

**PROJECT BLOOM WRAPAROUND  
COMPARISON STUDY**

**CHILD WELFARE INDIVIDUALIZED  
PLANNING PROCESSES:  
Team Decision Making & Family Group Conferencing**

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## INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICES PLAN

### A. Introduction

The State of Colorado, under the auspices of the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health, received a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) in October 2002 to build and sustain a system of care to address the needs of young children ages 0-5 with severe emotional disturbance (SED) and their families in four Colorado communities - the City of Aurora and the counties of Fremont, El Paso, and Mesa. This grant initiative is known as Project BLOOM (Building Leveraged Opportunities and Ongoing Mechanisms).

In 2006, Project BLOOM commissioned a study to compare the wraparound planning process, the service delivery approach chosen by BLOOM to implement the early childhood systems of care at the individual child and family level, with other individualized planning processes mandated or used by different service systems. These other planning processes were the: Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP); Individualized Educational Plan (IEP); Family Support Plan; Head Start/Early Head Start; Team Decision Making; and Family Group Conferencing. This study is known as the 'Wraparound Comparison Study'.

This portion of the study focused on the comparison between wraparound to the implementation of two child welfare planning processes, Team Decision Making (TDM) and Family Group Conferencing (FGC) in Aurora, and El Paso and Mesa Counties. Fremont County has not used either child welfare planning process to any great extent and therefore, it was not included in this portion of the study. The following sections describe the child welfare planning processes; the wraparound planning process; the study's purpose and methodology; the study's findings; and conclusion and recommendations.

#### **Child Welfare Planning Processes: Team Decision Making and Family Group Conferencing**

TDM is as one of the tools used by Family-to-Family programs across the country in an effort to improve and restructure the child welfare system (<http://www.aecf.org>). It involves not just caseworkers, but also birth families, relatives, community members, and foster families in all placement decisions regarding children.

TDM takes place in a meeting where information is shared about the family that relates to the child's protection and the family's functioning. The goal is to reach consensus around a plan that protects the children and preserves or reunifies the family. These meetings are typically chaired by a trained facilitator

TDM is a planning process utilized by child welfare in El Paso and Mesa Counties when a decision needs to be made about a child's placement due to safety and protection issues that have come to the attention of the department. It is a voluntary process in which families choose to participate.

Aurora is the only BLOOM community using FGC to make placement decisions for children who have come to the attention of the child welfare. Although FGC is compatible with TDM, there are differences between the two family-focused problem solving approaches. Both, however, emphasize family engagement and a strengths/needs based approach. FGC is primarily considered to be a clinical family intervention where the family members meet as a team with support from professionals. Like TDM, FGC's focus is on addressing family issues that have led to a crisis, typically one involving a child being placed in an out-of-home placement.

Like TDM, the FGC model includes a meeting where information is shared about the family that relates to the protection of the children and functioning of the family. The goal is for the family members to reach consensus about a plan to protect the children and ensure their safety. In order to do so, family members are given some private time to develop the plan by themselves. Once the family develops the plan, the family presents it to the FGC facilitator, the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), and the child welfare caseworker.

### **Wraparound Process**

Wraparound is a comprehensive child-centered/family-focused way of assessing and planning services. It involves a shift away from the traditional service delivery model where service providers are considered to be the experts, to seeing families and service providers as partners (Malysiak, 1997). In wraparound, children and families are viewed as the key to solving problems, rather than being viewed as the problem itself (VanDenBerg & Grealish, 1996). The term "wraparound" came from the idea that youth could be best served by "wrapping" individualized services and supports around them in their homes and communities.

In wraparound, families identify the areas of their life that they would like to address, such as school, recreation, home, health, employment or other life domains. They then go on to select the goals that they would like for their child and family to achieve within those life domains.

Families also choose the members of their wraparound team. These teams generally consist of the four to 8 people who know that child and family best. They include both informal supports, such as neighbors, friends or relatives, and professionals from agencies involved with the family, such as schools, mental health or child welfare. Ideally, wraparound teams have less than fifty percent professionals on them. The reason for this is that professionals will come and go in a family's life whereas informal supports will generally remain with the family.

Families develop their wraparound plans together with their team. These plans set forth a unique set of community services and natural supports that are individualized for each child and family based on their culture, strengths and needs (Burns & Goldman, 1999). Wraparound teams meet periodically to develop, review and adjust plans as needed.

