NCCD Children's Research Center

Implementing Team Decision Making

☐ 1 **Identify a Project Manager and Create Steering Team**
Start with forming an internal steering team. Later, include external partners.

☐ 2 **Design a Communication Plan**
Articulate why the agency is embracing Team Decision Making (TDM).

☐ 3 **Assess Existing Team Processes**
Streamline, build a continuum, and avoid redundancy.

☐ 4 **Develop Work Plan With Timeline**
Detailed rollout plan with timeframes and clear responsibilities.

☐ 5 **Analyze Numbers**
Examine placement data to estimate staffing and resource needs and predict likely number of meetings per week and month.

☐ 6 **Review Emergency and After-Hours Procedures**
Assess and adjust to integrate with TDM.

☐ 7 **Build Firewalls to Ensure All Families Receive TDM Meetings Appropriately**
Ensure all families receive TDM meetings at appropriate times, neither too early nor too late.

☐ 8 **Address Logistical Details**
Meeting rooms, referral process, childcare, invitation duties.

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Develop Agency TDM Protocol

Create, communicate, and train agency TDM protocol.

☐ 10

Ensure Robust Data Collection

Adopt automated data application, clarify roles and duties, deliver training, and create report protocol and an ongoing self-evaluation process.

☐ 11

Identify TDM Staff

Identify facilitators, supervisors, schedulers, and data administrators. Seek exceptional candidates and hire efficiently. Hire the right people at the right time.

☐ 12

Train and Develop Facilitators

Partner with Children's Research Center for preservice training, ongoing skills development, and coaching for TDM staff.

☐ 13

Educate Staff and Grassroots Community Partners

Ensure TDM readiness of all staff and grassroots community partners, including legal community.

☐ 14

Monitor Practice

Ensure a strong agency plan for leadership involvement and support.

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Support Development

Design a plan for continuing education for staff and partners. Ensure visible leadership support.

☐ 16

Preserve High Standards

Staff and partners should be actively involved for continuous quality improvement (CQI). Celebrate success.

The timing and order of these steps can be adjusted based on jurisdiction's circumstances.

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Implementing Team Decision Making

This document is designed to inform the sequencing of Team Decision Making (TDM) pre-implementation and implementation activities to achieve program fidelity and sustainability over time. It can be used as a checklist and guide for a jurisdiction's work plan, which will be supported by the NCCD Children's Research Center (CRC).

☐ 1. Identify a Project Manager and Create Steering Team

Start with forming an internal steering team. Later, include external partners.

A staff-only team may be best initially until early issues are worked out; later, it is highly recommended to include strong external partners with the potential to become community TDM champions**.**

The project manager should be on the agency's senior leadership team. The steering team should include representation from the following internal roles and teams: director, deputy director, regional manager, supervisors, workers, policy, legal, IT, and data/research. The implementation team should also include representation from external roles such as grassroots community organizations; courts; probation; foster youth alumni; foster parent; and public systems like mental health, drug/alcohol treatment, and education.

☐ 2. Design a Communication Plan

Articulate why the agency is embracing TDM.

Describe TDM's purpose and why your agency is embracing it, emphasizing its potential to improve outcomes for children and families. Highlight its alignment with your practice model and values and its potential to broaden the circle of community support for families. Begin identifying and reaching out to grassroots community entities for eventual inclusion in TDM meetings.

On the inside, position TDM as a fundamental casework skill within your practice model. Create a staff expectation that TDM use is necessary and required in quality case management.

☐ 3. Assess Existing Team Processes

Streamline, build a continuum, and avoid redundancy.

Review all current "teaming" or other collaborative processes, assess for redundancy, blend where possible, and eliminate if appropriate.

The NCCD Children's Research Center (CRC) will support you in creating a case consultation and family meeting continuum that makes sense to families and is efficient for staff and others. This may require outreach to and negotiation with external partners who are invested in their own team meetings.

☐ 4. Develop Work Plan With Timeline

Detailed rollout plan with timeframes and clear responsibilities

After fully considering all necessary implementation tasks, the steering team proposes an implementation plan that includes timeframes for full use of TDM for all placement-related decisions (initial, then for placement stability, and finally for permanency including reunification).

Design a process for regular progress check-ins and course corrections as rollout proceeds. This process should include steering meetings and, depending on structure, statewide and regional implementation team meetings.

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☐ 5. Analyze Numbers

Examine placement data to estimate staffing and resource needs and predict likely number of meetings per week and month.

Closely examine placement data for the past year in order to project how many TDM meetings—and thus how many facilitators, full time and backup—will be needed to fully implement each TDM phase at your site. (Use the provided TDM calculator.) Identify a way to estimate the number of "voluntary" or "diversion" placements that have occurred in the past year, as these will need to be factored into the analysis. Remember that TDM facilitators must be immediately available to lead meetings.

☐ 6. Review Emergency and After-Hours Procedures

Assess and adjust to integrate with TDM.

Determine what modifications to after-hours practice may be needed when TDM becomes a central element in the initial separation process. Set clear minimum standards for after-hours assessment activities so a fruitful TDM meeting can occur even following an emergency separation. Remember that a TDM meeting must occur quickly following an emergency separation of a child from their family, whether the separation is the result of a voluntary out-of-home safety plan or a court order.

☐ 7. Build Firewalls to Ensure All Families Receive TDM Meetings Appropriately

Ensure all families receive TDM meetings at appropriate times, neither too early nor too late.

