



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

## Protocol for Family Functional Assessment Process

Supplemental to DCS Policy: 11.1

The Family Functional Assessment is an ongoing process and an assessment tool that is utilized by trained staff to evaluate the needs and strengths of families throughout agency involvement.

### **Family Functional Assessment Process Manual:**

1. The [Documentation of the Family Functional Assessment Process Manual](#) will aid staff in the assessment of the child and family. It can be used to identify questions for interviewing families. However, interviews should not be exclusive to questions from the manual.
2. The Office of Child Safety will develop, maintain, and revise the manual annually or as often as necessary.

### **Assessment process:**

#### 1. Gathering Information

a) Information can be obtained through the use of:

- ◆ Interviews
- ◆ Observations,
- ◆ Records checks
- ◆ Collateral reports
- ◆ Evaluations
- ◆ Pictorial Tools
- ◆ Photographs
- ◆ DCS assessment tools, and
- ◆ Other appropriate evidence-based tools

b) DCS staff shall interact with families and children in a strengths-based, culturally responsive, family-centered manner using culturally competent, interpersonal skills demonstrating genuineness, empathy, and respect for the family and individuals in accordance with DCS policy [31.7. Building, Preparing and Maintaining Child and Family Teams.](#)

c) When interviewing members of the child and family team, it is important for staff to "hear the family story." Interviews with family members should be driven by the information that the person has to

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offer and should not be driven by questions on a questionnaire. Interviews will seek the underlying issues that result in surface behaviors or problems.

### 2. Analyzing Information

- a) Information will be analyzed by staff and the family to identify signs of safety (strengths) and signs of risk (needs and concerns).
- b) During supervisory case conferences, staff can receive assistance with further analysis of information.

### 3. Drawing Conclusions and Making Decisions

Conclusions and decisions about family strengths, needs, and service delivery are made in conjunction with the Child and Family Team.

### **Recording the FFA process and ongoing assessment:**

1. The **Family Functional Assessment**, located in TFACTS will be used to document ongoing family assessment information. Child Protective Services assessment workers (CPSA's), Family Service Workers (FSW, FSS, and FCIP) will initiate a FFA within thirty (30) calendar days of case assignment. Court Liaisons may initiate documentation if deemed appropriate by regional leadership. Child Protective Service Workers (CPSI's) will initiate a Family Functional Assessment (FFA) within thirty (30) calendar days of case assignment if:
  - a) The decision has been made to provide on-going services to the family; or
  - b) The child comes into DCS custody (See DCS Policy [14.4. Engaging Families: Family Functional Assessment and Child and Family Team Meetings](#)).
2. The FFA will be updated on at least a quarterly basis throughout the life of the case.

### **Probation cases**

FFA information for youth on probation will be documented within thirty (30) working days of case assignment in preparation for the development of the **Youth and Family Intervention Agreement (YFIA)** with the child and family.

### **CPS transfer to FSW :**

1. CPSI's and CPSAs will update the FFA within five (5) business days of the date of transfer to the FSW.
2. If the case is not transferred, the CPSI or CPSA will update the FFA prior to case closure.

### **Supervisor review:**

Team Leaders will conduct a monthly review of one FFA per case worker. The focus of the review will include the timely initiation of the document, identification of service needs, use of assessment tools, and continued assessment of permanency progress. The purpose of the review will be to promote high-quality assessments and timely and appropriate updates.

**Use of pictorial tools:**

1. Pictorial tools include:
  - a) Genogram;
  - b) Timeline;
  - c) Family map, and
  - d) Ecomap
2. Pictorial Tools assist the staff in conducting a family-centered, strengths-based, culturally-inclusive assessment. These tools offer visual representations of how families view themselves and the outside world and help families see their strengths and needs.
3. At least one pictorial tool should be used during the assessment process.