## **B. Study Purpose and Methodology**

### **Study Purpose and Methodology**

The wraparound process is structured to operationalize the core values and guiding standards of a system of care at the individual child and family level. The purpose of this study was to determine how closely other mandated planning processes also operationalize system of care values and principles in the four Project BLOOM communities given their interest in reducing the number of planning processes in which children and families are involved and including

these children and families involved in other mandated planning processes in the national outcome evaluation, a required component of all federally funded system of care grants. The findings from this study will inform Project BLOOM's planning efforts in these areas.

In order to compare the child welfare planning processes and others to wraparound, eleven different elements were analyzed. These elements were based on wraparound's core values and principles:

- Element 1: Family Voice and Choice
- Element 2: Child and Family Team
- Element 3: Community-Based Services and Supports
- Element 4: Cultural Competency
- Element 5: Individualized Services and Supports
- Element 6: Strengths-Based Services and Supports
- Element 7: Natural Supports
- Element 8: Continuation of Services and Supports
- Element 9: Collaboration
- Element 10: Flexible Resources and Funding
- Element 11: Outcome-Based Services and Supports

Within each element, several questions were asked and scored based on the interviewee's response. Following these scored questions, the interviewer asked several open ended questions to learn more about the child welfare planning processes and the other planning processes. The scored questions were adapted from the interview guides used by the Wraparound Fidelity Index, commonly known as the WFI. Project BLOOM uses the WFI to assess BLOOM's fidelity to the wraparound model.

A total of seven people were interviewed by telephone with regard to the child welfare planning processes. These interviews ranged from one hour to one hour and a half. Two TDM facilitators were interviewed from El Paso and Mesa Counties and two FGC facilitators were interviewed from Aurora. Additionally, a state representative from the Division of Child Welfare was interviewed to determine if there were any state and federal requirements governing the implementation of TDM and FGC at the community level. Although the Division encourages and promotes the use of TDM and FGC across Colorado, at this time no state or federal requirements governing their implementation are in place.

In each participating BLOOM community, the scored questions were averaged and then combined to arrive at an overall score for each planning process including TDM and FGC. The higher the score a planning process received the more similar that process was found to be to the wraparound planning process.

Finally, there are some restrictions about the Wraparound Comparison Study that should be noted. First, not all WFI questions under each element were asked in this comparison study. Instead, a sampling of questions under each element was asked to give an overall understanding of the similarities and differences between the specific planning process and wraparound. Second, the WFI is used to assess the fidelity of the wraparound process to the model in individual cases by interviewing both staff and families. Unlike the WFI, this study asked

agency staff to generalize what typically happens across all cases. Youth and families did not take part in the study.

### C. Study Findings

Overall, the TDM and FGC received the second to the highest score of all of the planning processes studied following the IFSP. Therefore, these child welfare planning processes were found to be more comparable to wraparound than other planning processes studied primarily due to the fact that when implemented appropriately TDM and FGC share many of the same values and principles as wraparound. The range in scores for TDM and FGC was 91.5 to 103 points. The total number of points that could have been awarded was 129. Mesa County, which uses TDM, received 103 points, which was the highest score of all the counties. Aurora, which uses FGC, received 95 points. El Paso County, which uses TDM, received 91.5 points.

Additionally, the communities' responses were compared to the state's perspective on how the TDM and FGC models should be implemented. However, there are no specific federal or state requirements that County Departments of Human/Social Services use TDM or FGC. The chart below summarizes the scores that each community received with regard to these child welfare planning processes.

Wraparound Element	Aurora FGC	El Paso TDM	Mesa TDM
Family Voice & Choice	8.5 points (out of 15)	10 points (out of 15)	15 points (out of 15)
Child & Family Team	23 points (out of 27)	20.5 points (out of 27)	21 points (out of 27)
Community-Based Services & Supports	7 points (out of 9)	6 points (out of 9)	8.5 points (out of 9)
Cultural Competency	5.5 points (out of 6)	5 points (out of 6)	5.5 points (out of 6)
Individualized Services & Supports	6.5 points (out of 12)	9 points (out of 12)	11 points (out of 12)
Strengths-Based Services & Supports	8 points (out of 9)	5.5 points (out of 9)	6.5 points (out of 9)
Natural Supports	8 points (out of 9)	6.5 points (out of 9)	6 points (out of 9)
Continuation of Services & Supports	9.5 points (out of 12)	9.5 points (out of 12)	7 points (out of 12)
Collaboration	6 points (out of 12)	7.5 points (out of 12)	9 points (out of 12)
Flexible Resources & Funding	8.5 points (out of 9)	7 points (out of 9)	7.5 points (out of 9)
Outcome Based Services & Supports	4.5 points (out of 9)	5 points (out of 9)	6 points (out of 9)
<b>Total</b>	<b>95 points (out of 129)</b>	<b>91.5 points (out of 129)</b>	<b>103 points (out of 129)</b>

The following sections summarize the study's findings regarding the implementation of FGC in Aurora, and TDM in El Paso and Mesa Counties as compared to the wraparound process and model requirements. Due to the differences between the FGC and TDM models, they will be discussed separately.

