

**Putnam County**  
**Family Assessment Response Application**

**Any Social Services district wishing to implement a Child Protective Services differential response (which OCFS shall refer to as family assessment response) program must apply to OCFS to participate by submitting a plan for implementation. Any plan approved will be posted on OCFS website within 60 days of such approval, as required by Chapter 452 of the Laws of 2007. The plan must address all the criteria listed below:**

**A) Factors to be considered by the social services district in determining which reports will be addressed through the family assessment and services track and the size of the population to be the subject of the Family Assessment Response Program (hereinafter FAR). Please address the following:**

- **The criteria by which you will assign reports to the family assessment and services track:**

Putnam County plans to screen reports for an alternative response or FAR track from a wide range of allegations. However, reports with allegations of educational neglect, inadequate guardianship, inadequate food, clothing and shelter, lack of supervision, lack of medical care, child/caretaker substance misuse, and custody disputes will be targeted.

The following allegations/reports will be eligible for consideration for the FAR track.

- Educational Neglect.
- Inadequate Guardianship
- Inadequate Food, Clothing, Shelter.
- Lack of Supervision.
- Lack of Medical Care.
- Caretaker or child drug/alcohol misuse.

The following allegations/reports will be ineligible for consideration for the FAR track.

- Sexual Abuse
- Fatality Reports
- Reports with criminal charges such as; murder, manslaughter, assault, failure to thrive, sex crimes.
- Licensed day care or foster homes
- Domestic Violence cases with child/victim safety concerns
- Cases where abuse/and or sexual abuse petitions have been filed

- **The anticipated percentage of reports that you are projecting will be handled through the family assessment and services track in the first 12 months of implementation:**

Putnam County CPS consists of 1 CPS unit with 7 CPS workers and one supervisor. Putnam CPS Caseworkers investigated 712 reports in 2009. With the implementation of the FAR program, Putnam expects to assign approximately 40% of the SCR reports received to the FAR track within the first 12 months. Putnam County will screen all reports using an agency developed screening tool. Screening will begin a minimum of 2 months prior to implementation in order to get an accurate percentage of the number of reports that will be tracked using the family assessment response.

- **Units and workers to be involved:**

The CPS Supervisor and 3 CPS Caseworkers will be involved in this project and will be oriented to the family assessment and services track approach. In addition, they will receive training on the implementation of FAR.

- **Phase in or rollout plans.**

In October 2009, Putnam County caseworkers visited Orange County to learn more about how the family assessment response works. Following the visit the Putnam workers verbalized their enthusiasm for the program and three volunteered to be part of the FAR program. In addition to the staff being excited about the implementation of FAR, the director of services, Andrew Pattie, and Commissioner, Michael Piazza are supportive of the FAR Program. Putnam County would like to implement FAR by June 2010.

Within the county, the director and supervisor have discussed FAR implementation at county and staff meetings, and with Children's Services staff. As part of the roll out of the program, plans will be made to present the FAR program to all DSS staff, Children and Family Services, Temporary Assistance, and County Stakeholders as part of the needs assessment for the Children and Family Services Plan. Putnam County will plan on implementing this training in the summer of 2010. The following is a list of County Stakeholders:

Name: **Margaret Nicholson, Esq.**

Agency and Title: **Law Guardian**

Name: **Medley Broege**

Agency and Title: **OMRDD Coordinator**

Name: **Dawn Mullins**

Agency and Title: **SPOA and CCSI Coordinator**

Name: **Dorinda Caltaldo**

Agency and Title: **Putnam Women's Resource Center, Clinical Director**

Name: **Gene Funicelli**

Agency and Title: **Putnam County Probation, Director**

Name: **Joseph DeMarzo**

Agency and Title: **Putnam County Youth Bureau and Mental Health Director**

Name: **Pamela Ford**

Agency and Title: **Putnam Family Advocacy/Putnam Family and Community Services**

Name: **Kathy Linder**

Agency and Title: **Putnam Family Advocacy/Green Chimney's Advocate**

Name: **Pat Brophy**

Agency and Title: **Putnam Legal Aide Director**

Name: **Marie Fabiano**

Agency and Title: **Putnam County Child Advocacy Center and CPS CW**

Name: **Frank Marocco, Esq.**

Agency and Title: **Putnam County Department of Social Services-Legal**

Name: **Marci Jones**

Agency and Title: **Putnam County Department of Social Services-CWS CW**

Name: **Karen Delduco**

Agency and Title: **Putnam County Department of Social Services-APS CW**

Name: **Jean Lambertson**

Agency and Title: **Putnam County Department of Social Services-APS CW**

**B) The assessment process regarding child safety and risk, types of services and interventions to be provided in the family assessment and services track, and a description of how the services will be offered:**

- **The assessment process that you will use to assess child safety, risk to children and family strengths and needs.**

Child safety will be Putnam County's first priority and will be reassessed throughout the life of the FAR case. Caseworkers will utilize Strength-based, solution and goal focused discussions to work with family members. The process will include personal interviews with family members, interviews with their identified support system, and interviews with other social support networks. Early engagement strategies, solution focused interviewing, and family meetings will be employed. The objective will be to empower families to identify their strengths, needs and the appropriate resources for their family.

