

# Bulletin

October 23, 2008

Minnesota Department of Human Services ■ 444 Lafayette Rd. ■ St. Paul, MN 55155

**OF INTEREST TO**

- Social Services Supervisors and Staff
- Tribal Social Services Directors and Staff
- FGDM Grant Managers

**ACTION**

Please implement  
January 1, 2009.

**EXPIRATION DATE**

October 23, 2010

## Documenting Family Group Decision Making in the Social Service Information System

**TOPIC**

The Department of Human Services (DHS) procedures for documenting Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) activities in the Social Service Information System (SSIS).

**PURPOSE**

To provide definitions, requirements and instructions to document FGDM service activities into the SSIS system for counties and American Indian Child Welfare Initiative tribes.

**CONTACT**

Nan Beman, SSIS policy coordinator  
Child Safety and Permanency Division  
(651) 431-4767  
[nan.beman@state.mn.us](mailto:nan.beman@state.mn.us)

Gerald Lindskog, FGDM program consultant  
Child Safety and Permanency Division  
(651) 431-4679  
[gerald.a.lindskog@state.mn.us](mailto:gerald.a.lindskog@state.mn.us)

**SIGNED**

---

CHARLES E. JOHNSON  
Assistant Commissioner  
Children and Family Services

## A. BACKGROUND

On January 1, 2009, DHS will implement procedures for documenting FGDM activities in SSIS for each FGDM conference. There is an assumption that FGDM improves outcomes for children and their families. Critically analyzing FGDM data, including reasons for referral, will enable DHS staff to evaluate the actual results of FGDM services for Minnesota families.

BRASS Code 166 defines FGDM as a decision-making process that allows the family to develop a care and protection plan to ensure child safety for reunification and/or permanency. The Family Group Decision Making process includes preparation for the family meeting, facilitation of the meeting, plan development and post meeting activities.

FGDM activities include those involved with the preparation and facilitation of the family meeting. The process is based on family values and family involvement, a strength-based approach that embraces cultural awareness and community involvement.

This social service strategy of family involvement is funded through Title IV-B, subpart 2, of the Social Security Act and county funds. Approximately 71 counties and eight tribal social service agencies provide FGDM. The FGDM Web site is [http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/dhs16\\_141725](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/dhs16_141725). This Web site includes a link to Minnesota's FGDM Program Directory.

There are five models that define the process by which activities are carried out under the umbrella of FGDM. They are:

- Family Group Conference
- Family Unity Meeting
- Family Conference
- Youth Transition Conference
- Family Case Planning Conference.

Support for the FGDM child welfare strategy has come from various sources. Recent Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) in Minnesota reveal that FGDM is an emerging practice for engaging families in meeting the safety, permanency and well-being needs of their children. The CFSR process has identified FGDM as a promising practice and has been included in the Minnesota Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Communities of color view FGDM as effective and culturally appropriate.

## B. REASONS FOR REFERRAL

SSIS data will include the reason for referral to the FGDM conference. County and tribal social workers responsible for referring families to FGDM services must enter this information. The reason for referral is to be entered into SSIS based on the desired goal and/or outcome of the conference. The referral is entered based on the following six definitions:

- **Case Planning**  
This referral is to develop a case plan specific to the on-going coordination, assessment, decision making and dissemination of information needs of the family and the agency.
- **Placement Prevention**  
This referral is to develop a placement prevention plan so that a child at risk may remain safely at home with proper supports. This definition includes family support and family preservation.
- **Reunification**  
This referral is to develop a reunification plan to return a child who is in an out-of-home placement to their parent(s) or caretaker.
- **Permanency Planning**  
This referral is to develop a permanency plan for a child who is in an out-of-home placement. Permanency options include adoption or transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, or return home with supports.
- **Placement Transition**  
This referral is to develop a transition plan to move a child from one placement setting to another (foster care, group home, residential treatment, or corrections). This plan would address the child's needs, strengths, concerns and needed services.
- **Youth Independent Living**  
This referral is to develop a youth-driven independent living plan. This conference assists youth in writing goals and tasks within the major life domains of education/training, employment, finances, housing, health and circle of support, etc.

C. **SSIS INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENTERING CONTACT/ACTIVITY RELATED TO FGDM:**  
Entry of time for the actual full FGDM meeting is done in Chronology on Contact/Activity.  
Review screen  
below.

Date: 09/10/2008 01:00 PM

Activity

Workgroup: Alexander Holly CP Case Management 01/02/2008 Caseload

Program: 110 - Child Protective Services a# No. of Persons: 1

Service: 166 - Family group decision making

County sub-service:

Activity: FGDM event

Duration: Hr. 1 Min. 0

Cnty Acctg:

Note: **E** Aunt Rose agreed to provide over night visits when mother and daughter need a break from each other. Transportation to family counseling will be provided by Grandmother Johnson. If placement is needed, Aunt Rose will provide for the same.

Regarding:

☒ Susan Alexander

☐ Holly Alexander

Allocate Time

Contact:

Purpose: prev

Status: ☒ Completed ☐ Attempted Contact With: Add

Note that the date of the FGDM meeting is appropriately chosen at the top of the screen. Under Activity, choose FGDM event for the full meeting (not planning meetings leading up to the event).

Enter all participants from the workgroup who attended the FGDM meeting.

The purpose line in Contact/Activity is essential for accurate identification of the reason for referral to FGDM. The identifying letters for the referral reasons are listed below, and **must be entered in lower case letters exactly as provided in this bulletin.**

#### FGDM TYPE

Case Planning  
 Placement Prevention  
 Reunification  
 Permanency Planning  
 Placement Transition  
 Youth Independent Living

#### Entry in Purpose Box

cpc  
 prev  
 reun  
 perm  
 pltr  
 yil

Bulletin #08-68-15

October 23, 2008

Page 5

**Special Needs**

This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by contacting us at (651) 431-4660 (voice). TDD users can call the Minnesota Relay at 711 or (800) 627-3529. For the Speech-to-Speech Relay, call (877) 627-3848.