

EMBEDDING COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: THE 4CS



Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) consists of four practice elements: Collaborate, Cultivate, Convene and Connect (The 4Cs of CFE). Texas CASA believes that to truly embed CFE, elements of each of The 4Cs must be consistently present throughout the program and volunteer advocacy. In 2022, an assessment was completed with nine local CASA programs who were identified as embedding CFE practice the most. Three themes emerged, as well as findings within The 4Cs. For more information, please see the full assessment report.

THEME #1

THE CASA PROGRAM UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT.

- Supervisors and volunteers clearly understand that utilizing CFE in their advocacy is important and is part of their job.
- Volunteers actively engage children and youth, and family, with CFE tools.

THEME #2

CASA PROGRAM LEADERSHIP HAS CREATED A CULTURE SUPPORTIVE OF CFE.

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IS REPRESENTED THROUGH MARKETING, RECRUITING, INTERVIEWING AND PRE-TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS.

- The Executive Director (ED) and Program Director (PD) are supportive of CFE and work to ensure that it is part of strategic planning.
- The PD understands that for CFE to be successful, supervisors must be responsible for coaching their volunteers on the CFE approach.
- The recruitment staff understand CFE and family engagement, and probe with potential volunteers their comfort level on engaging with families.
- The CASA program trains on CFE tools in pre-service training and expects volunteers to utilize them on all cases.
- CFE e-learning is utilized throughout pre-service and ongoing training.

B. CFE/FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IS INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM'S STRATEGIC PLAN, AND IN MOST CASES, THERE IS FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CFE.

THEME #3

ALL PROGRAMS HAVE A CFE-DEDICATED POSITION WHO HAS EITHER NO CASES OR A LOW CASELOAD TO SUPERVISE.

THAT ROLE MAY FOCUS ON ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- Working with supervisors and volunteers to support CFE practice, especially on difficult cases.
- Participating in pre-service training with volunteers.
- Helping facilitate family meetings to strengthen that practice.

THE 4CS OF CFE ACTIONS TO EMBEDDING



COLLABORATE:

- Strong collaboration with Child Protective Services (CPS), Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC).
- Supportive legal community that has been trained.
- Most programs participate in early CFE and work with Child Protective Investigations (CPI) (some programs are not appointed at removal).
- Team meetings are held, although they occur in many different formats.



CULTIVATE:

- CFE tools are completed with all children and youth; recorded in Optima.
- CFE tools are taught in pre-service training.
- Legal community helps to complete tools with parents.
- Connectedness Map, Circles of Trust, CFE Deck of Cards, Three Houses and genograms are the most used CFE tools; but there is a good understanding of all tools.



CONVENE:

- Strong family meeting practices are in place with CFE elements included.
- Connectedness Map and Unmet Needs Statement are included in family meetings designated CFE.
- Action plans are created, often shared in CASA court reports.
- Initial and 5th month family meetings occur consistently.



CONNECT:

- There is overall understanding of the importance of keeping children connected while they are in foster care.
- There is overall understanding and agreement on the importance of helping parents engage a network to support them.
- CASA court reports are used to record how connections are being maintained.
- There is greater focus on connections and more CFE work is done when a child is in a non-relative placement.
- Action plans/calendars are made to plan with network members.



"For children to heal, they need connections. CFE is just what we do." –CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County

"Every person who works or volunteers at this program understands that they need to try to engage with family in order to best advocate for the child." –CASA of Liberty & Chambers Counties