



# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

Revised August 2020

**NYC Administration for Children's Services  
Division of Family Permanency Services**

This guidance updates and supersedes the previous *ACS Parent-to-Parent Protocol*, which was issued in November 2010.

## Table of Contents

1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF PARENT-TO-PARENT MEETINGS .....	3
2. SCHEDULING AND LOCATION .....	4
3. PARTICIPANT PREPARATION .....	5
4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE MEETING .....	6
5. P2P MEETING PROCESS, SAMPLE AGENDA AND DISCUSSION TOPICS .....	7
6. P2P MEETINGS WITH KIN .....	9
7. MEETING DOCUMENTATION .....	10

## Acknowledgements

The Administration for Children's Services would like to acknowledge the efforts of all who provided input to help develop this protocol. The previous version was issued in 2010. This updated version was revised with input from the ACS Parent Advisory Council, the ACS/Advocates Permanency and Family Time Workgroup, and ACS staff in the Family Permanency Services and Family Court Legal Services divisions.

# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

## 1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF PARENT-TO-PARENT MEETINGS

The purpose of this document is to help staff prepare for and facilitate effective Parent-to-Parent (P2P) meetings. The P2P meeting is a child-centered and team-oriented conversation. It is an opportunity for foster parents to understand the needs of the child(ren) placed in their home and for the parents to meet and develop a positive working relationship with the foster parent(s) caring for their child.<sup>1</sup>

### Who Attends the P2P

When a child is placed into a family foster care setting, P2P participants include the parent(s), foster care agency case planner, and foster parent(s). When a child is placed into a congregate care setting, P2P participants include the parent(s), foster care agency case planner, and foster care agency child care staff. Where appropriate and helpful, parent advocates and/or supervisors may also join this meeting. The meeting is held face-to-face. A new P2P must occur any time a child is moved to a new foster care setting.

In many instances it will be appropriate for the child to be present at the meeting. This must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The child should be 10 years of age or older and mentally and emotionally capable of understanding the purpose for the meeting. In addition, the case planner must be sure that the parent will be comfortable with the child's participation.

### Purpose of the P2P

The purpose of the initial P2P meeting is to bring together key people who will be involved in the process of reuniting the family after a child has been removed from the parent(s) and enters foster care. This meeting provides an opportunity for the adults caring for the child—both parents and foster parents—to come together in an informal setting to talk about their common goals of meeting the child's needs and family reunification. The meeting's focus is narrow and addresses what the two families, supported by the case planner, community and service providers, can do to ensure that this child has the most positive experience possible in out-of-home care.

The P2P meeting:

- Focuses only on the child;
- Includes discussion of the child's strengths and needs, likes and dislikes, routines and anything else that will make the transition easier for the child;
- Gives parents and foster parents an opportunity to get to know each other and begin building a strong working relationship (or in kinship cases, discuss how they will work together in a new way);
- Establishes a plan for Family Time (parent-child visits).

### Why P2P Meetings are Important

Shared Parenting means that parents and foster or kinship parents work together in the best interests of the child. This is an essential practice in child welfare and contributes to children's

---

<sup>1</sup> In this guide, "foster parent" is intended to include both kinship and non-kin caregivers. "Child" is defined broadly to include children and/or youth in care. Where applicable, instructions that apply to foster parents of children in family settings also apply to childcare staff in congregate settings.

# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

well-being. Shared Parenting requires frequent and respectful communication between parents and foster or kinship parents. The P2P is a first step in this process.

P2P Meetings are important because:

- **Parents are experts on their own children.** They have a vital role to play in supporting the children in the transition and throughout their time in foster care.
- **First impressions matter.** The P2P helps set the tone for a respectful working relationship between parents and foster parents.
- A strong partnership between parents and foster parents enhances **stability for children and youth** and promotes **thoughtful, inclusive decision-making**.
- Early and continuing involvement of parents and foster parents in collaborative planning can lead to **timely family reunification** and permanency for children.
- **Children need to see the adults in their lives communicating calmly** and working together to meet the children's needs. This can help to mitigate the effects of trauma that children experience when separated from their parents. Children can feel safer and more comfortable when issues that arise between adults regarding the foster care placement are resolved respectfully.
- **Shared parenting preserves the parent-child relationship.** Visits should not be the only opportunity to preserve and improve parent-child relationships. More opportunities for involvement are needed to help the child continue regarding the parent as a parental figure, and to help the parent maintain and develop parenting skills. The parent-child relationship is similar to a muscle—if you don't use it, you lose it.
- **Shared parenting increases the probability of reunification.** It gives parents a voice in making sure their children are well cared for. It also creates more opportunities for families to demonstrate their readiness to take steps toward reunification—for example, more flexible Family Time arrangements or trial discharge.

