

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY MEETINGS

SOME CORE VALUES OF FAMILY MEETINGS	ALL FAMILIES HAVE STRENGTHS	FAMILIES ARE THE EXPERTS ON THEMSELVES	FAMILIES DESERVE TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY & RESPECT	FAMILIES CAN MAKE WELL-INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT KEEPING THEIR CHILDREN SAFE WHEN SUPPORTED	WHEN FAMILIES ARE INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING, OUTCOMES CAN IMPROVE	A TEAM OFTEN MORE CAPABLE OF CREATIVE & HIGH-QUALITY DECISION-MAKING THAN AN INDIVIDUAL
MODELS	CHARACTERISTICS SHARED BY ALL		(TDM) TEAM DECISION-MAKING	(FDGM) FAMILY GROUP DECISION-MAKING	(FTC) FAMILY TEAM CONFERENCE	
PURPOSE	To provide support to families at risk of or already involved with the child welfare system, in a strengths-based team setting which ensures child safety		To make immediate decisions regarding a child's placement.	To develop a plan that ensures protection of a child.	To develop a plan that ensures protection of a child.	
GOAL OF MEETING	To make best possible plans by using a solution –focused team approach and ensuring a family's voice is central		Team, including family, seeks consensus decision regarding placement that protects child and preserves or reunifies families.	Family, with support of others, makes a plan for child to ensure safety and stabilize current crisis	Family, using expertise and support of team members, develops plan to address needs and utilize strengths, at a variety of critical points	
DISTINCTIVE ELEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs/strengths-focused • Culturally appropriate • Individualized plans developed • Inclusive (participants w/ family input critical) • Linkages to continuing supports, both natural and traditional 		Held for EVERY placement-related decision faced by EVERY family served by the public child welfare agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private family time • Family traditions/culture emphasized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family tells the "family story" • Option to use for prevention purposes with families not yet involved with the CW system 	
DECISION RESPONSIBILITY	Goal is to place the family at the center of decision-making; ultimately the assigned social worker must approve of plans made		Agency maintains responsibility if consensus regarding placement issue cannot be achieved	Family develops plan that protects child, sharing responsibility with agency	Family determines outcome, except for identified non-negotiable issues	
SCHEDULING REQUIREMENTS	Varies...		Mandatory —meeting held before any placement or re-placement occurs, or before any initial court hearing in cases of imminent risk of removal	Voluntary —meeting is held only with family's approval and if scheduled by assigned worker or other involved person	Voluntary —meeting is held only with family's approval and if scheduled by family's assigned worker or community worker	
REFERRAL	Varies...		Assigned social worker required to schedule when placement-related decision must be made	Any professional involved with family may refer at any time	Assigned social worker, family, or other team members may refer at anytime	

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PREPARATION	Preparing the family for the meeting is both respectful and important to positive outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often limited preparation due to crisis nature of many placement decisions Assigned social worker invites and preps them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on advance planning, often 20-30 hours total, over 3-4 weeks period Coordinator invites and prepares family and others 	Assigned social worker or community worker has pre-meeting with the family to determine goal/desired outcome, and to prepare family and identify team members
TEAM MEMBERS	Birth parents and extended family, including non-relative supports as family chooses; child (as appropriate), service providers, assigned social worker, involved agency staff (i.e. supervisor) Typically CASA or GAL (not attorney)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also: neighborhood or other community partners, child's caregiver if already placed outside of family, facilitator who is deemed a team member All who attend have either the family's permission or a right to participate as "treatment team" members 	All family members are encouraged to attend, even if birth parents object	Family decided on participants with input from facilitator
FACILITATOR	Trained facilitators with strong strengths-based orientation and excellent group process skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediately accessible, full-time agency staff members (NO CASELOAD) who, as team member, shares responsibility for quality decision Same facilitator for family throughout their involvement with system (if possible) 	Impartial facilitator, often coordinator of meeting who is responsible for pre-meeting preparation	Trained agency staff, often the assigned social worker or community-based service provider
LENGTH OF MEETING	Varies...	One to two hours	Three to five hours	Varies
CONFIDENTIALITY	Privacy and respect are core values and set the tone for the meeting. New allegations of abuse/neglect must be reported	Focus on privacy—family told information may be used for case planning, or in court if necessary. USE OF FORMS IS DISCOURAGED	Signed agreement of confidentiality often used	Signed confidentiality statement used
POST MEETING RESPONSIBILITIES	Attention to post-meeting safety and emotional issues is a part of the discussion. Follow-up meetings are typical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigned social worker primarily responsible to implement decision from meeting; other participants play support role Outcome data collected and used for self evaluation 	Assigned social worker responsible for monitoring and ensure plan is implemented	Primary social worker or community person monitors individualized course of action plan and makes adjustments if necessary
USAGE	Growing! And complementary ... a continuum of family meeting types provides the opportunity for best practice and positive outcomes	TDM is a core strategy used in over 80 AECF Family to Family sites including Cleveland, Louisville, Detroit, Denver and San Francisco	Variations of FGDM in place in several hundred US sites and in Canada and Europe	Community Partnerships for Protecting Children Initiative sites including St. Louis, Jacksonville, Cedar Rapids & St. Louis

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