

## **Annual report on FGC by Francesca Maci, Catholic University of Milan**

In this document, I would describe my work about FGC development in Italy. I studied the model in UK as topic of my PhD thesis and after that, I have committed myself in disseminating FGC in child protection services as a new way to work with families and children.

At this moment, FGC model and its implementation is the main topic of my research work in University as an example of family decision making approach.

### **The context**

Family group conference is a quite new approach in Italy. In the last years professionals have shown interest in knowing and using FGC. The use of the model is correlated to pilot projects set up by local authority in partnership with University and mainly funded by private foundations.

The interest on FGC of Italian professionals engaged in families and children services is related to the fact that they realized that clinical interventions conducted by experts that do not involve parents, children and their extended family in building a good and safe protection plan, do not produce really useful changes in family life conditions.

Another reason for which professionals take into consideration FGC model is the big economic crisis. In a year there has been a cut in social service funds of around 70%. When standards provisions are not available it is necessary to find other creative solutions in order to helping people.

Personally, I do not agree with this position, because I think that FGC is first of all a cultural approach, a way of looking at the family and to conceptualize social work with families and children, but in any case, in this context, the crisis seems to be an opportunity to develop a new democratic and participatory way to work in the field of child protection.

### **The FGC pilot projects**

Pilot projects are carried out within the framework of action research. The general structure of pilot projects consists of three different parts:

- 1) Training phase carried out with the aim of training professionals and coordinators about principles, values and main features of the model.
- 2) In a second phase maintaining the orthodoxy of the model we try to adapt it to different working contexts.

- 3) Implementation phase, in which FGC are realized.
- 4) Evaluation phase in which we analyze pilot project findings and outcomes.

### **Italian pilot project**

✓ At this time I am involved in different pilot projects:

- *Progetto “Di concerto. Energie in movimento”*. The project started in November 2013 and will end in December 2014. It has been promoted by Comuni Insieme social service agency situated in Northern Italy in collaboration with University. The aim of the project is to use FGC in foster care as a good way to planning the protection and care project, in order to ensure the well-being of the child. In the specific case of foster care interventions, FGC could be a good way to reconcile the conflict between the biological family, foster family and social service. The project includes six FGC and contemplates a qualitative evaluation design.

- *Progetto “Il diritto del minore a crescere nella propria famiglia”* (“The right of children to grow up in his family”). The project started in September 2012 and will end in December 2013. It has been promoted by the Province of Varese, located in Northern Italy in collaboration with district local authorities and University. The goal is to use FGC in child protection service as a way to engage parents and children in decision-making process. The project provides 12 FGC and contemplates a qualitative evaluation design .

- *Progetto “Riunioni di famiglia”*. The project started in September 2013 and will end in 2015. It has been promoted by Comuni Insieme social service agency, in collaboration with Catholic University and others subjects. The aim of the project is to use FGC as a prevention intervention to cope with drop out students. The project involves 15 schools and 400 students. The project is based on a counterfactual design experiment. We will realize 180 FGCs.

✓ *Closed projects*

- *“Progetto Volano”* started in September 2010 and ended in December 2011. It was realized by Comuni insieme social service agency in collaboration with others local authorities. The aim of the project was to use FGC in youth justice as a good way to planning restorative project.

The project provided three FGCs but only two FGCs were held due to lack in referring families.

- “*Progetto Prisma*” started in September 2011 and ended in December 2012. The aim of the project was to use educational FGC in nursery school as a way to planning educational and protection projects. Particullary, the main goal was to promote collaboration between families, school and social service in case of child in need for which attending the nursery is a prevention intervention.

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