

# Family Meeting Facilitator Tip Sheet

## (FC) Written on flip chart

1. **Preparation:** Families and professionals should be well prepared before coming to a family meeting. This would have involved:

- Understanding the purpose and process of the family meeting
- Who will be in attendance
- What to expect
- Discussion regarding confidentiality
- Agenda
- Decision making process, plan development
- Private family time (if appropriate)
- Staying focused on child welfare concerns
- Ground rules
- What will happen following the meeting

2. (FC) **Meeting Introductions, Ground Rules, Agenda, and Rituals** (if desired)

- Introductions: Who is here and how they are related to the family/child
- The agenda should be reviewed
- Ground rules: Ensure that family is comfortable with any ground rules offered by professionals
- Rituals may include, songs, prayers, poems, photos and letters of persons not present, etc.

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## 3. (FC) **Reaching Mutual Understanding Regarding Child Welfare Concerns and Bottom Lines/Non-negotiables**

- Child welfare staff provides brief factual (no opinions or judgments) account of history of child welfare involvement
- Identification of bottom lines/non-negotiables

## 4. (FC) **Identification of Strengths**

- Identification of strengths should begin with DSS staff describing family and individual strengths
- All professionals are asked to describe family and individual strengths
- It is optional for families
- Turn to family and acknowledge strengths and ask if family members knew that others recognized their strengths
- Facilitator should convey the importance and role of strengths in developing the plan and should not lose sight of these throughout the meeting

## 5. (FC) **Discussion of Family Needs and Concerns of Professionals**

- Family can describe what they need to resolve child welfare concerns
- Concerns from professionals should be relevant to child welfare concerns
- Should not be value judgments or opinions
- This is an opportunity for full disclosure where professionals should be sharing important information for the family to know and understand...no hidden agendas
- Facilitators should check with the family to see if anything shared is new information and how the family is reacting to that information

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## 6. (FC) **Identification of Resources**

Listing and identification of outside resources, e.g.: which parenting program, day care that takes vouchers, which substance program, community reintegration program

## 7. **Preparing for Private Family Time \***

- Ask if there is anything anyone wants to add before private family time
- Does the family have any questions before going into private family time
- Completed flip charts should be available to and used by family
- A family member should serve as scribe either on flip charts or paper
- Facilitator and professionals should be available to respond to questions if needed

\* If there is not private family time then the facilitator asks if the family is ready to move ahead with decision making

## 8. (FC) **Decisions and Planning**

- If private family time has occurred, review decisions and close any gaps and ensure that bottom line child welfare concerns have been adequately addressed by checking with caseworker
- If no private family time has occurred then facilitator must engage the family in a decision making process utilizing all the flip charts, i.e., gathering the family's ideas and thoughts for how to address the bottom line
- Check in with family to see if ideas offered by professionals are workable for them
- Ensure that there is mutual understanding regarding specific tasks, activities and agreements among family members and professionals
- Create feedback loop so that key information can be translated into case record: identify who will communicate task completion information to caseworker

## 9. **Summarizing**

Facilitator clearly and concretely restates bottom line, decisions, plans and agreements and next steps (which might include a follow up family meeting)