### **Element 1: Family Voice and Choice**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** In wraparound, families must be full and active partners at every level. If the wraparound team cannot reach consensus, the family makes the final decision. Families also choose the members of their wraparound teams.

**FGC and TDM Model:** FGC is one of the models under Family Group Decision Making. The facilitator spends about 20 hours in preparation for the meeting. During this time, the facilitator interviews the nuclear and extended family to identify key family members to participate in FGC with or without the parents' agreement. In TDMs, the focus is on inviting informal supports from the community to participate on the team. If the parents do not want a certain person from the community participate on the team that community support is excused.

Both FGC and TDM are facilitated approaches directed at addressing the child's needs. Neither approach focuses on treatment planning for the adults, which is covered in the family services plan. In FGC, the facilitator influences the areas that the plan will cover based on the extensive preparation process that occurs prior to the meeting. Both FGC and TDM focus on child safety, protection, and well-being.

The court has final say as to the services and supports put in place through FGC and TDM if there is a court case. If there is no court involvement, the Department of Human/Social Services has the final say in TDM. In FGC, the team has the final say. If the team cannot make a decision, the facilitator will call another FGC meeting.

### **Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

#### *Aurora: Family Group Conferencing*

The FGC planning process is a family-driven process where family members ideally develop the plan for themselves to address the safety and protection of the child. Parents are invited to attend the meeting. If they decide not to participate, the meeting is still held with the extended family. Parents can bring whomever they would like to support them at the meeting, such as clergy and friends. Parents may not always agree with the choice of relatives who participate in FGC. However, given FGC's focus on the child's protection and safety, if a particular relative is important for the child, that relative will attend over the parent's objections.

#### *El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

The TDM planning process is a team-driven process where families actively participate in developing the plan and in choosing members of the planning team along with the caseworker. Families can also bring whomever they would like to support them at the meeting, such as clergy, friends, or other family members. Whether families bring these supports with them often depends on the caseworker. Those caseworkers that are very family oriented will encourage and

work with the family to identify and invite these supports. Those that are not as family oriented often do not encourage or explain to families about bringing people to support them.

The professionals are generally the caseworker and their supervisor, and the facilitator. If it is a first meeting, service providers generally do not attend unless the child has been placed in emergency foster care. In these situations, it is possible to have the child placement agency or foster home attend. At a follow-up TDM, other service providers sometimes will attend, such as the child's therapist. If a parent does not want a particular person at the meeting, the facilitator tries to honor that request as long as it is not one of the core members, such as the caseworker and their supervisor. Facilitators try to handle these situations before the team meeting. At a subsequent TDM, the child placement agency and the foster family are considered core team members as well.

One area of life that is always addressed is safety since child protection is the issue that has brought the situation to the attention of child welfare. Other areas are also addressed as they relate to the safety of the child, such as employment, housing, and education. If consensus cannot be reached the Department of Human/Social Services makes the final decision as mandated by law.

The main focus of a TDM is around the child's placement. Therefore, goals are not necessarily a part of the plan developed through a TDM. It also varies based on the situation as to who has final say regarding the services and supports that are put in place through a TDM. If it is a voluntary placement into care and there is no court involvement, the family might have final say. If it is a voluntary placement, but the caseworker believes that protective service monitoring is needed, the caseworker might bring the plan to the court for approval. If it is an involuntary placement into foster care, the caseworker brings the plan to the court for approval. Typically, however, families agree with the recommendations made in the plan since the facilitator will help the team reach consensus. When consensus is not reached and it is an issue of safety or risk, the plan is automatically brought before the court for approval. Typically, the court agrees with the plan and orders it.

#### *Study Findings:*

Both the FGC and the TDM planning processes are generally compatible with wraparound standards in this area. Since child welfare is involved it is a joint decision-making process between the family and the department which is in compliance with wraparound practice standards. One slight difference between the two child welfare planning processes are that in FGC the extended family can decide whether a certain family member should participate on the team over the parent's objections. Since TDM focuses on inviting the community to the team this issue did not arise.

