The transition to group decision making in child protection cases: obtaining bett...

Team Decision Making al Affiliation) A team refers to a group of people who come together so as they work as one in an interdependent and cooperative manner in order to meet a certain objective (Hardingham, A & Institute of Personnel and Development, 1995). They can be formed to work in the short or long term. Team decision making is where a team makes decisions as one through consultations with each individual in the team and thus putting consideration of each individual's input.

When discussing at-risk families, team decision making means having a meeting that will determines a child's placement in situations where the parents are considered unfit to raise the child. It normally involves a meeting that brings the child's family, professionals and any caregiver together to make sure that best decisions are made on where the child will be placed and the safety of the child. Some of the underlying values and believes of team decision making in this case are that families have the strength and can change. This suggests that even if parents may have their short comings when raising a child, there is a possibility for them to change through counseling, rehabilitation and through the help of other family members. This is so as to ensure the parents get an opportunity to regain custody of the child (Hamilton, 2007). Secondly, families need a chance to show their strengths by setting up opportunities for them to provide input on the placement of a child during the team decision making process for better decision making. Thirdly, it is believed that families are usually experts in issues that affect them as they can be able to help in determining where it is best to place a child depending on conditions that have made the child be placed. Finally, it is always seen that during decision making, a group is

usually more effective than an individual. This is because better decisions are made for the family and child as there is usually more information available. There is also the development of creative ideas due to active participation from everyone involved.

Some of the models used in team decision making include; the use of majority votes, where the decision is discussed until 51% or more members make a decision. This method has the advantage where decisions are made faster; however, there is normally lack of full interaction. There is also the use of consensus that ensures a collective decision is arrived through an effective and a fair communication process, and all team members feel listened to and valued. Finally, there is the use of a minority group in the team to make the final decisions which usually constitute less than 50% of the team. This is normally appropriate when there is a limit in time, and the decision is made by the executive committee. Team decision making has a number of advantages that can be evidently be seen. This includes the fact that better decisions are made for the child and family since there is usually more information that leads to a more creative and innovative solution. Team decision making also helps to increase the acceptability of the decisions made since decisions are made with the support of every individual involved. Finally, this leads better relationships between all parties involved which also helps in increasing acceptability of the decision made. However, there are factors that act as barriers to team decision making the main one being the fact that there may be the lack of discipline among some members especially when it comes to attendance and punctuality (Russo, J. E & Schoemaker, P. J. H, 1990). The article mentions the lack of attendance by

some family members to the meetings which can affect the quality of decision making (Edwards, L & Sagatun, I. D, 2007). Barriers can also be seen in cases where there are no discussions in the meeting since there can be no effective decision making where there is no active participation. While looking at team decision making in ensuring the safety and placement of a child, it is necessary to appreciate its impact in schools where they are also involved in the decision making as a caregiver.

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