

# Helping You Prepare for Child Welfare Conferences

A quick guide for Nebraska DHHS employees

Presented by



# Child Welfare Conferences with DHHS participation:

- **PHC** (Prehearing Conference)
  - Typically held soon after initial removal and immediately before first appearance in 3(a) cases.
  - Focus: preliminary safety and placement issues
- **FGC** (Family Group Conference) **EFGC** (Expedited FGC)
  - Available any time; ideally held 5-6 months after initial removal.
  - Focus: garnering support from extended family/friends in developing a plan to stop the abuse/neglect; set expectations for consequences of plan is not followed.
- **PHPR** (Prehearing Permanency Review)
  - Ideally held 10-months after initial removal in preparation for the 12-month permanency review
- **PHTPR** (Prehearing Termination of Parental Rights)
  - Held prior to a termination hearing to explore permanency next steps
- **BRIDGE ORDER**
  - Held prior to DHHS closing its case when parents need a visitation schedule that varies from what they have on file in District Court

*DHHS may also be asked to participate in Mediations or Facilitations with clients.*

# PHC – Prehearing Conference

Information DHHS may be asked to provide:

- details regarding legal parents
- court orders that may be in effect
- ICWA - tribe enrollment or eligibility for enrollment
- details on current placement
- thoughts about future placement
- current or planned visitation schedule
- information regarding safety plan
- provision of services identified as beneficial for the children or family members
- information about needs of the children

# FGC– Family Group Conference

AT REFERRAL: The designated caseworker will meet with the FGC coordinator to:

- discuss family strengths
- strategize on presenting concerns in a way they can be received by the family
- discuss possible resources that can be offered to the family
- establish department "bottom lines" given the risk factors
- make facilitator aware of the key risk factors that must be addressed in the family plan
- discuss the status of the court case
- identify those who should participate in the conference (extended family; kinship/community supports)

# FGC– Family Group Conference

AT CONFERENCE: The designated caseworker will:

- Will Provide a **brief overview** of why the family was brought to DHHS attention
- will discuss the **strengths** of the **children** and of the **family**
- share what **worries** DHHS about the **care** of the **children**, their **future**, etc.
- **present** the **bottom lines/critical issues**; these become the outline the family uses to develop their plan
- **provide feedback** to the family if the plan they create requires **resources** from the state or community
- **sign off on the plan** developed by the family (The caseworker in attendance should have the **authority** to approve the plan, or have **immediate access** to a supervisor who can approve the plan, before the meeting adjourns.)

# PHPR/PHTPR – Prehearing Permanency Review/Termination

## Areas to be Addressed in a PHPR/TPR

1. **Update on the Child(ren):** Placement, behavior, relationships, school performance, services provided to the child(ren)
2. **Services offered each parent** to achieve reunification?
  - This discussion is most fruitful when the DHHS representative attending can present a written list. The “**Reasonable Efforts**” list you use for your **court report** is ideal.
3. In which ways has each parent **taken advantage of the services** offered throughout the case?
4. **Reasons either parent has not taken advantage of services** offered throughout the case?
5. **Additional services that can be offered** to either parent to assist with timely reunification?
6. **Quantity/quality of contact that each parent has had with each child in the family.**
7. When reunification in a timely manner is possible:
  - If realistic by target date: **action plan** with **specific steps** and **timelines for each parent.**
  - If realistic at a later date: what is that **realistic date**; what makes it **achievable**?
8. If reunification in a timely manner is not possible:
  - develop an **appropriate primary permanency plan.**
  - If reunification is a **secondary** permanency goal, **develop** a plan with **timelines** and **action steps for each parent.**
  - If reunification is **not appropriate**, discuss **relinquishment vs trail, adoptive prospects** and **processes.**

# Bridge Orders

AT REFERRAL: The designated caseworker will discuss:

- Status of the DHHS case.
- Issues that need to be addressed in the Parenting Plan

Areas That Must be Addressed in a Bridge Order:

1. **Legal Custody:** The authority and responsibility for making fundamental decisions regarding the child's welfare, including but not limited to choices regarding education, health, and spiritual or religious upbringing.
2. **Physical Custody:** The authority and responsibility regarding the child's place of residence and the exertion of continuous parenting time for significant periods of time.
3. **Visitation/Parenting Time:** A "regular schedule" and holiday schedule will be discussed. Telephone/virtual time may also be defined.
4. How to handle the transition between parents is often defined (pick up / drop off procedures)
5. Decision making and other areas that need to be well defined for parents to work together should be captured in the agreement to minimize future parental conflict, especially in front of the children.