

**Worker's Guide for an Effective TDM Meeting**

**BEFORE TDM**

\_\_\_\_\_ **DISCUSS WITH SUPERVISOR:** Decide if a TDM is needed based upon your assessment of safety and risk, and a discussion of options. Agree upon a recommendation regarding placement.

\_\_\_\_\_ **CHECK YOUR MEETING ATTITUDE:** Consider the possible benefits for the family and for you that can result from the TDM meeting. Recognize how critical the pending placement decision is and the life-altering impact it could have on the child and family. Cultivate the mind-set that "this is so serious I really appreciate help thinking this through." Remain open to the possibility that additional information, ideas and discussion may develop ideas for resolution that are different from the recommendation you brought to the meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ **SCHEDULE TDM:** Provide all information necessary to support a productive meeting, including how many anticipated participants, and if any have special needs (foreign language translator, deaf interpreter, wheelchair access, etc.), serious mental illness and/or safety concerns including domestic violence history. Seek a time convenient for the principals, while adhering to the time requirements based on law and policy. Determine if the meeting can be held at a location in the family's community. Clarify who will be notified by the TDM clerk and who you are responsible to invite?

\_\_\_\_\_ **INFORM PARENTS:** Explain the TDM purpose, goal and process. Encourage parents to identify and invite support persons, assisting them if possible. Answer questions. Ensure parents know day, time, and location, and have transportation. Provide parents with a written explanation of TDM and contact information. Ensure non-custodial parent(s) invited. Discuss with parents whether older children should participate in the TDM.

\_\_\_\_\_ **INVITE OTHERS:** Inform appropriate parties (if not already invited by TDM staff) of the meeting. Participants may include GAL/CASA, service providers, current caregiver, parent advocate, etc. Explain purpose and process, if unfamiliar. Invite youth to attend/participate to ensure "voice and choice." Determine appropriateness of younger child's attendance. Prepare child/youth regarding TDM participants, process, expectations and rights. If child has an assigned GAL or CASA, confer with them regarding child's participation.

\_\_\_\_\_ **CONSULT WITH FACILITATOR:** If there are issues that may affect the TDM process discuss with assigned facilitator. Explore how to make the TDM safe and understandable if special needs are anticipated. If there are known to suspected DV and/or other safety concerns, ensure that the facilitator has been fully informed and with the facilitator determine how the TDM can safely proceed. Discuss how the facilitator can assist you and the non-offending parent if safety issues arise during the TDM. While providing complete safety

and special needs information, limit advance discussion to issues of process, not substance – especially for an Initial Removal TDM.

**BE PREPARED:** Expect to explain at the meeting why the TDM was scheduled, describing safety/risk assessment information, discussing family strengths and supports: what has been working well within the family? What protective factors are present? What strengths/support can help to address the concerns? Be prepared to summarize CPS history and services, and brainstorm ideas to address the concerns. Be ready to offer a recommendation about placement, while remaining open to other ideas and suggestions that may alter your plan. Bring supporting documents, including completed (or at least initiated in emergency situations) safety and risk assessment tool; case plan; and reports and recommendations from service providers, current caregivers and/or GAL/CASA if they are not present. If older child is unable to attend, be prepared to share their input. Be on time for the TDM, with adequate time scheduled to allow full attention to the TDM issues and to the family.

**EXPLAIN ROLE OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE:** If you or other agency staff have invited potential community “allies” such as members of the family’s neighborhood, faith, or ethnic community, be prepared to seek parental approval for their participation before the meeting starts. Immediately prior to, and outside of, the meeting, introduce parents to rep, explain his/her role and determine parent(s)’ willingness to have a representative attend. Assist parent to make an informed decision [NOTE: In some sites, facilitator assumes this responsibility.]

### **DURING TDM**

**YOUR VOICE IS CRITICAL:** The goal of the TDM is to make the best possible placement related decision with the maximum information and participation. As the family's worker, your knowledge, contributions and guidance are integral to the meeting. Your efforts to engage the family in open, sincere, and direct dialogue about concerns, risk and safety issues is necessary to the TDM as well as the Agency's future relationship with the family. Your involvement in identifying meaningful family or individual strengths that can be used as protective factors to address the safety and risk issues is vitally important. Owning your recommendation, while being receptive to alternative resolutions and participating in the brainstorming of ideas, is essential for a productive TDM. Do not rely on the facilitator to be "in charge," share the responsibility for meeting leadership! Let your voice be heard throughout the meeting, while supporting and assisting all members of the team to be involved and contribute.

**DEMONSTRATE PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR:** Listen to understand. Speak honestly, sincerely and respectfully to all. Watch your nonverbal behavior. Talk directly to parents and other participants – make eye contact. Encourage others to share their perspective, opinions and ideas, including those contrary to your own. Attend TDM with expectation of increasing understanding, exploring alternatives, and sharing decision making responsibility. Remain calm.

\_\_\_\_\_ **SPEAK TO BE UNDERSTOOD:** Avoid use of acronyms and jargon (and interpret for family if others do so). Present information clearly, fairly, and completely. Provide thorough disclosure of concerns, expectations, progress, etc. Offer behaviorally specific information and link behaviors to risk issues and child safety. Use safety/risk assessment tool as the foundation for the discussion. Elaborate, clarify, and rephrase as needed. Check for understanding. Answer questions.

\_\_\_\_\_ **BE ALERT:** Stay attuned for any signs of verbal or non-verbal threats and indications of intimidation which suggest that a participant's safety during or after the TDM could be at risk. You know the family better than the facilitator. You will likely recognize signs of danger first.

\_\_\_\_\_ **WORK FOR CONSENSUS DECISION:** Share leadership responsibility with the facilitator – the worker is content expert, the facilitator is process expert. Support the strengths-based and solution-focused format to systematically work toward a resolution that provides safety and promotes family integrity. Ensure safety and risk information is understandable; recognize family strengths; listen to information, opinions and ideas of others in attendance; and examine all suggestions offered in an effort to provide safety and protection in the least restrictive/least intrusive manner. Understand that if consensus cannot be reached with participating staff, that you, the worker must make the final decision/recommendation based upon all available information.

\_\_\_\_\_ **BE SENSITIVE:** When child is present, remain conscious of their well-being, promoting a safe, protective environment. Remove child from TDM if issues or discussion deemed detrimental. If decision is to place child, explore ways to minimize trauma for child and family. Validate feelings and emotions. Demonstrate commitment to assist the family to safely provide for their child.

### **AFTER TDM**

\_\_\_\_\_ **DEAL WITH EMOTIONS:** Ensure parent(s) and/or children experiencing significant emotional reactions are provided the necessary supports. Check for less obvious signs of upset. Consider if safety concerns exist for any participant that should be immediately addressed, especially if domestic violence is known or suspected.

\_\_\_\_\_ **INVITE FEEDBACK:** Be receptive to the assessment of your presentation, engagement skills, behavior, etc. offered by facilitator and/or your supervisor. Use information provided to strengthen skills and improve.

\_\_\_\_\_ **IMPLEMENT DECISION:** Complete all action steps necessary to carry out TDM decision promptly. Request a new TDM meeting if circumstances affecting child's placement should change.

Source: (Evident Change, 2021)