



# Implementation of Family Assessment Response

## What is Family Assessment Response?

Passed by the legislature in 2012, Family Assessment Response (FAR) is a Child Protective Services pathway that does not respond by doing an investigation, but instead through a family assessment. Family assessment does not include a determination as to whether child abuse or neglect occurred, which is part of an investigation, but does determine the need for services to address the safety of the child and the risk of subsequent maltreatment. FAR workers engage with families around safety issues but also work with the family to determine services needed to improve or restore family well-being.

## FAR Roll-Out

FAR is being rolled out across the state in a phased, geographical manner. Beginning in January 2014 with three offices (Aberdeen, Lynnwood, and Spokane), FAR is also now used in the following offices:

- Ellensburg
- Mount Vernon
- Martin Luther King (in Seattle)
- East Pierce County
- Select offices in Spokane
- Stevenson
- Moses Lake
- Richland
- Oak Harbor
- Peninsula (Forks, Port Angeles, Port Townsend)
- Vancouver

In January, 2015, FAR is expected to 'go live' in:

- All remaining Spokane offices
- Colville and Ferry Counties
- Newport
- Sky Valley
- Smokey Point
- South Bend
- Long Beach
- Pierce West

## Evaluation of FAR

The statute requires an evaluation of FAR by the WA State Institute of Public Policy, as well as the completion of two client satisfaction surveys:

- **Evaluation:** The Washington State Institute for Public Policy will conduct an evaluation of the

implementation of FAR. The institute will define the data to be gathered and maintained. At a minimum, the evaluation must address child safety measures, out-of-home placement rates, re-referral rates, caseload sizes and demographics. The institute shall deliver its first report no later than December 1, 2014, and its final report by December 1, 2016. Results from the first evaluation report are not yet available.

- **Survey:** The Department of Social and Health Services shall conduct two client satisfaction surveys of families that have engaged in the FAR pathway. The first survey results shall be reported no later than December 1, 2014. The second survey results shall be reported no later than December 1, 2016. Results from the first survey are not yet available.

## FAR Data to Date

Between January 1 and August 31, 2014, FAR workers have responded to 1,263 intakes. Of these:

- 33 were transferred to an investigation due to safety or risk concerns;
- 27 were transferred to investigation due to families who declined to participate in FAR; and
- 22 dependencies were filed by FAR workers.

According to the Children's Administration, if FAR were available statewide, it is estimated that 70 percent of intakes would be referred to FAR. This does not, however, take into account changes made by intake supervisors after reviewing the information received at intake, which is generally in the 5-10% range. At present, approximately 60 percent of intakes are referred to FAR in the 15 sites where FAR is available.

## Benefits and Challenges

A recent FAR Newsletter from the Children's Administration identified some of the benefits and challenges workers are experiencing, including:

### Benefits:

- There is more time to engage with families.
- Families are more willing to talk about things that are going on in their homes.
- Parents are more open to providing necessary collateral contacts.
- Parents have a lot more buy-in to the process.
- There is more focus on getting families connected

- to community resources.
- Children are often more likely to talk about their issues and concerns.

**Challenges:**

- Implementing a new program takes time.
- It can be difficult for workers to shift their thinking from that of being an investigator to doing an assessment.
- Getting parents to sign the required consent form can take time away from the assessment and subsequent connection to community resources. In addition, some families are hesitant to sign a consent form for fear that it admits any wrongdoing on their part.
- Concerns continue to be raised about whether FAR truly addresses safety issues.

## FAR Funding

In order to continue to successfully roll-out FAR statewide, adequate funding is critical. The Governor's proposed '15-'17 budget does not provide such funding based on current estimates of the cost. It is recommended that the legislature include appropriate funding for FAR workers and goods/services so that the FAR pathway can effectively work with families and achieve positive results.

## Information

More information on child welfare in Washington State can be found on our website, [www.partnersforourchildren.org](http://www.partnersforourchildren.org).

Please send your questions to:

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