

**FAMILY ASSESSMENT RESPONSE APPLICATION
WASHINGTON COUNTY**

a. Factors to be considered in determining which reports will be addressed through the family assessment and services track and size of population:

Criteria for assigning reports to the family assessment and services track

Family Assessment Response will be provided to families when child safety won't be compromised, and traditional investigation tools and court-ordered intervention aren't necessary. All SCR reports will be screened by trained Caseworkers, Senior Caseworkers and Supervisors for FAR eligibility.

The following criteria will be used to screen cases into FAR eligibility:

Allegations involving...

- Maltreatment
- Lack of Supervision
- Inappropriate physical discipline, unexplained bruises
- Educational neglect
- Family conflict
- 1034 Investigations

The following criteria will be used to screen cases out from FAR eligibility and require a CPS investigation:

- Reporters required by SSL-427a to be investigated
- Child fatalities
- Protective custody by law enforcement
- Medical holds by hospital personnel due to abuse and neglect
- Maltreatment alleged to have occurred in a licensed facility (i.e. day care, etc.), family day care or foster family home
- Initially, CPS reports with Domestic Violence allegations
- CPS reports where subject of report has been or will be arrested for a crime against a child
- Subsequent reports on an open CPS investigation
- Cross-county CPS reports

Family history will be considered but will not solely rule out any family participation in FAR.

Anticipated percentage of reports to be handled through family assessment and service track in the first 12 months of implementation

We anticipate 50% of reports to be handled through the family assessment and service track in the first 12 months of implementation. We intend to screen reports using our screening tool with all reports during a 1-2 month period before implementation to get an accurate percentage of reports which will receive a family assessment response.

Units and workers to be involved

Currently, we have 2 CPS teams; 1 will provide Family Assessment Response and the other will conduct traditional CPS track investigations. Staffing has been determined by interest and identified strengths of Caseworkers. Initially, 6 Caseworkers and 1 Senior Caseworker will be assigned to the FAR team. We will monitor the number of families using the FAR approach to assess whether the 6 assigned Caseworkers can manage the caseloads. We plan to train all Caseworkers, Senior Caseworkers and Supervisors so that potential FAR cases accepted during on-call hours won't be excluded. On call Caseworkers and Supervisors will be trained to screen and approve FAR cases if the situation is determined as safe.

Phase in or roll out plans

We have been introducing FAR to staff during our regular staff meetings. Attendance is required at these meetings every Monday morning so a wide variety of input is received. The CPS Supervisor and an interested Caseworker have gathered information for a bulletin board to familiarize staff with the concept.

We currently use a screening tool similar to what will be used in FAR. Staff will continue working with the strengths-based assessment tool they are already familiar with.

The Children's Services Advisory Committee has been kept abreast of ongoing information as we work on our application.

Program protocols and procedures including on-call protocols will be complete by late fall. Staff for the FAR has been identified, and training would occur in early winter.

b. Assessment process regarding child safety and risk, types of services and interventions to be provided in the family assessment and services track, and a description of how the services will be offered

Assessment process we will use to assess safety, risk, and strengths and needs

Child safety is our first priority. Child safety and risk will be assessed from receipt of report and throughout our work, in partnership with the family, using a family support approach. Immediately we will begin assessing strengths, needs, and risks, in partnership with the family, using a standardized assessment process and tool. We will meet with parents to explain the process and to engage them in the family assessment. We will obtain permissions from the parent to involve other community supports and to assist them to meet needs that may be identified throughout the assessment. Seven days after the report the formal safety assessment will be completed and approved in Connections. The SCR will be notified of the track. The strengths and needs assessment will be conducted in partnership with the family using a new process including specific dimensions of caregivers' capacity, family and child strengths and needs, giving high priority to the child's well being. The process will be explained to the family with an emphasis on partnership with the family and others in the assessment. The process will also include records review, personal interviews with family members including parents and children, their supports, and other stakeholders. Tools such as genograms, ecomaps, motivational interviewing, solution focused approach, and team meetings will be employed. Our process will empower families by acknowledging their abilities to use their strengths and resources to meet needs. Outcomes and goals will be developed in partnership with families.

Our plan for linking families with goods and services that address their needs, including what services will be provided by county children's services staff, what services will be provided by community service providers, and what relationship the county will have with TANF staff in assessing needs and providing services. How, if at all, will family assessment and services interact with other local models of service access including such things as SPOA, CCSI, etc.

