

**Evaluation Plan
For
Family Group Decision Making Pilot Project
With
Idaho Child Welfare Cases**

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IDAHO CHILD WELFARE RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER



Overview

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) is instituting Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) as an approach to serving families in their child welfare system. FGDM will be implemented by providers who contract with IDHW and evaluating FGDM implementation and outcomes will become integrated into a work order between IDHW and the Idaho Child Welfare Research and Training Center (ICWTRC), which is part of the Eastern Washington University (EWU) School of Social Work. This document describes the evaluation goals and objectives, data sources, and evaluation questions, followed by a budget narrative and detail. On February 28th, 2006 the EWU Institutional Review Board for Research with Human Subjects approved the procedures described in this evaluation proposal.

Evaluation Logic Model

This program evaluation will be guided by an evaluation logic model. Components of this logic model include assumptions, goals, objectives, activities, and short- and long-term outcomes associated with this evaluation. This section of this proposal describes each component. Figure 1 offers a visual guide to the evaluation logic model.

Assumptions

The assumptions that motivate implementing FGDM are congruous with assumptions driving this evaluation. These assumptions include; (a) Families who are referred to IDHW are experiences challenges to their family functioning; (b) A family centered approach would improve their family functioning; (c) FGDM is a family centered approach to improving family functioning; and (d) Improving family functioning will result in decreased contact between families and the child welfare system.

