

## **Family Group Meeting/ Conferencing Process**

### **THE REFERRAL**

There is agreement between family members and staff from an organisation that a plan needs to be made for a child or young person.

An independent facilitator is appointed to work with the family to set up the meeting.

### **PREPARATION**

The facilitator, in conjunction with subject of meeting (child/young person/vulnerable adult) and immediate carers, identifies the family network, which can include close friends.

The facilitator or subject of meeting sends out invitations and agrees on a venue, date and time for the meeting.

Family members and friends invited to the meeting will be contacted by the facilitator who will let them know what the meeting is about and discuss any worries or concerns they may have.

### **THE MEETING**

#### **a) Information sharing**

Workers from service provider agencies give the family the information they have about the young person and about services, resources and support that may be available. The facilitator chairs this part of the meeting.

#### **b) Private family time**

Workers, professionals and the facilitator are not present during this part. The family members have time to talk among themselves and come up with a plan that addresses the concerns raised by the staff in Part 1.

#### **c) Agreeing on the plan**

The facilitator and workers/professionals re-join the family to hear the family's plan. Any services or support from the agencies needed to make the plan work are discussed. The plan should be agreed on by agencies unless it places the child or young person at risk of significant harm. Everybody decides how they will check if the plan is working and what they will do if it is not working.

### **REVIEWING THE PLAN**

A review FGM/C or other meeting is often arranged to review how the plan is working and make new plans if necessary.

## Preparation

### **Contact referrer**

See referral form

### **Contact family**

Contact nuclear family. – Do they know you'll be calling?

Arrange visit

Ask for their story

Explain FGM/C

Get agreement to participate

Identify other family members

Agree on invitation list

Answer questions

### **Contact wider family**

Explain process

Secure their attendance

What potential problems do you foresee?

Does everyone understand the focus?

Who needs a support person?

### **Prepare agency staff**

Sometimes the most difficult part - Will the information sharers:

Be clear, honest and respectful?

Make a clear statement of the concern(s)

Clearly indicate available resources

Allow time for questions

Refrain from sharing ideas/ solutions

### **Arrange location**

Convenient

Available all day

Free from disruption

Neutral

### **Arrange Transport**

If needed

### **Organise food**

With family

## What to cover in initial meeting

Listen - Let them tell stories if they choose

Purpose of FGM/C in general and specifically for this case

Who referred the FGM/C

Importance of their involvement - try to be as inclusive as possible

The wider the network the better

This is who I have so far. is there anyone missing...do you have contact info on.....

The Process

3 stages of FGM/C

Professionals and family together

Family private time

Present plan

Bottom Line of Referral Source

Responsibilities of participants in process during and after the meeting

Encourage them to think about what they want to say. Be there, share thoughts and concerns

Be clear that this is not a time to resolve old family conflicts or air family secrets. The purpose is to discuss what is best for the child. If appropriate ask if there is anything that the family needs to put aside or needs to take care of before the conference.

Ask the family to start thinking about what issues might be brought up and how they feel. And how will others feel about what you have to say

Assess if there are any safety concerns for the family

Is there a support person necessary for this participant?

Has this person been asked to be a support person?

How would the family like to begin the conference?

What kind of food would the family like? How will that happen?

What dates, times and location would work? – Don't be too general.

## Handling Difficulties

An FGM/C is being held to consider plans for Bobby, who is six, after his father, Brian, assaulted him. The police were contacted and Brian was charged. He is on bail and staying at a friend's house. Because of the assault, Brian was not permitted to attend the FGM/C. Consider the following scenarios:

- Brian's brother starts verbally attacking Bobby's mother during the introductions and continues to be rude and aggressive throughout information sharing.
- Bobby runs out of the private part of the conference, very upset and refuses to re-join the conference.
- The family cannot reach a plan with which they all agree, but they are able to identify three possible options – they just disagree about which one is best for Bobby.
- The professional team does not agree with the plan because they believe it puts Bobby at risk.

## FGM/C Facilitator Checklist

- Have you met with the referring organisation worker?
- Have you invited everyone that should be present?
- Do you have a consent form signed?
- Have you prepared the support person?
- Have you spoke with all potential participants?
- Have you met with all involved professionals?
- Do participants understand the purpose and process of the meeting/conference?
- Does the family know what information the worker is presenting?
- Is the date, time and location secured with all parties?
- Do you know everyone who is attending?
- Have you secured a suitable site that will be large enough and free from disturbances?
- Does there need to be any transport arrangements?
- Is childcare needed?
- Has an invitation/confirmation been sent out?
- How is the food being provided?
- How is the meeting being started?
- Do you know where the potential alliances and conflicts will be?
- Have you addressed any areas of concern and helped participants get what they need to feel secure at the meeting.

At conference be sure to have,

- Flipchart Paper, Easel and Marker Pens
- Evaluation forms
- Pens
- Tables for food
- Coffee and Tea plus milk, sugar