Effective Facilitation for Fatality Review

Systematic review of fetal, infant, and child deaths helps communities identify opportunities that support preventive community and primary care services for pregnant women, mothers, infants, and children. Effective facilitation of case review meetings is vital. Successful facilitation can make a significant difference in teams' ability to recruit team members, conduct quality reviews, retain membership, and catalyze prevention activities.

This facilitation guide highlights practices fatality review teams have found helpful for preparing, conducting, and following up on review meetings. These practices have proven successful for both child death review (CDR) and fetal and infant mortality review (FIMR) teams. The National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention (National Center) provides this guidance to build capacity for effective fatality review facilitation.

Before the Meeting

Effective facilitation can help teams overcome barriers around team membership, such as lack of participation, attrition, and unaddressed conflict. Careful planning allows the facilitator to anticipate barriers to effective review and be prepared. The following ideas can help facilitators prepare:

- **Orient your meeting around fatality prevention, not fatality review:** Consider including a meeting objective on the agenda, focusing on prevention of future deaths.
- **Focus on overarching considerations while planning:** Ask yourself reflective questions, and let the answers inform each part of your preparation. Examples include:
    - *Why is the team conducting this fatality review?*
    - *What do the team members need in order to meet these goals?*
- **Establish ground rules for group communication:** Focus on respectful communication and fatality and injury prevention. Engage team members in defining ground rules or team charters. A team charter is a document developed in a group session early in the team-building process that clarifies team direction while establishing boundaries. An example can be found on the National Center website.
- **Consider co-facilitators or rotating presenters:** Engage members in a meaningful way.
- **Create tent cards identifying participants and agencies:** Make it as easy as possible for members to communicate with each other.
- **Create thoughtful, realistic agendas:** In addition to case reviews, include important business such as updates on prevention recommendations. Consider adding breaks for self-care and debrief. Send the agenda ahead of time. Assign timeframes to agenda items to keep the meeting on track.
- **Give members enough time to compile or abstract relevant records for case review:** Team members or abstractors may have to request records from partners, colleagues, or affiliated offices.
- **Provide prevention and equity questions for consistent use at meetings:** This helps teams consider how specific populations will be impacted by their recommendations and if there may be any unintended consequences.

- **Provide relevant reference resources:** Reference information like growth charts, due date calculators, BMI charts, etc., can be valuable in review meetings.
- **Anticipate what challenges may arise:** Consider the political and social context of the community and membership.
- **Consider how the team will generate recommendations:** Involve team members in designing a strategy.

During the Meeting

The case review meeting—its findings and prevention recommendations—are at the core of the process. Facilitating with a focus on team members' needs will build rapport within the team and minimize conflict. Use the following methods to help support the team's case review goals:

- **Present cases in a structured way:** Find what works for the team and be consistent.
- **Give every voice a chance to be heard:** Respectfully solicit input from all members by seeking reports or input from every participant and by asking open-ended questions. Avoid the likelihood of a few voices monopolizing the review by thanking members for their ideas and asking if someone else has anything to add or sees the situation differently.
- **Confirm anyone collecting data has had all their questions answered:** Check in with anyone collecting or entering case review data and give them the opportunity to clarify or ask questions.
- **Share any new reports or publications:** Keep team members apprised of the progress of their data and recommendations so they can see progress that affirms the value of their time and effort.
- **Leave time for prevention discussion:** The focus of fatality review is prevention. While the team may not generate formal recommendations at each meeting, record team thoughts on relevant prevention activities at each case review.
- **Celebrate successes:** Hold a regular meeting where the team's progress is highlighted. This could include a summary of the data the team has collected and an update on the teams' recommendations.
- **Decide if a case should be revisited in the future:** The team should set criteria for instances when a case may be brought back for case review at a future meeting. Reasons to consider revisiting a case include the absence of an important partner or record, or if findings or recommendations were incomplete.

