Client Evaluation of
Family Group Conferencing
In 12 Sites in 1st Judicial District of Minnesota

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School of Social Work, College of Education & Human Development
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I. Executive Summary

Family Group Conferencing is a process that involves those most directly affected by juvenile crime - the victim and the offender, and the family, friends, and key supporters of both - in deciding the resolution of a criminal incident. These affected parties are brought together by a trained facilitator to discuss how they and others have been harmed by the offense and how that harm might be repaired. To participate, the offender must admit to the offense. Participation by all involved is voluntary.

In July of 1996, the Family Group Conferencing (FGC) Program began in 12 communities in the 1st Judicial District. This 2 year pilot project was initiated and coordinated by the Dakota County Community Corrections, funded by a $95,000 grant from the Minnesota State Legislature. The Center for Restorative Justice & Mediation at the University of Minnesota, school of Social Work, was contracted with to conduct an evaluation of client satisfaction with their involvement in these new Family Group Conferencing projects.

A total of 455 interviews were conducted, consisting of 166 interviews with victims of crime, 159 interviews with juvenile offenders, and 130 interviews with support persons. The most common offense referred to FGC was shoplifting (62%). The data that emerged from these interviews indicated a consistent pattern of a high level of client satisfaction with the family group conferencing process. Specific findings included:

- 93% of crime victims were satisfied with the juvenile justice system handling of their case.
- 94% of juvenile offenders were satisfied with the juvenile justice system handling of their case.
- 96% of victims felt sufficiently prepared for the conference.
- 85% of offenders felt sufficiently prepared for the conference.
- 100% of victims felt that the facilitator of the conference was fair.
- 98% of offenders felt that the facilitator of the conference was fair.
- 97% of support people felt that the facilitator of the conference was fair.
- 95% of victims felt that the negotiated restitution agreement was fair to them.
- 89% of offenders felt that the negotiated restitution agreement was fair to them.
- 95% of victims & offenders were satisfied with the outcome of the conference.
- 94% of support people were satisfied with the outcome of the conference.
- 90% of victims felt that the offender was adequately held accountable in the family group conferencing process.
- 98% of victims, 94% of offenders and 99% of support people would recommend conferencing to others.

I. Background

The multi-site Family Group Conferencing (FGC) Program in the 1st Judicial District of Minnesota began in July of 1996, initiated and coordinated by Dakota County Community Corrections. It is a restorative justice program designed to provide a forum for the victims of crimes to meet with offenders in a safe and respectful environment and talk about the incident. Historically, victims have had little or no input into the juvenile justice process after they have been victimized.
They have often felt frustrated and angry because the court system had no provision for victims to process the act committed against them. FGC provides a forum for victims to express their feelings about how they were affected by the crime and to get answers to their questions. In addition, the traditional court system has failed to help offenders understand the human costs of their actions - how those actions impact the victim and the victim’s family as well as the offender’s own family members, the community and other individuals who were impacted by the crime. The FGC program provides an opportunity for offenders to describe the events that lead up to crime. It also give offenders an opportunity to hear, directly from the victim and others who were impacted by the crime, the many ways that the crime affected their lives.

Family Group Conferencing utilizes a mediation type of process where a neutral facilitator assists victims and offenders and other concerned parties (parents, other relatives and friends and/or community leaders) in engaging in an open and honest dialogue about the crime and its impact. The conferences are usually held at a neutral site such as school or a community center. There is typically at least one victim and one offender at the conference along with the facilitator and other concerned individuals such as parents, spouses/partners, business associates and/or anyone who is interested in attending the conference to support the victim or the offender.

The role of the facilitator is to ensure a safe environment for participants to openly and honestly discuss the circumstances surrounding the crime and the impact. The facilitator is also responsible for making sure that the conference is controlled and fair for all parties involved.

Most conferences begin with the facilitator setting down ground rules that allow each party to have a chance to speak. Next either the victim or the offender is asked to describe the events surrounding the crime and the impact on him or her. The victim is usually offered a choice as to whether or not he/she would like to speak first or have the offender go first. After the victim and the offender have shared their stories, the support people are given an opportunity to speak. When all of the parties have shared their stories, the facilitator invites the parties to discuss restitution. An important component of the FGC is that both the victim and the offender must agree to the restitution before it is finalized. After a restitution agreement is formalized, most conferences end with participants sharing refreshments.

In January of 1997 the Dakota County Corrections Department asked the Center for Restorative Justice & Mediation at the University of Minnesota to conduct an evaluation of the FGC program. Eleven FGC sites were included in the evaluation. After the first year one site dropped out of the evaluation and 2 new sites were added. The evaluation began in May, 1997 and ended in September, 1998. The primary research questions that were addressed are:

1) What is the demographic breakdown of the FGC participants?
2) What do victims, offenders and other persons who are in attendance to support victims and offenders think about the Family Group Conferencing Program?
3) Do victim and offender attitude change after participating in the FGC program?

III. Methodology

All juvenile cases that were referred for FGC at the twelve sites and had at least one victim and one offender involved in the case were eligible for the evaluation. The number of conferences conducted at each site that were eligible for the evaluation varied considerably. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the eligible case that were included in the evaluation.
Prior to the conference, victims and offenders were asked to complete a pre-conference pencil and paper survey. The pre-conference survey was intended to gather baseline data (pre-conference information) from program participants for the purpose of understanding how the program might impact participant attitudes and perceptions. The pre-conference survey was to be distributed by the FGC staff at each site and to be completed at least one day prior to the conference. However, in some cases, participants completed the survey at the conference site the day of the conference, just prior to their participation in the conference. The pre-conference survey was structured to 1) explore the level of importance to victims and offenders in meeting their respective victim or offender 2) assess how much responsibility the offenders felt about their involvement in the crime and the level of anxiety that victims felt about the possibility of being revictimized in the future and 3) examine the level of satisfaction victims and offenders felt with the justice system prior to their participation in the conference. After conferences were held, local program staff sent the pre-conference surveys and the case paperwork to the Dakota County Community Correction’s FGC management. The case information was then forwarded to the Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation at the University of Minnesota. The pre-conference surveys can be found in appendix 1.

