**What is a Decision Team Staffing (DTS)?**

A DTS is a multi-disciplinary staffing that is scheduled to enhance the assessment and analysis of risk and safety factors and determine the services and supports available to mitigate safety concerns and begin to reduce risk of future abuse or neglect. The overall goal is to safely reduce the number of children removed from their homes.

**Please note:** the acronyms DTS (Decision Team Staffing) and DTC (Decision Team Consultant) Staffing are often used interchangeably.

**What is the purpose of a Decision Team Staffing?**

The purpose of a DTS is to enhance the assessment and analysis of risk and safety factors through an expedited multidisciplinary team staffing process, to determine if a child can remain safely in their home. The overall goal is to arrive at a shared decision on the best approach to mitigate safety concerns and begin to reduce risk of future abuse or neglect by providing expedited services and assistance to vulnerable families.

**What are the different case directions considered during a Decision Team Staffing?**

Not all investigations result in the need for a DTS. The CPI requests a DTS only for cases in which they are seeking either In-home Supervision or potential Legal Action. Occasionally, based on the information shared, the team may recommend an alternative case direction, such as diversion services for the family (See below for more detailed explanation).

***In-home Supervision*** not only offers at-risk families needed services to improve the current family situation, but alsoprovideson-going case-management services through the local Case Management Agency (CMA); on average these cases remain open for 3-6 months. This is a voluntary agreement with the family and does not involve the court system, so unless additional or continued risk is identified, the family may decline the services at any time without further action being taken.

***Legal Action*** may be necessary if there is a high level of risk to the child(ren), as a result of the current allegations and/or family history of abuse, that cannot be sufficiently mitigated through service provision and/or family supports. Legal action may include shelter from one or both parents and/or current caregiver(s) or on less frequent occasions continued placement of the children in the home with Court Ordered services in place.

***Diversion Services*** are provided to at-risk families on a voluntary basis, but do not involve any form of on-going case management services through the CMA. There are a number of diversion services that may be provided to families in need including, but not limited to: mental health assessments, individual counseling, in-home paraprofessional and/or clinical services, parenting classes, substance abuse assessments and domestic violence counseling/support groups.

**Please note:** if a case is clearly appropriate for Diversion Services, it will not be staffed by the DTC.

**Can members of an outside agency request a Decision Team Staffing?**

DTS requests are made by DCF only. If you, as a provider or another agency familiar with the family, have concerns and would like to staff a case you should directly contact the CPI or FCC assigned to the family to schedule a time to discuss your concerns.

**Who is invited to a Decision Team Staffing?**

This list is not exhaustive; others can be invited if determined as appropriate. The CPI should inform the DTC, prior to the staffing, if they have particular individuals (e.g., current provider, guidance counselor) that they want to ensure be invited.

* DCF Investigations
* CMA Representative
* Children’s Legal Services
* Local Law Enforcement
* FIS (Meridian/Substance Abuse)
* DV Advocates
* Family Team Conference Coordinators
* CPT and/or CAC Representative
* School Personnel
* Service Providers

**What information should I expect to be discussed during a Decision Team Staffing?**

Prior to the staffing occurring, the DTC researches the family’s criminal, abuse and service history, as well as current allegations. They then provide this information to the team as part of the staffing process. The team discussion will also include, at a minimum: investigative information, exceptions to problem, family strengths and protective factors, family and individual level concerns, immediate case actions needed and service needs to be addressed with the family, at the Family Team Conference. The DTC will also clearly identify the team’s decision as it relates to case direction. If a case will be receiving In-home Supervision, a tentative date for the early engagement visit will also be scheduled.

Every member of the team is encouraged to participate in the process and provide any information they feel would be beneficial to the decision making process.

**What if I am unable to attend a Decision Team Staffing in person?**

A conference line is set up for all staffings so that individuals at other locations can easily participate. This number is included in the email staffing invitation. Additionally, information may be sent to the DTC, via email, prior to the staffing to be shared with the team as part of the decision making process.

**What happens after a Decision Team Staffing?**

The DTC compiles all of the information gathered during the staffing onto the Decision Team Staffing Form and shares with investigations and case management staff to become a permanent part of the case file. The information is then used as part of an on-going assessment of the family’s needs. A copy of the DTS Form may also be provided as background documentation for service referrals and also to providers that may already be involved with the family. The form is not automatically sent to all staffing participants, but may be available upon request (rules of confidentiality apply).

**Contact Information:**

Kelly Bennett, Ed.S, NCC

DTC- Alachua

352-955-2055

[kelly.bennett@pfsf.org](mailto:kelly.bennett@pfsf.org)

Stacy Merritt, MNM

DTC- Levy, Gilchrist, Dixie

352-493-6733 ext. 126

[stacy.merritt@pfsf.org](mailto:stacy.merritt@pfsf.org)

Christiam Joseph, MSW, LCSW

FSU Training Coordinator

DTC- Circuit 3

904-254-9449 (cell)

[cjoseph@fsu.edu](mailto:cjoseph@fsu.edu)

[christiam\_joseph@dcf.state.fl.us](mailto:christiam_joseph@dcf.state.fl.us)