

2014 SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET

IMPLEMENTING FAR

Request	FY14	FY15	13-15
FTE	3.0	16.0	9.5
GF-State	\$489,000	\$2,457,000	\$2,946,000
Total	\$811,000	\$4,033,000	\$4,844,000

DECISION PACKAGE SUMMARY

The Children's Administration (CA) requests staff and contracted services in order to continue successful implementation of the Family Assessment Response (FAR). By funding this request, CA is expected to support individual CA offices in the implementation of FAR, conduct a critical program evaluation, and make necessary changes to its case management system, FamLink.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the 2012 session, the Legislature passed ESSB 6555, which required CA to implement a differential response system, designing an alternative pathway for accepted reports of low to moderate risk of child maltreatment. This pathway is known as Family Assessment Response (FAR). Over the last year and a half, CA has developed implementation plans for FAR. These implementation plans require additional staff within local offices and additional funding for goods and services to families. FAR represents a significant change in the practice of child welfare in Washington State and requires the proper resources in order to be successful. During the 2013 session, CA did not receive all of the funding projected to be necessary for successful FAR implementation. CA is also required to conduct a detailed evaluation of FAR implementation as a requirement of receiving a Title IV-E waiver. These evaluation costs were not known during the legislative session and were not included in the financial modeling of FAR. Lastly, CA is requesting funding of a FAR lead within the majority of CA local offices. These staff will facilitate implementation of FAR within the office, conduct quality assurance activities, and act as a critical liaison with local resources that will be used to support families after they disengage from CA services. These positions are currently being funded on a temporary basis within offices but this method cannot be sustained and therefore this work will not occur post-implementation. Funding these positions from base funding levels diverts resources from existing social work activities.

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PROPOSED SOLUTION

CA is requesting the difference between funding projected as necessary in the FAR financial model and the funding provided by the Legislature in the 2013 session. This funding will cover a mixture of FAR staff and services and is necessary in FY 2015. CA is also requesting \$1.5 million in contract IT services to make additional changes to FamLink to support the new pathway and service delivery. Preliminary changes have been made to FamLink but CA anticipates more will become necessary once the pilot offices begin using the new features. These changes are anticipated to occur in FY 2015. Also, CA has secured TriWest as an evaluator of FAR efforts. This contract will cost slightly over \$900,000 for the 2013-2015 biennium. Lastly, while FAR leads are needed in every office, CA is only requesting to fund 3 of the leads in FY 2014 to prepare their offices for FY 2015 implementation efforts. An additional 16 FTE will be funded in FY 2015 to complete preparation in the remaining offices. These staff will be funded on a permanent basis.

EXPECTED RESULTS

This package supports the implementation of FAR within Washington State. Other states that have implemented similar approaches have eventually seen dramatic declines in foster care placements by supporting children within their families. FAR represents a dramatic shift in practice for CA; inadequate resources and staff support might jeopardize the overall success of the approach.

This request supports Results Washington Goal 4 of Healthy and Safe Communities. Funding this request will result in less children with founded allegations of abuse or neglect, less Child Protective Cases (CPS) that are open more than 90 days, less children in out-of-home placement for five or more years, and a higher percentage of child victims in emergent CPS intakes who are seen by a social worker within 24 hours of the intake.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACT

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Successful implementation of FAR has consistently been rated a number one priority for child welfare advocates. FAR has a wide variety of supporters from social workers to veteran parents to service providers.