

TRANSCRIPT

Presenters: Female Narrator; Tom Oates, Child Welfare Information Gateway; Danielle Zuniga, YMCA of San Diego County; Alisha Eftekhari, YMCA of San Diego County; Cristina Magana, Harder & Company

00:00:00 [Music Introduction]

FEMALE NARRATOR [00:00:03]: This is the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast, a place for those who care about strengthening families and protecting children. You'll hear about the innovations, emerging trends and success stories across child welfare direct from those striving to make a difference. This is your place for new ideas and information to support your work to improve the lives of children, youth, and families.

TOM OATES [00:00:33]: Welcome in to the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast, everyone. I'm Tom Oates, and it's great to have you with us. We're gonna continue the conversation surrounding Family Group Decision-Making. We've put out a couple of podcasts diving into the different ways to implement Family Group Decision-Making - from supporting families with Parent Advocates in New York City, to implementing the Family Group Conferencing Model with Kinship Caregivers in Arizona, and today, we're gonna dive a little deeper about Family Group Decision-Making and Kinship Care.

[00:01:03]: Yes, we're talk a little bit about how one organization in Southern California sets up and provides services - including how they serve formal and informal Kinship families differently and how their Kinship Navigators and Family Group Coordinators each serve separate roles in supporting families. But, what I really like about this conversation is how we started to define what being a family-centered office or agency means - and that's a special conversation. It's not so easy to turn around and say, we're family-centered - because in many cases, moving away from system-centered means sharing control with families and other partners and overcoming barriers you may not always recognize are there.

[00:01:44]: So, we're chatting with Danielle Zuniga who is the Associate Executive Director of the San Diego County's YMCA's Youth and Family Services and they are the county's provider for all Kinship Navigator services, along with Alisha Eftekhari, she is the project manager of the Families United Family Group Conferencing Project. The three-year project, which, just like the examples mentioned in New York and in Arizona, is a recipient of the Children's Bureau's discretionary grants around building the evidence for Family Group Decision-Making in Child Welfare. And the project is a partnership with the San Diego County Child Welfare Services and serves children at risk of entering or reentering the Child Welfare System for who Kinship Care has been identified as the best option.

[00:02:30]: San Diego County YMCA has embraced a family-centered approach, but they realized that an agency has to be ready to take that step - certain conditions must be in place and you need to be willing to alter approaches or to make accommodations to successfully implement the Family Group Decision-Making Model. We'll talk about the evaluation of the program, as well, with Cristina Magana, she's from Harder and Company and she's gonna be able to provide some insight into the types of families that may be most likely to respond and what skills Family Group Coordinators may rely on to see a greater level of success. So, think about what it takes to be family-centered as we discuss what's going on in San Diego, California with Family Group Decision-Making, Kinship Care and the Families United Project.

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[00:03:20]: Folks, I want to welcome you to the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast and, Danielle, let's start up front, so, when you guys at the YMCA were envisioning Family Group Conferencing, how were you envisioning meeting both formal and informal Kinship Caregiver needs?

DANIELLE ZUNIGA [00:03:38]: Well, we started off, we've learned about Family Group Conferencing actually through our local partnership with the Casey Family Programs field office. This was probably around ten years ago, they had started doing Family Group Conferencing with the families that they were working with and we had the opportunity to attend an FGC for a kinship family and that was really our initial exposure to the intervention and from there we just saw a lot of potential.

[00:04:11]: And to answer your question about what it, kind of how we envisioned it for both the formal population and the informal population, was that our experience had been with our, our, kind of our kinship, our, excuse me, our formal kinship families is that at the time, and again, this is about ten years ago and a lot's changed in Child Welfare since then, but often times we would hear from those families, from those caregivers that they just really didn't feel like they had a voice in what was happening with the Child Welfare plan - if the child was, had been removed from their biological parents and was independent within the Child Welfare System - and so, they often times felt like they didn't know what was happening with the case, what the direction was, how much authority they had to have a say in what happened next.

