The Blended Perspectives Meeting

Goals of the Meeting:

- Allow the family/kin to see how isolated the child/youth/caregiver is;
- Identify strengths and needs of the child/youth/caregiver;
- Identify the child/youth/caregiver’s Big Unmet Need; and,
- Identify the individuals who will be active members of the child/youth’s Network for Life.

It is important to note the Blended Perspectives Meeting (BPM) is not a place to make decisions. The purpose of the BPM is to accomplish the goals listed above. According to Kevin Campbell’s model, the decision making step and associated meeting is the environment in which the family makes final decisions.

In attempting to meet the child/youth’s needs, it is important to remember that frequently the caregiver’s needs are not met. This directly affects the caregiver’s ability/inability to meet the needs of their child. This being the case, the points below, which offer what BPM preparation, facilitation, and follow-up could look like, might also be used to consider caregiver needs being unmet and how to support the caregiver so that he/she can then support the child/youth.

Blended Perspective Meeting Considerations:

- Prior to the Meeting (during the Engagement stage):
  - In conjunction with your supervisor and others on the family’s team, consider the following points:
    - Do you have identifying information and information concerning agency involvement:
      - Name of child,
      - Age,
      - Gender,
      - Ethnicity,
      - Years involved with Child Welfare and related agencies,
      - Number of placements.
    - Are you aware of the safety threats? Are you prepared to discuss them with the family? If so:
      - What are they,
      - When did the threat(s) last happen,
      - When might it/they happen again.
    - Are you prepared to show how lonely the child/youth is in comparison to others outside the child welfare system in conjunction with the importance of building a Network for Life? Do you know:
The Blended Perspectives Meeting, continued

- How many connections the individual has in family, kin, community, etc.
- What the nature of their relationship is with identified connections.

- Are you fully aware of the urgency associated with this child/youth and his/her family’s situation and can explain it in a way that identified connections can understand? Do you know:
  - How soon planning decisions need to be made.
  - Whether a team has been developed or needs developed that consists of committed members.
  - If one has not been developed, how quickly the team needs to be developed to meet the planning decisions deadline.

- With regard to placement-related cases, are you prepared to tell/discuss with the family:
  - Where the child/youth is now.
  - How long the child/youth likely be there.
  - Whether there may be more appropriate settings (kinship-based) available.
  - The benefits of establishing/maintaining connections to help the child/youth in their existing placement setting.

- With regard to siblings, are you prepared to discuss with the family and/or discover:
  - Whether or not any exist.
  - Who they are (name, age, gender).
  - Where they are (i.e., placement, home, etc.).
  - Whether the relationship between the identified child/youth and siblings is fostered. If not, why?

- With regard to non-custodial caregiver(s):
  - Who are they?
  - Did you talk to them?
  - Are they involved?
  - Do they want to be involved?
  - What needs to be done to get them involved?

- Do you know how many family/kin exist right now (ensuring that you fully review case records, perform Internet and other searches, engage all available sources, etc.)?

- Regarding any existing child/youth and family team, do you know or have you considered:
  - Who is on the team and why?
  - Whether there should be more?
The Blended Perspectives Meeting, continued

- How many are family/kin?
- How many are providers?
- Whether or not they are all committed to serving as a member of the child/youth’s Network for Life.

  o Explain the meeting format and purpose of the meeting.
    - It is a preparation and planning meeting with the purpose being to get all the meeting participants on a similar page about the child/youth/family’s lack of and need for connections:
      - To learn from each other about each unique perspectives the participants have about the child/youth/family.
      - To understand what has and is happening in his/her life.
    - What is learned from the meeting will be used at a Family Group Decision Making meeting to make decisions about the future of the child/youth and/or family.

  o Discover functional strengths and needs. A service is not a need.
  o List the strengths and needs to be used at the Blended Perspective Meeting.
  o Identify three possible meeting dates.
  o Identify who is involved.
    - Twelve or more natural supports and family members.
    - Child or youth may attend; however, attendance is a safety decision which will need to be weighed in each situation. Keep in mind that safety issues take many forms. If the child/youth cannot attend, consider bringing a picture of child/youth.
    - Three to five service providers/agency staff (supervisor and/or caseworker).
    - Meeting facilitator.

  o Identify a meeting location and length of time.
    - Meet in a family friendly location – has to be safe.
    - No longer than two hours – aim for 90 minutes.

