The Philadelphia Department of Human Services
Children and Youth Division
Policy and Procedure Guide

Issue Date: March 23, 2009

TO: All CYD and Provider Social Work Staff

FROM: Dell Meriwether, Deputy Commissioner, CYD
Pamela Mayo, Operations Director

RE: Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Meetings

Effective: Immediately

Purpose
The purpose of this Policy and Procedure Guide is to inform all staff of the policy and procedural requirements for implementing Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) practice.

Discussion
In accordance with recommendations from the Philadelphia Child Welfare Review Panel, and the State's expectation that counties use evidence-based practices, the Department is implementing Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) meetings as a core practice to improve the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and families we serve. **FGDM practice and philosophy embodies a strength-based, family-centered, child-focused, and culturally sensitive approach to working with families in the child welfare system.** Families are engaged and empowered by child welfare agencies to make decisions and develop plans that protect and nurture their children, preventing further abuse and neglect. FGDM establishes a process for families to join with relatives, friends, community partners, and child welfare agency representatives to make better decisions and develop specific, individualized intervention plans to ensure that children are cared for and protected from future harm. The term "family" is interpreted broadly to include extended family members, friends, neighbors, and others identified by the family as potential sources of support. Widening the family circle increases the opportunity to engage more resourceful and dedicated family members as partners in creating solutions and making decisions. Participation in the decision-making process and FGDM meetings will also help families develop essential skills to successfully resolve future problems.

Key elements of effective and successful FGDM meetings include:
- FGDM meetings occur at significant decision-making points in the life of a case.
- Meetings and decisions address safety first with an emphasis on child permanency and well-being.
- "Family team" is defined broadly and inclusively and the family provides input in the selection of family team members.
- Meetings rely on the expertise of family members, service providers, community members, and child welfare staff.
- **Private family time** during the meeting (without the presence of professionals and support people) to allow the family to develop a plan to protect and care for the children.
- Separate and distinct coordination and facilitation of FGDM meetings by trained staff.
- FGDM meetings take place in neutral community-based locations such as churches, community centers, recreation centers, etc.
- Advanced preparation and planning.
- Structured family meetings that are strength based, solution focused, and task oriented.
- Family culture is embraced.

There are four phases in the FGDM process:
- Referral and Acceptance Phase
    - families are given the opportunity to participate in the FGDM process
- Coordination and Preparation Phase

    - a coordinator assists the family in identifying FGDM meeting participants and arranges the meetings.
    - pre-conference meetings are held for all participating professionals.
- Facilitation/FGDM Meeting Phase:
    - FGDM meetings are conducted by a facilitator and have a distinct agenda.
- Post Family Group Decision Making Phase:
    - FGDM coordinator and facilitator will conduct follow-up activities.

POLICY

CYD Social Worker Responsibilities

The CYD social worker **must discuss and offer** FGDM meetings to all CYD parents, caregivers, and older youth (14 yrs and older) when children and youth:

- are at risk of placement;
    - within 10 days after an emergency placement, prior to the adjudicatory hearing;
    - within 30 days prior to a planned placement or change in placement;
- have a change in placement level;
- are at risk of placement disruption;
- are being discharged from placement;
- participate in older youth permanency meetings; and/or
- have other critical issues, e.g. permanency decisions.

FGDM meetings may also be discussed and offered to families whenever safety assessments and decisions result in the development of a CYD Safety Plan.

When there are issues, such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, or criminal history, which may endanger FGDM participants during a meeting, the family should not be referred for FGDM. If the supervisor and/or administrator recommend not referring the family, the decision must be documented in the case record.

Participation in FGDM meetings is voluntary; parents, caregivers, and older youth have the right to choose not to participate in a FGDM meeting.

Upon discussion of the FGDM process with the parents, caregivers, or older youth, the CYD social worker will have the parents, caregivers or older youth sign the "FGDM Meeting Intent Form" indicating acceptance or rejection of the FGDM meeting.

- If the parents, caregivers, or older youth agree to the FGDM meeting, the CYD social worker will proceed with the FGDM meeting referral process.
- If the parents, caregivers, or older youth refuse the FGDM meeting, the CYD social worker will proceed with the appropriate case management intervention, including an informal family meeting and service planning with the family per established policy (CYD Policy Manual 4000 – Service Planning).

The CYD social worker will cooperate with and provide information to the FGDM coordinator in preparation for the FGDM meeting. The CYD social worker will attend all pre-conference meetings and the FGDM meeting.

