

WASHINGTON STATE
TITLE IV-E DEMONSTRATION
PROJECT

SEMI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: JANUARY-
JUNE 2017

*WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL AND
HEALTH SERVICES
CHILDREN'S
ADMINISTRATION*

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Appendix A: TriWest Evaluation Report

I. Overview

Washington State passed legislation in 2012 requiring implementation of differential response in the state's public child welfare administration. On January 1, 2014, Children's Administration (CA) began providing Child Protective Services (CPS)-Family Assessment Response (FAR), the alternative response to a CPS investigation.

Status of CPS-FAR Implementation

Implementation of CPS-FAR statewide was completed on June 1, 2017. The following offices were well prepared for implementation and launched FAR during this reporting period:

- January 30, 2017 Wenatchee, Omak, Everett and Bellingham
- April 24, 2017 Yakima
- June 1, 2017 King Southeast and King Southwest

CPS-FAR Intake Data

CA has tracked CPS-FAR intake data since January 2014. Because the intake screening tool was updated and implemented in October 2013 (before CPS-FAR was implemented in every office), this action has allowed for review of intakes that would be screened-in to CPS-FAR even though the pathway was not yet available in a particular office. This data is collected at the point the screening decision is made by the intake worker. Intake supervisors change 5 – 10% of all intake worker screening decisions across programs, not only for CPS-FAR. Supervisors change intake screening decisions for a number of reasons, including family history of child abuse and neglect, additional information from collateral contacts, and disagreement with the intake worker's screening decision.

Data shows that cases are transferring from CPS-FAR to investigations 4.9% of the time which is consistent with the previous reporting period of 4.8%. The number of cases transferring to investigations for safety or risk concerns has risen while the number of cases transferring because of families declining to participate in FAR has decreased. In previous reports, CA provided hand count data on the number of dependency filings. CA will now reference the number of removals as reported in the TriWest IV-E evaluation (Appendix A). Removal means that a child was placed in out-of-home care, regardless of whether or not a dependency was filed. From January 2013 to June 2017 (cohorts 1-4), FAR families have lower removal rates than families who received tan investigation.

2017 Month	Intakes Assigned to CPS-FAR	CPS-FAR cases Transferred to Investigations Due to Safety or Risk Concerns	Families who Declined to Participate in CPS-FAR (Transferred to Investigations)	Percent Transferred to Investigations Total
January	1,440	41	17	4.0
February	1,393	29	24	3.8%
March	1,922	44	19	3.3%
April	1,664	44	13	3.4%
May	1,861	62	22	4.5%
June	1,732	29	9	2.2%
Total	10,012	351	137	4.9%

II. Demonstration, Activities, and Accomplishments

Training and Coaching

CPS-FAR training is developed and delivered via a partnership between CA and The Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence (Alliance) at the University of Washington, School of Social Work. Caseworkers and supervisors are surveyed after each training and the training is modified based on the feedback received. Child safety is at the core of this training. No significant changes were made to the FAR training during this reporting period.

FAR trainings were held on the following dates:

- January 9-12, 2017
- January 23-26, 2017
- March 29-30, 2017
- April 10-13, 2017
- April 18-21, 2017

In addition, two FAR Preview sessions were conducted. These sessions involve leadership in offices that are preparing to launch.

Now that the implementation phase is complete, a two-day CPS in-service will replace the four-day FAR training. This in-service will cover both CPS programs (FAR and investigations). Because the curriculum is currently under development, an interim plan was developed. A modified two-day FAR training will be delivered by regional state staff. This interim plan will continue until the CPS in-service curriculum has been completed.

Changes to CPS-FAR Practice and Policy

The existing intake chronicity screening indicator has been adjusted so that a third accepted CPS or CPS-FAR intake in a twelve-month period will screen to CPS-investigation rather than CPS-FAR. In addition, a new intake involving a child or household with a dependency case that was dismissed within the last 12 months will screen to CPS-investigation rather than CPS-FAR. These two policy changes took effect July 1, 2016. A data review suggests the changes had a minor impact on the percentage of cases screening to CPS-FAR versus CPS-investigations.

A policy change took effect in July 2016 which directs intakes to CPS-investigations when the allegation is related to child-on-child sexual contact or sexualized behaviors. Many of these intakes were previously going to CPS-FAR. How to handle these type of cases is addressed in the County Special Assault Protocols across the state. The protocols written by the county prosecutors in consultation with CA, first responders, medical providers, service providers and advocates, define circumstances in which a coordinated response to child abuse allegations is necessary.

