

Team Decision Making: Key Elements



Goal

To involve parents/legal caregivers and extended families, community members, resource families, service providers, and agency staff in all decisions regarding the need for a child to leave the home; and to ensure a support network for the child and the adults who care for them.

Key Elements



1. A Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting, including parents/legal caregivers and youth, is held for *all* decisions involving child separation as well as all those involving a potential placement change.



2. The TDM meeting is held *before* the child's separation occurs—or in cases of imminent risk/emergency separations, by the next working day—and always before the initial court hearing in court-involved cases.



3. Families are encouraged to invite anyone in their support system, and public agencies strive to include community members who may have valuable contributions to the discussion.



4. The meeting is led by a skilled, immediately accessible internal facilitator, using a six-stage model. The facilitator is experienced in child welfare practice and is not a case-carrying social worker or line supervisor.



5. Information about each meeting—including participants, location, and recommendations—is collected in a timely way and ultimately linked to data on child and family outcomes in order to ensure continuing data-informed evaluation of the TDM process and its effectiveness.

Why

Equality: All families deserve to participate in agency decisions about their own lives.

Engagement: TDM meetings tap into the group's energy and creativity and embody team collaboration to address crisis, providing the agency and court with best thinking on next steps for the family.

Equity, Inclusivity, and Transparency: Acknowledging individual differences helps participants attend to power imbalances. Early inclusion sets the stage for ongoing engagement. Community partners share the responsibility of making the best decisions with the family and agency.

Fairness: The same process is offered to everyone. Facilitators manage the process, modeling respect and interpersonal skills.

Self-Evaluation and Sustainability: TDM provides child welfare agencies with data to better understand what works and helps to ensure effective and sustainable practices.