The CYD social worker will document the results of the FGDM meeting in the case record and file the FGDM Case Plan in the case record.

CYD Supervisor Responsibilities

The CYD supervisor is responsible for discussing with the CYD social worker the appropriateness of a referral for FGDM. If a referral is appropriate, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the referral form is **completed**. Upon receiving the completed referral form, the supervisor is responsible for reviewing and approving the referral. The CYD supervisor will ensure that the social worker provides the FGDM coordinator with requested information. The CYD supervisor will attend the FGDM meeting and pre-conference meetings if the social worker is unable to attend.

Provider Responsibilities

Providers are expected to participate in the FGDM process, monitor the FGDM plan with identified members and ensure that safety needs are being met.

FGDM Coordinator Responsibilities

The FGDM Coordinator will arrange and participate in a pre-conference meeting for all participating professionals; ensure that the identified purpose of the meeting is clarified and understood by all participants; arrange the FGDM meeting; engage and prepare all participants for the FGDM meeting; develop and distribute a FGDM Case Plan at the end of the meeting; ensure follow-up with family and CYD within 30 days of the date of the FGDM meeting; and arrange and participate in a follow-up meeting with key participants no later than 90 days from the date of the initial FGDM meeting; submit a final report to CYD, following the 90 day meeting, which includes the goals, plan, recommendations and results of the FGDM process.

During the FGDM process, the FGDM Coordinator will maintain, at a minimum, weekly e-mail contact with the CYD social worker regarding progress with engaging participants and timeframes for pre-conference and FGDM meeting dates. These e-mails will be copied to the CYD supervisor and administrator, and the FGDM project manager.

FGDM Facilitator Responsibilities

The FGDM facilitator will prepare for the meeting with the FGDM Coordinator. During the meeting the FGDM facilitator will lead the participants through the agenda. At the completion of the meeting the FGDM facilitator will complete and submit a final summary/report based on meeting information, participant interaction, and minutes from the FGDM Coordinator.

PROCEDURE

Initial Referral and Acceptance Process

CYD Social Worker:

The CYD social worker identifies the need(s) for key decisions regarding child(ren)and youth who:

- *are at risk of removal,*
- *have a change in placement level,*
- *are at risk of placement disruption,*
- *are being discharged from placement,*
- *participate in an older youth permanency meeting, and*
- *have other critical issues, e.g. permanency decisions.*

The CYD social worker will discuss the identified need with the social work supervisor to determine the appropriateness of the family for an emergency or non-emergency FGDM. The need for an emergency FGDM meeting might exist where there is a crisis and the family would benefit from the FGDM process.

- *For an emergency FGDM meeting, the CYD social worker will contact the parent/caregiver to discuss the FGDM process and offer an opportunity to participate in a FGDM meeting within 1 business day of the determination of appropriateness for an emergency FGDM meeting.*
- *For a non-emergency FGDM meeting, the CYD social worker will contact the parent/caregiver to discuss the FGDM process and offer an opportunity to participate in a FGDM meeting within 3 business days of the determination of appropriateness for a non-emergency FGDM meeting.*
    - *After discussing the FGDM meeting with the parent, caregiver, or older youth, the CYD social worker will have the parent, caregiver, or older youth sign the **Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Meeting Intent Form**. Make a copy of the completed, signed form and place in the case record.*

If the parent/caregiver or older youth reject(s) the meeting, the CYD social worker will continue with case planning as appropriate and document the rejection of the FGDM meeting.

If the parent/caregiver or older youth accept, the CYD social worker will proceed with the FGDM meeting referral process.

- *for emergency FGDM meetings, the referral will be completed within 1 business day of the acceptance of the FGDM process*
- *for non-emergency meetings, the referral will be completed within 2 business days of the acceptance of the FGDM process.*

To complete the referral process, the CYD social worker will:

- *inform the social work supervisor by phone or email, and document in the case record.*
- *complete the referral form:*
    - *Go to DHS Central, click "Referrals", a pop-up will appear to the right, choose "FGDM". On the next screen enter the case number and the case name, click on "Submit". The electronic Referral Form will appear. Complete the electronic referral form then click on "Submit." The electronic referral will automatically be sent to the social work supervisor for approval or rejection.*
    - *Print a copy of the electronic referral form and place in the case record.*

CYD Social Work Supervisor:
The CYD social work supervisor will discuss with the CYD social worker identified need(s) for a FGDM meeting. If the family circumstances determine that a FGDM referral is needed, the CYD social work Supervisor will:

- *Instruct the CYD social worker to contact the family to determine if they are willing to participate.*
- *If the family agrees to a FGDM meeting, the CYD social worker will complete the FGDM referral form. If the CYD social worker is unable to complete the FGDM referral form, the social work supervisor will be responsible for completing the referral form.*
- *Upon receiving the electronic referral form from the CYD social worker, the supervisor reviews and approves the referral. Once approved the case will appear as "approved" on the FGDM database.*

When the supervisor approves the referral, it is automatically sent to the FGDM Provider Supervisor.

