

# Family Group Conferencing

## What Happens in a Conference

**Preparation:** Facilitators meet or talk with everyone attending in advance and prepare them for the family group conference by:

- ✓ explaining the goals of the FGC,
- ✓ describing the stages of the family meeting,
- ✓ exploring who should attend the conference (“family” is defined very broadly and includes friends, family, and other supportive people in the family’s life), and
- ✓ identifying how everyone can feel safe and comfortable discussing the issue at hand.

Once everyone has been prepared for the conference, facilitators coordinate a time and meeting place that works for everyone.



**At the Conference:** Facilitators guide the family meeting in a transparent, honest, and respectful way. The stages of the family conference are as follows:

- ✓ Facilitators welcome everyone to the conference and people introduce themselves.
- ✓ Facilitators invite family members to share what they see as the youth’s or family’s strengths.
- ✓ Facilitators invite family members to share any concerns they have for the youth or family.
- ✓ Facilitators review the issues that should be addressed in the family plan, and family members can ask questions and get more information. Service providers (such as school or juvenile office representatives) may be present to answer questions or provide information.
- ✓ Facilitators and service providers leave the room so the family can have “private family time” to discuss the issues and concerns and make a plan to support the youth and/or family in managing the issues of concern. Families have as much time as they need to make their plan. Family group conferences provide a structure for talking that helps families create realistic plans to support the youth and family in addressing any issues of concern.
- ✓ When the family is ready, they invite the facilitators back into the room to review their plan and make sure it addresses all the relevant concerns.

**Follow Up:** After the FGC the family plan is shared with relevant agencies (if applicable) and professionals involved with the family provide support to help the family plan succeed. If needed, additional conferences can be convened to make changes to the family plan.

