

Cattaraugus County
Family Assessment Response Application
4/09

Any social services district wishing to implement a Child Protective Services (CPS) differential response (which OCFS shall refer to as family assessment response) program must apply to OCFS to participate by submitting a plan for implementation. Any plan approved will be posted on OCFS' website within 60 days of such approval, as required by Chapter 452 of the Laws of 2007. The plan must address all the criteria listed below:

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;

• Please address the criteria by which you will assign reports to the family assessment and services track;

Cattaraugus County will assign to the FAR track primarily reports alleging Educational Neglect.

The family assessment response will be provided for those families where it appears, after initial assessment, that court ordered intervention and evidence collection is not going to be necessary and that the safety of children will not be compromised

The following types of reports would be **excluded** prior to investigation:

- Reports involving licensed facilities, foster homes or day care
- Reports involving families receiving services in an open case with the Department
- Reports involving a fatality
- Reports involving children taken into protective custody
- Reports involving children currently involved in an Article 10 out-of-home placement
- Reports involving allegations that would constitute a crime if found to be true
- Reports involving allegations that, if found true, would result in the filing of a petition in Family Court
- Reports alleging sexual abuse
- Reports alleging domestic violence
- Reports involving DSS employees, or other "sensitive" reports
- Reports to which Cattaraugus is secondary or any cross-county reports
- Court-ordered investigations
- Reports on an open investigation.

Families with no SCR history will be a priority, although we will be open to considering a FAR response to a family with prior SCR history if there is reason to believe the FAR response might produce a different outcome.

The anticipated percentage of reports that you are projecting will be handled through the family assessment and services track in the first 12 months of implementation:

5-10% for the first year.

The particular units and/or workers who will be involved, if it is not initially to be done county-wide:

Cattaraugus County CPS has workers in two geographic units, therefore one caseworker in each of those units will take FAR cases which will be assigned, for the most part, based on the locality of families. At least initially, these two CPS caseworkers will have a mixed FAR/traditional CPS caseload. Depending on which workers choose to work the FAR tract, two of the three CPS supervisors will, therefore, be monitoring FAR cases. Initially, the 1 to 9 PM shift CPS caseworkers will not be assigned FAR cases.

Because some of the FAR cases will eventually be referred to contract school-based programming, whose cases are monitored by a DSS PINS Prevention Supervisor, that supervisor will sometimes become case manager for FAR cases which require more community/school-based interventions.

Any phase-in or rollout plans:

January 2010 phase-in of Educational Neglect cases without other restrictive criteria (listed above).

The assessment process regarding child safety and risk as well as the types of services and interventions to be provided to families included in the family assessment and services track and a description of how the services will be offered:

Please describe the assessment process that you will use to assess child safety, risk to children and family strengths and needs:

- A CPS report is received and screened by a supervisor(s) for potential inclusion in the family assessment and services track using a version of an already tried screening tool (to be determined).
- Cattaraugus County CPS workers will Immediately begin assessing strengths, needs, and risks, in partnership with the family. 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.
- Once the initial assessment is completed, the caseworker will complete a 7 day safety assessment to assure that safety needs have been addressed. We will meet with parents to explain the FAR process and to engage them in the family assessment. We will obtain permissions from the parent(s) 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 that the case will be FAR-track. Strengths and needs assessment will be conducted in partnership with the family and will identify family strengths and

needs, giving high priority to the child's well being. The assessment process will include records review, personal interviews with family members including parents and children, and with family supports and other stakeholders. Whenever useful, the caseworker will employ a solution-focused approach.

Please describe the plan for linking families with those goods and services that address their identified needs, including what services will be provided by county CPS or preventive 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.

- A full array of services will be made available through the department, including casework counseling, psychological and psychiatric counseling, parenting skills training and modeling, budgeting and home management services, among others. Referrals will also be made intra-departmentally with families for medical and financial temporary assistance, food stamps, HEAP and job searches and training. Caseworkers will also help families connect with the Cattaraugus County One-Stop for job training and job search, and will refer family members to other community providers as appropriate.

- 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, home visiting, teen parenting services, counseling, public health nurse services, WIC, health services, mental health services, classes such as parenting, anger management, aggression replacement training, parent support services, and support groups, among others.

- Families can be referred to services both contractual and non-contractual with the County.

