staff to meet in a secure meeting space at a regular time on a weekly basis, and protect that time by not scheduling other meetings, or casework responsibilities.
- Act as a conduit across Children's Services programs and throughout the agency, as well as with the provider community, to share information regarding the purpose of Teaming, why the agency is supporting it, and how it might impact their work with staff of a Teaming unit. In addition management staff can offset misinformation by keeping all staff informed of the Teaming process so as to dispel their potential concerns or perceptions that the Teaming unit is receiving special treatment.
- Support the team's need to take time for ongoing training and development by the Teaming Project training staff that supports their work (such as family engagement and solution-focused casework).
- Attend Teaming training activities and events where warranted.

- Consider providing supplies as needed and available such as white boards, team business cards, binders, folders, etc. that assist the team to be familiar with each other's cases as well as facilitating sharing of tasks.
- Observe a few group supervision sessions to learn firsthand how Teaming works and to provide coaching and feedback to the supervisor regarding the supervisor's guidance of the case review process and the team development process.
- Minimize the change of staff within established Teaming unit(s) whenever possible.

Teams that have management support develop more quickly and experience greater success in integrating Teaming into the agency's culture and way of doing business.

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### *Communication*

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Communication among all agency management and their teams working with CDHS/ICHP and OCFS is important. OCFS views Teaming as a learning collaboration among OCFS, CDHS/ICHP, and the agencies and encourages feedback regarding the issues encountered, the level and type of support needed, team progress, interest in expansion, and any changes that impact Teaming. Management is encouraged to proactively inform CDHS/ICHP of all changes within their agency (and/or within the team itself) that would affect team functioning as soon as the changes occur.

This proactive approach to communicating important information will allow Teaming Project training staff an opportunity to support and provide guidance to the team as it navigates its way through such changes. Teaming Project training staff will then also be able to better tailor their training to meet the changing needs of the team. Quarterly meetings between agency management and Teaming Project training staff are also encouraged to enhance communication.

OCFS project staff maintain communication with OCFS Regional Office county leads to share information about Teaming so they are able to offer informed assistance to the county and to inform the project staff of any emerging needs.

## Chapter 3: How to Develop an Effective Team

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### *Selection Process for Supervisors and Team Members*

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The process that agency leadership uses to select and prepare casework staff and supervisors to participate in Teaming has considerable impact on the team's ability to learn and to successfully implement Teaming. Agency leadership should consider the following guidelines when they are considering implementing or expanding Teaming:

- Solicit for interested staff and provide information to assist those staff to make an informed decision. Experience has shown that staff members who are willing participants in team development are more motivated to do the start-up work and maintain commitment as the team develops. It is very important for caseworkers and supervisors to learn from their managers and administrators about the benefits and the challenges of Teaming. Teaming Project training staff are available for consultation with agency managers who are preparing to discuss Teaming with their staff.
- Emphasize that Teaming is a great opportunity for supervisors and staff with experience to manage some of their most challenging work, enhance their effectiveness, and to experience greater support for workload management. It is important that the team supervisor has a solid set of supervisory skills and that most caseworkers in the unit have child welfare experience. When that basic background experience does not exist, it becomes challenging for the team to establish the momentum required to make progress and move forward. It can be challenging for a new supervisor to learn the supervisory role while concurrently learning his/her role in the Teaming process.
- Bear in mind that team size also impacts the ability of the unit to function effectively as a team. If the team is quite small (four workers or less) or large (eight workers or more) it is difficult to develop team cohesion and implement shared case assignments, shared team commitment, and effective group supervision.
- Focus of the unit service provision should be explored. Consider the type of services the unit provides (CPS, foster care, preventive, etc.) and how Teaming will support child welfare outcomes. For example:
  - In CPS investigations, team members might support each other during critical points of the investigation, such as when a caregiver experiences a mental health crisis, children have to be removed, and court work needs to be filed expeditiously.
  - In a foster care unit, team members can share responsibility for meeting the needs of a family with multiple placements of children that require monthly casework contacts and caregiver and sibling visits.
  - In a preventive services unit, team members might rely on each other's expertise by having one worker focus on engaging the older children while another focuses on engaging a father and his family.

The successful implementation of Teaming takes into account that it is essential that the teambuilding process be given adequate attention. Teambuilding is a process, not a single event. Teambuilding activities provide opportunities for team members to learn more about each other and to build trust and cohesion so that shared casework, group supervision, and case consultation become integral parts of unit functioning. The initial on-site teambuilding sessions provide Teaming Project training staff with a valuable opportunity to assess the strengths, culture, and needs of each team. Teaming Project training staff are then able to tailor teambuilding activities to meet each team's unique needs as they develop. Teams participate in teambuilding activities during their meetings with Teaming Project training staff. These activities are especially important whenever team composition changes with the reassignment of caseworkers and supervisors.

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### *Social Styles Profile*

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The Social Styles Profile (SSP) is an opportunity for Teaming participants to learn about their personal work style and those of other unit members. SSP is an easy to use self-assessment tool with a series of statements that are answered based on an individual's preferred styles of interacting and decision making. As they complete the profile individual participants discover their preferential SSP (Amiable, Expressive, Driving, and Analytical).

Assessing each team member's SSP is an essential step in the Teaming process. The results of the profiles provide key information and understanding for each team member's preferential style, which is important for team members to fully understand and appreciate each other's decision-making style and preferred mode of communication. This key information will assist the team in understanding where similarities or differences can be complementary and where conflict could arise among different working styles. This shared awareness of different styles will enable them to communicate effectively.

Knowledge of each team member's preferred social style will allow the team members to interact in an optimal fashion, conduct negotiations effectively, engage in productive brainstorming sessions, and fully cooperate in the process of in-depth decision making. It also helps minimize potential personality clashes as team members understand how their peers approach casework practice with families.

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## *Symposium*

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The annual Child Welfare Teaming Symposium facilitated by CDHS/ICHP provides a series of workshops and issue forums that are designed to provide both current and newly established teams with an opportunity to enhance their case-Teaming strategies. Teams from all the counties that participate in Teaming are brought together to learn from each other. The symposium supports Teaming caseworkers and supervisors through skill-building workshops and allows teams to discuss their specific challenges and solutions with other teams.

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## *Protected Meeting Times*

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Effective teams designate a protected time (or times) each week to meet for group supervision. This protected time allows teams the time for group supervision, to develop strategies for working with families and it provides opportunities for each team member to offer what he or she might be able to contribute to accomplishing the case tasks and case results that must be accomplished. Group supervision also builds and enhances commitment to the Teaming process, as team members experience concrete benefits through group supervision. It allows team members to feel safe with one another and to establish team cohesion and trust. Protected team time also fosters a culture of mutual respect, an open communication process, a shared team identity, and more effective conflict resolution. Case decisions are made utilizing a strengths-based, solution-focused approach that incorporates each team member's expertise.

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## *Shared Work Space*

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Ideally, the caseworkers and supervisor would be able to sit within one unit area and have a space where two or three workers could meet informally to share information and consult with one another in a way that would not disturb their colleagues in other units. Within such an environment, workers gain a better knowledge of each other's cases as they have opportunities to discuss their work between team meetings. Ongoing worker familiarity with the other team members' cases allows the team members to answer telephone calls from families and service providers and address case issues immediately as they occur in the office.

