Believe it or Not:
The Interplay between Child Welfare Agency Staff Attitudes and Knowledge about FGDM and Implementation
Agenda

• Welcome and introductions
• No Place Like Home project overview
• Evaluation design
• Staff Survey findings
• Conclusions and Discussion
Presenters

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Casey Family Programs
• Jason Williams, PhD
• Erin Maher, PhD
About No Place Like Home

• 3 child welfare agencies, each with many years experience implementing FGDM
  ◦ Dallas and Tarrant Counties, Texas
  ◦ Larimer County, Colorado
  ◦ Rapid City, South Dakota

• Various family meeting models across sites
• Training, technical assistance and coaching
• Process and outcome evaluation components
NPLH: Project Goals and Objectives

To improve the safety, permanency and well-being of children through implementation, program enhancement, and evaluation of FGDM.

1. Test the effectiveness of FGDM models in preventing children from entering or re-entering foster care
2. Determine the costs for FGDM implementation
3. Analyze implementation of multiple FGDM models to provide knowledge on fit, flow and sustainability
4. Disseminate implementation, cost and outcome findings and products
Evaluation Overview

• 18-month data collection period (October 2012-April 2014)
• 5 surveys
  1. Staff Survey
  2. Caregiver (Pretest) Survey
  3. Fidelity Survey (2 versions: Participant (Pretest) and Facilitator or Coordinator)
  4. Case-Specific Questionnaire
  5. Caregiver and Participant Fidelity Posttest Surveys
• Administrative data extracts (services, outcomes)
• Site-specific evaluation designs:
  ◦ Texas – Randomized Control Trial
  ◦ South Dakota – Intent-to-Treat
  ◦ Larimer County – Propensity Score Match
• Functional cost analysis
Progress to date

• >50 training days provided across project sites and over 400 staff trained around FGC practice
• ~1000 study referrals
  ◦ ~550 Texas
  ◦ ~400 Larimer County
  ◦ 21 South Dakota
• ~450 FGDM meetings held
  ◦ ~200 Texas
  ◦ ~250 Larimer County
  ◦ 11 South Dakota
Progress to date

- ~2000 pieces of survey data received
  - >250 Caregiver Surveys
  - >900 Participant Fidelity Surveys
  - >300 Facilitator Fidelity Surveys
  - >300 Staff Surveys
  - >300 Case-Specific Questionnaires
NPLH Evaluation Successes and Challenges

Successes

• Cross-site *n*
• Response rates; some exceeded targets of 60% or more
• Rich process data

Challenges

• Low referral rates
• Low response rates (25% or less)
• QA issues
Staff Survey

• Administered prior to data collection start in September 2012
• Sought to gain understanding about who is using FGDM and in what context through collecting information around:
  ◦ Staff demographics
  ◦ Organizational culture and climate
  ◦ Staff perceptions of FGDM usefulness and effectiveness
• Key question: do staff characteristics impact utilization of FGDM?
Context

1. Social workers and implementation of EBPs
   • Top-down implementation?
   • Worker authority and influence

2. Implementation of family meetings
   • Legal mandate vs. voluntary referral
   • Discretion of workers to refer for FGCs
   • Less worker discretion in the US to refer families for initial “family meetings”
Worker Attitudes on FGCs or other types of “family meetings”

- Minimal studies on topic
- Social worker and supervisor buy-in to FGCs will impact referrals in child welfare systems
- Across studies, general attitude positive
  - Overarching philosophies supported (empowerment, strengths-focused)
- Concerns noted:
  - Skepticism of plans developed at FGCs compared to other meetings (Trotter, 1999; Huntsman)
  - Meeting length and time (Velen and Devine 2005)
  - Too much family empowerment
Some previous findings

Sweden and England (2001)

• Increased referral rates: 1) social workers who participated in building FGC as a service in Sweden and 2) more positive attitude about FGCs
• No impact on referral rates: 1) age of worker and 2) previous work experience
• Majority agree with private family time, extended family as decision makers and FGC as a useful method for solving problems
Additional findings

Michigan (Crampton 2006)
• More likely: special needs children, improper supervision, parental substance abuse, child maltreatment uncertainty
• Less likely: if family had previous TPR

Crampton et al (2008)
• Discretion in selecting families
Congruency: Attitudes and Practice

Low referral rates for FGCs – hypotheses:
• Agency facilitating process for family decisions?
• Sharing of decision making power?
• Attitudinal change still needed?
• Challenges roles of professional?
• Organizational bureaucracy and procedural nature of social work

Commitment to philosophy, but difficult in practice to change power relations (Holland, 2005)
Modeling perceptions of family groups/meetings: Background

• Evaluation addressing processes, outcomes, and costs of family meetings
• Hope to impact implementation of family meetings nationally and internationally
• Big part of that is looking at the role of staff members in introducing and facilitating family-focused methods
Research Question

What characteristics and attitudes of workers are associated with more positive attitudes towards family meeting effectiveness and usefulness?
Modeling perceptions of family groups/meetings: General Staff Survey

• What is related to more positive attitudes towards family groups/meetings?
• “Modeling” means finding
  • which factors available in the survey are related to attitudes
  • in which direction
  • by how much
• Correlation ≠ causation
**Rankings of Effectiveness and Usefulness (N=301)**

**Effectiveness:** Rated effectiveness of “Family Group Conferences” across 10 family problems (drug abuse, extreme poverty, parent-child conflict, etc.)