- DSS has been a long term partner with other county and community human service agencies including the Department of Community Services (mental health), the Youth Bureau, and the Probation Department, as well as many other community agencies, including those contracted with DSS to provide school/community-based prevention work. These agencies meet every Friday in the Juvenile Needs Task Force to discuss youth that could be moving toward the JD/PINS system, with the intent of "brainstorming" options to help these families keep the youth successfully within their homes and communities. DSS is a member of the SPOA committees (children's and adult).

- Both the Commissioner and Director of Services are members of the CCSI Tier II Committee, which helps provide direction for youth services in the County, and DSS remains a partner with the Youth Bureau in sustaining the Integrated County Planning process.

- When useful, the caseworker will utilize one of the three agencies contracted to DSS to provide Family Group Conferencing.

- Cattaraugus County has contracted with a Voluntary Agency and with a

Community Agency for school-based prevention services. Two of those services are truancy prevention, and one is a school and community-based PINS prevention program. The truancy programs are operating out of seven school districts in the County. The PINS prevention, Families and Schools Together program operates in all county school districts.

If a caseworker feels that a family in the FAR tract may require case supervision after 30 days, or if the family requires intensive truancy related issues involving much work in the school, or both, the case will be “passed” from the CPS unit to the JD/PINS unit. There one of the school-based programs will work intensively with the youth in school, as well as working with other family members. JD/PINS DSS supervisors will monitor the casework, as they do with non-FAR cases in PINS Diversion.

A description of the process to be followed for planning and monitoring the services provided under the family assessment and services track. Please include how the assessments and services provided directly by LDSS as well as those provided by agencies under contract with LDSS and those provided by other community agencies will be developed and monitored for quality and adherence to negotiated principles and expectations:

- Initial FAR services will be provided by Cattaraugus County CPS workers, and monitored directly by their supervisors. CPS FAR workers will work a case, generally, from 7 to 14 days before handing it off to contract agency workers. However, there may be times when CPS FAR caseworkers can close a case within a month. Those cases would remain with CPS FAR caseworkers until the FAR case is closed. CPS supervisors will monitor cases through the use of Connections and case conferences. Established FAR milestones will be tracked and reviewed by the caseworker and the supervisor. Case documentation will capture significant case events, including services provided.
- Generally speaking, however, a FAR case will be handed to a contract truancy prevention worker between a week to 14 days of a report. At that time the CPS worker, contract agency staff and the family will come together to develop an initial services program.
- Once contract agency staff has begun working with the family, the JD/PINS supervisor will become case manager in Connections. Again, FAR milestones will be tracked and reviewed by the contract worker and the supervisor in case conferences and in Connections. Also, FAR outcomes will be added to the Outcomes for each of these preventive contract agencies and monitored by the JD/PINS Supervisor.
- Recidivism for CPS-track and FAR-track reports will be followed by the CPS support staff and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

A description of how the principles of family involvement and support

consistent with maintaining the safety of the child(ren) will be implemented in the family assessment and services track.

- **Please describe your County's core practice principles upon which the family assessment response is designed:**

For several years, Cattaraugus County DSS has been working on a Service Plan Review project to create more strengths-based Service Plan Reviews with a focus on family input in their services plans. This project has led the Services Unit of the Department to a more strengths-based, participatory focus "across the board".

Caseworkers have had training in Solution-focused casework practices and in the facilitation of strengths-based discussions with families and providers. We have provided training to staff on discussion facilitation itself. Caseworkers are spending more time reviewing family goals and achievements with family members, and discussing with the family how best to meet their needs and build on their strengths.

We have worked to make our plans, assessments and Parent Handbooks more understandable to the families we serve.

All in all, we have worked hard to maintain the safety of children while building upon the strengths of their families. We also seek family involvement in plans to help strengthen their families.

Please describe the approach you will take, and the strategy behind such an approach, to more actively engage and empower families in (i) assessment of their strengths, (ii) assessing their needs, and (iii) in decision-making, while at the same time reassessing child safety, as need be:

Caseworkers will employ a more solution-focused practice which will lay groundwork for engaging families to identify their strengths and the conditions/situations underlying safety and risk issues. Workers will engage families to build a family-driven plan that can support sustained change. This engagement will help to identify and utilize families' protecting factors to address child safety and risk.

Family Group Conferencing will also be utilized to encourage families, including extended family members and family resources to make plans utilizing family, neighborhood and community resources.

Cattaraugus County human service departments and other community human service agencies have also developed a protocol for cross-systems conferences. When it is learned by any of the "systems", e.g. DSS, mental health, OMRDD-licensed programs, schools, or probation, that a family is working with one or more of the systems, workers from any of the programs may ask the family if they are interested in participating in a cross-systems dialogue.

