IMPLEMENTING TEAM DECISION-MAKING: SEQUENCING SUGGESTIONS

Annie E. Casey Foundation
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1. ASSESS EXISTING PROCESSES:

Review all current 'family team' or other collaborative processes, assess for potential redundancy, blend where possible, delete, if appropriate—streamline! Create a continuum that makes sense to families and is efficient for staff and others.

2. DEVELOP BLUEPRINT:

The TDM work group proposes a rollout plan which includes timeframes for full use of TDM for 3 primary types of placement-related decisions (removal, changes of placement, and permanency/reunification.)

3. ANALYZE NUMBERS:

Closely examine placement-related data for the past year in order to project how many TDM meetings, and thus how many facilitators, will be needed to fully implement each phase of TDM in your site.

4. REVIEW AFTER HOURS PROCEDURES:

If the first phase of rollout is to cover initial removal decisions, assess after hours practice to determine what modifications may be needed if TDM becomes a central element in the initial removal process.

5. ENSURE COMPLIANCE:

Determine what "firewalls" will be put in place to ensure that TDM meetings are held at each required point in the life of a case. These firewalls typically require adjustments in current practice, standards of performance and decision making at very high levels of management.

6. EXAMINE DETAILS:

Tackle logistics planning, including such issues as:
   a) Where will meetings be held? Agency/community settings?
   b) How many meeting rooms will be needed and how can we ensure their immediate availability for TDM?
   c) Who will provide clerical/administrative support, such as scheduling of meetings, assistance with inviting participants, management of records, etc.?
   d) Do we have access to child care if participants bring young children to the meeting?
   e) Who will enter data from each meeting into a central database?
   f) Etc.

7. ESTABLISH AGENCY PROTOCOL:

Complete a final draft policy or protocol, which covers key elements of TDM practice within the site and clarifies expectations for all involved staff.

8. PREPARE DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM:
Plan for the collection of TDM data; identify which elements will be collected from every meeting, and in what format. Plan for the eventual automation of TDM data.

9. IDENTIFY TDM STAFF:
Hire facilitators, based on careful projection of needs. Be sure to plan for a workload of at least 3 meetings per day per facilitator. Identify supervision structure. Identify clerical support.

10. DEVELOP FACILITATORS:
Train facilitators, using the F2F curriculum.

11. EDUCATE STAFF AND PARTNERS:
Plan for the "TDM readiness" of all staff and partners. Conduct orientation sessions for the following groups, each of which has hopefully been represented in the TDM work group as it has planned for implementation:
- Public agency staff: first, supervisors and managers; then, line staff
- Resource families
- Community partners, both contract service providers and grassroots partners
- Private foster care agency staff
- Attorneys and court personnel
- Etc.

12. MONITOR COMPLIANCE:
Ensure there is a plan for monitoring TDM once it begins, to track whether all families facing a placement-related decision are experiencing a TDM meeting. Agency managers (not TDM facilitation staff) should take ownership for this monitoring.

13. SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT:
Ensure there is a plan for the continuing education of new staff, partners and TDM facilitators as turnover, new partner development, and/or new hiring occurs.

14. PRESERVE HIGH STANDARDS:
Have a solid plan for continuous self-evaluation of TDM, which is owned by the agency as a whole. The focus should be on both data and practice, to ensure that positive outcomes are resulting, and that the process maintains its integrity over time.