#### **Element 2: Child and Family Team**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** Wraparound is a team-driven process that involves the family, their informal supports, and community services. Wraparound teams ideally have four to 8 people on them who know the child and family best. These teams meet weekly in the beginning and eventually transition to less frequent meetings.

The wraparound team works together to develop, implement, and evaluate the child and family's individualized wraparound plan. Families choose the areas of life the plan addresses and the goals that they would like their child and family to achieve.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** TDM and FGC teams typically consist of four to 12 people, including professionals and nonprofessionals. Parents actively participate on these teams as well. Experts around the country highly recommend that the FGC model include an advocate for the parent. The role of an advocate did not come up as much in terms of a TDM.

FGC and TDM teams meet prior to specific case decisions. With FGC, meetings are held within three weeks of a child's placement in care to make further placement decisions for the child. The FGC team might meet again if there is a need to revisit the placement decision.

In TDM, the first meeting would be held to decide whether placement is necessary. The team would meet within 24 hours of the child and family coming to the attention of the department. TDMs are also held when there is a need to change placement and prior to the child returning home.

### **Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

#### *Aurora: Family Group Conferencing*

FGC meetings are held when decisions about a child's safety and protection need to be made. The FGC facilitator identifies relatives to participate on the team based on interviews with the parents and other relatives. FGC teams generally have 10 or so people on them with the majority being family members. The professionals on the team are generally the caseworker, the facilitator, and the GAL. These professionals present to the family the department's guidelines, the safety issues involved, and any applicable state regulations before the family develops the plan in private. Once the family develops the plan, the family presents it to the professionals. The GAL and caseworker then discuss whether they can support the plan. If for some reason, the GAL or caseworker cannot support the plan, the family reconvenes to address the concerns raised.

The plan that is developed is then presented to the court for approval. Team meetings generally occur just once unless an issue with the plan arises or a team member requests a subsequent meeting. The caseworker is responsible for monitoring the FGC plan as well as the treatment plan for the child and the treatment plan for the parents.

#### *El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

TDM meetings are held when a decision needs to be made about a child's placement due to safety and protection issues such as: a child needs to be removed from their home and placed in foster care or with kin; a child needs to be removed from their foster home or kin to another placement; or a decision needs to be made to return a child home.

Typical participants at an initial TDM include the caseworker and their supervisor, and the TDM facilitator. Service providers involved with the child and family, such as therapists, may attend subsequent TDMs. Families can also bring others to the meeting to support them, including

relatives, friends, neighbors, or community members, such as members from the family's faith community. There were some differences noted as to the size of the teams. In El Paso County, one respondent noted that these teams consist of 6 to 7 people where the other stated that they really vary in size with more than four people but less than 25. In Mesa, the typical team consists of 7-9 people.

The TDM team usually meets just once to develop the plan. Subsequent meetings are rare and only occur if another decision as to placement needs to be made. TDM plans are reviewed, however, at any subsequent TDM if it occurs. After the plan is developed if there is to be continued child welfare involvement, the plan is monitored by the ongoing caseworker and is subject to child welfare's utilization review process. In Mesa County, sometimes the plan is also subject to its treatment review process, which focuses on children placed out of county in restrictive placements.

*Study Findings:*

Both the FGC and TDM planning process appear to meet wraparound standards in this area with one major exception, the frequency of team meetings.

**Element 3: Community Based Services and Supports**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** One of wraparound's values is that services and supports be community-based and address the needs of the entire family, not just those of the eligible child. Wraparound teams also encourage families to participate in activities found in their community.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** The TDM model uses community-based services and supports as a strategy to develop and utilize neighborhood based services. The FGC model does not address the use of community-based services and supports.

Both models, however, encourage team members to make a commitment to undertake specific tasks written in the plan. In FGC, the plan does not address the needs of other family members unless they can be tied to the child in question. TDMs can also address the needs of other family members if they relate to child's safety and permanency.

**Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

*Aurora: Family Group Conferencing:*

Plans developed through FGC generally address the child's placement needs and the services needed to support that placement, including financial assistance for the family with whom the child is placed. Relatives can either become licensed foster homes and receive a foster care stipend for the children in their care or apply for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Families) if they choose to be unlicensed. Treatment plans usually address the parents' needs, but the FGC plan sometimes addresses parent needs if they are related to the child's placement. Children also have treatment plans in addition to the FGC plan.

