New York FAR Quarterly

New York Family Assessment Response (FAR) Quarterly

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American Humane Association™
The nation's voice for the protection of children & animals™

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In This Issue

FAR Continues to Grow by Leaps and Bounds 3

Family Assessment Response Legislation Passes Unanimously 5

Additional Family Assessment/ Differential Response Resources 5

Suffolk County's First Year: How FAR we have come!

From left to right are FAR Team Caseworkers Lori Quinn, Michael Graham, Michael Moody, Alexandra Zubizarreta and Senior Caseworker Joelle Arty-Eugene

By Mary Ellen Hanwick, FAR Team Supervisor

Sharon Stenger, FAR Implementation Team Assistant Director Suffolk County

June 7, 2011, marked the one-year anniversary of the Suffolk County FAR unit. It seemed like a good time to look back over the past year to consider the accomplishments that have been achieved. One of the most striking successes for the unit has been their creativity in helping to meet the needs of families in a time of budget cuts, lack of resources, and program closings. With FAR caseworkers spending longer periods of time in homes facilitating family meetings, they quickly realized that basic home furnishings were missing from many of the homes they visited. Some homes lacked enough furniture, such as couches, chairs, and dining tables, for everyone to be seated—or even to be together—in one room. Other homes lacked lamps and the basic lighting necessary to complete such activities as "3 Houses." Due to the bedbug epidemic, many families were without beds for all family members. There was little access to community resources that would provide beds or furniture. Even when some agencies had furniture to offer, most families had no way to pick the furniture up, and the agencies would not deliver. Prior to being able to utilize the FAR flex funds, the FAR team had to demonstrate, and model for families, resourcefulness in accessing supports from within the community without any government financing or assistance.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

The FAR workers tackled this challenge during their peer supervision meetings. It was decided that social networking was worth a try. FAR caseworkers used e-mail and Facebook to request gently used donations of furniture (e.g., televisions, dressers, couches, beds) and clothing to help families in need. Community organizations were made aware that FAR had a need for clothing and furnishings for FAR families. The Boy Scouts pitched in, as well as the Suffolk County Coalition Against Domestic Violence. During one FAR presentation to the Coalition, a program director advised that they have people wanting to donate to the Coalition all the time, but they don't always have the space or the need for the items. This program director now routes donors to FAR, and the response has been tremendous.

As they receive donations, FAR caseworkers are able to match the donated items to FAR families with identified needs for furnishings.

One of our FAR caseworkers, Michael Graham, was amazed at how many families lacked the basic home furnishings that truly make a house a home. Michael shared his amazement with his wife, Naomi, and his sister, Michelle Chamblin. They decided to do something about the issue and founded Furniture for All, a not-for-profit community agency that brokers furniture for needy families. They put out the word that they were accepting gently used furnishings to provide to families in need, rented a storage room, and incorporated Furniture for All (501(c)(3) nonprofit status is pending). FAR now shares their storage facility and all donations are given out on a first come, first served basis. FAR workers join together to collect and deliver the furnishings to their FAR families. You can imagine how surprised and grateful many families are to have their FAR worker (and, often, the FAR team supervisor) hauling furniture into their homes.

This venture keeps growing. Many other non-FAR caseworkers have called upon Furniture for All to assist their families as well. Once their nonprofit status is granted, Michael and his family also hope to receive donations that will enable them to purchase gift cards for food and gas for families in need. The FAR unit will be right there, helping families identify needs and finding ways to offer them substantial help.

Save the Date

FAR webinar on working with schools

Friday, Sept. 23rd @ 1 – 2:30 eastern

Presented by: Westchester County & Kasey Matz

Reminder: Register for your 4 FREE Differential Response webinars from American Humane Association.

Visit: **www.americanhumane.org/drwebinar** to register today!

FAR Continues to Grow by Leaps and Bounds

By: Lara Bruce, FAR project coordinator, American Humane Association

In partnership with the Office of Children and Family Services, American Humane Association continues to be committed to the implementation and sustainability of FAR practice across New York State. July 1 marks the beginning of our third contract with OCFS and, with it, many new opportunities for counties and their continued success. Here's what you can expect from American Humane Association across our various areas of work with you and throughout the state.

From July 1, 2011, through June 30, 2012, American Humane Association, in partnership with OCFS and the implementing FAR counties, have a lot of great activities in the works. As you have heard, we will be working with up to five new and expanding FAR implementation counties in the coming months. These five counties will receive the entire FAR training series, including FAR Process and Practice; Solution-Focused Casework Practice with Children and Families; Supervising a Practice Shift to FAR; and Assessing Safety and Risk in FAR. Each of the eight Round 4 counties (currently Madison, Cayuga, Rockland, and St. Lawrence, plus the additional five counties currently submitting FAR applications) will also receive three two-day coaching sessions during this time period. FAR counties in Rounds 1 and 2 can expect three regional coaching opportunities for FAR supervisors and managers. These sessions will bring staff together to support peer learning and networking. Watch for more information on these exciting opportunities! Round 3 implementation counties can expect four total coaching days during this contract period. These can be utilized in one- or two-day sessions, depending on the size and needs of the county.

The symposium will be developed by county representatives in an effort to make this *your* event.

OCFS and American Humane Association have begun planning for the 2011 FAR Symposium that will take place in early October in Albany (see ad included in this newsletter). The symposium will be developed by county representatives in an effort to make this *your* event.

