



SOCIAL WORKER'S GUIDE TO AN EFFECTIVE TDM MEETING

BEFORE TDM

DISCUSS WITH SUPERVISOR: Decide based upon the safety/risk assessment information and a discussion of options if a TDM is needed. Agree upon a recommendation regarding placement.

CHECK YOUR MEETING ATTITUDE: Consider the possible benefits for the family and for you that can result from the TDM meeting. Recognize how critical the pending placement decision is and the life-altering impact it could have on the child and family. Cultivate the mind-set that “this is so serious I really appreciate help thinking this through.” Remain open to the possibility that additional information, ideas and discussion may develop a placement decision different from the recommendation you brought to the meeting.

SCHEDULE TDM: Provide all information necessary to support a productive meeting, including how many anticipated participants, and if any have special needs (foreign language translator, deaf interpreter, wheelchair access, etc.) serious mental illness and/or safety concerns including domestic violence history. Request a time convenient for the principals, while addressing immediacy issues. Determine if the meeting can be held in family's community. Clarify who will be notified by the TDM clerk and who you are responsible to invite.

INFORM PARENTS: Explain the TDM purpose, goal and process. Encourage parents to identify and invite support persons. Answer questions. Ensure parents know day, time, and location, and have transportation. Provide parents with a written explanation of TDM and contact information. Ensure non-custodial parent(s) invited.

INVITE OTHERS: Inform appropriate parties (if not already invited by the TDM clerk) of the meeting. Participants may include child, GAL/CASA, service providers, current caregiver, parent advocate, etc. Explain purpose and process, if unfamiliar. Invite youth to attend/participate to ensure ‘voice and choice.’ Determine appropriateness of younger child's attendance. Prepare child/youth regarding TDM participants, process, expectations and rights.

CONSULT WITH FACILITATOR: If there are issues that may affect the TDM process discuss with assigned facilitator. Explore how to make the TDM safe and understandable if special needs are anticipated. Limit advance discussion to issues of process, not substance.

BE PREPARED: Expect to explain at the meeting why the TDM was scheduled, describing safety/risk assessment information, discussing family strengths and supports, summarizing history and services, and brainstorming ideas to address the concerns. Be ready to offer a recommendation about placement, while remaining open to other ideas and suggestions that may alter your plan. Bring supporting documents, i.e. completed (or at least initiated in emergency situations) safety and risk assessment tool case plan, reports and recommendations from service providers, current caregivers and/or GAL/CASA if they are not present. Be on time for the TDM, with adequate time scheduled to allow full attention to the TDM issues and to the family.

EXPLAIN ROLE OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE: Introduce parents to rep, explain his/her role and determine parent(s)' willingness to have a representative attend. Assist parents to make an informed decision. [NOTE: in some sites, facilitator assumes this responsibility.]

DURING TDM

DEMONSTRATE PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR: Listen to understand. Speak honestly, sincerely and respectfully to all. Watch your nonverbal behavior. Talk directly to parents and other participants—make eye contact. Encourage others to share their perspective, opinions and ideas, including those contrary to your own. Attend TDM with expectation of increasing understanding, exploring alternatives, and sharing decision-making responsibility. Remain calm.

SPEAK TO BE UNDERSTOOD: Avoid use of acronyms and jargon. Present information clearly, fairly and completely. Provide thorough disclosure of concerns, expectations, progress etc. Offer behaviorally specific information and link behaviors to risk issues and child safety. Use safety/risk assessment tool as the foundation for discussion. Elaborate, clarify, and rephrase as needed. Check for understanding. Answer questions.

BE SENSITIVE: When child present, remain conscious of their well-being, promoting a safe, protective environment. Remove child from TDM if issues or discussion deemed detrimental. If decision is to place child, explore ways to minimize trauma for child and family. Validate feelings and emotions. Demonstrate commitment to assist the family to safely provide for their child.

WORK FOR CONSENSUS DECISION: Share leadership responsibility with the facilitator—the social worker is content expert, the facilitator is process expert. Support the strengths-based and solution-focused format to systematically work toward a resolution that provides safety and promotes family integrity. Ensure safety and risk assessment information is understandable; acknowledge family strengths; listen to information, opinions and ideas of others in attendance; and examine all suggestions offered in an effort to provide safety and protection in the least restrictive/least intrusive manner. Understand that if consensus cannot be reached with participating staff, the social worker must make the final decision/recommendation based upon all available information.

AFTER TDM

DEAL WITH EMOTIONS: Ensure parent(s) and/or children experiencing significant emotional reactions are provided the necessary supports. Check for less obvious signs of upset. Consider if safety concerns for any participant exist that should be immediately addressed.

INVITE FEEDBACK: Be receptive to the assessment of your presentation, engagement skills, behavior etc. offered by facilitator and/or supervisor. Use information provided to strengthen skills and improve.

IMPLEMENT DECISION: Complete all action steps necessary to carry out TDM decision promptly. Request a new TDM meeting if circumstances affecting child's placement should change.