



## FAR Staff talk about impacts

Audrey Allred, a FAR Social Worker from the MLK office, was a Child and Family Welfare Services (CFWS) worker before transferring to FAR. She said she feels like she has "more time to engage with families and do the documentation. I am less stressed." Ms. Allred said fully staffing FAR and Investigations has had a positive impact on the whole office. "CPS was swamped before. Investigators say that their workload is more manageable now, so they are able to focus on more emergent concerns." Ms. Allred added she hopes both CPS programs remain fully staffed because it reduces stress on workers and allows them to truly engage with families and complete documentation requirements.

Tara Benson, FAR Supervisor in the Aberdeen office, came from a Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigative unit. Ms. Benson observed: "The biggest change is letting the families lead the case from the initial visit to reaching consensus about collaterals (contacts with information about the family situation). Families feel like they have more control, so they are more willing to talk about those things that aren't going well. As we improve our practice, we are finding this happens more. Families are providing collaterals we wouldn't have known about before." Initially, workers had a lot of concern about interviewing children in front of their parents. Ms. Benson said: "We are still addressing safety issues. The way we do it looks different. Children are talking to us in front of their parents about what is happening in their families just as much as they were when we talked to them separately. Some of the really shy kids seem more likely to talk to you in front of their parents than they were at school without their parents present." Not all children are willing to talk with FAR staff, but the children who do not talk with FAR staff generally were not willing to talk with investigators at school either.

Jolie Comery transferred to a FAR unit in Pierce East from CPS investigations. She said, "I have worked with families who have had investigations in the past and they are more willing to engage in the process with us (when using the FAR approach). They have a different attitude. Instead of feeling animosity and sheltering information, they are more forthcoming in what is happening in their home. ... They are willing to share more information, but still guarded about potential safety issues, so we have to keep looking and listening for safety issues. I keep child safety at the forefront."

Melissa Hall is the FAR Indian Child Welfare worker in Spokane. She said her biggest challenge is building consensus with parents on difficult topics. She said when she was an investigator, "I always tried to engage clients and build relationships with them, but the biggest change has been building consensus with them and

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## Schedule of Coming Events

### November 12 - 14

- National Differential Response Conference in Seattle

### November 17, 18

- Supervisor Coaching Training - Vancouver

### November 19, 20

- Supervisor Coaching Training - Spokane

### December 16, 17

- FAR Curriculum Preview

### January 5 - 8

- FAR Curriculum Training Week

### January 12

- Phase 4 Offices "Go Live"  
Spokane - all remaining zip codes, Colville & Ferry Counties, Newport, Sky Valley, Smokey Point, South Bend, Long Beach, Pierce West

### 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

Dawn Cooper: (360) 902-8469

Jeanne McShane: (360) 902-7858

# Community Partnerships

## KING AND SNOHOMISH COUNTIES

Through a federal grant awarded to Children's Home Society, in partnership with Children's Administration; four King County Children's Administration offices have monthly meetings about early learning, facilitated by Children's Home Society. Early intervention providers share expertise, knowledge and referral information with social workers who have questions about services and support for children age birth-five. Through confidential discussion about the strengths and needs of families raising young children, social workers receive resource and referral information to support case planning and long-term child/family success. Many of these services are designed to support families beyond involvement with Children's Administration.

In partnership with the Snohomish County Early Intervention Program, the Lynnwood/Sky Valley FAR Lead, Alissa Copeland is replicating these meetings in Snohomish County. Many of the services available for children age birth-five are community-based and do not require funding from Children's Administration. The services are available to families after their CPS case closes.



## SPOKANE

The Spokane FAR unit is collaborating with United Health Care's new Small Step Program to help improve the health of its clients. This program provides FAR workers with Small Steps "prescription pads" to use with clients. The pads outline basic nutrition goals and allow FAR workers to give clients a "prescription" to visit the local farmers market and pick up \$10 of fruits and vegetables.