Families are often eager to participate, as it alleviates some of the burden of them attending multiple meetings and conferences, and allows for more streamlined, focused services for the family. Family participation and a strengths-based approach are central to these discussions.

We consider the following factors to be critical to child welfare work, and essential for FAR casework:

- Safety – FAR workers will continuously monitor for the safety of children. When necessary, family plans may need to be altered to address safety issues. If addressing new safety issues or re-addressing safety issues with new alternatives does not work, the family may be referred back to the CPS tract.
- Family voice and choice - Family and youth/child perspectives are intentionally elicited and prioritized during all phases of the process. Planning is grounded in family members' perspectives.
- Natural supports – Family resources are drawn from family members' networks of interpersonal and community relationships as much as possible.
- Community-based - The family plan will implement service and support strategies that take place in the most inclusive, most responsive, most accessible, and least restrictive settings possible, and that safely promote child and family integration into home and community life.
- Collaboration – Families and caseworkers will work toward pulling together all resources working with the family to cooperatively implement, monitor, and evaluate a single wraparound plan. The plan will reflect a blending of team members' perspectives, mandates, and resources. The plan will guide and coordinate each team member's work towards meeting the family's goals.
- Culturally competent – Work with families will demonstrate knowledge of and respect for the values, preferences, beliefs, and culture of the child/youth and family, and their community. Cattaraugus County has worked extensively with the Seneca Nation of Indians to develop culturally-appropriate child welfare procedures.
- Strengths based - The differential program response process and family Plan will identify, build on, and enhance the capabilities, knowledge, skills, and assets of the child and family, their resources, and their community.
- Persistence - Despite challenges, the team persists in working toward the goals included in the wraparound plan until the team reaches agreement that a formal wraparound process is no longer required.
- Outcome-based. - Family goals and strategies will include observable or measurable indicators of success, and family success in the FAR tract will be monitored in part by the terms of these indicators. When necessary, the plan will be revised according to these indicators.

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.

• Please describe how the district will engage the family without increasing the involvement of government agencies without compromising safety of children:

FAR workers will continuously monitor for the safety of children. When necessary, family plans may need to be altered to address safety issues. If addressing new safety issues or re-addressing safety issues with new

alternatives does not work, the family may be referred back to the investigative track.

By identifying a family's strengths and needs and providing intensive, appropriate and/or tangible services immediately upon receipt of the report, differential response will open a dialogue between the department and the families, allowing the family to view the department's involvement as less punitive and more supportive in nature. We hope that families will more readily engage in taking the precautions necessary to maintain the long-term safety and well-being of their children. Our decision to focus primarily on first time reports will allow us to intervene with families and build strengths before risky behaviors and conditions become entrenched. We are also optimistic that others in the community might be more willing to work in partnership with DSS if they see we are making every effort to assist the family. The partnership between DSS and school districts should be especially strengthened, given our initial emphasis on CPS Educational Neglect reports.

We hope that the key accomplishment of this initiative will be to link willing families to family, neighborhood and community resources in a way that promotes their independence and their capacity to become stronger families. We expect a reduction of family involvement with government agencies as a natural result due to their involvement with community based services and because the use of natural supports will become a way of life for our families, thereby reducing repeat CPS reports and the associated re-initiation of government in their lives. We will work diligently with DSS financial services and employability, when appropriate, to help these families eventually become financially stable without government assistance.

Please describe 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.

FAR workers will assess the strengths and needs of families, and will work with families to include natural supports such as extended family, friends, and other community resources (such as educational, religious, job and career resources) in the planning process with families. We assume that this will reduce families' dependence on more formal government services.

We see this as a way to "teach them to fish": that is, that FAR families can become more adept at meeting family challenges by "dropping hook" into the family, neighborhood and community resources available to them not just for concrete needs such as food, clothing and shelter, but also to help meet their social, emotional and spiritual needs.

Please describe the staff resources proposed to be used in the family assessment and services track, including the proposed staff workloads and qualifications. Please include

- **How you plan to assign or recruit DSS staff to respond to a CPS**

report through the family assessment response track and whether staff will be involved in both the family assessment response track and the traditional CPS investigations:

Reports will be assigned to one of two FAR caseworkers based primarily on geography. (Due to the geographic size of Cattaraugus County, our day shift consists of two teams with territories. One CPS caseworker in each territory will have a combined traditional CPS/FAR caseload initially.)