Most services and supports are provided in the community. There are gaps, however, in community-based services that support kinship homes. These are: child care; respite; and

transportation. The FGC team sometimes helps the parents to become engaged in community activities.

*El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

Plans developed through a TDM can address the needs of both the parents and the children as long as it relates to the children's safety. Part of the TDM philosophy is to offer services in the community where the family lives. In Mesa County, plans developed through a TDM provide services in family homes and in the community or close by, but not always in the family's neighborhood. At the TDM, families are encouraged to become involved in community activities and some of these may be included in the plan.

In El Paso County, services identified in the plan are sometimes provided in the family's home or in the community, but the TDM facilitator cannot require that the services be community-based. Instead, it may be up to Medicaid or Connect Care to determine where the services will be provided. Connect Care arranges for all out-patient services, such as therapy, substance abuse treatment, and other services provided to the family through child welfare. Medicaid services may or may not go through Connect Care. Placement of the child into care is handled through a division within child welfare. Although the goal is to place a child near their family, such placement depends on community resources and whether the child will be placed with kin. Occasionally, TDM teams help families become involved with activities in their community.

*Study Findings:*

The FGC and TDM planning processes somewhat meet wraparound practice principles in this area. One key difference is that the needs of the parents and other family members are addressed only if they relate to the child's safety and protection.

**Element 4: Cultural Competence**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** In wraparound, teams are respectful and actively seek to understand the family's unique beliefs and traditions. These are documented in the wraparound plan, which is responsive to the family's culture and values.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** FGC and TDM facilitators are responsible for ensuring that the plans are culturally congruent for the family. In FGC, the plan is developed by the family and as a result is based upon that family's values and culture. The FGC and TDM models do not have a specific process or structure in terms of how culture should be addressed.

**Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

*Aurora: Family Group Conferencing*

The FGC plan is generally responsive to the family's culture since it is developed by the extended family and the parents. To the extent that culture is important to the family, it will be addressed and documented in the plan. Incorporating a family's culture is also an aspect of the meeting itself. Facilitators ask the family members if there are special meals that they would like at the meeting and if there are any rituals that they would like incorporated into the meeting. If so, facilitators will work with the family to provide culturally appropriate meals and rituals.

### *El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

Culture typically comes up in the context of the TDM when discussing the family's strengths. As a result, in both counties the plan sometimes documents the family's values and culture.

In El Paso, the plan is particularly responsive to the child and family's value and culture when the child is placed in a relative's home. Even when a kinship placement is not possible, attempts are made so that family has an opportunity to let the foster parents know about their child's likes and dislikes. If the family is particularly religious, efforts are made to place the child in a religiously compatible home. Older children, however, might be placed in a group setting as opposed to a foster home where it may be more difficult to address the family's values and culture. In these situations, efforts are made to place children with credentialed treatment providers of the same faith.

### *Study Finding:*

Plans developed through FGC and TDM are typically responsive the child and family's values and culture, but they may or may not be documented in the plan.

### **Element 5: Individualized Services and Supports**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** Wraparound requires that children and families receive services and supports that are tailored to their unique strengths, culture, and needs. These services and supports meet their needs at home, school/childcare, and in the community. They may include both traditional services and informal supports. At times, these services and supports may need to be modified or new ones created in order to meet the family's needs and goals.

Wraparound also requires that a crisis plan be developed for every child and family, and a safety plan for certain children and families where the child poses a risk to others. Crises are addressed prior to a wraparound plan being developed.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** Both FGC and TDM can address the needs of the child at home, school and in the community. These models also advocate for ongoing data collection and evaluation to ensure that the child and family receive the services and supports written in the plan. Arguably, the plan that is developed through FGC and TDM is a safety/crisis plan since they both focus on the child's safety and protection. In FGC, crises are generally addressed prior to the meeting.

### **Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

#### *Aurora: Family Group Conferencing*

Services and supports to the child and parents are generally addressed in their treatment plans rather than in the FGC plan. To the extent these are raised at the FGC meeting, however, they will be incorporated in the FGC plan. Typically, there is no crisis or safety plan that is developed at the FGC meeting. Instead, the caseworker would address the need for a crisis or safety plan within the context of the treatment plans. Although some consider the FGC plan to be a crisis/safety plan. Crises are sometimes addressed prior to a FGC plan being developed.

