

**Family Group Conferencing Network**  
**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2006**  
**2:00 – 4:00 pm**  
**Venue: Melbourne Citymission 19 King Street Melbourne**

**FGC Network Minutes**

**1. Attendance**

Mandy Baxter: MCM, Yasmin Thomas: MCM, Ranee Cornell: MCM, Trish Westhead: MCM, Margaret Brittain: Glastonbury, Debbie Moore: Glastonbury, Eddy De Naidis: DHS- Footscray, Nigel Polak: Ringwood Family Relationship Centre, Dominique Swift: DHS North – West Region, Ian Goodhart: Ringwood Family Relationship Centre, Paul Ban: Private practitioner/consultant

**Chair:** Paul Ban

**Minutes:** Mandy Baxter

**2. Apologies**

Lesley Harding: DHS, Michelle Mealor: Anglicare

**3. Business Arising**

**3.1 Identification of group**

The group has formed in recognition of the benefit of support, networks and “peer” links in the practice of family group conferencing (FGC). The group is diverse in its practice of FGC and should be kept relatively informal where an exchange of ideas will be the core.

Themes include:

- ✓ A support network
- ✓ Peer support/mentoring
- ✓ Shared common values
- ✓ Bridging the gap between services (removal of feeling “isolated”)
- ✓ Training opportunities
- ✓ A place to discuss practice and receive feedback
- ✓ A developed network of government, NGO, community services and private practitioners

The group shall be made up of a mix of diverse service providers such as private practitioners. Government and non-government organisations and Community Services.

**Action: The network to bring to the next meeting resources pertaining to Family Group Conferencing. E.g. training opportunities, examples of how FGC models are used within different settings, marketing and educational materials etc.**

**3.2 Central Coordination**

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What does this role involve? The Coordinator will act as a point of contact for the group as well as outside services who were wanting to know more about the network. The Coordinator would distribute the minutes and dates for each meeting. It was understood that minutes needed to be accurate and clear. Marg Brittan from Glastonbury would act as the central coordinator with Nigel Polak from Ringwood Family Relationship Centre acting as a support. The minute taker will first need to send the minutes to Marg and Nigel for clarification before being distributed publicly to the group as well as the wider sector. Nigel suggested the minutes be posted on the VARJ site, the group agreed to this.

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**Action:** Marg to act as Coordinator until further notice. Minutes to be forwarded to Nigel & Marg for distribution. Nigel to post minutes on VARJ website

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## 4. New Business

4.1 VARJ (Victorian Association for Restorative Justice). See above regarding how this network will be linked to VARJ

## 5. Standing items

### 5.1 Training

The network discussed issues of professional development opportunities. Some questions/themes posed by the group were;

- ✓ Bringing in specialists
- ✓ What conferences/forums were relevant to staff training
- ✓ What are the different training needs of the group and does this need to be tailored according to the type of service (e.g. child protection, youth homelessness, family law)
- ✓ Supporting workers to identify when FGC is appropriate for the “client”
- ✓ How can we best support workers who are learning or just beginning to practice FGC – suggestions included, “shadowing”, one to one support and mentoring. How do we identify the more experienced or new conveners?
- ✓ Who is already delivering packages? (e.g. Anglicare, the development of training for MCM by Paul Ban)
- ✓ How is it decided on who is involved in the conference? Who needs to be there? (Some family members may be resistant)

Other considerations raised; considering the cost of FGC it makes sense for workers to become trained and then follow on within agency. Training workers can be a complex process, workers need to feel confident to facilitate a conference and this depends on the number of conferences facilitated. Mentoring of workers needs to be ongoing. Co-convening can be a good strategy, yet FGC is normally run by one worker except in the case of indigenous conferences.

## 5.2 Information share

- ✓ Paul is presenting at NZ international conference in November. The theme is looking at FGC over the past 16 years and models of practice.
- ✓ VARJ is having conference in next 12-18 months (national conference)
- ✓ Conveners can be placed on the Family Reconciliation Mediation Program (FRMP) web database.
- ✓ Families in Tasmania are given the choice of who to choose as their convener

**Action: Those conveners interested in being on the FRMP web database to forward details to Yasmin Thomas at [ythomas@mcm.org.au](mailto:ythomas@mcm.org.au) or call 8625 4478**

Meeting Closed at 3:45 pm

### Next meeting

Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006 at 2:30pm, Melbourne Citymission, 19 King Street Melbourne.  
Low cost parking at Crown.

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