



NETcare

Empowering Professionals to empower others

Managing a Family Group Conference Meeting

Preparing the venue and welcoming the family members

Managing the Meeting

Preparation

Make sure the room is prepared before hand. When family members walk into room they need to feel comfortable and unconcerned. You will also need that 'free time' between the first group member arriving and the last. If you are too busy arranging chairs, finding out how to turn the heating on or setting up the equipment then you won't have time for the family members. They will need some-one to take care of them and take control. So arrive early and appear relaxed and welcoming when they arrive.

On arrival the family should find:

- A warm room
- Tea/coffee made and ready
- Seating arranged
- Equipment (flipchart, pens, paper) set up.
- Extra copies of reports

The co-ordinator should also have:

- Knowledge of the venue rules i.e. smoking, out of bounds areas, etc.
- Carryout menus or prepared sandwiches
- Met everyone attending
- A sense of control/authority
- A prepared sheet of expectations

Beginning

A 'nurturing' beginning is best. Family members will feel tense when they enter the room so fuss over them. Get them their tea or ask a group member to help others get tea. Keep a watchful eye for those members who isolate themselves or are being isolated. Make your way to them and attempt to include them. Greet and meet all the members of the group before the information giving stage. This will help:

- Relax family members
- Include everyone

- Connect with everyone
- Help assess the mood and feel of the group
- Affirm each member as important and unique

Information giving

Ensure that everyone is settled before introducing the information giver and then get the family members to introduce themselves and their relationship to the person in focus. Remind the group why they are here, their role and what they need to do. Introduce ground rules and check for any queries. Give the information giver an opportunity to share the information, ensuring that no new information is introduced that is not already known to the group. Give the group an opportunity to respond to the information.

Before leaving remind the group of why they are gathered and what their role and goal is. Make sure that they know that you are available if need be. This will help the group:

- Feel safe
- Gain knowledge
- Share anxieties
- Set boundaries
- Prepare for role
- Prepare for goal setting

Closing

Closing the meeting properly is important. The co-ordinator needs to help the group members to draw up their plan. The family members tend to be tired at this stage. The co-ordinator needs to be concise and precise. Make sure the plan has been agreed by a majority and should include the who, what and when in each part of the plan. Affirm the family no matter how limited the plan may seem to you. Inform them as to when the plan will be formally agreed, and thank them for coming. This will:

- Provide closure
- Affirm the work that had been achieved
- Set the scene for the plans implementation
- Assist in moving to the next phase.

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