[00:05:07]: And then, for informal population, we saw that for a lot of them, there were not a lot of formal resources to meet their needs because they weren't under the jurisdiction of Child Welfare Services. So, we oftentimes found ourselves trying to encourage them to access their natural supports to meet their needs. So, for example, we might have a Kinship Caregiver who might have guardianship of her grandchildren through probate court but doesn't, you know, either meet the eligibility criteria for any of the formal resources, services, maybe she wasn't, didn't meet the age requirement. And so, oftentimes we felt limited in terms of what we could do to support these families and getting their needs met.

[00:05:58]: So, we saw Family Group Conferencing as a, really as an intervention that could support both the formal families and the informal families in, in different ways, in different capacities and I can talk a little bit more about that as we, as we move through the conversation.

TOM OATES [00:06:21]: Sure, and of course, you've, you know, you talked about it as an intervention, but it's something that you're really looking for that family to be a partner with and so when all of that information comes to you about what you're trying to do, who's involved and their responsiveness to it, I mean the data's gotta finally tell you something and so Cristina is, is part of this, as well, and so, Cristina, let me ask you, in looking at, at, the work and looking at the project, talk to me about what you learned about those families, particularly, maybe who was more likely to respond and who may be more likely to stick with or drop out of the program.

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CHRISTINA MAGANA [00:06:58]: Sure. What we've learned is that it's actually quite challenging to incorporate a randomized study within a community setting. As you know, part of the grant requirement indicated that we needed to do rigorous evaluation, so that included randomizing our participants. What we've learned is that on average, Tom, only about fifty percent of our families were eligible to be in the study - actually agreed to consent and then of those that are randomized into the intervention and then another fifty percent drop off before they receive the intervention and in our case, that means that they actually participate in the family meeting. Thus equipping our Coordinators to monitor engagement in all stages of the study has been critical. This includes how we train them and support them to consent families, how we plan the meetings and how we assess for resistance and ambivalence along the way.

[00:07:49]: In terms of family characteristics, our population really does reflect the larger Kinship population in San Diego County. And something that I want to say for your audience that they may not know, a fun fact is that San Diego County includes 3.1 million residents, which is actually larger than 21 states. So, when you think about incorporating the family-centered model like this, it is in a very large region that has, you know, lots of complexities.

[00:08:16]: Back to our population, so they're typically evenly divided between formal and informal caregivers, they're largely Latino, they're female, they're grandparents, most of them are over 50 years of age and many of them are in fact bilingual or Spanish speaking. What we've also learned in terms of need, we use a healthy, a healthy parenting, Healthy Families Parenting Inventory - that's our baseline assessment tool - and what we've learned is that many of these families indicate need around parenting behavior, as well as personal care.

[00:08:52]: So, you know, having time to take care of themselves, to take care of their appointments. And something interesting that we've learned, Tom, is that of the families that drop out of our study, they tend to have a higher score related to depression, as compared to those that stay. So, those have all really been important pieces of data that we've used with our, with our Coordinators and with Alisha and Danielle to really figure out how do we, you know, ensure that families are engaged and that they stay in the study through the, through the entire phase.

TOM OATES [00:09:22]: It's very, very important information, so, you know, those, those Navigators and those Coordinators can kind of be armed to be on the lookout or think about what those families are going through and what may, you know, almost preventing them from dropping out, seeing how you can support them beforehand, before they drop out.

[00:09:39]: So, Danielle, obviously you've got your Family Group Coordinators, but then you've got your Navigators who are working with the Kinship folks along the way - tell me a little bit for, for your offices and for the program, what's the difference between those Navigators and the Coordinators.

DANIELLE ZUNIGA [00:09:55]: Yeah, I can talk a little bit about the differences, but I also wanna, I wanna highlight, so as we were, kind of, exploring using Family Group Conferencing with the Kinship population, I also want to highlight is we saw this as a way to increase Protective Factors within our

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Kinship families, so really, it's kind of twofold in that we're looking at prevention for those informal families so that they don't come into the Child Welfare System and then we're also looking at those, you know, obviously children that are in the Child Welfare System, but how can we increase a Caregiver's capacity to keep that child long term by meeting their formal needs and their informal needs?