After the meeting

Reflection and follow up after the case review meeting is critical. In addition to impacting data quality, it also equips the facilitator to continually evaluate and improve the quality of the fatality review meeting process. It can be a helpful opportunity for facilitators to check in with themselves and their teams. Steps to consider after the review meeting include:

- **Complete data entry and reporting:** Ensure that data are as complete as possible. Follow up with team members if clarification is needed. Refer to the National Fatality Review-Case Reporting System (NFR-CRS) Data Dictionary and FIMR Glossary of Terms for needed definitions. Both can be found at the National Center website.
- **Follow up with members:** Consider checking in with team members to offer support and problem solve concerns.
- **Strategize for the best use of upcoming meeting time if there are not cases to review:** Sometimes teams do not have cases ready for review at a scheduled review meeting. This can be because of a small

population size, or because of challenges with case abstraction. Either way, consider ways to use the planned meeting time. This may be a good time to review data, generate recommendations, or educate team members on important prevention topics. Engage the team in these discussions.

- **Ask reflective questions:**
    - *What about the meeting went well?*
    - *Were team members' needs effectively addressed?*
    - *Was health equity promoted in the findings and recommendations?*
    - *What can be improved for next time?*
- **Reach out to members for feedback on the meeting planning, process, and follow-up:** Consider adding questions assessing team satisfaction with the meeting process to an annual evaluation.

Facilitation Resources

Fatality review professionals have found the following resources helpful when working with their teams.

- **Nominal Group Technique:** Nominal group technique uses a variation of small group discussion to reach consensus. A moderator presents a relevant question and asks members to write down their response. Small groups then share and record all answers. All ideas are discussed for clarity, and then participants vote to identify priority ideas. This method is especially helpful for identifying priorities. Learn more.

- **Prevention Matrix:** This tool is designed to help fatality review teams determine their preferred prevention activity by evaluating ideas based on their effectiveness, ease of implementation, cost, sustainability, community acceptance, political realities, and potential unintended consequences. It guides members through reflective questions for each of these measures. The matrix can be handed out to teams to complete in the meeting, as homework, or it can be modified into a group activity. Learn more.

- **Technology of Participation:** Technology of Participation (ToP) is a series of structured facilitation methods used to recognize and honor contributions of all team members, deal with more data in less time, and build consensus through a qualitative process. The ToP Consensus Workshop is an especially effective tool for generating recommendations among a group with competing priorities. Learn more.

- **Delphi Model:** The Delphi Model allows facilitators to solicit input and consensus from a group of diverse stakeholders. This process allows participants to be in different locations. Team members are provided with a questionnaire and asked to comment on each topic based on their expertise. Responses are provided to the facilitator who summarizes and groups the responses, and a copy is provided to members. Members can then provide comment on the summarized responses. This can be done anonymously and outside the meeting context, lending itself to more candor. Learn more.

- **Liberating Structures:** Liberating Structures (LS) offers a library of more than 30 group processes geared toward diverse facilitation needs, including: sharing and spreading ideas; generating and improving solutions; analyzing, diagnosing and debriefing; and strategizing and planning. LS provides tools for facilitating effective work in groups that goes beyond presentations, reports, and conventional methods. The library allows activities to be identified based on facilitation needs and time constraints. Most of these tools are freely available on the LS website and through a free, downloadable ***Liberating Structures*** app for Apple and Android devices Learn more.

- **Multi-voting:** Multi-voting, also known as *N/3 Voting,* is a voting/brainstorming technique that helps groups prioritize ideas. Team members are allowed a pre-determined number of votes, and they can distribute those votes however the facilitator sees fit: spreading them out among ideas or allowing multiple votes on one idea. Votes are tallied, and the group preference is determined. This method can be used in in-person meetings or modified to be used remotely. Learn more.

Conclusion

Effective facilitation requires thoughtful preparation, respectful leadership, and meaningful reflection. As a facilitator, be open to trying something new, and listen to the constructive feedback of team members. Observe effective meetings in other contexts and consider using similar techniques. Review team meetings will be improved when facilitators approach meeting planning, implementation, and follow up in a thoughtful, structured way.

More fatality review meeting tools can be found at ncfrp.org under *Tools and Resources.*

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