



OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

~Family Decision Making~

What is Family Decision Making?

Family Decision Making (FDM) is a circle where members of the child's family come together with significant others and members of the child's community who are, or might become, involved to assist the family to develop a plan to care for their children.

The circle is arranged and facilitated by a FDM coordinator. The family and FDM coordinator make the final decision about who participates, and it can be anyone the family identifies as important to the child(ren).

What are the strengths of FDM?

FDM helps to promote and develop the capacity of Aboriginal families and communities to care for and protect children and supports child and family development. FDM often helps to avoid the need for court involvement, ensures family knows about and has access to resources and services that can help, and builds stronger relationships by helping families work out problems together. FDM recognizes and acknowledges the right and capacity of Aboriginal families and communities to care for and plan for their children. FDM respects and understands Indigenous ways of being and knowing.

Referrals:

The program receives referrals from Band, Friendship Center or MCFD Social Workers; Parents or Family members.

Note: Children/Families who are deemed at high risk prior to MCFD involvement will be placed in higher priority;

Roles:

- The FDM Coordinator is independent of the Band, Friendship Centre and Ministry of Children and Family Development. The coordinator works with participants to ensure balancing of the circle and that people can come together in a good way. The coordinator will also describe the process, legal process and options available.
- The role of the family at the FDM is to actively participate in planning for the child/ren's safety, wellness, permanency, culture and any other area decided by the family to be appropriate and important. It also may include supporting the parents in developing a wellness plan.
- The formal support role at an FDM is to provide information and offer consultation and resources to family members.
- In situations where there is MCFD involvement, the MCFD Social Workers role is to agree to, support and resource family plans wherever possible.

Family Decision Making is conducted in a circle format.

Since this is a family driven process the format is dependant on the family and community culture.

1st Round—Opening

Prayer / Smudge / Song
Introductions
Confidentiality
Ground Rules

2nd Round - Information Sharing

Family Strengths
Risks/Concerns
Questions
Sharing

3rd Round—Private Family Time

Discuss the Concerns
Decide on a plan

4th Round—The Plan

Present the Plan
Discuss the Plan
Questions/Get Clarification
Agreement to the Plan

Family Driven Process:

As a family driven process the family will determine:

- Who will be invited to participate;
- The location and food to be served at the meeting;
- The culture and ceremony to be incorporated;
- The use of any co-facilitators;
- Elder involvement;
- Support People;
- Follow Up.

Preparation:

The coordinator will meet with all participants to prepare them to attend the family circle. They will describe the process, outline what is understood as the needs of the children and the purpose of the circle, explain the rule of confidentiality, describe who else is attending and ensure the participants feel safe participating. The coordinator will work to ensure the family understands all the options available to them, understands the legal processes if applicable, is able to come together in a good, safe way and that the circle is balanced.

- FDM's are not designed or expected to resolve every issue that a family may face.
- There may be a follow-up family meeting to review the plan and see how everything is going.
- FDM follows family process, as a result the circle itself may last anywhere from a couple of hours to one/two days depending on this issues and how quickly everyone can reach an agreement.
- A written copy of the plan will be sent to all participants who attended the Circle

QUESTIONS?

Please contact: The Okanagan Nation Alliance (250) 707-0095 ext. 152, Family Decision Program