



## Tips to Facilitating a Good Meeting

To have a good meeting, you need to make it interesting with a positive focus, keep it on track, and make sure something is accomplished. The best facilitator listens to and respects the thinking of the Team.

Consider using some or all of the following information to run an effective meeting.

### Planning the Meeting

- Identify meeting participants – who is to attend depends on what you want to accomplish at the meeting. Consult with the child/family to elicit their input on who they wish to attend the meeting.
- Choose a meeting site that is familiar, comfortable, and accessible to those who attend.
- Set the meeting time to accommodate the majority of participants – a must for the child/family and anyone they identify to participate.
- Provide adequate written notice of the meeting date, time, and location. Give participants time to prepare reports and documents for the meeting. Make follow-up phone calls if needed.
- Prepare an agenda and utilize it as a tool to facilitate the meeting to keep it on track and on schedule.
- Gather and copy materials to be shared with meeting participants.
- Insure that audio/visual equipment, a conference phone, and other tools are available.

### Facilitating the Meeting

- Start the meeting on time, and do not recap what has been discussed for any latecomers.
- Welcome meeting attendees and thank them for their time.
- Make introductions – make sure everyone knows each other.
- Set basic ground rules such as the following and post them at the meeting:
  - Turn off cell phones
  - Participate
  - Look to understand others first – then be understood
  - Get focused
  - Maintain momentum
  - One speaker at a time
  - No side conversations
  - Everyone gets a chance to share their ideas
  - Reach closure
- Do something to gather people together such as asking everyone to briefly mention positive things that have been happening recently related to the meeting topic
- Make sure someone is taking minutes, if it is not you.
  - Consider using a checklist to compile and organize information
  - Minutes should focus on key discussion points and documenting decisions that were made
- Review the agenda to outline topics to be discussed and decisions to be made. Add additional items identified by meeting participants.

- Make sure people participate, especially the child and family.
  - Insure that the group respects everyone's ideas and opinions
  - Ask specific people what they think
  - Be prepared to gently remind people when they are talking too much.
- Pay attention to what is important as it relates to decisions to be made and level of detail to be discussed.
- Finish each discussion topic on the agenda before moving on to the next.
- Review for the group the decisions that have been made and the responsibilities undertaken by members of the Team.
- Finish the meeting on time.

### **After the Meeting**

- Send required documents and meeting minutes to attendees and other interested parties as identified by the Individual Service Plan.
- Use the minutes from this meeting to assist in developing future agendas and recap minutes from this meeting at the next meeting.

### **Decision Making Process**

Majority vote is the most popular way to make decisions, although not necessarily the best way to decide issues that impact the lives of children and families (depending on the issue being considered).

Many groups use consensus as a means of making decisions. The group takes actions that everyone consents to. This does not mean that everyone is in perfect agreement, but that everyone can live with the decision. Ideally, decisions by consensus have the support of the entire group. The best thinking of the group has been incorporated into their decisions. The process encourages creative ideas.