Taking this into account, Putnam County FAR caseworkers will engage the families they work with, and help them focus on solutions that the families identify as being beneficial for them. In this way, they are empowering the families to advocate for themselves.

After the FAR workers interview the family members, a 7 day safety assessment will be completed and approved by a supervisor. If the children are determined to be safe, the SCR will be notified through Connections and the track will change from investigative to FAR. The FLAG will be utilized on every case designated as FAR.

If safety factors arise and the case has not yet been progressed to FAR, it will be reassigned to the investigative track. However, if the case has been progressed to FAR and it's determined that the case needs an investigative response; a new report will be called into the SCR.

- **The plan for linking families with those goods and services that address their identified needs, including what services will be provided by county CPS or preventive services staff, what services will be provided by community service providers, and what relationship the county will have with the TANF staff in assessing needs and providing services. How if at all, will family assessment and services interact with other local models of service access including such things as SPOA, CCSI, etc:**

The need for services will be assessed throughout the life of the case. FAR caseworkers in partnership with families will assist families in the development of goals and strategies, casework counseling, referrals to community programs and will assist the family by linking them with community resources, such as advocacy and parenting programs, supportive networks, and counseling. Outreach to community stakeholders and referrals to preventive services can also be made for the family. Referrals for services provided by other DSS programs include transportation, day care assistance, temporary assistance (TANF), food stamps, Medicaid, child support services, and emergency services. Services which may be provided by community service providers include food, clothing, shelter, mediation, respite, advocacy, early intervention, substance abuse counseling, domestic violence services, shelter services, outreach services, parent support groups, public health nurse, WIC, health services, mental health services, and education services. FAR workers will make referrals and work closely with SPOA, CCSI and PINS.

The family assessment response caseworkers will be linking families with needed services and advocating for them. They will follow up with the families to see that the services being provided are working, and interact in partnership with other services on behalf of families.

**C) A description of the process to be followed for planning and monitoring the services provided under the family assessment and Services track.**

- **Please include how the assessments and services provided directly by LDSS as well as those provided by agencies under contract with LDSS and those provided by other community agencies will be developed and monitored for quality and adherence to negotiated principles and expectations.**

Services provided by FAR caseworkers and community partners will be reviewed and assessed through a minimum of bi-weekly supervision between supervisor and caseworker. The supervisor will review the interviews the FAR worker has had with family members and review the information regarding family's strengths, needs and types of support the family utilizes. The supervisor will meet with the caseworkers carrying a FAR workload, review their progress notes, and information gathered from interviews, and discuss ways of engaging the family or obstacles for the family and solutions. Discussion would include, the conditions of the home, the family's support network and the family's strengths.

**D) A description of how the principles of family involvement and support consistent with maintaining the safety of the children will be implemented in the family assessment and services track:**

- **Our core practice principles upon which the family assessment response is designed:**

Putnam FAR workers will use a family focused, strength based approach with families with safety of the child (ren) being the primary goal. In order to assess safety, FAR workers must employ the principles of family engagement skills, recognizing that the family is most knowledgeable about their needs, strengths, and resources. Reinforcing strengths and engaging the family is the key to assessing safety and ultimate change for the child(ren) and family. The FAR worker will collaborate with community and family resources to implement and motivate the family for permanent change. Services will be sought out and developed to meet the identified needs.

**E) A description of how the Family Assessment Response Program (FAR) will enhance the ability of the district to protect children, maintain the safety of children and preserve families:**

Child safety will be continually assessed and evaluated throughout the case by engaging the family in open discussions about what they think their family needs, and empowering the family to make changes if necessary. In addition, FAR workers will make home visits and referrals to service providers when necessary. By identifying a family's strengths and needs and providing appropriate services upon receipt of the report, a differential response will open a dialogue between the department and the family allowing for the family to view the department as less punitive and more supportive in nature. The overall goal is to engage and support families rather than put them on the defensive.

**F) A description of how the district will reduce the involvement of government agencies with families and maintain the safety of children through the use of community resources;**

- **How the district will engage the family without increasing the involvement of government agencies without compromising safety of children.**

The Family Assessment Response is a less intrusive approach than the traditional CPS response. The FAR approach focuses on short-term, front end services, thereby reducing government involvement over time. By having the family identify their own needs and community resources, they will be better able to address future problems thus eliminating future government involvement. Safety will be regularly monitored through supervision of cases and regular contact with the families.

