



# Office of Children and Family Services

Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor

52 WASHINGTON STREET  
RENSSELAER, NY 12144

Sheila J. Poole  
Acting Commissioner

## Local Commissioners Memorandum

<b>Transmittal:</b>	19-OCFS-LCM-07
<b>To:</b>	Local Department of Social Services Commissioners
<b>Issuing Division/Office:</b>	Child Welfare and Community Services
<b>Date:</b>	April 19, 2019
<b>Subject:</b>	Updated Requirements to Launch, Relaunch or Modify a Family Assessment Response Program
<b>Contact Person(s):</b>	See section IV
<b>Attachments:</b>	<a href="#"><u>OCFS-4362, Application to Relaunch a Child Protective Services (CPS) Family Assessment Response (FAR) Program</u></a> <a href="#"><u>OCFS-4363, Family Assessment Response (FAR) Change Request Form</u></a> <a href="#"><u>OCFS-4364, Family Assessment Response (FAR) Implementation Guidelines</u></a> <a href="#"><u>OCFS-4365, Application to Provide a Child Protective Services (CPS) Differential Response System by Adding Family Assessment Response (FAR)</u></a>

### I. Purpose

The purpose of this Local Commissioners Memorandum (LCM) is to inform local departments of social services (LDSSs) of the application process for establishing or amending a differential response system. This LCM is relevant to any LDSS wishing to **implement, relaunch, or modify** a family assessment response (FAR) approach for some families reported to the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.

## II. Background

In Chapter 452 of the laws of 2007, New York State initiated the opportunity for any LDSS to apply to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to establish a program that implements differential responses to reports of child abuse and maltreatment. Such programs, if approved, would create a child protective services (CPS) track for a family assessment response (FAR) as an alternative means of addressing certain matters otherwise investigated as allegations of child abuse or maltreatment. Initially, the opportunity to implement a FAR program was not available to all LDSSs.

Local Commissioners Memorandum 12-OCFS-LCM-02 expanded eligibility to all LDSSs in New York State and provided a revised application process for LDSSs wishing to utilize FAR in their provision of child protective services.

LDSSs currently practicing FAR continue to provide feedback that supports research conclusions around differential responses: increased satisfaction of families with the LDSS's response to reports, increase in the percentage of families provided or referred to services, broadened community involvement in meeting family service needs, a decrease in the need for Family Court involvement, and no significant difference in safety outcomes between the investigative approach and the FAR approach. New York State and OCFS remain committed to FAR, and to the idea that most often the families hold the solutions to achieving positive safety outcomes.

As part of this commitment, OCFS created a uniform application process. To create a FAR program, the LDSS will complete [OCFS-4365, Application to Provide a Child Protective Services \(CPS\) Differential Response System by Adding Family Assessment Response \(FAR\)](#). Furthermore, OCFS is issuing similar uniform application tools for any LDSS interested in relaunching a FAR program: [OCFS-4362, Application to Relaunch a Child Protective Services \(CPS\) Family Assessment Response \(FAR\) Program](#), and [OCFS-4363, Family Assessment Response \(FAR\) Change Request Form](#).

## III. Program Implications

LDSSs wishing to implement a FAR program must apply for OCFS approval using OCFS- (4365), *Application to Provide a Differential Response System by Adding Family Assessment Response (FAR)*. Before starting the application process, LDSSs should initiate discussions with regional office liaisons and review the [OCFS-4364, Family Assessment Response \(FAR\) Implementation Guidelines](#).

OCFS- (4365), *Application to Provide a Differential Response System by Adding Family Assessment Response (FAR)*, is included in this document as an attachment. When completing the application, LDSSs should consult the OCFS- (4364) *Family Assessment Response (FAR) Implementation Guidelines* tool that is included in this document as an attachment.

The following minimum standards are necessary to obtain OCFS approval to implement FAR:

- LDSSs must commit to assigning reports containing a broad range of allegations for FAR assessment, excluding those ineligible for FAR.<sup>1</sup>
- LDSSs must provide their screening criteria, which specify the types of allegations that the LDSS will and will not accept for assignment to FAR.
- LDSSs must assign sufficient caseworkers to handle their projected FAR caseloads.
- LDSSs must comply with FAR training requirements.

Any LDSS that wishes to **change** its existing FAR program should first consult with OCFS's regional office liaison. After consulting with the liaison, the LDSS must seek OCFS approval for any changes by submitting form OCFS- (4363), *Family Assessment Response (FAR) Change Request Form* that is included in this document as an attachment.

Examples of changes that require OCFS approval:

- Change in screening criteria
- Increase or decrease in number of FAR staff
- Change in number of FAR units or reorganization of FAR responsibilities
- Change in domestic violence protocols in FAR cases

Any LDSS that wants to **relaunch** its FAR program should first consult with OCFS's regional office liaison. After consulting with the liaison, the LDSS must seek OCFS's approval by submitting a completed OCFS- (4362), *Application to Relaunch a CPS Differential Response by Adding Family Assessment Response (FAR)*, that is included in this document as an attachment.

Any LDSS that wants to discontinue its FAR program must submit a written request to OCFS's regional office liaison and schedule an exit interview with OCFS prior to discontinuing its FAR program.

#### IV. Contacts

Buffalo Regional Office - Amanda Darling (716) 847-3145

[Amanda.Darling@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:Amanda.Darling@ocfs.ny.gov)

Rochester Regional Office - Karen Lewter (585) 238-8201

[Karen.Lewter@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:Karen.Lewter@ocfs.ny.gov)

Syracuse Regional Office - Sara Simon (315) 423-1200

[Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov)

Albany Regional Office - John Lockwood (518) 486-7078

[John.Lockwood@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:John.Lockwood@ocfs.ny.gov)

Spring Valley Regional Office - Thalia Wright (845) 708-2498

[Thalia.Wright@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:Thalia.Wright@ocfs.ny.gov)

New York City Regional Office - Ronni Fuchs (212) 383-4873

---

<sup>1</sup> *Child Protective Services Manual*, Chapter 5

[Ronni.Fuchs@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:Ronni.Fuchs@ocfs.ny.gov)

Native American Services - Heather LaForme (716) 847-3123

[Heather.LaForme@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:Heather.LaForme@ocfs.ny.gov)

*/s/ Lisa Ghartey-Ogundimu*

---

**Issued by:**

Name: Lisa Ghartey-Ogundimu

Title: Acting Deputy Commissioner

Division/Office: Child Welfare and Community Services