

How to make the most of your meetings

A resource for parents engaging with child protection and child and family services

The Voice of Parents worked alongside birth parents with lived experience of child protection and child and family service. These parents told us that they wanted to be more included in meetings that were about their child or family. This resource gives parents information about how they can get ready for a meeting with their case worker/s, and how they can make sure their voices are heard. This information is based on suggestions from birth parents with lived experience and other resources listed in footnotes.

Prioritising child safety is a critical part of this engagement and is ultimately most important. In addition, this resource recognises research that shows improved outcomes for children and young people can be achieved when their parents are effectively engaged by services including child protection¹.

What is a case plan meeting?

This is a meeting where you talk with practitioners from child protection or other services about what's happening with your child and family. In this meeting you might talk about things that your child or family needs support with, as well as things that your child or family are doing well. You are allowed to be a part of these conversations and your point of view should be listened to and included.

It is important to know that **you have rights** in meetings about your child or family.

Our [Charter of Parental Participation](#) was made by parents who have also had contact with child protection.

It talks about the things you are allowed to do, say, and ask for, when going through this process.

For example, parents have the right:

- To be listened to and valued as someone who is:
 - An expert in their child's life
 - An important influence in their child's sense of identity
 - A key member of the child's family and life.

Before the meeting

1

Write down the meeting time and location in your diary or calendar.

Ask your case worker to call or text you the day before to remind you. You could also put a reminder in your phone so you don't forget.

¹ Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare; University of Melbourne. (2020). A literature review of parent engagement and participation approaches in child protection: The Voice of Parents: A model for inclusion project in partnership with the University of Melbourne. Retrieved from: <https://www.cfecfw.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-Centre-Voice-of-Parents-Literature-Review.pdf>
<https://frg.org.uk/product/initial-family-and-friends-care-assessment-a-good-practice-guide/>
<https://inclusionh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/working-with-the-department.pdf>
<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/out-of-home-care/parents-with-kids-in-oohc/caseworker/chapters/case-planning-meeting>

- 2** **Make a plan for how you will get to the meeting.**
 Will you need someone to watch the kids?
 Do you have someone who can drive you?
 Talk to your worker if you need money for public transport as they might be able to help.
- 3** **Ask your worker to give you the meeting agenda.**
 This is a list of things that will be talked about in the meeting.
 You are also allowed to add things to this list – just tell the worker before the meeting.
- 4** **Tell your worker if you want to bring a support person with you.**
 This could be another worker who you trust, a friend, or a family member.
 This person might help you by writing things down in the meeting, so you don't forget, or making sure your points are heard.
- 5** **Think about what you might want to say in the meeting.**
 It might help to write it down before the meeting so you remember what you want to say.
 You can also bring along any information that is relevant (for example: school letters, medical information).
- 6** **Be on time for the meeting to make sure you have your chance to talk.**
 If you can't go to the meeting, it is very important that you call or text your worker to make a new meeting time.

Don't forget to let your worker know if you need an interpreter!

The person who is running the meeting should:

- make you feel welcome at the meeting,
- introduce everyone and tell you what their jobs are,
- tell you who is taking notes in the meeting,
- tell you if they can share those notes with you or if you need to take your own notes,
- let you ask questions during the meeting,
- let you know when they will send the notes to you after the meeting.

In the meeting

- 1** **Be open to sharing information and answering questions.**
 Make sure everyone is up-to-date with any new information about your family and child. This can help with delays in decisions being made. You should also ask your worker who else they might need to share that information with.
- 2** **Try to stay calm and be respectful.**
 It can be hard to hear some of the things that are talked about in these meetings. It will really help you if you can stay calm and keep talking about the pathway forward.
- 3** **Ask questions if something doesn't make sense.**
 It might help to write these questions down ahead of time and bring them to the meeting with you.

<https://frg.org.uk/product/initial-family-and-friends-care-assessment-a-good-practice-guide/>




<https://finclusionh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/working-with-the-department.pdf>

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/out-of-home-care/parents-with-kids-in-oohc/caseworker/chapters/case-planning-meeting>



- 4** If you feel upset or overwhelmed you can ask your support person to speak for you, or ask to take a break.
Let them know what you want to say in the meeting ahead of time so they can step in and help if you need.
- 5** **Remember what has been agreed and decided at the end of the meeting.**
This will be things you might need to do before the next meeting, and what your worker needs to do.
If you don't know - ask, or get your support person to ask.
- 6** **Ask when you will get the notes (these are sometimes called "minutes") from the meeting. If your worker can't share these with you, make sure you can take your own notes or ask if someone can help to take notes.**
These notes will help you to remember everything that was talked about. Keep these notes in a folder for your records so you can access them later.

After the meeting

- Make sure you know when the next meeting is and write this down in your diary or calendar. 
- If you have any worries or thoughts that you want to share after the meeting - talk about this with your case worker. 
- Even if you are unhappy with how the meeting went, it is best if you can share your concerns in a calm and respectful way so that your worker understands your point of view. 
- If you are still unhappy, you can ask to talk to your worker's supervisor. You can also make a complaint by calling 1300 884 706 or going to [this website](#).