

Family Group Conference

Family-centred planning for children's safety and well-being



What is a Family Group Conference?

Family Group Conference is a culturally respectful, family-centred decision-making process that brings together a family group, social worker and other service providers to develop a plan for the safety and well-being of children.

When is a Family Group Conference used?

A Family Group Conference may be used at any time after a social worker has determined that a plan for the safety and well-being of the child(ren) needs to be developed and the social worker and parent(s) have agreed that such a meeting would be appropriate to plan for the child(ren).

Benefits of a Family Group Conference

- Families actively participate in making decisions about the safety and well-being of their children.
- Children are safer by allowing timely decisions to be made.
- Family relationships are strengthened when members work together to find solutions to their challenges.
- Family members are made aware of and have access to resources and services that may help.
- The need for court involvement is decreased.

Main steps of a Family Group Conference

- 1. Referral:** The parent(s) or social worker requests that a Family Group Conference Coordinator facilitate a family-centred planning meeting.
- 2. Preparation:** The Family Group Conference Coordinator works with family members and the social worker to identify potential participants; meets with all participants to discuss the reason for the conference; and prepares them to participate.
- 3. Conference:** Participants meet to review family strengths and concerns related to the safety and well-being of the child(ren). The family group then meets in private to develop a plan for the safety and well-being of the child(ren) and proposes a plan to the supervisor and the social worker.
- 4. Review and evaluation:** The supervisor and the social worker will agree to the proposed plan if it ensures the child's safety and well-being. Once the plan is agreed upon, the participants decide how they will ensure that the plan is followed and is working well.

Who participates?

The Family Group Conference Coordinator works with family members and the social worker to identify participants. Typically, participants include immediate and extended family members, friends and other supportive individuals (such as neighbours, teachers and coaches) as well as service providers, the social worker and the Family Group Conference Coordinator.

How is the family involved?

Families are at the centre of the decision-making, recognizing that they know best what they need to provide for the care and safety of their children. The Department of Social Development believes families should have the opportunity to develop a plan that ensures the safety and well-being of their children.

What is the role of the Family Group Conference Coordinator?

The Family Group Conference Coordinator is a neutral individual who does not have any child welfare decision-making authority; who guides the process and ensures that everyone can safely participate.

What happens after a conference?

The Family Group Conference Coordinator provides a copy of the plan for the care of the child to the participants. The participants, in turn, put the plan into action and share responsibility for monitoring how well it is working and identify any challenges that may arise. The social worker supports participants in putting the plan into action.

For more information, speak with your social worker, a Family Group Conference Coordinator or visit www.gnb.ca/socialdevelopment