[00:10:43]: So, our experience is a Kinship Navigation Program has been that the Navigators are really focused on the formal resources, they're helping those families essentially go through the Child Welfare System, navigate the court system - whether that be the juvenile court or probate court systems or even family court systems. Any public benefits that the family might qualify for, navigating through the school system, many, you know, a good amount of our, our Kinship kids, you know, they really need some extra, additional support with, through DIEPs, or they've all had some struggles, obviously with abuse and neglect and we also tried to tap those Caregivers into the formal, formal resources for the mental health system, they've, you know, their kids have experienced trauma - how do we get them connected to all of the formal supports that are out there that can support the child and then therefore support the Caregiver's ability to care for them long term.

[00:12:01]: So, the Navigators are primarily focused on knowing and, and helping the family work through those different systems. So, I would say that's like the major difference between the, the Kinship Navigator and the FGC Coordinator. The, the FGC Coordinator is more focused on understanding what are the complex family dynamics at play - what is the family's history, you know, what's this Kinship Caregiver's history along with what's the child's history - so they have more time to engage with the Caregiver and the family to understand the complexity of their, of their family situation, understand what the Caregiver and the child experience in terms of grief and loss, loss of, you know, relationships.

[00:12:56]: Really spend time engaging with that family to under, get an understanding of how we can meet their, which we typically call their informal needs - but really we're talking about their natural support system, like who are the people in their lives that they could reach out to to get, you know, emotional support, peer support when they're really struggling. So, I would say the, the Coordinator is just much more focused on the natural supports and the Kinship Caregiver, or I'm sorry, the Kinship Navigator is focused on the more formal supports that they can access. The Navigator also just works with the family for a shorter period of time, so they're doing more in, you know, front-loaded case management services with that Caregiver for a period of three to six months until we've essentially connected them to all of the resources that they need in order to care for the child or kids in their care.

TOM OATES [00:13:56]: Well, that makes clear sense, is you've got somebody navigating the actual system to operate through case management to, you know, get that family back to where their case plan would have them. Alisha, I wanna turn to you to specifically talk about the FGCs, the Coordinators here, because from what Danielle was just going through, there's gotta be a certain set of skills and capabilities that you're really asking from those Coordinators. What are you really looking for from somebody for them to be successful?

ALISHA EFTEKHARI [00:14:25]: Yes, that's definitely true, it's a special skill set, I would say, that the Coordinators need to have as they're working with such a dynamic, diverse population and going into

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these homes and these families and trying to really get to know them and understand what their needs are so that we can find those informal support people. We're looking for staff that are culturally competent, I think that's really important that they're able to be sensitive and aware to what other cultural beliefs are present and since this is a family driven model, it's important that we have staff that are able to pick up on that and invite their, the different cultures to be present and, and play a part of the process in the FGC meeting.

[00:15:18]: We're also looking for staff that are trauma informed. We're working with participants that have experienced a lot of trauma - the Caregivers themselves, as well as the children - they've experiences a lot of loss, oftentimes these children have parents that are exposed to substance abuse and incarceration and are in and out of their lives and there's a lot of loss, so we need staff to be sensitive and aware of what they're going through so that they're able to really work with them and, and blend in and understand what's going on to help them identify what some of those needs are.

[00:16:00]: We're also looking for staff that are adaptable and flexible - since this is an innovative research project, we've made a lot of changes along the way and it's important that our staff are able to adapt to what those are and also flexible in the sense that we're working with so many different types of people and families and being able to go and, and adapt and not take such a lead voice, but be able to sit back and let the family take the lead and drive the, drive the process.

[00:16:36]: We're looking for staff who are open minded and creative and are able to come up with different ways that they can engage families when it's, it can be very challenging - that's one of the hardest tasks, I think we found in the model, is being able to keep these families engaged, a lot of times they're going through different crises and there's chaos - so, how can we utilize what tools we have and how can they utilize themselves to then try to hang on to these Caregivers and keep them engaged in the process to get to that FGC to help them meet some of those needs that they have.

TOM OATES [00:17:18]: You know, it's interesting, you know, you talk about - you know, in the business world they call them soft skills - but the cultural competency, the flexibility, the ability to get to know those families one on one and of course, every family is gonna be different and the dynamics are gonna be different. Cristina, on the flipside, I'm interested if the data told you anything about those skills that, that certain FGCs may have and what may have been more successful to receive positive results and what may have been not?

