

TEAM DECISIONMAKING MEETING (TDM)

Summary

TDM Definition

The TDM, a key strategy of Family to Family (F2F), is a facilitated process in which FCS social workers and social work supervisors, parents, extended family members, community members, service providers and caregivers gather so that assigned social workers can join with other meeting participants with the goal of reaching consensus on recommendations regarding placement decisions for children. By utilizing this inclusive process, a network of support for the child and the adults who care for them is assured.

Purpose

When social workers are making initial removal decisions, TDMs focus on the safety needs of children and discussions center on whether children can remain at home with their parents or caregivers. If removal is necessary, efforts will be made to maintain the child with relatives.

When social workers are making decisions regarding possible placement changes or recommendations concerning reunification of children who are already under the Court-ordered care and supervision of FCS, discussion points center on placement changes and permanency plans.

Philosophy

TDM is a strengths-based model that arises from the belief that a child's well being is best served by an inclusive collaboration of family, community and child welfare agency rather than by a unilateral public agency decision. This process establishes a forum to share ideas and opinions and to identify accessible resources available as immediate supports in a family's neighborhood. TDM philosophy embraces the importance of the family's perspective and involvement, stresses full participation of all attendees, and encourages honest communication. Throughout the meeting process, TDM staff promotes an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Achieving consensus among participants is a valued goal of the TDM process.

Policy

TDMs will be convened to provide consistency and accountability in creating safety and placement plans for all Initial Removals, Placement Changes, and Reunifications.

REFERRAL AND SCHEDULED TDM MEETING TIMING		
Reason for Referral	When referral made	TDM meeting timeframe
Initial Removal	Immediately, or when removal is	By end of next business day

	being considered	
Placement Change (disruption, transfer, move to a higher or lower level of care, or into a concurrent placement)	Upon determination that a placement change is needed	Within three to five business days
Reunification	When it is determined to begin extended visits in preparation for returning a child home	Prior to filing court document

Procedures

Pre-Meeting Process and Referral Guidelines

- A. *The Social Work Supervisor shall* consult with the social worker to identify risks, family strengths and other issues concerning placement.
- B. *The Assigned Social Worker shall:*
1. (a) Schedule a TDM when a child is placed in Protective Custody.
(b) Complete the safety and/or risk assessment tools and consult with the supervisor to determine how soon a TDM should be convened.
 2. Contact the Salinas FCS receptionist for a date and time slot for the TDM.
 3. Deliver/fax the completed referral form to facilitator/support staff's mailbox. **(TDM Referral Form, CO 503, Attachment 1)**
 4. Initiate background checks when considering relatives or near kin for out-of-home placement to maximize implementing the plan immediately if the TDM decision is to place with a relative.
 5. Verbally review any safety issues, such as domestic or other violence, threats or the existence of any restraining orders affecting participants with facilitator. In the event that safety issues exist, please see page 6 of this protocol, "Safety and Security".
 6. Prepare the family for the meeting and encourage them to bring additional relatives and support persons to the meeting. Distribute the information pamphlet with appointment time, when possible. **(TDM Family Brochure, Attachment 2)**
 7. Consult with the Placement Resource Coordinator regarding available placements, if a non-relative placement is needed.
- C. *The Support Staff/Facilitator shall* (with support staff assistance, when possible):
1. Schedule all TDMs:
 - a. Set the meeting date and time.
 - b. Arrange for the facility.
 2. Contact the social worker to:
 - a. Review the referral.
 - b. Coordinate notification of meeting participants of the meeting date, time and location.
 - c. Ensure arrangements are made to address special needs and/or safety issues.
 3. Ensure that an inventory of needed supplies is available at the meeting site. **(Supply Checklist, Attachment 3)**
 4. Prepare the meeting room, including arranging seating, supplies, materials needed.
- D. *The birth parents/guardian shall:*

1. Be invited to the TDM. *If the parent is unwilling or unable to attend the TDM, the TDM shall still occur as scheduled.*
 2. Invite other relative or support persons of their choosing to the TDM meeting and inform social worker of the names of attendees and how to reach them.
 3. Inform social worker of any special needs of the participants.
 4. After being introduced to the community liaison, decide whether or not to have the community liaison present.
- E. *The Community Liaison shall:*
1. Be knowledgeable of the resources available to serve children and families in the community.
 2. Be available for and attend TDMs upon request.

TDM Meeting Participation/Roles

Each participant is present by invitation and birth parent(s) agreement. Attorneys are excluded from participation due to the non-adversarial nature of the TDM process.

