

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Technical Assistance Site Report



Prepared for Kentucky
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Situation and Technical Assistance Request

Kentucky's Department for Community Based Services designed a new system, called the Dynamic Family Assessment (DFA) as an improvement to its former assessment method called the Continuous Quality Assessment (CQA). The impetus for developing the DFA was to address assessment of families and children throughout the life of a case and to have a tool that provided a guide for decision-making. The staff did not believe that CQA provided this level of good practice guide for the life of the case and was cumbersome and overburdening to use. The DFA allows for the assessment to be dynamic, a means for analyzing risk factors, and provides a foundation for developing and implementing case work intervention.

Kentucky designed a deliberate and well thought out plan of action to develop and test the Dynamic Family Assessment process prior to full state implementation. The ultimate goal is to test the system in the Investigative, Adult Protection, Ongoing, and Post-Termination of Parental Rights program areas. The outcome of the test for each area is to refine the instrument in terms of reliability, validity, and clinical usefulness, to determine staff perceptions, and to learn about how technology and policies supported the new process. A significant consideration for the state is to design an instrument that will integrate the use of technology as caseworkers perform good practice in assessment using convenient and time saving technical support.

The DFA was first piloted as a CPS Investigative Simulation with selected areas of the state. At the close of the simulation, Kentucky requested technical assistance from NRCCPS to assist with providing feedback on the DFA.

The assistance was to include:

- Facilitating a group of staff from the pilot counties who had used the DFA.
- Providing information on how other states handle assessment

- Making recommendations based on the feedback from the simulation and discussions with staff.

Prior to the site visit, the NRCCPS consultation participated in a conference call on November 7, 2005, with Kentucky's departmental staff and the evaluator. Kentucky planned a one-day work group closeout session to finalize the CPS Investigative portion and to decide next steps. The consultants would participate in the work day and a second on-site day to discuss next steps with project staff and Central Office staff. The conference call was to finalize the agenda and to decide on what information, resources, and materials would be helpful for the consultants to review to prepare for the meeting.

Site Visit

The NRCCPS consultants conducted an on-site visit on November 29-30, 2005, and participated in the Dynamic Family Assessment Simulation Closeout work group sessions and follow up meeting with Kentucky's Central Office staff and evaluator.

In preparation, the consultants were provided with a number of documents and materials to help familiarize them with the project's implementation plan, concept, instrument design, policies, results and psychometric analysis of the DFA.

The work group session was organized into several tasks and participants included invited Central Office staff, CPS investigative workers completing 10 DFA simulations, CPS investigative supervisors and other support staff. The first part of the day was spent giving an overview of the DFA and results of the simulation. All participants from the pilot sites were encouraged to give ideas, comments, and feedback about the experience and use of the DFA and technical tools. Following a large group discussion, three work groups were defined; (1) Investigation supervisors to discuss and decide on policy implications, (2) DFA front line staff to discuss safety/risk and protective factors scales, and maltreatment rating scales, and (3) Ongoing supervisors to discuss transitioning from investigation to ongoing. Results from the work group included feedback on measures, policy ideas, and transitioning to ongoing.

The afternoon session included a presentation by NRCCPS on safety and risk issues and a national perspective about how other states are addressing assessment-. A demonstration was also provided on technology application and possible integration with the state's TWIST screens

The day ended with ideas and issues being grouped and put into priority order to consider for next steps.

The follow up meeting on the second day with Central Office, project staff, and the evaluator was a debriefing about the previous day's discussions and identified issues. The outcome of the meeting was a work plan with itemized tasks, due dates for completion of the tasks, and the persons responsible for oversight.

In summary, the following issues were grouped for next steps:

- Revision to the DFA relative to scales and scoring, and inclusion of child items
- Refining measures for ongoing to build the simulation
- Differentiating safety factors in safety risk scales
- Developing a training plan that includes critical thinking skills and definitions of risk and safety
- Supervision and workload management issues
- Communication and public relations about the DFA system and next steps.
- Technical assistance and consultation on resources and assistance
- Review and modification to policy on neglect
- Technical assistance on fatality cases

A detailed work plan was drafted by the end of the meeting and a copy accompanies this report.

Next Steps

Kentucky's staff is very invested in the process for implementing the DFA and ensuring that the work group members are representative of each program or support area impacted by a new system. The work

plan has tight time frames with some tasks running concurrently and others being sequential.

The NRCCPS consultants committed to preparing a final draft of the work plan to send to the evaluator and Central Office Liaison for distribution to all work group members. Resources and materials about risk and safety issues were also provided for the work groups assigned to integrate into the DFA scales and rating. Each work group planned to meet as necessary to work on assigned tasks and all groups were to devise a way to communicate about progress.

Follow up conference calls and e-mails have been initiated between the NRCCPS consultant and Central Office during January and February 2006. During a conference call on February 28, 2006, the Kentucky staff provided an update about the progress of accomplishing the tasks on the Work Plan. In summary, the work groups have been working on key issues identified in the November work group meetings including:

- Revising language and measures in the DFA tool
- Working with the technical support staff and tasks
- Drafting policy revisions
- Identifying safety vs. risk issues
- Developing the training plan

A request was made to the NRCCPS to provide some information on neglect, critical thinking training content, and domestic violence impact on CPS cases. Resources have been provided on the neglect request as to how other states may be handling re-reporting of those cases often classified as environmental neglect/poverty related cases. An outline for critical thinking training content and a source for the training have been provided. Resources and materials for domestic violence are currently being researched and will be provided in the near future.

Future on-site or off-site technical assistance and consultation will be offered as needed as Kentucky proceeds with completing the work plan tasks.

