

**DHS has adopted Conferencing and Teaming as its common, case management standard of practice. Through Conferencing and Teaming, DHS integrates services in order to promote the safety, health, wellness and self-reliance of those served.**

The principle of this common standard of practice – of assessing, planning and integrating services around the perceived needs of those served by DHS – is that *decreasing dependency and increasing personal responsibility improves outcomes.*

Conferencing and Teaming combines initial engagement, assessment and planning through a family conference, with continuous service integration through teaming. The process is designed to help an individual (often, along with family members) set and meet outcomes to strengthen self-reliance, boost health and keep safe any minor children who may be involved in the person's life.

The plan is for full implementation of Conferencing and Teaming across DHS by 2018.

#### **DHS is**

responsible for providing and administering publicly funded human services to Allegheny County residents.

#### **DHS Principles**

**All services will be:**

- High quality, comprehensive and accessible.
- Individualized and designed to be respectful of the unique cultural characteristics of each individual and/or community.
- Integrated and offered through a team approach that recognizes the capacity of individuals and families to identify their own strengths, needs and goals; create relationships and natural supports; and take steps necessary to accomplish these goals.



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[www.alleghenycounty.us/human-services/index.aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/human-services/index.aspx)

DHS funding information is available  
on the DHS website at

[www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/About.aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/About.aspx)

#### ***DHS is an Inclusive Agency***

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of a protected class including: race; color; religion; national origin; ancestry or place of birth; sex; gender identity or expression; sexual orientation; disability; marital status; familial status; age (40 and older); use of guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness or physical disability.

**DHS**

## **Conferencing & Teaming**



**Building the team**

## Conferencing

The conferencing portion of Conferencing and Teaming involves identifying, then engaging, the individual/family and their natural supports system (the team) in a planning process that identifies any significant risks and barriers to health and welfare. After that, a plan is built around ways of managing these risks and improving long-term functioning.

### Building the team

*The team consists of at least*

- The individual (or his/her caregiver/family member) who is receiving services through DHS
- a DHS-trained facilitator
- one non-household family member or natural support person

### **The role of the individual (or family)**

The individual (or family) is the core of the team. Since they are most aware of their perceived needs and outcomes, they shape the planning process. With guidance from the trained facilitator, they develop and execute the family plan, set the timing of team meetings and determine who will attend.

### **The role of the facilitator**

The Conferencing and Teaming facilitator is a critical leader in developing the family conference, forming cohesive and effective teams and empowering individuals and families to manage their services and teams; while maintaining objectivity and protecting the safety of any minor children related to the family.

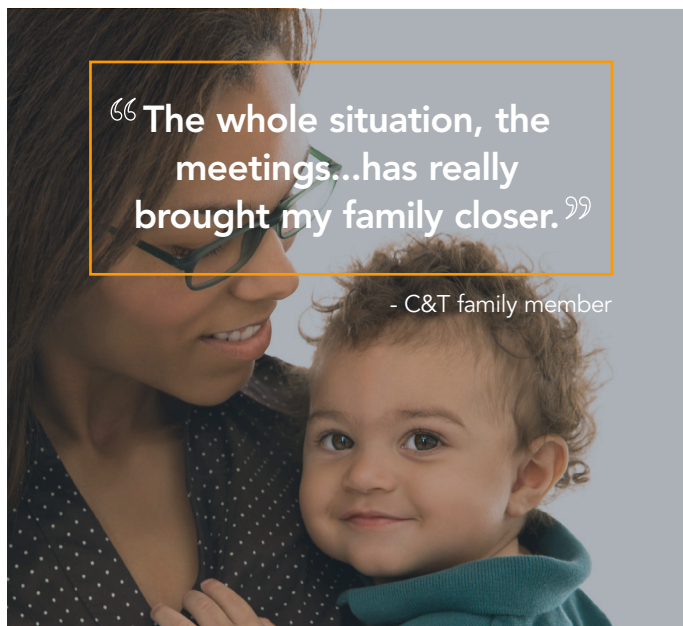
### **The role of the natural support person**

Extended family members and friends are frequently able to identify creative solutions to challenges beyond the imagination of formal systems.

### The individual/family plan

The individual/family conference leads to the formulation of a plan based on the perceived needs and outcomes of those involved.

- The plan is written in the words and language of the individual and family.
- The plan includes specific action steps, a timetable and a list of who will do what to help the individual/family reach desired outcomes.
- The execution of the plan is the responsibility of the individual and family.



## Teaming

The teaming portion of Conferencing and Teaming recognizes that as a person's situation changes, his or her plan may need to change. Therefore, the individual can call team meetings with his or her team and attending professionals to make necessary changes. In such a way, teaming fosters the ability to utilize a variety of naturally occurring resources to better cope with, adapt to and manage stresses, illnesses, challenges and traumas before and after formal/professional services end.

### Phasing professional services in and out

The professional services that are authorized by the Conferencing and Teaming team are not intended to fix the individual's or family's problems. Rather, they are sequenced and planned – based on the individual's/family's perceived needs and outcomes – to strengthen the family's self-reliance, health, and wellness so they can eventually move away from professional services. As professional services are phased out, the combination of increased self-reliance, significant behavioral changes and strong ties to natural supports help to keep the individual and family on the path of safety, health and wellness.