FGDM Project Manager:
In managing the FGDM database, the FGDM Project Manager

- *will review referrals that have been made;*
- *will contact CYD social worker or social work supervisor to confirm receipt of the referral;*
- *will, if necessary, clarify or obtain additional referral information.*
- *will prepare necessary reports.*

FGDM Provider Supervisor:
Upon receipt of the referral, the FGDM provider supervisor accepts the referral, which now appears as "in process" on the database.

- *The FGDM provider supervisor will assign a FGDM coordinator.*
- *The FGDM provider supervisor will notify the FGDM project manager, CYD social worker, social work supervisor, and social work administrator, via email, with the name and phone number of the FGDM coordinator assigned to the family.*
- *When the FGDM meeting has been completed, the provider will update the database to show "complete" and the Family Plan will be attached, so that there will be an electronic record of all the plans produced through FGDM Meetings.*

<u>Coordination and Preparation Phase</u>

FGDM Coordinator:
Upon receipt of the referral, the FGDM coordinator will:

- *contact CYD and provider agency social workers within 1 business day to obtain case content and participant information,*
- *conduct face-to-face interviews with parent(s)/caregiver to explain purpose and process of the FGDM meeting,*
    - *If the FGDM Coordinator is unable to contact the parent(s)/caregiver(s) after 3 face-to-face attempts, or if the parent(s)/caregiver(s) refuse(s) to continue with the FGDM referral process, the Coordinator will immediately notify the referring CYD social worker and supervisor.*
- *assist family to identify who to invite and participate in the meeting, and engage those identified persons,*
- *review the FGDM Case Plan form with the family, assisting them to understand the document, its use within the process, and their role in completing the form,*
- *explore all avenues for resource attendees,*
- *address any safety issues that may impact the FGDM process,*
- *identify potential services needed and engage appropriate specialists,*
- *prepare family and community member participants, DHS staff, provider agency staff and other service providers about the reason for the FGDM meeting and what their role will be in accomplishing the goal of the meeting,*

- *arrange the logistical aspects of the meetings, including date, time, location, transportation, translation services, and child care,*
- *conduct a pre-conference meeting for participating professionals to prepare them for their roles within the meeting and to discuss any outstanding issues or concerns.*
    - *A pre-conference meeting must be held prior to the FGDM meeting*
    - *Pre-conference meetings are to occur 1 week prior to the FGDM meeting.*
- *notify all participants of the FGDM meeting, to include the CYD Social Worker and the CYD chain of command (including the FGDM Project Manager), the Provider Social Worker and Provider Supervisor.*
- *engage the FGDM facilitator in ongoing dialogue regarding the family needs and situation.*
- *maintain, during the FGDM process, at a minimum, weekly e-mail contact with the CYD social worker regarding progress with engaging participants and timeframes for pre-conference and FGDM meeting dates. These e-mails will be copied to the CYD supervisor and administrator, and the FGDM project manager.*

Facilitation and FGDM Meeting

FGDM Facilitator:

- *Prior to the FGDM meeting, the FGDM facilitator will engage in pre-meeting preparation, which includes meeting with the FGDM coordinator to understand the needs of the family.*
- *On the day of the FGDM meeting, the FGDM facilitator will lead the group through the FGDM agenda, engaging all participants in the discussions.*

FGDM Meeting:

The FGDM meeting consists of:

