

# FAMILY: WHAT IS THEIR ROLE IN CHILD WELFARE DECISION MAKING?

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# Decision-making in the child welfare case

- ❑ When are the key decision making points?
- ❑ Why should the decision-making process be examined?
- ❑ How might decisions be improved?
- ❑ Who is involved in making decisions?
- ❑ Should family members be involved?



- ❑ How does involvement in decisions impact follow-through?
- ❑ How do decisions impact the child's safety? Well-being? Sense of family? Permanence?

# Family Involvement Continuum

*Family Voice in Decision Making*

*System Voice in Decision Making*

**Families**, along with their support network, **craft initial plans** that are subsequently **shared with the professionals who work collaboratively** with the family to ensure it is attainable and meets the highest standards for achieving the goals of safety, permanency, and well-being.

**Families are part** of the decision making team. In these instances, families partner with professionals to **create consensual decisions** acceptable to all parties.

**Families have a genuine voice** at the meetings. Their ideas, needs, perspectives, and other inputs are sought at the meetings, but the **decision making rests with professionals**.

**Families are present** at meetings where decisions will be made about their children.

**Families are not included** in meetings or other forums where decisions are made about their children.

# Collaborative approaches (ADR) in child welfare cases

## Why collaborative (ADR) approaches?

- ❑ Increases family voice in decision-making
- ❑ Increases buy-in
- ❑ Decreases resistance and apathy
- ❑ Increases understanding
- ❑ Decreases time in system
- ❑ Increases self/family-responsibility for change
- ❑ Decreases “silo approach” to problem solving
- ❑ Decreases imposed external decision-making

# ADR Approaches

- ❑ PHC – Prehearing conference
- ❑ FTM – Family team meetings
- ❑ FGC – Family group conferencing, also known as FDGM – family group decision making
- ❑ EFGC – Expedited FGC
- ❑ CDM – Child dependency mediation
- ❑ PHPR/PHTPR – prehearing permanency review or TPR conferences



# Terminology

## Family Involvement Models:

- Family Group Conference or FGC (New Zealand, 1989)
- Family Unity Meeting Model or FUM (Oregon, 1990)
- Family Team Conferencing (FTC) as developed by the Child Welfare Practice and Policy Group
- Hybrid Models that combine FGC, FTC, and FUM
- Expedited FGC (EFGC) – Nebr.

## Case Decision Making Models:

- Team Decision Making (TDM)
- Family Team Meetings (FTM)
- Prehearing Conferencing (PHC)

# Distinctive Elements



- ▣ **Prehearing Conference (PHC)**
  - Brief, limited meeting
  - Usually immediately prior to court hearing
  - Independent facilitator
  - Parent and other key stakeholders present
  
- ▣ **Family Team Meetings (FTM)**
  - Coordinator and facilitator are separate roles
  - Meetings held within 72 hours of referral
  - Only used for placement decisions
  - Tends to be more professionals than family

# Distinctive Elements

## ▣ **Family Group Conference (FGC)**

- Independent coordinator
- Comprehensive preparation
- More family than professionals
- Private family time (essential)
- Minimized facilitation
- Family culture embraced



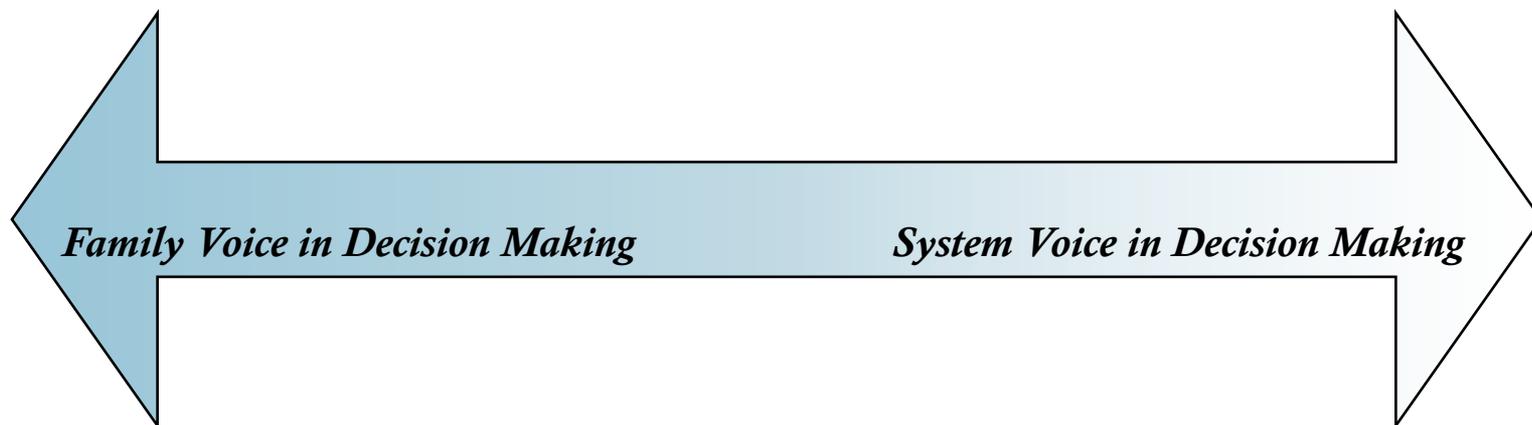
## ▣ **Child Dependency Mediation (CDM)**

