

TEAM DECISION MAKING: key messages

- A way to involve family & community in our work, and to extend partnership messages to caregivers, providers and neighborhood stakeholders.
- One of many ‘family team’ models, with many names and common values. Not the same as Family Group Conferencing, though it can be complementary.
- This model: group convenes for every key child welfare decision around placement, i.e. removal, change of placement, reunification or other permanent plan. (Case planning, assessment, review functions are secondary.)
- Provides gatekeeping for the public child welfare system: originally driven by need to improve quality and consistency of decisions around placement. Safety/risk issues are central.
- Extending the circle provides gains in both community partnership and family engagement (birth, extended, & caregiver families.) Also offers opportunity for birth-foster parent interaction in “safe” environment.
- Family’s social worker convenes the group to assist in making critical decision. Trained agency facilitator leads strengths-based, consensus-driven, respectful process – while modeling directness and honesty regarding risks and concerns.
- Agency maintains its responsibility to make ultimate decision in absence of consensus—and states this up front.
- Social worker is supported in making difficult decisions. Participants gain understanding of complexity of process and criteria used in decision making. Families are present and involved.
- TDM is related to and reinforces other core strategies: e.g., provides a “place at the table” for community and caregivers, sending a stronger message of inclusion and partnership. Offers opportunity for self evaluation – can measure effect of community/family/caregiver/other partners on decisions, success at avoiding unnecessary removals and preventing changes of placement, etc.