Pre-conference survey data was not consistently collected at all sites. Only 61 pre-conference victim surveys and 56 pre-conference offender surveys were received by evaluation staff. In order to ensure a sufficient number of cases for analysis, program and evaluation staff decided to include cases in the evaluation where pre-conference v/o surveys were not received.

Once cases were received for inclusion in the evaluation, a second contact with victims and offenders was attempted. The second contact was made through a post-conference telephone interview conducted by trained interview staff from the Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation. It was important to obtain as many completed cases as possible, that is, cases that included victims and offenders from the same case. Therefore, if an interview with the first victim or offender from the same case did not result in a completed interview, the case was not included in the evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th># of Eligible Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple Valley</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannon Falls/Goodhue/Redwing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carver</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaska</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inver Grove Heights</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenwood/Lakeville</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leseur/New Tomorrows</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolett Junior High</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakopee</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South St. Paul</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodbury</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, if the first attempt to contact a victim or offender resulted in a completed interview and the second attempt failed, the case **was** included in the evaluation. For example, if the interviewer first attempted to reach the victim of a case and the victim refused to be interviewed or could not be found, the case **was not** included in the evaluation even if the possibility of contacting the offender existed. However, if the interviewer first attempted an interview with a victim and it was completed but when the interviewer called the offender he or she refused or could not be found, the case **was still** included in the evaluation.

The victim interview contained 81 items and the offender interview 73 items. Both interviews took approximately 30 minutes to administer. It was hoped that the post-conference interviews with victims and offenders would be conducted within 30 days of the actual conference date. However, due to delays in receiving the FGC case information, including participant contact information, from the individual sites some of the interviews were completed more than 90 days after the conference date.

Both the victim and the offender post-conference interview explored, in more detail, the participant’s opinions about, and satisfaction with, the FGC program. They included several questions that probed participants’ reasons for choosing Family Group Conferencing as well as their satisfaction with the FGC process and facilitator. The interviews also allowed participants to describe the aspects of the program that each liked best and least about the program and asked them to rate their satisfaction with the program components and the outcome of the program. The entire victim interview schedule can be found in appendix 2 and the offender interview can be found in appendix 3.

Once a case was determined to be eligible for the evaluation by virtue of a first completed interview with either a victim or an offender, interviewers began to contact support people (individuals who attended the FGC in support of the victim or the offender). The post-conference support person interview contained 68 items and took approximately 15 minutes to administer. The content of the support person interview is similar to that found in the victim/offender interviews mentioned above. The complete support person interview can be found in appendix 4.

All of the interview formats were modified versions of a survey instrument used in several previous studies with similar groups (Umbreit, 1994; 1996; Umbreit & Roberts, 1996). The data on all 5 instruments was analyzed using the statistical software SPSS 8.0. The following findings reflect data from all interviews and were completed between July, 1997 and September 15, 1998.

**IV. Findings**

The number of completed cases that each site to contribute to the evaluation were determined by 1) the number of conferences that were held at each site and 2) by the number of cases that were eligible - where appropriate paperwork was submitted to evaluation staff. In order to obtain representative data that reflected all of the FGC sites, program management and evaluation staff set limits on the number of cases from each site that would be included in the evaluation. The limit set at each site and the number of actual cases eligible for inclusion into the evaluation is found in Table 2 below.
Table 2
Number of Cases Included in Evaluation by Site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Site limit # of Cases</th>
<th># of Cases Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple Valley</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannon Falls/Goodhue Redwing</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carver</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaska</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inver Grove Heights</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenwood/Lakeville</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leseur/New Tomorrows</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolett Junior High</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakopee</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South St. Paul</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodbury</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who are the FGC Participants?

Table 3 reports the characteristic breakdown of the 3 groups of study participants. Table 3 reveals that the participants in all 3 study groups are predominately white, closely reflecting the percent of the Caucasian population within the respective communities housing the programs. The gender distribution is similar across all of the 3 groups - over 60% male. Approximately 60% of the crimes were committed against businesses (shoplifting) and about 40% against persons. Forty percent of the victims and of the offenders knew each other before the crime occurred. Almost 70% of victims had been a victim of a crime prior to the incident that precipitated the conference.
Table 3

Characteristics of Victims, Offenders and Support Persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victim</th>
<th>Offender</th>
<th>Support Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number Interviewed</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: Caucasian</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Male</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conference Involved
Offense Against:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victim</th>
<th>Offender</th>
<th>Support Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>Not Reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>Not Reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you know the victim or the offender?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you previously been a victim?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Many Victims, Offenders and Support Persons were Interviewed?

It was mentioned above that the baseline data (the pre-conference information) was collected by program staff at each site from a portion of the victims and offenders participating in the FGC. Out of the 132 cases eligible for inclusion in the study, program staff gathered pre-conference data on 61 victim and 56 offenders. Post-conference interviews were also conducted. Of the 132 cases eligible for the evaluation, post-conference interviews were completed with 105 victims, 103 offenders, 130 support persons (100 who attended in support of offenders and 30 attending in support of victims). Table 4 reports the number and percent of the completed pre-conference surveys and post-conferences interviews by group.

Table 4

Completed Pre-Conference Surveys and Post-Conference Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Competed Pre-conference</th>
<th>Completed Post-Conference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>% of eligible cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Support</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender Support</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that the table indicates only a small number of post-conference victim support
interviews were completed. Many of the offenses conferenced by FGC were committed against business. Most of the businesses sent only one representative from the organization to attend the conference. Consequently, that one person represented the victim and there was no one to act as the victim support person.

Why do Victims and Offenders Participate in FGC?

Victims and offenders were asked why they chose to participate in FGC. The primary reasons reported by victims for participating in FGC was to “let the offender know how they felt about the crime” (29%) and to “receive answers to their questions” (19%). Offenders reported that the primary reasons they participated in the conference was to offer the victim an apology (30%), and to take responsibility - to make things right (26%). Both victims and offenders were asked whether they felt that their participation in FGC was voluntary. Ninety-seven percent of victims and eighty-six percent of offenders reported that their participation in FGC was voluntary.

What do Victims, Offenders and Support Persons Think About the FGC Facilitator?

Victims, offenders and support persons were asked to describe their impressions of the FGC facilitator and his/her role at the conference. Table 5 reports the victims’, the offenders’, and the support persons’ impressions of the role of the facilitator. The table reveals that victims, offenders and support persons all gave the facilitators and the facilitator’s role in the conference, high marks.

