



Minnesota State University, Mankato
Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly
and Creative Works for Minnesota
State University, Mankato

All Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other
Capstone Projects

Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other
Capstone Projects

2013

Social Worker's Guide to Engaging Families in Family Group Conference

Tiffany Kacir
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds>



Part of the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kacir, T. (2013). Social Worker's Guide to Engaging Families in Family Group Conference [Master's capstone project, Minnesota State University, Mankato]. Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds/858/>

This Other Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects at Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Social Worker's Guide to Engaging Families in Family Group Conference

Purpose

The purpose of this capstone project was to provide training materials to social workers that is relatable and practical regarding researched best practices for engaging families during the Family Group Conference process.

In Olmsted County, Family Group Conferences have been utilized since 1996 becoming an engrained practice model and a cornerstone of permanency planning for children. The capstone project focused on developing a training manual to enhance current practice in Olmsted County and implement newer best practice strategies throughout the Family Group Conference process--from prior to a referral to a post-conference follow up meetings--to ensure better outcomes for the children and their families.

Methodology

A systematic literature review was conducted using search engines employing keyword searches for terms such as "Family Group Conference," "engaging families," "best practice," and "child welfare." All literature was recorded using a process recording chart noting the date searched, citation, and relevance to the capstone project.

Several published journal articles, books and dissertations from 1996 to present day were analyzed looking for patterns regarding evidence-based practices that lead to positive outcomes and more family engagement for Family Group Conferences as it relates to social work practice in child welfare.

References

References are available upon request



Tiffany Kacir, LSW

MSW Student, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Olmsted County Community Services

Dr. Annelies Hagemester, Academic Advisor

Jessie Stratton, MSW, Field Liaison

Heather Johnson, LP, Field Liaison

Key Findings of Literature Review

Family Group Conference (FGC) was developed in 1989 in New Zealand and became a mandated practice (Morris & Connolly, 2012).

Family group conferences serve to bring professionals and families, including extended family, together to make decisions and resolve concerns related to the child/children.

Studies have found several positive outcomes when families participate in FGC including:

- Increased rates of relative care for children at risk (Morris & Connolly, 2012)
- Increased stability for children (Morris & Connolly, 2012)
- Reduction in child maltreatment and re-substantiated abuse following an FGC (Pennell & Burford, 2000).
- Shorter periods of time children are in placement (Morris and Connolly, 2012)
- Increased supports for family by the kinship network (Morris and Connolly, 2012)
- FGC is beneficial for enhancing professionals' understanding of the family situation (Healy et al, 2012).

Family Group Conferencing is reflective of a strengths-based approach which moves away from client's problems and toward enhancing possibilities (Connolly & McKenzie, 1999).

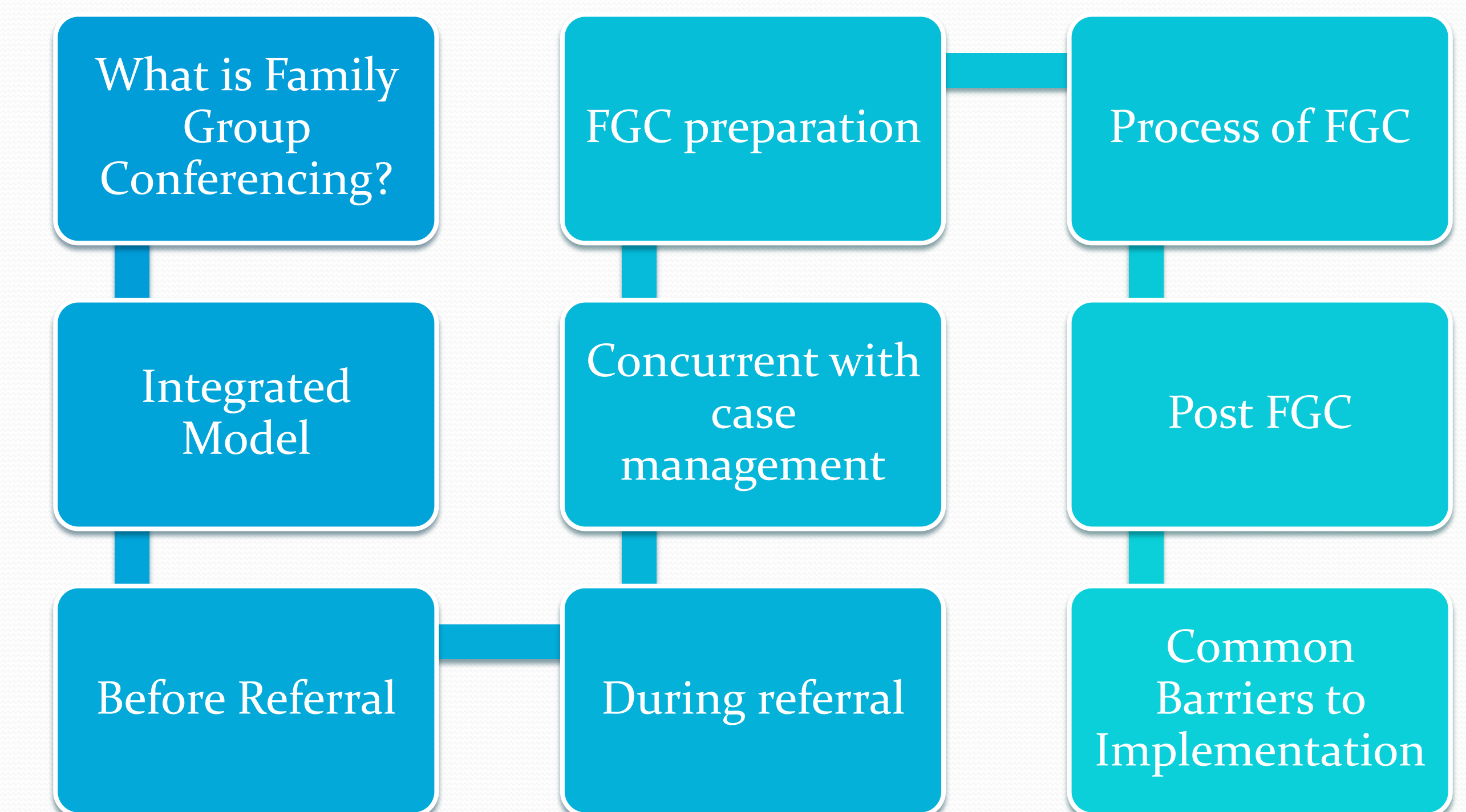
Common barriers to implementing FGC include:

- Social workers do not embrace the philosophy and values of FGC (Connolly & McKenzie, 1999).
- Professional resistance to using FGC (Brown, 2007).
- Deviation from the FGC model such as lack of funding or no independent facilitator (Merkel-Holguin, 2000; Crampton, 2004).
- Power differentials between the family and workers; families feeling intimidated (Schmid and Pollack, 2009; Connelly, 2006).
- Professionals work is exposed (Connelly, 2006).
- Family plans needing approval by the agency or court system (Crampton, 2004).

Implications for Practice

Social workers at Olmsted County are the only referral source for families to participate in an FGC. By understanding the philosophy behind FGC, the benefits for FGC, as well as practical knowledge about how best to proceed throughout the FGC process a social worker is hopefully more likely to utilize FGC.

Training Sections



Recommendations

Recommended next steps include:

- An agency wide training to social workers working with families with children and their supervisors on the practices for engaging families.
- Disbursement of the training manual



MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO