

MRS!

INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF NORTH CAROLINA'S MULTIPLE RESPONSE SYSTEM

In this Issue: Child and Family Team Meetings for Teens in Foster Care **1** Upcoming Training Events **2** The ABC's of Including Children in CFTs **3** Don't Miss the 2008 MRS Institute **3** Benefits of CFTs: What the Research Says **4**

July 2008

Child and Family Team Meetings for Teens in Foster Care

Under MRS, county DSS agencies hold Child and Family Team meetings (CFTs) with families involved with child welfare services. The primary functions of these meetings are to engage the family and other interested parties in joint decision-making and to provide the family with support. These meetings address the family's strengths and needs and how these affect the child's safety, permanence, and well-being. Each meeting also results in a plan that specifies what must occur to help the family safely parent the children.

Child and Family Team meetings occur soon after the decision is made to substantiate or reach a finding of "in need of services." CFTs are used with the family throughout the life of the family's case, even if it is unnecessary to remove the child from the home. Family-centered meetings of this type offer a host of potential benefits to families, children, and the professionals who serve them.

But what about meetings with older youth in foster care who, for whatever reason, don't have parents or birth family members who can attend CFTs with them? How should agencies approach CFTs when the "family" in question is a single teenager, a "family of one"?

CFTs and "Solo" Teens

Even if their birth family is not in the picture, most teens in care have some kind of support system they can call upon during a CFT, so the "family of one" situation doesn't come up all that often. Yet it does occur. Child welfare agencies need to have a formalized approach that ensures these youths' voices are reflected in their plans and that supports are set in place with their involvement. Unfortunately, there are still agencies in North Carolina that hold case planning meetings that are agency-focused, implemented without the involvement of youth, and that do not insist on the youth's and the youth's supporters' involvement.

Joan McAllister, LINKS Coordinator for the state of North Carolina, says, "I believe that youth who are, *de facto*, a family of one should also have CFTs that involve an objective facilitator, the youth's chosen support persons, community providers, and agency personnel."

CFTs play a central role North Carolina's efforts to ensure youth and families are involved in the case planning process.

MRS Meetings

Meetings will be held from 10 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

East

July 30
Johnston Co. DSS
Smithfield, NC

September 30
Onslow Co. DSS
Jacksonville, NC

Central

July 24
Moore Co. DSS
Carthage, NC

September 10
Orange Co. DSS
Hillsborough, NC

West

July 23
St. John's Church
Asheville, NC

Due to the MRS Learning Institute no meetings will be held in August.

For details about meeting locations and directions, contact Holly McNeill 828/757-5672 holly.mcneill@ncmail.net or consult the MRS Calendar on Google at <http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=multipleresponsesystem@gmail.com>

continued next page

Training Dates

Shared Parenting

October 1-2
Greensboro
Contact: Elaine Highsmith
336/954-1747
(fax) 336/954-1750

November 17-18
Kinston
Contact: Betty Williford
252/520-2413
(fax) 252/520-2417

Vol. 3, No. 3 • July 2008

MRS! is published quarterly by the NC Division of Social Services and the Jordan Institute for Families at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work. This issue was created by Patrick Betancourt, Holly McNeill, and John McMahon.

Comments?

Contact Patrick Betancourt, Family Support and Child Welfare Services, NC Division of Social Services, 2408 Mail Service Center, 325 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh, NC 27699-2408, Courier: 56-20-25, 919/334-1104; patrick.betancourt@ncmail.net

