



The purpose of a family conference is to provide a forum for family members and the health care team to discuss any issues of concern and develop a collaborative plan to address those concerns.

Type of conferences

A family conference can be used for a variety of reasons: facilitating lifestyle changes, making major care decisions, planning for complex transitions in care, disclosing harm, addressing conflict, and more.

In INT D 410, family conferences are typically admission or discharge conferences. The scenarios used for these meetings are somewhat different than would occur in clinical settings, but here are some general characteristics of these conferences.

Admission conference

The purpose is to develop a plan for in-hospital care. It aims to outline and obtain agreement on the nature of the patient's issues and the strategies to be used to investigate and manage those issues. It includes members of the healthcare team, the patient, and members of the patient's family if possible.

Discharge conference

The purpose is to develop a plan for continuing care outside of the hospital. It aims to make the patient's transfer to an outpatient setting easy and successful. It includes members of the healthcare team, the patient, members of the patient's family if possible, and those involved in continuing care.

Steps for leading a family conference

- Establish the purpose for the conference and consider who needs to attend.
- Ask the patient which of their personal supports (e.g. family members) they want to attend.
- Consider which team members will be needed at the table.
- Consider any other services involved (e.g. psychiatry, home care, child and adolescent protection team).
- Develop a strategy for conducting the conference.
- Create an environment in which each family member feels safe and supported.
- If the meeting might be distressing for the family, have tissues available.
- Communicate clearly and openly.
- Document the medical information given by staff, as well as any questions or information from the patient and family.
- Set goals that are clear, mutual, and attainable. Prioritize the goals.
- Establish a plan that allows the family to collaborate with the team in addressing the issues of concern.
- Identify resources and supports that are available to the patient and family.
- Provide a summary of the conference to the patient and family

Adapted from:

McDaniel, S. H., Campbell, T. L., Hepworth, J., & Lorenz, A. (2005). Family interviewing skills in primary care: From routine contact to the comprehensive family conference. In *Family-oriented primary care* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Springer.