Services will be offered immediately and throughout the intervention. Services to be provided by county Children's Services staff, in partnership with families and our community, include safety and risk assessment, strengths and needs assessment, development of goals and strategies, casework counseling, referrals to community programs and services, transportation, and advocacy. Services which may be provided by other DSS programs during the Family Assessment Response include transportation, day care assistance, public assistance, food stamps, Medicaid, child support services, and emergency services. Family Assessment Response staff will have close linkages with TANF staff in assessing needs and providing services, and TANF staff will prioritize emergency needs of eligible families and may be part of the team working with the family as necessary. Services which may be provided by community service providers include basic needs services (food, clothing, shelter), mediation, respite, advocacy, early intervention services, substance abuse services, domestic violence services, teen parenting services, counseling, public health nurse services, WIC, health services, mental health services, classes such as parenting, anger management, parent support services, and support groups. Families will be linked with goods and services they need with assistance of Family Assessment Response staff. The role of the Family Assessment staff person is different than the CPS Caseworkers role, whose role sometimes includes monitoring compliance with Article X (Child Abuse and Neglect) Court Orders. The Family Assessment Response staff will be linking families with needed services and advocating for them. They will be following up to see that the service is working for the participants, and working together with the family supports. Family Assessment and services will interact in partnership with other local models of services on behalf of families with the ultimate goal of child well being.

c. A description of the process to be followed for planning and monitoring the services provided under the family assessment and services track:

How the assessments and services provided directly by us and those provided by agencies who have contracts with us and those provided by other agencies will be developed and monitored for quality and adherence to negotiated principles and expectations.

Currently, we are working with our contract agencies on Getting To Outcomes so we have been able to work with them about moving toward the FAR approach. The Department currently meets with all services providers at least bi-weekly. The Children's Services Advisory Committee has been informed of the Department's decision to apply for FAR. The Committee meets monthly to review children's services programs in the county, and supports the Department in making the FAR application.

Services provided by Family Assessment Caseworkers will be reviewed in one to one and group supervision weekly to support staff and decision making. The FAR team will encourage family feedback on services provided by other agencies from FAR families and discuss this at regular service provider meetings.

d. A description of how the principles of family involvement and support consistent with maintaining the safety of the children will be implemented in the family assessment and services track:

Our core practice principles upon which the family assessment response is designed:

These core practice principles will be reviewed and finalized with staff and members of our chosen advisory board. Our draft core practice principles include the following:

The immediate safety of children is our first priority
We will use a child centered, family focused, strengths based, ecological approach
We will build on strengths and identify needs
We value partnerships with families, their community, and service providers
We will implement multiple strategies for engagement
We approach parents as the experts on their family
A positive relationship is a factor in effecting change
Multidisciplinary practice is fundamental to our work
Quality supervision will be provided and used
Our services will meet the diverse needs of culturally diverse families
Sustainable change is our goal

Approach we will take and the strategy behind such an approach, to more actively engage and empower families in assessment of their strengths, assessing their needs, and in decision-making, while at the same time reassessing child safety

Our interactions will emphasize building a therapeutic alliance with the family and working in partnership with the family and community. The core helping conditions: respect, empathy and genuineness will be emphasized throughout the intervention. Family members will be involved in the assessment process, full disclosure, and negotiation and mediation may be used to reach mutual understanding with families during the assessment and in strategizing to meet needs. We will continually examine, with the family, in the team, and in supervision, the efficacy of the relationship with the family. Tools such as ecomaps, genograms, and family team meetings will be used. Child safety will be continually addressed and assessed throughout the intervention. Contact regarding child safety will occur as needed but at least every two weeks. Home visits and collateral contacts will occur with family supports and service providers, and the family.

e. Description of how the differential response program will enhance our ability to protect children, maintain the safety of children, and preserve families

The Family Assessment Response will be provided in those circumstances where Court ordered intervention and evidence collection is not going to be necessary. Safety will be our first priority and child safety will be assessed throughout the intervention, through contacts with the family, resources and service providers and other contact. Family assessment staff will focus on the child in need of protective services through the relationship with the family and collaborative partnerships with the family, their supports, and the community. The

non-adversarial approach and the absence of investigation will engage more families in working towards change. Using this approach will enable us to redirect our resources, as appropriate, to helping families rather than unnecessary investigations. The goal is to have families recognize their own strength and needs so they have the opportunity to move forward, and sustain their changes.

f. A description of how we will reduce the involvement of government agencies with families and maintain the safety of children through use of community resources

How we will engage the family without increasing the involvement of government agencies and without compromising safety of children:

Safety of children is our first priority throughout the intervention. In some situations, for the short term, we anticipate increasing government involvement in a less adversarial manner; for example, if the family has a need for a service provided by a government agency (eg. vouchers, food stamps, Medicaid or services, etc). In the long term, we anticipate reducing the involvement of Child Welfare services by linking families with community agencies, building skills, and effecting changes with families and our community.

