

Benefits of Family Group Conferencing:

- ✓ Provides a safe environment for all involved to talk about the harm done and how to set things right.
- ✓ Victims are given an opportunity to participate in the justice process.
- ✓ Encourages creative, positive and workable solutions.
- ✓ Improves family interactions
- ✓ Supports inclusion of family, extended family, professionals, and the community.
- ✓ It results in lower incidence of repeat offending.
- ✓ Balance is achieved through restitution and reparation.

This brochure has been prepared by a Sonoma County Restorative Team, and designed by:



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Family Group Conferencing for Youth Justice

General Information

What is a Family Group Conference?

A Family Group Conference (FGC) is a meeting for the youth who offended, their family, and the victim with their support, to decide how the young person can be held accountable and take responsibility for his or her behavior. The focus is on putting things right, not punishment.

Why hold a Family Group Conference?

Family Group Conferencing is being used successfully throughout the United States and the world for youth who offend. Research shows that it is an effective and satisfying approach for:

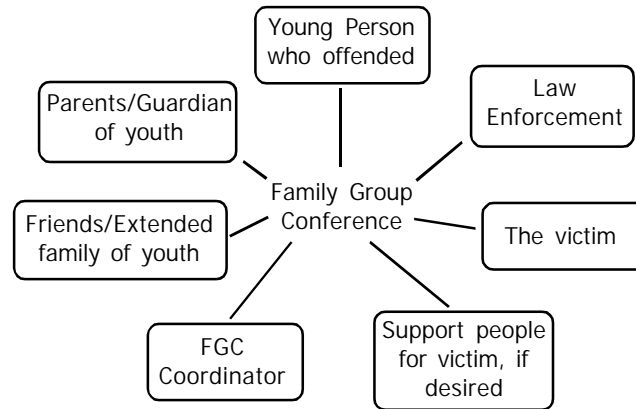
- ✓ Healing the harm done by youth who offend.
- ✓ Giving the victim an opportunity to be involved.
- ✓ Preventing the young person from re-offending.
- ✓ Involving and empowering families in decision-making.
- ✓ Strengthening communities to work together on addressing crime.

What are the goals of the Family Group Conference?

The goals of the Family Group Conference are:

- ✓ Have the youth take responsibility for their behavior.
- ✓ Repairing the harm done.
- ✓ Reducing the risk of future offending.
- ✓ Restore trust and safety in the community.

Who attends the Family Group Conference?



Why does the victim attend?

Experience has shown that the victim's contribution at the conference is important in confronting youth with the impact of their crime on others. It is important that the young person hear just how much others have been affected financially, physically, and emotionally by what has happened. No one can explain this better than the victim.

It can be difficult for victims to attend these conferences because they may be feeling angry about what has happened, and may not want to re-live it. They may be anxious, too, about seeing the youth and their family. However, it can be an opportunity for them to participate and contribute to the decision-making.

What will happen at the Conference?

A FGC Coordinator arranges a meeting with the youth and all the people impacted by the offense. Information is shared about:

- ✓ The actual offense.
- ✓ How it harmed the victim and community.
- ✓ Why the young person committed the crime.
- ✓ What is needed to repair the harm and prevent future offending.

The youth and his or her family meet privately to discuss how to put things right; together they make a written plan of action.

This plan is presented to the victim and the other FGC participants who discuss and decide whether the plan is acceptable. This process may involve discussions and revisions to the plan.

When an agreement is reached on the plan, it is signed by the participants

What happens afterwards?

The FGC plan is put into action and will be closely monitored. Upon successful completion of the plan, the key participants are notified.

How much time does all this take?

Most Family Group Conferences take about three hours. To organize an FGC from beginning to end can take from two to four weeks.