A small pilot of an engagement tool began October 1, 2016 in three CPS-FAR offices. The pilot is called "The Difference Game." This tool was developed by the University of Washington and used by staff in their Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) with mothers whose substance abuse is negatively impacting the parenting and possibly the safety of their children. The Difference Game is a card-sorting tool which allows the client to

identify what would make the most difference in her life. The choices include a broad array of services and concrete needs with one “wild” card. The goal of the pilot is to strengthen engagement between the worker and the client with use of a client-driven tool. While some staff found the tool to be useful in their work with families, many staff found it awkward and/or unnecessary. The pilot ended December 31, 2016.

Provision of Concrete Goods

CA contracted with agencies in each of the three regions to purchase, store, and distribute concrete goods to families and CA offices across the state. This approach has proven to be a successful endeavor. Staff appreciate having necessary items on hand or easily accessible to them and families are getting items that they need in a timely and efficient manner. Initially only available to CPS-FAR, access to concrete goods has been expanded to include CPS investigations, parent-child visitation, reunification, and kinship care placement and licensing. Caseworkers are able to request items for families, such as diapers, cribs, housekeeping supplies, lice kits, and beds that are needed to address safety or risk concerns, support visitation, ease placement of children into safe kinship care, and assist kinship caregivers in becoming licensed. The contracted providers deliver the items to the local CA offices and directly to a family’s home. Many of the families served in child welfare have unmet basic needs impacting the parent’s ability to safely parent and reduce risk of abuse and neglect to their children. The intent of these contracts is to reduce barriers to obtaining these goods for families and streamline the process for distribution.

Targeted Case Review

The sixth and final targeted case review of CPS-FAR occurred March 1-3, 2017. This review was specifically for offices that launched FAR in 2016 and had not previously had a review. Eight reviewers electronically reviewed a total of 91 cases or approximately two cases per worker. The reviewers included area administrators, headquarter CPS-FAR and regional leads, CPS-FAR supervisors, regional safety administrators, quality practice specialists, and a Central Case Review team member. Four reviewers performed second reviews on approximately 40% of the cases, for quality assurance and consistency. The period under review was August 1, 2016 – February 17, 2017. After the review, the regional leads met with supervisors from offices that met or exceeded 80% compliance with the review measures. The methods and practices the supervisors used to achieve this level of success were discussed and shared in written format with all CPS-FAR supervisors.

Additional Activities for this Reporting Period

- Weekly CPS-FAR Project Team meetings to discuss implementation, policy and practice, successes, and challenges as well as planning for future CPS-FAR related activities.
- Monthly meetings between the CPS-FAR Project Team and the regional/ office CPS-FAR leads. The leads shared updates from their regions and local offices and bring issues to the attention of the CPS-FAR Project Team.
- The CPS-FAR Project Team conducted site visits to observe CPS-FAR operations at the local level, assessing unmet training needs, and providing case consultation, with the goal of supporting caseworkers and striving for fidelity to the CPS-FAR model. Offices visited during this period included: Everett, Bellingham, Spokane, Bellevue, Sunnyside, Yakima, and Wenatchee.
- Participation in monthly statewide CPS and Intake program manager meetings. The CPS-FAR Project Team also participates in monthly intake consultation calls with intake supervisors from across the

state. The intake consultation calls assist in developing statewide consistency in screening intakes for CPS investigation and the CPS-FAR pathways.

- Monthly meetings with TriWest Group, the contracted evaluator of CPS-FAR. The meetings cover activities and work accomplished over the previous month, allow opportunities for information sharing and more recently the review of preliminary data.
- Monthly meetings with Casey Family Programs to discuss FAR implementation.
- Two FAR implementation celebrations. One event was for the regional FAR leads, office leads, Alliance staff, and other regional and headquarters staff who helped support the launch of FAR. A second event included CA regional and headquarters leadership, Casey Family Programs, legislators, the Office of the Children and Families Ombuds, Alliance staff and members of the FAR Steering Committee.

Addressing Challenges to Implementation

Intake

The data below shows the percentage of intakes screened to both CPS-FAR and CPS-investigations, along with regional variations. These numbers reflect CPS intakes for offices that had the CPS-FAR pathway available during the reporting period.

Statewide CPS Intake Screening Decisions January-June 2017			
Location	Total Number of CPS Intakes	Percent of CPS-FAR Intakes	Percent of Intakes Investigated
Region 1	5,400	46%	54%
Region 2	9,672	49%	51%
Region 3	7,643	54%	46%
Statewide	19,715	49%	51%

Efforts to achieve consistency in screening and consensus in decision-making continue. These efforts include monthly intake consensus-building phone calls and monthly intake and CPS program leads meetings. Both of these allow for discussion about the screening tool, screening decisions, policy and practice.

