



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

FAMILY TO FAMILY

THE FACILITATOR

A National Newsletter for TDM Facilitators and Supervisors

Spring 2007
Issue 1

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TDMnewsletter@bex.net

A Newsletter — Another Way to Keep in Touch

These are exciting times for Team Decisionmaking folks. All over the U.S., in our 60+ Family to Family sites, we are hosting meetings that welcome families to be full participants in the most critical child welfare decisions affecting them.

How we've grown since 1992, when Family to Family was launched! At that time, TDM was practiced only in a couple counties in Ohio, and it would be several years before F2F developed the notion of "core strategies." As promising practices were shared across new sites, it became apparent that TDM was a rising star. Combining rigorous attention to a central area of front line practice with a philosophical foundation that honored the critical F2F values of family, commu-

nity, and partnership, TDM quickly took root. Surprisingly, this occurred despite its "kiss of death" requirement of an entirely new staff position within the child welfare agency—the full time facilitator.

With the growing body of sites' experiences to learn from, enhancements have grown like topsy: the creation of outcome measures and a simple data collection application; development of a comprehensive training curriculum for TDM facilitators; a library of written materials to support implementation of TDM in every variety of F2F site; a national cadre of TDM practitioners who share ideas at annual gatherings (and now, through their own newsletter!) etc.

This is heady stuff. But the

real thrill of being participants on the "TDM train" as it has roared into being is this: seeing parents, youth, and the families and communities who care about them experience a respectful, strengths-based and truly solution-focused interaction with public child welfare. On our best days, we experience that all-too-rare sensation: we have actively contributed to a family's journey toward strength and stability. As child welfare professionals, does it get any better than that?

We, the TDM TA team, look forward to the next chapter of our shared history with all of you. Keep on letting us know how we can best support you.

Warmest Regards,
Pat Rideout and the AECF F2F
TDM Technical Assistant Team



HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU...



Two Family to Family anchor sites are taking advantage of a valuable resource to strengthen their TDM practice: technical assistance from The Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF.) Both Macomb County, Michigan and San Francisco are working w/ FVPF consultants, who are teaming with the rest of the F2F TA teams in those sites, to strengthen their TDM meetings involving family violence.

FVPF was a valued partner in the development of our tool, "In the Moment Strategies for Facilitators of TDM

Meetings."

Now FVPF's team is providing site-based consultation by debriefing TDM case experiences, advising TDM staff on alternative approaches and practice changes, and assisting sites in strengthening partnerships with their local domestic violence service providers.

FVPF's technical assistance is not limited to TDM; they are also working with other core strategy work groups to ensure that F2F sites provide consistent,

effective service to families affected by violence.

Ultimately, we hope the work that San Francisco and Macomb TDM staff are doing with FVPF will lead to the development of new facilitator-friendly tools to augment those tools provided by Casey and available on the F2F website: www.aecf.org

So here's looking at you, San Francisco and Macomb!

DETROIT, MI

Wayne County just completed its first round of spe-

cial placement change TDMs targeted at youth who have been "stuck" in residential care.

A sample of 25 cases were selected, youth were specially prepared to participate, facilitators received enhanced training, and strong efforts were made to get an expanded cast of participants in the room.

Outcomes? Plans were made to move more than half the youth to kin or birth family homes! The second round begins in early May...

CALIFORNIA SITES

As of December 31, 2006, 24 of CA's 25 F2F counties have rolled out TDM in at least one of the 3 TDM focus areas (initial removal, placement preservation, permanency.)

Since January '03 when TDM began in the first CA sites, and June '06, a total of 26,388 TDM recommendations have been made. That's a lot of facilitating!

ST. LOUIS, MO

TDM Supe Joan Garrison writes that St. Louis has been thinking up ways to make the

TDM table and materials more productive and user-friendly. Here are some of their dynamite ideas:

ENHANCED TABLE TENTS

TDM name tents now prompt participants to write both their name and their relationship to the family, which is helpful as well-attended meetings unfold.

On the other side of the tents are useful tips for communicating during meetings. Children are encouraged to decorate the tents during the meeting, and families to take the tips/table tents with them when they leave the meeting.

MAGNETS WITH STICKING POWER

Magnets that say "Think TDM" include the main TDM scheduling number, and are used to orient new workers to the process.

FORM FRENZY

The St. Louis TDM Summary Form was modified so that the page copied and shared with the participants contains only the placement and custody recommendation, plan and signatures. Other information is contained on a separate sheet, to save trees and paperwork overload!