Creating a shared workspace that supports casework Teaming will enable these critical benefits:

- Allowing for freer and more frequent informal discussion of cases by team members sitting in close proximity

- Providing spontaneous support for a caseworker on a call with a challenging family member
- Strengthening shared team identity, with each team member feeling more connected to the team
- Enabling immediate access to case information in the event of an emergency

Most teams utilize a Teaming whiteboard and a Teaming binder to facilitate communication among staff. A Teaming binder can contain a variety of different materials regarding case circumstances and needs, notes from weekly meetings, staff itineraries, case updates, and alerts, etc. This is beneficial because when caseworkers are working with families and performing daily activities outside the office and a case issue arises, the team supervisor and other caseworkers have easy access to current case issues and updates that may not yet be recorded in progress notes. The whiteboard enables the team members to better manage their workloads. The whiteboard can be utilized to coordinate case contacts and identify tasks that need to be completed so that another team member may be able to assist in completing a case task efficiently, such as picking up medical records from a hospital that they were already planning to go to for one of their cases or to make a case visit in a part of the county or city that the primary caseworker could not get to at that time. This allows team members to quickly respond to families, foster families, and others. When team members sit in close proximity, these tools are readily available to each team member for review or updating.

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### *Team Mission Statement*

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Effective teams share a vision, mission, or purpose that guides their team work. The team's vision/mission/purpose aligns with the agency's mission statement and is expressed in the form of a concise written statement that defines the reason(s) for the team's existence, thus providing the team with a benchmark against which the team can measure both its actions and the end results.

All members of the team share their ideas and their own interpretation of the team's vision/mission/purpose and brainstorm their ideas until the team has developed a statement that reflects the team's values.

The team's vision/mission/purpose is not what it does, but the difference the team makes in working with the children, families, agency, and community that the team serves.

An example of a mission statement is shown below:

*The Columbia County Transitional Team provides services to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood.*

Once the team's vision/mission/purpose statement has been formulated, the team can determine how they plan to utilize the statement as a guide in their work. Teaming Project training staff can provide each team with a printed poster or smaller, laminated posters displaying the team's statement so that it can be viewed in their Teaming area.

It is important to keep in mind that a vision/mission/purpose statement is fluid in nature and may change over time and with team transitions. Periodic review of the team's statement may occur when there are changes in service provision, case criteria, or team membership.

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### *Team Operating Agreement*

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All teams are supported by Teaming Project training staff to develop operating agreements. An operating agreement, also called a working agreement, is a living document that outlines the expectations and guidelines for working together as a successful team. This agreement is developed by team members and serves as a contract between team members, including a description of their expected behaviors, the nature of their working relationships, and the steps the team takes to address conflict when it arises.

The operating agreement is an essential tool for successful Teaming and, along with the vision/mission/purpose statement, should be reviewed every time change takes place. Team members should be comfortable referencing the operating agreement as it provides the structure for how the team works together.

Successful teams strive to create an open atmosphere that encourages free sharing of ideas and allows for sharing leadership roles at different times, depending on the needs of the team and what members wish to accomplish. Experience has shown that two types of interpersonal behaviors can be counterproductive to the success of the team: those interactions that disrespectfully challenge other members' thoughts and/or ideas and those actions whereby a team member withdraws from participation. Care should be taken to address these behaviors in a respectful and supportive manner.

The team's written operating agreement generally includes these essential elements:

- Behavioral expectations (such as specifying the requirements regarding mutual respect)
- How team members communicate with each other
- Conflict resolution guidelines

- The method to be used in the decision-making process (e.g., will it be consensus, majority rule, or the supervisor having the final say?)
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of team members
- A clear agreement regarding the frequency of team meetings and the expectations for attendance and participation at team meetings

CDHS/ICHP Teaming Project training staff assist teams with the development of their initial operating agreement and in revising it as needed over time. Using an appreciative inquiry exercise, each team member has an opportunity to share her or his best team experience and the characteristics that made that team experience most memorable. This information is helpful in determining the way the team would like to operate and in drafting its operating agreement.

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### *Developing Criteria for Teamed Cases*

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Teaming has worked effectively in providing a variety of child welfare services throughout New York State, including child protective services, preventive/long-term services, foster care, adoption, and/or a blended service version. Not all cases need to be teamed. Each team develops its own case criteria for selecting which cases in their unit will be teamed. Experience has shown that starting with too many cases can be overwhelming. On the other hand, if only a few cases are teamed, the team takes a long time to develop the skills and culture of Teaming and a long time to reap the benefits of Teaming.

The following are some of the case criteria currently being used by existing teams.

- Complex cases (as evidenced by multiple children, multiple fathers, multiple placements, and/or multiple family dynamics occurring at the same time)
- Children who need a higher level of care and/or who have multiple needs
- Long-term service delivery cases and/or multigenerational cases
- History of multiple placements
- Urgency of case needs

The family's situation may change over time, causing the case to no longer meet the case criteria. During the weekly meetings, the team reassesses the needs of the family and if it is decided that the family no longer needs assistance from other members, it may be time to "de-team" a case.

Likewise, the criteria may need to change when they no longer meet the team's needs. Team members should feel comfortable enough to request that the team revisit the case criteria when they feel it is not conducive to the Teaming process.

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## *Supervisory Roles and Responsibilities*

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Supervisors play an integral role in supporting the practice of Teaming and shifting the mindset of caseworkers from an individual mindset to a Teaming mindset. The supervisor is responsible for setting the agenda and ensuring that regular meetings occur, that the team adheres to the operating agreement, and that conflict is surfaced and addressed. In their leadership role they also model and facilitate effective team behavior and the application of critical thinking skills to casework decisions. In addition, they facilitate an ongoing review of the effectiveness of their Teaming process and behavior. Supervisors may advocate for the resources to meet the team's needs, such as protected team meeting time and space, a whiteboard, etc. Supervisors also reach out to Teaming Project training staff between regularly scheduled meetings for additional assistance and coaching.

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## *Introducing Teaming to Stakeholders*

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Agency administrators should take responsibility for explaining Teaming to other units within their agency. They should also reach out to their community partners, such as to school districts, probation staff, and other service providers.

The team members may introduce the Teaming process to other units within the agency, as well as to school districts, probation staff, and other providers. This is important to minimize confusion when there is more than one caseworker who may be working on a case. The team members may introduce the Teaming process to families, as it helps families to understand that having more than one caseworker in their lives can assist them, especially when a family or a foster family needs frequent support. Informally, individual team members can introduce Teaming in daily conversations with co-workers, with court staff while waiting for a hearing, with family members during permanency hearing meetings and/or during service planning reviews, during home visits, and/or in their personal interactions with the groups and organizations that they belong to outside the agency.

Formal promotion of this innovative practice might take the form of a workshop at a conference or a presentation at an agency open house or community event to present the team's work with families and how incorporating Teaming into their daily work has strengthened the agency's responsiveness to family and stakeholder needs.

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## *Understanding Tuckman's Model: Stages of Team Development*

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Over time, the team will transition through various stages of development, each with its own set of feelings and behaviors that the team will experience. Transitioning through

each of the Four Stages of Group Development (Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing) as defined by Tuckman (1965) is an integral and normal part of team development. Team development is a fluid process, one that may transition back and forth with each staffing change within the group.

Some of the behaviors and/or events typically associated with each stage of group development are described below. Teaming Project training staff support the team through each of the stages. Teaming Project training staff facilitate the process of surfacing conflict or frustration and then assist the team in finding resolutions. This is an important step in building trust and confidence among team members.

### **Forming Stage**

- Team members experience excitement about being part of a team and at the same time may feel some anxiety and have lots of questions.
- Initially, some members may be reluctant to be part of a team, may not feel comfortable sharing their cases, and may be uncomfortable sharing in the decision-making process.
- Sometimes this can be experienced as a “honeymoon period,” where all team members seem to get along with no conflict at all.
- Group cohesion and trust are not yet developed.

### **Storming Stage**

- Team members will likely experience frustration with the team’s progress or process, and they may even become angry. Or the team may be in denial of any conflicts occurring within the team.
- Members may express concerns about being unable to meet the team’s goals or that Teaming takes too much time and/or effort and impacts their work load or casework practice.
- Frustration might be directed towards other members of the team, the supervisor, or Teaming Project training staff. There may be arguments among team members, criticism of the team’s original mission or goals, or other complaints.