The majority of victims and offenders felt that the facilitator sufficiently prepared them for the conference. When they were asked to describe how the facilitator was helpful in preparing them for the conference, 65% of victims and 50% of offenders felt that receiving information about how the conferences works as well as what to expect at the conference was the most helpful in the preparation. Victims also mentioned that having someone whom they could contact if they had questions or concerns about the conference, helping the victim to face the reality of the crime through a review of the incident and having a contact person at the Department of Corrections was helpful. A few offenders mentioned that they did not receive enough information about the conference. They said that they would have liked someone to spend more time with them who would answer their questions as well as someone to just to talk to about their own involvement in the conference.

Nearly all of the victims, offenders and support persons felt that the facilitator was fair in the way he/she conducted the conference. In addition, 95% of participants in each group felt that facilitators remained neutral during the negotiation of the restitution agreement. Over 94% of each group reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the facilitator.

Table 5
Facilitator’s Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victim N = 105</th>
<th>Offender N = 103</th>
<th>Support Person N = 130</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator sufficiently prepared participants</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was facilitator fair?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>98.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with facilitator</td>
<td>very satisfied/satisfied</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator neutral during restitution agreement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>97.9%</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Victims, offenders and support persons were asked to rate several tasks of the facilitator. All three groups felt that the most important task of the facilitators was to “be a good listener.” Offenders and support persons also rated "helping to formulate a restitution agreement” as important. Victims believed that it was important that facilitators ensure that “all participants have a chance to talk” and that facilitators “make the conference comfortable” for all parties. All three groups agreed that the least important role of the facilitator was to “take charge of the conference and do most of the talking.”

**What do Victims, Offenders and Support Persons Think About the Restitution?**

All three groups of participants were asked several questions about the restitution agreement and their satisfaction with the agreement. Table 6 reports the participants responses to the restitution questions. Fewer victims reported that a restitution agreement was negotiated during their conference than did offenders and support persons. However, both victims and offenders agreed that the agreement was fair to both parties. Approximately eighty percent of offenders said that they had input into the restitution agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>Restitution Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim N = 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was agreement negotiated?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was agreement fair to you?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was agreement fair to the other?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Do Victim and Offender Attitudes Change After Participating in FGC?**

It was mentioned above that pre and post conference data were collected on 61 victims and 56 offenders participating in a FGC. The same questions were asked prior to the conference and after the conference in an attempt to learn if attitudes changed as a result of the conference. Information on the participant satisfaction with the way that the justice system handled the case was collected from victims and offenders pre and post conference and on support persons, post conference. Table 7 identifies the combined satisfied/very satisfied responses as reported by the 61 victims and the 56 offenders pre and post conference and from the 130 support persons post-conference surveys.

Participant satisfaction with the justice system went up for both victims and the offenders after the conference - the increase was greater for the offenders (up more than 14 percentage points). The support persons rating of their satisfaction with the justice system was over 90 percent (satisfied/very satisfied) as was the victim’s and the offender’s post-conference rating of the justice system.
Table 7
Victim and Offender Pre & Post Conference Satisfaction with Justice System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Conference %</th>
<th>Post-Conference %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victims N = 56</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offenders N = 61</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Person N = 130</td>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The victim’s and the offender’s rating of other aspects of the FGC are found in Table 8. The percentages reflected in the table are the combined very important/important responses. The table reveals several changes in perceptions after the conference. For example, the offenders’ very important/important rating of the importance of meeting with the victim went up over 18 percent after the conference, while the victim’s rating of importance of meeting the offender went up 5 percent. The victims were less concerned with receiving an apology after the conference (down 18 percent) and the offenders’ felt that giving an apology was more important after the conference (up 15 percent). Both victims and offenders put more importance in discussing how the offender could make things right for the victim.

Table 8
Pre/Post Conference Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victim (N = 61)</th>
<th>Offender (N = 56)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Conference</td>
<td>Post-Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting victim/offender</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving/receiving apology</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing how things could be made right</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting paid back or paying back</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victims were asked how important it was to tell the offender how the crime affected them. The rating of importance went up from 82% (very important/important) pre-conference to 91.7 post-conference. Moreover, the victims were asked to rate their level of anxiety about being victimized in the future. On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is no anxiety and 10 high anxiety, the rating of anxiety went down from a 4 on the pre-conference scale to a 3 on the post-conference scale.

Offenders were asked how important it was to them to tell the victim about the circumstances of the crime and why it happened. The offenders’ pre-conference rating went up from 85.5% (very important/important) to 94.2%. The offenders were also asked to rate their pre and post feelings of taking responsibility for the crime. On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all responsible and 10 is
completely responsible, the offenders reported feeling more responsible post-conference with a responsibility rating of 9 compared to a pre-conference responsibility rating of 8.

What was Most and Least Helpful in the FGC?

Most Helpful
Victims, offenders and support persons were asked what was most helpful about the FGC. Victims reported that talking to the offender - explaining how the crime affected them and hearing the offenders’ explanation about what happened and why - was most valuable to them. Victims also thought that hearing from the other parties’ family members, receiving an apology from the offender and having input into the restitution agreement were helpful.

Offenders said that meeting face-to-face with the victims and having an opportunity to tell their side of the story as well as apologizing to the victim were the most valuable aspect of FGC. Offenders also reported that not having a record and avoiding the court was important to them.

Support persons stated that having all of the parties meet together to talk about the crime as well as to work out the restitution agreement was the most important contribution of the program. They also reported that having a fair and neutral facilitator to assist in the process contributed to the success of the family group conferences.

Least Helpful
Victims found the negative attitudes of offenders’ parents least helpful. Offenders were most troubled about having their friends attend the conference. Support persons stated that some of the conferences were too long and too time consuming. They were also disappointed when the offender(s) did not attend the conference.

Responses of Specific Participant Groups
A few questions in the interview were specific to each of the 3 groups - victims, offenders and support persons - and addressed issues individual to their particular involvement in the FGC.

Victims
Victims were asked whether or not they believed that the offender was adequately held accountable for his/her actions. Over 90 percent of victims reported that FGC was effective in holding offenders accountable. Victims were also asked how important it was for them to see the offender get some counseling and/or spend some time in jail of a correctional facility. Interestingly, approximately 80 percent of victims felt that it was important that offenders receive some counseling while only 10 percent felt that it was important for offenders to spend some time in jail or in a correctional facility.