## 2. SCHEDULING AND LOCATION

The P2P meeting should occur within two (2) business days of the child's placement in a foster home to support the child's successful adjustment. The case planner assigned to the case schedules the P2P meeting and secures a meeting space. The case planner must call the parent within 24 hours of placement to arrange the P2P. Scheduling efforts should give priority to parent availability. The case planner must also coordinate with the foster parent to ensure they can participate. Planning efforts must be documented in CONNECTIONS progress notes. Either at the time of scheduling or prior to the meeting, the case planner should prepare the participants for what to expect at the meeting (see below).

If circumstances beyond the provider agency's control prevent the P2P from occurring within two business days of placement, the case planner should document their attempts and continue to follow up so that the P2P can happen as soon as possible.

The P2P meeting should be held at the foster care agency office. If there are multiple offices, it should be held at the one most accessible to the parent in order to support their engagement in the process.

# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

Important Note: The P2P, Transition Meeting and first parent-child visit all occur at the beginning of a foster care placement, but they are three separate events with different purposes and participants.

- At the **Transition Meeting**, ACS Child Protective Services staff, foster care agency staff and parents share information about why the child is in out-of-home placement, including outcomes of the Child Safety Conference as applicable, and discuss an immediate plan for the child's care. The scheduling of the Transition Meeting cannot delay the P2P or the initial family visit, nor should the Transition Meeting occur during the P2P or the initial visit.
- The **P2P meeting** is held between the parents and foster parents to discuss the child's needs and background. The P2P is **not** a forum to discuss case allegations or reasons for removal. The Child Protective Specialist does **not** attend the P2P.
- The **initial family visit** may occur on the same day as the P2P meeting in order to provide for timely visiting and to maximize the opportunity of the parties present. However, the P2P meeting cannot occur during a visit. It must be facilitated as a separate process. The first visit must take place no later than 48 hours after removal and should not be delayed to coincide with the P2P meeting.

## 3. PARTICIPANT PREPARATION

The provider agency case planner prepares the participants prior to the meeting. Parent advocates and/or supervisors may also assist.

- ✓ Explain the purpose of the meeting.
- ✓ Convey the expectation that all participants will work as a team and that discussion will focus on the child.
- ✓ Emphasize to parents and foster parents that both families are important, and the child will benefit from all the adults working together.
- ✓ Ask how each person would like to be introduced (e.g., first or last name).
- ✓ Help participants understand their roles and think about what they want to share and ask in the meeting.
- ✓ Find out at least one or two things that the parent wants to know and one or two things that the foster parent wants to know. This will help you facilitate conversation when they first meet.

**Preparing the parents:** This meeting is an opportunity to ensure that parent(s) understand that they are still involved in the parenting of their child. The parent should be informed that this is an important opportunity to guide the foster parent in caring for their child. They may be encouraged to bring a favorite toy, book, or other comforting items for the child to the meeting. Any vital medical/health or school information and accompanying documents should be shared at the meeting. Parents may need reassurance that the meeting is child-centered and a chance for them to talk about their child as well as raise any questions they may have of the agency or foster parent. They can be asked what information they would like to share and what they think is important for the foster parent to know about their child. Case planners should listen to parents and address any questions they may have. Knowing that their voice is heard can be essential to the parents truly embracing this process. If the parent expresses a desire to have someone accompany them to the meeting, this should be discussed with the provider agency case planner during this preparation time.

# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

---

**Preparing the foster parents:** The P2P is an opportunity for the foster parent to hear from the parent and to reassure the parent that their child will be well cared for. The case planner should remind the foster parent that this meeting is child-centered and encourage them to write down questions they have about the child. The case planner should also encourage the foster parent to consider what information they wish to share—for example, why they decided to become a foster parent, years of service, number of children they have fostered and any other relevant information about their family. The case planner may offer suggestions about what information may be reassuring to the parent. The goal here is to help set a positive tone for the meeting. Some foster parents may want to consider drafting a short letter that shares information about their background to give to the parents when they meet. Provider agencies can help foster parents prepare this letter.

Note: Pre-certification training for foster parents should inform potential foster parents about P2P expectations and process.

