

Family to Family Key Elements Team Decision Making

➤ Strategy	Team Decision Making
➤ Goal	To involve birth families and community members, along with resource families, service providers and agency staff, in all placement decisions, to ensure a network of support for the child and the adults who care for them.
➤ Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child deserves a family • Every family needs the support of the community • Public child welfare agencies need community partners
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group can be more effective in decision making than an individual. • Families are the experts on themselves. • When families are respectfully included in the decision making process, they are capable of identifying and participating in addressing their needs. • Members of the family’s own community add value to the process by serving as natural allies to the family and experts on the community’s resources.
➤ Key Elements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A TDM meeting, including birth parents and youth, is held for ALL decisions involving child removal, change of placement, and reunification/other permanency plan. 2. The TDM meeting is held BEFORE the child’s move occurs, or in cases of imminent risk, by the next working day, and always before the initial court hearing in cases of removal. 3. Neighborhood-based community representatives are invited by the public agency to participate in all TDM meetings, especially those regarding possible child removal. 4. The meeting is led by a skilled, immediately accessible, internal facilitator, who is not a case-carrying social worker or line supervisor. 5. Information about each meeting, including participants, location, and recommendations, is collected and ultimately linked to data on child & family outcomes, in order to ensure continuing self evaluation of the TDM process and its effectiveness. 6. Each TDM meeting resulting in a child’s removal serves as a springboard for the planning of an “icebreaker” family team meeting, ideally to be held in conjunction with the first family visit, so that the birth-foster parent relationship can be initiated.

Family to Family Key Elements Self Evaluation

➤ Strategy	Self-Evaluation
➤ Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a comprehensive baseline perspective on agency performance using the nine Family to Family outcomes. • To create a capability for determining how changes in agency policies and practices, especially those related to key Family to Family strategies, are affecting those outcomes.
➤ Values	<p>Self-evaluation is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focused on outcomes; • carried out by a diverse team of child welfare managers and staff, neighborhood partners, and private providers; and • supported by the investment of human and other resources in acquiring technical expertise in analysis and data management.
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal data that capture the experiences of all children served by the child welfare agency provide the most reliable estimates of where the agency stands on the outcomes emphasized by Family to Family. • The responsibility to use data to understand agency and provider performance is shared by all staff and is not just the job of data managers and analysts.
➤ Key Elements	<p>Self-evaluation seeks to enhance data resources and to develop an ongoing process for using data to help make policy and practice decisions.</p> <p>Data Resource Key Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop within 6 months a longitudinal database that describes baseline performance relative to Family to Family outcomes; • Establish a process for updating the baseline database every 6 months after the initial baseline is established; • Develop indicators that allow analysis of whether: (1) siblings are placed together; and (2) children are placed in their own neighborhoods; and • Work with strategy teams to develop process data that track the implementation of key strategies, with appropriate benchmarks identified for each strategy. <p>Self-Evaluation Process Key Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a self-evaluation team (SET) representing three key perspectives—frontline (agency staff and community partners), data management, and analysis; • Develop a concrete and well-defined linkage between the SET and top management so that managers act to reinforce self-evaluation; and • Establish a regular schedule for SET meetings and adjust agency participants’ assignments to accommodate their commitment to self-evaluation efforts.