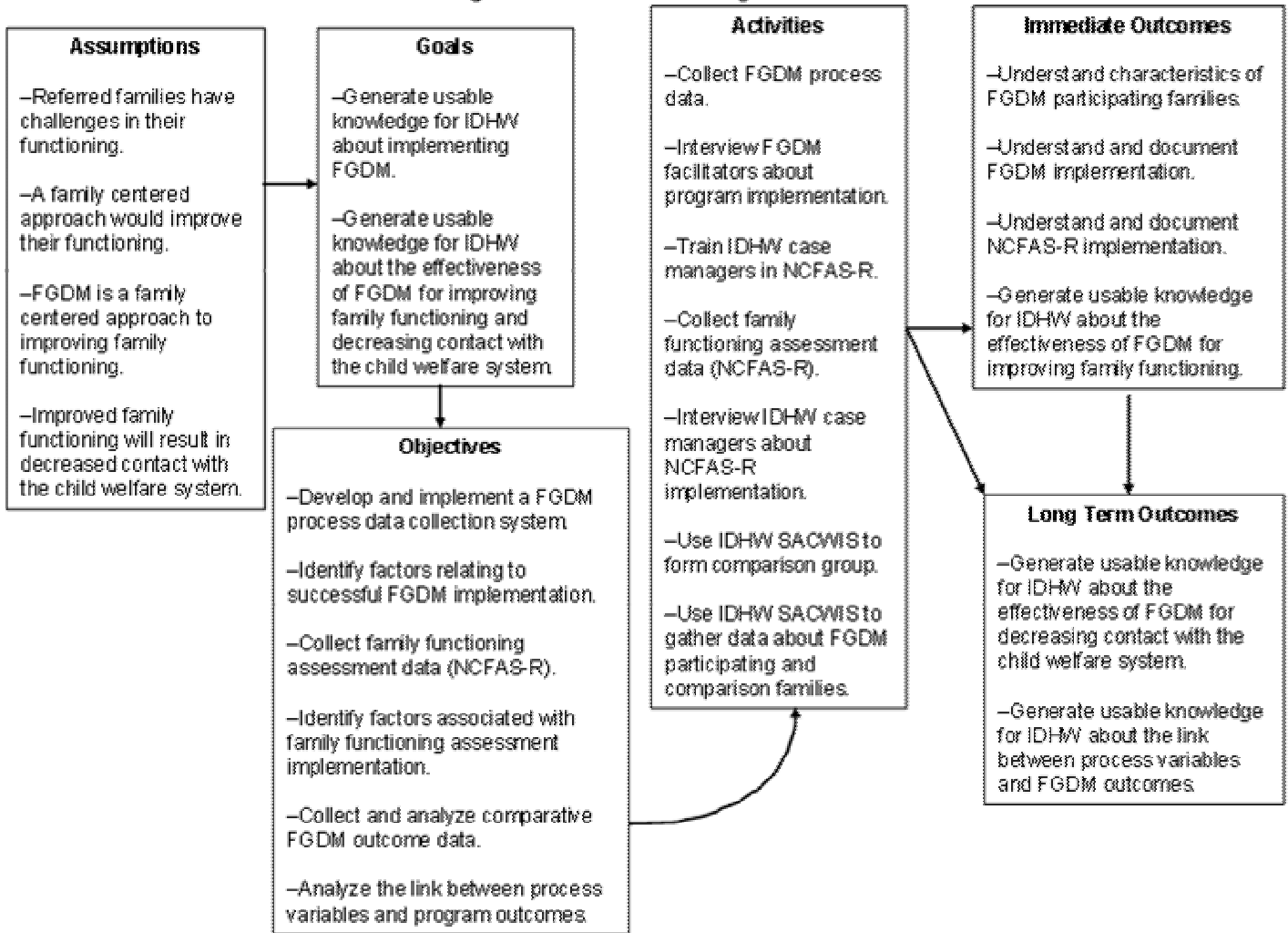
Goals

The goal of this training and pilot evaluation are twofold. The first goal is to generate usable knowledge to inform the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) about how FGDM is being implemented. The second goal is to generate usable knowledge to inform IDHW about the effectiveness of FGDM for improving family functioning and decreasing contact with the child welfare system.

Objectives

The objectives of this evaluation include; (a) Developing and implementing a FGDM process data collection system; (b) Identifying factors relating to successful FGDM implementation; (c) Collecting family functioning assessment data; (d) Identifying factors associated with implementing family functioning assessment; (e) Collecting and analyzing comparative FGDM outcome data; and (f) Analyzing the link between implementation process variables and program outcomes. A description of how each objective will be met follows.

Figure 1. FGDM Evaluation Logic Model



Develop and Implement a Process Data Collection System

Dr. Byrnes will develop a FGDM implementation database using a Microsoft Access™ platform. The purpose of the database is to collect process evaluation data for this project in a consistent, clear, and easy manner. Dr. Byrnes will train FGDM implementation staff on using the database, which will serve operational as well as evaluation purposes. The FGDM database will be housed on a secure server either at Eastern Washington University (EWU) or the IDHW. Process data are essential to understanding how a project achieves its outcomes, and an electronic data collection system is the easiest way to accomplish this.

Identify Factors for Successful FGDM Implementation

Data from the FGDM implementation database and the IDHW Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) will provide information about successful FGDM implementation. In addition to these quantitative data Dr. Byrnes will conduct key informant interviews with all of the FGDM facilitators. These interviews will focus on the rationale and process that facilitators use in implementing FGDM. The questions for these key informant interviews are included in Appendix A.

Collect Family Functioning Assessment Data

One of the anticipated immediate impacts of FGDM is improved family functioning. There is a high quality family functioning assessment tool available, the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for Programs Serving Reunification Cases (NCFAS-R). The NCFAS-R was developed by Dr. Raymond S. Kirk of the Jordan Institute for Families at the University of North Carolina School of Social Work. The NCFAS-R has been used extensively in evaluations of reunification programs around the United States, possesses excellent reliability and validity, and was developed specifically for child welfare reunification settings. The NCFAS-R's precursor tool, the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) has been used in numerous evaluations of programs aimed at preserving families and preventing out-of-home placements.

In addition to being a high quality measure of family functioning for this evaluation the structure of the NCFAS-R makes it a user friendly intervention and service planning tool. The NCFAS-R will be completed by IDHW case managers when families begin participating in FGDM and again when the FGDM facilitators indicate that services are completed. IDHW case managers complete the NCFAS-R over a time period of up to two weeks through using the NCFAS-R questions to guide their increasing understanding of the family. Using the NCFAS-R in this evaluation will allow for immediate assessment of family functioning outcomes related to FGDM participation.

