

NRCFCPP Concurrent Permanency Planning Curriculum

Module 5: *Using Family Meetings to Expedite Concurrent Planning*



Using Family Meetings to Expedite Concurrent Planning

Session at a Glance (2hours)

Review/Preview *10 minutes*
Dave Thomas Tape *20 minutes*
Purpose and Stages of Family Meetings *30 minutes*
Concerns *20 minutes*
Conflict Management Discussion *20 minutes*
Wrap Up *20 minutes*

Objectives:

- Discuss the role and benefits of holding meetings with families to address safety, permanency and developmental well-being
- Discuss emerging issues and concerns about holding meetings with families
- Plan for and use conflict management strategies
- Apply family meeting values, knowledge and skills in role play situations that are representative of their child welfare practice

Time *2 hours*

Overhead, handouts and other materials

Session Materials:

Easel, flip chart, markers, tape

Handouts and Overheads

Handout 5.1 Underlying Beliefs Guiding Family Meetings
Handout 5.2 Phases of Family Meetings
Handout 5.3 Family Meetings: Emerging Considerations
Handout 5.4 Family Meetings: Pre-Planning
Handout 5.5 Family Meetings: Stages
Handout 5.6 Family Meeting Checklist

Review/Preview

Welcome back the group. Comment that we have spent a good deal of time reviewing the family-centered framework for Concurrent Planning – why it is needed, what it involves, and how to do it respectfully with vulnerable families. This portion of the

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training will focus more on how it is done in the context of good social work practice with families.

Remind the group that Concurrent Planning is a way of thinking critically about the options that are possible in the present and future, based on what we know through our assessments about the present and the past. It is best facilitated through the engagement strategies of respect, genuineness, empathy and full disclosure – strategies we have reviewed and practiced in our last session.

Explain that we now want to move on to planning with families for the safety, permanency and developmental well being of the children. More and more today, innovative ways of working with families to achieve more timely case planning and decision-making about where their children will grow up is done through non-adversarial family conferencing and mediation techniques – strategies that are involved in the family-to-family approach and the community-based initiatives we see across the country.

Introduce and then show the Dave Thomas Foundation video on Pathways to Permanency, which highlights how these non-adversarial strategies have been used.

After the video, ask for comments.

Using Family Meetings to Expedite Permanency Planning–Guiding Beliefs

Move on to discuss the values and beliefs that drive the use of family meetings to address safety, permanency and well-being issues.

Ask what they group thinks these values and beliefs would be. Put on flip chart and supplement with **Handout 5.1**.

Underlying Beliefs Guiding Family Meetings

- Respect for the integrity of the family unit and extended family
- Respect for diverse cultures and the ability to maximize cultural competence
- Children need continuity in their family relationships for their healthy growth and development
- Best outcomes for children come from the sharing of power between the state and family
- Opportunities for parents to feel responsible for their children and themselves
- Crisis as opportunity and motivator for change
- Families have strengths that can be tapped to make positive changes
- People can change with the right education and support

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Comment that there is great consistency here with the values that we've reviewed so far that drive family-centered and strengths-based practice and the process of full disclosure.

Family Meetings: Phases

Then explain that meetings with families can take many shapes and forms – case conferences, service plan reviews, home visits, and more recently with more formal Family Group Decision-Making Meetings (emerging from New Zealand) and Family Unity Meetings (emerging from Oregon). These formal models include time for the families to meet with agency representatives and the New Zealand model allows time for the family to meet alone – to come up with a suggested plan for how to keep the children safe and in stable living arrangements.

Explain that whatever form our meetings take with families, meetings have predictable phases that are involved. List contents of **Handout 5.2** on flip chart.

Phases of Family Meetings

- Pre-Planning Activities
- Beginnings
- Middles
- Endings
- Post-Meeting Activities

Family Meetings: Emerging Considerations

Ask the group what some of their initial concerns/considerations are about holding family meetings and list on flip chart. Using **Handout 5.3** supplement their discussion.

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Family Meetings: Emerging Considerations

- How is a ‘family meeting’ defined?
- What are the varying purposes of family meetings?
- When in the life of the case should family meetings be held?
- Who will facilitate the family meetings?
- Who should attend?
- Where should family meetings be held?
- How will confidentiality be protected?
- How will self-determination be promoted?
- What should the role of the caseworker and supervisor be?

THIS SECTION COULD BE DONE BEFORE OR AFTER LUNCH

Family Meetings: Pre-Planning

Comment that the most important phase of the Family Meeting is the Pre-Planning activities that are needed. Even if you are going to make a home visit and you find that you are having a “family meeting” as the opportunity presents itself, you will need to step back and figure out what it is you want to do and how you want to accomplish it. Review the following pre-planning activities that are commonly involved. Ask what else the participants have done to prepare for meetings with families?

Family Meetings: Pre-Planning

- Concern about immediate safety of the child
- Obtaining consent for the meeting from birth parents
- Defining the family
- Explaining the purpose and the process
- Inviting family members and service providers
- Involving offenders and children (preparing statements in advance)
- Soliciting the views of those not attending
- Defining and clarifying participants’ roles
- Coordinating the logistics (date, time, space, transportation, food, supervision of children, etc.)

