

# PRACTICE GUIDE

## Family group meeting legislative requirements

The *Child Protection Act 1999* Chapter 2, Part 3A, of deals with the legislative requirements for a Family Group Meeting (FGM), case planning processes and the development of case plans. This guide summarises the legislative requirements for an FGM. For more information about legislative requirements for case plans and case planning, refer to Chapter 2, Part 3A.

### Purpose of a family group meeting

Provide family-based responses to children's protection and care needs and ensure an inclusive process for planning and making decisions about the child's well-being, protection and care needs. [Section 51G]

### Function of a family group meeting

To discuss the matters relating to a child's protection and care needs or wellbeing. For case planning, this includes:

- considering the child's protection and care needs
- agreeing on a plan to meet those needs and promote the child's wellbeing [Section 51J]
- the case plan can be developed over more than one meeting [Section 51P].

### Principles of case planning

The *Child Protection Act 1999* [Section 51D] states case planning must be done in a way that:

- enables timely decision making
- is consistent with the principles of the Act, including the child placement principle
- encourages and facilitates participation of the child, their parents, other family members of the child's family group
- encourages and facilitates the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and persons for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- facilitates input from other appropriate entities
- enables the people involved to understand
- gives participants the information they reasonably need to participate effectively
- shares information in a timely way to participants to facilitate their participation.

### When to hold a family group meeting

When an FGM <u>must</u> be held	When an FGM <u>may</u> be held
To develop an initial case plan for a child Section 51H(1)	To review and prepare a revised case plan Section 51H (3)
<b>Or</b>	<b>Or</b>
The court orders an FGM under Section 68(1) (d)	To otherwise deal with another matter relating to the child's wellbeing, protection and care needs.

### Who can convene a family group meeting?

The authority to convene a family group meeting is delegated to the following roles:

- Child Safety Officers and Senior Child Safety Officers
- Family Group Meeting Convenors and Principal Team Leaders
- Senior Team Leaders, Senior Practitioners, and Managers.

Principal Team Leaders and Managers are able to appoint a private convenor to convene an FGM [Section 51I].

## Who must be involved?

The following people must be given a reasonable opportunity to attend the FGM [Section 51L]:

	<b>Must Allow</b> <small>regardless of parent's agreement</small>	<b>Must Allow</b> <small>Only if parents agree</small>	<b>Can Exclude</b>
The child	✓		
Support person for the child		✓	✓~
The child's parents	✓		✓~
Support person for the parent		✓	✓~
Other members of the child's family	✓		✓~
Others who the child has a significant relationship with	✓		✓~
Legal representative of the child (direct or separate representative)	✓		
Independent person		✓	✓*
Public guardian (CV or Child Advocate)	✓		
Anyone who can make a useful contribution to the plan's development	✓		
The chief executive	✓		
Department of Child Protection Litigation (at the request of Child Safety)	✓		

\* only if the convenor thinks it is likely to adversely impact the child or another person's safety or wellbeing.

~ only if the convenor thinks their attendance would be contrary to the purpose of the meeting or not in the child's best interests

## Preparing for the FGM

**Before the meeting**, the convenor **must** inform the invitees of the following [Section 51M]:

- that Child Safety considers the child in need of protection and what the assessed risks and needs are
- the details of the proposed meeting including:
  - day, time, location,
  - purpose and functions of the meeting,
  - particular issues to be addressed at the meeting, and
  - opportunities to identify issues or deal with particular issues.

**Before the meeting** [Section 51N], the convenor **must take reasonable steps** to ascertain the views of:

- the child
- relevant prescribed entities or service providers
- anyone listed above who cannot attend

and

- anyone who the convenor has not included but thinks their views should be obtained.

The convenor must make their views known at the meeting.

**After the meeting**, the convenor must record the plan in the approved form. A private convenor must give the plan to the chief executive [Section 51O].

## Version history

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