



# FACILITATION FOCUS

A NEWSLETTER FOR FACILITATORS OF CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS IN NORTH CAROLINA

CENTER FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

[HTTP://WWW.CFFACE.ORG](http://www.cfface.org)

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## What's the Good News?

*Themes from Family Group Decision-Making Research*

- Meetings can be used successfully with families that have serious challenges

*Many studies show that child participants in family-centered meetings have the same or greater level of risk than those in average child welfare cases.*

- Facilitators play a significant role in the overall meeting process

*Research shows that the perception of facilitator effectiveness is a statistically significant predictor of success for parents, friends, family members, and professionals.*

- Family members come when invited

*Family participation in meetings is consistently high. Comprehensive preparation is linked to family attendance.*

- Families develop safe plans

*Based on research, only 5% of plans are not accepted by authorities, and very few meetings result in no plan being developed.*

- Meetings increase the involvement of fathers and paternal relatives

*Various studies demonstrate a high level of father and paternal relative involvement in meetings. ♦*

Merkel-Holguin, L., Nixon, P., and Burford, G. (2003). Learning with families: A synopsis of FGDM research and evaluation in child welfare. *Protecting Children*, 18, (1&2).

### OVERHEARD ON THE GOOGLE GROUP:

- "I'M WONDERING ABOUT THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUR MEETINGS AND PPATS"
- "MY CFT MEETING DID NOT GO WELL... ANY ADVICE WOULD BE APPRECIATED"
- "THE 'TONE' OF A MEETING IS VERY DIFFERENT WHEN A NEUTRAL FACILITATOR IS PRESENT"
- "THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT"

BE A PART OF THE CONVERSATION! JOIN THE VIRTUAL FACILITATOR FORUM BY EMAILING ANNE AT [ARWAKEFI@CHASS.NCSU.EDU](mailto:ARWAKEFI@CHASS.NCSU.EDU)

## SPOTLIGHT ON...



... Toni Richardson, facilitator from Vance County!

Toni Richardson has been facilitating Child and Family Teams in Vance County since March 12 of 2007. Since assuming her role as facilitator, she has impressed colleagues and clients alike with her enthusiasm, energy, and positive outlook. In fact, when asked what she likes best about facilitating CFTs, Toni responds "helping families realize that they have strengths." Prior to facilitating family-centered meetings, Toni worked as a Community Alternative Program Social Worker, where she provided resources to medically ill children and adults wishing to remain in their homes and communities. Also, Toni worked for Adult Protective Services, investigating the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities.

While she states that it is sometimes difficult to get buy-in to the CFT process from workers, Toni recounts the following about a successful Child and Family Team meeting:

*"Recently, I had a CFT that was attended by a member of Work First. The Work First social worker brought resources to the table that the family had no knowledge existed. Her presence helped the family feel empowered, and the family was able to leave the meeting with a newfound understanding of how to keep their children safe and resources that would help them become better people and better parents."*

Many thanks to Toni and every other dedicated facilitator of Child and Family Team meetings. The work you do changes lives. ♦

(Know a hard working facilitator we should spotlight in a future newsletter? Please email [arwakefi@chass.ncsu.edu](mailto:arwakefi@chass.ncsu.edu))

## Spotlight on...

... Heather Watson, facilitator from Cherokee County!

As the school nurse at Murphy High School,



Heather Watson has facilitated Child and Family Teams (or Care Team meetings, as they are called in Cherokee) for three years. Through her experience as a

facilitator, she has come to value the importance of placing families at the center of planning for their children. She states, *"families are...appreciative of the fact that they play an integral role in developing a plan and that their voice is heard."* Heather enjoys seeing family members and school staff come together to develop a plan for a child's success. Her greatest challenge is *"gaining the trust of the families...I am there to facilitate the process, not represent the needs of the school system."* Despite the challenges of facilitation, Heather has enjoyed some wonderful successes, as well. She shares a story of a student failing all of her courses and experiencing discipline problems. In addition to the student having a mental health diagnosis, her mother was diagnosed with a terminal illness. *"The student reported that she hated school and was planning to drop out as soon as she could,"* Heather shares. Following a home visit by the school nurse and social worker, the family agreed to participate in the Care Team meeting. At the meeting, the team developed a plan that has been very successful for the student. Not only did the student benefit from placement in a special school program, she passed all of her classes and has now wants to graduate from high school. Additionally, her mother has gotten more involved with the student's counseling, benefiting both mother and youth. Heather states, *"there have been two follow-up meetings since the initial Care Team meeting"* to help insure continued success. Wonderful work, Heather! ♦

*Thank you for your dedication to children and families.*

Please contact us with any questions or requests at 919-513-2339. Rather not receive this newsletter?

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### NEWS FROM THE FORUM FRONT:

**SOUTHERN SENSE:** THE SOUTHERN FACILITATOR FORUM WAS HELD IN SPRING LAKE ON JUNE 17. FACILITATED BY TRAINER ANNE WAKEFIELD, THE GROUP DISCUSSED THE IMPORTANCE OF UTILIZING FOLLOW-UP CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS. **THE NEXT SOUTHERN FORUM WILL BE HELD IN SPRING LAKE ON SEPTEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>.**

**WESTERN WISDOM:** TRAINERS BILLY POINDEXTER AND JENNY KING WILL FACILITATE THE NEXT WESTERN FORUM ON **AUGUST 15<sup>TH</sup>** IN IREDELL COUNTY, AT THE IREDELL DSS OFFICES. CELEBRATE THE BEGINNING OF AUTUMN WITH CFFACE

**CENTRAL CHATTER:** ON APRIL 17, KARA ALLEN-ECKARD AND MARIANNE LATZ LED THE CENTRAL FACILITATOR FORUM IN AN "APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY" EXERCISE. ON JULY 17, THE CENTRAL GROUP'S TOPIC WAS "FOCUS ON FOLLOW-UP", DURING WHICH MEMBERS DISCUSSED FOLLOW-UP CFTs. **THE NEXT CENTRAL FORUM WILL TAKE PLACE IN BURLINGTON ON OCTOBER 21<sup>ST</sup>.**

**TALES FROM THE EAST:** BAYBORO HOSTED THE EASTERN FACILITATOR FORUM ON MAY 22<sup>ND</sup>. TEE HENDERSON AND SUSAN GASMAN (BELOW) CONDUCTED AN ENGAGING FORUM ENTITLED "APPRECIATING WHAT WE EACH BRING TO CHILD AND FAMILY TEAMS." **THE NEXT EASTERN FORUM WILL TAKE PLACE ON AUGUST 12<sup>TH</sup> IN WILSON. ♦**



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT UPCOMING FORUMS, CHECK OUT THE CFFACE WEBSITE:

[www.cfface.org/dss/facilitatorforums.htm](http://www.cfface.org/dss/facilitatorforums.htm)

**"If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much."**

**--Marian Wright Edelman**