- **How traditional service providers, the family's support network, and other community resources will provide assistance to families whose reports/cases will be handled by a differential response program.**

The FAR workers will engage the family, their support network, and other community resources in providing assistance to the family. Family strengths will be identified and services will be provided with the family's mutual consent.

**G) A description of the staff resources proposed to be used in the family assessment and services track, including the proposed staff workloads and qualifications; please include;**

- **How you plan to assign or recruit DSS staff to respond to a CPS report through the assessment response track.**

After visiting Orange County and learning about the FAR program, 3 Putnam CPS workers volunteered to be part of the FAR program. These 3 identified workers will become the FAR workers. They will carry between 10-15 cases per worker. All three workers have demonstrated experience in providing the CPS response, success in assessing safety and risk, skill in interviewing and engagement of the family, ability to establish and maintain therapeutic relationships, common sense and judgment, and excellent observation and analysis abilities.

- **Whether staff will be involved in both the family assessment response track and the traditional CPS investigation**

The FAR workers will only carry FAR cases on their workload. It is believed that at least 40% of SCR reports received will be eligible for FAR.

- **An indication of the use of any and all specialized staff/resources that will impact on the implementation of FAR**

The FAR supervisor is a CPS supervisor and a licensed Social Worker. She has her Masters in Social Work and Elementary Education. All 3 caseworkers, that will become FAR workers, have worked in CPS for at least 2 years. One caseworker previously worked in Preventive Services and as an advocate at the CAC. Another has her Masters in Social Work and has experience providing

outreach services to young mothers. Another caseworker was employed by the Child Care Council and worked extensively with daycare providers and day care services.

**H) A description of the training that will be provided to district staff regarding the family assessment response program. Additionally, please include a description of training to be provided to any non-district staff to be used in the differential response program. Both descriptions should include, but not be limited to, a description of the training involved maintaining the safety and well-being of children and any cross training planned for family assessment and investigative staff;**

Putnam County made a field trip to Orange County in October 2009, to learn about the FAR program. The training and information obtained from Orange County was helpful and the feedback from workers who attended the training was positive. Following the training, 3 workers volunteered to be part of the FAR response. Responses about the implementation of FAR from staff and community stakeholders have also been positive. In February 2010, Putnam met with the School Superintendents and discussed the possibility of Putnam implementing the FAR program. The Superintendents were open to learning more about the alternate response program and agreed to meet again in the future.

Training will continue for all DSS staff and community providers. All FAR workers have received safety and risk training and currently work in CPS. Cross training for family assessment and investigation staff will be provided and will include specific training for domestic violence and substance abuse issues. Putnam County will identify weaknesses and supplement with support and training in those areas.

**I) A description of the community resources that are proposed to be used in the family assessment and services track;**

As a family engages with the FAR caseworker and identifies the services needed, all efforts will be utilized to connect the family with the necessary services. This may range from applying for day care services, to domestic violence services, shelter services, substance abuse treatment, school advocacy, mentoring services, counseling, or helping the family arrange for transportation or find a job. A SPOA universal referral process is in place and will be utilized for Family Assessment Response cases to access contract services, including PINS prevention programs. Families can be assisted with negotiating Single Point of Access (SPOA/CCSI) processes for mental health, OMRDD and PINS prevention services and to apply for Temporary Assistance, Food Stamps, Medicaid, Social Security and housing.

**J) A description of any additional funding (beyond the regular child welfare finance mechanisms) that may be utilized to enhance the Family Assessment Response Program (FAR);**

Putnam County will apply for any grants and or funding available from the State or County, which may be utilized to assist with on going training, mentoring and technical support.

**K) A description of the protocol to be followed for handling cases in the family assessment services track when domestic violence is suspected or confirmed. The protocol must address the need to maintain the safety of the child(ren).**

- **If you plan to collaborate with your local domestic violence provider concerning any aspects of your family assessment and services track, please describe such collaboration**

Putnam County has an on going relationship with the domestic violence provider (Northern Westchester Women's Center). When there is domestic violence suspected or confirmed all interviews of family members shall be coordinated with the Child Advocacy Center and CAC advocates. Interviews shall be conducted at the CAC and standard protocols shall include interviewing the parties separately, establishing safety plans, linking families or victims with local crime victim boards and victim advocates, providing emergency needs, and ensuring the child(ren) safety. Referrals may be made to support groups, legal services, domestic violence shelter, and parenting classes. If at initial contact there are safety concerns then the case may be transferred back to the traditional investigative track.

**L) A description of your plan to involve community agencies, schools, Family Court, other key stakeholders in your community or catchments area, and the community as a whole in planning and implementing a family assessment response:**

- **Please indicate your projected timeline for implementation.**

Putnam County has already started to involve the community and local stakeholders in the anticipated implementation of the family assessment response. Training will take place on an on going basis as needed for staff, providers and the community. If Putnam's application is approved, we would plan to start the family assessment response by June 2010.