



State of Tennessee

Department of Children's Services

Protocol for Completion of the Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST)

Supplemental to DCS Policies: 14.6, Child Protective Services Case Tasks and Responsibilities, 14.7, Multi-Disciplinary Team: Child Protection Investigation Team, 14.8, Child Protective Services Second Shift, 14.10, Special Investigations Unit Child Protective Services Investigations, 14.18, Family Support Services Program, 14.19, Family Crisis Intervention Program

The purpose of the Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) is to help identify safety concerns, underlying risks, needs and strengths of families involved with the Department. The FAST is the initial intervention assessment tool designed to be utilized with non-custodial children and families that have had contact with Child Protective Services (CPS) and any Ongoing In-Home Services to include Family Crisis Intervention Program (FCIP) cases, Family Support Services (FSS) cases and any non-custodial aftercare services. The FAST assesses the family unit as a whole in order to determine child safety, identify risks, needs and assist workers in identifying protective factors. After evaluating these factors, the FAST then guides the Case Manager in identifying any needed planning and/or service provision. The initial FAST should be completed prior to or during any Child and Family Team Meetings to assist with this service planning. All children and caregivers in the household, regardless of age, are included in the FAST assessment. The FAST should be reassessed throughout the life of the case to evaluate implemented services and adjust, as necessary, to affect the desired change. DCS staff must be certified prior to completing the FAST.

1. FAST Assessment

The FAST is comprised of four (4) assessment components (Safety Assessment, Risk and Service Need Assessment, Trauma Score and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor) by gathering information from multiple sources including, but not limited to:

- ☐ Interviews with child(ren) and family
- ☐ Observations
- ☐ Records checks (see form [Background Check History and IV-E Eligibility Checklist](#))
- ☐ Collateral and/or witness interviews or reports
- ☐ Evaluations
- ☐ Medical records
- ☐ Educational records
- ☐ Pictorial tools (i.e. genogram, timeline, family map, photographs)
- ☐ Other assessment tools

A. Safety Assessment Component

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The Safety Assessment component is comprised of sixteen (16) items of the FAST. These sixteen (16) items focus on immediate safety for the child and once addressed, will recommend if immediate intervention may be needed. The outcome to the Safety Assessment is designed to be used as a decision

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support tool to support planning and/or protective measures implemented for the child(ren). The sixteen (16) items included in the Safety Assessment include:

Family Together:

☐ Physical Condition of the Home

☐ Home Maintenance

☐ Family Conflict

☐ Family Safety

Caregiver:

☐ Developmental

☐ Mental Health

☐ Substance Use

☐ Criminal Activity

☐ Supervision

☐ Discipline

☐ Involvement in Caregiving Functions ☐ Knowledge of Youth and Family Needs

Youth:

☐ Sexual Abuse Status

☐ Physical Abuse Status

☐ Emotional Abuse ☐ Neglect

Based on the ratings given in each section, the Safety Assessment will result in one of two outcomes: Immediate Intervention Recommended or Immediate Intervention Not Recommended. The worker considers the outcome and, if necessary, addresses protective factors or safety concerns requiring intervention within the justification sections of the assessment tool. Each item of the Safety Assessment that is rated as a 2 or 3 requires a justification. The exception is Home Maintenance which requires a justification regardless of the rating.

Timeframes:

☐ CPS – submitted to supervisor within five (5) business days from the intake date

- As the FAST is inclusive of the sixteen (16) items comprising the Safety Assessment, this timeframe is met if a FAST is submitted to the supervisor within five (5) business days from the intake date.

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- ☐ In-Home –The FAST, including the items that make up the Safety Assessment, is submitted to the supervisor within ten (10) business days from the intake date.

Note: When a child is placed out of the home custodially or non-custodially, the Safety Assessment is completed based on the initial home where the safety issues were discovered leading to that intervention.

B. Risk and Service Need Assessment Component

The Risk and Service Need Assessment component is comprised of the remaining fifteen (15) items of the FAST. These sixteen (16) items identify strengths, risks, needs and possible service planning for the child(ren) and family. Once the fifteen (15) items are rated, the worker is provided a level of risk associated with the family. This outcome assists the worker in the type of service provision needed. The outcome to the Risk and Service Need Assessment is designed to be used as a decision support tool to support plans or services identified for the child and family.

Family Together:

- ☐ Financial Resources
- ☐ Residential Stability
- ☐ Natural Supports
- ☐ Resiliency

Caregiver:

- ☐ Adjustments to Trauma Experience ☐ Physical Health (Caregiver)

Youth:

- ☐ Traumatic Grief
- ☐ Witness to Family, School or Community Violence
- ☐ Relationship with Primary Caregiver
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Physical Health (Youth)
- ☐ Developmental
- ☐ Mental Health
- ☐ Substance Use
- ☐ High Risk Behavior
- ☐ Runaway

Timeframes:

- ☐ CPS – submitted to supervisor within ten (10) business days from intake date
- ☐ Ongoing In-Home submitted to supervisor within ten (10) business days from FSS/FCIP episode start date for cases that do not originate from CPS. Cases transferred from CPS are-submitted to supervisor within -thirty (30) calendar days from the FSS/FCIP episode start date.

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C. Trauma Score Component

The Trauma Score is automatically generated by TFACTS based on the ratings given to six (6) specific items on the FAST. The Trauma Score is assigned to each youth assessed with a completed FAST. This score is based on the severity of ratings in the following FAST items:

- ☐ Sexual Abuse
- ☐ Physical Abuse
- ☐ Emotional Abuse
- ☐ Neglect
- ☐ Traumatic Grief
- ☐ Witness to Family, School or Community Violence.

