

Child Protective Services

CPS and FAR

Tompkins County Department of Social Services



The Concept of Child Protective Services

It is against the law to endanger the welfare of children.

The focus of CPS is to protect children from further abuse or neglect.

While CPS must often investigate abuse, neglect or maltreatment, filing CPS proceedings in Family Court, and placing foster homes, under New York's concept of CPS, "the state's first obligation is to help the family with services to prevent its break-up or to reunite it if the child has already left home"

Therefore in New York, CPS focuses on the child in the context of the family, and recognizes the value of the family to the child. Removing a child from the home is a last resort and is only employed when less drastic means of protection are impossible.

Tompkins County INV and FAR

Investigation (INV)

- Workers are trained as INV workers first, then become FAR trained
- INV workers conduct Investigations for cases that do not qualify to be FAR tracked
- Although all INV workers are CPS trained, Tompkins County has 7 CPS Caseworkers that work in two work units

Family Assessment Response

- Tompkins County has a dual track system
- All cases that can, are assigned to FAR
- Tompkins County has 7 FAR caseworkers that work within two work units
- Family Assessment Response (FAR) is an alternative Child Protective response to some reports of child maltreatment. FAR does not require an investigation and determination of allegations and individual culpability. It is an alternative approach to providing protection to children by engaging families in an assessment of child safety and of family needs, in finding solutions to family problems and in identifying informal and formal supports to meet their needs and increase their ability to care for their children.

Tompkins County Child Protective Services (INV) and Family Assessment Response (FAR)

- A CPS case begins with a report received from the NY State Central Registry (SCR)
- Tompkins County DSS determines if the case will be INV or FAR “tracked”
- Safety Assessment begun within 24 hours and completed in 7 days regardless of FAR or INV tracking
- When Children considered safe – case either continues with FAR or Investigation ensues
- When Children considered unsafe – case reverts to Investigation
- Workers always engage families with **Strengths-Based and Solution Focused approach**, i.e. working with families to identify their strengths, resources and collaborating with them to find solutions that are workable within the current context of their lives

FAR Flowchart



- ❖ Family Assessment Response is always preferable when possible
- ❖ Keeping kids safe is our priority
- ❖ Engagement and Empowerment of Families is always an essential focus
- ❖ Our approach is first, Child Centered, and a close second, Family Centered
- ❖ Keeping families together is the priority, when not possible, research kinship care options
- ❖ When children are placed in Foster Care it is because all other options to establish safety have been exhausted
- ❖ The goal is to keep Foster Care placements brief and to engage parents in the re-unification process
- ❖ When re-unification is not possible, seeking permanency becomes key for the health and wellbeing of the child

Trauma Informed Care Recognizes:

- ✓ Trauma is inherent in the process of CPS intervention
- ✓ Children and Adults are already likely experiencing (possibly high) levels of trauma
- ✓ Removing children from their parent's care is a traumatic event and is only used when the risk to children outweighs the potential impact of trauma
- ✓ Care plan for children and adults includes supports that address effects of trauma
- ✓ Workers Regularly employ the five principles of Trauma Informed Care: Safety, Trustworthiness, Choice, Collaboration and Empowerment



Overarching Goals:

Safety - Children are safely maintained in their own home, families and communities with connections, culture and relationships preserved.

Prevention - Through effective intervention, parents, caregivers, and families improve their ability to develop and maintain a safe, stable environment for themselves and their children.

Permanency - When it is necessary to place children in out-of-home care, it is a safe, short and stable experience concluding with permanent attachments to caring adults.

Well-being - Parents and caregivers have the capacity to provide for their children's needs. Children are cared for in safe, permanent, and nurturing environments that meet their needs and develop their physical, cognitive, behavioral/emotional and social functioning. As youth transition to adulthood, they benefit from services that promote healthy development, academic success and/or self-sustainability and safe living conditions.

INV and FAR

Questions?