

## Forming an Family Wellness Team

### Objectives:

1. Participants will better understand the role of the Family Wellness Team in the Indian community.
2. Participants will learn the importance of having a mission statement and protocols for the Family Wellness Team.
3. Tasks and duties of the Family Wellness Team will be discussed so that participants will fully understand their role.

### Activities:

Ask the group to develop a mission statement and protocols for their FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What is the role of the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM in Indian communities? How are they looked at by community members?
2. What responsibility does the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM have in Indian communities?
3. Who should be active members of the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM and what can they contribute?
4. How can your FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM become advocates for children and families in your community? Why is this necessary?

## Forming a Family Wellness Team

Creating a FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM involves several steps: identifying and recruiting members, developing a mission statement and protocol, establishing and maintaining good working relationships among team members, and evaluating the team's performance.

### What is an FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM?

There can be a variety of definitions of FAMILY WELLNESS TEAMS and CPTs and MDTs. For the sake of simplicity, a MDT will be defined as a prosecution based team, focusing on child abuse and neglect cases involved in the legal/judicial system, while an FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM focuses on child protection.

An FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM has the responsibility to ensure that children who are victims of abuse or neglect are protected from additional maltreatment.

## **Team Participants**

Many agencies work very well together in an informal environment. With the creation of an FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM you will need written protocols that will detail the involvement and activities of each agency member. It is important at the protocol development stage to assure that each agency is willing to take on the responsibility and commit to being involved with the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM.

Everyone on the team must be committed to the concept that a coordinated and collaborative process is required for successful investigation of child abuse and/or neglect. This may take several meetings before the team begins to grasp the team concept.

The FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM must have the support of the leadership of its members' agencies and organizations. For instance, one study has revealed that in a jurisdiction where a FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM created a close working relationship between law enforcement and child protective services, three out of four cases were referred for criminal prosecution, and nearly 95 percent of those cases resulted in convictions (Tjaden, Anhalt, 1994).

Possible team members might include: Indian Child Welfare, law enforcement, prosecutor (tribal and/or state), criminal investigator, Indian Health Service physician/pediatrician, victim advocate, Bureau of Indian Affairs social service, tribal housing personnel, substance abuse program personnel, mental/behavioral health program personnel.

## **Writing a Mission Statement:**

A mission statement is a general declaration of the purpose, scope of activities and the guiding principles of the team. It should be short and clearly describe the reason the team was formed and the purpose it will serve. Your team should consider the following questions when writing a mission statement.

- Why was the team formed?
- Who is on the team?
- What jurisdiction will the team serve?
- What types of cases will the team address?
- What other functions will the team perform?
- What challenges will the team face?
- How will the team meet those challenges?

Don't attempt to include the answer to all of these questions. A mission statement should be short and specific enough to provide an adequate measure of success. It should be simple and direct and must also be tied to the everyday work of the team's member agencies.

Your Mission Statement Should....

- Express your team's purpose in a way that inspires support and ongoing commitment

- Motivate those who are connected to the team
- Be articulated in a way that is convincing and easy to grasp
- Use proactive verbs to describe what your team does
- Be free of jargon
- Be short enough so that anyone connected to the team can easily repeat it

### **Developing a Protocol**

A protocol is a written document detailing the understanding of the role and responsibility of each agency involved in the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM. It is a practical, working document and serves as a reference when questions or disputes arise within the team. Protocols typically reduce conflict within teams because there is a shared understanding of the responsibilities of team members and their agencies. The agencies and individuals signing the document signify their mutual commitment to the team and the team's mission statement.

The development of an FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM will be greatly influenced by the purpose for the team. An FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM can provide one or more of the following services:

- protection
- case management
- case follow-up/tracking
- sponsoring activities
- activism
- providing recommendations to the court
- coordination
- education
- support for Team members
- advocacy
- discussion/problem solving
- data collection
- provision of multidisciplinary input.

### **Six potential functions for a FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM:**

- 1) development of policies and procedures for handling situations involving child abuse and/or neglect
- 2) identification, coordination, and management of these situations
- 3) developing and implementing protocols and screening instruments in clinics where high risk families can be identified
- 4) development of necessary protocols and procedures for gathering and recording information for reporting, legal, clinical, and monitoring purposes

5) developing and coordinating child abuse/neglect training for the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM members and the general community

6) identification and prevention activities in the schools with staff and children

Issues of confidentiality are paramount for any FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM. The type of information shared within FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM meetings is extremely sensitive. Everyone is concerned that information only be shared on a "need to know" basis and that their personal contributions to case discussions do not violate their agency or professional ethical guidelines. Confidentiality concerns can be a major barrier to inter-agency cooperation. The development of multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement (MOUs or MOAs) must address how information can be shared within each agency's confidentiality standards. The fewer the team members, the fewer the chances for violations of confidentiality.

To address confidentiality concerns, most FAMILY WELLNESS TEAMS require members to sign confidentiality statements. Several teams include a Confidentiality Declaration as part of the meeting attendance sheet. As each member signs the meeting attendance sheet, they must consciously reaffirm their commitment to maintaining confidentiality.