The program provides an opportunity for FAR workers to have a meaningful conversation with clients about health and nutrition and connects families with services in their community.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

The FAR implementation team and Program and Policy wish to extend a warm welcome to Sandra Surface, the new CPS FAR Program Manager. Sandy began her work with the state of Washington in 1995 with the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration and came to Children's Administration in 1999 as a CPS social worker in the Everett office. She has held many positions in Region 2 including; CPS and Child and Family Welfare Services social worker, Kidscreen (CHET) specialist, Family Team Decision-Making Meeting facilitator, and supervised many programs in Region 2. Most recently she was the Region 2 FAR Program Manager, leading the Mount Vernon and MLK offices through a successful launch of the FAR program. Throughout her work experience she has developed strong community partnerships and sees them as an intricate part of successful implementation of FAR. Sandy is passionate about FAR and excited to be working on a statewide level to support it.



Sandra Surface

## FAR FAQs

### How is FAR different from Family Voluntary Services (FVS)?

**ANSWER:** FAR responds immediately to allegations of abuse and neglect, working with families to assess their needs, and identify services and community supports to help keep their children safe at home. Typically, FVS responds to families who need services following a CPS investigation. FVS will continue to be an important part of Children's Administration programs to support families who have been involved in investigations

### Will families that are engaged with FAR have access to other programs usually associated with FVS? Such as FPS, FFT, Homebuilders, and PCIT?

**ANSWER:** Yes, services that are available to families in FVS that can be completed within the 45-90 day time frame will be available to families engaged in the FAR program.

### Will FAR replace FVS?

**ANSWER:** No, FVS is still necessary to provide services to families who were engaged in the investigative pathway.

### Can FAR continue beyond 90 days?

**ANSWER:** No. The legislation that allows Children's Administration to use FAR limits our intervention with these families to 45 days, unless the family is engaged in services and agrees to participate for up to 90 days. The legislation does not allow for cases to be open for longer than 90 days.

# FAR by the Numbers

## January to August 2014

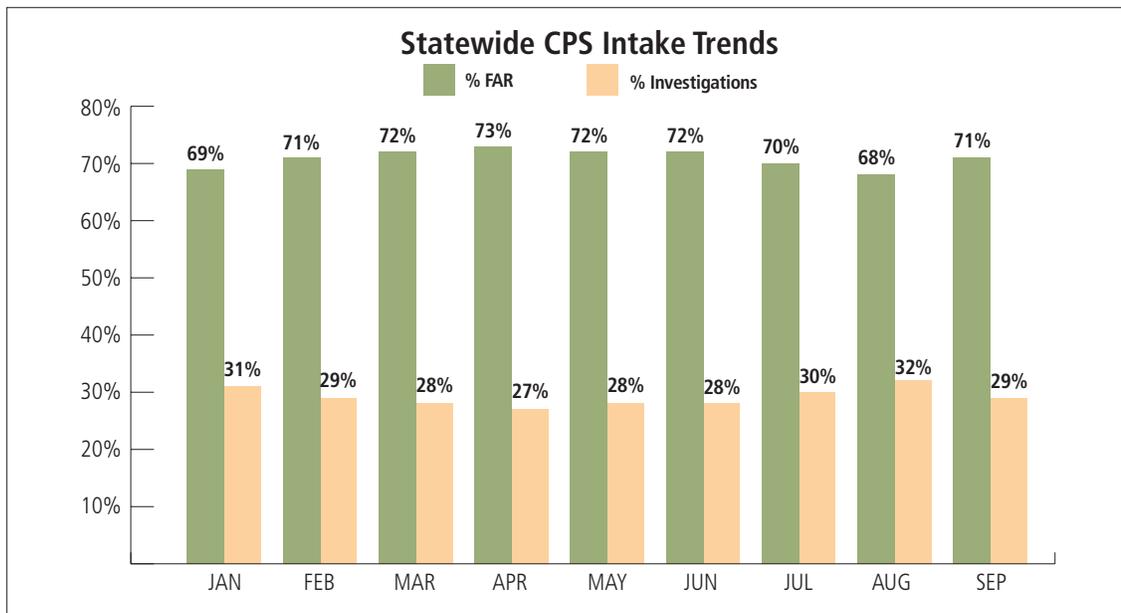
Children's Administration began implementing Family Assessment Response (FAR) in January 2014. So far, the results are encouraging. Between January 1 and August 31, 2014, FAR social workers have responded to 1,263 intakes.

- FAR workers filed dependencies due to child safety threats in the home in fewer than 2 percent of cases. These cases did not transfer to investigations because the FAR worker gathered enough information to file the dependency to keep the children safe without adding to the number of social workers involved.
- Five percent of FAR intakes were reassigned to investigations because of safety concerns or because the family chose an investigation instead of FAR.

