

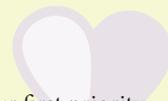


## Welcome to Children's Administration's first quarterly Family Assessment Response (FAR) Newsletter



Jennifer Strus  
Children's Administration  
Acting Assistant Secretary

### 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.

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.



### 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>

# The 6 principles of Differential Response engagement

## Judgments Can Wait

Holding back judgment doesn't mean avoiding making decisions. Rather, it means staying open to all information, especially the information that doesn't fit our expectations, and allowing that information to inform our understanding.

## Everyone Has Strengths

Acknowledging and building on strengths doesn't mean ignoring problems or glossing over concerns. On the contrary, strengths-based practice sees the problem and the strengths and clearly links them together to support the family.

## Everyone Desires Respect

We want respect for our experience and perspective, for how we've come to be who we are and how we've developed our way of seeing things.

## Partners Share Power

When power is shared, setbacks become opportunities to learn and rethink situations rather than place blame.

## Everyone Needs to Be Heard (and Understood)

By inviting families to freely share their ideas and concerns, we bring those resources out of hiding and into the open. We create more options for families when we seek a diversity of opinions.

## Partnership Is a Process

Try to learn from what does and doesn't work well. Involve families in evaluating your efforts to work well together.

Source: Adapted from Smith, C., White, P., & Comer, D. (2006). *Cornerstone III: Self study guide for family assessment*. Morganton, NC: Appalachian Family Innovations.

## PREPARING LOCAL OFFICES FOR FAR

Children's Administration has asked 12 offices statewide to complete an office readiness tool to evaluate whether they are ready to begin implementing FAR. The FAR Headquarters lead is working with regional and office leads on this readiness assessment. The first phase of FAR is scheduled to begin in January 2014. We will continue to assess the readiness of local offices over the next two and a half years, as funding allows.

# Coming to a Screen Near You

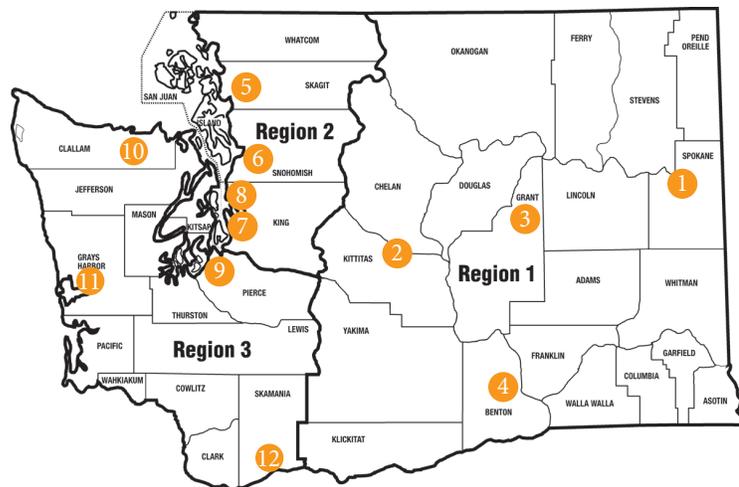
## Families struggling to meet their needs

sometimes compromise the safety of their children. With help from the local community, we can help these families keep their children safely at home. To introduce the FAR pathway, Children's Administration produced a video to describe FAR from a variety of perspectives.



The video features cameo appearances from veteran parents LaRon Burris and Nadine Miller; Representative Ruth Kagj; Children's Administration Assistant Secretary Jennifer Strus; Mary Stone-Smith from Catholic Community Services; Children's Indian Child Welfare Program Supervisor Cheryl Rich; and Children's Administration Supervisor Frank O'Dell. The FAR team wishes to thank everyone involved in producing the video. The video will be available in mid April.

## Readiness assessments will be conducted in the following areas



- 1 Spokane
- 2 Kittitas (Ellensburg)
- 3 Grant (Moses Lake)
- 4 Benton (Richland)
- 5 Mt. Vernon (Skagit)
- 6 Snohomish (Lynwood)
- 7 King South (Kent)
- 8 King -Seattle (MLK)
- 9 Pierce East (Tacoma)
- 10 Clallam and Jefferson Counties (Port Angeles, Port Townsend, Forks)
- 11 Grays Harbor (Aberdeen)
- 12 Skamania (Stevenson)

# 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



**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