Identify "firewalls," or structures, to put in place to ensure that TDM meetings are held in real time at each required point in a case. (For example, establish strong protocol that a placement resource cannot be approved, or a court petition filed, without evidence of a TDM meeting.) These firewalls typically require adjustments in current practice, performance standards, and decision making at very high levels of management.

☐ 8. Address Logistical Details

Meeting rooms, referral process, childcare, invitation duties

Undertake logistics planning, including the following.

Staffing. Establish a position classification for facilitators at or above worker level to attract and retain quality candidates. CRC will provide sample job descriptions and selection support.

Location. Where will meetings be held? Agency settings, community settings? Consider logistical issues for offsite meetings.

Dedicated space. How many meeting rooms will be needed, and how can their immediate availability for TDM meetings be ensured?

Program support. Who will provide clerical and administrative support, such as scheduling meetings, assisting with inviting participants, and managing records? Who will supervise this TDM scheduler? How will childcare be managed if participants bring young children to the meeting?

Data collection. CRC will set up the TDM database for facilitators to enter meeting data. Who will need to attend the required training on using the TDM data application? Who will serve as data administrator for the application?

Site selection. Which sites in the jurisdiction will start in the first phase? Which will follow?

☐ 9. Develop Agency TDM Protocol

Create, communicate, and train agency TDM protocol.

CRC will support creating a policy or protocol that covers key elements of TDM practice within the site and clarifies expectations for all involved staff.

Pay particular attention to clarifying expectations that TDM must be used in *all* situations in which a child is at risk of separation from the home or caregiver while under the agency's jurisdiction, whether the separation is the result of a voluntary out-of-home safety plan or a court order.

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☐ 10. Ensure Robust Data Collection

Adopt automated data application, clarify roles and duties, deliver training, and create report protocol and an ongoing self-evaluation process.
Adopt CRC's web-based TDM data application.[1]

- Customize the application's language to be specific to your agency and system. Train facilitators on data entry.
- Create protocols for running regular reports and establish agency self-evaluation activities to review process and fidelity aspects and outcome and impact indicators.
- Plan to regularly analyze reports to surface recommendations on practice or policy change as reflected in TDM data.
- CRC will support development of good continuous quality improvement (CQI) practices to monitor TDM fidelity and track impact on child and family outcomes.

☐ 11. Identify TDM Staff

Identify facilitators, supervisors, schedulers, and data administrators. Seek exceptional candidates and hire efficiently. Hire the right people at the right time.
Hire the right team of facilitators and staff based on careful projection of needs.

- Seek individuals with strong emotional intelligence and high-level practice skills and knowledge.
- Plan for a workload of at least three TDM meetings per day per facilitator.
- Ensure high-quality clerical support to manage screening and scheduling of meeting requests and other duties.
- Identify who will oversee the TDM program and supervise TDM facilitators for each area.
- TDM staff must be trained before they can perform their respective duties; therefore, the hiring of TDM staff should be coordinated with the scheduling of TDM trainings.

☐ 12. Train and Develop Facilitators

Partner with Children's Research Center for preservice training, ongoing skills development, and coaching for TDM staff.

- CRC will provide preservice training using its three-day facilitator curriculum.
- Create strong supervision structure, including regular facilitator–peer case conferencing and opportunities for observation and feedback.
- Seek ongoing constructive feedback from staff who participate in TDM.
- CRC will provide some facilitator observation and coaching during early implementation.

☐ 13. Educate Staff and Grassroots Community Partners

Ensure TDM readiness of all staff and grassroots community partners, including legal community.
Training for frontline staff (workers, supervisors, and managers) must be thorough, emphasizing TDM's core values and offering the opportunity to practice TDM-related skills. In addition to conducting orientation for staff, hold sessions for the following groups, each of which will ideally be represented within TDM implementation teams.

- Resource families
- Grassroots community partners as identified in outreach activities
- Service providers, especially drug/alcohol and mental health
- Private foster care agency staff
- Attorneys and court personnel
- Hospital and school staff
- Law enforcement
- Domestic violence community organizations
- Tribal partners
- Other agency partners

[1] The TDM data application can optionally be integrated with your statewide automated child welfare information system (SACWIS)/ comprehensive child welfare information system (CCWIS).

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☐ 14. Monitor Practice

Ensure a strong agency plan for leadership involvement and support.

Have a plan for monitoring TDM once it begins to track key fidelity elements, including whether all families facing a placement-related decision had a TDM meeting and whether key participants such as youth and fathers are attending regularly. Agency frontline managers (not TDM facilitation staff) should own this monitoring.

☐ 15. Support Development

Design a plan for continuing education for staff and partners. Ensure visible leadership support.

Have a plan for continuing education of new staff, partners, and TDM facilitators as turnover, new partner development, or hiring occurs. Create advanced TDM-skills training opportunities for facilitators and frontline staff.

CRC will provide trainings for agency staff on TDM meetings involving families experiencing domestic violence and on engaging youth in TDM meetings.

☐ 16. Preserve High Standards

Staff and partners should be actively involved for CQI. Celebrate success.

Have a solid plan for continuous TDM self-evaluation, visibly led by the agency's top managers and including staff and external partners' active involvement.

Ensure use of data to assess fidelity to TDM's key elements and to track correlation between high-quality meetings and desirable outcomes for children and families. Celebrate successes. Create actionable steps to continually improve practice.

The timing and order of these steps can be adjusted based on your jurisdiction's circumstances.

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