### *El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

Services and supports provided through the TDM process can meet the child's needs at home, school and in the community depending on the needs and issues that come up during the meeting. Since the TDM team meets just once typically, it is the responsibility of the ongoing caseworker and case manager to ensure that the child and family receive the services and supports that have been identified in the plan. The plan that is developed by the team is considered a safety plan and its purpose is to address the crisis that has caused the child to become known to the department.

#### **Findings:**

The FGC plan somewhat meets wraparound practice principles in this area, but only if it is combined with the child and family treatment plans.

The TDM plan also appears to somewhat meet wraparound practice principles in this area. Some areas for further exploration are the relationship between the child and family treatment plans and TDM plans with regard services and supports.

Some consider the FGC and TDM plans to be crisis/safety plans. Further exploration is needed, however, to determine whether these plans are as comprehensive as the crisis/safety plan developed through the wraparound process.

### **Element 6: Strengths Based Services and Supports**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** The services and supports provided through the wraparound process must be based on the child and family's strengths that are initially identified through a 'strengths, needs, and culture discovery'. The wraparound plan capitalizes on these positive abilities and characteristics when selecting services and supports that are incorporated in it.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** In FGC, the formal meeting structure includes having team members discuss the strengths that they bring to the table as well as the strengths of the child and parent(s). A strengths and culture discovery is also conducted in FGC when the facilitator interviews the nuclear and extended family. FGC meetings are typically held at the department or can be held at a community-based location. Both the FGC and TDM approaches discourage holding meetings at the family's home.

Identifying child and family strengths is not a formalized process in the TDM model. Instead, it is based on overall child welfare values promoting the use of a strengths-based approach. As a result, in a TDM it is dependent on the facilitator's skill at drawing out the child and family's strengths at the meeting. No strengths and culture discovery is conducted prior to the TDM meeting.

### **Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

#### *Aurora: Family Group Conferencing*

The strengths of the child, the parents, and the extended family are written up in the FGC plan. These strengths and abilities are used to determine the best possible placement for the child.

Further, the child and parents' strengths and abilities are used in choosing services and supports included in the treatment plans.

Typically, FGC facilitators learn about child and family strengths when interviewing the parents and relatives involved in the FGC process. These interviews can take place in the family and relatives' homes, in court, at the department after a visit with the child, or at a community location. These meetings generally take place during the day, but can also be held in the evenings and on weekends if necessary.

#### *El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

The strengths of the child and family are used when choosing supports and services. These strengths are identified at the TDM meeting. A separate strengths and culture discovery, however, is not conducted prior to the TDM.

In El Paso County, TDMs are held across the county with the majority being held at the department. Other places where TDMs are held include: the family center; family homes; child placement agency offices; schools; the court house; and at different residential treatment facilities across the state. Meetings are generally held during the day in one of four time slots during the business week. These meetings last about an hour. Meetings can also be held in the evening and early morning to accommodate the parents' work schedules. Generally, the caseworker chooses where the meetings are held.

In Mesa County, there are two locations where a TDM can take place, at the department or a community provider's office. Child welfare may consider an alternate site, such as jail if the parent is being held or at home if the parent is not mobile. These situations, however, are very rare. Meetings are held during the day in one of two time slots during the business week. There are two times a day, five days a week that families can choose from in consultation with their case manager.

#### *Study Findings:*

The FGC plan appears to meet wraparound practice principles in this area. Further exploration is needed, however, to determine whether the process by which a child and family's strengths and culture is discovered is comparable to the one conducted as part of the wraparound process.

The TDM planning process, however, does not appear to meet wraparound practice standards in this area due to a lack of a comparable 'strengths and culture discovery' and the limited locations and times that TDM meetings are held.

#### **Element 7: Natural Supports**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** In wraparound, services and supports reflect a balance of formal and informal community and family supports rather than relying solely on formal providers and traditional services. The reason being is that service providers will come and go in a family's life whereas their informal supports will remain with them.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** Both models encourage the use of natural supports. In FGC, the extended family is brought together to identify what they can do to support the child and

family. This support is incorporated into the plan that they develop. In TDMs, natural supports are provided by the community and incorporated into the plan. There are no prescribed percentages of professionals to nonprofessionals on the team. Instead, it is the facilitator's responsibility to address the ratio if it is out of proportion.

### **Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

#### *Aurora: Family Group Conferencing*

FGC teams typically have more natural supports than professionals on the team. The FGC plan can also provide community supports for the child and family. These supports are generally provided by extended kin and friends. Although parents may at first be embarrassed by having their issues disclosed to their extended family, many parents come away from the meeting feeling supported by their family and empowered.