A. FCS staff

The TDM facilitator, assigned social worker and a supervisor (or designee) are expected to attend. Any additional FCS staff requested by the parent(s) also will be invited to attend. The total number of FCS staff participants will not exceed 4.

1. TDM Facilitator

Designated non case-carrying social work staff, trained in the TDM process, will facilitate the meetings. The facilitator shall:

- a. Explain the meeting's purpose and guidelines.
- b. Define the issues and direct the information gathering process from the participants in a manner that promotes an inclusive, safe and supportive environment.
- c. Support and represent the values and "emerging best practices" of Child Welfare.
- d. Assist participants in clear and honest communication and manage conflict and strong emotions as they arise.
- e. Develop group consensus for a plan focusing on child safety and family strengths.
- f. Request a Review of any plan that he/she believes jeopardizes the child's safety.
- g. Accurately record TDM information and decisions on the (TDM Summary Form, **(CO 483, Attachment 4)**).

2. Social Work Team

Social Workers and Supervisors are assigned to help families navigate the child welfare system.

a. *The Social Worker shall:*

1. Attend and actively participate in TDMs for all assigned families.
2. Present to family members and all TDM participants the observed family strengths and department's concerns.
3. Support the values and "emerging best practices" of child welfare and share knowledge about agency policies and resources that would benefit families.
4. Communicate openly and honestly during the meeting.

5. Maintain receptivity to the ideas expressed by other participants and work as a team member to discuss and formulate the plan.
 6. Follow up on activities and tasks that grow out of the TDM meeting.
- b. *The Social Work Supervisor shall:*
1. Remain receptive to opinions and ideas offered by other participants during the TDM meeting.
 2. Assist in the formulation of the safety or action plan after thoroughly assessing the family's situation.
 3. Make the final decision, if consensus is not achieved.

B. Family and Community Participants

Wide participation from the family and community is encouraged. Participants include:

1. Parents/legal guardians, the child, additional family members & relatives
 - a. *Birth Parents/legal guardians shall:*
 1. Present information about the family's strengths.
 2. Provide the parents' unique point of view.
 3. In the event that a parent is incarcerated or cannot attend due to a restraining order or other extenuating circumstances, the social worker will make an effort to receive his/her verbal and/or written input regarding placement of the child.
 - b. *The Child:* Based on the child's maturity, cognitive-emotional status and the anticipated subjects to be discussed at the TDM meeting the referring social worker shall assess the appropriateness of a child's attendance at the meeting. Teenagers are encouraged to attend unless it is determined that participation would be detrimental.
 - c. *Additional Family Members and near kin* that have significant relationships with the child/family.
2. Family's support network, such as family friends, neighbors, clergy.
3. Caregivers (Resource Family, FFA Worker, Group Home and Residential Care Providers). Caregivers are requested to participate in TDMs that are held after a child is already in placement, for example, when the placement is likely to be disrupted, or when making decisions regarding permanency or reunification. Resource Families may also be invited to TDMs at initial removal. *Caregivers shall:*
 - a. Express their views about the child's needs, strengths, adjustment, progress.
 - b. Learn more about the child and family.
 - c. Further develop a partnering relationship with the child's family.
 - d. Assist birth parents in the family's transition towards a successful reunification.

4. Community Liaison: A member of the family's community will be invited to provide support, resource expertise, and an external perspective to decision making. Parents must agree to their presence.

As the F2F initiative is developed, community liaisons will be identified who represent neighborhoods or communities where child welfare cases occur. Until such liaisons are designated, the social worker can invite staff from agencies who currently serve the family or support persons who can help the family to access community-based services.

The Community Liaison shall:

- a. Offer assistance in the creation of the safety plan.
 - b. Identify services that can assist the family in support of the safety plan.
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5. Additional participants may include:
 - a. Service providers who are currently or were previously involved with the family (e.g., juvenile probation staff, CalWORKS, public health nursing, school, behavioral health, AOD staff, etc).
 - b. Child's assigned CASA

TDM Meeting Sites

- A. Prearrangements with collaborative partners will be made to hold meetings at various neighborhood-based sites throughout the county. In the event that safety is an issue, the meeting will be held at FCS
- B. Sites shall offer:
 1. Adequate space, appropriately equipped;
 2. Safety and privacy;
 3. Accommodation of the special needs of persons with disabilities.

TDM Meeting Structure and Process

The TDM meeting process is based upon the Casey training for facilitators. Meeting duration is 1 to 2 hours (***TDM Meeting Structure, Attachment 5***).