CHRISTINA MAGANA [00:17:47]: So, I think I want to step back a little bit and sort of talk about our larger frame, Tom, in terms of how we're thinking about understanding what the Coordinators bring in terms of the soft skills and training, but also as an implementation team, what we need around successful support.

[00:18:06]: So, what we've done early on in this particular study group is to really bring a strong learning orientation to all aspects of the work, bring a value of promoting evidence-based practices and ensuring ongoing training and support for all members of the implementation team, which then really leads to -

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not only in terms of the Coordinators having flexibility - but actually as an implementation team being flexible and adaptive.

[00:18:33]: So, what that looks like for us in terms of an advisory group - and again, supporting the Coordinators - is using ongoing evaluation and program data to really lift up those challenges. So, you know, Alisha described sort of what, what the characteristics are what they, what she's provided the Coordinators, but then coming back as a team from different perspectives - so that includes the evaluation team, that includes our Child Welfare partners, that includes our content experts, which in this case are Casey Family Programs - and then different members of the implementation team to come forward and say here's what we're seeing in terms of our challenges and implementing the work and then what do we need to do to really be able to, to overcome them?

[00:19:16]: So that, that is where we really, sort of, started to hone in. So, you have this menu of best practices, you have an orientation towards family-centered practices - what do we know about the way you're implementing the model that needs to be strengthened? So, bringing in data - so, so I'll mention that last year we held two site visits with Arizona, but we really focused on what did we need to do at the consent process to help strengthen those Coordinators' soft skills to be able to effectively introduce a study and, and help the families really be informed and come into the study and then what do we need to do through the lifespan of the study to really support engagement?

[00:19:56]: So, that really has sort of led a combination of, again, of looking at the data to see what are we seeing in trends, and then what is a solution from the evidence-based and training and support side. Something else that I'll say that really has contributed to really supporting the coordinators is the way that the Y really has, really leveraged themselves as a really multi-service organization. So, they run parallel programs that really have evidence-based practices and then how they've been able to bring those practices into the work that the Coordinators are doing.

[00:20:31]: But not just, sort of, giving them, you know a broad toolkit, but then giving them the structure to be able to strategically determine at this point, given what I'm seeing in the family dynamics, given what I'm seeing with the data that we have, baseline data - is this a place where I'm gonna be looking at a motivational enhancement kind of effort to engage the family, am I really gonna have to kind of bring the trauma-informed lens?

[00:20:52]: And so, I feel that, you know, that learning orientation and supportive model has really allowed the Coordinators to feel pretty confident in how they're moving about the cases and what, you know, the ongoing engagement of families in the study.

TOM OATES [00:21:06]: You know, you brought up a phrase that I think is pretty common across the field, but the definition of it may be, may be confusing, or may be not fully explored - and that was family-centered. And, you know, folks when I got a chance to talk with Cristina and Danielle and Alisha ahead of time before we recorded, you know, they started talking about family-centered and with not just a label, but much more of this is a holistic approach and for many folks, it's a big change. Danielle,

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you were discussing what it, what it really means to be fully family-centered. What does that mean to at least to you, and to the Y?

DANIELLE ZUNIGA [00:21:48]: Well, for our organization, family-centered really means that how we orient our services, we're always asking ourselves and reassessing - is what we're doing meeting the needs of our organization and system or is it meeting the needs of the family? So, we do that on an ongoing basis and that's, I think for us, is it still continues to be an evolution we integrate other practices and new information from the field - so I think our definition of family-centered is constantly changing and I would say a couple of other, you know, factors that, that we, we see contributing to being family-centered would be that we believe that families, they know their families and children best and that if we can identify the strengths within families, we can support them in coming up with solutions that will be the most impactful and most beneficial to each family.

[00:23:01]: So, how that looks probably different from other programs or other practices, is that it kind of shifts away from a case manager, let's say driving the services in terms of a case plan - and, I mean, obviously we, we utilize assessments and other tools to drive our services and also incorporate pieces of, you know, educating our families on areas that maybe they need some support around - but we really encourage the families to drive the process because at the end of the day, the goal is for the family system to take the lead on either the plan or whatever the next steps are and the agency is really going to fade into the background.

