

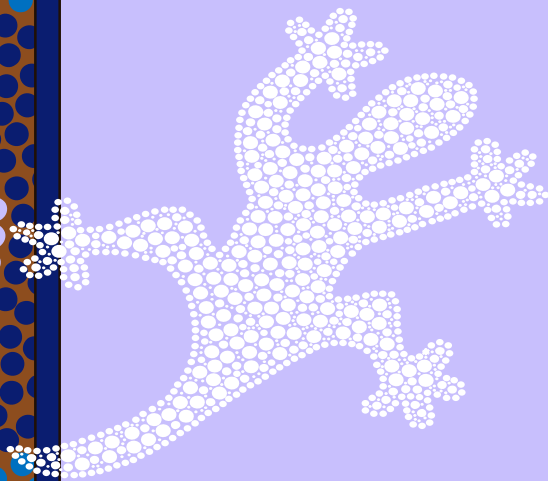


National **Aboriginal
Wellbeing** Conference

EMPOWERING THE FAMILY

Family Group Conferencing

Mel Brown



FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING MODEL

A family group conference (FGC) is a structured decision-making meeting made up of family members.

‘Family’ is determined broadly, to include the children, parents, extended family and even significant friends and neighbours to the family who may not actually be blood-related.



FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING MODEL

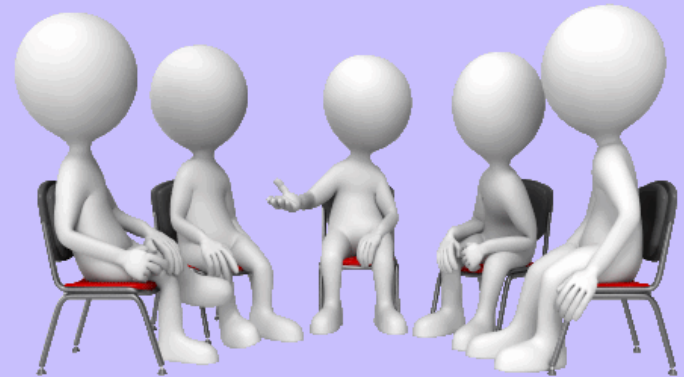
This group of people are given 'private' time to reach a plan to facilitate the safe care and protection of a child or children in need.

The professional is involved in information giving at the beginning of the process and in the assessment of the plan following a decision.

All professionals are excluded from the private time, which is attended by family members only.

Family Group Conferences are used to make plans for children in a number of different contexts:

- ✓ Child Welfare
- ✓ Youth Offending
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Welfare
- ✓ Domestic Violence
- ✓ Children as Young Carers,
- ✓ Foster care Breakdown
- ✓ Adoption etc.



5 STAGES OF THE FGC

1



REFERRAL

2



PREPARATION

3



CONFERENCE

4



IMPLEMENTATION

5



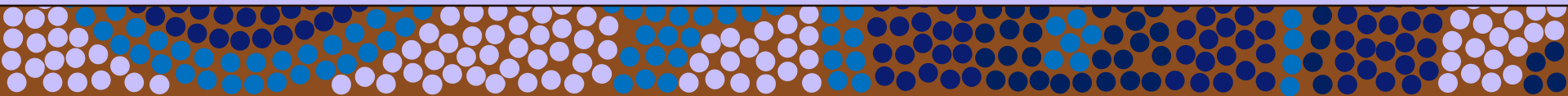
REVIEW



There are no
certain types of
cases that should
be excluded



Individual
characteristics of
each case should
be taken into
account



CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE HAVING A SAY IN THEIR OWN CONFERENCE

There are divergent views on the desirability of children attending conferences.

Some adults felt children should be excluded, that requiring children to agree to a plan placed too much responsibility on their shoulders and that they got bored during long conferences.

For others, the presence of children, even very young children, was important as a reminder of the purpose of the meeting.

SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

- ☐ The decision about who is to attend depends on what you want to accomplish in the meeting. This may seem too obvious to state, but it's surprising how many meetings occur without the right people there.
- ☐ Don't depend on your own judgment about who should come. Ask the family who they want to be invited.



SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

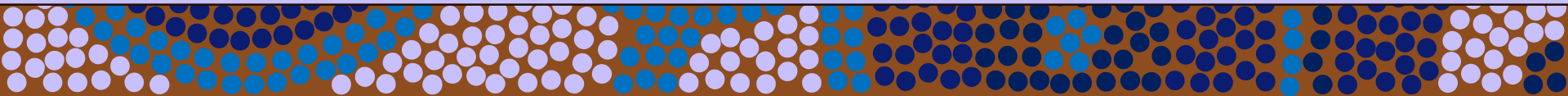


- ☐ If possible, call each person to tell them about the meeting, it's overall purpose and why their attendance is important.