### **Tasks of a FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM**

There are several tasks that the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM should be willing to tackle. These include:

- **Advocacy** – This is one of the most important tasks the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM can do for children and families of the community. Many Indian children and families are not aware of the services available to them or the requirements they must meet in order to receive services. The FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM must advocate for families to receive the services they need to either regain their children or to participate in services to become better parents.

- **Case Review/Determination** - FAMILY WELLNESS TEAMS are designed to review each case as it comes into the child protection system. This ensures that cases are dealt with in a timely manner and that appropriate services are identified and provided.

- **Determination of Services** – Identifying services is critical so that families can receive the necessary services to meet their case plan. It is very helpful to families to know what services are available so that they can receive and participate in services, parenting classes, etc. a timely manner. The FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM, as a group, can come together and discuss the issues of each case and each member can inform other members of services available within their agency or other services they are aware of that the family might need.

- **Provide Training and Technical Assistance to CPS** – As a group, the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM will have many years of training and experience.

They can assist each other in the dynamics of dysfunctional families, as well as domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and other issues affecting Indian families.

- **Provide Feedback on Progress of Each Case** – FAMILY WELLNESS TEAMS can continue to review cases until they leave the system. In providing feedback on each case, the team can determine the efforts that are being made by families and what might better help them.

### **Role of the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM in the Community**

There are many roles of the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM in Indian communities. Some of these would include:

- **Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect** – The FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM can create awareness of child abuse and neglect in various ways. They can decide to print brochures on the definitions, indicators, what happens when a report is made, who must make a report, etc. and distribute or post in each member's agency.

- **Sponsor Community Education Activities** – It is the responsibility of each agency in the community to make community members aware of child abuse and neglect. If each agency/member was willing to participate in a community training on child abuse and neglect, there would be little effort on one person. Each agency/member could do a half hour/one hour presentation on their expertise, i.e., domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, etc.

- **Prevention Efforts** – Prevention activities are an important part of the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM. There are many activities that the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM could do in Indian communities to get the word out about child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, etc. Many FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM have set up booths at the annual pow-wows or tribal events for a safe place for kids who are lost, need first aid, etc. This not only is a service to the community, but also makes the community aware of the FAMILY WELLNESS TEAM and their activities in the community.

## Case Staffing and Tracking Form

*This form is to be completed on each case that will be staffed by the Family Wellness Team.*

**Name of Child/ID#:**

**Guardian/Caregiver:**

**Status of Court Case:**

**Next hearing date Adjudication date:**

**Status of Family and Child:**

**Current Placement:**

**Location of Perpetrator:**

**Services Received:**

**Additional Services Needed:**

**Reunification Efforts:**

[Note Council emphasis on exhausting all efforts and determination that all further efforts would be futile]

**ICWA Recommendation for further action:**

1. [State the question presented] Whether .... ?

**FWT Recommendation:** The Family Wellness Team recommends ...

**Reasons for recommendation:**

With respect to the findings required by the Youth In Need of Care statute:

[Example only re guardianship]

**J. Grounds for Appointing a Guardian and Burden of Proof.**

1. *The Court may appoint a guardian when the following conditions have been proved by clear and convincing evidence:*

- a. The parent has consented in writing to the guardianship; or*
- b. The youth is a youth in need of care as defined under this code.*

The parent has not consented in writing to the guardianship.

The youth is a youth in need of care.

**2. In addition to finding one of the above conditions has been proved, the Court must also find all the following conditions have been proved by clear and convincing evidence:**

- a. That appointment of a guardian is in the best interest of the youth; and*

The Family Wellness Team finds, for the reasons stated above, that the appointment of a guardian is in the best interests of the youth at this time on the condition that (a) – (e) above are included in any order granting guardianship.

- b. The youth's best interests would not be served if the youth remains under the parent's care and custody; and*

The Family Wellness Team finds that the youth's best interests would not be served if the youth were to remain under Angel Hall's care and custody.

- c. That the petitioner(s) can provide appropriate and adequate parental care for the youth's financial and emotional support.*

The Family Wellness Team finds that the petitioners can provide appropriate and adequate parental care in a foster care environment.

In sum, the Team recommends that the guardianship petition be granted with the conditions (a) – (e) expressed above.

This report adopted by consensus of the Family Wellness Team. The participants were:

Health and Human Services

- Director Whitney Jones
- Family Services Manager Pam Hammond
- ICW Case worker Yolanda Harvey
- Mental Health counselor Heidi Chambers
- Mental Health counselor Brenda Dorsey
- \_\_\_\_\_

Northwest Indian Treatment Center

- Director June O'Brien
- Counselor Sally Heath
- Counselor Astrid Poste
- Counselor Carol Shaw
- \_\_\_\_\_

Education Department

- Director Kim Cooper
- Education Liaison Walt Archer

Public Safety (Law Enforcement)

- Administrative Assistant Shelly Rawding
- Probation Coordinator Jerry Schroder
- \_\_\_\_\_

Administration

Assistant Executive Director David Whitener, Sr.

Legal Department

Director Kevin Lyon

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