

Family Assessment

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

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The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families utilizes the principles of family centered practice in developing a Family Assessment. The purpose of the assessment is to identify, in partnership with the family, the plans and services needed to ensure safety and permanency for the child and child and family well-being. The "family" is defined broadly and includes more than biological relations. Through the assessment process, risk factors, service needs and family strengths are identified in a manner that is respectful to the family and sensitive to their culture and ethnicity. A Family Assessment, which lays the foundation for the Department's intervention with a family, emphasizes family strengths as much as family needs. A Family Assessment is required for all families receiving DCYF services and must be completed prior to the development of the Service Plan.

A comprehensive assessment of a family initiated early in the process of the Department's involvement is critical in implementing the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (PL 105-89). ASFA requires that child safety be the paramount concern in making service provision, placement and permanency planning decisions. ASFA includes provisions that shorten the time frame for making permanency planning decisions and establishes time frames for initiating proceedings to terminate parental rights. DCYF staff make critical decisions relating to child safety, reunification, family preservation and termination of parental rights based on a comprehensive assessment of the family's strengths, needs and ability to provide a safe, stable home environment within a reasonable period of time.

Family information contained within the Department's records is confidential as a matter of State and Federal law, except where the statute allows the sharing of information for purposes of providing care and treatment to a family. An evaluation of family functioning and service needs, based on information obtained from the family and other community partners, is essential in completing a comprehensive assessment of the family. It is imperative that the sharing of information be continuous between DCYF and the family in an effort to support relationship building to effectively evaluate and address the issues that initiated the Department's involvement. The assessment process includes the engagement of collateral contacts, highlights the comprehensive needs and individual strengths, capabilities and resources of the child and family, and begins to identify how multiple agencies can support the family and build on their strengths while using discretion to maintain the family's right to privacy. This ongoing process evolves as the worker/family relationship develops, providing an opportunity for the family and DCYF staff to review concerns, strengths and resources together. A Family Reassessment is completed every six months to continually address changes in family functioning throughout the Department's involvement with the family.

Related Procedures

[Family Assessment and Reassessment](#)

Related Policies

[Service Plan](#)

Family Assessment and Reassessment

Procedure From Policy 700.0075: Family Assessment

- A. The Family Assessment (DCYF #148) and Reassessment (DCYF #148A) documents are located in RICHIST and are created for all families receiving services through Family Services Units (FSU) and for all families of youth active with Probation Units or sentenced to the Rhode Island Training School (RITS).
1. Assessment is an ongoing process that is conducted throughout the Department's involvement with the family.
 2. Each family will have one initial Family Assessment with subsequent Re-Assessments.
 - a. Each parent (including non-custodial parent), significant others living in the home and every child in the family, active or inactive with the Department, will be included in the assessment process. Information is documented in the appropriate sections of the Family Assessment and Reassessment.
 - b. Workers are responsible to complete as much of the Family Assessment and Reassessment as possible to effectively evaluate and address the issues that initiated DCYF's involvement. Efforts to engage family members are documented in the DCYF record.
 - c. Workers are responsible to make efforts to locate absent parent(s) and to document attempts in the DCYF record.
 3. In dual supervision cases, staff from each division enter data into the same Family Assessment or Reassessment.
 4. Once a Family Assessment is approved, a Reassessment may be created at any point.
- B. Timeframes for the completion, review, revision and approval of the Family Assessment
1. Family Services and Probation Units
 - a. The initial Family Assessment is completed by the assigned Family Services Caseworker/Probation Officer prior to the development of the Service Plan. The Service Plan must be completed within sixty (60) days of the child's removal from the home or within sixty (60) days of assignment if the child remains at home (refer to RICHIST Window Help, Family Assessment Window).
 - b. In cases where the Family Court has made a finding of Dependency/Neglect/Abuse on a petition filed by the Department and a Service Plan is required to be submitted to the Court within thirty (30) days of the finding, the Family Assessment is completed prior to the development of the Service Plan (refer to Policy 700.0025, Service Plan).
 - c. Revisions can be made to an approved initial Family Assessment for up to six (6) months or until a Reassessment has been created. Revisions to the initial Family Assessment may be necessary prior to the six-month Reassessment if:
 - i. A substantive change in circumstances occurs.
 - ii. More detailed information is obtained on the family.
 - iii. A family re-opens to the Department within six (6) months and it is determined to be appropriate to add to the existing initial assessment after a case consultation between primary worker and supervisor.

