

Team Decision Making:
A Better Way to Assess Child Safety
By The Annie E. Casey Foundation

<https://www.aecf.org/blog/team-decision-making-a-better-way-to-assess-child-safety>

Team Decision Making (TDM) is a departure from traditional child welfare practice. Instead of a single caseworker determining what to do in a crisis that requires consideration of out-of-home care because of child abuse or neglect, TDM brings together parents, family, community members and others to assess the situation and determine how best to keep the child safe.

TDM enables those closest to a child to participate in problem solving. Is a child or teen safe at home, or should they leave for a time until safety can be assured? If they must leave, can they live with relatives or will a foster home be needed? Engaging a child's entire network helps those involved identify the best solution and builds trust between those closest to the child and the child welfare agency. Many child welfare agencies endeavor to engage families in their work of keeping children and families safe. TDM takes that a step further, by involving in decision making families and communities, as well as the child or teen, depending on their age and abilities.

"My belief in Team Decision Making is growing with every meeting. Whether I'm facilitating or observing, the benefits I see are endless," says Claire Vonallmen, a TDM facilitator in Springfield, Missouri. "TDM's collaborative method is giving everyone at the table an opportunity to express their worries for harm or danger, recognize the family's strengths and successes, and create a plan with everyone's input to mitigate safety." Child welfare agencies that use TDM involve a variety of stakeholders — such as grass-roots community partners, agency staff, service providers, coaches, teachers — who can contribute insight, guidance and support to help parents and the agency make critical decisions about a child's future.

Research has indicated that the benefits of high-quality TDM include:

- Increased likelihood that a child who enters care will live with relatives or foster parents from the start, not in a developmentally inappropriate shelter or group setting.
- Increased likelihood that a child will reunify with a parent or family member within a year.
- Decreased chances that a child will experience repeat maltreatment.

The Casey Foundation has supported the development of TDM for nearly 20 years. Based on promising research findings, Casey is pursuing an evidence-based practice designation for TDM to support its continued growth and expand the positive outcomes it can bring to children and families.

"TDM is a great tool. It puts the safety of children first and recognizes the important role families and communities play in a child or teen's life and well-being," says Tracey Feild, managing director of the Casey Foundation's Child Welfare Strategy Group. "It also

ensures more consistent decision making within agencies by analyzing data on how decisions affect children and families.”

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PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ½ HOUR CREDIT.

**Attach question like multiple choice, fill in the blank, and True or False—REMEMBER to add the answers below the questions.

- 1) TDM is an abbreviation for:
 - A) Team Discussion Meeting
 - B) Team Decision Making
 - C) Team Disclosure Meeting
- 2) True or False: TDM brings together parents, family, community members and others to assess the situation and determine how best to keep the child safe
- 3) TDM enables those closest to a child to participate in _____
- 4) True or False: Engaging in the child’s entire network helps identify the best solution and builds trust between those closest to the child and the child welfare agency.
- 5) Claire Vonallmen states that “TDM’s collaborative method is giving everyone at the table an opportunity to express their worries for _____ or _____ , recognize the family’s strengths and successes, and create a _____ with everyone’s input to mitigate safety”
- 6) Child welfare agencies that use TDM involve a variety of stakeholders. Name three stakeholders the child welfare agency might involve in the TDM meeting.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
- 7) True or False: Research has indicated that one of the benefits of high-quality TDMs is the increased likelihood that a child will reunify with a parent or family member within a year.
- 8) What is another benefit of high-quality TDMs?
- 9) The Casey Foundation has supported the development of TDM for nearly _____ years.

10) "TDM is a great tool. It puts the safety of children first and recognizes the important role _____ and _____ play in a child or teen's life and well-being"