

Solution Focused Meeting (SFM) Overview

What is a SFM?

SFMs are a formal family engagement strategy to work toward solutions. Families are best served when they are actively engaged and their voices are heard, valued, and considered with regard to decision.

The purpose of SFMs is to bring important family supports, in addition to the family, to the table with DHS and other service providers to address safety, permanency, and well-being. SFMs are solution-based, draw on past successes of the family in problem solving, and work in partnership with the family.

SFMs are built upon the three main tenets of Solution Based Casework (SBC):

- 1) **Prioritize the family partnership.** It is our intention, even when difficult, to partner with all families. We *prioritize* partnership. So when we go into our family meetings, it is not to tell them what to do, but to work with their own best intentions (if not actions) to create a good and safe life for their children. In short, we do not own this interest and have to convince them, they want it to and we try to bring that out in every way possible.
- 2) **Focus on pragmatic solutions to everyday life problems.** We try to bring change down to the specific and pragmatic solutions in the everyday life of the family, so we focus on HOW the family goes about creating safety and well-being, we are CURIOUS about what works and what doesn't work. We get them help by providing services, but the **SERVICE is not the goal, CHANGE in the everyday life of the family is our SHARED goal.**
- 3) **Help families document and celebrate success.** We know families get discouraged with the system, and new skills are vulnerable to drift and falling off if we do not help them *notice* those changes, *document* them so others can see them, and *celebrate* small steps of change to lock it in.

What is the goal of SFMs and how long are they?

The goal and length of a SFM varies depending upon which SBC Milestone the family is in at the time of the SFM referral.

Milestone 1: The goals are to engage the family and supports in discussing or establishing safety. It also provides an opportunity to explore ways to keep children safe while the family works on their issues.

Milestone 2: The goal is to focus on continued engagement and partnering.

Milestone 3: The goal is to brainstorm creative tasks to achieve family and individual outcomes that are already established.

Milestone 4: The goals are to get fresh ideas to problem solve challenges, prevent relapse, measure change, and celebrate change.

When are SFMs facilitated on open DHS cases?

SFMs are facilitated at the following junctures during the life of the case:

- Initial SFM (within 45 calendar days from the date of referral to services;
- Upon family request;
- Six months from the date of referral to services;
- 12 months from the date of referral to services and every six months the case remains open; and
- Prior to case closure.

In addition, SFMs may be facilitated when:

- the Family Agreement/Service Plan is complete and Action Plans need the assistance of others (between milestone 2 and milestone 3); or
- the family is in mid milestone 3 and tasks are stalled; or
- ready to acknowledge and recognize change and brainstorm specific ways to measure change; or
- the family is in milestone 4 to recognize and celebrate change and identify what is left to accomplish.

What documentation is completed and/or provided after SFMs?

At conclusion of the SFM, the facilitator will provide the family with the Family's Follow Up Summary. The SBC Action Plan may be completed and provided to the family in lieu of the Follow Up Summary for families in milestone 3 or milestone 4.

The SFM facilitator completes the SFM Notes and provides to all meeting participants within five business days from the date of the meeting.