KRAFTY KIDS

TDM staff utilize "Tool Kits for

Kids," created with donated plastic battery containers (minus the batteries). Facilitators can offer a young child the container with crayons, coloring pages, etc. to occupy them during meetings. The kids can then take the kits with them when they leave.

IN THE WORKS

—A family folder containing information about resources, court dates, etc., to take away from the TDM table.

—Bookmarks with family tips on them.

—Yearly calendars for families, to contain appointments and tips.

TDM and Me: Holly Baker — Phoenix, AZ

At the start of the initial removal TDM meeting, the group learned that Mrs. Smith was struggling with providing adequate living conditions for her family, and as a result, a number of safety concerns were raised. She lived with her children and two pets in a one bedroom dwelling without running water or toilet facilities and the agency believed that her children were in an at-risk situation. She had also just left a 16 year marriage, due to extreme domestic violence, fleeing in the middle of the night. Mrs. Smith said that she was ashamed that her children had witnessed years of brutality and verbal abuse. She revealed injuries including horrific scarring from a burn. Married at 15, she did not go to high school or have a job. Mrs. Smith appeared depressed and was struggling to make basic decisions about many things including housing, budgeting, parenting and functioning in the community.

In spite of these adverse conditions, and after discussions with the caseworker, Mrs. Smith decided it was time to ask for help and she was spurred to action. With relatives watching the children, she sought new housing. Mrs. Smith identified a Phoenix community resource that assisted her in locating

an apartment for immediate occupancy, and she used bus service to transport the family's belongings. She also secured electricity and furniture with community resources.

By the time the TDM meeting started, Mrs. Smith had already begun to make changes in her life, however long standing barriers and chronic neglect issues still threatened the safety of her children. It was up to the team to help Mrs. Smith develop a plan that would address those issues and allow her children to stay safely with her.

As the TDM meeting was wrapping up, a team member asked Mrs. Smith if she was able to read the meeting report. Mrs. Smith shrank in her chair and began to cry, stating that being illiterate was the biggest shame and barrier in her life. When asked how we could ensure that she would understand the action steps from the meeting, Mrs. Smith said her excellent memory would help her remember pictures. The group quickly huddled and began sketching for Mrs. Smith, who became very engaged as we drew pictures illustrating food, cleaning supplies, a school bus and daycare. Most importantly, a picture of a battered

Holly continued on page 4



News Alert

Dateline: Anchorage, Alaska:

Last summer, TDM staff in Anchorage looked on as a father sued to have TDM meetings named a "critical stage" in the child welfare legal process, requiring representation by counsel under AK law. The father's attorney, while invited to the TDM, was unhappy that the meeting was scheduled at a time he was not able to attend.

Although TDM protocols in Anchorage encourage attorney participation, the need to hold meetings promptly and often on short notice in order to ensure children's safety

often precludes arranging meetings around any one person's busy schedule. As the attorneys representing the agency argued, families always have the opportunity to challenge the TDM team's recommendations, both in internal agency proceedings and ultimately at Court, if they are in disagreement.

Fortunately for Anchorage's healthy, expanding TDM practice, the father's lawsuit did not succeed.

Have you had similar court challenges in your site? Inquiring minds are interested, so please share!



Spotlight on a FAQ

Should Supervisor Attendance at TDMs be Mandatory?

Best practice suggests that supervisors attend 100% of their staff's TDM meetings. However, in most sites, supervisors juggle multiple responsibilities that make it nearly impossible for them to achieve this expectation. Therefore, some sites create a set of priorities for supervisory TDM attendance. Examples of situations mandating a supervisor's attendance are:

- Social worker is new/still on probation;
- Social worker is having performance problems/is un-

der a corrective action plan;

- Worker or facilitator requests supervisor to attend due to complexity of case, challenging participants;
- Agency designates a certain type of TDM (e.g., all initial removals) as the priority based on current practice concerns.

It is recommended that sites track and report supervisory attendance at TDM meetings, as it may provide useful insights re: the impact of supervisor's involvement (or lack thereof) in meetings.

Ask a Colleague...about DV and TDM

From Dave Buscher, TDM Facilitator in Macomb County, MI:

Among the many questions that arise when facilitators lead a TDM meeting in which family violence is an issue is this: **How do we reach a consensus decision when there are two separate TDM meetings being held due to the need to separate survivor and perpetrator?**

This question calls for an in-depth discussion (more next issue!) but here are a few considerations:

—Always meet first with the survivor. This will provide her the opportunity to control the flow of

information and express a plan she feels is best to keep herself and the children safe, even though she may be unable to reveal all of the information we'd like to have.