### **Norming Stage**

- At this point, the team has developed a process for successfully resolving any conflicts that arise.
- The team resolves inconsistencies between expectations and the reality of the Teaming experience.
- Team members feel a greater sense of comfort in expressing their real ideas and feelings.

- Team members become more accepting of others on the team, recognizing that the variety of opinions and experiences they bring makes the team stronger and its family interventions better.
- Constructive criticism is both possible and welcomed.
- Members start to bond as a team and take pleasure from the increased group cohesion.
- There is a conscious effort to settle issues and bond as a team to support a sense of trust and group cohesion.

### Performing Stage

- The team matures and a cooperative sense of shared responsibility exists.
- Team members recognize and feel comfortable communicating a need for assistance (rather than waiting for someone to offer it), and that assistance will be volunteered when requested or a need is recognized.
- Members openly and frequently share insights into personal and group process, and they are aware of their own and each other's strengths and needs.
- Members feel attached to the team as something "greater than the sum of its parts" and feel satisfaction in their team's effectiveness.
- Members feel confident, both in their individual abilities and those of their teammates.
- Members are able to prevent or solve problems in the team's process or progress.
- A "can do" attitude is visible as there are increased offers to assist one another.
- The role of the team may become more fluid, with members taking on various roles and responsibilities on an as-needed basis.
- Differences among members are appreciated and are used to enhance the team's overall performance.

There are times when a team is unable to see that there is a problem or concern, or the members may be unable to recognize and appreciate the growth they have made as a team. It is during these times that Teaming Project training staff may be called upon to ensure that the team continues to look at its progress through team reflections.



## Chapter 4: Group Supervision

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### *What is Group Supervision?*

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Group supervision is a case consultation process that involves all team members. It engages all team members in a strengths-based, solution-focused assessment and decision-making process for teamed and even non-teamed cases that draws on multiple perspectives and enhances critical thinking skills. It reinforces team work and provides a platform for team members to build trust, share their expertise, and develop their critical thinking and best practice skills. When the thinking power of the entire team converges to assess case circumstances through multiple lenses and generate multiple strategies, families benefit from the amplified responsiveness of each team member.

Recurrent and consistent group supervision fosters a high level of commitment to the team and strengthens engagement of all team members in the progress of the families they serve. Teams utilize their operating agreement (chapter 2) to establish clear expectations about regular attendance, mutual group facilitation responsibility, shared decision making about next steps, timelines, and tasks. Teaming Project training staff assist teams in maintaining a safe environment for open dialogue and conflict management that leads to increased awareness about individual strengths and needs.

Group supervision provides a wide range of teaching/learning opportunities for team members. Team members with specialized training or content expertise, such as substance abuse, juvenile justice, early intervention, and/or probation, can share their knowledge and specific skills with the team. New caseworkers learn a lot from their experienced team members and grow their own confidence and competence from case conference discussions. Staff from other units can be invited to participate in group supervision to add their perspective and expertise that can aid decision making. Additionally, Teaming Project staff can provide coaching and facilitate skill practice to address unit specific issues and challenges. Group supervision encourages learning that can lead to improvement in practice. This has been shown to occur more rapidly in a well-established team environment that promotes the sharing of various points of view and techniques with one another. With this model of effective team decision making, agencies are empowered to respond faster and more effectively to changing circumstances.

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### *The Supervisor's Role in Group Supervision*

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Supervisors may be more experienced and comfortable with individual case consultation. Group supervision does not replace individual supervision; rather, it complements it and builds staff's problem-solving skills that can build staff expertise. The transition to group supervision provides supervisors with an opportunity for growth and the enhancement of their group facilitation skills, including the following:

1. During group supervision, the supervisory responsibility of support, education, and administration is shared among the whole team. The supervisor models and promotes effective communication, feedback, and accountability with the whole team.
2. All team members are empowered to participate in solution-focused, strengths-based discussion that distributes case-related decision making and action planning to the whole team. This shift from individual supervision to group facilitation promotes shared responsibility and joint leadership, while the supervisor still guides, concurs with, or challenges the team's proposed solutions.
3. Supervisors support a structured approach for the team in which caseworkers first present information about the circumstances of the family without interruption. All team members can then analyze the information so that as a team they can generate approaches and ideas to protect children, engage the family in moving forward, and secure permanency. Team members learn from each other, and supervisors can highlight these learning points and encourage staff to generalize what is learned to other applicable situations.
4. During group supervision, team members ask for help and offer help to each other. Supervisors are central in creating a safe environment where disagreement or conflict can be surfaced and managed in ways that build stronger relationships and effective teamwork.
5. During group supervision, supervisors model critical thinking and open-mindedness by seeking everyone's perspective. In this way, supervisors balance the transfer of some of their authority to make best possible decisions, while at the same time guiding and challenging the team's proposed solutions and decision-making processes.

Group supervision is a parallel process, in which supervisors model best practice skills that team members can utilize with families. This makes group supervision an important and effective tool for supervisors to support and develop their staff while reaching agency goals.

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### *The Caseworker's Role in Group Supervision*

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During group supervision, caseworkers present information about teamed and non-teamed families to the team for discussion. Many caseworkers find a structured approach helpful when presenting information about the circumstances of the family, analyzing the information with the team, and, as a team, generating approaches and ideas to engage the family in moving forward. The structure of group supervision can be adapted to the specific needs of each unit. For example, a FAR unit may utilize a slightly different structure than a foster care or preventive unit.

One possible group supervision structure, which includes questions that could be asked by the facilitator and/or other team members, is as follows:

### Weekly Group Supervision-Structure

**Date:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Primary/Secondary Caseworker(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Remind everyone of agreement/ground rules for meeting:** Confidentiality, Commitment, Punctuality, Respect, Sensitivity to Culture, other?

**Bring family into the room** (team member representative or use symbol)

**Primary/Secondary CW present specific purpose or focus (what I/we need help with):** Issues that need to be addressed; questions that need to be asked/answered; concerns that need to be addressed; confusion or gaps in information that need to surface; specific assistance that is required; etc.

**Present Family Map/Genogram:** On flipchart or handout for everyone; fill in additional info as it becomes known.

**Child Well-Being:** Identify school attendance/concerns/interventions; mental health concerns/diagnosis/treatment; criminal involvement/interventions; health concerns/treatments.

**Parents:** Employment; mental health; substance use/abuse; health; criminal involvement.

### What is going well with the family regarding safety, risk, well-being and permanency?

- *What is the level of engagement with each family member? What could be done to engage more?*
- *What would the family say you have done that has been helpful?*
- *What is the families' understanding/perception about issues related to safety, risk, well-being, and permanency (mutual understanding)? What has the family told you about their understanding/perception regarding the child welfare issues (if applicable)? What could be done to improve the family's understanding? How would you rate the family's change readiness (present discomfort, preferred alternative future, emotional security, efficacy, internalization of responsibility)? How would the family rate themselves? How do you know?*
- *What has the family told you they have done to improve their situation/address child welfare issues? What steps have you seen the family take?*
- *What would the family say about how you and the agency could be more helpful to them?*

**What don't we know that is important to know? How can we get that information?**

**What safety issues still need to be addressed? What risk factors still need to be addressed?**

**What has to occur to reach the Permanency Planning Goal? What will need to occur in order for the case to be closed? What will it take for that to happen?**

**How do this family and their current challenges impact your own values and emotions? How are you feeling?**

**What needs to be done between now and next meeting (tasks)? Who will do what?**

**What have we learned from this group supervision? Have we accomplished the purpose?**

(See Appendix G: Group Supervision Structure)

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### *The Team's Role in Group Supervision*

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1. **Division of Tasks:** Caseworkers may decide to share responsibility for various tasks to support their team members and to efficiently respond to the families' needs.
2. **Development of Strategies:** Team members share their perspectives, expertise, and ideas about how to best partner with the families they work with to obtain needed information, to solve problems, and to achieve mutually agreed upon outcomes.
3. **Assessment of Impact:** Team members consider their feelings and concerns regarding the families they work with, as well as the feelings and concerns of family members interacting with the team.
4. **Identification of Learning Points:** Team members reflect on their experiences working with families and generalize what they are learning from their team work with families. (What went well? What could be done differently next time? etc.) This step is especially important when de-Teaming a case.