Almost 90% of victims felt that it was important for them to receive an apology from the offender and 92% actually received an apology from the offender. Only 13% of victims were fearful that the offender would commit another crime against them. However, over 55% said that they were still upset about the crime at the time of the post-conference interview. Lastly, 96% of victims felt that FGC should be routinely offered to victims of crimes as part of the criminal justice system.
Offenders

Offenders were asked how helpful it was for them to meet the victim. Over 96% of the offenders reported that it was helpful or somewhat helpful to meet the victim. In addition, over 95% of offenders said that they felt better after meeting the victim.

Support Persons

Support persons were asked how valuable it was for them to participate in the FGC. Over 92% said that the conference was very or extremely valuable to them. Many felt that it was rewarding to see the conference hold the offender accountable and help the offender see the impact of his/her actions on the victim. The support persons also felt that it was important for the parties to resolve this issue in a forum of discussion and negotiation.

Final General Impressions of FGC

Participants of all 3 groups were asked some questions that provide insight into the participants’ final impressions of FGC. Table 9 compares the responses to those questions among the participants of all 3 groups.

Table 9
General Impressions of FGC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After the conference:</th>
<th>Victim N = 105</th>
<th>Offender N = 103</th>
<th>Support Person N = 130</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude about the other party.</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with outcome</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>93.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you recommend FGC?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you choose to participate again?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows that, after the FGC, victims and offenders were still a bit uncomfortable with each other with more than 30% of each group feeling less than positive about the other. However, over 90% of victims, offenders and support persons were satisfied with the outcome of the conference and would recommend it to others who found themselves in similar situations. Moreover, 90% or more would themselves choose to participate in a the FGC again.

V. Conclusions

A total of 455 interviews were conducted, consisting of 166 interviews with victims of crime, 159 interviews with juvenile offenders, and 130 interviews with support persons. The data that emerged from these interviews indicated a consistent pattern of a high level of client satisfaction with the family group conferencing process. Nine out of ten victims and offenders were satisfied with the juvenile justice system handling of their case. Nine out of ten victims, and eight out of ten offenders, felt sufficiently prepared for the conference. Nearly all victims and offenders, as well as support people, felt that the facilitator of the conference was fair. Nine out of ten victims and offenders felt that the negotiated restitution agreement was fair to them. Nine out of ten victims, offenders, and support people were satisfied with the outcome of the conference, and would recommend conferencing to others. These positive findings of client satisfaction with the family
group conferencing process are consistent with two other studies of FGC in the United States (McCold & Wachtel, 1998; Umbreit & Fercello, 1998).

Because of the exploratory nature of this study and the lack of random selection of cases, or use of a comparison group, the findings that emerged cannot be broadly generalized. At best, they are suggestive. These findings do, however, indicate strong and consistent support for the family group conferencing process by those participating in it - victims, offenders, family members, and other support people. This should encourage further experimentation with family group conferencing, as well as a more rigorous evaluation design at a future time.

References


Appendices

1. Pre-conference victim and offender surveys
2. Post-conference victim interview schedule
3. Post-conference offender interview schedule
4. Post-conference support person interview schedule
5. Multi-site program description chart: key characteristics
Appendix 1
Dakota County Family Group Conference
Pre-Conference Survey

Victim Survey

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Address: _________________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________________________________________________

Age: _____________________________________________________________

Race (optional) ____________________________________________________

Name and phone number of person who can help us reach you? ____________

Instructions: Please circle the response that best reflects your feelings.

1. How satisfied are you with the way the justice system handled your case so far?

   Very Satisfied  Satisfied  Dissatisfied  Very Dissatisfied  Don’t Know
   4            3             2             1             -7

2. How important is it to you to meet with the offender and talk about the incident?

   Very Important  Important  Unimportant  Very Unimportant  Don’t Know
   4            3             2             1             -7

3. How important is it for you to receive an apology from the offender?

   Very Important  Important  Unimportant  Very Unimportant  Don’t Know
   4            3             2             1             -7

4. How important is it for you to tell the offender how you felt about the crime?

   Very Important  Important  Unimportant  Very Unimportant  Don’t Know
   4            3             2             1             -7
5. How important is it for you to receive answers to questions you would like to ask the offender?

Very Important  Important  Unimportant  Very Unimportant  Don’t Know
4 3 2 1 -7

6. How important is it to you to participate in a discussion about how the offender could make things right for you?

Very Important  Important  Unimportant  Very Unimportant  Don’t Know
4 3 2 1 -7

7. How important is it for you to get paid back from the offender with work or money?

Very Important  Important  Unimportant  Very Unimportant  Don’t Know
4 3 2 1 -7

8. For some victims of crime, the anxiety of being further victimized increases. On a scale of 1 to 10; 1 being no anxiety and 10 being high anxiety, how much anxiety do you feel now about being revictimized?

No Anxiety  High Anxiety

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. What do you hope to gain by participating in the Family Group Conference?


10. What concerns you most about participating in the Family Group Conference?
Dakota County Family Group Conference
Pre-Conference Survey

Offender Survey

Name: 

Address: 

Phone: 

Age: 

Race (optional) 

Name and phone number of person who can help us reach you? 

Instructions: Please circle the response that best reflects your feelings.

1. How satisfied are you with the way the justice system handled your case so far?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How important is it to you to meet with the victim and talk about the incident?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How important is it for you to apologize to the victim?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How important is it for you to tell the victim what happened and why?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. How important is it for you to participate in a discussion about how you could make things right for the victim?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How important is it for you to pay back the victim with work or money?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. On a scale of 1 to 10, one being the not at all responsible and 10 being completely responsible, how much responsibility do you feel for your involvement in this offense?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Responsible</th>
<th>Completely Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. What do you hope to gain by participating in the Family Group Conference?