The Trauma Assessment is provided upon completion of the Risk and Service Needs Assessment and provides the worker with a basic knowledge of potential trauma to the child and family. The trauma score can assist in guiding the service plans developed. While a lower score may indicate a need for services specifically addressing trauma, a higher end score represents the worker's assessment of multiple traumas present in the case that could be addressed through service provision.

D. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (CSEM) Component

The CSEM output is automatically generated by TFACTS based on eight (8) specific items of the FAST. The CSEM output is assigned to each youth assessed with a completed FAST. This score is based on the severity of ratings in the following FAST items:

- ☐ Residential Stability
- ☐ Substance Abuse
- ☐ High Risk Behavior
- ☐ Runaway
- ☐ Sexual Abuse
- ☐ Physical Abuse
- ☐ Emotional Abuse
- ☐ Relationship with Primary Caregiver

The CSEM output is generated upon completion of the FAST. It is designed to provide the worker with a basic understanding of the potential vulnerabilities present that places a youth at risk of being trafficked. The CSEM output can assist in guiding the development of the service plan and a higher risk level represents the worker's assessment of multiple areas of vulnerabilities that could be addressed through service provision. It is important to note that the CSEM risk output (Low, Moderate, or High) does not designate a youth as being trafficked or as pre-determined to experience a trafficking incident. The worker has an opportunity to acknowledge whether a child has been a victim of CSEM when scoring the Sexual Abuse item as 1, 2, or 3 through an additional yes/no type of question.

E. Service Intensity Levels

Based on the ratings given in each section, the Risk and Service Needs Assessment will result in one (1) of four (4) service intensity levels:

No Service Intensity – Services not recommended, and worker continues to complete required tasks for case closure.

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Low Service Intensity – Worker may proceed to case tasks or closure contingent on supervisor approval and no new safety or risk concerns.

Moderate Service Intensity – Worker may initiate referrals for appropriate services that have been identified for any family member's needs. If services are initiated, a plan should address the identified items from the assessment that led to the outcome (items rated 2 or 3). A case conference with the supervisor should be held to assess progress and to ensure identified needs are being addressed. If the worker proceeds without initiating services, the supervisor reviews and determines if the decision is appropriate or will advise for additional needs of the family.

High Service Intensity – Worker may initiate immediate referrals for appropriate services that have been identified for any family member's needs. A plan should be created to address the identified items that scored 2 or 3. A case conference with the supervisor should be held to assess progress and to ensure

identified needs are being addressed. Case closure is not likely to occur until identified services have been put in place and progress can be observed.

2. FAST Reassessment A. CPS

Investigations

For CPS Investigations, a reassessment of the FAST is completed at case transfer or closure unless the previous FAST assessment was completed within the last thirty (30) calendar days. When an intervention such as an Immediate Protection Agreement, court petition, or removal into state custody takes place, the family is to be reassessed through an updated FAST. A reassessment of the FAST may also occur at any time during the life of the case to indicate a change in safety, risk, trauma or service need.

B. CPS Assessments

For CPS Assessments, a reassessment of the FAST is completed at a minimum every ninety (90) calendar days and/or at case closure (unless a previous FAST was completed within thirty (30) calendar days of closure) in order to track progress and service efficacy. If the case is being transferred, an updated reassessment is completed unless the previous FAST was within thirty (30) days of the transfer. A reassessment of the FAST may also occur at any time during the life of the case to indicate a change in safety, risk, trauma or service need.

C. In-Home Cases

For all In-Home cases, workers reassess the FAST at a minimum of every ninety (90) calendar days following the date of the last FAST completed during the In-Home case and/or at case closure a reassessment of the FAST may also occur at any time during the life of the case to indicate a change in safety, risk, trauma or service need.

3. Documentation

Documentation within the FAST informs future work with a child and family. All child and family needs ratings of a 1, 2, or 3 must have justifications entered to indicate any identified protective factors, or a lack thereof, risk factors and services/interventions that have been put in place to address ongoing needs. Child and family strengths ratings of 1, 2 or 3 should also have justifications entered to indicate whether they are useful in planning, can be developed, or need to be

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identified. Though not required as part of the assessment, ratings of "0" should also include information regarding protective factors if indicated.

4. Supervisor Approvals

A. Safety Assessment-CPS Only

The Safety Assessment must be reviewed and approved by the supervisor within three (3) business days of submission by the worker.

B. Risk Assessment-ALL

The Risk Assessment must be reviewed and approved by the supervisor within three (3) business days of submission by the worker.

C. Reassessment

The supervisor reviews the FAST reassessment during monthly case conferences with staff to ensure that progress is being tracked and adjusted, when necessary.

5. Training

All DCS staff responsible for completing the FAST need to be trained and certified by the regional Center of Excellence FAST Consultants. All applicable DCS staff require yearly re-certification. In order to be certified, staff must score a seventy (70) or above on a training vignette. All newly hired staff responsible for completing the FAST must complete their first FAST in consultation with a FAST Assessment Consultant.

6. Reassignments

When a CPS or In-Home case has been reassigned to another worker, location or program area (apart from a case transfer), communication between the appropriate supervisors is necessary to determine who completes the Safety Assessment and Risk and Service Needs Assessment components of the FAST. Generally, the worker who possesses the most information is expected to complete the initial FAST.