- iv. A family transfers to a different division and it is determined to be appropriate to add to the existing initial assessment after a case consultation between primary worker and supervisor.
 - d. If it is appropriate to add information to an existing initial assessment, primary supervisor authorizes the “reopening” of the assessment and information is added.
 - e. Subsequent Family Reassessments are completed by the assigned Family Services Caseworker/Probation Officer every six (6) months throughout the Department’s involvement with the family.
 - f. In cases where there is dual responsibility, the Probation Officer, FSU Caseworker or the respective supervisors discuss and mutually decide upon primary and secondary assignments in RICHIST and mutual responsibilities in completing the Family Assessment and subsequent Reassessments (refer to Policy 800.0000, Transfer and Dual Supervision of Youth by Juvenile Probation and Family Services).
 - i. Workers will collaborate to determine which sections should be completed by FSU or Probation.
 - ii. If FSU or Probation employees are unable to collaborate or resolve differences, the matter will be referred to the next level in the chain of command.
 - iii. Completed Family Assessment and Reassessment are sent to the primary worker’s supervisor for approval. All sections within the Family Assessment must be addressed prior to sending the document for approval.
- 2. Rhode Island Training School
 - a. The initial Family Assessment is completed by the assigned Clinical Social Worker prior to the development of the Service Plan. The Service Plan must be completed within thirty (30) days following adjudication of youth sentenced to the Rhode Island Training School (refer to RICHIST Window Help, Family Assessment Window).
 - b. Revisions can be made to an approved initial Family Assessment for up to six (6) months or until a Reassessment has been created. Revisions to the initial Family Assessment may be necessary prior to the six-month Reassessment if:
 - i. A substantive change in circumstances occurs.
 - ii. More detailed information is obtained on the family.
 - iii. A youth is adjudicated within six (6) months of a previous discharge and it is determined appropriate to add to the existing initial assessment after a case consultation between Clinical Social Worker and supervisor.
 - iv. A youth transfers to the RITS from a different division and it is determined appropriate to add to the existing initial assessment after a case consultation between Clinical Social Worker and supervisor.
 - c. If it is appropriate to add information to an existing initial assessment, primary supervisor authorizes the reopening of the assessment and information is added.
 - d. Subsequent Family Reassessments are completed by the assigned Clinical Social Worker every six (6) months throughout the youth’s sentence.
 - e. Completed Family Assessment and Reassessment are sent to the primary worker’s supervisor for approval. All sections within the Family

Assessment must be addressed prior to sending the document for approval.

- f. In a case where a youth is at the RITS and his or her siblings are open to Family Services or Probation, workers will collaborate to determine which sections should be completed by FSU, Probation and the RITS.

C. Engaging family systems and collateral contacts

1. The Family Assessment is developed in partnership with the worker and family.
2. The Family Services Caseworker/Probation Officer/ RITS Clinical Social Worker must make every effort to personally interview family members, including children, in the family's home, when appropriate. If not appropriate, worker documents reasons in the DCYF record.
3. Ongoing communication and visits with the family, including individual, parent/child and/or family interviews, are utilized to gather information for the development of a comprehensive assessment of family dynamics and functioning.
4. Contacts are made with extended family, school, mental health, medical and other community providers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the family. A signed Authorization to Obtain or Release Confidential Information (DCYF #007) must be obtained when appropriate.
5. For children receiving services through a Family Services Unit or a Probation Unit, a coordinated meeting with family members and service providers is scheduled at the beginning of DCYF's involvement to capture comprehensive information about the family. The meeting can be scheduled at a DCYF office, in the family's home, at a community provider's office or at a location appropriate to meet the needs of the family.
6. For youth sentenced to the RI Training School, information to complete the Family Assessment will be gathered at the initial Service Plan meeting. The youth's family members are invited to participate in the meeting (refer to Policy 700.0025, Service Plan).
 - a. The Clinical Social Worker interviews the youth.
 - b. If family members are unable to attend the Service Plan meeting the Clinical Social Worker will attempt to contact each parent (including non-custodial parent), significant others and each child in the family.
7. In the event the family is unwilling to participate in the assessment process and/or worker is unable to gather information to complete one or more sections of the assessment, worker must document efforts to engage the family to obtain necessary information in the DCYF record.

D. Gathering information and completing the Family Assessment and Reassessment

1. Information collected by the Department relating to the family will be entered into RICHIST in accordance with the time frames detailed in Policy: 700.0100, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST).
2. Information entered into the various windows of RICHIST will pre-fill into selected sections of the Family Assessment and Reassessment documents.
3. Worker brings a copy of the Family Assessment and/or Reassessment to scheduled meetings to use as a guide in gathering appropriate information on the family.
4. There are seven sections to the Family Assessment. Each section has corresponding topics within the section to capture appropriate information to meet ASFA guidelines.
 - a. Face Sheet Information

- b. Agency Involvement
 - c. Family History
 - i. A separate Family History section is created for each parent and significant other.
 - ii. Each person identified as a caretaker or individual living in the home will be included in the Family History.
 - d. Child/Youth History
 - i. A separate Child/Youth History section is created for each active child.
 - ii. Worker will document who is providing the information on the child.
 - e. Family Dynamics
 - i. Include inactive child(ren) in the family addressing safety and well being status.
 - ii. Worker will document who is providing the information on the child(ren).
 - f. Family Network
 - g. Assessment Summary
5. There are ten sections in the Family Reassessment that capture appropriate information to meet ASFA guidelines. The Reassessment addresses both active and inactive child in the family.
- a. Face Sheet Information
 - b. Safety
 - c. Risk
 - d. Permanency
 - e. Well-Being
 - f. Strengths
 - g. Visitation
 - h. Family Situation
 - i. Out of Home Placement/Training School Unit Adjustment
 - j. Ongoing Assessment/Next Steps

E. Distributing the Family Assessment and Reassessments

- 1. The primary service worker must use discretion to maintain the family's right to privacy. A signed Authorization to Obtain or Release Confidential Information (DCYF #007) must be obtained when appropriate (refer to Policy 100.0000, Confidentiality).
- 2. Family Assessment and Reassessments are included in referral packets for treatment providers, placement providers and internal DCYF Care Management Team (CMT) and Resource Management Team (RMT) referrals.
- 3. Family Assessment and Reassessments are available to the Administrative Review Unit (ARU) in RICHIST for review prior to the scheduled date of the Service Plan Review.
- 4. The Family Assessment can be customized during printing by choosing a combination of participants and topics (refer to RICHIST Window Help, Family Assessment Window: Options Button).