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## Group Facilitation Roles

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During the initial stages of team development, Teaming Project training staff assist teams in the group supervision process and model the use of a group supervision structure (see above). The group supervision process provides an excellent opportunity to encourage and foster the growth of team members as facilitators of group processes. As members rotate and assume various group facilitation roles, each individual has the opportunity to develop different leadership skills. When teams are comfortable with group supervision, team members may meet without their supervisor.

The following group facilitation roles can be used for group supervision and other team meetings. In taking on different roles, a team member takes on different responsibilities for the team meeting process. The roles listed here are recommendations and can be adjusted to meet each team's needs:

### Facilitator

- Prepares the agenda and sends it to team members prior to meetings
- Ensures that every team has input into the decision-making process
- Monitors body language of meeting participants to determine the feelings and addresses them, if needed
- Makes sure that everyone is present (not just physically, but also in the moment)

### Timekeeper

Keeps members focused on the task at hand and reminds team of elapsed time

### Recorder

- Takes meeting notes to be stored in a binder (for teams that use a binder)
- Enters tasks on Teaming whiteboard (for teams that use a whiteboard)

### Every Team Member

- Participates in the discussion by openly and honestly contributing thoughts and ideas
- Respectfully reminds others of the use of critical thinking skills (e.g., How do we know that? Are biases at play here?)
- Actively listens to the other members of the group



## Chapter 5: Beginning and Expanding Teaming

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### *How Can Teaming Benefit My Staff and Agency?*

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Teaming can play a positive role in supporting agency workforce, reducing stress and turnover, strengthening case decision making, strengthening responsiveness to family's needs, and managing workload. Each local district and agency in New York State has a unique culture, distinct areas of strength, and areas where the county/agency may be looking to strengthen its performance. Agency administration should consider their organizational and staffing strengths and needs when deciding to implement or expand Teaming.

There are several ways an agency can begin the process of participating in the Teaming Project or expand existing teams, including the following:

1. Agencies can respond to annual solicitation from OCFS.
2. Agencies can contact their OCFS Regional Office and express interest.
3. Current Teaming agencies can contact their OCFS Regional Office or the Teaming Project training staff.

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### *Application and Selection Process for Teaming*

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Through the Teaming Project, OCFS seeks to match agency needs with Teaming project resources and to offer a partnership to the agency for a successful Teaming experience. In order to lay the ground work for that, interested districts and agencies are asked to submit a short application to OCFS that will be the basis for follow-up discussions and joint planning.

Applications are designed to address all the following questions:

- How would Teaming fit in with overall agency goals and meet agency needs?
- Why does the agency want to participate in Teaming?
- What type of unit(s) will participate in Teaming, and why was that unit selected?
- What resources can be provided for the team in terms of equipment, space, time for training, protected time, and space for meetings?
- What administrative supports will be put in place to support the team and the team's supervisor?
- What supports will the agency and team likely need from the CDHS/ICHP Teaming Project training staff?

After the OCFS Design Team and the Regional Office have received the application, a conference call will be scheduled to discuss everyone's expectations for the prospective team; the plans and goals for the team; and what the team members, supervisor, and management can expect from OCFS and CDHS/ICHP. At the conclusion of the conference call, the Teaming Project training staff will identify initial team contact dates and times.

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## *Conclusion*

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We hope that agency managers, supervisors, and caseworkers who have not yet adopted the Teaming approach—but who would like to experience the advantages of Teaming firsthand—will find this guidebook to be a valuable introduction to the Teaming approach. While not intended as a do-it-yourself manual, it should serve as an overview and realistic starting place before an agency embarks upon the Teaming approach. This guidebook is a means of informing those interested in learning more about Teaming and as a resource as teams form and continue to develop with the guidance of the OCFS Design Team and Teaming Project training staff. It has been demonstrated that the assistance of an objective and supportive facilitator, trainer, and coach really makes a positive difference in a team being able to start up on the right foot and to sustain its development. We hope that administrators searching for an innovative approach to caseworker retention and quality casework will find that this guidebook also provides the kinds of practical information that they need in order to make an informed decision regarding the implementation of Teaming in their agency.

The beauty of Teaming lies in the diversity of Teaming. With that principle in mind, it is hoped that both current and future team members, along with supervisors and administrators, will continue to share their experiences and insights with Teaming Project training staff for the purpose of continuously refining the Teaming process through shared learning.

# Appendix A: Teaming Start-Up Guide

# Teaming Start-Up Guide

County: \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this document is to guide the team in completing the tasks involved in the development of the team. This is a fluid document that is shared between the team and the Teaming trainers during the ongoing process of building a successful team.

## Initial Team Development Tasks

TASK	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	DATE COMPLETED; COMMENTS ON PROGRESS
1. Complete the <i>Social Styles Profile</i> , share results within the team, and plan how the Team will use this knowledge about individual differences to advance team functioning.	Day one	Facilitated by CDHS staff	
2. Develop a plan for regular meetings with the Teaming trainers that will support the team development process as outlined in this guide.	Within 1st month	Facilitated by CDHS staff	
3. Schedule and begin holding regular team meetings to support team development, completion of ongoing tasks 4-8, and beginning process of group supervision.	Within the 1st to 2nd months	Facilitated by supervisor	
4. Create a vision/mission/purpose statement for the team.	Within 1st month	Facilitated by CDHS staff	
5. Using your vision/mission/purpose statement, clarify the “standards of practice” that the team will implement. What does your team want to accomplish? Get agreement on the hallmarks of effective casework practice and the values that all team members will strive to implement.	Within 1st month	Facilitated by CDHS staff	

TASK	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	DATE COMPLETED; COMMENTS ON PROGRESS
<p><b>6.</b> Develop written Operating Agreements to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior guidelines for group discussions</li> <li>• Defined decision-making process</li> <li>• Description of decisions that will/will not be made by team</li> <li>• A plan for managing conflict (team members bring all conflicts to group for discussion vs. private discussions)</li> <li>• A plan for welcoming new team members, saying goodbye to those who leave the team, and covering cases in the interim</li> </ul>	<p>Within 1st and 2nd month</p>	<p>Facilitated by CDHS staff and supervisor</p>	
<p><b>7.</b> Determine case criteria for teamed cases by identifying types of cases to team and set a goal for the number of cases to team within the next two months. Case criteria examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cases with multiple children, multiple services, more than one home</li> <li>• Cases where there are many tasks to be completed in a short amount of time</li> <li>• Long-term cases and/or multigenerational cases</li> <li>• Cases with severe mental health issues</li> <li>• Cases with children with disabilities</li> </ul>	<p>Within 2nd month</p>	<p>Facilitated by CDHS staff and supervisor</p>	
<p><b>8.</b> Determine how the supervisor will assign roles for primary and secondary caseworker and expectations for other team members for the teamed cases.</p>	<p>Within 2nd month</p>	<p>Facilitated by CDHS staff and supervisor</p>	