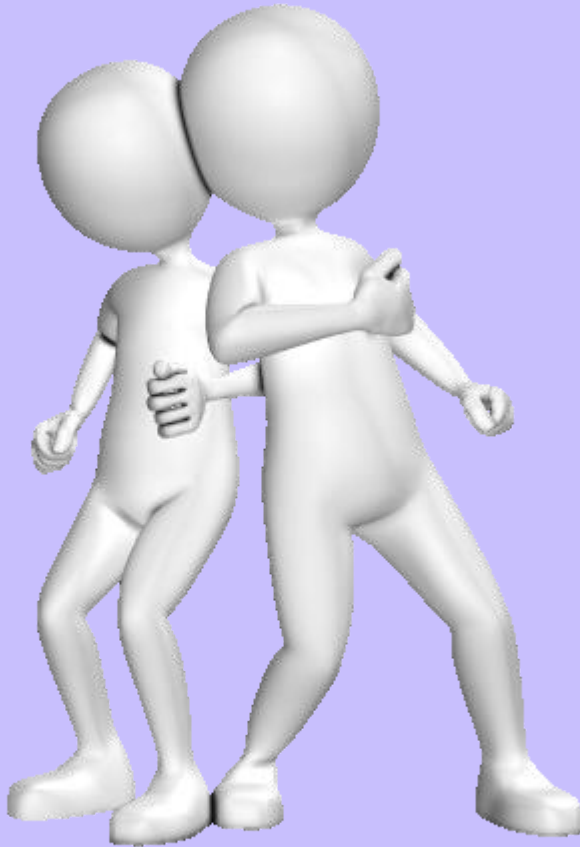
ATTENDANCE

Two aspects of family attendance may cause concern:

1. Whether certain types of families are more likely to be invited, or to attend conferences; and
2. The extent to which family members participate when a conference has been called.



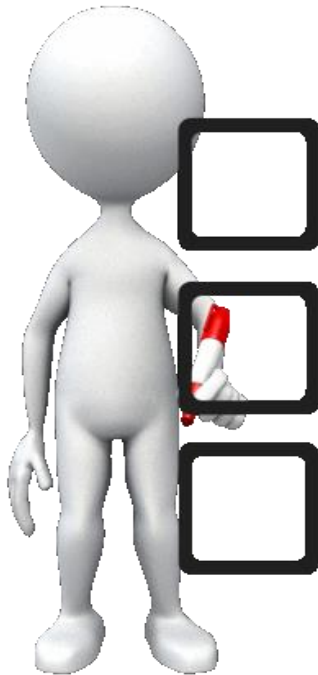
GENOGRAMS



A genogram offers the opportunity to define and explore the family by acknowledging the client as the “expert.”

Genograms may also be helpful for families to overcome resistance “as they begin to see the connections between their concerns and historical family patterns”

ISSUES TO CONSIDER BEFORE THE PLAN IS CREATED ...

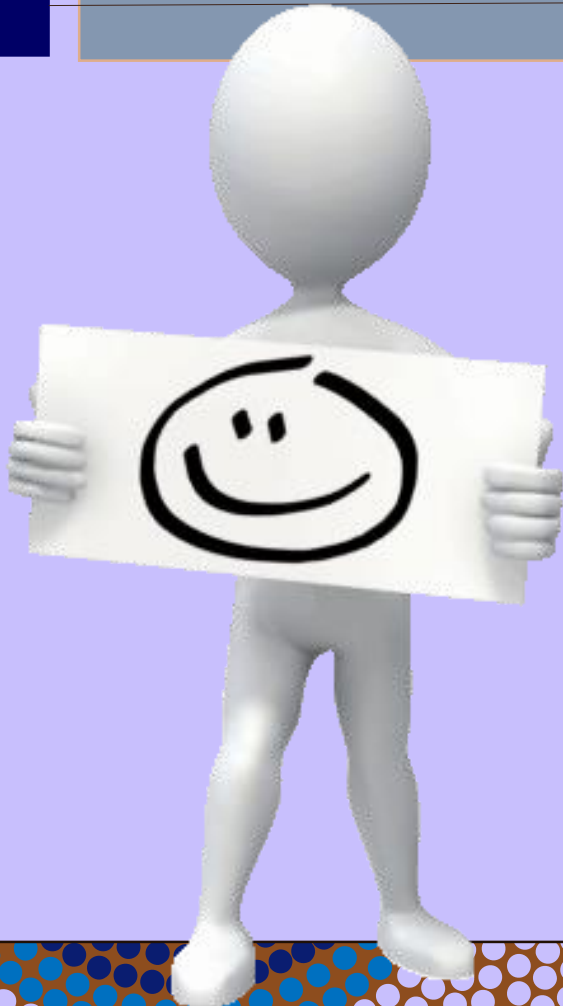


Is the extended family able to prepare a plan that will be approved by the authorities?