- *Welcome & Introductions*
    - *The meeting will begin with family traditions/prayers/rituals.*
    - *All meeting participants will introduce themselves and state their relationship to the child(ren).*
    - *The facilitator will:*
        - *review meeting purpose and agenda,*
        - *instruct the participants on confidentiality, privacy of group discussions, mandated reporters, and court access to the FGDM plan, and*
        - *state ground rules, e.g. full group participation, emphasize respect and listening, focus on safety of the child(ren).*
- *Information Sharing*
    - *Beginning with each family member, participants will share their understanding of the purpose and hopes for the outcome of the meeting.*
- *Child Update*
    - *Parents and foster care/residential staff share updated information about the child(ren), e.g. what children are doing well and what is not working well.*
- *Family Strengths*
    - *First the family members, then the other group members will identify strengths of the family, which should include strengths that have been used in the past to address safety concerns.*
- *Safety Concerns/Risk Factors/Other Concerns*
    - *Family members will state their concerns as it relates to the FGDM meeting purpose.*
    - *The CYD social worker presents the safety concerns, risk factors, and other concerns for the child(ren) and expectations for safe outcomes.*
    - *The CYD social worker states any bottom line issues that the FGDM meeting must address.*
- *Identification and Discussion of Needs*
    - *The group will discuss what informal and formal resources the family needs to resolve safety concerns.*
    - *Service providers may use this time to explain services and resources available to the family that will help the family complete and implement their plan.*
- *Private Family Time*
    - *The family is given private time, which will provide a safe venue for family members to freely communicate and develop a family plan that addresses the safety needs and meeting purpose.*
    - *The family is asked to choose a leader who will guide the discussion and record the family plan on a flip chart.*

- *When the family concludes their private family time, they will inform the facilitator to invite the rest of the participants back into the discussion.*

- *Plan Creation*
  - *The plan should contain the goals, tasks, and assignments for the family, a crisis plan as well as contingency plans, which will be activated if needed.*
  - *The plan should include* ***Who/What/When/How.***
  - *The family will present their plan to the participants of the FGDM meeting.*
  - *The CYD social worker is given the opportunity to consider the family plan.*
    - *If the CYD social worker has concerns regarding the plan, the CYD social worker explains the concerns and suggests ways of revising the plan to ensure that the meeting purpose is achieved.*
  - *If the parent(s) does not agree with the plan, the parent(s) will express their concerns regarding the plan.*
    - *When there is a disagreement with the plan, the facilitator will assist the family and CYD social worker with achieving an agreement.*
    - *Upon agreement with the family plan the CYD social worker will inform families who are court-involved, that a copy of the FGDM plan may be submitted to the court at the next court hearing.*
- *Closing*
  - *At the end of the FGDM meeting, the family determines how they wish to end the meeting, e.g. special prayer, ritual, song, moment of silence, or other act meaningful to the family.*

<u>Post Family Group Decision Making Phase</u>

- *The coordinator will provide meeting participants with a copy of the FGDM plan according to the following:*
  - ***Pages 1 & 3*** *of the plan will be given to parents, youth, and CYD at the conclusion of the meeting.*
  - ***The entire plan (pages 1 – 4)*** *will be mailed to all other participants within 5 days.*
- *The CYD social worker will integrate the objectives and tasks of the FGDM case plan into the Family Service Plan (FSP).*
- *The CYD social worker will document the result of the FGDM meeting in the case record and file the FGDM case plan in the case record.*
- *For court-involved cases, the CYD social worker may submit the FGDM plan to the court along with the FSP for the next court date.*
- *The coordinator will conduct phone follow-up with the family and CYD within 30 days.*
- *The coordinator will arrange and participate in a follow-up meeting with the family no later than 90 days after the initial FGDM meeting.*
- *Following the 90 day meeting the provider will submit a final report to CYD which includes the goals, plan, recommendations and results of the FGDM process.*

Questions regarding this policy and procedure guide can be addressed to:

Patricia C. Ripoll, Policy and Planning Administrator	215-683-4112
Bari Rose-Epstein, Program Supervisor	215-683-4116
June de Vries, Program Analyst	215 683-4117

Questions regarding the FGDM process can be addressed to:

Marlo Thomas, FGDM Project Manager	215-683-6111

City of Philadelphia
Department of Human Services
Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Meeting Intent Form

Family Name: _____

Case Number: _____

I/We met/spoke with _____, DHS Social Worker and discussed the purpose and process of the Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) meeting.

I/We understand that FGDM meetings establish a process for families to join with relatives, friends, and child welfare agency representatives to make better decisions and develop specific, individualized intervention plans to ensure that my child(ren)'s safety, permanency, and well-being.

