

TEN TIPS FOR GAL/CHILD ADVOCATES FOR EFFECTIVE FTDM MEETINGS

- 1. Please attend the FTDM. The participation of the CA and/or GAL, as the child's independent advocate, is critical.** Understand, however, that due to the often emergency nature of situations requiring a FTDM, meetings can be scheduled quickly and with little notice. When scheduling the FTDM the social worker must give priority first to the parents' attendance and then to other participants.
- 2. Recognize the goal of a FTDM is to involve parents, family/supports, caregivers, service providers, CA/GAL, community partners, etc., with child welfare staff in an honest, open and thorough discussion that results in a high quality placement decision.** Contribute information, ideas and recommendations in an effort to achieve the best decision that provides safety and protection for the child, with the least trauma.
- 3. Support the value of maintaining the best interest of the child as the focus of discussion.** Recognize that 'best interest' means a decision that provides safety and protection in a placement at the lowest possible level of restrictiveness, and in the least intrusive manner. Never forget that, in most cases, children suffer emotionally when they must leave their families, and we must weigh that damage against the harm of their remaining in risky home situations.
- 4. Understand the consensus goal and cooperative intentions of every FTDM.** A decision that all participants can agree on and support is the objective for the meeting. If you have questions and/or concerns during the discussion, or as ideas are being considered, ask for clarification, indicate your issues and express your feelings so that you feel you have been heard.
- 5. Look for family strengths.** Strive for a solution-focused approach, discussing the strengths and concerns particular to this family's situation. Suggest options to address the issues which build on family strengths. Work to develop a consensus decision that provides safety and protection for the child in the least restrictive way possible.
- 6. Offer your opinion, input, suggestions and recommendation while remaining open-minded, creative, flexible and receptive to the opinions and ideas of other participants.**
- 7. Talk directly with family members and others during the meeting and listen carefully,** considering the comments, suggestions and ideas of everyone present.
- 8. Accept as normal that everyone will not agree, emotions can run high, some individuals' behaviors will be difficult, and the environment may be tense during many FTDM meetings.**
- 9. Maintain the privacy of information discussed at the FTDM.** Information should only be repeated outside of the meeting for case planning purposes or, if necessary, in court.
- 10. If you are unable to attend the FTDM, provide your concerns and recommendations to the social worker verbally or in writing in advance so that your input can be part of the meeting.** If you are unable to be present, check with the social worker after the meeting regarding the decision/recommendation and plan of action.