Online

www.ncdhs.gov/dss/mrs

CFTs for Teens *continued from page 1*

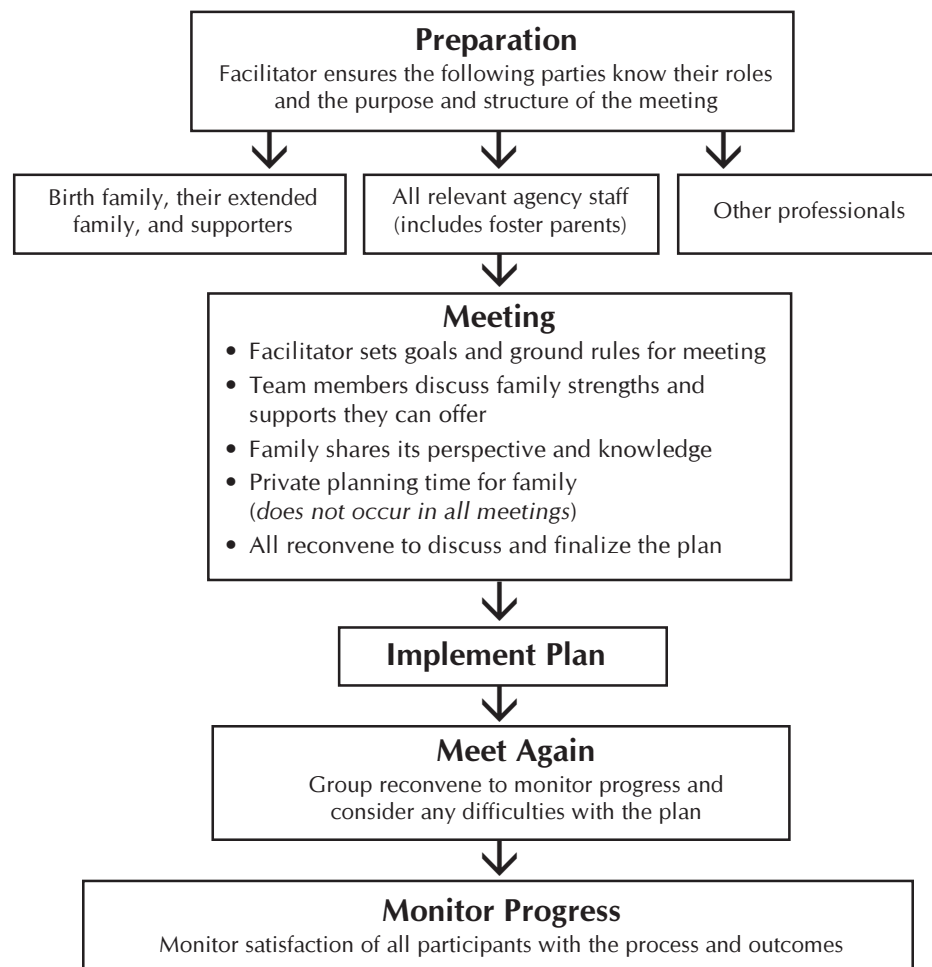
For agencies seeking to improve their practice in this area, especially if the adolescents in question resist or are indifferent to being involved in their own CFT, McAllister has this advice:

- Tell the young person to invite whomever they wish. Don't screen out anyone. They will be the persons to whom the youth goes for support, regardless of our opinion. They should be at the table.
- If the youth refuses to come, or says he or she can't miss school, etc., postpone the meeting until the youth can come. This will send the message that the meeting is useless without their involvement and input. Can you imagine a more powerful (or empowering) message to send to a youth in foster care?

Adapting the CFT Process

The figure below illustrates the general structure of Child and Family Team meetings in child welfare in North Carolina. Many practitioners have successfully adapted this process to hold CFTs with "solo" teens. *continued next page*

Overview of a Child and Family Team Meeting



CFTs for Teens *continued from page 2*

For instance, Jackie Brown, LINKS coordinator for Catawba County DSS, describes her approach this way:

An agenda is formulated at the beginning of the meeting with the youth, capturing issues they wish to address. Each participant in the room signs the confidentiality form and we then proceed. The youth takes the lead. Everyone has a chance to be heard. Feedback and outcomes are written under each heading for the note takers. Copies of the notes are given to the youth for reference. Meetings are held around the youth's schedule to ensure that she is present.

Brown believes this approach helps meetings with "solo" teens go smoothly, leading to greater buy-in from the youth and other parties and, ultimately, more positive outcomes.

Holly Yaeger, LINKS Coordinator for New Hanover County DSS, says that in her experience, follow-up CFT meetings are especially valuable because they reinforce supports and empower teens. In follow-up meetings, Yaeger says, "The social worker can get [teens] to work toward a goal and give the power to the teen to make a plan that works for them."

To learn more about involving teens in CFTs, attend the *The ABC's of Including Children in Child and Family Teams*, which is described below.

Training Resource: The ABC's of Including Children in Child and Family Teams

Working in partnership with children and families is a central philosophy of the North Carolina Multiple Response System. Therefore, it is not a question of WHETHER children should be involved in Child and Family Teams, but rather a question of HOW. Using a wide range of activities and materials, this one-day skill-building event helps participants use strategies for preparing children for family meetings, making sure their voices are heard, and ensuring their safe participation. This course is sponsored by the NC Division of Social Services.