How traditional service providers, the family's support network, and other community resources will provide assistance to families whose reports/cases will be handled by a differential response program:

The family assessment staff will engage the family, their support network, and other community resources in providing assistance to the family. Tools such as ecomaps, genograms, and team meetings will be used to identify strengths and engage resources. Assistance to the families will be provided with the family's mutual consent, engagement and coordination within the team working with the family.

g. Description of staff resources to be used in the family assessment and services track, including the proposed workloads and staff qualifications

Caseworkers with a wide variety of experience in the approach will initially provide the Family Assessment Response. Supervision will be provided by a Supervisor and Senior Caseworker. We will strive for workloads similar to the workload standards for CPS (12 to 20). Initially, staff qualifications will include: Bachelors degree and 2 years casework experience, demonstrated experience in strengths-based assessment, demonstrated successful experience in assessing safety and risk, skill in interviewing and engaging, ability to establish and maintain successful relationships including with family's diverse communities, good powers of observation, analysis, and judgment, knowledge of principles underlying human behavior and growth, and prior CPS training.

How we plan to assign or recruit DSS staff to respond to a CPS report through the family assessment and response track

Staff have been identified based on interest and experience within child welfare staff.

Whether staff will be involved in both the family assessment response track and traditional CPS investigations

Separate staff will provide the traditional CPS investigation and the Family Assessment Response. This is something we would like to explore further as we pilot our

screening tool and process to get a better sense of the number of families who will be approached with a Family Assessment Response. We will not be combining caseloads provided assigned casework staff are able to handle the cases as they are split between FAR and investigations. Screening for track assignment and initial response after hours may be provided by traditional CPS staff as well as family assessment staff, and after hours on call staff. All (3) Children's services Supervisors and 6 Senior Caseworkers will be involved in the screening process.

Any and all specialized staff resources which will impact on implementation of Family Assessment Response

Our staff resources include: Two experienced Caseworkers who provided strengths-based approach through other work experience, one experienced staff who provided Family Reunification. The remaining staff has expertise in strengths based approach through our 10 years in Family Resolutions strengths-based programming, and Family Engagement Training.

h. Description of the training which will be provided to district staff regarding the family assessment response program. A description of training to be provided to any non-district staff to be used in the differential response program. Both descriptions should include but not be limited to, a description of the training involving maintaining the safety and well being of children and any cross training planned for family assessment and investigative staff

If our application is approved, formal information sessions regarding the program will be provided to all child welfare staff. Training in the principles, the model, the approach and the requirements will be provided to all Family Assessment Response staff. All Family Assessment Response staff will have received safety and risk training and CPS response training. Cross training for family assessment and investigation staff will be provided as appropriate, and may include training specific to dynamics and interventions in domestic violence and substance abuse situations. Training in the screening process will be provided to all CPS, Family Assessment, on call staff and child welfare Senior Caseworker and Supervisors. Refreshers on use of genograms, ecomaps. We plan to send 2 frontline Caseworkers, 2 Supervisory staff to the July 30 and 31st, 2009 symposium. We will continually evaluate training needs throughout planning and implementation stages.

i. Description of community resources proposed to be used in the family assessment and services track

Community resources such as health services, mediation, family support services, Family Court, domestic violence services, substance abuse services, housing, support groups, children's groups, and counseling may be used as needed.

j. Description of additional funding (beyond regular child welfare finance mechanisms) which may be utilized to enhance the program

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k. Description of protocol to be followed for handling cases in the family assessment track when domestic violence is suspected or confirmed. The protocol must address the need to maintain the safety of the child(ren). If you plan to collaborate with the local domestic violence service provider, please describe such collaboration.

We are, initially, going to continue domestic violence cases in our investigation track. We want time to perfect our skills in Family Assessment Response prior to adding the complicated dynamics of domestic violence cases.

If during the Family Assessment FAR staff learns of domestic violence, the plan is to continue the case in FAR. Child safety will be determined by the FAR staff, Supervisor and DV/CPS liaison from the Domestic Violence Project, before determining whether a new CPS report should be made or the case continued in FAR. In cases remaining in FAR, initial contact and engagement will occur with the victim separately, and safety planning will occur with the victim. Engagement with the person responsible for the harm will occur as well, and crisis and safety plans will be developed with this person as well. Additional services such as domestic violence services, advocacy and support, financial services, emergency services, housing, victim support groups, probation, domestic violence treatment, batterer treatment, and parenting groups, will be provided as needed. We don't plan to include DV cases in our FAR plan initially.

l. Description of your plan to involve community agencies, schools, Family Court, other key stakeholders in your county and the community as a whole in planning for and implementing a family assessment response

We will approach and meet individually and/or in community forums with community stakeholders, including agencies, schools, Family Court, the faith community, parent advocates, and parents, throughout 2009, to receive their ideas, input, or concerns. We plan to provide an overview of Family Assessment Response at our Mandated Reporter's Conference on May 28, 2009. Agencies will be advised that if our application is approved more information will be forthcoming. We will have a community kick off in early winter.

m. Timeline for implementation

If our application is approved, we plan to provide Family Assessment Response as of 1/1/2010.