#### *El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

The team somewhat encourages parents to connect with their family and friends to receive support. Usually, this comes up when discussing the family's strengths and the natural supports in their life. Teams generally have more professionals on them than non-professionals. In El Paso County, the TDM plan typically includes community supports such as recreation or transportation. In Mesa County, the TDM plan can include community supports such as recreation or transportation depending on the issues that need to be addressed relating to the child's safety.

#### *Study Findings:*

FGC planning process appears to meet wraparound practice principles with regard to natural supports. TDM planning process somewhat meets wraparound practice principles with the major exception being there are more professionals than non-professionals on the team.

#### **Element 8: Continuation of Services and Supports**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** Wraparound requires that services and supports be provided unconditionally. If a child and family's needs and goals change so do the services and supports.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** Since TDM and FGC teams generally meet only once, it is the ongoing caseworker's responsibility to monitor the plan to ensure that the services and supports are being delivered. It is also the caseworker who holds team members responsible for the tasks they agreed to undertake in the plan. If the plan is not working, it will be revised by holding a new meeting. Anyone on the team can raise the fact that the plan is not working. In both models, the plan that is developed is crafted into a court ordered family services plan. Services can be discontinued under both models.

### **Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

#### *Aurora: Family Group Conferencing*

This is an area where the FGC process is difficult to assess because the team typically meets only once because FGCs are event driven around the child's placement. If a subsequent FGC is held

the reason for it is that the child's placement needs have arisen again as an issue. The ongoing caseworker generally monitors the implementation of the FGC plan and the treatment plans.

Services and supports can be terminated, but this is generally a positive event because it is a sign that the safety issues that brought the family to the attention of child welfare have improved and the need for child welfare involvement has decreased.

#### *El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

Again, this is an area where the TDM process is difficult to assess because the team typically meets only once around the child's placement. If a subsequent TDM is held the reason for it is that the child's placement needs have arisen as an issue. The plan developed at the initial TDM is revised only if the child's placement is not working or there are continuing or new issues related to the child's safety. Services can be terminated to the child and family when the safety issues have been resolved, which is a positive outcome.

#### *Study Findings:*

Both the FGC and TDM planning processes appear to somewhat meet wraparound practice standards with one major exception. FGC and TDM teams typically meet only once. Unlike wraparound, which is an ongoing process, these child welfare planning processes are event driven around the child's placement needs.

#### **Element 9: Collaboration**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** The wraparound team coordinates services and supports so that they seem seamless to the family rather than fragmented. This requires everyone, both professionals and informal supports, to work together with the family. As a part of this practice standard, wraparound facilitators carry caseloads of 15 families or less.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** The professionals and nonprofessionals on either a TDM or FGC team do not hold each other accountable for specific tasks. Instead, it is the ongoing caseworker's responsibility. Sometimes it is difficult to get different service providers or agencies to attend team meetings, such as Guardian ad Litem (GALs). Generally, TDM facilitators can facilitate four TDMs a day and have an average of about 12 per week. FGC facilitators average about three to 4 cases a month.

#### **Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

##### *Aurora: Family Group Conferencing*

Typically, service providers are not involved in the FGC planning process. Instead, the meetings are attended by extended family, the parents, the caseworker, the GAL, and the FGC facilitator. Service providers, however, may provide information to the team to help in the decision-making process.

Since the team meets just once, it is the responsibility of the ongoing caseworker and the extended family that developed the plan to monitor its implementation. If something is not working, the family can request another FGC meeting.

Neither interviewee was aware of a caseload standard for FGC facilitators. Ideally, the caseload should be about 10 active families with others that are inactive. One of the interviewees, indicated that s/he has an average caseload of about 12-13 families.

*El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

Getting service providers to attend a TDM when they are needed is sometimes easy. Since the team meets just once, team members typically do not hold one another accountable for specific tasks. Instead, it is the responsibility of the ongoing caseworker, if there is one, to monitor the TDM plan.

TDM facilitators do not carry a caseload. Their workload is set by the meeting schedule. There are caseload standards for certain types of caseworkers, which typically exceed wraparound practice standards.

*Study Findings:*

FGC and TDM planning processes do not meet wraparound collaboration practice standards due to the lack of an ongoing team and the apparent high caseloads of the ongoing caseworkers.

