Expanding FEC Within Our Community

"Uniting families, strengthening communities, and keeping children safe"

In Hennepin County, Minnesota
Family Group Conferencing

- Phase Three: Presentation of the Plan
- Phase Two: Family Alone Time
- Phase One: Information Sharing

How does FCG Work?

- Community Based
- Culturally Relevant
- Strengths Based
- Family Centered
Hennepin County Community

Population: Just over 1 million

- Large central city—Minneapolis
- Surrounding suburbs

County-operated, state-administered child protection organization
Racial Composition of Children Age 0 to 17

Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis, 2000

Hennepin County

Minneapolis

White

Black/African American

Asian or Pacific Islander

Two or More Races

American Indian

Other

Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (any race) = 11.0%

Total Minneapolis children = 84,169

Total county childen = 267,502

69.3% White

14.0% Black/African American

10.8% Asian or Pacific Islander

9.3% Two or More Races

3.5% American Indian

5.8% Other

6.9% Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (any race) = 5.7%

Total Hennepin County children = 267,502
Designing a FGC Program

- Visionary
- Stakeholders
- Steering Committees
- Agency-wide Training
- Implementation of the Pilot
### Recommendations for the Pilot Project:

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**Recommendations:**

- Establish a steering committee that will draft plans, policies, and procedures compared to the typical CP process.
- Conduct an outcome evaluation to see the effects of FGC.
- Conduct an outcome evaluation by community members and agencies.
- Hire a supervisor to assist the FGC coordinators.
- Inform families of the FGC option during the referral process.
- Extend FGC to include families that are not yet in the court or petition stage.
- Extend the use of FGC beyond Child Protection.
Decision Making (SDM) categories
Severity level of most current substantiated maltreatment--using Structured

Number of families referred for a FGC
Number of families completing a FGC
Number of families completing a follow up FGC
Number of families referred for a FGC

CGA SD CP cases, who were invited to participate in
Race, ethnicity, and age of parent(s) participating in FGC compared to all

Age range of children that are the subject of a FGC
Providers (CP worker, guardianship worker, etc.) participating in each FGC
Number and type of family members and number and type of service

Number of children invited to each FGC
Number and average number of family members and service providers
Number and average number of children participating in each FGC

Process Indicators

Evaluation Design
Evaluation Design Continued

- Stage Three: Plan Presented
- Stage Two: Conference Completed
- Stage One: Conference Sceduled

Number of cases at each stage:

- Number of parents „parental rights
- Number of percentage of children who experience a termination of
- Legal Custody
- Number of percentage of children who experience a Transfer of
- Number of percentage of children reunified with their families
- Number of percentage of children that have implemented their family plan at case
- Number of cases closed and closing reason/disposition:
  - Abuse, etc.
  - Presiding issues of parent(s) (domestic abuse, child abuse, chemical abuse, etc.)

9/12/02
• Number of substantiated abuse/neglect up to 18 months after the case is closed

• Number of substantiated maltreatment reports following the initial
  Permanency Court Order

• Number of days between the most recent CP case opening and the date of
  FGC or inclusion in comparison group

• Number of continuous placements after the initial placement that led to the
  (and any subsequent out-of-home placements)

• Number and costs of the days in out-of-home placement (both the initial
  and on writing case plans)

• Allocation of time spent by community facilitators on coordination/facilitation
  and what way service plans were modified

• Summary of the most frequent reasons for service plan rejection and in
  Number of service plans approved by the Court at initial presentation

Evaluation Design Continued
Evaluation Design Continued

• Extent of completion of family/permanency plans at case closing
• Content comparison of family/permanency plans
  initial substantiated abuse/neglect
• Severity level—as measured by SDM (above) as compared to the
Engaging the Community

• Pilot to Program plus TLRG Grant
• Hennepin County Model
• Customized to the family’s culture
• Family driven, voluntary, culturally sensitive
• Recruit diverse facilitators among community agencies
• Expanding definition of community
Co-Facilitation Model

Hennepin County’s

to co-facilitate conferences

- 14 community agencies under contract
- 1 county supervisor
- 1 case management assistant
- 7 county social workers
Criteria for Participation in HC Family Group Conferencing (FGC)

- Parent is willing to participate and sign consent
- Parent has a support network
- Referral is made by conferring parties which could include a social worker, judge or a tribal representative or others
Parent Not Available

Coordination: review process
• identify kin and support network
• determine arrangements
• consider cultural and special needs

Arrange meeting logistics: site, food selection, lodging, transportation, payments

Contact family member and service providers: via phone or letter, invitations sent

Family Group Conference
Screen for FGC based on content of referral
Referrals to FGC: Court, CFS Staff, Tribal Representative, or other