Are the action plans actually implemented and followed up on?

Do the measures and actions in the plans lead to resolving the issues that were addressed in the conference?

FAMILY ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILD PROTECTION



There is considerable evidence that families prefer FGC to other case planning processes, and some evidence that negative perceptions of the child protection agency and workers (as well as family/agency communication) improve following the FGC experience.

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL FAMILY PLAN



Action plans are approved in 9 out of 10 FGC cases.

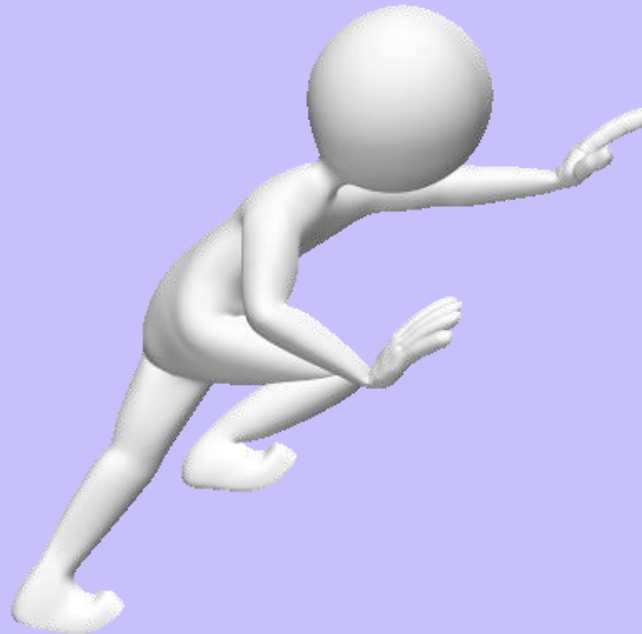
Child welfare authorities will approve in 90 to 100 % of conferences

It is rare that family propose plans which are not approved.

That means that an FGC is an effective way to implement measures and motivate efforts the child welfare services consider valid for addressing a child's situation.

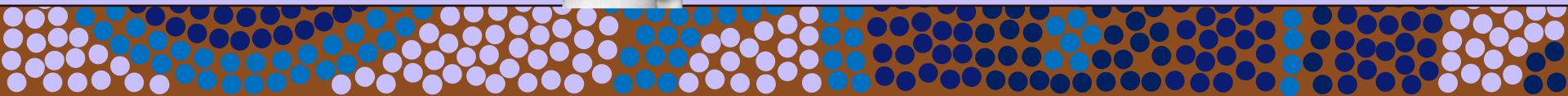
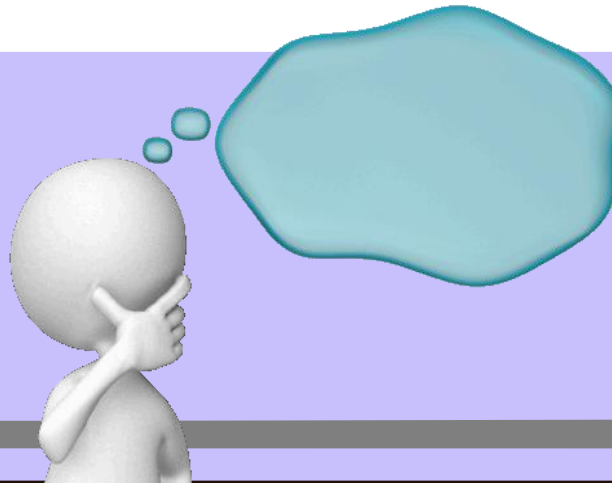
CARRYING OUT THE PLAN

Even if the plan is acceptable for all parties and it is approved by the authorities, the plan has no value if no attempt is made to follow through and implement it in real life.



BEST PRACTICE ...

1. The conference should occur in a community-oriented setting.
2. Cultural traditions must be respected (e.g. not rushing to a decision).
3. The convenor should have the same cultural background as families.
4. Community education/communication is needed to overcome lack of trust.



THANK YOU

Presenter Name
Contact Details

