



CFPM FIDELITY ASSESSMENT: APPROACH AND LESSONS LEARNED

Implementing sites and their community partners did considerable work in developing, testing and refining CFPM fidelity assessment protocol, tools, and measures. These were developed by implementing jurisdictions with the full participation of community partners. The fidelity assessment aligns with the frontline practice approach and core elements in the Practice Model and leverages time already spent by social workers and other staff in family team meetings. The process was designed with particular focus on circles of support and teaming because the Practice Model includes an important focus on regular teaming opportunities that bring in the family's natural supports to strengthen engagement, shared planning, and ongoing family and community support for the child and family.

The fidelity assessment protocol includes (1) an observation of a family teaming process (annually and on a randomly selected case on each trained continuing social worker's caseload) and (2) a non-case-specific system support survey disseminated at least annually to all social workers and supervisors in the agency to better understand how the organization is supporting social workers and is helping to address system barriers in their work with children and families. There is a Fidelity Assessment Observer Team, which includes one parent partner or community partner observer and one child welfare agency supervisor, coach, or implementation team member. Each assessor unobtrusively takes notes during the observation and independently rates staff interactions with children, families, and their circle of support. The observations and ratings are discussed by the two assessors immediately after the observation.

The purpose of the discussion is to understand what was observed from both agency and community perspectives. One assessor or the other may choose to change one or more ratings based on the discussion though there is no pressure to do so, and scores do not need to be the same or similar. What is important is that each assessor feels their ratings accurately reflect their own assessment of the interactions. The final agency and community partner sets of ratings are averaged to compute both a score for each observation question and an overall score for all questions.

Because an important goal of implementing the CFPM is reducing disproportionate representation and disparate outcomes for certain target populations being served by the local child welfare agency, the fidelity assessment protocol prioritizes selection of target population cases for the observation. Given the newness of using fidelity assessment processes for the child welfare agencies in implementing sites, however, it was important to begin by having the first units or groups of social workers participating in fidelity assessment self-select the case to be observed. As the fidelity assessment process was demystified, local staff and labor union representatives began to understand that CFPM fidelity assessment is not a process that is critical or judgmental of social worker job performance and productivity, but rather is a process designed to provide helpful information to the organization about how to support consistent use of the practice. As this understanding developed within the first few months of initiating fidelity assessment processes, the site transitioned to random selection of fidelity assessment cases consistent with the fidelity assessment protocol.

As the observation portion of the fidelity assessment process provides meaningful fidelity data from both agency and community partner perspectives, federal TA partners encouraged the implementing sites to explore strategies for strengthening the observation process and promoting inter-observer

agreement. This resulted in agency and community partners drafting a scaling guide for the observation questions. While not all potential interactions and possibilities in a team meeting can be captured in a

scaling guide, the guide provides more concrete and operational descriptions for the five-point rating scale for each observation question. Below is an excerpt of the scale developed for one of the fidelity assessment observation questions.

Sample Fidelity Assessment Observation Question and Scale

1. To what extent have you observed the family and their team discuss supporting and sustaining relationships with people the child has shared are important to him/her or that others are aware are important to the child?				
5	4	3	2	1
The family and team's discussion included planning and/or coordination of <i>specific</i> activities supporting MOST or ALL of the child or youth's important relationships, including MOST or ALL important relationships on <i>both</i> maternal and paternal sides of the family if available.	The family and team's discussion included planning and/or coordination of <i>specific</i> activities supporting MANY of the child or youth's important relationships, including MANY relationships on <i>both</i> maternal and paternal sides of the family if available.	The family and team's discussion considered SOME important relationships of the child/youth, including SOME relationships on <i>both</i> maternal and paternal sides of the family if available.	The family and team's discussion focused on VERY FEW important relationships OR discussion focused on supporting the child/youth's relationships on only <i>one</i> side of the family.	The family and team <i>did NOT discuss</i> important relationships of the child/youth OR the team <i>was discouraged</i> from discussing and/or supporting the child/youth's important relationships.
<p>General Guidelines for Bold/Italicized Words:</p> <p>All/Always = 100% Most/Usually = 80-99% Many/Often = 50-79%</p> <p>Some/Somewhat/Sometimes =20-49% Very Few/Occasionally = 1-19% Not/Never/None = 0%</p>				