The two-day event will bring together existing and new FAR counties to build on the momentum of all of the work occurring across the state. American Humane Association will be working on a companion DVD to support the FAR process and practice, as well as other FAR trainings that will highlight case practice issues, engagement practices, and other strategies in advancing FAR practice. The objective will be to provide core values, principles, and engagement skills in FAR. We hope that viewers of the DVD will understand how the FAR approach differs from the traditional CPS investigation; procedures and mandated activities within FAR; how to engage a family in a discussion and understanding of safety and risk concerns; the use of different question and query practices; and more. We may call on *you* to play a starring role once filming gets underway in 2012!

As part of a plan for FAR sustainability in NYS, OCFS and American Humane Association worked last year to develop a FAR Training-of-the-Trainers (TOT) for the two-day Process and Practice training. The trainers and county staff have begun to deliver the FAR Process and Practice training in several of the Round 4 counties already and will continue in this capacity as new counties come on board. They will also be participating in

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quarterly technical assistance calls to discuss strengths and challenges to this process and a "community of practice" online forum to host questions, post resources, and network with the other TOT participants. As part of our next contract, American Humane Association will be developing a FAR TOT for the Solution-Focused FAR Practice training, to be delivered in the second quarter, and will be including the university training partners and county representatives in future deliveries of that training, as well. Don't be surprised if you see these trainers popping up in FAR trainings across the state!

Our work in collaboration with Casey Family Programs continues through the end of the 2011 calendar year and there is a lot of great work already under way. Casey Family Programs has already supported FAR implementation in Rockland and St. Lawrence counties and will continue to support their FAR training and coaching series. A third quality assurance case documentation review process (QA), including case reviews and focus groups, is scheduled to begin in August with Round 3 FAR counties. The QA review will include updates to the review tool and guidlines and sampling from each Round 3 Counties including Livingston, Putnam, Rensselaer, Suffalle and Yates. OCFS, American Humane Association, and Casey Family Programs staff began work on FAR decision-making points related to disproportionate minority representation (DMR) in March. Current FAR counties included in this work are Westchester (Round 1), Monroe (Round 2), and Suffolk (Round 3). The group will be developing a protocol to review case samples from each county looking specifically at FAR decision-making points and recommendations for better addressing them in FAR practice.

In addition, American Humane Association is working on a unique opportunity for county FAR supervisors in collaboration with the Northeast and Caribbean Implementation Center **(www.muskie.usm.maine.edu/ncic/)**. This opportunity, the Peer Network for FAR Supervisors, will kick off in July and initially will include two cohorts of FAR supervisors. The hope is that once the pilot version of this process wraps up in September, we will be able to expand this process and offer this opportunity to FAR supervisors across NYS. The goal of the Peer Network for FAR Supervisors is to introduce the idea of peer networking in FAR and to develop an effective structure and model that could be utilized as part of FAR sustainability. FAR supervisors will meet in person and via conference call to discuss their strengths and challenges in their roles within FAR and in supervising FAR caseworkers. They will also have the opportunity to participate in a "community of practice" online forum where they will be able to share resources and questions regularly with one another. American Humane Association staff will encourage supervisors to stay in contact and support one another beyond the work within their cohort.

There are more plans in the works, but we wanted to be sure we provided you with an overview of what's to come. As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to your regional representative, OCFS or American Humane Association, with any questions or concerns.

Family Assessment Response Legislation Passes Unanimously

On Thursday, June 2, 2011, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the Family Assessment Response (FAR) bill into law after it unanimously passed both the state assembly and senate late in the evening of June 1. Officially known as Chapter 45 of Laws of 2011, the passing of the FAR bill makes FAR a permanent option in NYS Social Services Law (SSL) and now allows for the inclusion of New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) in the statewide FAR movement.

"This is historic for NYS and you should all be congratulated for your pioneer work along with us in establishing FAR".

"This is historic for NYS and you should all be congratulated for your pioneer work along with us in establishing FAR," Associate Commissioner Sheila Poole remarked in an e-mail to all implementing and interested FAR counties and their stakeholders on June 2. The Office of Children and Family Services will share a final copy of the new law and a chapter amendment, addressing several issues related to court access to FAR information, when the final version becomes available. Congratulations to all!

Additional Family Assessment/ Differential Response Resources

Domestic Violence Resources:

- Minnesota Department of Human Services: "Guidelines for Responding To the Co-occurrence of Child Maltreatment and Domestic Violence": http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/minn_guide.pdf
- North Carolina Division of Social Services: "Supervisor Tool for Domestic Violence Cases": See the FAR shared folders to download this resource
- "Integrating Domestic Violence Intervention into Child Welfare Practice" by Robert Sawyer and Suzanne Lohrbach, in American Humane Association's *Protecting Children* journal, Differential Response in Child Welfare, Vol. 20, No. 2 & 3, 2005. Download the complete volume by going to: http://www.americanhumane.org/children/professional-resources/protecting-children-journal/
- David Mandel's "Safe and Together" Model
- American Humane Association's Training and Professional Development Catalog: www.americanhumane.org/assets/pdfs/children/pc-training-catalog.pdf

New York Family Assessment Response (FAR) Symposium

October 4-5, 2011

Desmond Hotel

Are you interested in being a part of the symposium planning committee? We are actively seeking county representatives to be a part of organizing workshops, keynote speakers, and all of the fun for the upcoming symposium. Contact Lara Bruce, larab@americanhumane.org, to get involved!

November 8-10, Chicago

American Humane Association's 2011 Conference on Differential Response in Child Welfare

Write for Us!

Write for Us! Do you have a FAR story or case example that you would like to share with others?

Have you been trying new tools or techniques related to FAR that are working well?

Would you like to highlight the good work happening in your county?

If so, we want to hear from you! Articles should be between 500-800 words and can be sent at any time to get into the newsletter schedule.

Please reply to Lara Bruce at Larab@americanhumane.org.