


Family Group Decision Making: A Culturally Responsive Child Welfare Practice?

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Introductions



Historical Timeline


- 1989: New Zealand legislates the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, which introduced the family group conference (FGC). The FGC process:
 - originates from indigenous ways of decision making.
 - addresses disproportionality,
 - changes oppressive casework practice,
 - recognizes family as its own best expert.
- 1991: FGDM and other models hit the US shores
- 1995-2005: Great expansion in North America, Europe
- 2008: FGDM further defined
- 2008: FGDM grants program in the Fostering Connections legislation
- 2010: Implementation: Starts and stops




Terminology

Family Involvement and Decision Making Models:

- Family Group Conference or FGC (New Zealand, 1989)
- Family Unity Meeting Model or FUM (Oregon, 1990)
- Family Team Conferencing (FTC) as developed by the Child Welfare Practice and Policy Group
- Team Decision Making (TDM)
- Family Team Meetings (FTM)
- Rapid Case Planning Conference
- Hybrid Models that combine FGC, FTC, FUM, and other models



Six Core Elements of FGDM



1. An independent Coordinator
2. Family group as key decision making partner—resources put towards finding and preparing
3. Private family time
4. When plan meets agency concerns, preference to the plan developed by the family
5. Services and resources available to meet agreed upon plans
6. Follow up activities occur until outcome is achieved

The National Center on Family Group Decision Making (2008; revised in 2013)

Mother, After the FGC

It made a huge difference 'cause when all these people walked in, the people from [child protection] were there and then the lawyers and there were just so many people, and when I walked in I was feeling a little intimidated cause I felt outnumbered. And then all my friends and family showed up and then they were probably feeling outnumbered.

Lens #1: An evidence-informed promising practice

Lens #2: Rights Based Perspective

Extended Family/Social Network

This [FGC] is a great concept. The State takes children away from entire families and not just [from the] parents. [Experienced non-relative foster parent after her first FGDM for one of her foster children.

When you think about it, why wouldn't extended family and friends be included in planning for a family? [Experienced social worker after her first FGDM.


Lens #3: Social Capital and Democracy Building

Some other outcomes: Do they matter?


- Family satisfaction
 - Conflict decreased
 - Empowerment increased
 - Listened to/Respected
- Worker satisfaction
 - Belief in safety outcomes and the wider circle
- Having a say
 - Child and youth input
 - Paternal input
- Connections
 - Mobilized family network
 - Re-knitting family connections
- Less formal proceedings
- Services—faster and tied to needs

The Coordinator


The Act of Defining

A black and white photograph showing several hands of different skin tones reaching up to hold a white cup together in a circle. The hands are positioned around the cup, with some fingers wrapped around it, symbolizing collective effort and definition.

Location, location, location

A black and white photograph of a street map with several pushpins of various colors (red, blue, green) placed on different locations. The pushpins are scattered across the map, representing various points of interest or locations.

Elders

A black and white photograph of a large group of people, including many elderly individuals, standing in front of a large, ornate wooden structure that resembles a traditional house or a ceremonial building. The structure has a high, peaked roof and intricate carvings.

Flexibility

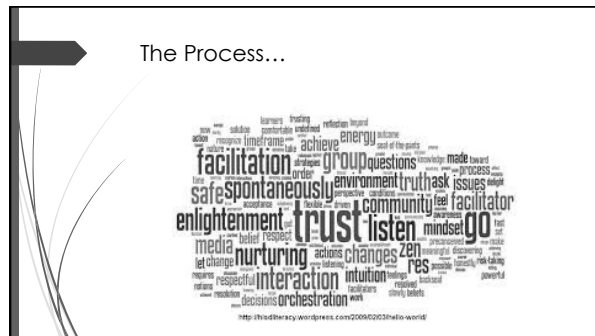
A black and white photograph of a metal spring, possibly a coiled spring, resting on a reflective surface. The spring is curved into a semi-circle, illustrating the concept of flexibility.

The Comforts

A black and white photograph of a baby in a cradle or bassinet, surrounded by a large arrangement of flowers and other decorative items. The baby is lying in the cradle, which is placed on a wooden floor.

Simplicity

A black and white photograph of a single, clear water droplet resting on a dark, textured surface. The droplet is perfectly spherical and reflects light, symbolizing simplicity and clarity.



- Trends in "family meetings"
- ▶ Under engaged
 - ▶ Role of family group in decision making is elusive
 - ▶ Faster and more meetings
 - ▶ Transparency of information
 - ▶ Trends relationship to: FGDM as a practice, procedure or a legal right