This draft scaling guide was tested when implementing sites and their trained fidelity assessment observer partners from the community came together to use the draft scaling guide after observing 20-minute video clips of 2 different family team meetings. After much discussion and exchange, it was clear that this cross-site team that came together felt the scaling profile was helpful as a guideline for observer ratings and that there was good cross-site agreement on ratings for individual questions. For example, on a particular observation question, the scores of 30 observers were clustered in the 3 to 4 range, with 5 people rating the same question as a 5. As a result of input from this cross-site team of observers, recommended refinements were made to the scaling guide and it was incorporated in the CFPM Fidelity Assessment Toolkit and Protocol.

As a result of both the fidelity observation and the system support survey, data are entered into a local database, so reports can be created and data regularly reviewed to guide agency decision making, strengthen implementation supports, detect changes in practice-level behaviors with children and families, and better understand whether/how fidelity use of the Practice Model is affecting short- and long-term outcomes of the Practice Model.

The CFPM fidelity assessment process is *not* about an individual's performance; rather it reflects on the child welfare agency as a whole. It represents a shift in accountability as the data and information are used to determine if the child welfare agency and system are adequately supporting agency staff in implementing the Practice Model and in addressing barriers in their work with children and families.

Implementing sites found the shift in accountability and the teaming with community partners in fidelity assessment observation transformative. Community partners involved in defining the problem and implementing the Practice Model were playing a critical role in assessing whether the practice was in place. The external community perspective brought understanding and expertise in cultural humility and productive working relationships with the children and families being served, which was a good balance for the professional perspective of agency staff regarding child welfare system expectations, processes, and case-management.

Over time, CFPM fidelity assessment data enable jurisdictions implementing the Practice Model and their partners to:

- Better support skill development and use of the Practice Model in the local cultural context;
- Ensure consistent use and impact of the core elements and practice behaviors;
- Identify “active ingredients” of the model (those various parts and components of the Practice Model that are essential for success);
- Provide data on the effectiveness of practice model implementation to better interpret outcomes; and
- Strengthen and align community and system resources to support use of the Practice Model.

Preparing for local CFPM fidelity assessment requires important planning and capacity-building activities. Coordination of fidelity assessment logistics and processes requires thoughtful preparation for and sequencing of system coordination, communication, and support of fidelity assessment processes to ensure that a teaming event on the selected case is available, an observer team is present, and staff and partners are prepared for the roles they will play during the process and debriefing meeting. The tip sheet on the following page may be helpful in identifying needed resources and in organizing to support local fidelity assessment processes as part of CFPM capacity building and installation.

CFPM Fidelity Assessment Resources

A synthesis of the fidelity assessment resources developed, tested, and used by implementing sites is included in the links on the Capacity-Building page of the CFPM website. While replicating jurisdictions may develop other sources of fidelity assessment data (e.g., staff CFPM checklists, records review tools and processes), use of the observational assessment in CFPM processes should always be included as an implementation best practice that ensures the perspective and involvement of community partners in understanding whether/how the Practice Model is reaching the children and families being served in culturally responsive ways. The CFPM Fidelity Assessment Overview PowerPoint is a resource for preparing community partners in the role as fidelity assessment observers. Some sites included agency staff in this overview, while others focused the training on community partner fidelity assessment observers. The CFPM Fidelity Assessment Toolkit contains the tools and scripts for fidelity assessment observation, while the Complete CFPM Fidelity Assessment Protocol provides information regarding the entire fidelity assessment process from beginning to end. *(Note: The Toolkit is also a part of the Complete CFPM FA protocol.)*



