

BOOST4FAMILIES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN

Family Team Meeting Facilitation Guidelines

Statement of Purpose

Family Team Meetings can and should be used whenever families and/or those who are trying to help families (e.g.: schools, churches, health and mental health providers, etc.) identify issues related to child safety or family stability.

Families do not need to be involved with Department of Human Services (DHS) in order to access and benefit from a Family Team Meeting. In fact, Family Team Meetings can be used to prevent entry of the child or family into the DHS or Juvenile Court systems. Examples of when Family Team Meetings should be convened include:

- When a child's behavior is out of control or in other ways making it difficult for him to be successful at school or at home;
- When a parent is facing problems - with the child or with other members of the community - that make it difficult for them to do a good job taking care of their children;
- When family dynamics - substance abuse, domestic violence, lack or parenting skills - are such that there are concerns about the child's well-being; or
- When a family is facing so many issues that they aren't sure how to even begin to resolve problems.

The above items are simply examples - many other situations may be appropriate for Family Team Meetings.

It is the intention of Boost4Families to embed trained Family Team Meeting facilitators throughout Cass, Mills, and Montgomery counties, and that Family Team Meetings be used as a supportive response when potential risks to child safety or family stability are threatened. Ultimately, Boost4Families would like to see Family Team Meetings achieve the following:

- Reduce entry of families into the formal child welfare and juvenile justice systems;
- Reduce risk of placement of children outside their parents' home; and
- Reduce incidents of re-abuse of children who have been brought to the attention of the child welfare system.

Training

Initially, approximately 25 people from Cass, Mills, and Montgomery counties will be trained as Family Team Meeting facilitators. The initial group of facilitators will include a mix of people from the following groups:

- Education
- Health
- Mental Health
- Early childhood
- Child welfare
- Family support
- Faith community
- Community volunteers

These groups have been identified because they are the ones most likely to come into contact with families who need help. Boost4Families has a steering committee for the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children initiative; this steering committee will work from the list of those who indicate willingness to be trained as facilitators to ensure that FTM facilitators are geographically and professionally balanced across the three counties.

Training of the facilitators will take place over a four-day period. There is no charge for the training and meals will be provided. Following training, facilitators will need to "shadow" and co-facilitate with an experienced facilitator for 2 meetings minimum. After that, FTM facilitators are considered fully trained.

Deployment of Facilitators

Boost4Families sees the 25 trained FTM facilitators as falling into two categories: *In-house FTM facilitators* and *Community FTM facilitators*.

By design, some of the FTM facilitators already will work in settings where families who might benefit from FTMs are served. The FTM process will simply be another strategy for that person or their agency to draw upon when working with families. These facilitators will be considered *in-house FTM facilitators* who will use their FTM skills primarily to serve families with whom their agency, school, or organization is already working.

Other facilitators (e.g.: community volunteers, or those who are not routinely providing direct service to families) will function as "*community FTM facilitators*" who will be available, upon request and based upon their own availability, to facilitate FTMs as needed in their area.

However, those who are trained as FTM facilitators with the intention of being in-house facilitators may be called upon to serve as FTM facilitators outside of their own agency, school, or organization. The availability of an in-house FTM facilitator to accommodate such a request is a decision which must be made by that facilitator's employer, if done during normal work hours.

Payment of FTM Facilitators

When a trained FTM facilitator conducts a meeting either "in-house" or because their agency, school, or organization has deemed it to be within the scope of the agency's mission, the facilitator will not be reimbursed by Boost4Families.

However, if a trained FTM in-house facilitator agrees to conduct an FTM at the request of a family, community members, or for another organization in Cass, Mills, and Montgomery counties, and this meeting is not within the normal scope of the facilitator's work, Boost4Families will reimburse the facilitator for their time.

Generally, Boost4Families will reimburse any FTM facilitator - whether community volunteers, ministers, or an in-house FTM facilitator working on their own time, etc. - for conducting an FTM designed to address issues of child safety or family stability.

Boost4Families has not yet established a reimbursement amount for FTM facilitators functioning as community FTM facilitators. It is expected an all-inclusive flat fee (including preparation time, travel costs, and meeting time) will be developed. Boost4Families currently has money from DHS's Community Partnerships for Protecting Children funds to cover facilitator training, snacks for family meetings, and facilitator fees.

Securing a FTM Facilitator for a Meeting

As people throughout Cass, Mills, and Montgomery counties become knowledgeable about Community Partnerships for Protecting Children, they may identify situations in which a family may benefit from a Family Team Meeting. In such instances, the person identifying the need should introduce the idea of the FTM to the family to see if the family might be interested. If the family is interested and this is not a situation in which an in-house facilitator is available, Sonja Marquez of Boost4Families can help identify facilitators who might be available.

As a matter of respect for the family, no Family Team Meeting shall be arranged without the family's full knowledge and consent. While Sonja (and any trained facilitator) can brainstorm with you whether or not a FTM might be an appropriate strategy, no facilitator should be asked to conduct a meeting unless the family is willing to learn about the FTM process and then make a decision to schedule a meeting.