TASK	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	DATE COMPLETED; COMMENTS ON PROGRESS
<p><b>9.</b> Choose initial case: select a family to begin working with as a team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define respective roles of team members and plan how to introduce the Teaming concept to the family and any other involved service providers/stakeholders (e.g., family court, school personnel, and mental health providers).</li> <li>Identify and implement modifications that may be needed for case record access and documentation. Determine the process for deciding who will enter which case data and notes in CONNECTIONS, as well as the expected time frames for that.</li> </ul>	<p>Within 2nd and 3rd month</p>	<p>Facilitated by the CDHS staff and supervisor</p>	
<p><b>10.</b> After meeting with the family, discuss as a team what worked well, any obstacles, and any changes needed in your approach. Plan necessary adjustments for subsequent meetings with the family and other service providers.</p>	<p>Within 3rd month and ongoing</p>	<p>Facilitated by supervisor</p>	
<p><b>11.</b> As resources are available, develop or obtain supplemental materials (white board; Teaming binder; common business cards; team brochure/pamphlets for families, service providers, and courts).</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Facilitated by supervisor</p>	
<p><b>12.</b> Revisit types and numbers of cases to team at 90 days and on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>Within 3rd month and ongoing</p>	<p>Facilitated by supervisor</p>	

TASK	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	DATE COMPLETED; COMMENTS ON PROGRESS
13. Revisit and make any necessary modifications to case record access and documentation in CONNECTIONS, as well as the expected time frames.	Within the 3rd month and ongoing	Facilitated by supervisor	
14. Revisit Teaming/group supervision meetings: review process of rotation of facilitation roles, meeting times, team member participation, and any necessary changes.	Within the 4th month and ongoing	Facilitated by supervisor	
15. As part of group supervision, incorporate discussion as a team of what worked well with the family/teamed case, any obstacles, and any changes needed in your approach. Plan necessary adjustments for subsequent meetings with the family and other service providers.	Within 4th month and ongoing	Facilitated by supervisor	
16. Revisit case assignment process on a regular basis to ensure equitable workload distribution.	Within 4th month and ongoing	Facilitated by supervisor	
17. Begin working with additional families as a team so each team member is either a primary or secondary worker on a case.	Within 4th month and ongoing	Facilitated by supervisor	
18. Revisit the team mission statements; revise as needed.	Ongoing	Facilitated by supervisor	
19. Revisit the team operating agreement; revise as needed.	Ongoing	Facilitated by supervisor	

# Appendix B: Levels of Team Development

# Levels of Team Development

Teaming County/unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Levels of Team Development	Date Achieved	Comments
<b><i>Benchmark for Teams</i></b>		
<b>LEVEL 1</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The team completes tasks 1–10 on Teaming Start-Up Guide.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The team develops case criteria for teamed cases and decides on its first Teaming case.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The team meets at least once a week for group supervision and team development activities.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary and secondary roles on teamed case(s) are assigned.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operating agreements are established and utilized by team members.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The team orients new members and mentors them in the Teaming process.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members are seated in close proximity to one another whenever possible.</li> </ul>		

Levels of Team Development	Date Achieved	Comments
<b>LEVEL 2 (Level 1 benchmarks have been reached and maintained)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The team completes tasks 11–18 on Teaming Start-Up Guide.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members experience shared identity as valued members of the team.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members regularly engage in case discussions about teamed case outcomes and activities during group supervision meetings.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operating agreements are regularly reviewed and refined as necessary.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The team is aware that changes in team membership will have an impact on team functioning; the team works together to address this; and the team seeks Teaming trainer support as needed.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members are aware of their Social Styles Profiles, and those of their team, and are beginning to address conflicts with one another and to successfully resolve them.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members practice rotation of facilitation roles during group supervision.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The team is moving towards each team member having at least one teamed case.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members use a strengths-based and solution-focused approach to reach their own team goals and to work effectively with families.</li> </ul>		

Levels of Team Development	Date Achieved	Comments
<b>LEVEL 3 (Levels 1 and 2 benchmarks have been reached and maintained.)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During group supervision, team members consistently use a structured approach to presenting and addressing case issues that are solution focused and action oriented.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members experience increased comfort in seeking input and support when they are stuck or struggling.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members regularly take initiative to brainstorm similar approaches to working with non-teamed cases and volunteer to take on a task to assist another member to accomplish case tasks.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members demonstrate skill in multiple facilitation roles (facilitator, timekeeper, process observer, scribe/recorder) during group supervision.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team seeks feedback from families and service providers regarding services the team provides.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members incorporate other child welfare practices (e.g., family meetings, visit coaching, engaging fathers) into their daily Teaming practice and group supervision discussions.</li> </ul>		

Levels of Team Development	Date Achieved	Comments
<b>LEVEL 4 (Levels 1–3 benchmarks have been reached and maintained.)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There may be an opportunity for teams at this level to offer their guidance as expansion occurs within their agency.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams are successfully incorporating new casework approaches learned in training and group supervision into daily practice and are utilizing such approaches in their engagement and problem solving with families.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members are actively involved in developing a plan to cover a caseload when a team member is absent due to vacation, leave, etc.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal and informal Teaming is integrated into the team’s daily practice.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where opportunities exist, team members volunteer to participate in workshops and webinars to educate other teams, agencies, and interested parties on the benefits of Teaming.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For teamed cases, workload is managed collectively by all team members and the team consistently meets for group supervision even when the supervisor cannot be present.</li> </ul>		

Benchmarks for Supervisors	Date Achieved	Comments
<b>LEVEL 1</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor schedules regular group supervision meetings with an agenda and facilitates case presentation/discussion.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor meets regularly with team and facilitates team development activities.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor coordinates completion of tasks 1–10 on Teaming Start-Up Guide.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor facilitates discussion with team members about criteria for cases and choice of first teamed case.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor assigns primary and secondary caseworker roles and appropriate access to teamed cases in CONNECTIONS.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor supports team members in utilizing the operating agreements developed by the team.</li> </ul>		

Benchmarks for Supervisors	Date Achieved	Comments
<b>LEVEL 2 (Level 1 benchmarks have been reached and maintained.)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor oversees completion of tasks 11–18 on Teaming Start-Up Guide.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor promotes the group supervision of more than one case, develops a structure for rotation of facilitation roles during group supervision, and models the skills used in the facilitation roles.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor identifies developmental needs of the team and utilizes that information to develop or obtain appropriate training and/or skill-building activities for the team.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor fosters safe, supportive, and inclusive team environment.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor is aware of team members' Social Styles Profiles and can assist team members in surfacing conflicts with one another and successfully addressing them.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor supports team members in using strengths-based and solution-focused approaches to reach their own team goals and to work effectively with families.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor initiates/models process for integrating new team members and for saying “good-bye” to departing team members.</li> </ul>		

Benchmarks for Supervisors	Date Achieved	Comments
<b>LEVEL 3 (Levels 1 and 2 benchmarks have been reached and maintained.)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor enhances team functioning by encouraging discussions regarding the emotional impact of case events and circumstances on family members and caseworkers.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor coaches/supports team members regarding rotation of group supervision facilitation roles.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor models the use of critical thinking and encourages the transfer of learning from teamed cases to other cases.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor develops confidence in the team’s ability to share responsibility with each other and actively participate during case discussions.</li> </ul>		
Benchmarks for Supervisors	Date Achieved	Comments
<b>LEVEL 4 (Levels 1–3 benchmarks have been reached and maintained.)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor ensures that the team’s workload is managed collectively and meets best practice standards.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor facilitates team discussion on lessons learned through Teaming, as well as how to share these lessons with other teams and other units in the agency.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor may provide mentoring and coaching to new teams.</li> </ul>		

Benchmarks for Supervisors	Date Achieved	Comments
<b>LEVEL 4 (Levels 1–3 benchmarks have been reached and maintained.)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor has high degree of confidence that the team can manage the workload of teamed cases and the group supervision process in the absence of the supervisor.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor encourages team members to take on leadership roles through volunteering to participate in workshops and webinars to educate other teams, agencies, and interested parties on the benefits of Teaming.</li> </ul>		

## Appendix C: Brochure and Flyer Examples\*

Columbia County Phase 2

Orange County Phase 6

Orange County Phase 7

Rockland County Phase 3

Rockland County Phase 4

\*Actual brochures include full names and complete phone numbers listed

## *Columbia County Phase 2*

Your Columbia County  
Permanency Team includes:

**Caseworkers**

Geeta  
518-828-XXXX

April  
518-828-XXXX

Polly  
518-828-XXXX

Jennifer  
518-828-XXXX

Patricia  
518-828-XXXX

**Senior Caseworkers**

Pamela  
518-828-XXXX

Karen  
518-828-XXXX

**Supervisor**

Cindy  
518-828-XXXX

Kary Jablonka, MSW  
Interim Commissioner



Columbia County  
Department of Social Services  
25 Railroad Avenue  
Hudson, NY 12534

## Columbia County *Permanency Team*



### Mission Statement:

Columbia County  
"Team Eight" strives to  
achieve permanency for the  
children of the families we  
serve, working together in  
a respectful manner, while  
ensuring safety and well-  
being.