10. What concerns you the most about participating in the Family Group Conference?
Appendix 2

Program Site: Dakota County, MN

Family Group Conferencing
Post-Mediation Victim Interview Schedule

April 1997

Program Case Number: ______________________

Interview Date: ____________________________

Interviewer: _______________________________

Age of offender: ____________________________

Gender: _________________________________

Race: _________________________________

Offense _________________________________

Center for Restorative Justice & Mediation
School of Social Work
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
1985 Buford Ave, 386 McNeal Hall
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108-6134
612-624-4923 Fax: 612-625-8224
E-mail: ctr4rjm@che2.che.umn.edu
Internet: http://ssw.che.umn.edu/ctr4rjm
I Would Like To Begin By Asking You A Few General Questions.

1. Did you know the offender before the crime occurred?
   1. yes  0. no

1A. IF YES: How did you know the offender?
   a. friend
   b. acquaintance
   c. neighbor
   d. other __________

2. Have you been a victim of a crime before?
   1. yes  0. no

3. Of the following possible effects of the crime on your life, which was the most important effect for you?
   a. a greater sense of fear
   b. the loss of property
   c. the damage to property
   d. the hassle of dealing with police and court officials
   e. a feeling of powerlessness

I Would Now Like To Ask You A Few Questions About Your Experience With The Justice System In This Case.

4. How satisfied were you with the way the justice system handled your case?
   
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Do you believe the offender was adequately held accountable for his/her behavior?
   1. yes  0. no

6. Do you believe that the Family Group Conferencing program should be routinely offered to victims of a crime as part of the criminal justice system
   1. yes  0. no  -8. don’t know
Now I Would Like To Ask A Few Questions About The Family Group Conferencing Program.

7. Do you believe that your participation in the Family Group Conferencing program was voluntary, that is, did you feel that you could say that you didn’t want to participate in the program.

   1. yes  0. no

7A. IF YES: Why did you choose to participate in the victim offender conferencing program?

   a. to get paid back for losses
   b. to let the offender know how you felt about the crime
   c. to receive answers to questions you had
   d. to help the offender
   e. to receive an apology
   f. other ____________________________

8. Do you feel the facilitator prepared you sufficiently for the meeting with the offender?

   1. yes  0. no

8A. If yes, what was most helpful?

8B. If no, what information would have been most helpful to you?

Now I Would Like To Ask You Some Questions About Your Experience In The Meeting With The Offender. For Each Of The Following Items, Please Tell Me Whether The Item Is Very Important, Important, Unimportant, Or Very Unimportant.

9. How important was it for you to meet with the offender and talk about the incident?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. To receive answers to questions you would like to ask the offender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. To tell the offender how you felt about the crime?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. To participate in a discussion about how the offender could make things right for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. To get paid back from the offender with work or money?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. That the offender gets some counseling or other type of help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. To have the offender spend some time in jail or a correctional facility?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. To have the opportunity to negotiate a pay back agreement with the offender that was acceptable to both of you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. To receive an apology from the offender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16A. Did the offender seem to be sorry about the way he or she hurt you?

1. yes 0. no

16B. Did the offender offer an apology?

1. yes 0. no

I Would Like To Ask You Some Additional Questions About The Meeting With The Offender And Its Outcome.

17. Was a restitution agreement negotiated during the meeting with the offender?

1. yes 0. no

18. Do you feel the restitution agreement was fair to you?

1. yes 0. no

18A. If no, why don’t you feel it was fair to you?

19. Do you feel the restitution agreement was fair to the offender?

1. yes 0. no

19A. If no, why don’t you feel it was fair to the offender?

20. Did the facilitator remain neutral during the negotiation of the agreement?

20. Was it helpful to meet the offender?

1. Not at all helpful
2. Somewhat helpful
3. Very helpful
21. Which of these choices best describes your attitude about the conference with your offender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>No Attitude</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is least important to you and 10 is most important to you, how important was each of the following tasks of the facilitator?

- a. providing leadership
- b. making you and the offender feel comfortable and safe
- c. taking charge and doing most of the talking
- d. allowing plenty of time for you to talk directly with the offender
- e. being a good listener
- f. helping us formulate the restitution agreement

23. Do you believe the mediator was fair?

1. yes 0. no

23A. If no, in what way was he or she unfair?

24. Which of these choices best describes your attitude about the mediator who worked with you and the offender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>No Attitude</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. If you had it to do over again, would you choose to meet the offender at a Family Group Conference??

1. yes 0. no

26. Would you recommend Family Group Conferencing to other victims of crime?

1. yes 0. no
27. When you left the conference session with your offender, how satisfied were you about the outcome of the meeting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. Which of the following choices best describes your attitude toward the offender at this point?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Positive</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Mixed; positive and negative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Very Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Are you afraid the offender will commit another crime against you?

1. yes 0. no -8. don’t know

30. How do you now feel about the crime committed against you?

1. Not upset
2. Somewhat upset
3. Very upset

31. For some victims of crime, the anxiety of being further victimized increases. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is no anxiety and 10 is high anxiety, how much anxiety to you feel now about being revictimized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Anxiety</th>
<th>High Anxiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32. What three things did you find the most helpful about your Family Group Conferencing experience?

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
33. What three things did you find least helpful about your Family Group Conferencing experience?

1. 

2. 

3. 

Now I would like to ask you a few questions about the additional people present at your conference.

34. How important was the presence of your support people during your conference?

Very Important  Important   Unimportant  Very Unimportant

4 3 2 1

35. Which support person's presence was most important to you?

36. Was anyone missing whom you would have liked to have been present?

1. yes  0. no

37. Were you comfortable with the number of people present at the conference?

1. yes  0. no

38. In general now, is there anything else you would like to say about the conference with your offender or how your case was handled?

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this program evaluation.
Appendix 3

Program Site: Dakota County, MN

Family Group Conference

Post-Mediation Offender Interview Schedule

April 1997

Program Case Number: ______________________

Interview Date: ____________________________

Interviewer: ________________________________

Age of offender: ____________________________

Gender: ____________________________________

Race: ______________________________________

Offense ____________________________________

Center for Restorative Justice & Mediation
School of Social Work
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
1985 Buford Ave, 386 McNeal Hall
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108-6134
612-624-4923 Fax: 612-625-8224
E-mail: ctr4rjm@che2.che.umn.edu
Internet: http://ssw.che.umn.edu/ctr4rjm
First, I would like to ask you a question about your experience with the justice system in this case.

1. How satisfied were you with the way the justice system handled your case?

Very Satisfied  Satisfied  Dissatisfied  Very Dissatisfied
4 3 2 1

Now I would like to ask a few questions about the family group conferencing program.