[00:23:54]: We also really rely on teaming, so, I think that that's been a very valuable approach that we've integrated and, and so we're trying to also just I think near to the family that, you know, we don't, we're not the experts on their families and we need them to really drive the process, but then we also as staff, utilize the strengths of each other so that each staff doesn't feel the weight of, you know, the success or failure of how services go is not just reliant on them, that they're utilizing other team members, either through their process or asking for consultation or just receiving that support. So, we're really trying to message that in a different, in a different way within our own organization.

[00:24:54]: Also, I would also want to highlight that our organization - while we are the YMCA of San Diego County, we're large - our branch, Youth and Family Services, we're kind of, we're almost like a small non-profit within a large non-profit. We have a lot of flexibility - so that allows us to, to really tailor our services to the family. So, how that looks in terms of logistics - we have YMCAs all throughout the county that we can utilize where we can meet families, even host the Family Group Conference there if they choose to. We're able to have multiple offices throughout the county and, and our staff are able to kind of move nimbly and fluidly to, to kind of meet the community need.

TOM OATES [00:25:45]: So, you, you know, and I want to play devil's advocate here, because if I'm a, a state agency or let's say large or small, you know, I may argue that our staff is flexible, I may argue that, you know, we have that approach of we wanna put what's best for the family but then when someone kind of approaches that and says well, we do all of this, we're family-centered, how come we wouldn't be looked at as family-centered though we're system-centered - can you explain to me the difference from, you know, there's, there's that approach, but what does it look like as opposed to, you know,

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when you had mentioned someone who is or an agency that's dependent on that system, what does that look like in comparison to, you know, where you talk about being family first?

DANIELLE ZUNIGA [00:26:30]: Yeah, I think what we've learned along the way is that there are actually a lot of, there's a lot of system barriers that can make the Family Group Conferencing and probably Family Group Decision-Making process challenging to implement and achieve. So, I mean, again going back to the logistics - meeting the family at times that are the most convenient for them, which is typically evenings and weekends.

[00:26:58]: So we've seen a struggle with other, with like our public Child Welfare agency, if there's just more policies in place that don't allow for staff to be as flexible with their work schedules, to travel – I mean, also, to travel and to be creative and try new things that were, like for example, we're looking at how, you know, considering that we're a border town, how can we serve the population that where they have family here on the U.S. side and on the Mexico side, we're looking at partnerships with their local YMCA to see if we can start traveling internationally and hosting those Family Group Conferences on the Mexico side.

[00:27:54]: So, it requires us to not really stay within the limits of the traditional, I guess our traditional practices, we're constantly looking at ways to be innovative, what does this family need that's different - cultural components, food components - that we prioritize, I mean I would say for most organizations, they're not, they're really not focusing on the family values and what they're, and how they can fit their organizational practice, or even their program practice to mirror this family's culture.

[00:28:39]: So, I would say we're constantly doing that and reassessing, it's not necessarily a place that we land that we have it all figured out, but we're open to putting resources and dollars to always enhance that piece of our program. I'd also say that we also look for key family members to really drive the process. So, again going back to who is steering the services, is it the professional or is it the family? And, so, we're always, as Alisha's talked about the Coordinators, they're looking at who's the leader in this family, who can take the reins on this process, so that more and more of the service is being led by the family and less by the professional.

[00:29:34]: We're very transparent about concerns that either would be presented by if we're dealing with a family that's involved in the Child Welfare System, we advocate that those concerns are clear - not just clear in what is the concern, but how do we overcome the concern - so, we support the family in asking questions that really drill down how do we, how do we address the concern as a family. I think sometimes families will kind of, they'll be less, they'll be less firm about asking the hard questions or maybe don't even know the right questions to ask when they're given somewhat ambiguous parameters around - you know, if they're planning for safety, well, what does safety mean and when we, you know, when we've achieved safety.

