

FAMILY ASSESSMENT RESPONSE APPLICATION FOR CAYUGA COUNTY

- a) The factors to be considered by the Social Services District in determining which reports will be addressed through the family assessment and services track and the size of the population to be the subject of the differential response program.

Initially we intend to have approximately one third of the reports we receive going through the FAR track. This will include reports with allegations of Inadequate Guardianship, Educational Neglect, Lack of Supervision and Lack of Medical Care. SCR reports that will automatically be ineligible for FAR would include:

- 1) Fatalities
- 2) Sexual Abuse
- 3) Severe Physical Abuse
- 4) Reports involving daycare facilities or family daycare homes
- 5) Foster Homes
- 6) Reports with law enforcement involvement
- 7) Allegations that, if found true, would result in the filing of a petition in Family Court
- 8) Court-ordered investigations

Preference for FAR will be given to families that have no previous SCR history. Initially, three CPS Caseworkers will be dedicated to do only FAR cases, while the remainder of the Caseworkers in CPS will continue to follow the investigative process. The current CPS Supervisor will provide direct supervision to all of the FAR workers and cases.

In the frame of approximately 9-12 months from implementation, the Agency hopes to have increased the number of FAR cases to our goal of 50% of all cases. In addition, we will try to include more low risk allegations such as reports that allege inappropriate discipline, but child has no injuries and reports that allege parent drug/alcohol misuse but there are no criminal charges pending in an attempt to engage a higher number of families.

- b) The assessment process regarding child safety and risk as well as the types of services and interaction provided.

Upon receipt of a SCR report, 24 hours safety will be determined and the family will be evaluated for appropriateness as a FAR case. The Caseworker will then complete 7 day safety assessment and make case a FAR case in Connections.

The FLAG (Family Lead Assessment Guide) tool will be used for assessing strengths and needs of the family. This assessment is based on a series of questions in categories such as the home environment, family interactions, children's and caregivers' individual needs, and strengths. Responses to questions in each of these categories are then used to determine whether this area is a strength, a service need, or a need for immediate and intensive service action.

FAR workers will work with the family to identify family resources that are available to them. Our Agency has a contract with a service provider that arranges family group conferencing in an effort to bring extended families together and maximize family resources. We believe that this can be an important tool in having a successful FAR outcome.

FAR workers will assist families in identifying needed services. Some examples of services to be provided by our Agency are casework counseling, referrals to community programs and services, transportation and advocacy. FAR staff will have on-going communication with TANF staff to assess the need for financial assistance and services. Workers will assist families in applying for temporary assistance, food stamps, Medicaid and HEAP as appropriate. In addition, families will be linked with a variety of community resources, after an assessment of needs has been completed. These services will include parenting education, domestic violence intervention, substance abuse services, PINS Diversion, Mental Health Services, MR/DD Services, SPOA, etc.

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

All services provided to the family will be monitored for appropriateness by CPS Supervisor at the initiation of the FAR Response, and throughout the life of the case. This will be done during on-going Caseworker supervision, as well as when Supervisor reviews cases at the time of the completion of the 7-day Safety Assessment and prior to completion of case. Services being provided by service providers outside of the Agency will be monitored regularly by the Caseworker through on-going communication and completion of case notes. Families and Service Providers will be asked for input into their FAR experience, through the use of specially designed satisfaction surveys. We will also reconvene a stakeholders' meeting about 6-9 months after implementation to receive feedback on our services. This information will in turn be used to enhance service provision in future FAR cases.

- 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.

Cayuga County will utilize a child-centered family focused approach to working with our FAR cases. This is based on the belief that parents love their children, and despite other

contributing factors, want them to be safe. By taking more time to successfully engage families in a non-threatening way, FAR workers, families and service providers can work as a team to promote safety for children. By building trust and focusing on family strengths, sustainable change can be achieved. Training for the child-centered, family-focused toolkit will begin for all CPS workers in November 2010. In addition, CPS workers and Supervisors involved in FAR will be receiving training through the American Humane Association. Family meetings and family group conferencing will be used as tools to bring extended family resources into the case. This will help provide support to the family unit without the need for on-going government involvement.

- e) A description of how the differential response program will enhance the ability of the district to protect children, maintain the safety of children and preserve families.

The FAR approach takes the focus off of making a determination as to whether abuse or maltreatment has occurred and what consequences there are to this behavior to instead focusing on long-term prevention of abuse and maltreatment. By taking away the stigma of an “indicated report”, FAR allows parents to lower their defenses and work with caseworkers to address areas of concern. The focus of FAR workers will be on service provision and safety, as opposed to investigation. Ideally, families will see our Agency as a support rather than an interference in their lives. Hopefully, we will then be able to encourage families to be an active part of safety planning for their children. This leads to safer children and stronger families.