The CPS case supervisor and the two CPS unit supervisors will work as a team to determine which cases will go into the FAR tract. Often, Child Welfare and JD/PINS supervisors, and possibly the Director of Services, will be drawn into the assessment process to help determine whether or not the dual-response tract is appropriate for a family.

CPS FAR workers will generally maintain cases for between seven and 14 days before handing them over to the contracted truancy-prevention workers.

Initially, the 1 to 9PM CPS workers will not be assigned FAR cases..

FAR cases will be supervised by CPS unit supervisors and the CPS case supervisor until they are passed to the contract program personnel. The JD/PINS Unit Supervisor and Case Supervisor will supervise the FAR tract cases open with the contract agencies.

- **An indication of the use of any and all specialized staff/resources that will impact on the implementation of FAM:**

All CPS, Child Welfare, and JD/PINS staff have had some Solution-Focused training, and all have some experience utilizing Family Group Conferencing. Some CPS, Child Welfare and JD/PINS caseworkers and supervisors have been involved several years in our Service Plan Review project which has helped us become more strengths-based. All Child Welfare and JD/PINS staff have been utilizing our designed Service Plan Review Process, and CPS workers have been involved as case monitors.

Our Service Plan Reviewer (part-time caseworker) is also the coordinator for Family Group Conferencing for the Department. She would continue in this capacity for workers in the FAR process. Also, DSS is contracted with three community agencies to provide Family Group Conferencing facilitation.

The Service Plan Reviewer is also the coordinator for DSS referrals to Cross-Systems reviews.

Any FAR-tract families that include a youth who may have been brought to Probation with PINS issues (i.e., truancy) can also be brought to the Juvenile Needs Task Force for suggestions regarding programming.

DSS staff and contract agency workers have attended many and diverse trainings.

The Department has its own Staff Resource person to research and set up training that might become useful for the dual-response process. The Staff Resource person will be able to pull up the training record of any DSS staff, if that is required or useful.

The Department has its own Information Services staff to help caseworkers and ancillary staff (e.g. truancy program staff) get (or remain) active in Connections.

Please describe 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 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:

In March 2009, Regional OCFS staff met with CPS supervisors as a preliminary informational meeting regarding FAR. FAR is a continued topic of discussion in supervisory meetings. Until January 2010, we will continue to hold meetings with all supervisors and eventually all Services staff to refine the FAR process.

If and when this application is successful, DSS administration will meet with Berkshire Farm and Cattaraugus Community Action administration to discuss how our contracted Attendance Support (truancy prevention) programming can become part of the FAR process.

Some time in the late summer or early autumn of 2009 we expect to provide a "community meeting", perhaps utilizing the Integrated County Planning meeting forum, to speak with the Community regarding FAR. We will also put FAR on the agendas of the CCSI II meeting, the DSS Advisory Board (where it has already been discussed in March of 2009), and a Cattaraugus County School Superintendents' Meeting. Although FAR has been a continued topic of discussion at DSS Management Team Meetings, we will provide an informational session for all DSS non-Services staff at about that time as well, and we will arrange a meeting with the Family Court Judge and all other judicial personnel involved with child welfare.

In the summer of 2009, we will begin to pull together all CPS staff and all affected contractual staff to work toward FAR implementation. We will work as a team to decide on various elements of FAR, including choice of an assessment tool. We will continue to meet until, and after, FAR implementation in January 2010.

CPS and involved contractual staff will be oriented to the family assessment and services track approach and will receive training on the use of the chosen screening tool in anticipation of a January start-up. All training will include an emphasis on the unaltered principle that child safety remains a primary focus during all phases of agency involvement. 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. Additionally, staff will be trained to communicate these principles.

All DSS CPS staff has received Core and specialized CPS training. Prior to FAR implementation, all CPS workers and contract agency staff working in the FAR tract will attend a safety and risk training.

Contract agency staff have attended many of the trainings offered to DSS employees. Each agency has also provided training to its workers. For example, Berkshire Farm offers a six-week Caseworker Training and a three day New-employee training. All preventive workers contracted with DSS have been trained in Connections.

FAR workers will also need to be trained (or refreshed) in strengths-based interviewing and engagement, and also in meeting facilitation with families and their natural supports. It would be very useful if these trainings could include a field coaching component.

Whenever possible, community agency staff have been included with DSS staff in the extensive training provided by and for DSS caseworkers including trainings on psychiatric and psychological conditions and treatments, medical conditions, social and educational issues, and demographic and cultural conditions and circumstances, and social work issues and service provision updates.