[00:30:33]: So, and, and some of that for our project and our county has been supported in that our Child Welfare agency has implemented other practices, like safety organized practice, which does also

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value natural supports, being very specific about non-negotiables within the Child Welfare agency and having plans that are tangible and clear for families so that they can successfully either reunify or support the kids, the kids in the foster care system.

CHRISTINA MAGANA [00:31:13]: I think what I would like to add to all that Danielle was saying was around when you are a family-centered organization, what does that look like on the partner's side, and especially on the evaluation side. I think what I'll say is that there was a lot of attention paid at the point of pursuing this particular funding in terms of is the Y really the best place to serve as the PI and what those conditions were, right, and so what I would say, just in terms of what it's look like on, on my side is that oftentimes our conversations that we're having around implementation, I don't recall ever the conversation being this is not good for the Y, or we have this particular policy that really forbids it.

[00:31:55]: It was really around, as Danielle said, you know, functioning as a small profit within a large non-profit is what can we do, where are opportunities to really be able to, to make this work for the families. Do we need to engage Child Welfare in this particular way, do we need to engage Casey Family, do we need to shift our budget - so, I think that that, that family-centered orientation is not just at the organizational culture, but I feel like that really got carried through in our partnership, the way that we've implemented the study.

[00:32:27]: So, what people are thinking am I child, am I family-centered versus system-centered, I would say pay attention to your implementation and conversations. If they're often about what's good for the system, then you have some work to do there.

TOM OATES [00:32:40]: It's, it's almost a big question of where are our drivers and sometimes those drivers can also be constraints and so if there are policy constraints, you know, as opposed to as, Danielle, you just mentioned, being, being incredibly flexible and then the partnerships, as Cristina touched base. So, then, Alisha, this all has to be delivered at, kind of, like, that service level. So, for your FGCs, when they may come in from, let's say, a different system where they are used to being system-centered, how are they going about empowering those families who may not be used to being, you know, maybe the drivers in, in things like a case plan - so how are your FGCs then, kind of, becoming family-centered to really share control with those families.

ALISHA EFTEKHARI [00:33:23]: That's a good point, Tom, because a lot of times, the families aren't used to that power and used to being put in the situation to guide it or lead it, so I think it's about we encourage the staff to take it slow and meet the families where they're at and sort of help them guide through motivating them, motivational interviewing, really being present with them and helping hear what their needs are and encouraging them to be the drivers.

[00:33:53]: It's also not just about, working with the family, but it's about working with the other participants - the professionals of the meeting - prepping them and making sure that they are believers in the work that we're doing and helping them understand what their role is and making sure that they

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agree to support the plan and the family and guiding the process so everyone's on the same page and it helps make a families voice in their plan guide the process.

[00:34:26]: Basically, I think it's important, it's not just about working with the family to be the drivers, but about everyone else, all the other players and making sure that they're all prepared and bought in and support the family in being the ones that come up with the plan and agreeing as long as the non-negotiables are met from Child Welfare, as long as those are addressed by the family that the rest - the social worker, the whoever else is involved - is gonna agree to abide by that plan.

TOM OATES [00:34:54]: And, so doing this, it is a big change if an agency is trying to make that shift, but clearly as not constrained by maybe certain policies, YMCA clearly had an advantage in that, you know, maybe those environmental conditions. Danielle, talk to me about maybe where that landscape was where the Y found itself in that made YMCA of San Diego County maybe more susceptible or maybe more easy to really adapt to this family-centered approach.

DANIELLE ZUNIGA [00:35:25]: Having some prior experience with not just Family Group Conferencing, from Casey Family Programs, but also a strong relationship with our local Child Welfare agency I think really supported that. And, one, because we had a mentor via Casey Family Programs, I wouldn't have wanted to go into this work not having anybody else to consult with and learn from. And so, that was a huge driver of us getting into this practice.

[00:36:03]: And then also, with Child Welfare, I think they, we have a good track record, we have a, a Kinship Navigator program that they've funded and a lot of communication and collaboration, so I think there's a lot of trust between the agencies, so when we talk about implementing new practices or programs, they're really at the table to talk through what are their concerns and how does this align with their system goals. So, I think that's like the broader context outside of just our organization of being the Y.

