

Participating in Family Group Conferencing as a Support Organisation

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is a family focused, strengths-based form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). It aims to bring family and professionals together to strengthen partnerships between family members and encourage greater family decision making and responsibility. Participation by family in a FGC is voluntary and is facilitated by an impartial facilitator. What is said during a FGC is confidential?

This fact sheet outlines the role of PSP casework staff in FGC where you are invited to participate. If you are the lead referrer, your role will additionally involve engaging with the facilitator and developing bottom lines.

Understanding the Family Group Conferencing Process:

There are 5 stages to FGC, although you may be invited to participate in only 3 or 4 of these stages, depending on the purpose of the family group conference.

The five stages of FGC are:

- referral
- preparation
- conference – this has three phases:
 - Introductions and information sharing
 - Family time
 - Presentation of an agreement to the family plan
- implementation of the family plan
- review of the family plan.

Who Can Participate In a Family Group Conference?

A FGC is facilitated by an impartial and trained facilitator who guides participants through the process.

Participants may include:

- child or young person
- mother and father
- aunts and uncles (maternal and paternal)
- grandparents (maternal and paternal)
- cousins

- siblings
- family friends
- elders and community representatives
- PSP service provider caseworker
- DCJ caseworker
- carers (current and previous)
- community agency support workers
- PSP service provider casework manager
- DCJ manager casework

If you are invited to participate in a FGC, the FGC facilitator will make contact with you to talk about your participation, and this will be at the preparation stage. The FGC facilitator will provide you with all the information you need to be able to successfully participate including the purpose of the FGC and expectation of your participation. They will also work with you through any worries you may have.

The Role Of The Support Service Provider at the FGC

Your role in the FGC is to provide information and advice about your organisation's offerings and provide advice or support during introductions and information sharing phase of the conference.

You will be asked to share information in a strength-based way, whilst also sharing your knowledge about the needs and or worries for the child and or family. Your role is to provide information about your organisation's offerings including:

- the type of service that can be offered to the child and or family
- the referral process and availability of the offering
- the timeframe and expected outcomes of the offering.

You may also provide cultural support and guidance, if appropriate.

If you are unable to attend the family group conference in person, other options include:

- having another worker from your organisation attend on your behalf
- attend by phone or video conference
- provide information to the FGC facilitator to share with participants on your behalf.

After the Conference

After the conference has been held, you will receive a copy of the family plan if the family has chosen to include your organisation's services within the family plan. The success of the family plan strongly relies on family and professionals working together to implement it. It is key to maintain communication with the family and walk alongside them to support the actions and tasks in the family plan that need to be carried out.

You may also be invited to a meeting to review the family plan and this usually takes place within 3 months after the conference.

What You Can Expect

You can expect to be supported by the FGC facilitator to participate effectively in the FGC. This will include support to ensure you understand your role and the expectations of participation. You can expect to be able to share information, support or provide advice to the family. You will receive a copy of the family plan if the family have chosen to include your offerings.

We understand that your time is valuable, and your participation is appreciated to support positive and lasting change for children and families.