

**Office of Children and Family Services**  
**CONNECTIONS Q2-09**  
**Implementation date of June 27, 2009**

**Impact Analysis for Q2-09 Quarterly Improvement**  
**Changes to the Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP)**

1. **Functional Areas:** Child Protective Services, Foster Care, Preventive Services, Adoption Services
2. **Brief Description of Current Function/ Process:**

The Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP) provides a consistent structure to assist workers to conduct thorough, focused assessments and reassessments of child and family functioning throughout the life of a case. The FASP guides the development and documentation of the plan of needed changes, services, and outcomes that a family must achieve to maintain children safely, achieve permanency, child well-being and to reduce or eliminate the need for services.

The FASP is designed to support individual assessments and a service delivery process that is based on engaging and working with the entire family, building on the family's strengths, and providing clear focus to the goals and objectives of service interventions. Toward those ends, the FASP includes highly structured assessments of safety and risk, parent/caretaker functioning, child functioning and overall family functioning. These assessments contain a combination of checklists and short, directed narratives which are intended to guide workers through a critical thinking process that leads to consistent and balanced decision making that considers all of the relevant factors in a family's circumstances.

3. **What Remains the Same?**

Q2-09 does not change the essential nature of the FASP. Workers will continue to complete Assessments of Safety, Risk, and overall family functioning. They will continue to develop strength based service plans with the involvement of the family to the fullest extent possible and work toward the goals and objectives needed to protect the children, reduce risk of future abuse and neglect, and to maintain the integrity of the family whenever feasible.

However, it does introduce several features that will offer agencies and workers increased discretion and simplification in using the FASP. These changes are described in the next section.

#### 4. What is New?

##### A. Districts may elect to make certain assessment scales optional for workers

For each family and individual child, workers must assess the functioning, strengths and needs of caretakers, children and the family as a whole. The system had required the completion of a comprehensive set of Assessment Scales which help to structure the assessment process and assist workers in considering all areas of a family and children's functioning in determining their needs. Prior to the implementation of Q2-09 all scales were required to be completed in the FASP for each parent/caretaker, each individual child and the family as a whole, and a system edit enforced this requirement. With the implementation of Q2-09, districts may elect to lift the system edit, thereby making certain of these scales optional for their workers. **If a district exercises this option, the system will continue to require a worker to complete all the scales that map to the Risk Assessment Profile (RAP) for all cases with a "protective" program choice.** If those scales have not been completed, the indicator of "Required" will display on the Check FASP Detail window for the scales. If the district opts to lift the edit, once the mapped scales have been answered, the "Required" indicator will no longer display.

All scales will display to workers, and workers may complete one or more of the optional scales workers deem relevant to the assessment of functioning for a family and any of its members. The FASP Reports will continue to display all available scales and responses, including scales that have not been responded to, regardless of whether a district has exercised the option to make the scales optional. When no child scales have been addressed, a blank section will be displayed in the Assessment Summary Report.

Supervisors may exercise individual discretion or a district may do so based on its own internal policies and require workers to complete some or all scales according to the case circumstances or other specified criteria (e.g., inexperienced worker). Although these internal agency or supervisory policies will not be enforced by the system, they can be enforced by individual supervisors and management oversight. This discretion allows districts and workers to complete those scales that make the most sense for an individual case and an individual worker.

Districts will need to determine if they wish to exercise this option. In order to do so in time for the implementation of Q2-09, districts should notify their regional CONNECTIONS staff by **June 18th**. After that date, requests will be scheduled within several weeks of their submission.

If a district chooses the system option, the district should review policy and practice expectations and determine any circumstances when workers will still be required to complete some or all of the scales and advise workers. In addition, districts must notify voluntary agencies providing services under contract that require the completion of FASPs and advise these voluntaries of the decision to make the scales optional and any policies or procedures associated with this decision.

**B. FASP Safety, Needs and Risk Scales can be used to pre fill O & A Blocks in the Service Plans**

With the implementation of Q2-09, the CONNECTIONS system will support the ability to pre-fill Service Plan O & A Blocks from Family, Child, or Parent/Caretaker scales, and from the Risk Assessment-Elevated Risk questions in an in-process FASP. A new column labeled “Create O & A Block for Scale” will be incorporated into the scales and Elevated Risk windows. By checking this column for any scale item, an abbreviated version of the scale language (i.e., first 100 characters) will be brought forward into an O & A Block, in the “Problem/Concern (What has to Change)” section. Within each O & A Block that has been created in this way, the worker should adjust or refine the scale language and add relevant information so that it fits the individual case circumstances, and then save the O & A Block for it to become part of the FASP. Once the FASP is approved by the supervisor, the O & A Blocks created in the manner described will be brought forward into subsequent FASPs. This enhancement provides workers with a way to “flag” key areas of need for inclusion into the Service Plan and streamlines the creation of new O & A Blocks directly from designated scales.

**C. Needed Improvements/Changes tab on the Family Assessment/Analysis dialog has been removed.**

Currently, completion of the **Needed Improvements/Changes** tab is required for all FASPs. The worker is asked, “*Based on your analysis, what improvements/changes need to be made in family functioning, behavior and/or living conditions to achieve the identified PPG and provide for children’s safety, permanency and well-being?*” With the implementation of Q2-09, this tab will be eliminated from the FASP. Workers continue to document areas requiring change by the family and its members in the Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, selected scales and Foster Care Issues (where applicable). They will continue to be expected to critically think through all available information regarding child and family strengths and needs and come to a conclusion, in conjunction with the family whenever possible, regarding the priorities for improvements and changes. Those conclusions form the basis for development of O & A Blocks that detail the specific behavioral changes that are needed and the services to be provided to accomplish these changes. Districts and agencies will need to alert workers to this change and instruct workers in how information that had been documented in this tab will be captured elsewhere in the FASP.

**D. A comment box has been added to the Safety Assessment that workers may use if they check ‘No Safety Factors present at this time.’**

When completing the Safety Assessment in both the Investigation and the FASP, if no Safety Factors are present, workers can check a single box indicating this circumstance. However, it is often the case that supervisors and agency policy require workers to provide more context and explanation for how they have arrived at this conclusion regarding the child’s safety. With the implementation of the Q2-09 Quarterly Improvements, the addition of the comment box on the Safety Factors window will

enable workers to provide additional narrative information regarding their conclusion that no safety factors are present. Recording comments when no safety factors exist is not enforced by a system edit. It is optional, based on the circumstances of each case and the requirements of each supervisor and program.

**5. Implications/Considerations:**

Districts must determine if they will exercise their option to make the allowable Assessment scales optional. If they decide to do this, they must also determine what internal management and supervision policies will accompany this decision. For example, districts might want to require workers to complete all scales under certain circumstances, such as for inexperienced workers or for cases that meet certain criteria. In the alternative, they might choose to continue to require the completion of all scales in most instances, but allow exceptions under specified circumstances. Districts will need to advise staff and voluntary agencies with which they contract of their decision and any internal policies that they intend to implement in conjunction with the decision. As noted above, districts electing this option will need to notify their CONNECTIONS Regional Office representative of their decision. Voluntary agencies will need to be aware of the requirements for each district with which they contract and realize that this may mean different expectations from different districts.

The other three changes detailed above involve some differences in the way the FASP is completed. Districts and agencies should determine if they wish to direct their staff and voluntary agencies with which they contract to modify the way in which they complete FASPs to take the changes into account.