CPS-FAR Agreement

State law requires CPS-FAR families to sign a participation agreement. If the family does not want to sign the agreement, the case is transferred to CPS-investigation. In discussions with CPS-FAR caseworkers about the agreement, the CPS-FAR Project Team learned that many of the families who chose not to participate in CPS-FAR did so because they did not want to sign the agreement. Some families indicated that signing the agreement meant they were admitting to abusing or neglecting their child and agreeing to participate in services. The parent's negative perception of the agreement appears to be a barrier to signing.

After some research with states that have differential response pathways, it appears that no other state requires a parent to sign a written agreement. TriWest Group, our contracted evaluator of FAR, has found that Native American families are more likely to decline to participate in CPS-FAR, presumably because of the agreement. CA submitted request legislation for the 2017 session seeking to have the signature requirement removed from statute. The legislation was signed into law and is scheduled to be implemented in October 2017.

Length of Time for CPS-FAR Intervention

CPS-FAR legislation allows for a CPS-FAR case to be open for 45 days for assessment with an extension up to 90 days for service provision with parental consent. CPS-FAR staff have consistently provided feedback that more time is needed for both assessment and service provision. The CPS-FAR statute also includes language about the use of evidence-based services. By the time most parents engage in services after the assessment period, there is not enough time for parents to complete the service. This is counter-intuitive to the intention of addressing issues in order to reducing risk of abuse or neglect and possibly preventing a family’s return to the agency. CA submitted request legislation for the 2017 session seeking to increase the amount of time a CPS-FAR case can remain open for services. The legislation did not pass; as a result, CA will continue to struggle with decisions about case closure v. letting a family complete a service even though past the statutory timeframe.

Additional Legislative Request

State statute governing the CPS-FAR pathway currently prohibits allegations of child abuse or neglect that could constitute a criminal offense from being screened into the CPA-FAR pathway even if the potential offense has no bearing on child safety, law enforcement has declined to investigate, or the county prosecutor has no intention of prosecuting. This requirement detracts from the intent of the CPS-FAR program which is a collaborative family assessment, intervention and services with no finding of abuse or neglect. CA requested an amendment to the statute during the 2017 legislative session. The legislation did not pass.

III. Fiscal

Family Assessment Response Expenditures Services, Concrete Goods, Staffing	
January 2017 June 2017	\$4,807,912

Note: The fiscal year closes at the end of June 2017. Additional adjustments that may have been made during June 2017 may not be reflected in this report.

IV. Evaluation Status and Findings

TriWest Group has provided updated information on the status of the evaluation as well as findings for this report. This information can be found in appendix A.

V. Recommendations and Activities Planned for Next Reporting Period

- Continue monitoring FAR performance and practice while transitioning to maintenance of the pathway.
- Utilizing evaluation and administrative data, monitor for pathway fidelity and need for course corrections.
- Train newly hired or transferring CPS-FAR caseworkers as well as CPS investigation caseworkers needing to be cross-trained.
- Work with the Alliance on development of the CPS In-Service Training that will cover both FAR and investigation pathways.
- Continue site visits to CPS-FAR offices. These visits include meeting with CPS-FAR workers, supervisors and area administrators and provide opportunities to answer questions and provide practice direction.
- Continue to gather feedback from caseworkers through site visits and surveys about the program's successes and challenges and how to improve training, policy, and support from the state and regional level.
- Continue to evaluate the intakes assigned to CPS-FAR and identify any trends for CPS-FAR intakes that transfer to investigations or result in a removal. Assess regional variation in screening rates to CPS-FAR and investigations.
- Organize key informant interviews for TriWest group. These will be completed in Wenatchee, Omak, Yakima, Everett, Bellingham, King Southeast and King Southwest.
- Continue to work with TriWest Group to inform their evaluation.

VI. Program Improvement Policies

CA committed to implementing two child welfare program improvement policies as outlined in the terms and conditions of the IV-E waiver.

- 1. Procedures to Assist Youth in Foster Care to Reconnect with Biological Family Members**

CA has included in its Title IV-E plan a description of the State's procedures for ensuring that foster youth, ages 16, and older are engaged in discussions regarding their desire to reconnect with biological family members, including during the development of transition plans required by the case

plan and case review requirements of Section 475(1) (D) and 5(H) of the Social Security Act. Below is a description of that plan:

- Explore whether the youth wishes to reconnect with his or her biological family, including parents, grandparents, and siblings, and if so, what skills and strategies the youth will need to successfully and safely reconnect with those family members;
- Provide appropriate guidance and services to assist youth who affirm a desire to reconnect with biological family members to safely and successfully achieve this goal; and
- When appropriate, make efforts to include biological family members in the reconnection effort.