### What is "Teaming?"

Child welfare teams are small groups of people with a shared common mission and approach to working with families. Caseworkers are each responsible for the team's tasks and progress. They have complementary social work skills and expertise that they willingly share with each other to achieve the ultimate goal of permanency for children.

### Benefits of teaming

- ↓ More caseworkers can quickly connect a family with community services in order to address a family's individual needs
- ↓ Increased availability to meet with families and address individual needs and concerns around the family's schedule
- ↓ Families feel more supported by having a team of workers they can contact
- ↓ Recognition/ celebration of successes
- ↓ Families are freed from repeating their stories over and over
- ↓ Less stress and isolation for both workers and families

Teaming involves all the core practices of Child Welfare.

### Teaming is:

- ↓ CHILD-DRIVEN
- ↓ FAMILY-CENTERED
- ↓ COMMUNITY-FOCUSED
- ↓ STRENGTH-BASED
- ↓ COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

*Orange County Phase 6*

**Teaming  
Approach to  
Family Services**

Typically, when a child enters foster care, one caseworker is assigned to work with the family. Teaming involves a unit of Social Caseworkers, Sr. Caseworkers and a Supervisor who work together with your family. While there is one primary caseworker who will be your main contact, all members of the unit are available to you, if needed. Each member of the team brings their own unique skills and knowledge to help you and your family.

The Teaming approach doesn't work without your participation. Keep in touch with your primary caseworker and keep the team informed of your accomplishments. If you need help, ask. Communication is a key part of teaming.



**Team Contacts**

Andrea  
Sr. Social Caseworker  
#291-XXXX

Maureen  
Sr. Social Caseworker  
#291-XXXX

Lisa  
Social Caseworker  
#291-XXXX

Valerie  
Social Caseworker  
#291-XXXX

Rene  
Social Caseworker  
#291-XXXX

Brian  
Case Supervisor  
#291-XXXX

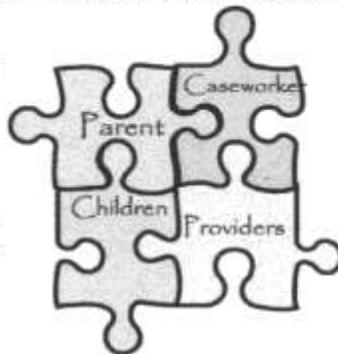
Office Address:  
Orange County DSS  
23 Hatfield Lane  
Goshen, NY 10924

## Orange County Phase 7

### Where do I fit in?

The Teaming approach doesn't work without your participation. It can be frustrating when your children are in care and you are unsure what to do. The caseworkers are there to help you. The caseworkers work with all of your providers to ensure that you are receiving all of the services that will help reunify your family. The caseworkers can provide you with updates on your children's education, health and daily activities. You are an important piece of the puzzle. It is up to you to participate in all of your court-ordered services. Along the way, the caseworkers may also make referrals to any programs that may be beneficial to you and your family. It is important that you keep in touch with your caseworkers and update them on

your accomplishments and struggles. Communication is a key part of teaming.



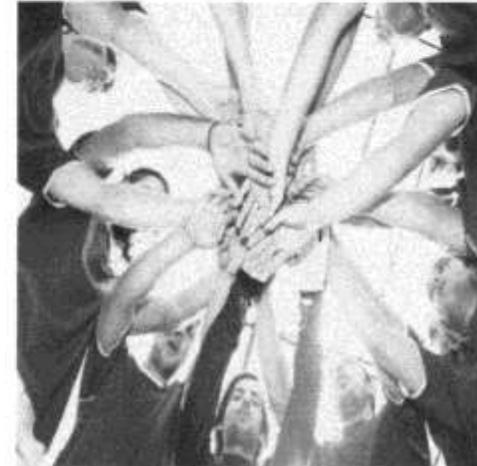
### Your Team

Mandy	Caseworker 845-291-XXXX
Nicole	Caseworker 845-291-XXXX
Michele	Caseworker 845-291-XXXX
Shana	Caseworker 845-291-XXXX
Madeline	Caseworker 845-291-XXXX
Cathy	Case Supervisor 845-291-XXXX

Fax: 845-291-XXXX  
 Orange County Department of Social Services  
 23 Hatfield Lane  
 Goshen, NY 10924



## Orange County Teaming Initiative



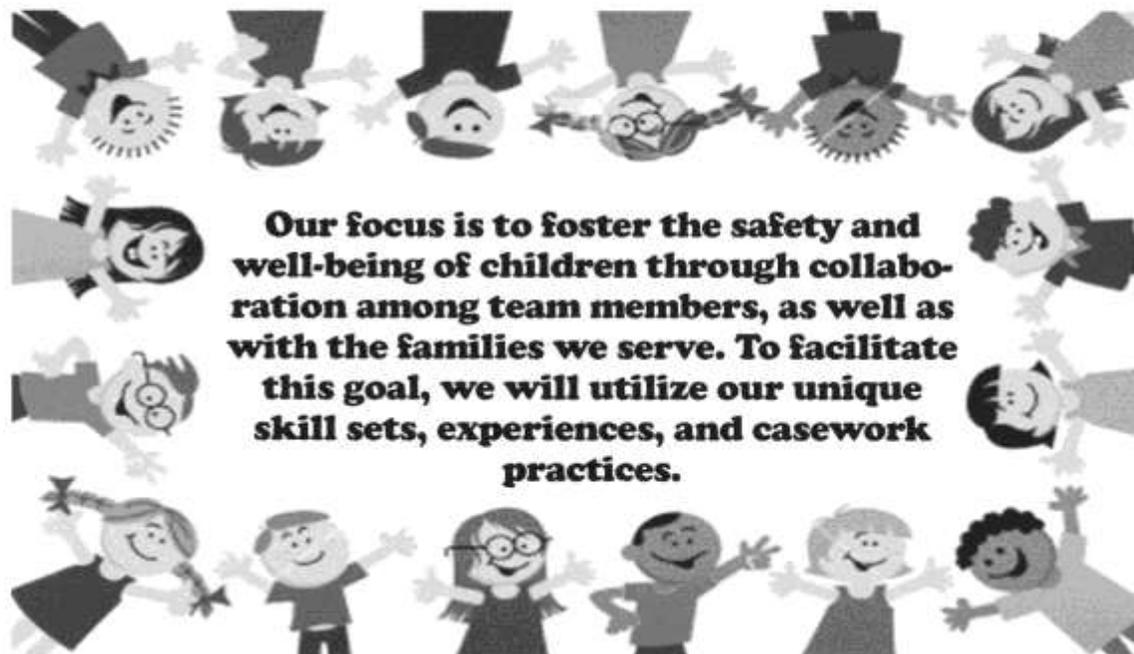
"Coming together is a beginning.  
 Keeping together is progress.  
 Working together is success."