Tips for Supporting CFPM Fidelity Assessment

In developing a plan for phased rollout of the Practice Model, it is important to identify who is responsible for fidelity assessment (FA) processes and how they will be connected with the local Practice Model leadership and implementation teams. If FA is a new process in child welfare, creating a team that includes staff from all levels of the organization (e.g., the implementation team lead and at least one social worker, supervisor, and manager) can improve FA planning and preparation and provide staff at all levels who can ease anxiety about these new processes. Whoever is identified to move FA planning and preparation forward needs to work closely with the agency's linked teaming structures and with the entire management and supervisory teams to develop and implement a work plan for FA, which outlines roles, tasks, resources, and timelines for:

- **Adapting FA Overview Training** to align with local context and needs
- **Identifying community partners** who are interested in being FA observers and are a good fit for the role
 - Work with local cultural/community partners engaged by agency leadership to guide practice and system changes. Are they interested in being FA observers, or do they have suggestions? Consider local cultural coaches, parent partners, foster parents, and other agency and system partners who can bring a cultural/community lens to FA observation
 - Ensure interested observers understand how the FA observation role is different from other roles (e.g., advocacy or support roles). Some potential observers will self-select out if they decide the role of silent observer in the back of the room is not of interest or would be uncomfortable for them
 - Consider upfront if there are boundaries that cannot be crossed. For instance, if the local community group or FA observer outreach strategies are likely to include parents or youth with active child welfare cases, it will be important for the agency to be upfront if involvement in a current open case prevents participation as an FA observer
- **Deciding who** will provide FA Overview Training, who will receive it, **frequency** with which it will be offered, and **what facilities and resources** will be used
 - Consider whether social workers pending their first FA will be trained with community partner observers; this can ease anxieties, demystify the process, and reinforce agency and community partnering
- **Identifying or developing infrastructure and support** for the System Support Survey and for FA case selection, data, and other logistics. Consider:
 - Who will distribute the System Support Survey, when and how will it be distributed, and who will receive the results back
 - Who will be responsible for timely FA case selection, and who will communicate the identified case to the social worker and their supervisor or manager
 - Who will talk with the parent(s) about FA observation and set up the team meeting and location if verbal consent is received (usually the social worker)
 - Who will communicate with and arrange for the FA observer team

- What the process is for community partner observers to be reimbursed for their time and who will act as a liaison and help shepherd those processes in the agency
- Who/how is the FA observation data collected from observers
- What database or capacity can be developed or leveraged for entry/tracking/reporting of FA data (both the survey and observation data) and who/how will the data be entered
- **Developing a rolling FA rollout plan** that includes:
 - **When cohorts were trained and when their FAs are due.** For example, if CFPM training is completed in July 2015, FA observation is due in July 2016
 - **A written schedule for timely preparation activities** for each cohort of social workers that are trained (or are up for an annual FA observation) indicating who is responsible for what and when they need to do it in order for the FA observation to be completed by the due date
 - Consider what advance time is needed to select the case, orient the worker, provide sufficient time for the worker to discuss the FA *observation of staff* during the meeting with the parent(s), and arrange a family team meeting if the family consents (may require 3-4 months). A sample schedule is below.

Trained Cohort	# of SWs Trained	Date Trained	Case Selection and Worker Orientation	Outreach/ Discussions With Family	Observer Team Arranged/ Observation Completed
Units N4; N2	12	May 2016	Feb/Mar 2017	April 2017	Apr/May 2017
Units N5, FP1, FP2	14	July 2016	Apr/May 2017	Jun 2017	Jun/July 2017
Etc.					
Etc.					

- **Developing a way to continue tracking and cueing up annual FA observations** as the composition of units will change, and staff will turnover. This may involve setting up a monthly schedule and noting workers due FA assessment in that month.
- **Establishing who/how social workers will be recognized** and appreciated for their participation after the FA observation.
- **Creating a schedule for sharing aggregate fidelity assessment data** with different audiences on a regular basis (e.g., sharing data with supervisors and staff, leadership and management, trainers and coaches, and community and Tribal partners) and coordinating the sharing of other data (e.g., training and coaching data)