

BUTLER COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

POLICY NO.: 2.1	SUBJECT: FAMILY DECISION MAKING CONFERENCE
	EFFECTIVE DATE: 5/1/08
	REVISION DATE: 7/23/08, 4/8/09

PURPOSE:

A Family Decision Making Conference ("FDM") is a meeting held to improve the safety, permanency, and well-being of children by building alliances between families, the community, and BCCS. The Conference is a structured process which identifies and taps resources within the family system while assisting the participants in developing a plan that meets both safety and permanency concerns. Parents, extended family, professionals, and other resource people are invited to attend the Conference. This meeting is an opportunity for families to have input and take an active part in the plans and decisions that affect their children and relatives. Family Decision Making Conferences can be held anytime during the life of a case.

POLICY:

1. Family Decision Making Conferences **must** be held at critical points in the case. Critical points include but are not limited to:
 - (A) An assessment that shows a child is not safe in his/her home and there is no viable safety plan. (FDM must be held prior to removal or the next business day in the case of an emergency).
 - (B) When the case/family is transferred from Intake/Assessments to Supportive Services. (Policy 2.1a Case Plan Development and Family Case Conference are to be followed for all Case Plan Development Conferences).
2. In addition to those Family Decision Making Conferences that must be held, a FDM conference **may** be held when:
 - (A) Problems arise in a child's foster care placement, indicating a potential threat of disruption in the child's current living situation.
 - (B) Permanency planning must be discussed with the family. The agency is required to discuss permanency issues when a child has been in agency care for 6 months or more. The agency must begin the Permanent Custody process when a child is in care for 12 of 22 months based on HB 484.
 - (C) At the request of the family or other person of significance as determined by the agency.
3. A scheduled Family Decision Making Conference will be held even if family members choose not to attend. If the family cannot physically attend but still wants to participate, a conference call using speaker phone can be used to allow for their input or they can submit their

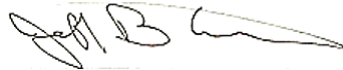
respective suggestions in writing to the caseworker prior to the conference. A plan will be developed and decisions regarding the child(ren)'s protection and safety will be made and other decisions as appropriate to the purpose of the FDM conference. If a family member refuses to attend/participate he/she loses the opportunity for input.

PROCEDURE:

1. A facilitator in the Quality Assurance Unit will facilitate the conference for removals as described above in 1a. The worker will schedule the conference directly with the facilitators in the Quality Assurance Unit.
2. In the event a facilitator in the Quality Assurance Unit is not available, a list of back up facilitators will be kept by the administrative assistant in charge of scheduling Family Case Conference and SAR's. The worker shall request a facilitator through the administrative assistant. Once a facilitator is identified, the worker will determine a date and time for the conference and provide the facilitator with a copy of the referral or ongoing face sheet prior to the conference.
3. It is the caseworkers' responsibility to explain to the family the purpose of the meeting, what they can expect, and assist the family with identifying who they would like to attend. The worker will contact the extended family members and other professionals to discuss the need for the conference and to schedule a suitable time.
4. Other meeting attendees may include: the worker's supervisor, administrator, past or present providers of services to the family, the child's GAL if applicable, therapist, and such persons as the family may request to be in attendance, etc. The worker should contact prospective participants explaining to them the purpose of the meeting and inviting them to the scheduled FDM. All of the prospective participants should be encouraged to attend.
5. All participants will sign the Confidentiality and Privacy Agreement at the beginning of the conference.
6. Presentation of case history, strengths and safety concerns are provided by the caseworker and/or supervisor in writing. The strengths of the family, current circumstances and presenting safety concerns for the child(ren) and family are discussed. The facilitator will open the dialogue as to what is needed to reduce the risk to the child(ren) and to assure child safety and while providing family stability. The desired outcome is that the family will have a clear expectation of what the professional members of the group are seeking in a safety plan and/or action plan.
7. The group develops options to address the concerns/issues that have been raised and the family considers these options. The family uses the options to assist in developing action plans that will be implemented immediately.
8. The facilitator should verbally and in writing, summarize the action steps decided upon. These action steps, will identify who will do what by when. Each participant signs the Family Decision Making signature sheet at the conclusion of the conference. All parties are entitled to a copy with the original being placed in the permanent record.

9. The assigned worker will enter the information into SACWIS under the case conference in the activity log.
10. The caseworker follows up with the children and family to make sure the plan developed during the Family Conference is being followed. At the SAR the facilitator will also follow up with the worker and client regarding the action steps that were developed at the Family Decision Making Conference.

Approval Date: 9/1/09



Jeff Centers, Executive Director