**Family to Family Key Elements
Building Community Partnerships**

➤ Strategy	Building Community Partnerships
➤ Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child deserves a family • Every family needs the support of their community • Public Child Welfare Agencies need community partners
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All neighborhoods have strengths. Every community has a history, legacy, and celebrations that should be acknowledged and respected • Youth and children want to be with families in their neighborhoods. • A culturally sensitive network of family foster care in communities in which children have lived will accelerate reunification or other permanency plans
➤ Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish a strong network of neighborhood based resource families • To ensure that community representatives are present at every TDM meeting. • To identify and enhance services and supports that are accessible financially, culturally and geographically for all families who live there. • To analyze and respond to child welfare data • To reduce the overrepresentation of African American children, other children of color and poor children in the child welfare system
➤ Key Elements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of a Community Partnership Work Group to assist the agency director in creating, implementing and evaluating this strategy • Participation of community partners in all four F2F strategy work groups, along with the public child welfare agency staff • Sharing of data for the nine F2F outcomes with community partners to initiate meaningful dialogue for the partnership. . • A tracking tool is developed to measure attendance by community and its impact on outcomes • Ongoing recruitment and support of resource families in the neighborhoods of focus. • Funding is channeled through contracts with grassroots community groups for the implementation of child welfare activities in neighborhoods of focus. • Child welfare activities move into the community (i.e. Family visits, TDMs, Departmental/supervisory meetings, reunification celebrations, pre-service trainings, etc.)

**Family to Family Key Elements
Recruitment, Development and Support Strategy**

➤ Strategy	Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families
➤ Goal	To assure that children who cannot be protected in their own home will be placed with a safe and stable family member or with a family from their own community or neighborhood.
➤ Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child deserves a family for protection, nurturance and permanency. • Every family needs the support of their community. • Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWA) need community partners.
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource families provide the most valuable service we have to offer children in out of home care. These families need the support of all Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWA) staff, community partners and contract service providers in order to provide protection, stability and nurturance to these children. • There are strong, nurturing family and community members who will step forward to care for those children who cannot be protected in their own homes if we inform them of the need and provide them with support. • Birth families, youth and resource families are experts on their own experiences and can serve as valuable partners in recruitment, training and developing resource families, PCWA staff and contract providers. • Data drives the Recruitment, Development and Support (RDS) process, providing information about the children in out-of-home care and information about how the children and resource families move through the system so that practice adjustments can be continually made. • The most successful recruitment efforts target potential caregivers for those children most often left behind (e.g. teens and sibling groups) as well as the neighborhoods with the highest rate of child welfare reports. This mode of recruitment is personal and leaves a residue of good will with the community. General awareness media campaigns may attract more attention but there is little evidence that they result in significant gains in the number of foster and adoptive families. Media campaigns can best be used to inform the community of the needs of children in care and identify the areas of greatest need.
➤ Key Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, knowledgeable PCWA leaders model and promote a culture of respect, support and empathy for current and prospective resource families. Agency policies, staff evaluations and the criteria for promotions reflect this culture. • All PCWA staff understand the meaning of RIEB: Recruitment is everyone's business. They know and show that recruitment begins with respect and support for the current, prospective and re-recruited resource families. • The RDS activities are community-based and located in areas with high child welfare intake to ensure that recruited families reflect the race, ethnicity and culture of children coming into care.

- The PCWA staff works with neighborhood partners, youth, birth families and resource families to establish a well-developed system of neighborhood-based family care to meet the needs of all children coming into care, including teens and sibling groups.
- Placement services and supports offered to families are based on the needs of the children. The placement process is conducted in a manner that is respectful and supportive of the children and families involved.
- Resource families, social workers, youth, community partners, and birth families work as a team in every step of the process leading to reunification or another permanency goal. They participate in placement decisions at Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings; they have an opportunity to play a major role in recruitment, training, and placement and they serve as active members of policy development work groups.
- A meeting between the caseworker, resource family, and birth parent is held within three days following all new placements or any change of placement. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the two sets of parents and to give them an opportunity to exchange any information that will benefit the child. These meetings have different names in different locations (e.g. Icebreakers or Family Team Meetings) but the goal is always to begin to build a bridge between the birth and resource families for the good of the child.
- In order to assist the resource families in caring for the children placed with them, all child-placing agencies practice full disclosure by securing and providing to those resource families all information about the child in their care prior to and throughout the time the child is with them.
- The PCWA takes a leadership role in partnering with contract agencies involved with all aspects of RDS work in order to implement the values, goals, and strategies of Family to Family.
- Training for new and experienced resource families is relevant, participatory and accurately describes the experience of resource families. It is accessible geographically and culturally. Foster youth, birth and resource families function as co-trainers sharing their experience and their lessons learned.