- **October 3, 2008**
Location: Burgaw, NC
To register contact: Ashley Duncan
(919/513-0488; fax: 919/513-7980)
- **November 20, 2008**
Location: Charlotte, NC
To register contact: Donna Pearson
(828/433-7187; fax: 828/430-8762)

The 2008 MRS Learning Institute

The fourth Multiple Response System Learning Institute will take place August 18 through 20, 2008 at the Sheraton Four Seasons in Greensboro, North Carolina. *Working in Harmony: Families, Community, and Social Services* will offer a variety of skill- and knowledge-building sessions for all areas of Children's and Family Services. Workshops will be punctuated by keynote speakers Jeanne Robertson and Jimmy Wayne, a former NC foster child, who will share his experiences through story and song. For more information or to get a registration brochure, call Holly McNeill at 828/757-5672.

Training Dates

Child Forensic Interviewing

To register contact:

Clarence Lamb
919/334-1178
(fax) 919/334-1173

September 29-October 3
Kinston

October 13-17
Charlotte

November 17-21
Fayetteville

December 8-12
Greensboro

CPS Assessments in Child Welfare Services

August 15-18
Fayetteville
Contact: Amy Campbell
910/677-0460
(fax) 910/677-0468

September 2-5
Greensboro
Contact: Elaine Highsmith
336/954-1747
(fax) 336/954-1750

October 21-24
Fayetteville
Contact: Amy Campbell
910/677-0460
(fax) 910/677-0468

December 9-12
Charlotte
Contact: Bonnie English
704/395-2110
(fax) 704/395-2101

Benefits of Child and Family Team Meetings: What the Research Says

by Dr. Joan Pennell

Studies in the United States and elsewhere have found that holding family meetings is associated with:



- Identifying and engaging the natural networks of children, youth, and their families to widen the circle of supports (Pennell & Anderson, 2005);
- Including white, minority, indigenous, and Hispanic/Latino populations in a culturally respectful manner (Glode & Wein, 2007; Waites, Macgowan, Pennell, Carlton-LaNey, & Weil, 2004);
- Encouraging the participation of children and youth and creating circles of support for youth leaving care (Crampton & Pennell, in press; Merkel-Holguin, Tinworth, & Horner, 2007);
- Involving fathers or the paternal side of the family in planning (Pennell, 2006; Veneski & Kemp, 2000);
- Involving families and their informal supports in meaningful and participatory decision-making processes (Pennell, 2006);
- Raising family satisfaction with child welfare services and improving family-worker relationships (Duke University, 2006, 2007; Merkel-Holguin, Nixon, & Burford, 2003);
- Generating plans that are written in a way that reflects the family's culture (Thomas, Berzin, & Cohen, 2005) and encompass a wide range of children's needs that would not normally be included in case plans, such as attendance at church (Titcomb & LeCroy, 2005);
- Creating concurrent plans that place children with relatives while working on returning them to their parents, but with the relatives available to provide long-term care as needed (Desmeules, 2003);
- Keeping siblings together, stabilizing placements, maintaining children in their homes or reunifying families, placing children and teens with relatives or 'like family,' returning children from kinship care to their parents more quickly, and keeping these young people connected with their communities and cultural groups (Edwards & Tinworth, 2006; Merkel-Holguin, Nixon, & Burford, 2003; Morris, 2007; Titcomb & LeCroy, 2005; Walker, 2005);
- Decreasing the overrepresentation of children of color and Hispanic children in foster and institutional care (Crampton & Jackson, 2007; Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2006);
- Achieving these results while increasing the safety of the children (Gunderson, Cahn, & Wirth, 2003) and their mothers (Pennell & Burford, 2000) and without substantially affecting children's safety (Berzin, 2004; Edwards & Tinworth, 2006; Sundell & Vinnerljung, 2004); and
- Achieving these results without raising costs (Pennell, 2005).

Joan Pennell directs the Center for Family & Community Engagement at North Carolina State University

Training Dates

Coaching in the Kitchen: Guiding Parents through Teachable Moments

To register contact:

Donna Walters-Pearson
828/433-7187

(fax) 828/430-8762

August 26-28
Charlotte

September 23-25
Black Mountain

November 4-6
Raleigh

Supervisors Strengthening Staff Performance: Managing Transfer of Learning in the Work Place

To register contact:

Donna Walters-Pearson
828/433-7187

(fax) 828/430-8762

Fayetteville Class
September 11-12
October 13-14

Asheville Class
November 12-13
December 10-11

Understanding and Intervening in Child Neglect

To register contact:

Judy Prophet
704/545-9512

(fax) 704/573-4802

Charlotte
August 14-15

Kinston
September 22-23

References for MRS Newsletter, vol. 3, no. 3 (July 2008)

