



FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES' INVESTIGATIONS

Expanding the Philosophy of
Family Group Decision Making

Presenter

Date

TRAINING AGENDA

- Background of Family Group Decision Making Philosophy for Texas
- Types of Family and Youth Meetings in Texas
- Define Family Team Meetings
- Family Team Meeting Processes and Stages
- Roles and Expectations for Staff
- Benefits of Family Team Meetings
- Community Partners and Family Team Meetings
- Questions and Answers

2002 TEXAS CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE REVIEW FINDINGS



- Impact of staff turnover, which “impacts staff expertise to engage families.”
- Case planning process, specifically, “families are not effectively engaged in case planning process”
- Placement instability and delays to permanency.

LEGISLATIVE OBJECTIVES

During the 80th Legislative Session in 2007, DFPS received funding for positions to meet the following objectives:

Keep Families Together by engaging families during Investigations to help prevent removal of children

- Provide family group conferences during the investigation stage of service for 12% of confirmed investigations in FY 08 and for 11% in FY 09.

To Ensure a Realistic Plan of Service and to Increase Placement with Relatives after removal

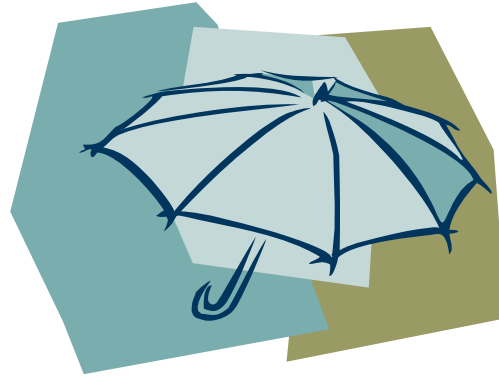
- Provide family group conferences to all families experiencing a removal.

BELIEF SHIFT PARADIGM



- Rescue the Child
 - Parents as Clients
 - Deficits/Weaknesses
 - Standardized
 - Agency Driven Decisions
 - Reacting
 - Community Consulted
 - Quantity of Services
- Empower the Family to address safety issues
 - Parents as Partners
 - Capabilities/Strengths
 - Individualized
 - Team Consensus
 - Responding
 - Community Based
 - Effectiveness of Services

Family Group Decision Making



an umbrella philosophy for Family and
Youth Involvement in Planning and
Decision Making

FAMILY and YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

The process of meaningful and maximized engagement of, and shared decision making with, families and youth in planning for the safety, permanency and well-being of children and youth.

PUTTING THE AGENCY MISSION INTO PRACTICE

AGENCY MISSION

The mission of Child Protective Services is to protect children and to act in the children's best interest. To seek active involvement of the children's parents and other family members to solve problems that lead to abuse and neglect.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The process of meaningful and maximized engagement of, and shared decision making with, families and youth in planning for the safety, permanency and well-being of children and youth.

TEXAS' FAMILY AND YOUTH INVOLVEMENT MEETINGS

- ★ Family Team Meetings (FTM)
- ★ Family Group Conferences (FGC)
- ★ Circles of Support
- ★ Permanency Conferences
- ★ Transition Planning Meetings

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCES

A process where families join with relatives and friends to develop a plan that ensures children are cared for and protected from future harm. The “family group” is vested with a high degree of decision making authority and responsibility.

Key Characteristics

- Preparation Time
- Private Family Time
- Post Removal

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

A youth-focused/driven meeting with the primary purpose of developing a transition plan for older youth from foster care to adulthood. It includes broad participation of the youth's support network

- Required for youth 16 yrs and older
- May begin as early as 14 yrs

PERMANENCY CONFERENCES

A permanency planning meeting to develop or review the permanency plan for youth, and to identify, address or resolve barriers to achieving permanency.

- Used when FTM or FGC cannot be held
- Focused on finding a permanent placement and/or relationship for a child
- Incorporates as many Family and Youth Involvement Strategies as possible

TRANSITION PLANNING MEETINGS

An alternative to COS with the purpose of developing a transition plan for older youth from foster care to adulthood. Incorporates as many Family and Youth Involvement Strategies as possible

Held after a youth reaches age 16, and annually thereafter if:

- Circle of Support is not desired by the youth or
- Is not able to be convened

FAMILY TEAM MEETING (FTM)

Designed as a **pre-removal** quick response to **child safety concerns**, and are used to achieve positive outcomes for children in the earliest stages of DFPS and family connection.

Process of engaging family, community members, and other caregivers in critical decisions related to child protection, **safety**, placement and permanence.