Dr. Kirk, the NCFAS-R developer, will provide annual training for the IDHW case managers. The National Family Preservation Network (NFPN) provides training materials to support the ongoing use of the NCFAS-R including forms, definitions, training guides, and a videotape. The materials also include an automated database for entering NCFAS-R information, which returns scale scores that practitioners can use. Dr. Byrnes will use the NFPN materials to train staff who join the IDHW between Dr. Kirk's training sessions. This training will also be integral in developing a Title IV-E student unit at IDHW that, among other things, will credibly facilitate this new approach to practice.

Identify Factors for Successful NCFAS-R Implementation

Dr. Byrnes will conduct key informant interviews with all of IDHW case managers who are using the NCFAS-R. These interviews will focus on the process that IDHW case managers use in implementing the NCFAS-R and how it impacts their assessment of families. The questions for these key informant interviews are included in Appendix B.

Collect and Analyze Comparative FGDM Outcome Data

Data related to FGDM outcomes can include outcomes that are common to most rigorous child welfare program evaluations. Outcomes for this evaluation can include achievement of reunification, subsequent CPS referrals, subsequent out-of-home placements, and subsequent terminations of parental rights. Related outcomes can include the time elapsed between reunification and events such as CPS referrals, out-of-home placements, or terminations of parental rights.

Outcome data will be queried from the IDHW SACWIS for families who participated in FGDM. Because the SACWIS contains data on all child welfare cases Dr. Byrnes anticipates working with the IDHW personnel who manage the SACWIS to use database queries in assembling a comparison group. This use of SACWIS data will allow for comparative analyses between similar families who did and did not participate in FGDM as a reunification intervention.

Analyze the Link Between Process Variables and Program Outcomes

This evaluation will capture rich process data, including client characteristics, child welfare case histories, FGDM implementation information, and assessment of family functioning. Data about IDHW case managers and FGDM facilitator characteristics will also be collected and analyzed. These data will allow for analyses of the relationship between these process variables and outcomes including achievement of reunification, CPS referrals, out-of-home placements, or terminations of parental rights. Such analyses can often shed light into important program and client characteristics, and the interaction of these, and how they affect program outcomes.

Scope and Methodology of the Evaluation

This section of this proposal describes the data sources used for the evaluation and the evaluation questions. This methodology is the result of several conference calls and meetings with between Dr. Byrnes and personnel from IDHW and ICWTRC. Since this evaluation is being conducted from a formative perspective it is expected that the interim results will lead to additional evaluation questions. Dr. Byrnes will meet quarterly with evaluation stakeholders including IDHW administrative and case management staff, ICWTRC personnel, and FGDM facilitators to ensure that the formative focus of this evaluation is maintained, and that useable knowledge is consistently generated throughout the duration of this project.

Data Sources

Three primary data sources will be used for the quantitative components of this evaluation. These sources are the FGDM and NCFAS-R databases, and the Idaho SACWIS. Content based training evaluation data from the FGDM and NCFAS-R curricula will be an important source of evaluation information. Content based training evaluation will also be used to assess the impact of training activities on IDHW case managers and FGDM facilitators.

FGDM Database

The Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) database will be developed by Dr. Byrnes as described previously in the evaluation objectives. This database will include demographic information about participant families, dates of FGDM service initiation and termination, dates of FGDM service encounters, and specifics about service encounter activities and content.

NCFAS-R Database

The North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for Programs Serving Reunification Cases (NCFAS-R) database will include data about NCFAS-R scale scores from pretest and posttest assessments. This information will be completed by trained FGDM implementing staff.

Idaho SACWIS

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare statewide automated child welfare information system (SACWIS) contains data about case histories and characteristics that will be used for process evaluation. Since the SACWIS contains data about all child welfare cases it will be used to develop comparison groups as described in the evaluation objectives.

Content Based Training Evaluation

Content based training evaluation will be applied to the FGDM and NCFAS-R training programs. Content based training evaluation asks the question “What gains in knowledge and information are evident subsequent to participating in training activities?” This is accomplished by developing questionnaires that assess changes in participants’ knowledge of the training content before and after the training is delivered.

