During its 20-year history, the Team Decision Making® (TDM™) approach has proven to benefit children by decreasing the chance of repeat maltreatment and by increasing the rates of reunification and placement stability. A recent study from Child Trends is the first randomized controlled trial of the TDM approach and offers stronger evidence of its efficacy.

**BETTER OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES**

After controlling for a variety of characteristics, the study found that children and families who took part in a TDM meeting:

- Felt heard and included in the decision-making process; and
- Were less likely to experience a removal, without any increase in re-allegations of child maltreatment, compared with families who did not take part in a TDM meeting.

**BETTER-INFORMED WORKERS**

The study demonstrated that in cases where a TDM meeting took place, workers reported feeling better informed about the child’s situation. The study’s authors concluded that better-informed workers may feel more confident about keeping a child at home with their family and be less likely to have internal biases affect their decision making.

Workers also expressed appreciation for the support of an objective facilitator. Every TDM meeting involves a facilitator who is trained to help with these meetings.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

Because the study sample of families was predominantly white, conclusive findings about the impact of TDM meetings on racial disparities were not available. Future research should explore whether the TDM approach has differing impacts on families in non-white racial groups.
Child welfare agencies exist to protect children from harm while keeping families together whenever safely possible. The Child Trends study shows that families who take part in TDM meetings are less likely to experience separations without compromising safety. This helps agencies improve child placement stability and has the potential to prevent child trauma. At the same time, better-informed workers make better decisions. TDM meetings instill confidence in workers about the very important decisions they must make every day.

LEARN MORE
Read more about Evident Change’s TDM work on our website. You can also contact Heather Meitner, Child Welfare Practice and TDM Manager, at (800) 306-6223 or hmeitner@evidentchange.org.