Post-meeting process

- A. *Referring social worker shall:*
 1. Consult with the Placement Coordinator regarding any placement change to be made to a non-relative placement.
 2. Follow through with items indicated in the safety or action plan as recorded in the TDM meeting.
 3. For removals and placement changes, arrange the F.O.C.U.S. "Icebreaker" meeting (***Attachments 6a – 6c***), a meeting between the parent(s), the resource family and worker that usually occurs at the time of the first visit after a detention hearing or placement change.
- B. *The community liaison shall seek community supports that provide both short-term and ongoing assistance.*

- C. *The facilitator shall: (with clerical support)*
1. Give a copy of the TDM Summary Form (**Attachment 4**) to the social worker and all parties present at the TDM.
 2. Enter data from TDM Summary Form into the TDM database to produce accurate monthly data reports for self-evaluation.
 3. To insure that a TDM was held and consensus regarding the placement decision was reached, the TDM facilitator will send copies of the TDM Summary Form to:
 - The immediate supervisor, if he/she was not present at the TDM;
 - The Court officer, if a petition is going to be filed;
 - The Placement Resource Coordinator, if a placement is needed

Review Process

A. Requesting a Review

1. Any attending FCS staff shall request an Review prior to ending the TDM meeting if the staff person feels that the proposed plan does not adequately address the safety issues of the child.
2. Family member or community partners may not request a Review of the decision.
3. The facilitator shall document the Review request on the TDM Summary Form (**Attachment 4**) and the Deputy Director (or management designee) shall be called into the TDM meeting room, or they will be contacted via telephone and placed on speakerphone inside the meeting room. If the Deputy Director (or management designee) is unavailable, meeting participants shall be notified and the Review held as soon as possible and within the next business day.

B. The Review Process

1. The TDM Facilitator will present an assessment of the issues and concerns about the TDM decision to the Deputy Director (or management designee). The Deputy Director (or management designee) may ask for clarification from any participant regarding the information being shared.
3. The Deputy Director (or management designee) makes the final decision that becomes the agency's official position, binding upon all staff.

Safety and Security

In the interest of safety:

- A. Social workers shall discuss safety concerns (such as history of family violence, substance abuse, sexual abuse, and possible conflictual relationships) with the facilitator prior to the TDM being held.
- B. Facilitator shall address safety for all participants in the meeting guidelines.

- C. All meeting rooms must have access to a telephone. Exits and parking lots will be well lit.
- D. Family members will be excluded from meetings if their participation violates protection or stay-away orders. Restraining orders are always observed. In cases of mutual restraining orders the parent who has physical custody attends.
- E. Family members who pose emotional trauma or a physical threat to other family members may not be able to be present.
- F. When, for safety reasons, it is not appropriate for a family member to attend, other arrangements, such as a separate meeting, participation by telephone or through correspondence, may be made.

Accommodating Special Needs

- A. Provisions will be made to accommodate special needs including language interpreters, mental health advocates, family violence advocates, and recorders for sight impaired parents or other primary caretakers necessary to facilitate successful meetings.
 - 1. The referring worker alerts the facilitator regarding the special needs of participants, including the number of persons who require services.
 - 2. Spanish-speaking families will be assigned to bilingual facilitators. For other languages, the facilitator will arrange for services with the Language Bank. In some cases, it may be possible for interpretation to be provided by FCS staff or local community partners.
 - 3. The social worker shall work with the parent(s) to identify solutions to barriers to their participation in the meeting (e.g. transportation, childcare).

Self Evaluation

In order to measure the effectiveness of the TDM process and the impact of TDM on F2F outcomes for children, FCS will conduct self-evaluation activities that link specific TDMs and decisions to individual children and families in collaboration with the F2F Self Evaluation Team. These activities include, but are not limited to: copies of reports that have been distributed to the family and FCS staff; monthly activity reports produced by the TDM facilitator (with clerical support); information captured and recorded in the TDM database.

Confidentiality

The TDM is a private forum focused on achieving consensus regarding placement decisions. Information shared at the meeting may be utilized for the creation of a case plan and/or for the development of recommendations for court orders. Mandated reporting laws as well as professional ethics apply to TDMs. These limitations on confidentiality are explained to participants at the start of the TDM. Participants shall sign a statement on the Sign-In Sheet/Confidentiality Form (**Attachment 7**) indicating their understanding of these limitations.

Robert Taniguchi
Deputy Director

Date

Distribution: FCS Managers, Supervisors and Staff
Resource Families
TDM Team