



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 11.1

Subject:	Assessment Process and Tools
Authority:	TCA 37-5-105 (3), 37-5-106, 37-1-137
Standards:	DCS Practice Model Standards: 2-105B; 2-109B; 2-110B; 5-201; 5-204; 6-400; 6-507B; 6-508B; 6-513C; 8-101; 8-206B; 10-101; 11-101; 11-103; 11-302A; 11-307A; 11-310B; 11-315B; PREA: 115.341
Application:	To All Department of Children's Services Employees
Policy Statement:	
<p>The Department shall utilize a comprehensive, individualized, strengths-based, culturally responsive assessment process, which includes the use of appropriate assessment tools and documentation in order to determine the family's strengths, skills, motivation for change, and immediate and on-going needs. Assessment shall be a continuous process throughout the life of the case.</p>	
Purpose:	
<p>To ensure child safety and strengthen families, many critical pieces of information is gathered and considered. The assessment process explores underlying causes of child maltreatment or risk of abuse and neglect, factors that prevent the family from making the necessary changes to keep its children safe, community risks to youth, factors that ensure that youth are not a threat to the community, formal and informal community supports, possible mental or physical health issues, and signs of substance abuse or domestic violence.</p>	
Procedures:	
A. Documentation of the assessment process	<p>Family Functional Assessment Process (FFA)</p> <p>The Family Functional Assessment process is designed to support the DCS Practice Wheel, the Guiding Principles of Tennessee child welfare practice, and high-quality casework.</p> <p>The FFA is not an assessment tool by itself. It is an ongoing, written record that explains the information attained through the successful engagement of family members, the findings of official DCS assessment tools and service provider reports, and the continual assessment of case progress.</p> <p>The information documented in the FFA should lead to the development of individualized plans utilizing family strengths and solutions. Refer to <u>Documentation of the Family Functional Assessment Process Manual, Protocol for Family Functional Assessment</u> and Family Functional Assessment located in TFACTS for additional information.</p>

<p>B. Assessment tools</p>	<p>1. Structured Decision Making (SDM) Track Tool</p> <p>A tool used upon receipt of a report of abuse/neglect to gather all available information to determine whether the report meets DCS criteria to initiate an investigation. If the report meets DCS criteria to initiate an investigation, the tool is used to determine how quickly face-to-face contact is initiated for assigned investigations. Access to the tool on the <i>DCS N-Drive</i> is restricted to Central Intake staff responsible for completing this assessment. (See <i>Structured Decision Making Policy and Procedure Manual-hard copy for Central Intake and CPS staff</i>).</p> <p>2. (SDM) Safety Assessment</p> <p>A tool to guide the decision to leave children in the home <u>or</u> place children out of the home based on observed threats of immediate harm and the availability of interventions to mitigate safety concerns. Utilize form, <u>SDM Safety Assessment</u>.</p> <p>3. Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)</p> <p>A tool that provides a context for communicating and making decisions about care. The CANS consists of approximately sixty-five (65) items to evaluate how the department and its partners act in the best interests of children and families (see <u>CANS Case Protocol</u>). For youth placed in foster care and residential settings who score a “2” or “3” on the identified high risk items on the CANS Assessment, follow the steps listed in the <u>High Risk Protocol</u>.</p> <p>4. Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST)</p> <p>A tool to help identify strengths as well as underlying issues and needs for families brought to the Department’s attention through the CPS process. The FAST consists of approximately forty (40) items to help assess all family members receiving in-home services. (See <u>Family Advocacy & Support Tool (FAST) Protocol</u> for additional information).</p> <p>5. Independent Living Assessments</p> <p>Tools to assess a youth’s knowledge of the following life skill areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Career Planning, Communication;</i> b) <i>Daily Living;</i> c) <i>Home Life;</i> d) <i>Housing and Money Management;</i> e) <i>Self-Care;</i> f) <i>Social Relationships;</i> g) <i>Work Life and Work; and</i> h) <i>Study Skills.</i> <p>◆ The assessment results are useful for goal setting, program and permanency planning, and for measuring progress on life skill acquisition.</p>
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	<p>◆ Eligible youth (ages 14 and above) and young adults as defined by DCS Policy 16.51, Independent Living and Transition Planning, receive an individualized life skills assessment of strengths and needs. The Family Service Worker (FSW) shall administer the assessment in advance of Independent Living Plan (ILP) development. The assessment is completed no later than fourteen (14) days after a youth enters custody in order to fully integrate the results into the youth’s Independent Living/Family Permanency Plan. It is updated at least annually thereafter. One of the tools used for Independent Living Assessments is the Casey Life Skills Assessment. Instructions for completing this assessment and the most updated testing instrument addressed is located in the Identifying and Accessing Independent Living Services Manual.</p> <p>Note: There are circumstances that may impede the ability to complete a life skills assessment in advance of the initial CFTM/Permanency Plan development. These circumstances and alternative measures are outlined in the Identifying and Accessing Independent Living Services Manual.</p> <p>6. Profile of Parenting Study (POPS)</p> <p>A tool designed to assist in identifying and developing prospective resource parents. The foundation for POPS is the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment. Staff are trained and certified to use the Profile of Parenting Study assessment tool.</p> <p>7. Time frames for implementation/completion of assessments and those required for each case type or program are outlined in assessment training, DCS policies and procedures, and/or current practice.</p>
<p>C. Goals of assessment</p>	<p>The goals of the assessment process are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify functional strengths for the family; 2. Identify family concerns and needs in order to access appropriate services; 3. Promote team-focused quality decision making; 4. Promote the development of comprehensive family plan.
<p>D. Responsibility</p>	<p>All employees who work with child and family assessments shall ensure that the assessments are conducted appropriately and contain current and accurate information on the child/youth/family for each case type or program.</p>
<p>E. Training</p>	<p>All employees who utilize assessment tools receive appropriate training and/or certification. Assessment training is documented in each employee’s training record and maintained by the Office of Professional Development.</p>
<p>F. Health assessments</p>	<p>Part of the assessment process for children/youth in DCS custody is related to the child's/youth's medical and behavioral health. This includes assessment of immediate health concerns as well as ongoing health related issues. The basis for screening and follow-up of the medical and behavioral health needs of children/youth in DCS custody is Early, Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT). All health related concerns are addressed through the</p>