I/We that I/we have been offered the opportunity to participate in a FGDM. I/We confirm that:

☐ I/we wish to participate in a FGDM meeting

☐ I/we do not wish to participate in a FGDM meeting

_____	_____	_____
Parent/Caregiver Name (Print)	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Parent/Caregiver Name (Print)	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
DHS Social Worker (Print)	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
DHS Supervisor (Print)	Signature	Date

The Philadelphia Department of Human Services
Children and Youth

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING (FGDM) CASE PLAN

Family Name:	*Case Number*:	*Date Family Accepted for Service:*
☐ *Initial FGDM Plan* ☐ *Revised FGDM Plan*	*Date of Initial/Revised Plan:*	*Date of Next Plan Review:*

Identifying Information

Suffix(es)	***Children's Names***	***Subject of FGDM? Yes or No***

Parent(s)/Guardian	***Address***	***Telephone No.***
Mother:		
Father(s):		
Significant Other(s) (identify relationship)		

Permanency Goal(s) Recommendations as a Result of the FGDM Meeting

☐ *Child remains in the home.*

- ☐ The child is at imminent risk of removal from his/her home. Absent effective preventive services, foster care is the planned placement for the child. Foster care is defined as foster family homes, kinship foster homes, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child-care institutions and pre-adoptive homes.
- ☐ Absent effective preventive services provided for in this service plan, placement outside of the home other than in foster care is the planned placement for the child (hospitalization, secure residential treatment, juvenile detention or other secure juvenile facilities).

☐ *Child is in substitute care with the goal of:*	*Child Suffix(es)*	*Child's concurrent goal is:*	*Child Suffix(es)*
☐ *Return to parent, guardian, or custodian.*			
☐ *Place for adoption.*		☐ *Place for adoption.*	
☐ *Placement with a permanent legal custodian.*		☐ *Placement with a permanent legal custodian*	
☐ *Place permanently with a fit and willing relative.*		☐ *Place permanently with a fit and willing relative.*	
☐ *Placement in another planned living arrangement.*		☐ *Placement in another planned living arrangement.*	

Family Name:	*Case Number:*	*Date of Initial/Revised Plan:*
PURPOSE of FGDM MEETING - *We are here today to talk about:*		
SAFETY FACTORS - *The child(ren) are not safe because:*		
RISK FACTORS *-The child(ren) might not be safe in the future unless the family takes care of:*		
OTHER CONCERNS – *There are some things that aren't making the child(ren) unsafe, but probably need to change:*		
FAMILY STRENGTHS - *Identify strengths by family member, e.g. "Mother's strength is…":*		
FAMILY NEEDS – *Identify needs by family member, e.g. "Mother needs…":*		

Family Name:	*Date of Initial/Revised Plan:*

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING CASE PLAN

OBJECTIVE:

Who	***Will Do What Task***	***By When***	***How This Task Will Be Monitored***	***Who Will Monitor***	***Date to be Reviewed***

OBJECTIVE:

Who	***Will Do What Task***	***By When***	***How This Task Will Be Monitored***	***Who Will Monitor***	***Date to be Reviewed***

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Family Name:	*Date of Initial/Revised Plan:*

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING CASE PLAN

OBJECTIVE:

Who	***Will Do What Task***	***By When***	***How This Task Will Be Monitored***	***Who Will Monitor***	***Date to be Reviewed***

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Who	***Will Do What Task***	***By When***	***How This Task Will Be Monitored***	***Who Will Monitor***	***Date to be Reviewed***

Family Name:	*Date of Initial/Revised Plan:*

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING CASE PLAN

OBJECTIVE:

Who	***Will Do What Task***	***By When***	***How This Task Will Be Monitored***	***Who Will Monitor***	***Date to be Reviewed***

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OBJECTIVE:

Who	***Will Do What Task***	***By When***	***How This Task Will Be Monitored***	***Who Will Monitor***	***Date to be Reviewed***

Family Name:	*Date of Initial/Revised Plan*:

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING MEETING SUMMARY

Date Meeting Held:	*Coordinator:*	
Facilitator(s):	*Referring Worker:*	
Location of Meeting:	*Time of Meeting:*	*Length of Meeting:*

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

RESOURCES IDENTIFIED IN THE MEETING:

PERSONS WHO ATTENDED:

PERSONS INVITED WHO DID NOT ATTEND:	**PROVIDED INFORMATION:**
	☐
	☐
	☐

SIGNATURES:

Mother:	***Date:***	***Child(14 years of age & older)***			***Date:***
Father:	***Date:***	***Father:***	***Date:***	***Father:***	***Date:***
Coordinator:	***Date:***	***Facilitator:***			***Date:***
DHS Social Worker:	***Date:***	***Provider Social Worker:***			***Date:***