

Family Group Conferencing Network
Wednesday 14th March 2007
2:00 – 3:30 pm
Venue: Melbourne Citymission 19 King Street Melbourne

FGC Network Minutes

1. Attendance

Margaret Brittain: Glastonbury Family Services (GFS), Nigel Polak: Ringwood Family Relationship Centre (RFRC), Ian Goodhardt: RFRC, Paul Ban: Private practitioner/consultant; Mandy Baxter: Melbourne City Mission (MCM); Rani Cornell MCM,

Chair: Paul Ban

Minutes: Nigel Polak

2. Apologies

Dom Swift (on behalf of all DHS North & West Convenors): Department of Human Services Child Protection (DHS CP); Yasmin Thomas: MCM; Judith Newbold: Regional Extended Family Services (REFS); Eddy DeNardis: DHS CP; Margaret Armstrong; educational consultant; Debbie Moore: Glastonbury Family Services.

Nigel will contact Anglicare Lilydale (Marg Kearsley and Michelle Mealor) to discuss ongoing attendance at meetings and relevance of Network to their needs.

3. Business Arising

3.1 Future meetings bi-monthly

Future meetings will be held bi-monthly.

4. Standing items

4.1 Resources Pertaining to FGC

Dom Swift has asked that an article of interest be distributed. This was sent out with these minutes.

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 etc.**

4.2 FDR Practitioner Accreditation

See previous minutes.

Action: **Nigel, Paul and Marg to submit a (joint) response on behalf of the Network (with VARJ) objecting to the removal of FGC from the elective options and giving reasons for its inclusion in future frameworks.**

4.3 FGC Training

See previous minutes.

Judith advised (care of Nigel) that proposed dates for training offered by Patricia Kiely (Burnside Family Services Training) on behalf of REFS are 9-13 July. Approx cost per person is \$700. Judith requested the Networks support in disseminating relevant information.

The training is a nationally accredited elective unit of the Advanced Diploma of Systemic therapy. Approx cost per participant of 4-day training is \$500.

Action: **The Network is happy distribute any information disseminated by REFS.**

Action: **Nigel to speak to REFS and encourage them to keep the costs down if possible (as this will secure the numbers they need).**

Action: **Nigel to contact DHS Eastern and Southern regions to invite to training.**

Action: **Mandy will speak with Judith about adding FGC training to the SAAP training calendar in the future.**

Ian indicated that he can see a need (e.g. for himself) for a more generic training on the common principles of “restorative practice”.

4.4 Discussion – neutrality

Paul raised the issue of neutrality as one that warrants ongoing consideration for practitioners. Ian contrasted neutrality, that suggests taking no position on the issues under discussion, with impartiality, that implies that the practitioner may have a view, but does not side with either party. This led onto a discussion of the theoretical (im-)possibility of neutrality given any individual’s subjective place and, therefore, view of the world. In particular, moral values, the role of the individual and the role of organizations within the systems in which they exist (i.e. including the role of the system within a larger social system) put pressure on any ideal of neutrality.

4.4 Discussion – promotion of FGC in Victoria

All agreed that while the primary purpose of the Network is a central meeting place for the exchange of information and ideas between practitioners, it may also play a promotional role. This role would include demonstrating the utility of and encouraging the use of FGC in different fields and in different situations.

Different levels of promotion were discussed from the grass-roots to the highest points of political influence, including: community education approaches, person-by-person spreading the word, take-up of the model by (community) organizations, take-up by government organizations, legislated use of the model in specific contexts, and influencing law-makers to consider the different contexts in which it may be the best-practice model for facilitating change.

**Next meeting: Wednesday 23rd May
 2.00-3.30pm
 Melbourne City Mission, 19 King Street, Melbourne CBD**

Proposed Meetings: Wednesday 26th April, 2.00-3.30pm

Wednesday 20th June, 2.00-3.30pm
Wednesday 18th July, 2.00-3.30pm
Wednesday 15th August, 2.00-3.30pm
Wednesday 12th September, 2.00-3.30pm

Proposed item for future discussion:

- **where does the convenor role best sit: legal/community/welfare/families?**