- Specific issue-related
- Few participants
- One to three sessions; one to two hours each
- Independent trained mediator
- Can be used at any point through the case

# Where does each approach lie on the family decision-making continuum?

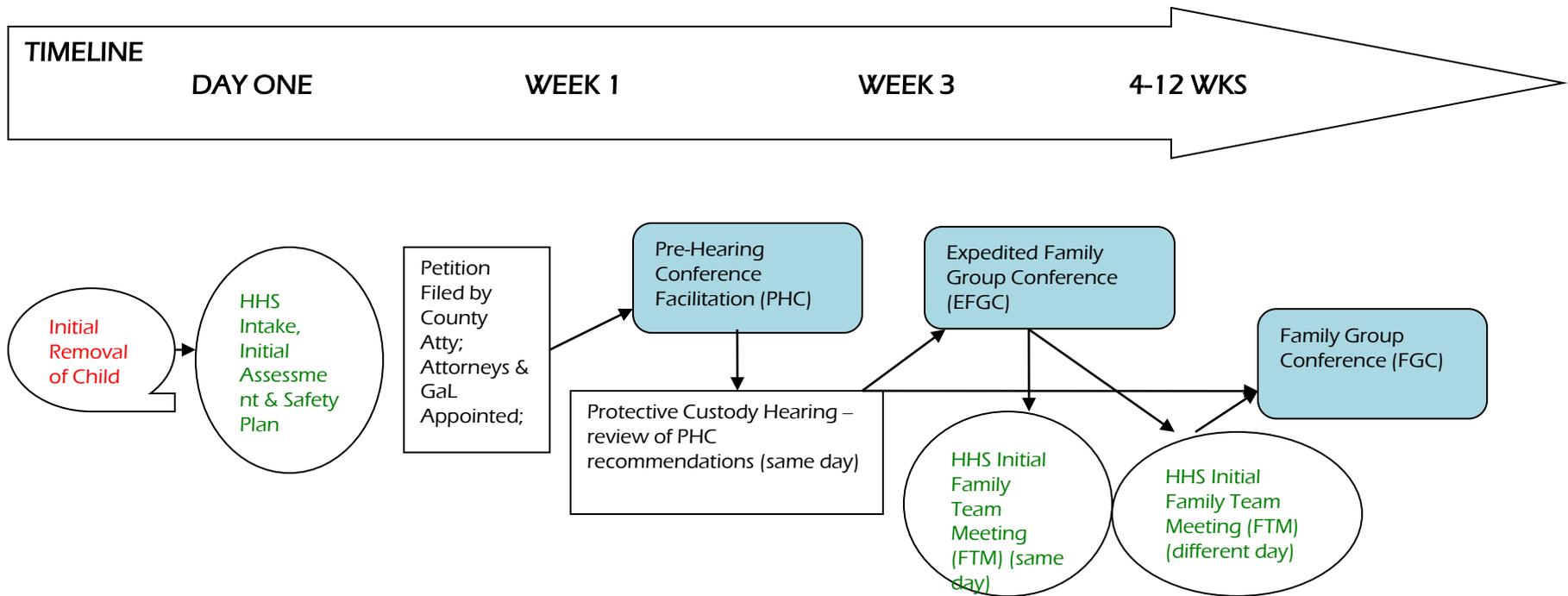
- ▣ TDM/FTM – professionally-driven, family infused process
- ▣ FGC – family-driven, professionally-infused process
- ▣ PHC – court-driven, professionally-infused process
- ▣ CDM – open-ended

*Adapted from AHA, Doolan (2005)*



# SAMPLE FLOWCHART

## First Twelve Weeks Child Welfare Case: *family collaborative forums*



# What is the greatest treasure?

*Ki mai ki au. He aha te taonga  
nui o te ao? Maku e ki, he  
tamariki, he tamariki.*

Should you ask me, what is the  
greatest treasure in the world, I  
would reply, It is children, it is  
children, it is children.