2. Did you want to participate in the family group conferencing program?

1. yes  0. no

2A. IF YES: Why did you want to participate in the program? (Read all responses.

a. to pay back the victim for their losses
b. to let the victim know why you did it
c. to offer an apology
d. to take direct responsibility for making things right
f. other ____________________________

2B. Did you know the victim?

1. yes  0. no

2B(1) If yes, what was your relationship to the victim?

3. Do you feel the facilitator prepared you sufficiently for the meeting with your victim?

1. yes  0. no

3A. If yes, what was the most helpful in this preparation?

3B. If no, what would information would have been most helpful to you?

4. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all responsible and 10 is completely responsible, how much responsibility do you feel for your involvement in this case?

Not at all Responsible  Completely Responsible
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Now I Would Like To Ask You Some Questions About Your Experience In The Meeting With The Victim. For Each Of The Following Items, Please Tell Me Whether The Item Is Very Important, Important, Unimportant, Or Very Unimportant.

5. To meet with the victim and talk about the incident?
   Very Important   Important   Unimportant   Very Unimportant
   4                3                2                1

6. To be able to tell the victim what happened and why?
   Very Important   Important   Unimportant   Very Unimportant
   4                3                2                1

8. To participate in a discussion about how you could make things right for the victim?
   Very Important   Important   Unimportant   Very Unimportant
   4                3                2                1

9. To pay back the victim with work or money?
   Very Important   Important   Unimportant   Very Unimportant
   4                3                2                1

10. To apologize to the victim?
    Very Important   Important   Unimportant   Very Unimportant
     4                3                2                1

10A. Did you apologize to your victim?
     1. yes          0. no

I Would Like To Ask You Some Additional Questions About The Meeting With The Victim And Its Outcome.

11. Was a pay back agreement negotiated during the conference?
    1. yes          0. no

12. Do you feel the agreement was fair to you?
1. yes 0. no

12A. If no, why don’t you feel it was fair to you?

13. Do you feel the restitution agreement was fair to the victim?
   1. yes 0. no
   13A. If no, why don’t you feel it was fair to the victim?

14. Did you have input into the restitution agreement?
   1. yes 0. no

15. Do you feel that facilitator remained neutral during the negotiation of the agreement?
   1. yes 0. no

16. Was it helpful to meet the victim?
   1. Not at all helpful
   2. Somewhat helpful
   3. Very helpful

17. Do you feel better after having met with the victim?
   1. yes 0. no

18. Which of these choices best describes your attitude about the conference with your victim?
   Very Positive 5  Positive 4 Mixed; 3 positive and negative
   Negative 2  Very Negative 1
19. On a scale from 1 - 10 where 1 is the least important to you and 10 is the most important, how important was each of the following tasks of the mediator?

_____ a. providing leadership in the meeting
_____ b. making you and the victim feel comfortable and safe
_____ c. taking charge and doing most of the talking
_____ d. allowing plenty of time for you to talk directly with the victim
_____ e. being a good listener
_____ f. helping to formulate the restitution agreement
_____ g. other _________________________________

20. Do you believe the facilitator was fair?

1. yes  0. no

20A. IF NO: In what way was he or she unfair?

21. Which of these choices best describes your attitude about the facilitator who worked with you and the victim?:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>No Attitude</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. If you had it to do over again, would you choose to meet the victim at a conference?

1. yes  0. no

23. Would you recommend the Family Group Conferencing program to friends that might get in trouble?

1. yes  0. no

24. When you left the conference session with your victim, how satisfied were you about the outcome of the meeting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
25. Which of the following choices best describes your attitude toward the victim at this point?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Positive</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Mixed; positive and negative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Very Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. What three things did you find the most helpful about your Family Group Conferencing experience?

1. ____________________________

2. ____________________________

3. ____________________________

27. What three things did you find least helpful about your Family Group Conferencing experience?

1. ____________________________

2. ____________________________

3. ____________________________

Now I Would Like To Ask You A Few Questions About The Additional People Present At Your Conference.

28. How important was the presence of your support people during your conference?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Which support person's presence was most important to you?

30. Was anyone missing whom you would have liked to have been present?

1. yes 0. no

31. Were you comfortable with the number of people present at the conference?

1. yes 0. no
32. In general now, is there anything else you would like to say about the conference with your victim or how your case was handled?

Thank You Very Much For Your Willingness To Participate In This Program Evaluation.
Appendix 4

Program Site: Dakota County, MN

Family Group Conferencing
Post-Mediation Support Person Interview Schedule

October 1997

Program Case Number: __________________________

Interview Date: __________________________

Interviewer: __________________________

Age of offender: __________________________

Gender: __________________________

Race: __________________________

Offense __________________________

Center for Restorative Justice & Mediation
School of Social Work
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
1985 Buford Ave, 386 McNeal Hall
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108-6134
612-624-4923 Fax: 612-625-8224
E-mail: ctr4rjm@che2.che.umn.edu
Internet: http://ssw.che.umn.edu/ctr4rjm
I Would Like To Begin By Asking You A Few General Questions.

1. Prior to your participation in this Family Group Conference Program, had you heard of the program?
   1. yes  0. no

   1a. If yes, where did you hear about the program?

2. Who were you at the conference to support?
   1. Victim
   2. Offender
   3. Other

3. What is your relationship to the _________ (read response from #2).
   1. Spouse
   2. Parent
   3. Sibling
   4. Other relative
   5. Neighbor/friend
   6. Professional (teacher, counselor etc.)
   7. Business Associate
   8. Other _________________

4. How satisfied are you with the way the justice system handled the case?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Do you believe that the Family Group Conferencing program should be routinely offered to victims of a crime as part of the criminal justice system
   1. yes  0. no  -8. Don’t know
Now I Would Like To Ask You Some Questions About Your Experience In The Conference. For Each Of The Following Items, Please Tell Me Whether The Item Is Very Important, Important, Unimportant, Or Very Unimportant.

6. How important do you feel it was for the victim and the offender to meet and talk about the incident?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6a. Why?

7. For the two parties to have the opportunity to negotiate a pay back agreement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7a. Why?

8. For the parties to have support people present if they choose to do so?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8a. Why?