Henry Ford

## What is Teaming?

When a child enters foster care, a caseworker is assigned to monitor the progress of the child and his/her parents. With Teaming, rather than working with one caseworker, you have an entire team of caseworkers available to you. You will be assigned a primary worker, who will oversee your case. In addition to this primary worker, you will have the benefit of additional caseworker support. Each caseworker is up to date on your case specifics and can assist you. The benefit of the Teaming approach is that you will almost always have a caseworker available to answer questions or help resolve any issues. Each team member has his or her own unique approach to case management.

## Our Mission Statement



**Our focus is to foster the safety and well-being of children through collaboration among team members, as well as with the families we serve. To facilitate this goal, we will utilize our unique skill sets, experiences, and casework practices.**

"Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." Maria Robinson

"Don't wait until everything is just right. It will never be perfect. There will always be challenges, obstacles and less than perfect conditions. So what. Get started now. With each step you take, you will grow stronger and stronger, more and more skilled, more and more self-confident and more and more successful."

Mark Victor Hansen

## Rockland County Phase 3

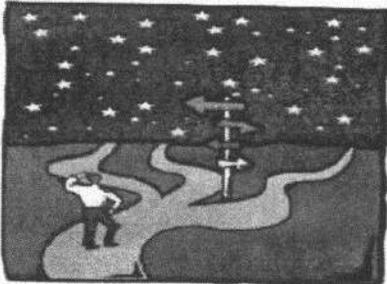
### What Are the Benefits of Teaming?

- Families feel more supported by having a team of caseworkers they can contact.
- Family members, who are already overwhelmed by the crises that led to placement, have access to a broader array of casework expertise and experience to meet their individual needs.
- If your assigned caseworkers are not available, another Permanency Team Caseworker who is familiar with your case can be reached.
- The Permanency Team will maintain consistent support toward helping you reach your family's goals even if your assigned caseworkers are no longer available.



### An Innovative Approach

The Child Permanency Team's mission is to utilize a team approach that gives at-risk children and their families a broader array of culturally competent expertise and casework planning strategies. Caseworkers work together as a team to empower families to build healthy networks of social supports and more effective coping skills leading to self-sufficiency for parents and permanency for children.



### Rockland County Children's Services

#### Child Permanency Teaming Initiative

What Are The Benefits of Teaming ?

What Can You Expect ?

Who Are We ?

Key Points to Remember



For information about health and human services, please contact:

Information Rockland-NY Connects  
 845-364-XXXX  
[www.informationrockland.org](http://www.informationrockland.org)  
[inforock@co.rockland.ny.us](mailto:inforock@co.rockland.ny.us)

**What Can You Expect?**

When a referral is made to the Child Permanency Team because your child was removed by the Rockland County Family Court and placed in either foster care or direct custody:

- Two team members/caseworkers will be assigned to work with your family.
- The team members will work with you to identify the safety & risk factors that led to your child's placement.
- The team members will then help you to develop a service plan which builds on your family's strengths and minimizes identified safety and risk factors.
- The primary goal of the service plan is to achieve a safe strategy for permanency for your child, which must be approved by Family Court.
- The team will provide casework counseling and connect you to services in and around your community to help you achieve your goals.



**Who Are We?**

**Rockland's  
Child Permanency Team:**

**Barbara** ..... 364-XXXX  
*Supervisor*

**Linda** ..... 364-XXXX  
*Senior Caseworker*

**Jill** ..... 364-XXXX  
*Senior Caseworker*

**Susan** ..... 364-XXXX  
*Caseworker*

**Martine** ..... 364-XXXX  
*Caseworker*

**Beatrice** ..... 364-XXXX  
*Caseworker*

**Rockland County  
Department of Social Services  
Children's Services  
Sanatorium Road, Bldg. C,  
Pomona, New York 10970**



**C. Scott Vanderhoef, County Executive  
Susan Sherwood, Commissioner**

**Key Points to Remember...**

- Children need a safe and stable home environment, so they have the best chance of developing into healthy and secure adults.
- Foster care is only a temporary solution, so it's very important for everyone to start working together and planning right away to ensure the best possible outcomes for your family.
- It is the responsibility of both parents to participate in planning with the team once your child enters placement.
- The Child Permanency Team Caseworkers will help you develop a safe plan that will satisfy the expectations of the Family Court.
- You will have the opportunity to learn and practice skills that can strengthen your family and prevent separations from your children in the future.
- Your Caseworkers are here to guide and assist you to achieve your and your family's goals.
- If your child remains in placement for 15 out of 22 months, the agency is mandated to petition the court to terminate parental rights unless compelling reasons exist.

*Rockland County Phase 4*

# Helping Keep Families Together



## The Teaming Approach



COUNTY OF ROCKLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
Haverstraw Preventive Services

## Benefits of Teaming

- You will always have a caseworker available to you
- Each team member brings their own expertise
- Family will be freed from repeating story
- Extra support

## Your Team

Abbie

Adelina

Debbie

Diana

Janice

Johanny

Kim

Theresa

429-XXXX

## Mission Statement



Haverstraw Preventive Team is committed to providing supportive services to our families, ensuring the safety, permanency and well being of their children. Our team respects the diversity and values of all.

## What Is Teaming?

Teaming involves a unit made up of caseworker's, senior caseworkers, supervisors and support staff all working together with each individual family.



## Benefits of Teaming

- If your primary worker is not available other team members will be able to assist you, it will not be necessary to repeat your story
- Each team member brings their own expertise
- Additional support by having more workers available to service you
- Less stress and isolation on families
- We work together with your family for better understanding and different way to solve problems with you

## **Appendix D: Mission/Purpose Statement Examples**

Albany County Phase 2

Albany County Phase 7

Columbia County Phase 3

Columbia County Phase 8

Orange County Phase 5

Orange County Phase 6

Orange County Phase 7

Schenectady County Phase 2

## **Albany County**

### **Phase 2 Mission Statement**

*The Albany County Training Teaming approach is to provide shared responsibility among each team member while utilizing our individual strengths when working with families to protect children, reduce risk, and strengthen families.*

### **Phase 7 Mission Statement**

*The Team will work collaboratively and support each other both physically and mentally, while promoting the safety of children. The people we serve will benefit by the Team's ability to think strategically in an effort to empower and strengthen their families.*

## **Columbia County**

### **Phase 3 Mission Statement**

*The Columbia County Transitional Team provides services to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood.*

### **Phase 8 Mission Statement**

*"Columbia County Team 8 strives to achieve permanency for the children of the families we serve in a respectful manner while ensuring safety and well-being."*

*"Through Teaming, we will develop a strategy of shared decision making. We will work together to offer varying strategies, which will support the health, safety and well-being of the families we serve."*

## **Orange County**

### **Phase 5 Mission Statement**

*Our mission statement which is "Through Teaming, we will develop a strategy of shared decision making. We will work together to offer varying strategies, which will support the health, safety and well-being of the families we serve."*

### **Phase 6 Mission Statement**

*To work as a collaborative team to manage casework responsibilities in the most effective way, while working with families to educate, empower and achieve permanency*

## **Orange County (continued)**

### **Phase 7 Mission Statement**

*Our focus is to foster the safety and well-being of children through collaboration among team members, as well as with the families we serve. To facilitate this goal, we will utilize our unique skill sets, experiences, and casework practices.*

#### **Ideas for our Standards of Practice:**

- *Commit to meet*
- *Empower and support clients*
- *Accountability among caseworkers and clients*
- *Treat everyone with respect*
- *Holistic approach*
- *Promote family connections*

## **Schenectady County**

### **Phase 2 Mission Statement**

*We are a unified, strength-based team that will utilize our collective knowledge, skills and training to facilitate the safety and growth of the families we serve, as well as each other.*