Identifying Content: The process begins by developing questionnaires that are derived from training content. Initial questionnaire items will be written based on the information provided in handouts, overheads, and electronic presentation files that are used in training activities. Questionnaires will sample the entire content of the training materials.

Training Evaluation: The training evaluation will be based on participants’ knowledge and information gains using questionnaire items. Two analysis strategies will be used on the data addressing (a) what specific training content, measured by specific questionnaire items, is being most effectively disseminated, and (b) what the overall changes in participants’ content knowledge is. Data will be reported using descriptive and inferential statistics.

To address specific training content, data will be reported as the percent of participants answering each item correctly at pretesting and posttesting. Changes in the number of participants having correct and incorrect responses between pretesting and posttesting will be analyzed for each item using appropriate nonparametric statistical tests.

To address overall changes in participants’ content knowledge, data will be reported as the most frequent number of correct responses at pretesting and the most frequent number of correct responses at posttesting. The highest number of correct responses at pretesting and the highest number of correct responses at posttesting will also be reported. Correct item responses will be summed across the full questionnaires for each participant and average pretest and posttest scores will be reported. The difference between average pretest and posttest scores will be analyzed using appropriate parametric and nonparametric methods, based on the nature of the obtained data. These analyses will address (a) whether average changes between pretest and posttest total questionnaire scores are statistically significant and (b) what magnitude of effect the training has on participants’ gains in content knowledge.

Evaluation Questions

These evaluation questions were developed through conference calls and meetings between Dr. Byrnes and personnel from IDHW and ICWTRC. Although these questions are important from an overall evaluation perspective additional questions will be added as the evaluation progresses and Dr. Byrnes meets quarterly with evaluation stakeholders.

Process Evaluation Questions

Process evaluation questions address client characteristics and program implementation. Suggested process evaluation questions for the FGDM program include:

- 1) What is the composition of families participating in FGDM services?
- 2) What are the demographic characteristics of families participating in FGDM services?
- 3) What was the reason for the out-of-home placement preceding FGDM services, in cases where out-of-home placement has occurred?
- 4) What are the child welfare case histories of families participating in FGDM services?
- 5) What is the overall functioning of families participating in FGDM services?
- 6) What conditions facilitate and impede implementing FGDM services?
- 7) What are the characteristics of facilitators and participants in FGDM and NCFAS-R training?

Outcome Evaluation Questions

Outcome evaluation questions address immediate and long term outcomes related to program participation, and systemic impacts of programs. Suggested outcome evaluation questions for the FGDM program include:

- 1) What changes in overall family functioning were observed at the end of FGDM services?
- 2) What changes in family functioning related to reunification were observed at the end of FGDM services, in reunification cases?
- 3) What proportion of families experienced a first subsequent CPS referral at six, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months following the end of FGDM services? How did these proportions differ between families who participated in FGDM services and similar families who did not participate?
- 4) What proportion of families experienced a first subsequent out-of-home placement at six, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months following the end of FGDM services? How did these proportions differ between families who participated in FGDM services and similar families who did not participate?
- 5) What proportion of families experienced a termination of parental rights at six, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months following the end of FGDM services? How did these proportions differ between families who participated in FGDM services and similar families who did not participate?
- 6) Of families who experienced a subsequent CPS referral, what was the time elapsed between the end of FGDM services and the first CPS referral? How did these elapsed times differ between families who participated in FGDM services and similar families who did not participate?
- 7) Of families who experienced a subsequent out-of-home placement, what was the time elapsed between the end of FGDM services and the first out-of-home placement? How did these elapsed times differ between families who participated in FGDM services and similar families who did not participate?
- 8) Of families who experienced a subsequent termination of parental rights, what was the time elapsed between the end of FGDM services and the first termination of parental rights? How did these elapsed times differ between families who participated in FGDM services and similar families who did not participate?

- 9) What gains in knowledge and information by IDHW staff, students and contracted facilitators are evident subsequent to participating in training activities? How are these gains in information related to characteristics of these individuals?