Statewide <sup>1</sup>						
Month	Intakes assigned to FAR	FAR cases transferred to Investigations due to safety or risk concerns	Families who declined to participate in (transferred to Investigations)	Percent Transferred to Investigations total	Dependencies filed	Percent dependencies filed
January	126	4	6	7.94%	1	0.79%
February	126	3	5	6.35%	0	0.00%
March	130	6	1	5.38%	4	3.08%
April	138	8	2	7.25%	4	2.90%
May	106	4	1	4.72%	3	2.83%
June	101	2	2	3.96%	0	0.00%
July	243	6	7	5.35%	3	1.23%
August	293	2	3	1.71%	7	2.39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,263</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5.07%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1.74%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Ellensburg; Lincoln County (included in Spokane data); Mount Vernon; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Pierce East; and Stevenson Offices began taking FAR cases on July 13, 2014

We have been tracking CPS Intake trends since January 2014. If FAR were available statewide, it appears that approximately 70 percent of the intakes would go to FAR. However, these numbers do not account for intake decisions that the intake supervisor might change after reviewing the information. Intake supervisors make changes to 5-10 percent of intakes.



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taking engagement to the next level. Parents seem to have a lot more buy-in.”

When asked about how FAR has impacted families, Ms. Benson said, “They are more engaged in the process and I hope that we are helping them make better community connections.” Jim Brooks, FAR worker in the Ellensburg Office, said, “Once they understand what FAR is, they seem relieved and almost thankful that we are involved – not all of them, but for the most part, families are very engaging and forth-coming with information – much more so than my previous experience. Families have a choice in how we proceed and that helps with engagement – they get to choose between FAR and investigations. As we explore the situation, families are providing a lot more information about what their family needs. I am providing them with resource lists as we talk, so that we can tie it all together.”

Ms. Hall said that the community connections have helped her to foster more Tribal connections for families. She said that she is collaborating more with the Native Project in Spokane and Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). “Those workers have been very helpful for families. We can share a case plan and case vision to work collaboratively and uniformly with families across systems.”

Ms. Benson said that the FAR implementation has had a positive impact on the Aberdeen office, “Extra training for all the supervisors in the office and FAR workers has changed conversations and how the whole office engages with the families and the community. We talk about families differently—we try to be more empathetic to what they have going on in their lives and let that drive our conversations.”

## Challenges of FAR

FAR is a work in progress. Staff talked about the challenges of starting a new program. Ms. Hall said her biggest challenge is “building consensus with parents to understand the impact of drugs and alcohol or domestic violence on their children.” Mr. Brooks said, “Adjusting to a new program and finding your groove takes time.” Ms. Comery said that sometimes it is hard to recognize that a family is a good fit for the FAR program. She said that often she first reacts to intakes as an investigator. Sometimes she gets an intake and she wonders “Why isn’t this intake an investigation? But once you get out and work with the families it feels like a good fit for FAR — changing my thinking pattern has been the biggest challenge.”

Ms. Allred sometimes struggles to explain the purpose of the FAR Agreement to families. “If FAR families don’t need services, it is hard to get them to sign it. ... It becomes more about the Agreement than assessment at the first visit.” The families she is working with want to work in the FAR pathway, but “a lot of parents don’t want to sign anything about abuse and neglect of their kids—it makes them nervous.”

Ms. Hall said she still hears some concerns from other people in her office about whether FAR is safe for kids. She said, “We are still addressing child safety in FAR. It’s not turning a blind eye, but working with families to understand child safety.”



## Children’s Administration (CA) has implemented Family Assessment Response (FAR) in these offices:

Spokane (Zip codes 99201, 99207, 99205, and 99217) and Lincoln County  
Ellensburg  
Mount Vernon  
Lynnwood  
Martin Luther King (MLK), Jr. (in King County)  
East Pierce County

Aberdeen  
Stevenson  
Moses Lake  
Richland  
Oak Harbor  
Peninsula (Forks, Port Angeles, Port Townsend)  
Vancouver



Phase 2 FAR Curriculum Training Participants - Tacoma June 23-26, 2014



Phase 3 FAR Curriculum Training Participants - Spokane September 15-18, 2014



Phase 3 FAR Curriculum Training Participants - Vancouver September 22-25, 2014