# Appendix E: Operating Agreement Examples

Albany County Department of Social Services  
Phase 7 Operating Agreement

Rockland County Department of Social Services  
Phase 4 Operating Agreement

Schenectady County Department of Social Services  
Phase 2 Operating Agreement

## ***Albany County Department of Social Services***

### **Phase 7 Operating Agreement**

#### We all agree to:

- What happens in Teaming stays in Teaming
- Take responsibility for our own feelings-no blaming or pointing fingers
- Talk only to each other not about each other- Do not discuss anyone if they are not present
- Commitment to the program but okay to have different levels of commitment
- Have and follow set rules
- Be respectful of one another's perspective and ideas
- Work together
- Common goals – focus on tasks
- Shared values
- Ongoing (effective) communication
- Productive – results for efforts
- Learn from each other
- Honesty
- Strategic and plan-full
- Being flexible and willing to compromise
- Be patient and understanding
- Constructive Feedback
- Open to Teaming and allowing another person to work on your case

## **Rockland County Department of Social Services**

### **Phase 4 Operating Agreement**

#### Running Meetings

- Arrive on time and be committed to the team. Meetings run from 9:30 – 11:00 each Tuesday.
- Stick to the agenda – Facilitator to provide copy of agenda by Monday morning
- Develop a plan of action
- At each meeting we are to:
  - Review prior weeks meeting
  - Go through agenda
  - Assign tasks for following week
  - Establish facilitation roles for next meeting
- Be a respectful listener
- Respect those that are speaking
  - Don't finish other's thoughts
  - Clarify any confusion that you may have
  - Refrain from telling stories
  - Process observer will step in when others go off task

#### Decision Making

All decisions to be made via consensus method – facilitator will ask for either a thumbs up (meaning you agree), thumb sideways (you can live with it), or thumbs down (you don't agree). If anyone gives thumbs down, they are given chance to explain why, then re-vote is taken. Tie goes to the facilitator.

#### Conflict Between Team Members

- Everyone given opportunity to express their opinion
- Hold each other to task – process observer and/or facilitator to step in when needed
- Utilize strength based approach and “I” messages when discussing difference of opinions
- We will accept the decisions of the group

## **Schenectady County Department of Social Services**

### **Phase 2 Operating Agreement**

- Make decisions as a team.
- Communicate in a strength-based manner for both “big T” and “little t” cases.
- Request a “Time Out” before things get out of control and/or present a threatening situation.
- Be specific about steps taken for the family and what the outcomes have been.
- Prioritize our families’ needs and problems so as not to overwhelm yourself or the team.
- Actively listen and be considerate as evidenced by being respectful, by maintaining eye contact, and watching body language, and responses of the team members. All points of view can be considered.
- Food and coffee every Tuesday (plan on Friday).
- Be honest, respectful, courteous, and willing to listen.
- No personal attacks.
- Bring Agenda to meetings.
- Start and end meetings on time.
- Everyone gets heard.
- Discuss differences respectfully; keep issues within the team.
- Don’t get caught up in the negativity – opt for positivity.
- Format to end positively.
- Prepare a to-do-list.
- No phones during meetings.
- Rotate facilitation roles (except for scribe).
- Be flexible and available to help other team members and communicate in strength based manner with “big T” and “little t” cases.

## Conflict Resolution

- Identify the problem/conflict/concern.
- Decide how to address concerns (team or individual).
- Assessment and Problem identification
- Use “I” statements.
- Timing: When to resolve conflict.
- Safety/trust: emotional safety.
- Worthwhile (worth your time, risk/reward)
- Consensus or majority vote.
- Deal with conflict as it arises (Go to person privately first; if not resolved, then go to the team)

# Appendix F: Teaming Case Criteria Examples

Albany County Department of Social Services  
Phase 7 Case Criteria

Orange County Department of Social Services  
Phase 7 Case Criteria

Schenectady County Department of Social Services  
Phase 1 Case Criteria

## ***Albany County Department of Social Services***

### **Phase 7 Case Criteria**

- Cases which have been open for more than one year will be reviewed for Teaming
- High Risk Cases
- Foster Care cases will be considered
- Cases that a caseworker would like additional assistance with.

## ***Orange County Department of Social Services***

### **Phase 7 Case Criteria**

- Multiple players
- Challenging personalities/situations
- 4 or more children
- Impact on caseworker (e.g. distance, personality conflicts, time-consuming)
- Children with higher level of needs
- Crisis periods/legal issues

## ***Schenectady County Department of Social Services***

### **Phase 1 Case Criteria**

Decisions about Teaming a case will be made by the team after a discussion of the following issues:

1. Is the family in immediate crisis?
2. Does the family present with a multitude of issues/facets and/or subsystems that could not reasonably be managed by a single caseworker?
3. Would Teaming be appropriate on cases for staff with caseloads that have multiple cases that are very challenging?
4. What is the number of cases currently teamed?
5. What are the current caseload numbers in the unit?

# Appendix G: Group Supervision Structure

## Case Supervision Structure

### Weekly Group Supervision Structure

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Primary/Secondary Caseworker(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Remind everyone of agreement/ground rules for meeting:** Confidentiality, Commitment, Punctuality, Respect, Sensitivity to Culture, other?

**Bring family into the room** (Team member representative or use symbol)

**Primary/Secondary CW present specific purpose or focus (what I/we need help with):** issues that need to be addressed; questions that need to be asked/answered; concerns that need to be addressed; confusion or gaps in information that need to surface; specific assistance that is required; etc.

**Present Family Map/Genogram:** on flipchart or handout for everyone; fill in additional info as it becomes known

**Child Wellbeing:** identify school attendance/concerns/interventions; mental health concerns/diagnosis/treatment; criminal involvement/interventions; health concerns/treatments

**Parents:** employment; mental health; substance use/abuse; health; criminal involvement

### What is going well with the family regarding safety, risk, well-being, and permanency?

- *What is the level of engagement with each family member? What could be done to engage more?*
- *What would the family say you have done that has been helpful?*
- *What is the family's understanding/perception about issues related to safety, risk, well-being, and permanency (mutual understanding)? What has the family told you about their understanding/perception regarding the child welfare issues (if applicable)? What could be done to improve the family's understanding (e.g., courageous conversations, managing authority)?*
- *How would you rate the family's change readiness (present discomfort, preferred alternative future, emotional security, efficacy, internalization of responsibility)? How would the family rate themselves? How do you know?*
- *What has the family told you they have done to improve their situation/address child welfare issues? What steps have you seen the family take?*
- *What would the family say about how you and the agency could be more helpful to them?*

**What safety issues still need to be addressed? What risk factors still need to be addressed?**

**What has to occur to reach the Permanency Planning Goal: what will need to occur in order for the case to be closed? What will it take for that to happen?**

**How do this family and its current challenges impact your own values and emotions?**

**What needs to be done (i.e., tasks) between now and next meeting? Who will do what?**

**What have we learned from this group supervision? Have we accomplished the purpose?**

# Appendix H: Teaming Resources

## Teaming Resources

Teaming Overview and Information on OCFS Website:

- Introduction to Teaming
- Teaming Video: An overview of Teaming concepts and benefits presented by Gail Haulenbeek, OCFS Teaming Project Manager, and Julie Copeland, Case Supervisor, Schenectady County Department of Social Services
- Overview of Teaming in New York State, which highlights key concepts and elements of developing successful teams from the perspective of administrators, supervisors, and staff
- Posters: Caseworkers Make a Difference

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cfsr/teaming.asp>

National Webinar: Casework Teaming to Reduce Workload, Enhance Effectiveness and Boost Morale

<http://ncwwi.org/index.php/link/83-casework-teaming-to-reduce-workload-enhance-effectiveness-boost-morale>

Maxwell, John C. 2001. *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork: Embrace Them and Empower Your Team*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Tuckman, Bruce. Ph.D. *Famous Models Stages of Group Development*  
[www.chimaeraconsulting.com/tuckman.htm](http://www.chimaeraconsulting.com/tuckman.htm)