**Involvement of Children:** The case planner should tell the child that their parents and foster parents are meeting with each other and explain the purpose of the P2P. To meet the needs of children in foster care—including safety, permanency, well-being, and preservation of relationships—the adults in their lives must communicate with one another openly, even when they have differences of opinion or approach. If the child has questions or concerns and will not be present at the meeting, the foster parent or case planner can ask the questions on the child’s behalf. If the child (age 10 or older) will be joining part of the meeting (see page 7), the case planner should arrange for child care during the other part of the meeting.

Agencies should work with foster parents to start a Life Book in which to collect meaningful items such as the child’s schoolwork, artwork, and pictures with the child’s parents, foster parents and siblings. Parents should be encouraged to contribute ideas/items to be included in the Life Book.

## 4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE MEETING

### ***Provider Agency Case Planner/P2P Facilitator***

The provider agency case planner facilitates the meeting. Parent advocates or supervisors may also facilitate as needed. The role of the facilitator in assuring an effective P2P meeting is extremely critical to the process, and everyone who fills this role must be trained before assuming this responsibility. Training may be provided by the supervisor using this guide.

The facilitator should establish a friendly, informal environment by introducing the participants and reiterating the purpose of the meeting, emphasizing that it is **child centered**. To begin the discussion, the facilitator may ask the parent to share information about the child that the foster parent will need to know, which may help “break the ice.” See below for a sample agenda and topics for discussion. The facilitator guides the conversation and keeps the participants focused on the child.

### ***Parent***

The parent shares information with the foster parent about the child’s strengths, needs, likes and dislikes, and anything else that may be helpful in caring for the child. Open sharing of pertinent

# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

information can help support the child's well-being. The P2P meeting offers the parent an opportunity to maintain their parenting role while the child is not living with them.

## **Foster Parent**

For the foster parent, the P2P is an opportunity to learn about the child first-hand from the parent. During the meeting, the foster parent should ask essential questions about the child and provide information about their household to the parent. They are encouraged to begin building trust and developing a constructive working relationship with the parent, as this relationship can go a long way in making child's experience as positive as possible while in foster care. The foster parent should update the parent on the child's initial adjustment in the home and get advice on how to support the transition for the child.

## **Child**

Children ages 10 or older may join the P2P meeting if the agency deems it appropriate (see page 3). If the child attends, the adults should still have an opportunity to speak without the child present, either at the beginning or end of the meeting. If the parent and/or foster parent need time to meet and to regulate emotions at the start of their discussion, have the child join part way through. On the other hand, if waiting increases anxiety for the child, facilitators may choose to have them join for the first part of the meeting. Children invited to the P2P are encouraged to identify any unresolved situations they may want to follow up with (i.e., sports tournament, religious commitment, their ability to visit with extended family members, etc.). They should also ask any questions they have related to their own care and the well-being of their parents. The other participants may not be able to answer all of the questions raised, but they will at least be recorded for follow-up by the appropriate party.

## 5. P2P MEETING PROCESS, SAMPLE AGENDA AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

The following is a general outline of the P2P meeting. During the P2P meeting, the case planner should seek to bring out the positives/strengths that the parents and foster parents possess, so that both can be active partners in the alliance forged for the well-being of the child.

P2P meetings can be short (approximately 30-45 minutes) and informal. They are just the beginning of an ongoing conversation.

### **Sample Agenda**

(Agenda items are in bold; the additional notes are for facilitators.)

- 1) **Introductions and Purpose of the Meeting**
  - a. The facilitator introduces parent(s) and foster parent(s) in a way that is comfortable for them and sets a tone of respect and cooperation.
  - b. Kin may not need an introduction. Still, it is important to start off by acknowledging the parent's and kin caregiver's roles and setting the expectation that they will work together for the child's well-being.
  - c. The facilitator establishes ground rules such as confidentiality regarding all case-related matters and an agreement among all meeting participants to communicate in mutual respectful ways.

# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

---

## 2) Foster/Kinship Parent(s) Share Information

- a. The foster/kinship parent(s) share information about how the child is doing.
- b. They may also want to share their commitment to working with the parent and discuss when and why they became foster parents.
- c. They may answer questions from the parent(s) and/or offer information about themselves and their home. (See below for potential discussion topics.)
- d. If the parent and kinship caregiver know each other well, kin can still share how the child is doing and discuss their commitment to working with the parent.

## 3) Parent(s) Share Information

- a. The parent(s) share information about the child (see below for sample topics).
- b. They may answer questions from the foster parent about the child.
- c. Facilitators should encourage parents to share anything that may be urgent, such as health or educational information, as well as anything that could help care for the child during the transition into foster care.

