

**GUIDELINES FOR USE OF SCREENING TOOL AND PROCESS FOR
TRACK ASSIGNMENT
COLUMBIA COUNTY FAMILY ASSESSMENT RESPONSE**

The goal of the screening process is to determine the most appropriate response when the report is assigned.

The Family Assessment Response is considered the preferred approach for reports received by Columbia County DSS unless the report involves allegations considered ineligible (see screening tool for track assignment and flow chart).

Upon receipt, all CPS reports will be screened using the Screening Tool for Track Assignment and this process. A decision will be made, before contact with people named in the report, whether the family will be approached with the CPS response or the Family Assessment Response.

The decision will be recorded on the screening tool and approved by the Grade B CPS Supervisor. The supervisor's approval will be documented with the supervisor signature on the screening tool. The completed screening tool will be in the case file.

After the report is screened, the family will be approached with the selected response according to requirements, including mandated timeframes and procedures.

Screening should not delay responding to safety issues with children. Safety is our primary priority. Screening should also meet all requirements for safety assessments (24 hour safety assessment, 7 day assessment).

Who will screen reports:

- Supervisors
- CPS/FAR staff
- On call staff

For reports which are received during business hours:

If the report meets the criteria for a CPS investigation, the Grade B CPS Supervisor will immediately complete the screening tool for track assignment and assign the report for CPS investigation.

If the report needs further screening, the assigned FAR caseworker will immediately screen the report but no later than 24 hours from receipt of report. Screening should not delay responding to safety issues. A supervisor will approve the track assignment immediately or within 24 hours of receipt of report.

For reports which are received after business hours:

On call staff will screen reports and complete the screening tool for track assignment while they are on call. If assistance with screening reports is needed, on call staff should contact the assigned on-call consultant.

Screening reports should not delay responding to safety issues. Safety is our primary priority. 24 hours safety assessments are required.

How to use the Screening Tool for Track Assignment:

Complete case name, case ID, and Date of report

If the allegations are consistent with any of the allegations listed in section 1, check the box(es), sign the form, and the report will receive a CPS response.

If the allegations are not listed in section 1, or, after contacting the source you find out the allegations are not listed in section 1:

Gather additional information to determine which track would be appropriate.

Those reports requiring an investigation listed on the screening tool, those reports which are likely going to require Article X action (Family Court neglect and abuse petitions in order to protect the child, removal, etc) and those reports where we are not likely to be able to engage with the family are most appropriate for the CPS track.

History

Completely reviewing history and documenting the review in progress notes is a requirement, in order to assess safety and risk, plan the intervention, and gather information to plan and complete the investigation. “Within 1 business day of the report, CPS staff must review the SCR records pertaining to all prior reports involving members of the family, including legally sealed unfounded reports where the current report involves a subject of the unfounded report, a child named in the unfounded report, or a child’s sibling named in the unfounded report... Within 5 business days of the report, the CPS staff must review its own CPS records that apply to the prior reports, including legally sealed unfounded reports...and must request relevant portions of any other county’s records within 1 business day of the report.” (NYCRR 432.2 (3)) The purpose of reviewing the SCR history immediately for screening, is to determine which track may be most appropriate, and begin to gather information for either response.

When reviewing the Connections history immediately for track assignment, it may not be possible to review all the records before the track assignment decision is

made. It is required for both CPS and FAR to complete the review in the timeframes above.

Those reports requiring an investigation by law, and those reports which are likely going to require Article 10 action (protection of the child by Family Court, removal, etc), and those reports where we are not likely to be able to engage the parents, are most appropriate for the CPS track. When screening for track assignment, look for:

- Were there indicated CPS reports? About what?
- Was there previous Article X intervention?
- What was the family's response? Will the family likely cooperate?
- If changes were necessary, did the family make changes?
- If services were needed, did the family participate?
- Did the family work with services providers, including CPS?
- Did the family refuse to work with services providers, including CPS?
- Are there indications there were strengths and supports which might be engaged in either response?
- If there are reports from other counties, document results of review of those as well. (It may take longer to document these)

Contact with source

Documenting contact with the source in progress notes is required. The purpose of the contact with the source is to gather information regarding child safety and risk, and information and evidence for the CPS intervention and investigation. The additional purpose is to gather information about which track may be most appropriate. Remember to ask their opinion, let them talk, listen.

Consider, with the source, and document

- What are the concerns about the children (what happened, witnesses, where, how, why)
- Is the child safe? Is anyone else concerned? About what?
- What is your involvement? Others? Have you/someone tried to intervene with the family to address the concern? What are the family members' reactions?
- What's going well for this family? What's worked?
- Is the family working with someone else?
- What are your reasons for making the report at this time? What do you hope to achieve?
- What do you think should happen?
- What are the strengths and supports the family has?
- What are you comfortable with?
- What would be the best way for me to approach this family?
- Can you be a support to the family throughout this intervention?
- Can you help somehow? Who else might? Other questions for me?

Contact with others

Contact with others to plan the CPS intervention may be necessary. It may also help to determine which track may be most appropriate. DSS staff, law enforcement, school personnel, or others may have information, to determine not only whether the child(ren) has been abused or neglected and whether the child(ren) is safe, but how we can intervene to help the child and family. In addition, this information may be used to determine track assignment.

Document the results of your contacts in the progress notes. Complete the rest of the screening tool and the recommended decision. Sign and date the form and receive supervisor approval and signature and date. Screening should be completed immediately but no later than 24 hours and must not delay responding to safety issues.

The screening tool for Track Assignment will be filed in the hard copy of the case record.

Team decision making and conflict resolution

It may be necessary to make these decisions as a team, particularly in those situations where it is not clear which track the report should be assigned to or in situations where domestic violence or substance abuse is suspected.

The goal is to try to put the report into the most appropriate track when it is assigned.

If there is question or disagreement about which track the report will be assigned to, this must be immediately taken up the chain of command for resolution.