I Would Like To Ask You Some Additional Questions About The Family Group Conference

9. Was the restitution agreement negotiated during the conference fair to both parties?

1. yes 0. no

9a. If no, for whom wasn’t it fair?

1. victim 2. offender

9a1. Why wasn’t it fair

10. Did the facilitator remain neutral during the negotiation of the agreement?

1. yes 0. no

11. Which of these choices best describes your attitude about the Family Group Conference?
11a. Why do you feel this way?

12. On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is least important and 10 is most important, how important was each of the following tasks of the facilitator?

- a. providing leadership
- b. making everyone feel comfortable and safe
- c. taking charge and doing most of the talking
- d. allowing plenty of time for everyone to talk
- e. being a good listener
- f. helping to formulate the restitution agreement

13. Do you believe the facilitator was fair throughout the conference?

1. yes  0. no

13a. If no, in what way was he or she unfair?

14. Which of these choices best describes your attitude about the facilitator?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>No Attitude</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14a. [INTERVIEWER - If no attitude, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied ask why they feel the way they do].

15. If asked to participate as a support person again in a conference would you choose to do so?

1. yes  0. no

15a. IF NO, why not?
16. Would you recommend Family Group Conferencing to individuals or families who find themselves involved in an incident either as a victim or an offender?

1. yes  
0. no

16a. Why or Why not?

17. When you left the conference, how satisfied did you feel about the outcome?

Very Satisfied  Satisfied  Dissatisfied  Very Dissatisfied
4 3 2 1

18. What three things did you find the most helpful about the Family Group Conferencing experience?

1. __________________________

2. __________________________

3. __________________________

19. What three things did you find least helpful about the Family Group Conferencing experience?

1. __________________________

2. __________________________

3. __________________________

20. How valuable was participating in the Family Group Conference to you?

1. Not valuable
2. It had a little value
3. It had a lot of value
4. It was extremely valuable

20a. Why?
21. Which approach do you believe will be more effective in positively changing the behavior of youth (18 years old or younger) who have been involved with the police for an incident like the one described at your conference?

1. Traditional Courts  
2. Family Conferencing  
3. Other ____________

21a. Why so you feel this way?

22. Do you believe that the Family Group Conference approach will benefit society as a whole?

1. yes  0. no

22a. Why or why not?

23. In general now, is there anything else you would like to say about the Family Group Conference Program?

Thank You Very Much For Your Willingness To Participate In This Program Evaluation.
Appendix 5
Chart for Conferencing Project
1st Judicial District, MN, USA

Program title: 1st Judicial District Family Group Conferencing Pilot Project

Convened by: Dakota County Community Corrections

Managed by: Dakota County Community Corrections under the auspices of the MN Department of Corrections

Coordinator/mediator/facilitator(s): Barbara E. DeGrio – former
Natalie Nelson—current

Participants: May include: police, school, County Attorney, Court Services, and other community members along with victims, offenders and supports.

Purpose/responsibility: Dakota County Board established a pilot project for Family Group Conferencing in Dakota County to provide assistance to other municipalities in the 1st Judicial District, State of Minnesota, establishing a FGC program. Established to increase community involvement in crime reparation by facilitating conferences among offender, victims, community members, and law enforcement agencies as an alternative to prosecution for appropriate offenders. Two year pilot project with intent to submit a report to the MN state legislature on the effectiveness of the project by January 15, 1999. Initially, 300 agencies were sent letters seeking requests for proposals to implement Family Group Conferencing in their agencies. Pilot sites were then selected to be assisted in developing conferencing procedures and policies and given a stipend for startup costs out of the grant money received from the State of MN. Originally the sites included: 5 Police Depts; 1 junior high school; 1 County Attorney’s office; 1 community citizen under the direction of a school district and in collaboration with Court Services and the County Attorney’s office; and 1 collaborative agency under the direction of a County board. Each site assigned a coordinator for their project, although some of the coordinators have been reassigned since the initial implementation of the pilot. A two letter code will be used for the sites:
Apple Valley Police Department-AV
Goodhue County Attorneys Office-GO
Hutchinson Police Services-HU
Nicollet Junior High-NJ
Lakeville Police Department-LA
LeSueur Henderson Collaborative-LE
Shakopee School District #720-SH
(One site has ended its project and has chosen to not continued to be a part of the grant.)

Selection of community members: Community members selected to be participants in conferences as appropriate for each case, with input from facilitators and key participants (victims, offenders, and supporters).
Decision-making:

AV- Coordination of this program was moved from the police officer who wrote the grant to another police officer in the department. This has been a well coordinated and structured program. The coordinating officer receives all of the juvenile arrests reports and tickets and reviews them for conferencing. She then selects the appropriate cases that meet the guidelines and gives them to facilitators to do the conferences. The coordinator is trained in conferencing and does cases as well. There are 7 police officers trained in conferencing. There are 5 community volunteers completing cases for the department.

GO-This program was initially coordinated by the victim witness support person through the County Attorneys office. It is now being coordinated by a person hired to coordinate conferencing on a part time basis. This person has many contacts and the drive to get the program instituted and accepted by this community.

HU- This program is coordinated by a police officer. Cases filter through a lieutenant who reviews the cases for conferencing. The officer then disperses them for conferencing to facilitators.

NJ- Incidents that occur at the junior high initially involve staff at the school. The staff then report it to a vice principal or counselor. They then submit the report to the police liaison officer to see if it is an appropriate case to conference. If it is, the officer gives the case to a trained facilitator to conference. The trained facilitators in the school are vice principals, counselors, police liaison officer and a volunteer parent. A solo facilitator is used for conferencing.

LA- This program is run out of a police department. The juvenile cases go directly to a lieutenant who then disperses them to trained police officers and one volunteer at the agency.

LE- This agency receives its cases from the Court services department who receives the case from the county attorney’s office. The county attorney’s office has already drawn up a petition and after completion of the conference, requires notification, so that they can dismiss the case. Upon the collaborative agency receiving the case, they gather the necessary paperwork and disperse to a trained volunteer facilitator.

SH- The Shakopee site is coordinated by a community citizen who had an interest in this idea and wrote a grant for the school district. She then did some footwork, and convinced the county attorneys office to give her cases that fit the “A chargeable offense” criteria to conference. Since that time, she receives her cases from the county attorney’s office. Either she conferences the cases or gives them to trained volunteers to conference.

