

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION Family Assessment Response (FAR)



2016 SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET

Request	FY16	FY17	15-17
FTE		26.0	26.0
GF-State		\$2,274,000	\$2,274,000
Total		\$4,548,000	\$4,548,000

DECISION PACKAGE SUMMARY

The Children's Administration (CA) requests 26.0 FTEs and \$2,274,000 GF-State and \$4,548,000 Total Funds in the 2016 Supplemental Budget to continue statewide implementation of Family Assessment Response (FAR), a non-investigative response to screened-in reports of abuse and neglect.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the 2012 Legislative Session, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6555 required CA to implement a differential response within child protective services. A differential response in child protective services means that there is an alternative to investigation for families with less serious allegations of abuse or neglect. This alternative, called FAR, does not require findings and focuses on child safety, family engagement, and assistance to address the issues that brought the family to the attention of DSHS. Families agree to work voluntarily with FAR caseworkers who assess the safety of children in the home and take protective action as needed. Parents and caseworkers work together to identify needed services, concrete supports, and reengage with the community.

CA began implementation of FAR with three offices on January 1, 2014. As of August 2015, FAR has been implemented in 29 of CA's 45 offices. Three additional offices are slated to implement FAR on October 1, 2015. Without additional funding, CA cannot continue implementation of FAR into the remaining offices or maintain FAR in existing offices.

CA was granted a Title IV-E waiver in Fiscal Year 2013, which waives the Title IV-E provisions and regulations to operate a demonstration project, in Washington State known as FAR. The waiver allows the flexibility to claim Title IV-E at a 50 percent federal financial participation rate for goods and services provided in the FAR pathway. Title IV-E traditionally only reimburses for costs associated with eligible children and allowable services for children in out of home placement. The waiver allows greater flexibility to leverage federal funds in the front end of child welfare service delivery for preventative family support and stabilization services under FAR.

Suspending FAR implementation will jeopardize CA's ability to continue operating under the waiver. The Title IV-E waiver terms and conditions and the approved Initial Design and Implementation Report speak to the statewide rollout of FAR. Under the guidance of the Washington DC Children's Bureau Office of the Administration for Children and Families, if the conditions as approved to implement the demonstration project statewide are not complied with, CA may be required to withdraw from the waiver. The Title IV-E waiver terms and conditions, state "Failure to operate the demonstration as approved and according to Federal and State statutes and regulations will result in withdrawal of approval of this demonstration project." Absent the Title IV-E waiver, FAR goods and services are not a Title IV-E



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allowable expenditure. Therefore, Title IV-E funding would not be allowable to continue supporting FAR in the existing offices. Insufficient funding would create a collapse of the entire program.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

CA received funding in the 2013-2015 Biennium to begin the implementation of FAR. However, funding was not provided to implement or maintain the demonstration project statewide. Consequently, funding is needed to complete the phase-in of FAR across the state, as well as to comply with the terms and conditions of the Title IV-E waiver. If funded, statewide implementation will begin July 1, 2016 and be completed by June 30, 2017. Provided the phased-in approach, additional funding will be needed in the ensuing biennia to maintain these additional offices. Notably, funding this request will secure the Title IV-E waiver in Washington State and more importantly the FAR program.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Preliminary data from the FAR offices show a very low rate, approximately two percent, of children being placed out of their home while the case is open to FAR. Historically, the out-of-home placement rate in Washington is at 12 percent for all cases. Families and caseworkers have reported FAR has led to increased engagement, leading to acceptance of services and placement prevention. Caseworkers report a collaborative relationship with parents, less contentiousness, and a more positive opportunity to address and help the family make necessary changes.

A preliminary FAR Family Survey Report was completed in December 2014 by Tri-West, the evaluator contracted by CA, as a component of the Title IV-E Waiver Evaluation. Although a small sample size was analyzed, results were favorable. The survey focused on the FAR participant's experience with FAR such as fidelity with the FAR model, family satisfaction with services, and perceived outcomes. Nearly all respondents reported a high level of engagement in the FAR process. Parents reported that the FAR caseworker listened to their input when planning for services. Further, there were reports of improvement in family dynamics, feelings about their role as a parent, and/or their ability to get support from their community subsequent to participating in FAR.

With these preliminary survey results, we expect to continue positively engaging families to achieve better outcomes for children and families. Statewide implementation of FAR will provide the same opportunity to children and families, regardless of the geographic area of the state they reside in.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACT

Stakeholders were instrumental in the passage of the statute requiring the implementation of differential response in Washington State Children's Administration. Per RCW 26.44.260(1) ".....the department shall implement the family assessment response." Stakeholders are supportive of the fundamental notion of investing funds to stabilize children in their own homes.