

## **CPS Family Services Assessment Parents' Guide**

### **What is a Family Services Assessment?**

When Child Protection Services receives a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, state law requires that an assessment of the report be completed. The Family Services assessment is a type of assessment that recognizes not all families need an "investigative" response. Sometimes, families struggle with difficult situations and just need help and direction to solve family problems. That is what the Family Services Assessment is all about. The Family Services Assessment is meant to prevent family problems from getting worse and to help strengthen families so that the child protection system does not need to be involved.

### **How is a Family Services Assessment different?**

In a Family Services Assessment, the family caregiver is contacted, and an appointment is arranged to meet with a CPS Worker. The visit usually takes place in the family home with all household members present and is more like a family meeting. The CPS Worker shares with the family about the concerns that were reported. While there is discussion about the report, there is also discussion about problems, concerns and needs the family, both parents and children, may have. The CPS Worker provides family members with helpful information about programs and services and resources that might be helpful to address the identified family needs. If the family agrees to follow through with activities and helpful services to remedy family problems, a Family Prevention Plan may be developed. The plan helps everyone understand what is expected. In a Family Services Assessment, no determination is made whether a caregiver abused or neglected a child, the family simply completes services to strengthen their family.

### **Do All Families Have a Family Services Assessment?**

Not every family is eligible to receive a Family Services Assessment; only those where the child abuse and neglect reports indicates there is low risk and there are no concerns for child safety. There are certain criteria that must be met to qualify for a Family Services Assessment. If it is discovered during the time of a Family Services Assessment that a child is in danger (present or foreseeable) and requires safety intervention, or a family is not following the Family Prevention Plan as agreed, a family may become ineligible for Family Services Assessment.

### **What Happens if a Family Doesn't Complete the Plan?**

Under the law, Child Protection Services is required to complete an assessment of reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. If a family doesn't follow through with the agreed plan, Child Protection Services may then complete a child protection assessment for child abuse and neglect and must determine whether a child is abused or neglected by a caregiver.

### **What Kinds of Activities and Services is a Family Expected to Participate In?**

The types of services and activities can vary, depending on the areas of family need. For struggles with parenting, there may be parenting classes available that can help. For struggles with mental health, counseling or screening may be recommended. If a family is lacking in necessities, and doesn't know about services that might help, the CPS Worker can help identify resources. If a child is avoiding school, the CPS Worker can help the family meet with school officials to resolve misunderstandings. Available services differ in each community and every family has different needs. The important thing to remember is that the family creates the prevention plan with the CPS Worker and must agree with following through.

### **How Long Does a Family Services Assessment Take?**

The amount of time the family works with a CPS Worker varies and depends on the length of time the family takes to develop and move their plan to action. The CPS worker stays in contact with the family approximately every 10 days to two weeks unless the worker and the family agree to get in touch more frequently. When the family and the agency agree that the family is meeting the goals in their Family Prevention Plan and is able to access needed resources and services on their own, the assessment is then closed. The CPS Worker provides a letter to the family closing the assessment. The time can vary from approximately 25 to 60 days for most families.

### **Can I Call the CPS Worker if I Have Questions After My Assessment is Closed?**

Yes. The CPS Worker is a resource who can direct you to other services or provide helpful information about resources in the community that you can access on your own.