



DCFS at Work Investing in Los Angeles County families every day

June 10, 2026 - Volume 7, Edition 6



As one of eight Child and Family Team meeting facilitators in the Palmdale Office, DCFS social worker Eve Gomez works with families to develop customized plans focused on a child's safety and well-being.

Prioritizing Safety and Well-Being, DCFS Partners with Families to Create Practical Solutions

The two fathers lived in different states, connected only by a shared history with the mother of their children. One had not seen his sons, now 12 and 13, in more than six years. The other had once helped raise the boys alongside his own 10-year-old son before his relationship with their mother ended. But recently, the mother's declining mental health made it unsafe for the three boys to remain in her care.

When the fathers joined a Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting earlier this year, the room was defined not by conflict, but by cooperation. In a single conversation, they agreed the brothers should remain together and began building the framework for a joint future.

"It was beautiful to see how they came together," said Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social worker Eve Gomez, a CFT facilitator in the Palmdale Regional Office who moderates conversations among families, their social workers and support networks. "It was really about guiding the fathers through the CFT process, helping them develop an action plan that allowed the family to come to an agreement on how to raise these boys even after DCFS is no longer involved."

CFT meetings are required statewide upon a child's entry into foster care, but may also occur at any point during the life of a case when concerns arise. The model emerged from reforms following the 2002 Katie A. lawsuit, which challenged California's mental health services for children involved in the child welfare system and prompted a shift toward more collaborative, relationship-based planning.



DCFS at Work Investing in Los Angeles County families every day

Since 2018, DCFS has expanded the use of these specialized gatherings across Los Angeles County. CFTs may include relatives, family friends, faith leaders, therapists and educators — anyone identified as part of the family's support system. To date, the department has facilitated almost 9,000 initial CFT meetings, with roughly 80% followed by additional convenings.

Preparation is central to the process. Before those involved confer, social workers help families understand what to expect and ask a pivotal question: Who is there of you?

While the safety of children remains nonnegotiable, families help shape the path forward by sharing their life experiences so everyone can better understand their circumstances and identify realistic next steps. Plans may include therapy, parenting classes, school-based services or assistance from extended family members — practical remedies that families consider helpful.

According to Dorothy Byron-Arrington, the manager of the department's Coaching and Practice Support Unit, the approach shifts the decision-making from isolated conversations to the shared insights and collaboration of the group.

"When we do it right, we have better success, truly engaged parents who leave feeling heard and supported," she said. "It's about acknowledging that they are experts on themselves."

For Eve, who has facilitated roughly 40 CFTs over the past year, those moments of alignment are what stay with her most. Months after the initial meeting, the two fathers remain committed to safely keeping their sons together, who continue living with the Los Angeles County father while the other stays connected through regular video calls, messages and planned visits.

"It's all about the children," Eve said.

"When we do it right, we have better success, truly engaged parents who leave feeling heard and supported."

—Dorothy Byron-Arrington