	<p>EPSDT process.</p> <p>Refer to DCS policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 20.5 Health Care Delivery at Youth Development Centers ◆ 20.7 TENNderCARE Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment ◆ 20.8 Reproductive Health Education and Services ◆ 20.12 Dental Services ◆ 20.19 Communicable Diseases
<p>G. TFACTS documentation</p>	<p>In the TFACTS system, each Quantitative tool (CANS, FAST, SDM, etc....) contains a narrative box that relates to a predefined section of the Family Functional Assessment (FFA). Any information entered in these boxes is automatically populated into the FFA. The location where the information goes is noted at the top of the narrative box (Example: FFA Narrative – Assessment of Safety). These boxes were created to assist the worker filling out the assessment by reducing the need to switch between different tools in order to fully document their assessment of the child and family.</p> <p>Note: Please remember that in practice, a full description of why a box was checked on a quantitative assessment is documented in detail on the FFA. Information can also be entered directly into the FFA when needed.</p>

<p>Forms:</p>	<p>CS-0777. Family Functional Assessment</p> <p>CS-0899. Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment</p> <p>CS-0906. Family Advocacy and Support Tool</p> <p>SDM Safety Assessment</p>
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<p>Collateral documents:</p>	<p>Casey Life Skills Assessment</p> <p>CANS Case Protocol</p> <p>Documentation of the Family Functional Assessment Process Manual</p> <p>Family Advocacy & Support Tool (FAST) Use and Review Protocol</p> <p>SDM Safety Assessment</p> <p>High Risk Protocol</p> <p>Identifying and Accessing Independent Living Services Manual</p> <p>Profile of Parenting Study Tool</p> <p>Profile of Parenting Study Tool Manual</p> <p>Protocol For Family Functional Assessment Process</p>
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Glossary:	
Term	Definition
Assessment:	The on-going process of organizing and analyzing the information gathered.
Child Protective Services Investigator (CPSI):	A DCS term used to identify the person under the CPS Multiple Response System (MRS) who investigates CPS allegations of severe abuse. This person is principally responsible for investigating allegations to uncover abuse, identify victims and perpetrators, and determine findings related to the allegations.
Child Protective Services Assessment Worker (CPSA):	A DCS term used to identify the person under the CPS Multiple Response System (MRS) who works with families who are involved in low- to moderate-risk CPS cases. This person is principally responsible for ensuring the safety of the child, while assessing and engaging the entire family in order to identify services and supports that can address the family's needs.
Ecomap:	A map that provides a visual image of family members who reside in the household and the formal and informal resources in the community available to them.