Additional outcome evaluation questions will examine the relationships between process variables, including client characteristics, child welfare case histories, and FGDM implementation variables including facilitator, student and navigator variables, and the outcomes indicated by the preceding questions.

Anticipated Results

This evaluation will provide formative feedback to the project through answering process evaluation questions and examining the relationship between process and outcome variables. This evaluation will also rigorously examine outcomes associated with families participating in FGDM services. Through achieving these results this evaluation will inform IDHW leaders about the effectiveness of FGDM as an approach to serving families in the child welfare system. Additionally, results from this evaluation will inform revision of the IDHW training programs and curricula for new and existing employees and supervisors.

Budget Narrative

The total project cost for a three year implementation, process, and outcome evaluation of the Idaho Family Group Decision Making for Reunification Cases program is \$153,364. Training and program evaluation costs include Eastern Washington University (EWU) personnel salary and benefits, training and ongoing support for using the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for Programs Serving Reunification Cases (NCFAS-R), travel for the evaluation Principal Investigator to Idaho, and travel for the NCFAS-R training consultant.

Personnel

The Principal Investigator (PI) for this project is Edward Byrnes, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Eastern Washington University. Dr. Byrnes will be responsible for all aspects of designing and implementing this evaluation of Family Group Decision Making for Reunification (FGDM). His duties will include (1) development of specialized instruments for this project, both independently and conjointly with Idaho Child Welfare officials, (2) training staff directly, or providing for training, in the use of any and all data collection instruments, (3) developing database programs, training staff in their use, and being available for any trouble shooting or ongoing development work related to FGDM evaluation databases, (4) securing and maintaining IRB approvals for human participants research with EWU and the Idaho State Department of Human Services, (5) executing statistical analysis of quantitative data, (6) providing quarterly interim reports and annual evaluation reports, (7) consultation with the IDHW curriculum committee, and (8) reporting evaluation results in venues decided on with Idaho Child Welfare officials.

Dr. Byrnes has been teaching quantitative research methods, statistics, and program evaluation at the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels over the past six years. Before joining the faculty of Eastern Washington University he was a research faculty member at the University of Utah College of Social Work, where he was a supervising principal investigator with both their Social Research Institute and Criminal and Juvenile Justice Consortium. Dr. Byrnes' program evaluation work has been published in peer reviewed journals and Federal (U.S. Department of Justice) monographs, and he has presented his evaluation findings at national and international conferences. Dr. Byrnes is also a Senior Research Associate with Glacier Consulting Inc. of Annapolis, Maryland. In addition to teaching research methodology Dr. Byrnes teaches practice classes in behavioral and cognitive behavioral interventions. He has also consulted with school districts as a trainer in behavioral and cognitive behavioral interventions.

Because of the scope of this project, especially in terms of ongoing data collection and management, Dr. Byrnes will hire a Research Assistant for the duration of the project. The research assistant will monitor data collection on a weekly basis with all FGDM providers, assist with basic data analysis, and assist in preparing training, reporting, and presentation materials. The Research Assistant will be directly supervised at the EWU School of Social Work by Dr. Byrnes and will be recruited from the ranks of graduate students in the social and behavioral sciences in the greater Spokane area.

Salaries

Dr. Byrnes will devote a 50% full time effort to this project throughout the three year duration. This effort is the equivalent of teaching one course every quarter at EWU, including summer quarter. Dr. Byrnes' base salary at the beginning of this project is \$53,045 and will increase 3% each year. Dr. Byrnes' total salary cost for the three project years is \$82,000.

The Research Assistant will devote a 10% full time effort to this project throughout the three year duration. The Research Assistant will start at \$9.00 hourly with a 3% pay increase each year. The Research Assistant's total salary cost for the three project years is \$4,500.

Benefits

Eastern Washington University faculty benefits are calculated at 29% of base salary. The Research Assistant will not receive health or retirement benefits, and the cost of FICA, unemployment, and other mandated benefits is calculated at 9% of compensation. Total benefits costs for the three project years are \$24,000.