Assign primary coordinator

Assign primary coordinator

Pre-conference consultation with service providers
• consider cultural and special needs
• determine arrangements
• identify kin and support network

Pre-conference consultation with parents

Notify CPS worker and other identified participants

Obtain court order

Follow-up FGC

Complete and distribution of Service Plan to CFS case manager and others

Pre-conference consultation with service providers

Pre-conference consultation with parents

FGC coordinator sends report to CFS case manager if unable to proceed with FGC

Intake completed with primary agency staff
• potential dates for FGC identified

Inquire completed with primary agency staff

Screen for FGC based on content of referral

Referrals to FGC: Court, CFS Staff, Tribal Representative, or other

Referred to FGC

Credit: CPS Staff, Tribal Representative, or other

Parent Not Available

Service Providers consultation with Pre-conference
Identifying Components That Work

- Acknowledging the power of the family
- Recognizing and utilizing evaluation results
- Expanding definition of community
- Allocation of funds and resources
- Ongoing support from administration
- Providing to maintain diversity of facilitators
- Active recruitment of agency staff and community
- Ongoing training of staff
- Ongoing outreach to community
- Respecting family culture
- Cooperative co-facilitation with community
- Flexible, adaptive, spontaneous coordination
- Maintaining a voluntary, family-driven model

Maintaining a voluntary, family-driven model

Identifying Components That Work
FGC Advisory Committee

Membership/Representation

• Judges
• County Attorneys
• Public Defenders
• ICWA Law Center

• Hennepin County Administrators
• Hennepin County Social Workers
• Developmental Disabilities
• Child Protection
• Long Term Foster Care

Community Partners
• African American Family Services
• BIHA
• Confederation of Somali Community
• Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
• Reuben Lindh
• Minneapolis American Indian Center
• St. David’s
• Genesis II for Women
• Centro Cultural Chicano
• CLUES
• Legal Rights Center
• Tubman Family Alliance
• Prevention Alliance

Three Subcommittees
• Operations
• Service Effectiveness
• Resource Development/Future Directions
FCC Families vs. Traditional Child Protection Families

Client Descriptors

2001
Race of children in out of home placement

Race of children served in FGC

African-American: 47.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander: 2.7%
Caucasian: 23.4%
Native American: 12.7%
Unknown: 14.1%

Race
Families Referred to FGC by HC Program Area

Approximately 17% of ICWA cases opened were referred to FGC.

5% of Upfront cases, and 18% of CP Permanency cases, and 17% of ICWA cases opened were referred to FGC.

Referrals

Conferences Completed

Other
Permanency
Upfront
ICWA

0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
Cases using FGC vs. all CP cases opened in the Department of Risk Levels

SDM Risk Levels
Family Child Protection Issues Identified

- Physical abuse: 20%
- Sexual abuse: 17%
- Neglect: 64%
- Failure to protect: 31%
- Emotional abuse: 6%
Other Family Issues Identified

As determined by the Child Protection case manager

Chem Abuse 70%
Dom Abuse 33%
Outcome Data

Families using FGC versus families not using FGC
Program Details

- 215 conferences held since the inception of the program (2/05/00 - 6/30/02)---approx. 8 conferences per month
- 11 families have had 1 or more follow up conferences
- Average number of children per family is 2 (range from 1-7)
- Average time spent by agency facilitators in 2002:
  - Coordination: 15.50 Hours
  - Facilitation: 6.08 Hours
  - Writing case plans: 6.66 Hours
- 11 families have had 1 or more follow up conferences
- 215 conferences held since the inception of the program (2/05/00 - 6/30/02) ---approx. 8 conferences per month

**Program Details**
TPR Determination

2001 cases

Court Ordered

Voluntary

FGC

All CP

13% 20% 87%

80%
Feedback from Families

Results of 40 Post-Conference Satisfaction Surveys

Families

48% said, overall, the Family Group Conference was a positive, productive experience for their family

82% said they had a good idea what the conference would be like beforehand and felt prepared for it

97% said they were given adequate information beforehand about the purpose of the conference and their role

96% said they would recommend Family Group Conferencing to their colleagues

Service Providers

93% said the conference helped them better understand the family’s situation and dynamics

92% said they were satisfied with the service plan that was developed

98% said they were treated with respect during the conference

96% said they would recommend Family Group Conferencing to their colleagues

97% said they were given adequate information beforehand about the purpose of the conference and their role

Families

48% said, overall, the Family Group Conference was a positive, productive experience for their family
Results of 73 Follow-up Satisfaction Phone Surveys

Feedback from Families

Seventy-three percent of participants said the conference was somewhat to very helpful.

- Ninety percent of family plans were totally or partially implemented.