- Berzin, S. C. (2004, June). *California's waiver demonstration project: Results from an experimental project*. Paper presented at 2004 Conference on Family Group Decision Making, Harrisburg, PA.
- Crampton, D., & Jackson, W. (2007). Family group decision making and the over-representation of children of color in foster care: A case study." *Child Welfare, 86*(3), 51-70.
- Crampton, D., & Pennell, J. (in press). Family-involvement meetings with older children in foster care: Intuitive appeal, promising practices and the challenge of child welfare reform. In B. Kerman, A. N. Maluccio, & M. Freundlich (Eds.), *Achieving permanence for older children and youth in foster care*. Columbia University Press.
- Desmeules, G. H. (2003). *Family group conferencing: A decolonization journey for Aboriginal children & families in child protection services*. Master thesis, Royal Roads University, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.
- Duke University, Center for Child and Family Policy, Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy. (2006, June 30). *Multiple Response System (MRS) evaluation report to the North Carolina Division of Social Services (NCDSS)*. Durham, NC: Author.
- Duke University, Center for Child and Family Policy, Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy. (2007, September 20). *Improving child welfare outcomes through system of care: Family centered meeting survey report 2005-2006 Alamance, Bladen, and Mecklenburg Counties, North Carolina*. Durham, NC: Author.
- Edwards, M., & Tinworth, K. (with Burford, G., & Pennell, J.). (2006). *Family team meeting (FTM) process, outcome, and impact evaluation: Phase II report*. Englewood, CO: American Humane Association.
- Glode, J., & Wien, F. (2007, June). *Respecting Aboriginal families and communities: Lessons from an evaluation research project on FGDM among the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia*. Workshop presented at the annual conference of the American Humane Association on Family Group Decision Making, Washington, DC.
- Gunderson, K., Cahn, K., & Wirth, J. (2003). The Washington State long-term outcome study. *Protecting Children, 18*(1-2), 42-47.
- Merkel-Holguin, L., Nixon, P., & Burford, G. (2003). Promising results, potential new directions: International FGDM research and evaluation in child welfare. *Protecting Children, 18*(1-2), 2-11.
- Merkel-Holguin, L., Tinworth, K., & Horner, A. (2007). Using family group conferencing to achieve permanency for youth. *Protecting Children, 22*(1), 38-49.
- Morris, K. (2007, September). *Camden FGC service: An evaluation of service use and outcomes*. West Midland, United Kingdom: University of Birmingham.
- Pennell, J. (2005). Costs of family group conferencing. Appendix in J. Pennell & G. Anderson (Eds.), *Widening the circle: The practice and evaluation of family group conferencing with children, youths, and their families* (pp. 156-158). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Pennell, J. (2006). Restorative practices and child welfare: Toward an inclusive civil society. In B. Morrison & E. Ahmed (Eds.), *Restorative justice and civil society*, special issue of *Journal of Social Issues, 62*(2), 257-277.
- Pennell, J., & Anderson, G. (Eds.). (2005). *Widening the circle: The practice and evaluation of family group conferencing with children, youths, and their families*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Pennell, J., & Burford, G. (2000). Family group decision making: Protecting children and women. *Child Welfare, 79*(2), 131-158.
- Sundell, K., & Vinnerljung, B. (2004). Outcomes of family group conferencing in Sweden: A 3-year follow-up. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 28*(3), 267-287.
- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. (2006, October). *Family Group Decision-Making: Final Evaluation*. Author. Retrieved December 27, 2006, from http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Documents/about/pdf/2006-10-09_FGDM_Evaluation.pdf
- Thomas, K. L., Berzin, S. C., & Cohen, E. (2005). Fidelity of family group decision making: A content analysis of family conference and case plans in a randomized treatment study. *Protecting Children, 19*(4), 4-15.
- Titcomb, A., & LeCroy, C. (2005). Outcomes of Arizona's family group decision making program. *Protecting Children, 19*(4), 47-53.
- Veneski, W., & Kemp, S. (2000). Families as resources: The Washington State Family Group Conference Project. In G. Burford & J. Hudson (Eds.), *Family group conferences: New directions in community-centered child and family practice* (pp. 312-323). Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Waites, C., Macgowan, M. J., Pennell, J., Carlton-LaNey, I., & Weil, M. (2004). Increasing the cultural responsiveness of family group conferencing. *Social Work, 49*(2), 291-300.
- Walker, L. (2005). A cohort study of 'Ohana conferencing in child abuse and neglect cases. *Protecting Children, 19*(4), 36-46.