

2011 Family Connection Discretionary Grants:
Using Family Group Decision-Making to
Build Protective Factors for Children and Families

Project Abstract/Summary

Grantee Name: The Village Family Service Center
Grantee City and State: Fargo, ND
Grant Project Title: *Family Engagement for Native American Youth*

Native American children are overrepresented in the foster care population in North Dakota. On September 30, 2010, data collected for a one-day snapshot of the foster care system showed that 27.3% of the children in state foster care were Native American, yet Native American children make up 9% of North Dakota's population of children (0 to age 18).

The intent of this project is to reduce the number of Native American children placed in state foster care throughout North Dakota. The Village Family Service Center, partnering with the North Dakota Department of Human Services, will implement two family engagement processes through the Family Engagement for Native American Youth project. Family Team Decision Making (FTDM) is a front-end intervention process delivered as soon as possible, but always within 72 hours of a child being placed in foster care, and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is a reunification process for children already in care.

The target population is Native American children, 0-18 years of age, currently in out-of-home placement and those at imminent risk of placement outside the home. Referral criteria will be child placement by social services (FTDM held as soon as possible, but within 72 hours of removal) or a petition to the court for child removal by social services (FTDM offered to families). Children currently in care will be offered FGDM as a process for early, successful reunification.

The four project sites for the Family Engagement for Native American Youth project include **Fargo**, serving Cass County, **Bismarck**, serving Burleigh and Morton counties, **Devils Lake**, serving Ramsey and Rolette counties, and **Minot**, serving Ward and Mountrail counties. These seven, participating counties were selected based on CFSR ratings and foster care numbers of Native American children. These counties represent the largest number of children in foster care and most border Native American Indian Reservations.

The Family Engagement for Native American Youth project will serve 100 Native American children and their families annually across the state of North Dakota, which translates to 300 children over the three years of federal funding.

This demonstration project will allow The Village to conduct a rigorous evaluation of family conferencing with the following goals in mind: 1) Generate new knowledge about implementation and outcomes of FTDM/FGDM with Native American populations; 2) Determine the extent to which the proposed intervention is successful at addressing the disproportionality and reducing the number of Native American children in foster care and/or increasing kinship placements in North Dakota; 3) Determine the extent to which children served by FTDM/FGDM processes experience reoccurrence of neglect or abuse; and 4) Inform future family-centered child welfare practices.

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