NCFAS-R Training

The North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for Programs Serving Reunification Cases (NCFAS-R) was developed by Dr. Raymond S. Kirk of the Jordan Institute for Families at the University of North Carolina School of Social Work. The NCFAS-R has been used extensively in evaluations of child welfare programs around the United States, such as Intensive Family Preservation Services. After discussions with national child welfare program evaluation experts their consensus was that the NCFAS-R would be an excellent measure of family functioning changes as an immediate outcome of this FGDM program. The NCFAS-R possesses excellent reliability and validity, was developed specifically for child welfare settings, and is relatively simple to train personnel to use. Additionally, the structure of the NCFAS-R makes it a user friendly intervention and service planning tool.

Training Consultant

Dr. Kirk, the NCFAS-R developer, has agreed to provide annual training for the personnel who will be providing the FGDM services. The costs for this training are \$2,250 per training day, and \$500 per travel day. The training can be accomplished with one training day and one travel day each way from Chapel Hill, North Carolina to Boise, Idaho, and back. Total costs for Dr. Kirk's training services for the three year project are \$9,750.

Training Materials

The National Family Preservation Network provides training materials to support the ongoing use of the NCFAS-R. The materials include forms, definitions, training guides, and a videotape. The materials also include an automated database for entering NCFAS-R information, which returns scale scores that practitioners can use. The one time purchase of the training package comes with copyright permission to

make as many copies of the written materials as needed for ongoing training, support, and implementation of the NCFAS-R. The estimated cost of the National Family Preservation Network NCFAS-R materials is \$1,500.

Travel

PI Travel

To ensure the highest quality evaluation that is both rigorous and reflective of the program staff and Idaho Child Welfare officials' perspective ongoing in person interaction between Dr. Byrnes and key FGDM program personnel is essential. Dr. Byrnes will make six (6) visits to Idaho during the first project year, and four (4) trips during the second and third project years. Visits will include program site visits to set up and monitor data collection protocols and procedures, and visits to the state capitol to both work with Idaho Child Welfare officials and database managers (to develop queries for outcome measures). Total travel costs for Dr. Byrnes for the three project years is \$11,747.

Training Consultant Travel

Dr. Kirk will travel to Boise, Idaho once annually to train personnel implementing FGDM services. Total travel costs for Dr. Kirk for the three project years is \$3,471.

Budget Detail Tables

Table 1. Three year FGDM evaluation budget summary.

First Year	
Salaries	\$ 28,395
Benefits	\$ 7,860
Travel	\$ 5,925
Training Consultant	\$ 3,250
Training Materials	\$ 1,500
First Year Total	\$ 46,930
Second Year	
Salaries	\$ 29,246
Benefits	\$ 8,096
Travel	\$ 4,533
Training Consultant	\$ 3,250
Second Year Total	\$ 45,125
Third Year	
Salaries	\$ 30,124
Benefits	\$ 8,339
Travel	\$ 4,759
Training Consultant	\$ 3,250
Third Year Total	\$ 46,472
Total Project Cost	\$ 138,526

Table 2. First year FGDM evaluation budget detail.

Salaries			
Person	Annual Salary	FTE %	Adjusted Salary
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 53,045.00	50%	\$ 26,522.50
RA/GA, TBH	\$ 18,720.00	10%	\$ 1,872.00
		Salary Subtotal	\$ 28,394.50

Benefits			
Person	Adjusted Salary	Benefits Rate	Benefits Cost
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 26,522.50	29%	\$ 7,691.53
RA/GA, TBH	\$ 1,872.00	9%	\$ 168.48
		Benefits Subtotal	\$ 7,860.01

Travel to Idaho			
Traveler	Per Trip Costs	Number of Trips	Travel Costs
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 804.00	6	\$ 4,824.00
R. Kirk, Consultant	\$ 1,101.00	1	\$ 1,101.00
		Travel Subtotal	\$ 5,925.00

NCFAS-R Training Consultant			
Consultant	Daily Rate	Days	Subtotal
R. Kirk, Training Day Rate	\$ 2,250.00	1	\$ 2,250.00
R. Kirk, Travel Day Rate	\$ 500.00	2	\$ 1,000.00
		Consultant Subtotal	\$ 3,250.00

Total Annual Costs		
Line Item	Cost	Total Annual Costs
Salaries	\$ 28,394.50	\$ 46,929.51
Benefits	\$ 7,860.01	
Travel	\$ 5,925.00	
Training Consultant	\$ 3,250.00	
Training Materials	\$ 1,500.00	

Table 3. Second year FGDM evaluation budget detail.

