

Family Group Decision Making Third Annual Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

It opened my eyes as to what needs to be done.

-A Family Group Decision Making father

Results from the third year's evaluation of the Arizona Department of Economic Security's (DES) Family Group Decision Making Program (FGDM) reveal both high positive regard for the process from extended family and professionals involved in the meetings, and additional "growing pains" as the program has continued its statewide implementation. Highlights of the results from the evaluation data collection include the following:

- **Successful completion of meetings**
 - From February 2001 to July 2003, 471 families were referred to the program. Of these, 72% held family group meetings.
- **Successful completion of plans**
 - 97% of the families that held meetings also successfully completed placement plans for the children involved in the case.
- **High levels of relative placement**
 - Over three quarters (75%) of the children involved were placed with relatives according to the family plans developed at the meetings.
- **High levels of satisfaction**
 - 96% of the family members who completed a survey at the meeting felt that the family had an equal part or main role in decision making about the plan development.
- **High confidence that children will be safe**
 - 94% of the family members and 96% of the Child Protective Services (CPS) professionals completing meeting surveys were confident that the children would be safe.
- **High levels of respect**
 - 96% of the family members felt respected by the FGDM facilitator and 94% felt respected by the CPS case manager.
- **Performance goals were exceeded**
 - All legislated goals were exceeded and FGDM outcomes were better than those of a comparison group from Children's Information Library and Data Source (CHILDS).



Legislated Performance Goals	Results	Performance Goals Met?
Do 85% or more of the children whose families participate in FGDM and develop an acceptable family plan NOT receive a substantiated report of child abuse and/or neglect within a six-month period following the FGDM meeting?	96.8%	YES
Do 85% of the participants express satisfaction with the process and outcome in the satisfaction surveys conducted immediately following the meeting?	94%	YES
Do 85% of the families who participate in FGDM services and develop an acceptable family plan NOT have a dependency petition filed on their minor children within three months following the family meeting?	91%	YES
Do 85% of families whose children are wards of the court at the time of the meeting, who participated in FGDM services, develop an acceptable plan approved by the court, and whose petition was dismissed by the court NOT have a dependency petition filed within three months of the dismissal of the dependency petition?	98.7%	YES
Do 85% of the families who participate in the FGDM services, whose children are wards of the court either at the time of the meeting or afterwards, have their family plan accepted by the court and adopted as a part of the case plan developed by CPS?	90%	YES
How does FGDM compare to random sample of CHILDS and cancelled cases?	<i>FGDM Outcomes Better Than Comparison Group</i>	YES

- **Follow-up services are not fully utilized by all participants**
 - Based on a 6-month telephone survey, about one-third of extended family members interviewed did not remember being offered follow-up services and of those who did, half reported difficulties in receiving the service.



The results of the evaluation indicate success in a number of areas as described above. In order to continue to show progress, some key conclusions and recommendations are included to promote program improvement. These include:

- Need for improved DES management support;
- Continued refinement of follow-up/monitoring procedures (e.g., continued and enhanced communication of plan monitor responsibilities procedures);
- Ongoing need for clear communication about the vision and purpose of the program itself;
- Continued development of training and co-facilitator resources;
- Continued review of the draft logic model;
- Specification of outcome goals more closely tied to the FGDM unique effort and purpose.