—No one should enter or leave the room until it is clearly understood what will be shared with the victim's partner in the subsequent meeting. At the second meeting, the facilitator must determine which participants should be present from the previous meeting, and how to explain the reason for holding separate meetings. **But if all information from the previous meeting (with the survivor) is not**

shared... is there truly the potential for consensus?

—Perhaps less than usual...but I have found opportunities to engage the alleged perpetrator in identifying the best interests of their children. Keeping the focus on the children's needs rather than which parent is at fault can allow for reframing the issue toward exploring various options, and may allow an opportunity for positive engagement. This approach can often lead to an agreement about what needs to be done to provide for the immediate safety of the children even when the parties to domestic violence are not in the

same meeting.

—Note that in these meetings, the facilitator may need to assume a more active role than usual. Concern for the safety of the survivor becomes an added focus that extends beyond the time frame of the meeting. Facilitators need to be prepared to engage their own agency to 'step up' and do what is needed... and not merely what is required.

In Memory of Steve Peavler

It is with great sadness that Contra Costa County, CA reports the passing of Steve Peavler who suffered a massive heart attack.

Steve leaves a legacy of passion and commitment to children and families. He will be remembered for his positive spirit, sense of humor, and leadership, especially around TDM.

Steve was the county's Family to Family Coordinator in addition to other management duties. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Tip Exchange

From Facilitator to Facilitator

Reminder of best practices to utilize as you facilitate:

- Take time to make sure everyone understands the purpose of the meeting.
- Always use flip chart or writing board to list concerns, significant and relevant strengths, and ideas that are generated.
- Encourage worker to speak directly to the parent/family when discussing issues of concern.
- Invite supervisor or co worker to observe your facili-

tation of a TDM. Feedback and constructive observations help to enhance your facilitation skill level.

- Identify your personal "weak spot" as it relates to knowledge of agency policy/ protocols, the law, or new developments in related fields. Challenge yourself to become more competent in the identified areas.

Send your favorite facilitating tip or suggestion to share with fellow TDM practitioners to TDMnewsletter@bex.net

Fast Facts



- There are 15 anchor sites: Maricopa Cty, AZ (Phoenix) Alameda County, CA Fresno County, CA Los Angeles, CA Orange County, CA San Francisco, CA Denver County, CO Jefferson Co, KY (Louisville) Macomb County, MI Wayne County, MI (Detroit) New York City, NY Guilford Co, NC (Greensboro) Wake County, NC (Raleigh) Cuyahoga Co, OH (Cleveland) Shelby County, TN (Memphis)

- There are an additional 4 CA-only anchor sites, reflecting the valuable partnership of the CA-based Stuart Foundation:

Contra Costa County
Riverside County
San Luis Obispo County
Sacramento County

Cleveland Anniversary

Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services is celebrating 13 years of TDM! Judith Goodhand, one of F2F's favorite TA since her retirement, was the agency's executive director when TDM was initiated in Cleveland in March, 1994.

The TDM unit presently has a staff of 18 facilitators and 2 supervisors, who cover all TDMs, as well as regular review meetings for all children in care. To date 24,000 TDMs have been held!

Hundreds of visitors from other sites have observed TDM in Cleveland. Staff there emphasize that, despite their years of experience, ensuring excellent TDM is a continuing work in progress!

Bravo Cleveland, for being our "big sister" in TDM practice all these years!

Let's Share!

We hope this newsletter can support peer sharing of site-written materials. Has a new document related to TDM been developed by your agency? Is your agency seeking adjunct TDM information/materials? If so, share with your colleagues in the national TDM community.

San Diego is searching for materials that describe the link between TDM and Concurrent Planning.

Arizona is looking for samples of brochures describing Permanency Planning.

Can you help?

Send requests and materials to TDMnewsletter@bex.net and we will facilitate the exchange.

TDM Facilitator Training in 2007

(NOTE: CA and MI have developed internal training capacity and training schedules)

In 2007 the 5-day TDM facilitator training is being offered quarterly. Since nearly all anchor sites, have established TDM programs, the need for training is now largely focused on preparing sites' replacement facilitators when turnover occurs.

The 15-person classes are typically filled by new TDM facilitators and supervisors from multiple sites. To qualify for the training attendees must be full-time TDM facilitators, significant back-ups or supervisors of facilitators. Attendance preference is given to anchor site staff who meet the qualifications, if they register at least 6 weeks before the scheduled training

date. Thereafter, training slots are open to network sites on a space available basis.

Six to eight weeks before the training, the location will be announced based upon the home site of the majority of registered participants. The first quarter training was held Feb.12-16 in Phoenix, with Sharon Meyer as the trainer.

