

Fresno County Ice Breaker Meeting Protocol

November 2006

The purpose of Ice Breakers

The Family to Family Ice Breaker meetings bring together the key parties who will be involved in the process of reuniting the family and exchange information for the benefit and support of the child. Family to Family sites nationwide report that the use of tools, such as Ice Breakers, can significantly increase reunification rates while minimizing the trauma to the child who must be placed in out of home care. As the birth parent and foster parent begin to form a positive working relationship, the child is not "split" or "placed in the middle" of two competing families, but feels a sense of continuity of care as he/she spends time with both families during the reunification period.

Ice breakers (first meeting of the "Family Team") will be conducted within the first 7-14 days of placement. At this time, the Court Investigative Workers within the Concurrent Planning Unit will schedule the meetings. The birth parents, the social worker, and the foster parents (including risk adopt foster parents, relative parents, and non-related extended family placements) attend the meeting. In some instances, it may be deemed appropriate for the child to attend. If the child is placed into a risk adopt home, then the Risk Adopt Coordinator could attend the Ice Breaker meeting as well. If the child is between the ages 0-5, then the BASYC worker may schedule the meeting, but *both* the BASYC worker and the DCFS social worker will attend the Ice Breaker meeting. The DCFS social worker will facilitate the meeting.

Logistics (Method)

The meeting shall occur at the agency. Child care will be provided by DCFS **if needed**. An office assistant within Concurrent Planning may support the social worker by making initial calls to the birth/foster families to schedule the meeting and if necessary, ensuring that child care arrangements have been made for the foster parents. The social worker will still call each party, according to the Family to Family protocol to prepare them ahead of time. The office assistant's work does not preclude the role of the social worker to prepare the families, to answer questions, and to explain the purpose and ground rules of the Ice

Breaker. The meeting should last about 20-30 minutes and the *Ice Breaker Meeting Guide* shall be used by the facilitating Case Manager to guide the meeting. After the meeting, the hard copy shall be placed into the case file under the Correspondence Tab to document that the meeting occurred. Notation of the meeting shall also be entered in the Associated Services in CWS/CMS. In addition, a brief reference of the Ice Breaker meeting can be made in the Contacts section in CWS/CMS. If, by any chance, the Concurrent Planning Social Worker gets called into Court regarding one of his/her cases at the time of the scheduled Ice Breaker, then the social worker would first ask the Court for permission to arrive to the Court a few minutes late, after the Ice Breaker. If the Court could not accommodate the social worker's request, then the Concurrent Planning Court Investigative Unit's "I" person would facilitate the Ice Breaker for the assigned social worker.

EVALUATION

After the Ice Breaker meeting, the CP OA will call the birth and foster parents and conduct a brief process evaluation with each of them (individually) over the phone. The social worker will also complete an evaluation of the meeting. All evaluations will be collected by the OA, who will track the results, and then place all hard copies in the case file.