- 31% of staff rated FGCs as effective or very effective across all items.

**Usefulness:** Single item rating usefulness of “family meetings” on 1 to 5 scale

- 64% of staff rated family meetings as very or completely useful
## Variables Examined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary job (3 cat.)</td>
<td>Supervisors/PDs/trainers vs. coordinators/facilitators vs. case workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work area FGDM</td>
<td>Currently in FGDM position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in CW</td>
<td>CW = child welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience w/ FM</td>
<td>A lot vs. some vs. little to no experience with family meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caseload carried</td>
<td>Yes = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>White = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction high</td>
<td>Very or completely “satisfied with your current job”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family preservation proclivity</td>
<td>Family preservation vs. child safety scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree: family ability to plan</td>
<td>“Construct thorough plans for resolving their issues”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload change due to FM</td>
<td>Decrease vs. increase vs. no change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree: find services</td>
<td>“Can usually find services in my community”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence: services</td>
<td>Mean of ratings across 20 family needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services composite 1</td>
<td>Combines all service ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor competence</td>
<td>Mean of supervisor ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Mean shared/effective leadership rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VPC</td>
<td>Co-worker Vision/Professionalism/Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>SD vs. TX vs. CO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Characteristics of Workers (N=301)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Percentage in category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary job</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case workers</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors/ PDs/trainers</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator/ facilitators</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience w/ FM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little to none</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workload change due to FM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Percent yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work area FGDM</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caseload carried</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction high</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree: family ability to plan</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree: find services</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Characteristics of Workers continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years in position</td>
<td>2.538</td>
<td>3.225</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in CW</td>
<td>6.409</td>
<td>7.147</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence: services</td>
<td>3.362</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>1.440</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services composite 1</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor competence</td>
<td>5.094</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>1.750</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>4.723</td>
<td>0.901</td>
<td>1.467</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VPC</td>
<td>4.936</td>
<td>0.701</td>
<td>2.167</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modeling perceptions of family groups/meetings: Modeling process

Both outcomes are yes/no

- Quantities of interest = predicted probabilities
- Logistic regression
Modeling perceptions of family groups/meetings: Modeling process

Model selection process
• Which factors $\rightarrow$ probability of endorsing the:
  1. effectiveness of FGC
  2. usefulness of family meetings

How changes in those variables $\rightarrow$ probability of endorsing
• Simulate quantities of interest and uncertainty for counterfactual scenarios
• Pictures!
Effectiveness Results: What Matters?

• Feelings about service availability/effectiveness *if* you carry a caseload
  • “I can usually find services in my community that can help keep children safe in their home.”
  • “I have confidence that when a family has one of the following needs, these needs are able to be met by a local community provider…”
• Agree/disagree that “families know how to construct thorough plans” *if* you have no caseload
Modeling results

Predicted probability of endorsing FGC as effective
Modeling results

Predicted probability of endorsing FGC as effective with 95% CI
Usefulness Results: What Matters?

• Primary job
• State
• Perceptions of shared and effective leadership
  • “Provides visible, ongoing support for innovations and ideas”
  • “Encourages staff to make our own decisions in our work”
  • “Values cultural responsiveness in our work with families”
  • “Advocates for resources necessary to meet our goals and CPS mission”
Modeling results

Predicted probability of endorsing family meetings as useful
Modeling results

Predicted probability of endorsing family meetings as useful with 95% CI
Summary: Model Results for Effectiveness

• Not carrying a caseload:
  • Agreeing that families are capable of constructing “thorough plans” → rate FGC effective
  • Service rating has no effect

• Carrying a caseload:
  • If rate service availability/competence high → rate FGC effective
  • Agreeing with family competence item matters little

• Lowest opinions of FGC effectiveness ← low opinion of services (caseload) or of family competence (no caseload)
Summary: Model Results for Usefulness

• Probability of rating family meetings as useful strongly dependent upon primary job and state
• Climate and culture appear important: Higher ratings of shared and effective leadership → FM useful
• Lowest endorsement of usefulness ← low endorsement of leadership, particularly among TX and CO caseworkers
What have we learned?

• Different modeling results for **effectiveness** versus **usefulness**
• Perceptions of service availability and competence impact perceptions of **effectiveness** depending on whether respondents carry a caseload
• Position, climate and culture matter more for **usefulness**
A concluding thought...

“Social workers are based near the bottom of a managerial and bureaucratic structure and themselves often feel disempowered in their ability to help families in distress. It can be difficult to introduce a radical change of style such as FGC without some more fundamental changes to the current hierarchal social welfare systems (in the UK).” (Holland, 2005, p. 75)
Discussion

1. How would you describe attitudes towards family meetings or FGDMs in your agency/jurisdiction?

2. What role does organizational leadership play in influencing these attitudes?

3. How can organizational commitment to family meetings be maintained and sustained?

4. What strategies work to support of family meetings and the belief that families are capable of creating their own plans among leadership and staff? Are there policy changes that work? Workforce development strategies?

5. If implementing FGDM in your organization, what agency, staff, and family impacts do you stemming from this practice? Do you see it impacting family safety and well-being? Are there any examples you can share?
For more information:

www.fgdm.org

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