Future training dates and trainers are:

- May 14-18 with Stacey Saunders in NYC
- September 17-21 with Fred Harris
- November 5-9 with Sharon Meyer

To register for a future training, have your F2F coordinator send your name, agency, position and date preference to TDMnewsletter@bex.net

Are You Suffering From Model Drift?



You adopt a new practice (maybe TDM?), with great effort and fanfare. Reality intrudes. Resource challenges, staff resistance, distracted leadership or other causes, over time and sometimes imperceptibly, lead to shifts in practice, expectations or accountability. Your system has been stricken with the dreaded "Model Drift," which commonly occurs as a system tries to integrate new practices into an already existing way of doing business.

So, thinking of TDM, why is model drift a problem, if generally good work seems to be happening? One way to think about the question is this: Family to Family is based on the belief that certain strong principles, values and practices, if faithfully demonstrated, will work synergistically to result in better outcomes for kids and families. The F2F "movement," of which we are all members, seeks to test this theory of change. If it holds up, we can replicate our efforts and thereby greatly expand the potential for better lives for the families our systems touch.

It's hard to prove that F2F (or

TDM, one of its core strategies) works if every site tweaks its key elements to reflect local politics or preferences. Hence, the development of defining "Key Elements" for TDM (and the other core strategies — see the F2F website) which every F2F site is expected to adopt to their best ability when they "build TDM."

TDM consists of specific key elements that are characteristic and critical to its function. Modification or elimination of any of these elements compromises not only the basic principles upon which TDM is based but that of the entire Family to Family belief system of including families in making decisions regarding the safety and care of their children.

In order to evaluate how "true" to the TDM model your current program practices are for making decisions about the custody and placement of children, we suggest that you "go back to basics" by examining what is current practice at your site against the Key Elements of TDM (handout received in training or available from your TDM TA).

Review of your site's protocol is also helpful. Are you sticking to what you originally outlined or have you allowed practice to change to the extent that the "alterations" are now common practice rather than (perhaps) exceptions to the rule?

Look for additional articles on this topic in future issues of "The Facilitator."

HOLLY Continued From Page 2

woman with a DV liaison's number was drawn. Mrs. Smith was pleased to discover that the liaison would provide her services since Mrs. Smith believed that DV services were only available if she entered a shelter.

Mrs. Smith shared her fear that she would lose her children, as her husband had threatened for years, if CPS became involved. She said that she never imagined the help and acceptance that she received from the TDM team.

Holly Baker is a TDM Facilitator in Maricopa County, AZ

"Engaging Youth" Curriculum Coming

We believe deeply in giving youth "voice and choice" at the TDM table. That's why we carefully track their invitation to and attendance at all TDMs affecting them. Yet it can be challenging to facilitate a TDM when youth are present. We now have a one-day training to provide facilitators with tips on successfully engaging youth at TDM. Some benefits for Facilitators who attend include increased:

- Commitment to the value and importance of engaging youth;
- Understanding of personal characteristics that can affect a youth's response;
- Skill in managing group dynamics and intervening successfully with negative behaviors;
- Ability to lead the team toward engaging youth at the TDM table.

Ask your TDM TA about scheduling this training at your site in 2007.

SAVE THE DATE

FIFTH ANNUAL TDM FACILITATOR CONFERENCE

AUGUST 7 - 9, 2007

RENAISSANCE HOTEL
DENVER, COLORADO

COMPLETE DETAILS WILL BE COMING SOON

See what's new (or review what's old but still good) at the AECF website: www.aecf.org The website has been recently updated so after you enter major initiatives, click on Family to Family, under the resources heading look for TDM material below Building Community Partnerships in Child Welfare.



Name the Newsletter

OK, so we initiated this newsletter—not bad, eh? But maybe we fell a bit short in naming it.

Would you like to claim this newsletter's naming rights? If so, submit your best idea for a name for the newsletter. If we get enough suggestions, in our

next issue we will print all nominees and ask readers to vote for their favorite. If your title is chosen, we will celebrate your ingenuity and make you famous (at least to all who read this publication.)

Submit your title suggestion to TDMnewsletter@bex.net by 09.01.07

We Want to Hear From You

Be part of the next newsletter!

Participate by sending your questions, ideas, site news, tips, TDM-related articles, etc. Articles offered for publication should reflect good TDM practice and not exceed 300 words. Publication choices are based upon relevance to TDM Facilitators and Supervisors. Contributions may be edited for brevity or clarity.

Deadline for submission is 9.01.07.

Contact us at:

TDMnewsletter@bex.net

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