Salaries			
Person	Annual Salary	FTE %	Adjusted Salary
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 54,636.35	50%	\$ 27,318.18
RA/GA, TBH	\$ 19,281.60	10%	\$ 1,928.16
		Salary Subtotal	\$ 29,246.34

Benefits			
Person	Adjusted Salary	Benefits Rate	Benefits Cost
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 27,318.18	29%	\$ 7,922.27
RA/GA, TBH	\$ 1,928.16	9%	\$ 173.53
		Benefits Subtotal	\$ 8,095.81

Travel to Idaho			
Traveler	Per Trip Costs	Number of Trips	Travel Costs
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 844.20	4	\$ 3,376.80
R. Kirk, Consultant	\$ 1,156.05	1	\$ 1,156.05
		Travel Subtotal	\$ 4,532.85

NCFAS-R Training Consultant			
Consultant	Daily Rate	Days	Subtotal
R. Kirk, Training Day Rate	\$ 2,250.00	1	\$ 2,250.00
R. Kirk, Travel Day Rate	\$ 500.00	2	\$ 1,000.00
		Consultant Subtotal	\$ 3,250.00

Total Annual Costs		
Line Item	Cost	Total Annual Costs
Salaries	\$ 29,246.34	\$ 45,124.99
Benefits	\$ 8,095.81	
Travel	\$ 4,532.85	
Training Consultant	\$ 3,250.00	

Table 4. Third year FGDM evaluation budget detail.

Salaries			
Person	Annual Salary	FTE %	Adjusted Salary
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 56,275.44	50%	\$ 28,137.72
RA/GA, TBH	\$ 19,859.43	10%	\$ 1,985.94
		Salary Subtotal	\$ 30,123.66

Benefits			
Person	Adjusted Salary	Benefits Rate	Benefits Cost
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 28,137.72	29%	\$ 8,159.94
RA/GA, TBH	\$ 1,985.94	9%	\$ 178.73
		Benefits Subtotal	\$ 8,338.67

Travel to Idaho			
Traveler	Per Trip Costs	Number of Trips	Travel Costs
E. Byrnes, PI	\$ 886.41	4	\$ 3,545.64
R. Kirk, Consultant	\$ 1,213.80	1	\$ 1,213.80
		Travel Subtotal	\$ 4,759.44

NCFAS-R Training Consultant			
Consultant	Daily Rate	Days	Subtotal
R. Kirk, Training Day	\$ 2,250.00	1	\$ 2,250.00
R. Kirk, Travel Day R:	\$ 500.00	2	\$ 1,000.00
		Consultant Subtotal	\$ 3,250.00

Total Annual Costs		
Line Item	Cost	Total Annual Costs
Salaries	\$ 30,123.66	\$ 46,471.78
Benefits	\$ 8,338.67	
Travel	\$ 4,759.44	
Training Consultant	\$ 3,250.00	

Appendix A: Interview Questions for FGDM Facilitators

1. What is the underlying foundation for FGDM?
2. How does this foundation translate into the premises or tenets of FDGM?
3. How do these premises or tenets relate to your activities with families when applying FGDM?
4. How do you decide which activities to engage in with families?
5. How do you decide when to engage in these activities?
6. How do you know if FGDM is working well? Working poorly?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for IDHW Staff Using NCFAS-R

1. What information do you gather about families?
2. How has the information you gathered changed over time?
3. What has influenced the changes in the information you gather?
4. How do you gather information about families?
5. How has the way you gather information changed over time?
6. What has influenced the way you gather information?
7. How do you use the information you gather about families?
8. How has the way you use information changed over time?
9. What has influenced the way you use information?