

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Family Assessment Response

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Policy

Following completion of the SDM Screening and Response Priority Tools, the Careline shall review all accepted child protective services reports that have been designated for a 72-hour response time and determine whether the report will be assigned to the child protective investigations track or the Family Assessment Response (FAR) track based on "rule out" criteria.

Legal reference: Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101g.

Cross reference: DCF Policy 22-2, "Intake" and "Family Assessment Response Practice Guide".

SWS Responsibilities

For all reports designated as a Family Assessment Response, the ISWS shall:

- document the assignment of the report to an ISW along with supervisory expectations;
- conduct and document a minimum of two supervisory conferences during the duration of the assessment;
- document case consultations, response determination reviews and assignments in the computer system;
- assess the family's appropriateness for continued FAR services, considering emerging safety concerns, risk factors, CPS history (patterns or trends), and the family's willingness to address or mitigate safety or risk concerns.

Following face-to-face contact with the family, the ISWS shall consult with the Program Supervisor on cases in which a track change is recommended

Timeline for Initial Contacts with Family

Whenever possible, the preferred method for initial contact with the family is by telephone.

The Social Worker shall make an initial phone call to the family to schedule a face-to-face meeting. Both the telephone call and the attempted face-to-face meeting shall occur within 72 hours of the acceptance of the report.

If phone contact is unsuccessful, the Social Worker shall make an unannounced home visit to meet the family within the designated response time. All efforts to contact the family shall be documented in the protocol.

The ISW shall notify the ISWS of any delays in face-to-face contact with the family.

Note: "Commencement" of the assessment is defined as the initial face-to-face contact (or attempt at face-to-face contact) with the family. The telephone call prior to the home visit is made as a courtesy to the family and does not mark the commencement of the assessment.

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Response Guidelines

Because the allegation(s) in the CPS report must meet the statutory definition of abuse or neglect (including human trafficking) in order to be accepted by Careline, a thorough assessment of child safety and risk shall be required.

During the first face-to-face meeting the Social Worker shall:

- provide the parent or other caregiver with the Parent's Right to Know (PRTK) brochure and request that they sign the acknowledgement as indicated on the PRTK brochure;
- provide the parent or other caregiver with the DCF-2236, "Notice of Privacy Practices," and require that they sign a copy as an acknowledgement of receipt;
- inform the family of DCF's protective services mandate and the need to assess child safety;
- assess child safety and potential risk factors within the family, including intimate partner violence, substance use or misuse, and mental health concerns;
- observe and conduct interviews with the following:
 - parent(s) including non-custodial parents;
 - the legal guardian of child, if not the parent;
 - other persons responsible for the care of the child;
 - the child(ren) identified in the report;
 - siblings and other children in the home;
 - all household members; and
 - family resources and supports;
- obtain all demographic information necessary to conduct mandatory background checks; and
- obtain necessary releases of information.

Note: Even when the initial determination is that a Family Assessment Response is appropriate, DCF staff shall utilize any measures necessary, up to and including removal, to ensure child safety.

All FAR-related activities shall be documented by the Social Worker within five business days in the Family Assessment Response Protocol.

Required Case Contacts

The Social Worker shall:

- engage and interview all household members;
- engage and interview the non-custodial parent;
- engage and interview children who reside with the non-custodial parent if they have contact with the referred household;
- document interviews and efforts to engage these individuals in the FAR Protocol; and
- if no contact was made, document the barrier to contact or provide a rationale for the decision not to contact these individuals.

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Required Case Contacts (Continued)

The frequency of home visits and the required case contacts shall be determined in supervision taking into consideration:

- case circumstances;
- physical and psychological risk and safety concerns;
- age of the children; and
- the children's visibility in the community.

At a minimum, following the initial contact with the family, visits shall occur at the midpoint of the assessment and prior to the case closing. For cases that remain active beyond 45 days, the frequency of visitation shall be determined in supervision

Mandatory Background Checks

The ISW shall conduct a Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) criminal history records check and a child protective services check on the parents, legal guardians or other caregivers, the alleged perpetrator, and all household members age 16 years and over.

The Social Worker shall utilize and incorporate criminal and protective services histories as part of the overall assessment of the family.

