

Talking to Children and Families about Family Group Conferencing

As Permanency Support Program (PSP) casework staff, it is your role to talk with children, young people and families about Family Group Conferencing (FGC) in a way that they understand. Casework staff are usually responsible for having initial conversations with children and families about FGC. These conversations are important as it is often children and families' first time hearing about FGC and their agreement to participate is required.

This factsheet provides casework staff with information to support meaningful and clear conversations with children and families about FGC.

Talking to Families about FGC

Family members and significant people in a child's life must be informed about FGC in order to participate. Speak with family members in a way they understand by adjusting your communication style to suit the needs of each family member.

Casework staff need to explain to all family members that FGC :

- is an opportunity to come together to develop solutions and a plan for moving forward.
- focuses on the needs of the child and family strengths.
- is a confidential process.
- brings the adults in a child's life together to make essential decisions.
- considers family to be experts regarding their family.
- An FGC facilitator will prepare all participants and facilitate the FGC.
- The FGC facilitator is impartial and can help with any concerns before the meeting.

Provide families with the [FGC Brochure for Parents and Carers](#) so they can refer to it in their own time.

For further information see [Tips For Talking With Children And Young People](#), [Relationship-Based Practice](#), [Language](#) and [Difficult Conversations with Children, Families and Carers – Tips and Guidance](#).

Talking to Children about FGC

Children are at the centre of FGCs as both subject and participant. This role can be intimidating or difficult for children to understand so it is important to have age-appropriate conversations with them about what an FGC involves.

- Explain to the child what an FGC is, its purpose and how it will run.
- Use plain language and avoid jargon.
- Ensure that the child knows their voice will be heard and that the purpose of the FGC is to keep them safe and happy.
- Some children may worry about their family members coming together for many different reasons. Acknowledge these concerns and explain that there is an impartial facilitator that will prepare the child, the family and all participants.
- Tell the child that the FGC facilitator will help with any worries they may have and that they will be explored before the FGC meeting.
- Explain that the FGC facilitator will be at the FGC meeting to support them.
- Give the child the [FGC Brochure for Children and Young People](#) so they can refer to it if they have more questions.



Useful contact numbers

Caseworker details:
.....
Phone:

Child Protection Helpline
Report suspected child abuse or neglect
Phone: 132 111 (24 hours/7 days)
TTY Phone: 1800 671 442

Lifeline
Phone: 13 11 14 (24 hours/7 days)

**Department of Communities Justice
Enquiries, Feedback and Complaints**
Phone: 1800 000 164
<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/contact/complaints>

Telephone interpreter service
If you need an interpreter to speak to your caseworker, please phone TIS on 131 450

Family group conferencing

Information for children and young people

All families are different. We want to work with your parents, carers and family to help keep you safe.

pslearninghub.com.au



For further information to support conversations with children see [Tips for Talking With Children And Young People](#).

Supporting Worries about FGC for Children and Families

Worry is thinking about current and future events in a way that can leave you feeling anxious, fearful, uneasy, apprehensive or concerned. When talking with children and families about FGC they may feel worried and express concerns. For some children and families, even the thought of meeting with other family members in this context can be daunting and raise anxieties.

Some family members may be worried about other family members coming together for many different reasons which could include:

- shame about the child protection concerns or situation
- family dynamics and struggles

Casework staff can support the worries of children and families when you are speaking with them about FGC by:

- letting them know that you take their worries seriously
- ask them to take some deep breaths
- let them know that you will look into the worry and let the FGC facilitator know so they can be supported
- be available for them to express their worries to if they want to speak with you now or later.

Appropriately supporting and addressing the worries of children and families is a key component to the success of the FGC.

Tools for Talking With Children and Families about FGC

- [FGC Brochure for Children and Young People](#)
- [FGC Brochure for Parents and Carers](#)
- [Foundations of Family Group Conferencing](#)
- [Family Group Conference Process](#)