Caseworkers encounter situations when a youth expresses his or her desire to be with his or her bio-family and there are times that the caseworker will initiate the “re-establishing relationships with biological family members” conversation. The conversations include follow-up discussions on safety, well-being and permanency. The information may be incorporated in the case plan or the work may be embedded in practice.

CA will be implementing a transformative policy that will identify current adolescent policies and practice by age and function This policy will connect existing policies to identify when and how we engage youth in case planning and maintaining or re-establishing family connections such as:

- Monthly Health and Safety Visits with Children Policy. Caseworkers and youth visits occur monthly. During these visits information is gathered on all aspects of the youth’s life. Discussing parental relations is a very common conversation between the caseworker and youth. The caseworkers support the youth and give tools and ideas on how to move forward on re-establishing relationships needs with their biological families.
- Family Team Decision Making Meetings Policy. Prior to “returning home,” the youth’s team conducts a meeting to discuss a transition and support plan for the youth and family. The plan focuses on ensuring the safety of the youth during transition and when living at home. Family and youth relatives and supports are invited and expected to offer ways they can support and help the family and youth if the need arises.
- Independent Living Program (IL). Youth who are engaged in an IL Program are connected to an IL worker who will assist the youth in bridging family connections by helping the youth identify potential positive connections and barriers to these connections. The IL worker will also be available to help facilitate interactions with family members. The IL worker is responsible for setting appropriate boundaries that meet the youth’s needs for independence and connection to family.

Youth in the IL Program also learn about “relational permanency” through the Foster Club’s Permanency Pact. Skills are taught on how to identify supports they may want or need to help them transition to adulthood. IL workers assist the youth in developing a list of people who may be willing to help with identified supports. The list may include current relationships or previous relationships such as family members. The IL provider talks to the youth about healthy relationships and establishing boundaries.

- CA Responsibilities to Dependent Youth 12 and older policy and Youth Petition for Reinstatement of Parental Rights policy. Many youths have attorneys by the age of 16. Youth are able to meet with their attorneys to discuss case plans. If the youth expresses a desire to reconnect with family, the attorney will represent the child's position in court.
- Shared Planning Meetings policy. Beginning at 14, youth are active participants in their case planning. The youth attends shared planning meetings and court hearings. The youth may also invite two individuals to the meeting. The youth may express his/her ideas and what he/she would like to see happen in his/her life. Discussion of permanency is a dominant topic in the meetings. Linking bio-family's reconnections, safety, wellbeing and permanency, the participants can create a supported case plan for the youth.

In July 2016, the Shared Planning Meetings policy was updated for youth 16 and above, to incorporate a requirement to discuss the child's connections with siblings and other relatives including discussion of skills and strategies to safely reconnect with any identified family members and guidance and services to assist with reconnecting.

- Children Missing From Care policy. Some youth who are "Missing from Care" are connecting with bio-families. Circumstances that led to the youth's placement in out-of-home care may not be relevant at an older age. The family may have alleviated risks and safety concerns or there may be additional protective factors present. Caseworkers are reassessing safety risks and are using bio-families for placement options for the youth. Support services can be provided to the family.

2. Increased Age Limit for Title IV-E Programs to 21

Washington State's Extended Foster Care (EFC) Program is a result of the state's efforts to further implement the Federal Fostering Connections for Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. It provides an opportunity for youth who are in foster care on their 18th birthday to continue to receive services until they turn 21.

Beginning in 2011, Washington State proposed legislation that defined the program criteria for qualifying youth aging out of the foster care system to participate in the EFC program and receive the benefits and case management assistance the program offers.

In 2013, Washington state legislation, facilitated the delivery of extended foster care services for any youth who is dependent in foster care at the age of eighteen years and who, at the time of his or her eighteenth birthday is in school, working full or part-time, or seeking to enter school. The final program eligibility criterion was enacted in March 2015. Under this criterion, which became effective July 1, 2016, youth qualify for the program regardless of their ability to engage in the previously established criteria if the youth has a documented medical condition.

Washington state law establishes EFC throughout the state. Washington state EFC policy stipulates that eligible youth can participate from the day they become 18 upon exiting the foster care system; or voluntarily enter the EFC program prior to becoming 19 years old through a Voluntary Placement Agreement if they exit foster care when they become 18 years old. Washington state legislation passed in

the 2017 legislative session allows youth who enter at EFC at 18 but who lose eligibility or choose to leave the program to re-enter up until the age of 21. CA is committed to providing these young adults the resources, case management, and guidance for a successful transition to adulthood.