- During the Meeting:
  o Perform welcome and introductions.
    - Introduce yourself by stating:

      ____________________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________________

    - Ask individuals to introduce themselves, including:
      - Their connection to the child/youth.
      - Why they are here.
The Blended Perspectives Meeting, continued

- What they most hope to result from this meeting.
  - Introduce the Blended Perspective Meeting by stating:

    “As the facilitator, my role is to make sure that we learn from each other our perspective about (Child/Youth’s Name). To do this, we’ll need to discuss what has and is happening in his/her life. We will use what we learn today to help inform decisions about (Child/Youth’s Name)’s future.”

  - Process out and write information about the child/youth and their caregiver(s):
    - The child/youth’s name (with correct spelling).
    - Age (In addition to when is his/her next birthday is).
    - Gender.
    - Ethnicity/cultural identity of youth. Identify any other ancestry than that of which the agency is aware.
    - # of years youth has had a social worker.
    - # of placement settings.
      - Living arrangement: including formal, informal, and private arrangements.
      - Educational: moves from setting to setting may involve educational issues.

    **Note:** The young person may or may not be made to change schools. This has the potential to greatly affect the young person. The family must be made aware of all the affects that the number of placement settings can have on a young person. A key point to consider is that each placement setting tends to equal 10 lost relationships.

    - Child/youth’s greatest strengths - each person identifies two.
    - Child/youth’s greatest needs - each person identifies one.
    - Connectograms: Use these to identify who is important to the child/youth. On the Connectogram, identify and capture the following:
      - The tiers of connectedness:
        - Kinship and family;
        - Friends;
        - Non-relative adult supports.
      - For those who say they will serve as supports, ask:
        - “Who is in child/youth’s life right now? Who sees him/her on a consistent basis?”
The Blended Perspectives Meeting, continued

- “Who loves this child?” Make connecting lines to show the flow.
- “Who does the child love?” Make connecting lines to show the flow.
- “If the youth moved or supports stopped getting paid (e.g., formal kinship care payments cease), who would stay involved?”

- Now do a Connectogram for a comparable youth known to a relative who is not in placement. Keep in mind that this might not be a good idea if the child/youth is in the room (e.g., to see that a child/youth relative is better-liked/supported than the child/youth).
- The goal of the Connectogram is to get everyone on the same page about the child/youth’s lack of and need for connections.
  - Identify, discuss, and come to consensus concerning the child/youth’s “big unmet need after discussing the connections (or lack thereof) as seen on the Connectogram(s). It may also prove useful to do a Connectogram on any existing caregivers, identify, discuss, and agree upon their “Big Unmet Need.”
  - Write the identified unmet need statement on flip chart paper. Ask the meeting members to provide the language for the statement.

- Summarize and offer next steps:
  - Ask family members whether they need to meet again to make decisions about how to address the big unmet need(s). The hope is that they will acknowledge the fact that they need to meet again.
  - Offer Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) as an option. If the group likes the idea, work with the FGDM Coordinator to schedule a Family Group Decision Making meeting. If the group does not like the idea, offer the benefits of FGDM and/or explore other family engagement options.
  - Ask everyone to think about the role they can play in making the plans work.
  - Based on people’s ability to meet the needs of the child/youth/family, ask whether the team is complete. If not, ask who else needs to be involved.

- After the Meeting:
  - Process out what occurred:
    - Review with your supervisor and other individuals on the family’s team what was learned during the Blended Perspectives Meeting. In considering whether the goals associated with the Planning step were achieved, again consider the goals offered at the beginning of
The Blended Perspectives Meeting, continued

this handout and think about whether the following points were addressed:

- The possible isolation of the caregiver and the likely isolation of the child/youth (especially in placement cases);
- Strengths and needs of the child/youth/caregiver;
- The individual’s “Big Unmet Need;” and,
  - Did the individual and/or the family define the unmet need statement in a way that defines the individual’s wishes and needs?
- Individuals who will be active members of the child/youth’s Network for Life were identified.

Things to Consider Before, During, and After the Meeting:

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Lessons Learned:

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________