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

Differential response focuses on short-term, front end service. By providing more intensive services at the initiation of the case, the hope is that there will be less need for long term Preventive Services. It is also anticipated that a successful FAR response will lead to a decreased likelihood of recurrence of SCR reports for the family. FAR cases will be open for approximately 60-90 days. During this time, needs will be assessed and referrals to appropriate community resources will be made. In addition, Caseworkers will work with the family to identify family resources and supports. Many services are available to address concerns related to mental health issues, domestic violence, substance abuse and parenting that do not require on-going government involvement.

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

The current CPS Supervisor will directly supervise FAR workers and FAR cases. Initially, we plan to have 3 (which is 1/3 of our current CPS staff) Caseworkers carrying strictly FAR cases. Caseworkers who are interested in FAR will be asked to volunteer.

Cayuga County has a Caseworker who recently transferred from another County. This worker had previously been trained in FAR and was carrying a FAR caseload before his transfer. He has expressed an interest in being involved in FAR in Cayuga County if we are approved. In addition, several of our own workers have previously worked in Preventive Services and have a strong background in service provision. They also have a good knowledge base of community resources. At the time of the implementation, we plan to have approximately 1/3 of our cases follow the FAR track. As workers gain more experience, we hope to increase this to approximately 50% of all cases.

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

Have everyone attend 2 day training because skills are applicable to all CPS Caseworkers. Have had an offer from 2 contiguous counties to have our workers come and shadow their FAR workers.

Family Engagement Training
Training on the use of Family Group Conferencing
Training on the Assessment Tool

All CPS Caseworkers will attend the 2 day FAR training, as well as training on safety and risk assessments.

Currently, all CPS Caseworkers are required to attend Common Core for child welfare workers and CPS Response Training which trains them to appropriately complete safety and risk assessments, assess for strengths and needs and engage with families. With the implementation of FAR, everyone will attend the 2 day FAR training because the skills learned are applicable to all CPS Caseworkers. In addition, workers will also receive specialized training to improve their family engagement skills. This includes working with the Family Engagement Specialist to provide training on Locating and Engaging Father's Tool Kit. Due to the fact many of our current CPS workers do not have much experience with family group conferencing, training in how to utilize this process will be provided. Workers will also need to be trained on the use of the assessment tool, the process for selecting a case for the Far track and connections documentation.

- i.) A description of the community resources that are proposed to be used in the family assessment and services track.

Community resources that will be available and utilized as necessary are mental health counseling, substance abuse services, domestic violence services, parenting education,

MR/DD services, family support services, housing and any other services that would routinely be used by our agency.

- j.) A description of any additional funding (beyond the regular child welfare finance mechanisms) that may be utilized to enhance the differential response program;

Cayuga County will require a dedicated source of funding for the Community resources that will support this initiative. Any available state funding to support flexible funding would be appreciated. We will use TANF resources whenever possible and wrap around funds to be provided by FAR pilot.

- k.) A description of the protocol to be followed for handling cases in the family assessment services track when domestic violence is suspected or confirmed. The protocol must address the need to maintain the safety of the children.

SCR reports in which the primary allegations in the report surround a particular incident of domestic violence will not be included as a FAR case in the original phase of implementation. As a previously designated FAR case is evolving, new information may become available that there are underlying issues regarding domestic violence in the home. At that time, worker will continue to assess safety for the family and make a determination after consulting with the Supervisor if the case should continue as a FAR case or be transferred back to an investigation. The worker will also make appropriate referrals to the Domestic Violence Intervention Program for advocacy and assistance for the victim.

- l.) A description of your plan to involve community agencies, schools, Family Court, other key stakeholders in your County or catchment area, and the Community as a whole in planning for and a family assessment response.

Cayuga County will hold multiple stakeholders meetings with hospitals, Family Court, schools, contract agencies, mental health providers, DV and service providers throughout the development and implementation of the FAR process. An initial meeting will be held to explain about Family Assessment Response, as well as the specific training our staff has used to do this work, including child-centered, Family-focused Training and the Training from AHA, we anticipate handing out power points that we find in the public folders or at AHA trainings to enhance the stakeholders' knowledge of the process and the process that our County is planning to use to successfully implement FAR. We will ask for input from stakeholders on their ideas regarding FAR and how their services can assist our Agency's FAR workers.

- m.) Please indicate your projected timeline for implementation.

We understand that OCFS has planned training for January 2011. We plan to be prepared, with staff in place, for an implementation date of March 1, 2011.