[00:36:45]: So, some of the other factors that I think essentially primed us to be able to integrate like a family-centered practice was a culture of integrating new innovative practices, the YMCA of San Diego County we've had multiple demonstration projects and I think having that experience, as well, really primed us for, for trying new things. I think it's probably pretty typical for a lot of social service organizations to get into the rhythm of doing, you know, executing their grants and contracts as stated. But, with demonstration projects, it really challenges you, especially the evaluation piece, to go through the process of implementation to adjusting your, your service or your intervention.

[00:37:42]: So, I really feel like that was a valuable experience for us to be open to trying a new, a new intervention, so I'd like to, you know, I think and also the flexibility that comes with a federal demonstration project. You have lots of discretion to adapt and change, which you typically don't have that flexibility just in your, you know, experience of operating grants and contracts. So, those two definitely supported that process.

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[00:38:16]: And then, again, just echoing back to the experience with Family Group Conference, through conferencing through Casey Family Programs I would really recommend for organizations to reach out to other organizations that have done the work to start some formal, like, mentoring or coaching relationships that have, so that they can learn from, from others in terms of what's worked and what hasn't. And that's really worked well for us as we've reached out to integrate other, other services such as Family Finding and also, now, we're right now integrating 357 Grief and Loss Models into some of our programs.

[00:39:07]: So, many, many organizations, I think, sometimes you are, kind of, operating in a silo and there's not always a lot of opportunity to grow and learn from other organizations and that's really been pretty vital to our growth and development.

TOM OATES [00:39:24]: And, you mentioned some of the big keys there - flexibility, adaptability but then also empowering that staff to understand and take that family-centered approach is partnerships, not only with your literal partners, but treating the families as partners, as well. Hey, Cristina and Alisha, along with Danielle, I thank you guys for, for the work that you, you've been doing through this grant and just, you know, the work that you've been able to, to put together not only to help serves those children, youth and families, but also to, kind of, take stock and learn and then share what you've learned with us here on the podcast. Guys, thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it.

ALL: [00:40:02]: Yeah it was great, Tom, thank you.

[00:40:06]: Like we mentioned earlier, we've put out a few other podcasts looking into Family Group Decision-Making, so if you go to this podcast's web page at acf.hhs.gov/cb, just search 'podcast', we'll have links to our podcasts featuring how parent advocates are being used within Family Group Decision-Making in the Bronx, New York and they are working directly with parents as they walk the journey of their case plans. Along with a podcast that features our conversation about Arizona Kinship support services, it's another example of using Family Group Conferencing similar to how Danielle and Alisha are implementing it in San Diego.

[00:40:43]: We'll point you also to the Families United web page so you can see a little bit more about that project. Also, we'll have a synthesis of Lessons From the Field: Successful Strategies for Implementing Family Group Decision-Making, which includes a look across the 2011 Family Group Decision-Making grantees, which actually Families United was part of then, as well. So, you can see the project summary from back then and you can see the findings that they had from the Families United project - including a handbook they created for grandparents and other relative raising children.

[00:41:16]: We'll also point you to the Family Group Decision-Making web section on the Information Gateway website. That includes guidelines for Family Group Decision-Making from the American Humane Association and the National Center on Family Group Decision-Making. There's also a series of great examples of guides and reports and solutions from a few other states, including Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia and Virginia.

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[00:41:39]: I'll make sure to also put a link to the National Center on Family Group Decision-Making's website and they are part of the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect. Alright, my thanks to Danielle Zuniga, Alisha Eftekhari from the YMCA of San Diego County and Cristina Magana from Harder and company for sharing with us all they've done, learned and continue to learn.

[00:42:02]: So, stay with us for more Child Welfare Information Gateway podcasts, where we are looking to share what's new and what's working well across Child Welfare with you so maybe you can take a few of the lessons learned and apply them within your work. So, thanks for listening, I'm Tom Oates, have a great day.

FEMALE NARRATOR [00:42:22]: Thanks for joining us for this edition of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. Child Welfare Information Gateway is available at childwelfare.gov and is a service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. The views and opinions expressed on this podcast do not necessarily reflect on those of Information Gateway, or the Children's Bureau.