



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

900 East College Way, Suite 200 • Mount Vernon, WA • 98273-5625
TDD - 360-416-7222 • Voice - 360-416-7200 • Toll-Free - 800-785-5582 • FAX - 360-416-7202

Dear community leaders:

The Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration is transforming how we respond to certain reports of child abuse and neglect.

Businesses and community organizations will play a critical role in the success of this new statewide CPS pathway called Family Assessment Response (FAR). We will phase-in FAR over the next couple of years, as funding allows.

Child safety will always be at the heart of our work. FAR provides an alternative pathway to a Child Protective Services investigation for families when we receive reports of low- to moderate-risk child abuse and neglect. Our research shows other states that are using similar programs have found the children of families engaged in FAR are as safe or safer than those involved in traditional investigations.

The FAR pathway differs from the CPS investigative pathway in that it allows FAR staff to work with families to assess the circumstances that contributed to concerns about child maltreatment without conducting an investigation. FAR caseworkers will partner with families to identify the services and supports they need. They will work with families to access those services and supports in the community. FAR emphasizes the family as the expert and places them at the center of decision making.

Community engagement is a critical component of FAR. We believe every community wants its children to be safe and well-cared for. We will be working with communities in new and exciting ways to identify, build, and coordinate support and services that will respond to families' self-identified needs.

We would like to meet with you to tell you more about the FAR model, how it differs from current practice, our plans for rolling it out, and how you can become a partner in this innovative approach to child welfare.

We look forward to talking with you about this change in our practice. Please contact Heidi Kennedy, at 416-7120, to schedule a meeting to learn more about FAR.

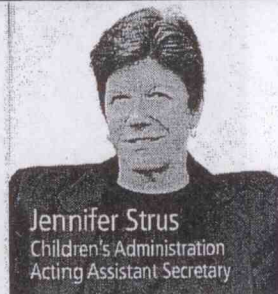
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Washington State Children's Administration Family Assessment Response **FAR News**

SPRING 2013 ISSUE



Welcome to Children's Administration's first quarterly Family Assessment Response (FAR) Newsletter



Jennifer Strus
Children's Administration
Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration is launching an innovative, alternative Child Protective Services pathway – Family Assessment Response, or FAR. FAR caseworkers will respond to families with low to moderate risk allegations of child abuse and neglect. This is an exciting opportunity for us to better serve these families.

States with programs similar to FAR have found that families who engage in these services have:

- Increased safety – fewer children have new reports of child abuse and neglect.
- A more positive experience with their child welfare caseworker.
- Better relationships with their communities.

As a result, fewer families return to the child welfare system.

Children's Administration will roll out FAR statewide over the next two and a half years, as funding allows. The first office will begin offering the FAR pathway in January 2014. We will use this newsletter to keep you updated on our progress.

"This is an exciting opportunity for us to better serve these families."

Twelve offices around the state are conducting readiness assessments to help us decide where to begin. I recognize that it has taken a lot of time and effort from the regional and office staff who have been working on the readiness assessments to make FAR a reality in

Washington. Their efforts will help transform our practice and improve the lives of children and families involved in the child welfare system.

As time goes on, we will share lessons learned, best practices and FAR success stories from around the state. We will continue our focus on the safety of children while we work with their families to develop skills and community support systems to help them keep their kids safely at home.

I would like to thank the Legislature, Tribes, and the Title IV-E Advisory Committee for championing FAR and the Children's Administration staff who have already devoted significant time to getting this initiative off the ground. Without this help, FAR would not be possible.

I look forward to hearing from you as we continue our work together.

FAR IS SAFE

Child safety is always our first priority. The FAR caseworker will assess child safety throughout the life of the case. If a caseworker believes a child is at risk of harm, he/she will take immediate action to secure the child's safety. FAR will enhance our ability to protect children, maintain the safety of children, and preserve families through collaborative partnerships.

PAYING FOR FAR

All states receive federal funding for child welfare from Title IV-E funds. These funds support children in foster care. Washington was one of only nine states to receive a Title IV-E Waiver. This waiver gives the state flexibility to reinvest IV-E funding to keep children safe at home as we safely reduce the number of children in foster care. We are reinvesting these funds to implement the FAR pathway.

FAR Benefits Families

- Social workers partner with families to identify needs and to access services.
- Families engaged in FAR have no findings of abuse or neglect.
- Enhanced family engagement.
- Families learn how to access community resources.
- Families develop skills to meet challenges and prevent future child abuse and neglect.

For more information about FAR:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/about/far.asp>



Four FAR FAQs

What is FAR?

ANSWER: Family Assessment Response (FAR) is an alternative Child Protective Services (CPS) pathway. It gives us a new way to respond to screened-in reports of low to moderate abuse and neglect. Allegations of sexual abuse and high-risk physical abuse and neglect will continue to be investigated by CPS caseworkers. Child safety is at the heart of every CPS intervention.

The FAR caseworker will engage with families to assess the circumstances that led to the report. Caseworkers will work with families to identify community supports and services that will help them safely care for their children at home. A family's involvement in the FAR pathway is voluntary.

Why FAR?

ANSWER: Research shows that other states using similar programs have found the children of families engaged in FAR are as safe or safer than those involved in traditional investigations. Research also shows:

- Parents engaged in FAR receive more services to meet their children's basic needs.
- Caseworkers have better relationships with the families, which means families engage in services to keep their children safe sooner and more effectively.

In 2012, with input from Children's Administration leadership, Tribes and community partners, the legislature developed legislation that supports FAR.

What happens if a family refuses to participate in the FAR Assessment?

ANSWER: A CPS caseworker (from FAR or the investigative pathway) will respond to all allegations of abuse and neglect to address child safety concerns. FAR is a voluntary CPS pathway. Families who are eligible for a FAR intervention may choose to participate in a traditional CPS investigation instead. If a family refuses to participate in the initial assessment, the case will be transferred to the CPS investigative pathway.

What kind of training and tools will be available?

ANSWER: We are working with the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence to develop training for CA staff, Tribes, courts, mandated reporters and other community partners.

FAMLINK REVISIONS DESIGNED TO REDUCE DUPLICATION OF WORK

A workgroup of headquarters, field, and CATS staff have been working diligently to create tools designed to reduce duplicate documentation requirements in FamLink. Training on these new tools will begin this summer. These FamLink tools are scheduled for release in Fall 2013.

Schedule of Coming Events

February – April 2013

Phase 1 Office Readiness Assessments completed by 12 offices

April 24, 2013

Tribal Colloquium on FAR

May 2013

Select Phase 1 Offices for FAR Implementation

August 2013

Begin FAR /FamLink tools and practice training

Fall 2013

FamLink changes released

November - December 2013

FAR Training for Phase 1 Offices

January 2, 2014

Implement FAR Phase 1

Potential Family Needs on FAR Pathway

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Job or skills training
Job search
Parent support groups
Adult education classes (college)
Cooking and cleaning
Medical and dental
Counseling
Alcohol or drug treatment

SERVICES

Mental health treatment
Parenting classes
Drug or alcohol treatment
Early childhood education
Early Family Support Services (EFSS)

CONCRETE SUPPORTS

Appliance repair
Furniture
Food
Clothing
Utilities
Rent or housing support
Auto repair or transportation
Child care
Other supports

**FAMILY
NEED**

For more information about FAR, please contact:

Regional Leads

Region 1 Julie Ellis: (509) 363-3495

Region 2 Kara Rozeboom: (425) 673-3113

Region 3 Anita Teeter: (360) 725-6807

Headquarters Leads

Jeanne McShane: (360) 902-7858

Debbie Willis: (360) 902-0247