## 4) Discussion with Children/Youth

- a. When appropriate, the facilitator invites the child(ren)/youth to join the meeting. Child(ren)/youth have an opportunity to ask questions and contribute information important to them.

## 5) Family Time Plans and Next Steps

- a. The facilitator shares guidelines around Family Time (aka. visitation) and helps coordinate plans for visits and other contact. This includes the visiting schedule, location, transportation and any other relevant logistics.
- b. The group develops any other next steps as needed based on the conversation.
- c. The facilitator summarizes next steps and concludes the meeting.

## **Topics for Discussion**

The issues discussed at the meeting should center on the needs, safety and comfort of the child.

For example, parents may share:

- Child's likes and dislikes
- Child's strengths and needs
- Sibling relationships
- Important relationships the child has with relatives and other supportive adults
- Any general or special educational issues
- Specific plans regarding sharing information about school progress and the parent's ongoing participation in school-related activities
- Important health care needs, medications, doctor's appointments and health history (including medical, dental, and mental health care as well as vaccination history)
- Favorite foods and any dietary restrictions or food allergies
- Hair/personal hygiene/body care
- Child's behaviors and how to manage them (what works)
- Child's favorite toys, books, movies, TV shows, music, clothing
- Extra-curricular activities, hobbies, sports and other interests
- Child's friends from school or neighborhood



# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

- Plans for special celebrations: birthdays, graduations, holidays, etc.
- Religious beliefs, traditions and cultural practices
- Bedtime and other routines
- Child's fears or anxieties and how to comfort the child
- Any other thoughts that may be useful for the foster parent to know about their child

## Foster/kinship parents may share:

- Updates from the foster parent about how the child is doing
- Foster family composition/who lives in the home
- Pets (if applicable)
- General description of the home and sleeping arrangements
- What a day in their home looks like (routines, etc.)
- Religion and cultural background
- Recreational activities the family enjoys

This list only partially identifies the range of topics. Other topics may be included as needed.

## **Reminders for Facilitators**

- The facilitator's primary goal is to break the ice and address any barriers.
- Offer all participants time to ask questions and share information.
- Parents have a right to remain involved in their child's education and healthcare and should be encouraged to do so.
- Help participants recognize the "human" side of each person and eliminate any preconceived notions.
- In the event that the parent expresses concerns about the foster parent or the placement, the agency should have a plan for how they will address these issues after the meeting.

## 6. P2P MEETINGS WITH KIN

While parents and kin caregivers generally know each other before a P2P meeting, they may not have discussed shared parenting. Also, the placement of the child in kinship care changes their relationship. This makes the P2P meeting very important though different from a non-kin P2P conversation.

Give the parent an opportunity to share information about the child's education, health, bedtime and other routines, extra-curricular activities, etc. Encourage parents to let kin know what is familiar and comfortable for the child. Do not assume kin know this already.

Clarify roles and requirements around Family Time. What is the plan for visits?

Kinship care arrangements can bring up challenging family dynamics. If this happens in the P2P, help participants re-focus on the child's needs. How can they show the child that they are able to work as a team? How can each individual find support for the complicated emotions that kinship care can bring up without making the child feel caught in the middle? After the meeting, discuss these dynamics with your supervisor for support.

# Parent-to-Parent Meeting Protocol

---

If the foster parent is a kinship resource, the foster care agency may want to provide them with a copy of the OCFS Handbook for Relatives Raising Children, *Having a Voice & a Choice* (available in [English](#) or [Spanish](#)).<sup>2</sup>

## 7. MEETING DOCUMENTATION

The provider agency case planner must document in CONNECTIONS Progress Notes the date that the P2P meeting was held, who attended, and what took place at the meeting for future reference. Case planners should select the “Parent to Parent” dropdown option for Progress Note Purpose. Youth age 10 or older should be included in most P2Ps, and if they are not, the reason should be stated in the Progress Note narrative.

In addition, provider agency staff must distribute meeting notes, especially next steps such as visits, to all participants.

---

<sup>2</sup> See OCFS Administrative Directive 18-OCFS-ADM-23—“New Brochure: *Know Your Resources: Non-Parent Caregiver Benefits* and New Requirements for Distributing Publications”—for a full list of materials required and recommended to be shared with kinship caregivers. The ADM includes links to all materials.

ADM: [https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/ocfs\\_2018/ADM/18-OCFS-ADM-23.pdf](https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/ocfs_2018/ADM/18-OCFS-ADM-23.pdf)

Handbook in English: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub5080.pdf>

Handbook in Spanish: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub5080-S.pdf>