



Nebraska Family Group Conference

Nebraska Family Group Conference (FGC)

Case Statistics

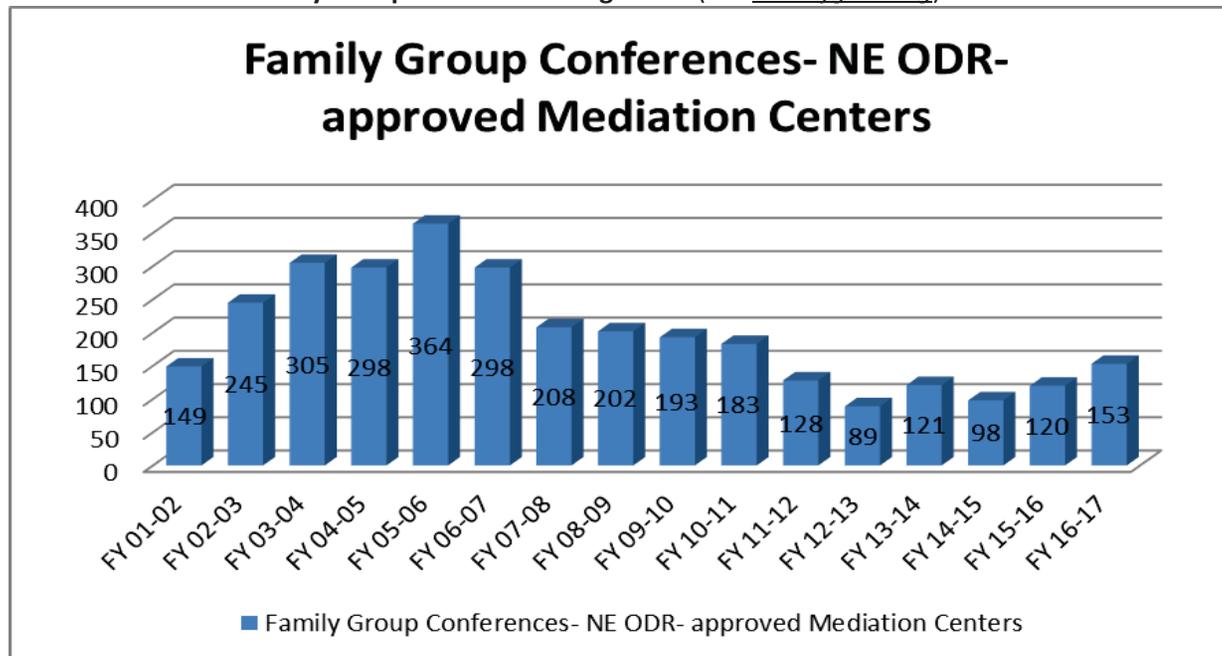
July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2017

Nebraska State Court Administrator ODR-approved Mediation Centers

Nebraska's Family Group Conferencing for children was initiated by the **Administrative Office of the Court's Court Improvement Project** with the Nebraska Center for Children, Families, and the Law in the late 1990s. Nebraska's ODR-approved mediation centers, in partnership with Nebraska Health and Human Services, have been providing Family Group Conferencing (FGC) for children and their families since 2001 as a statewide service. This **family and child-centered approach for decision making around a child's safety, permanency, and well-being** for children involved in child abuse and neglect cases, adoption, juvenile justice, and transitioning into adulthood.

A **qualified impartial FGC Coordinator**, proficient in conflict resolution strategies and family conferencing decision-making, devotes up to 30 hours in preparation in working with children, their parents, other kinship members, and child welfare professionals, such as attorneys, guardians ad litem, counselors, and others to prepare for half to full day gathering **to create a family plan**. The 3-7 hour gathering includes addressing critical safety issues, strengths and concerns for the child and family, and **providing private family time for decision-making**, prior to the last phase of the conference which reality-tests the family plan in regard to the child safety issues.

Nebraska's FGC model is adapted from New Zealand's Maori family child inclusion model, and as taught to Nebraska FGC Coordinators by the **American Humane Association's Family Group Decision Making team**. (see www.fgdm.org).



Stories and Testimonials from Family Group Conferences Experiences...

Case: “Drug Bust in Home”— two very young children were put in foster care while Mom got treatment; Dad was put in jail for drugs before FGC follow-up session

- ❖ FGC Session resulted in a Family Plan to reunify the children with mom after she successfully completed drug treatment and included visitation with Dad’s side of the family
- ❖ FGC Follow-up: Mom and children doing well; Mom has remarried, children still in contact with paternal side of family
- ❖ Case dismissed several years ago
- ❖ Plan still being followed over three years later

“I really enjoyed the FGC process...[it] allows the family to take ownership of their lives and have buy in on what their future looks like...[the FGC] helped my court case early into the case and helped us all get on the right path - a path that was family oriented, and family led.”

- Nebraska City HHS Case Manager

Case: “Orphaned Children in Foster Care”-- the family’s father had died several years prior to the FGC, then the mother committed suicide. The four orphan children were placed in foster care. FGC Coordinators identified children’s relatives from five different states who were talked with and agreed to travel to Nebraska to attend the FGC.

- ❖ Family members in the FGC session mutually agreed upon a plan in which an aunt from southern United States took guardianship of the children, and the plan was implemented;
- ❖ One year later, the entire family came together for a family reunion and discovered that the children were very unhappy with placement
- ❖ The Mediation Center convened another FGC that following year; all the extended family members agreed on change of custody to different relative in another state;
- ❖ Children left Nebraska to go with those relatives;
- ❖ This placement is ongoing and is successful over a year later.

Case: “Big Family, Small Town” – the Central Mediation Center received a referral from NDHHS regarding a family that had multiple intakes over the past year requiring several in-home visits by HHS caseworkers due to the volatile relationships between the mother, the mother’s boyfriend (who was not a bio-dad to any of the children) and the fathers of the three children, including their families. Two of the three fathers still lived in the town, which had a population of 700.

- ❖ In preparation for the FGC, the FGC Coordinator personally contacted and met with several family members individually and professionals involved with the children’s lives. They all reported that there would be no way for this particular family to meet together in a family conference without the presence of law enforcement;
- ❖ The FGC allowed for the family to not only work together and come up with a plan involving all the family members, but the entire family was able to communicate and emphasize where each other was in their current life paths and how putting aside the adult feelings for the sake of the children was something that they were actually capable of doing;
- ❖ By the end of the conference, in which everybody worked very hard for 7 hours, the family was actually joking and laughing with each other;
- ❖ The family members, with the assistance of the case manager and other professionals were able to come up with permanency plans for each one of the children.

Summary of FGC Case Statistics – NE Office of Dispute Resolution (Rev. 8-2017)



For more information, please contact:
Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution, (ODR)
State Court Administrator’s Office, P. O. Box 98910,
Lincoln, NE 68509-8910
402-471-2766; deboradenny@nebraska.gov,
supremecourt.nebraska.gov/programs-services/mediation