FTM INHERENT PRINCIPLES

Families and Youth as Experts on themselves

- Information, Expertise, Wisdom, Knowledge
- Family culture

Respect for Families and Youth

- Family centered process, inclusiveness
- Strength-based

Team as Primary Decision Makers

- Work towards consensus
- Multi-systemic intervention

FTM GUIDING VALUES

- Safety driven
- Voluntary Participation
- Adherence to social work ethics
- Grounded in best practice
- Culturally competent
- Reliance on the expertise of family members, service providers, community members and CPS staff
- Belief that protective parents and other family members want their children to be safe; and that they will work effectively in a supportive environment to ensure that safety.

FTM: STRENGTH BASED

- Focused discussion on the strengths of the family
- Family strengths are explored first as a means of addressing needs
- Family strengths and needs are recorded on the plan, which follows the family to court, if needed, and establishes the family as competent
- Children are a source of strength for families and the barometer by which CPS measures the effectiveness of its interventions. As such, children should be included in case planning as appropriate for age and mental abilities

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN FTM:

Per Policy, Children and Youth will be in attendance at Family Team Meetings but attendance is never forced.

Participation can be:

- In person
- By telephone
- In writing
- By representative

FTM STAGES

- **Welcome & Introductions**
- **Identify the Situation**
 - Precipitating Event
- **Assess the Situation**
 - Strengths/History/Safety and Risk
- **Create the Plan**
- **Closing**
 - Plan copies available to participants



GOAL OF FTM

CONSENSUS

- Participants agree that the Child will be safe in the placement decision, even though it might not be the placement each individual participant preferred.
- Every participant feels that he/she has had the opportunity to present information and/or perspective.

FAMILY PRIVATE TIME WITH FTMS:

Family time is considered a tool that can be used within the FTM framework.

- As needed and appropriate for the individual family
- It can be offered anytime in the agenda that it is deemed appropriate
- Facilitator or the family determines need

EXPECTATIONS OF AN FTM FACILITATOR

Assure that the purpose of the FTM meeting is understood and all participants have an opportunity to be involved in a safe, and supportive environment.

Assure that the situation is thoroughly examined, risks stated, family strengths recognized, goals verbalized, ideas brainstormed, quality decisions made with **safety foremost**, and action plans developed-to reach a decision

Strive to develop a consensus decision with all participants, but always with agency staff in attendance.

EXPECTATIONS OF SUPERVISOR

Discuss with staff the agency's commitment to the Family Group Decision Making Philosophy and its application to day-to-day activities

- Children do best in strong families
- Families can become strong when they have the support of their communities
- CPS can do its job better when we partner with families and communities

EXPECTATIONS OF SUPERVISOR

Attendance of Supervisor or Designee is mandatory

If the supervisor is unable to attend:

- the supervisor should designate who will attend in his/her place
- The person attending should have the ability to make case and placement decisions

ROLES OF INVESTIGATIVE STAFF

- Understand Referral Criteria
- Present option of FTM to families who meet referral criteria
- Complete referral for FTM
- Prepare for FTM meeting
- Fully participate and be willing to explore options within the FTM
- IMPACT documentation

REFERRAL CRITERIA

FTM

- Imminent removal
- Voluntary placement
- Pending non-emergency removals
- Multiple referral indicator in IMPACT
- Professional determination (cases outside the basic statewide referral criteria)
- Program Director approval necessary on cases involving domestic violence or sexual abuse

FGC

If a child has been legally removed from their parent, a referral must be made for an FGC. Investigators should follow regional policy in making this referral.

BENEFITS OF FTM

- Involves and gives a Voice to Family; Youth; Caregivers; Providers; Community
- Increases consistency and accountability when placement is considered
- Shared responsibility/supports caseworker
- Develops understanding, engages, builds positive relationships;
- Increases ownership, commitment and support
- Assists in efficient service delivery
- Improves cooperation, communication, and teamwork
- Encourages creativity...energizes
- Demonstrates Agency's Values Of Protection And Partnering

COMMUNITY PARTNERS at FTMs

- Community partners often support the same children and families as CPS; inclusion in the FTM will maximize support to increase better outcomes for those families
- Community Partners encompass an understanding of the neighborhood from which the children come
- Community Partners at FTMs increases resources available to children and families experiencing crisis
- Community Partners in FTMs assist in increasing engagement and trust of CPS' intent to assist the family

COMMUNITY PARTNERS ROLE in FTMs

- Serve as a natural ally for birth parents
- Represents the family's community and helps agency staff to understand the family's community
- Assists the family in understanding CPS' role and the agency's concern
- Offers educational and resource information to CPS and the family even when unfamiliar with the family prior to the FTM