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Family Meetings: Stages

Then review the beginning, middles and ending stages of holding the family meetings found in **Handout 5.5:**

Family Meetings: Stages

Beginnings: *Introductions*

- Culturally relevant welcome (prayer, song, poem, silence)
- Reiteration of purpose and process
- Introduction of participants and their relationship to child
- Ground rules
- Agreement on the goal of conference
- Review of participants' role

Middles: *Information Sharing and Conflict Management*

- Case social worker reviews/presents facts of the case – others share related information
- Focus on: Where are we? How did we get here? What are the strengths? What are the barriers to safety, permanency and well-being? What will happen next? When?
- Family members react and ask questions on what has been presented
- Family may meet alone to develop plan that protects/safeguards child, addresses placement/permanency options or options are reviewed together

Endings: *Reaching a Decision*

- Options and plans are outlined with family, agency and service providers' reactions and input
- Details get specified: tasks/activities, timeframes and consequences
- Resources are planned and supported
- Follow-up activities are agreed to

Family Meetings – Concerns

Ask the participants what their one concern is about holding/participating in meetings with families – and place these concerns on the flip chart – making sure to address them throughout the remaining discussions on Family Meetings. Expect that participants will be concerned about how to handle conflicts that emerge – about the original reasons for intervention, who did what, who would best care for the child (ren), timeframes for the work, how parents have disappointed their children and family members.

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Family Meetings: Conflict Management

Discuss conflict management strategies that work best for participants – asking them to break into groups of 6 to share the ways in which they handle conflicts. Ask them to put on flip charts and share with the larger group after 15 minutes. Ask if there are any other strategies that seem to be left out.

Then ask the same groups of 6-7 to reconvene and take the case of Teresa once again. They are going to hold a family meeting to discuss the planning that will be needed with Teresa for Tanya. Assign each group one of the following scenarios:

Scenario Options:

- 10 months after placement: Teresa has a relapse, disappears for a month and has returned; and the foster mother doesn't want to adopt.
- 10 months after placement: Teresa continues to make progress and doesn't relapse; the foster mother is not interested in adoption.

Then ask the groups to begin to plan for the Family Meeting to address the next steps with Teresa, any of her family members you'd want to include, or others from the family network or community who ought to be involved. Ask them to assume the roles of:

- Caseworker
- Supervisor
- Teresa
- Family Members of their choice
- Foster Mother

Ask the groups to consider the following Anticipatory Planning Questions, and to identify others they might want to ask themselves to prepare for the meeting:

- What would be the purpose of the Family Meeting with Teresa?
- What permanency issues would the caseworker want to have addressed and why?
- What outcomes could emerge?
- Who should be there?
- What could the anticipated conflicts be?
- How will you handle conflicts that emerge?

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Allow the groups about 20 minutes to hold their family meetings. Then review the experiences each group had, asking first about Scenario 1 and then Scenario 2:

- Who attended the meetings?
- What was the purpose of each meeting?
- What issues were addressed?
- What issues were resolved and how?
- What next steps emerged?

Then ask:

- How did those who played Teresa feel? Did they feel respected? Was the worker genuine and empathic? Did they feel that the issues raised were realistic? Were problems and options shared in a helpful way?
- How did those who played the worker feel? Was it hard to share strengths and concerns? What was most difficult?
- How did others in the group feel? Did the process feel respectful, useful, and productive? Did people feel included? Were they pleased with the outcome that emerged?

Ask for general comments. And thank the groups for their hard and creative work.

Acknowledge that Teresa needs help to consider what she can realistically do. That in the real case – which came from Florida – Teresa did work with the agency to voluntarily relinquish her parental rights and Tanya was placed with a paternal aunt, as the foster mother was not interested in adoption. Teresa was able to have contacts with Tanya, as was the former foster mother, maintaining continuity in those relationships and minimizing the trauma of Tanya’s move.

Again thank participants for their involvement in practicing holding a family meeting. And let them know that after a break, they will review how to develop and document a case plan that addresses the concurrent planning activities that are needed.

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Checklist for Family Meetings

(Adapted from materials developed by Dee Unterbach for NRCFCPP)

<p>Need for Conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review case history <input type="checkbox"/> Review reason for referral/cause for Allegations <input type="checkbox"/> Determine purpose or goals for holding family meeting 	<p>Purpose (Goals)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review goals with family <input type="checkbox"/> Allow for reactions or expression of feeling <input type="checkbox"/> Elicit family input to plan of action 	<p>Composition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Who should be involved? <input type="checkbox"/> How is “family” defined? <input type="checkbox"/> Which other formal or informal supports should be there?
<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Where will meeting be held? <input type="checkbox"/> When and how often in the life of the case will the meeting be held? <input type="checkbox"/> What time of day? <input type="checkbox"/> How much time will be needed? <input type="checkbox"/> What are the transportation needs? <input type="checkbox"/> What other logistics should be considered: i.e. food, cultural traditions? 	<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What should content of agenda be? <input type="checkbox"/> Who will facilitate? <input type="checkbox"/> How should meeting be introduced? <input type="checkbox"/> What are the key issues that need to be addressed? <input type="checkbox"/> What are contingency plans for when conflict arises, for case planning and for permanency options? 	<p>Pre-Meeting Contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have all facts been compiled? <input type="checkbox"/> Have all relevant participants been contacted and prepared for what to expect? <input type="checkbox"/> Child, if age appropriate? <input type="checkbox"/> Parents? <input type="checkbox"/> Foster parents or other caregivers? <input type="checkbox"/> Other family members? <input type="checkbox"/> Other collateral parties?

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