Since we will initiate FAR with reports of educational neglect, all FAR workers will attend an educational law training before, or soon after, FAR implementation.

Please describe the community resources that are proposed to be used in the family assessment and services track:

As stated, contracted community truancy prevention services will be used with many of the FAR-tract educational neglect cases.

FAR workers, both CPS and contract, will also utilize the array of services also used by CPS, Child Welfare, JD/PINS and Adult Services, including but not limited to casework counseling, psychiatric and psychological, medical, parenting, budgeting, emergency and temporary assistance with finances and medical care, job training and job search, educational, anger management, legal, domestic violence services, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, and many others. Many of these services are paid for through Preventive 65%-35% funding or FFFS dollars. Others are paid directly out of Title XX.

Some of these services are paid through Medicaid or Health Insurance policies. Some other temporary and emergency assistance needs and job training and employment search will be paid through TANF or Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding.

The Cattaraugus County Youth Bureau's AmeriCorps program has been a major component of PINS Diversion programming for many years. We are hopeful that the increase in AmeriCorps funding will provide opportunities for AmeriCorps involvement with youth and families in the FAR tract, in school, at home, and in the community.

Please describe of any additional funding (beyond the regular child welfare finance mechanisms) that may be utilized to enhance the differential

response program:

We are very hopeful that we will be able to utilize OCFS “wraparound” dollars for those times that these traditional funding sources are not available, such as car repairs to help families maintain appointments, home repairs to keep homes safe and nurturing, etc.

Please describe 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 child(ren).

- **If you plan to collaborate with your local domestic violence service provider concerning any aspects of your family assessment and services track, please describe such collaboration.**

New reports with specific allegations or concerns regarding domestic violence or which include verified incidents of domestic violence will not be included in the FAR tract.

As incidents or allegations surface on those cases already referred to FAR, caseworkers and supervisors will hold immediate case reviews, possibly with administrative staff, to determine whether the case should remain with the FAR tract, or whether the case should go through the traditional CPS process. We may be able to continue to provide a family assessment response to those already-established FAR cases when DV comes to the surface in situations where CPS safety interventions and neglect/abuse petitions would not be necessary. If we were to continue to work with these families in FAR, we would need to collaborate with Cattaraugus Community Action (CCA), our local domestic violence service provider. We will develop specific protocols related to dual-response with our staff and the CCA domestic violence staff. The family assessment response to these reports will be provided in a manner which ensures the victim and the child(ren) are safe and that the response supports the adult who has been perpetrated, and that it holds the perpetrator, not the perpetrated, accountable. FAR workers will connect these families with the appropriate additional services. It is possible that FAR will allow victims more control and a greater ability to influence the case planning process than would the traditional CPS tract.

Please describe 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 implementing a family assessment response:

Cattaraugus is a very collaborative county, and has a long history of positive working relationships between the social services, educational, religious and employment communities. The multitude of working relationships that have been established through this collaboration will help us to bring FAR to the attention of other organizations, and help to make them working partners in the process.

DSS has been a long term partner with other county and community

human service agencies such as the Department of Community Services (mental health), the Youth Bureau, and the Probation Department, as well as many other community agencies, including those contracted with DSS to provide school/community-based prevention work. These agencies meet every Friday in the Juvenile Needs Task Force to discuss families with youth that could be moving toward the JD/PINS system, with the intent of “brainstorming” options to help these families keep the youth successfully within their homes and communities.

DSS is also a member of the SPOA committees (children’s and adult).

Both the Commissioner and Director of Services are members of the CCSI Tier II Committee, as are other human services and school district representatives. This Committee provides direction for youth services in the County. FAR will be on the agenda of an upcoming CCSI II meeting.

DSS remains a partner with the Youth Bureau in sustaining the Integrated County Planning process. There are over 100 school districts, agencies, churches and businesses represented with ICP. We will also continue to give FAR updates at ICP meetings.

We will put FAR on the agenda of the monthly School Superintendents’ meeting. The establishment of truancy-prevention programming in several of our school districts is helping us establish good working relationships with schools, especially regarding truancy issues. Also, through our COPS programming we have Juvenile Probation officers working out of schools. These will be useful venues for helping FAR become positively entrenched in the County educational system.

DSS has a very good working relationship with the Family Court. We will establish an informational and question and answer session for Court staff and ancillary legal staff.

Please indicate your projected timeline for implementation:

(Please see attached timeline.)