



ENSURING THE PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES AT TDM: SEQUENCING SUGGESTIONS

1. STRATEGIZE WITH BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP WORK GROUP:

TDM strategy work group members must maintain regular and ongoing communication regarding plans and progress to involve community representatives in TDM meetings with Building Community Partnership work group. Ensure BCP understands and supports neighborhood/community participation in TDM meetings. Working with BCP, coordinate efforts to reach potential community and neighborhood collaboratives. Jointly develop multiple strategies to identify and recruit potential community reps for TDM.

2. DETERMINE EXISTING STRUCTURES FOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVES AND REACH OUT TO THEM IN PARTNERSHIP AROUND THIS GOAL:

With the assistance of the F2F BCP work group, determine whether there are community groups already organized around F2F which could serve as key partners in this effort. If so, coordinate efforts to recruit, orient and support community reps for TDM with these groups.

3. DETERMINE AVAILABLE FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVES TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN TDM:

Incentives for community groups to partner with the agency should be available. Clarify before approaching neighborhood collaborative the financial support the agency is willing to provide for participation in TDM meetings, e.g. by including TDM participation as a deliverable in community contracts.

4. CREATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY ENTITIES TO ENSURE ONGOING COMMUNITY VOICE AT TDM MEETINGS (ESPECIALLY THOSE CONSIDERING INITIAL CHILD REMOVAL:

- If F2F community collaboratives are in place, provide thorough orientation on TDM to inform and educate community leadership. Together, develop plans for the ongoing recruitment, training, and support of community reps who will represent the collaborative at meetings. Also, develop mechanisms to track community participation and share data about attendance and impact. Ensure that the community collaborative is prepared to serve as a supportive “home base” for the representatives who attend TDM meetings on its behalf. Share mutual visions of collaboration, as well as expectations, necessary for successful partnership around this goal. Formalize agreement/understanding/commitment in a written document.
- If the site does not have a structure based on F2F community collaboratives, utilize existing F2F BCP committees as vehicles for recruiting, orienting and supporting community representatives (who may be volunteers if supportive funding is unavailable.) As noted above, be sure to develop clear structures for tracking, reporting, and support of community reps, with the BCP work group or other community committees serving as umbrella organizations for the effort.

5. KEEP STAFF INFORMED OF PLANS; ENLIST THEIR INVOLVEMENT:

In most F2F sites, the achievement of community participation at TDM begins slowly and is an ongoing effort. It's important to keep agency staff aware of plans to continually increase the participation of community partners at TDM meetings. Reiterate the role of these partners at TDM, highlighting benefits and acknowledging challenges. Encourage questions and provide clarifications. Share recruitment presentation plan and invite staff, who are part of targeted communities, to assist with identifying potential TDM representative candidates and/or participate in the orientation efforts with their community.

6. CONTINUOUSLY RECRUIT AND TRAIN COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES FOR TDM MEETINGS:

Work with community collaborative leadership, BCP work groups, and/or other appropriate partners to identify individuals who might be interested in serving as TDM community representatives. Offer regular, no-obligation presentations to explain TDM and the role and responsibilities of a community representative. Share why neighborhood and/or other community participation is important, and how it will benefit families who identify with their community. Co-present with community leadership. Extend an invitation to interested parties to further investigate the role/responsibility/partnership by attending a scheduled "official" orientation/training.

7. REGULARLY PROVIDE ORIENTATION/TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY REPS:

Invite individuals who express interest in serving as TDM community representatives to attend orientation/training. Orientation should include basic child welfare and specific TDM information, and should be limited to 2-3 hours. The goal is to give enough information to inform and prepare a partner to participate effectively at a TDM, while not overwhelming or attempting to create a child welfare expert. The orientation should be jointly presented by agency TDM experts in tandem with community members of BCP and/or collaborative leadership. (Include experienced community representatives in future orientation/training) At the conclusion of orientation, determine the commitment/willingness of each participant to function as a community partner.

8. ESTABLISH CLEAR INVITATION PROTOCOLS:

Develop a process to identify the birth parents' "community" when the initial TDM is scheduled. Use neighborhood as a starting point to define 'community', but remain open to the idea that other connections (e.g. ethnicity, faith) may provide a better 'community' fit for particular families. Ensure that an individual within the agency is responsible for inviting the community rep and that contact people at the agency and within the community collaborative or committee are identified to handle questions and concerns about the process. Anticipate confidentiality issues; have a clear plan on how to obtain prior parental consent to community rep participation.

9. ASSIST COLLABORATIVE TO CARE FOR REPRESENTATIVES:

As referenced in #4 above, develop a support structure within the community collaborative or other umbrella organization for representatives. The reps will need opportunities to discuss, debrief, vent, and receive resource information and support that will not be available through the child welfare agency. The collaborative or "home base" organization must provide an avenue for partners to maintain a perspective on their TDM responsibilities to avoid burn-out. It should provide to its representatives information on neighborhood resources, guidance on follow-up procedures, agency contact names, etc. It can provide input to the child welfare agency re: future training needs for TDM reps and how to continually improve it.

10. MONITOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND IMPACT:

Ensure thorough recording of data in the following areas: identification of and invitation to community rep, attendance of rep, family agreement to rep's participation, outcome of meetings attended by reps vs. not attended, etc. Provide this information to the community collaborative and to the Self Evaluation Team monthly. In response to these data, set target goals and identify new strategies for increased/enhanced community participation in TDM.

11. MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION AMONG COLLABORATIVE, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES AND TDM STAFF:

Have regular contact with collaborative to give and receive feedback regarding TDM. Determine how neighborhood representatives feel about their involvement. Share number of community families invited to and involved in TDM; track progress of communities toward achieving 100% of representation at TDM meetings involving its families. Discuss what is needed from the agency. Acknowledge and appreciate the community group and individuals' efforts.

12. SHOW APPRECIATION FOR COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Recognize the importance of community reps to the TDM process. Be creative, conscientious and consistent in acknowledging their participation and value. Demonstrate the agency's appreciation in both simple and elaborate ways. Appreciation can be shown with thank you letters/notes, praising participation publicly, hosting recognition luncheons, etc. Agency leadership, TDM facilitators, TDM/BCP work group members and other staff should all commit to expressing gratitude for the representatives' contribution.