**Element 10: Flexible Resources and Funding**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** Successful wraparound teams are creative in their approach to service delivery and have access to flexible funds and resources to implement their ideas. Team meetings are also held when and where it is convenient for the family, including evenings and weekends.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** Both the TDM and the FGC approaches allow for non-traditional, and new services and supports to be written into the plan. For the larger counties in Colorado funding is generally easily available to fund these nontraditional and new services. Both approaches promote having the team meetings at a time and place that is convenient for the family.

**Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

*Aurora Family Group Conferencing*

The FGC team can use non-traditional services or create new ones for children and families. This usually involves the use of the family's natural supports. Providing transportation, respite care, and child care for these families is challenging unless a family member volunteers to provide that support. The department, however, funds services and supports that are part of the child and family's treatment plans. FGC meetings are generally held at a time that is convenient for families.

**El Paso Discussion:**

In El Paso County, the TDM team can use non-traditional services or create new ones for children and families. Again, this usually involves the use of the family's natural supports who can act as mentors and respite providers. Sometimes, TDM teams need to be creative about funding for services and supports. In these situations, teams look at different funding streams to

try to address the child and family's needs such as Senate Bill-94, family preservation, and Medicaid. Meetings are generally held at a time and place that is convenient for families.

In Mesa County, the TDM team can also use non-traditional services or create new ones for enrolled children and families. Sometimes, funds to support these services and supports are easily available depending on the type of service needed and the expense. Meetings are generally held in two locations during the day and during the work week.

*Study Findings:*

FGC planning process generally meets wraparound practice principles with regard to flexible resources, but not with regard to funding. Further exploration is needed to determine whether the funding provided through the treatment plan is integrated with the FGC plan.

The TDM planning process generally meets wraparound practice standards with regard to flexible resources and funding with one exception in Mesa County, the location and times of the meetings.

**Element 11: Outcome Based Services and Supports**

**Wraparound Practice Standards:** Wraparound uses specific, measurable outcomes that are monitored to assess the child and family's progress toward goals. Wraparound teams use this data to inform their decisions. Wraparound teams also measure child and family satisfaction with services.

**State Child Welfare Perspective:** Both models recommend monitoring family satisfaction with services. This is typically done by the department. FGC and TDM teams neither monitor family satisfaction nor progress towards goals since they typically meet only once.

**Wraparound Comparison Study Discussion and Findings:**

*Aurora: Team Decision Making*

FGC teams and facilitators typically do not measure family satisfaction nor review a child's progress towards goals since they meet just once. Also, many of the child's goals are found in the treatment plan rather than the FGC plan. In situations where a subsequent meeting is held, the team might review the progress made if the goals were included in the plan.

*El Paso and Mesa Counties: Team Decision Making*

TDM teams and facilitators typically do not measure family satisfaction nor review a child's progress towards goals since they meet just once. In situations where a subsequent meeting is held, the team might look at the parents' progress towards goals. However, this is generally the responsibility of the ongoing caseworker, if there is one. In El Paso County, the department used to conduct a family satisfaction survey. This survey has been discontinued.

*Study Findings:*

FGC and TDM planning process do not meet wraparound practice standards in this area since they do not measure family satisfaction, track progress towards goals, or use data to make decisions at team meetings since the team usually meets just once.

## **D. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Overall, the FGC and TDM planning processes share many of the same values and principles as wraparound, but there are significant differences primarily in terms of the ongoing nature of the FGC and TDM team processes. Given this limitation, FGC and TDM would not be suitable alternatives to the wraparound process.

Key differences between wraparound and FGC and TDM are:

- Frequency of team meetings.
- Lack of a crisis or safety plan comparable to the one developed through the wraparound process.
- TDM teams typically have more professionals than non-professionals on them.
- Lack of a ‘strengths, needs, and culture discovery’ comparable to the one found in wraparound.
- Caseloads for ongoing caseworkers significantly exceed wraparound practice standards.

However, Project BLOOM is encouraged to explore opportunities as to how the FGC, TDM, and wraparound processes can be coordinated with each other given their shared values and principles and the Division of Child Welfare’s interest in promoting FGC and TDM across Colorado. To do so, a transition or coordination process could be developed between the different planning processes. For example, a suggestion from El Paso County would be to merge the wraparound and TDM meetings when a decision needs to be made whether to return a child home for those families engaged in both processes rather than holding two separate meetings. Another would be to refer families involved in TDM and FGC to wraparound who need additional ongoing support since TDMs and FGCs are event and time limited.