Victim role:

Victims are asked to participate only and when the offenders have already agreed to do so. Participation is totally voluntary. If the victim chooses to participate, they are a key person at the conference. They have direct input into the final conferencing agreement.

Targeted offenders:

The criteria for all of the sites for this project is first time juvenile offenders who are 17 years and under when the offense was committed. The offense criteria was developed in conjunction with all of the county attorneys in the jurisdictions; ineligible offenses include domestic violence, child abuse, use of firearm, driving and alcohol related offenses, drug offenses. Felonies were originally considered ineligible, but this was changed so that lower level felonies such as property damage are now eligible. Also, exceptions are made through the family group conferencing coordinator and the county attorney’s office. Offenders must admit their guilt and involvement in the incident and sign a waiver of his/her rights. They must also sign an agreement to participate in the conference.
Stage of CJS:
This is used as a diversion, pre-adjudication program. Although some of the sites use conferencing post adjudication; those conferences are not submitted for the statistics and are not considered for our grant purposes.

Offender role:
Own behaviors and be accountable. Actively participate in the discussion of how to repair the harm done or to make things right.

Family role:
Family’s role is to support the offenders and to discuss how the incident effected them. Focus is on the incident.

Size of group:
Typical conferences average approx. 7 people. The goal of the programs would be to involve more community people in the conferences. The largest conference to date within the pilot sites included 70 people.

Case scope of community group:
The goal of the conference participants would be to resolve the matter at the conference without having to reconvene the group. Although if that needs to happen, it should.

Preparation of participants:
The offender is notified first either by phone or by letter. They are then offered the opportunity to meet in person or to review the program guidelines and information over the phone. The same is then done for the victim and the support persons of both. Most of the preparation is completed by telephone. It appears that this is enough preparation for the offenders and victims for the crimes we are dealing with.

Gatekeeper(s):
All of the intake data, i.e., names of offenders, participants in the conference, facilitators’ names, etc., are submitted to the 1st judicial district coordinator. Within the project the information is entered into a data base and the pre-conference questionnaires are returned to the University of MN Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation to complete the independent evaluation of the program.

Research topics/issues:
As indicated the evaluation component to the program will be completed by the University of MN. The evaluation will address the research questions: 1) Who participates in family group conferencing at the various pilot sites and why? 2) How does the family group conferencing process work at each site and what are the implication of replication elsewhere? 3) How do participants in the family group conferencing process (victims, offenders, family members, other support people) evaluate it? 4) What are the immediate outcomes of family group conferencing, such as number of restitution agreements, type agreed to, completion of restitution agreements, interesting anecdotal stories or spin-off effects in community resulting from participating in a conference? 5) What are the cost implications of developing and operating family group conferencing projects at the pilot sites, including the determination of startup costs, fixed and variable operating costs, and unit costs of referral and actual participating in a conference?

Conceptual framework:
Restorative justice for the Correctional programs. Community Policing for the police departments

Main goals:
The goal is to have the community and members who were affected by the crime, be directly involved in how the harm can be repaired. The benefits to the offender would be to also be directly involved in how the harm can be repaired and to be reintegrated back into the community.
Time in operation: This pilot program began in July 1996. The pilot sites were selected in September 1996. They were trained in November 1996 and began conferencing cases shortly thereafter.

Annual budget: $95,000. This amount pays for the coordinator salary, the evaluation, and gives a small (up to a max. $5,000) stipend to the pilot sites to offset startup costs.

# FTE staff: 1 FTE coordinator for the district.

# volunteer or sessionally paid coordinators: AV- Coordinator does this in course of her duties. If she puts in overtime, it is paid time and a half.
GO- Coordinator does in course of duties. “Volunteers” are paid a stipend
HU- Coordinator does this in course of his duties. If he puts in overtime, it is paid time and a half.
NJ- Coordinator(liaison police officer) does in course of duties. Volunteers have been paid a stipend.
LA-Coordinator does in course of duties. Officers coordinating conferences are paid time and a half.
LE- Coordinator is paid through the grant money, volunteers are also paid.
SH-Coordinator pays herself stipend out of grant money. Some time has been donated. All of the rest of volunteers are unpaid.

***NOTE*** At this point the stipend for volunteers varies program by program—mileage, phone calls and/or a modest fixed sessional fee. It is the hope of the district coordinator that volunteers are not paid but this would be a service they would do. A stipend could be paid to them to reimburse refreshment expenses, and possibly mileage but that is all. It is my belief that these program will NOT be sustained by paying persons to conference. In addition, it brings it closer to the community when TRAINED volunteers are running the conferences. The coordinators could be paid and for the most part their responsibility would be to organize training for volunteers, ongoing support to the volunteers and to do community outreach and public relations.

Volunteer reimbursement: See above.

# cases referred to program/service annually: Not available

# cases conferences annually: Upon submitting the grant proposals, the pilot sites projected the cases they would complete for the first year of the grant. Because of a later start-up, the time was extended. # cases conferenced projected/actual as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Projected</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AV</td>
<td>25/25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>48/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>10/6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH</td>
<td>25/25+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>55/4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td>20/20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most sites did not meet their quota. This is because of a few factors. 1) Did not receive referrals as early as projected 2) Referrals were down in some areas 3) Apprehension on part of referral sources

Primary referral sources: Directly from the police or county attorneys offices prior to petition or Court appearance

Point of case referral: Diversion
Age of offenders (range and average): 17 years and under. Some conferences have involved juveniles that were 8 and 10 years old.

Most frequent offense: Statistics thus far have indicated that the most common offenses for conferencing have been Theft (shoplifting); Assault; and Damage to property

Prior phone &/or letter contact with victim and offender: As previously stated, most offenders are first contacted by phone or letter. It is then offered that the facilitator can explain the program and discuss the incident by phone or go for a personal visit. The same for the victim. Support persons and community persons receive a phone call.

Prior in person meetings with victim and offender: See Above

Population of area served: 590,000 – 1st Judicial District.

type of area: AV- urban/suburban NJ- urban/suburban LA- suburban/rural SH-suburban/rural GO-rural HU- rural LE- rural

Contact Information

Name: Barbara E. DeGrio (former coordinator)
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Org: Dakota County Community Corrections

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E-mail: bdea7@nor.co.dakota.mn.us