Collateral Contacts

In order to enhance the assessment of the family, the Social Worker shall request that the family sign releases of information for the following collateral contacts:

- school, substitute caretaker or daycare provider;
- pediatrician; and
- service providers involved with the family or adult caregiver.

If the family declines to sign a release, DCF shall abide by the wishes of the family. The Social Worker shall inform the ISWS of the status of the collateral contacts and develop strategies to gather information to help inform the assessment.

The Social Worker shall document information gathered from the collateral contacts in the Family Assessment Protocol. If the family declines to sign releases, the Social Worker shall document this in the FAR Protocol.

Structured Decision Making Safety Assessment Completion

The Social Worker shall be responsible for assessing child safety during the initial face-to-face contact with the family, utilizing the SDM Safety Assessment.

The assessment results shall be documented in the computer system within five days of the initial face-to-face contact with the family and reviewed and approved by the ISWS no later than at the close of an investigation or within 45 days of receipt of new information on an active case.

Note: A new SDM Safety Assessment shall be completed whenever new information becomes available that suggests a change in the child's safety status.

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Safety Decision

A safety decision may be designated as follows:

- "safe" shall continue to receive Family Assessment Response services;
- "conditionally safe" shall be evaluated with the ISWS and Program Supervisor regarding appropriateness for continued Family Assessment Response services; and
- "unsafe" shall immediately result in a track change to investigations (the FAR Protocol shall be completed no later than three business days from the decision to switch tracks.)

Consideration shall be given to the duration and severity of the safety factor to determine the appropriate continued response.

Note: For cases that are transferred to investigations without a new report, the investigations protocol shall be completed within 45 days from date of the original CPS report.

Risk Assessment

To enhance planning and service delivery to families, DCF shall utilize the SDM® Risk Assessment tool to identify potential risk factors that influence future risk of harm.

The risk assessment shall be completed by the Social Worker prior to the end of the Family Assessment Response process and shall be approved by the ISWS within 45 days of the Careline report.

Family Team Meetings

The Social Worker shall offer a family team meeting once a need has been identified from any source. The discussion and outcome of these meetings shall help inform the Service Plan.

Service Plan

The Service Plan is a family driven, dynamic document that utilizes the protective factors to assess the strengths of the family and empowers it to develop and employ strategies to accomplish its identified goals. The Service Plan shall guide the activities of the family, its community supports and DCF and is required for all cases being referred to the Community Partner Agency.

Disposition

A Family Assessment Response disposition shall be made within 45 days of the acceptance of the Careline report.

Notification Family Assessment Response Results

At the conclusion of the Family Assessment Response, the Social Worker shall notify the parent or guardian and any mandated reporter, in writing, of the assessment determination.

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Recommended Case Dispositions	Results of SDM Safety Assessment	Results of SDM Risk Assessment	Case Disposition
	Unsafe - children removed	Very Low to High	Transfer to the investigations track. Following completion of the investigation, the case shall be transferred to Ongoing Services. Services are required.
	Conditionally Safe - safety factors have been identified, interventions are in place.	Very Low to High	Transfer to Ongoing Services. Services are required.
	Children are safe	Very Low to Low	Recommend for closure. Referrals for services in the community may or may not be initiated on behalf of the family based upon its level of need and willingness to engage in services.
	Children are safe	Very Low to Low	Recommend for transfer to the Community Partner Agency if multiple needs are identified. This transfer is predicated on the family's willingness to receive services and supports from the contracted agency.
	Children are safe	Moderate to High	Recommend for transfer to the Community Partner Agency, or to Ongoing Services. This transfer is predicated on the results of the risk assessment

Transfer to a Community Partner Agency

At any point during the Family Assessment Response, if DCF determines the family has multiple needs and will benefit from ongoing community support, DCF shall assess the family's interest in engaging in services with the Community Partner Agency prior to the end of the 45 day assessment period.

A transition meeting shall be held as soon as possible with the family, its supports (if available), and the Social Worker to:

- exchange information;
- review the strengths and needs of the family;
- review the goals that have been established;
- discuss the activities currently under way; and
- discuss what is needed to continue to support the family.

Following this meeting, DCF shall close its case.

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Transfer to Ongoing Services

If at the conclusion of the Family Assessment Response, the child is designated as "conditionally safe," the case shall be transferred to ongoing services.

The Program Supervisor or designee shall schedule a transfer conference at a time and location convenient to the family.
