Preparing the Family to
Develop a Successful Family Plan

Preparation is one of the most critical components of the Family Group Decision Making process. A family that has been well prepared is far more likely to succeed in developing and implementing a successful family plan. Part of preparation is helping families to consider what goes into a successful plan. While we cannot and should not tell families what should be written in their plan, we can share with them things to consider. Below is a list of questions that you as a coordinator can review with families during preparation to get them thinking about how they can develop a plan that has the best chance for success.

- How will your plan address any concerns that the agency requires your plan to address?

- How will you and your family monitor the plan you create to make sure it will work short-term and long-term? (Things to think about include: will there be a point person, will several people be responsible for monitoring the plan, who will call another meeting when it's necessary, how will you know it's necessary to call another meeting, and so on?)

- How will the plan address meeting the child's daily needs? (Things to think about include: transportation to and from school, getting the child up and ready for school, doctor's/dentist/counseling appointments, extra-curricular activities, and so on.)

- How will the plan address meeting the child's other needs? (For example, are there concerns about the child's behavior, mental health, drug and alcohol use, truancy, *etc.*)

- How will the plan address meeting the family's needs? (Things to consider include: finances, respite, transportation, groceries, behavior, separation issues, mental health, drug and alcohol use, domestic violence, legal issues, incarceration, and so on.)

- If a child/young person stays with or returns to a family with challenges, if a caseworker determined that a safety plan is needed, how will your plan address the safety needs identified by the caseworker?

- If the child is staying in his/her own home and a safety incident or emergency arises, how will that be handled? If the child is staying somewhere other than his/her own home and a safety incident or emergency arises, how will that be handled?

- If the child can't stay in his/her own home, where will the child stay; and, how will the child maintain connections with family and friends? Also, will the child have a say in where they will stay and how the family will maintain connections?

Preparing for the Meeting (cont'd)

- If the child can't stay in his/her own home, how will you help the child and others involved with this transition? (Things to consider include: discussions about why the child will be staying somewhere other than their own home; will they need counseling to help them deal with the transition; informing caregivers about the child's daily routines/schedules, favorite foods, toys, and activities, *etc.*;)

- In situations where the child cannot stay in his/her own home and plans are made for the child to stay with a relative or family friend, it may be necessary for the agency to complete a home assessment before the child moves. The time that it takes to complete the assessment can vary for a number of reasons. Have you spoken with your caseworker about this situation in order to make appropriate plans?

- What are the strengths of the child and your family? How can the strengths be used to address the needs of the child and family?

- How will you include enough family supports in the plan so it will continue to be successful when service providers are no longer involved?

- If your case is involved with the court system, how might that affect your plan? If your case is involved with the court system, you will want to talk with your caseworker and your attorney.

Sources: Adapted from Louisell, M. J., (2008) and from Campbell, Kevin. *Family Finding: Workshop Presented by Kevin Campbell.*

Additional Considerations:

Please capture other concepts to consider based on your experience and/or the experiences of others in your training.

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