- Frequently the plan changed or a back-up plan was implemented.
- The children during the FGCs were followed through in more cases than not; however, very.

- Seventy-three percent of participants said the conference was somewhat to very helpful.

- When asked, "In what ways was the conference helpful?" They responded,
  - It brought the family physically together and emotionally closer.
  - Unexpected support was received.
  - It was a comfortable environment where participants were treated respectfully and listened to.
  - Families felt their input in the plan for the children.
  - Clear.
  - Much valuable information was shared.
  - There was a feeling of cooperation and agreement to the plan.
  - Expectations were.
  - Better communication between family members.

(4-16 months after conference)
Feedback from Community Facilitators

What has worked well in the facilitation process?
• Shadowing
• Teaming with County staff
• Giving the “power” of decision making to families
• Coordination of meetings by community facilitators

What has not worked well?
• Time commitment of facilitating is an “add-on”
• We’re not always “in the loop” on all of the family’s issues
• If we’re unsure if something is ok, we need to ask
• By continuing to have community facilitators at the conferences

How can we ensure that a family’s culture is being represented during a conference?

What do community facilitators add to the experience for families?
• Increase family comfort level
• Empower families

What has not worked well?
• Coordination of meetings by community facilitators
• Giving the “power” of decision making to families
• Teaming with County staff
• Shadowing

How can we ensure that a family’s culture is being represented during a conference?
• By continuing to have community facilitators at the conferences
Benefits of Family Group Conferencing:

- Allows us to involve relatives who are interested in the children
- Helps a family understand what is going on, and, if reunification isn't possible, to understand why
- Offers a family the opportunity to self-assess
- Empowers families in placement of the children
- Helps a family make alternative plans if reunification isn't possible
- More relatives are contacted through the FGC process than we knew about from the department’s kinship search

Feedback from Social Workers:
Feedback from Social Workers

Barriers in Family Group Conferencing:

Cases aren't being referred to FGC early enough

Some parents are hesitant to participate because they don't want to signal to Court that they aren't interested in reunification

Writing service plans can be intimidating for some families

Judges are ordering FGC unilaterally. FGC doesn't work for everybody.

Information presented at FGC can be overwhelming and confusing to children that are present.

Social workers sometimes feel under-prepared for the conference and need more coaching on their presentation and role.

Writing service plans can be intimidating for some families.
Feedback from County Attorneys

(\(n = 13\); results are from a study performed on 12/03/2001)

- Feedback was obtained from 13 county attorneys who have worked with families involved in FC processes.

- Forty-six percent stated that they have worked with families who have participated in FC processes.

- Eight-five percent stated that families who do not have the resources that are unrealistic or plans that do not address problems are a concern.

- A concern that the third phase of a conference is hurried which could result in incomplete recommendations.

- A need to help families understand case planning versus court processes.

- Concern about referrals being made for FC cases with families who do not have the resources.

- "Recycling" refers to the practice of referring families who have previously participated in FC processes.

Additional Concerns:

- Fifty-four percent feel that the family is easier to work with.

- Twenty-three percent feel that there is more follow-through on case plans compared to traditional cases.

- Twenty-three percent feel that there is less court-time involved with the case.

- Thirty-one percent feel that FC case plans are written in a more complete manner.

- FCG, their responses were:

  When asked what differences they had seen in families who have participated in a FC:

  - Eighty-five percent stated that they have worked with families who have participated in a FC.

  - Fourty-six percent stated that they have worked with families who have participated in a FC.

  - Eighty-five percent stated that they have worked with families who have participated in a FC.

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Social Workers tend to act like they are tolerating the FGC process and not interacting with it. Social Workers need to initiate the FGC process more often. It's a really good program.

Additional Concerns:

- Eighty-two percent stated that they have worked with families who have participated in a FGC.
- Seventy-three percent stated that they believe it is beneficial for families to participate in a FGC. More training is needed about the permanency options at the conference.
- Forty-five percent feel that there is less court-time involved with the case compared to traditional cases.
- Eighty-two percent feel that FGC case plans are written in a more complete manner.
- Eighty-two percent feel that the Family is easier to work with.

When asked what differences they had seen in families who have participated in a FGC, their responses were:

- When working with families in a FGC, Children, Family, and Adult Services Department they do consider referring them for FGC.
- Seventy-three percent stated that when working with families involved with the FGC, they do consider referring them for FGC.

Eighty-two percent stated that they have worked with families who have participated in a study performed on 1/14/2002 (n = 111). Results are from a study performed on 1/14/2002. 

Defenders/Dispo Advisors

Feedback From Public
Expanding FGC in the Future Through...
Thank You!

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Thank You!