



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 11.1

Subject:	Assessment Process and Tools
Authority:	TCA 37-5-105, 37-5-106, 37-1-137
Standards:	COA: AS2: 2; CM:3; CPS:6; CPS:7; FC:2; GLS:3; KC:2; RTX:3; YIL:4, JJCM 2.02,2.06, 3.04, 6.01, DCS Practice Model Standards 2-105B; 2-109B; 2-110B; 5-201; 5-204; 6-400; 6-507B; 6-508B; 6-513C; 8-101; 8-206B; 10-101; 11-101; 11-103; 11-302A; 11-307A; 11-310B; 11-315B.
Application:	To All Department of Children's Services Employees
Policy Statement:	
The Department shall utilize a comprehensive, individualized, strengths-based, culturally responsive assessment process which includes the use of appropriate assessment tools and documentation in order to determine the family's strengths, skills, motivation for change, and immediate and on-going needs. Assessment shall be a continuous process throughout the life of the case.	
Purpose:	
To ensure child safety and strengthen families, many critical pieces of information must be gathered and considered. The assessment process should explore underlying causes of child maltreatment or risk of abuse and neglect, factors that prevent the family from making the necessary changes to keep its children safe, community risks to youth, factors that ensure that youth are not a threat to the community, formal and informal community supports, possible mental or physical health issues, and signs of substance abuse or domestic violence.	
Procedures:	
A. Assessment tools	<p>Various assessment tools used by DCS include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family Functional Assessment (FFA) <p>This assessment tool is designed to engage children and families in a professional helping relationship and help guide employees in gathering information on the past, present and future of a family by continuously evaluating the family's strengths and underlying needs, concerns and challenges and to build supportive teams with children and families which will last beyond agency involvement; and lead to the development of individualized plans utilizing family strengths and solutions. Refer to Documentation of the Family Functional Assessment Process Manual, Protocol for Family Functional Assessment and Family Functional Assessment located in TFACTS for additional information.</p>

2. Structured Decision Making (SDM) Track Tool

A tool used immediately upon receipt of a report of abuse/neglect to gather all available information to determine whether the report meets DCS criteria to initiate an investigation. If the report meets DCS criteria to initiate an investigation, the tool is used to determine how quickly face-to-face contact must be initiated for assigned investigations. Access to the tool on the *DCS N-Drive* is restricted to Central Intake staff responsible for completing this assessment. (See ***Structured Decision Making Policy and Procedure Manual***-hard copy for central Intake and CPS staff).

3. Initial (SDM) Safety Assessment

A tool to guide the decision to leave children in the home or protectively place children out of the home based on observed threats of immediate harm and the availability of interventions to mitigate safety concerns. Utilize form, [Initial SDM Safety Assessment](#).

4. Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)

A tool that provides a context for communicating and making decisions about care. The CANS consists of approximately sixty-five (65) items to evaluate how the department and its partners should act in the best interests of children and families (see [CANS Case Protocol](#)).

5. Youth Level of Services/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI)© Risk Assessment

Identifies both risk and protective factors that are present in a child's life that either promote or prevent delinquent behavior. Such factors include parenting skills, conditions within the home and family, parent/sibling criminality, school involvement, peer influence, leisure activities, current and previous delinquency, severity of offenses, alcohol/drug usage and others. Depending upon the presence or absence of such factors, a risk score of low, moderate, high or very high is determined. It also serves as a guide for case planning by identifying those factors that present the highest level of risk for promoting further delinquent behavior. (See DCS Policy [11.6, Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory Assessment \(YLS/CMI\)© Risk Assessment Guidelines](#)).

6. Family Advocacy Support Tool (FAST)

A tool to help identify strengths as well as underlying issues and needs for families brought to the Department's attention through the CPS process. The FAST consists of approximately forty (40) items to help assess all family members receiving in-home services. (See [Family Advocacy & Support Tool \(FAST\) Protocol](#) for additional information).

7. Interdependent Living Assessments

Tools to assess a youth's knowledge of the following life skill areas: *Career Planning, Communication, Daily Living, Home Life, Housing and Money Management, Self-Care, Social Relationships, Work Life and Work and Study Skills*. The assessment results are useful for goal setting, program and permanency planning, and for measuring progress on life skill acquisition.

	<p>Eligible youth (ages 14 and above) and young adults as defined by DCS Policy 16.52, Eligibility for Interdependent Living and Voluntary Post-Custody Services, shall receive an individualized life skills assessment of strengths and needs. The Family Service Worker (FSW) shall administer the assessment in advance of Interdependent Living Plan (ILP) development. The initial life skills assessment shall be administered within 30 days of intake, and updated at least annually thereafter. One of the tools used for Interdependent Living Assessments is the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment. Instructions for completing this assessment and the most updated testing instrument address is located in the Interdependent Living Manual.</p> <p>Note: There are circumstances that may impede the ability to complete a life skills assessment in advance of the initial CFTM/Permanency Plan development. These circumstances and alternative measures are outlined in the following protocol: Alternative Life Skills Assessment Protocol.</p> <p>8. Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE)</p> <p>A tool designed to evaluate families for adoption, resource home approval, concurrent planning, and relative placement. SAFE is built upon solid social work practice values that stress the importance of respectfully engaging families in a strength based, mutual evaluation process that strives to select families in, not out. SAFE is a suite of home study tools for the psychosocial evaluation of prospective adoptive families, foster families, relative care providers, resource families and concurrent planning families. SAFE results in a comprehensive home study report. SAFE is a web-based application that is available to select DCS staff trained in the appropriate use of the SAFE tool.</p> <p>9. Time frames for implementation/completion of assessments and those required for each case type or program will be outlined in assessment training, DCS policies and procedures, and/or current practice.</p>
<p>B. Goals of assessment</p>	<p>The goals of the assessment process are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify functional strengths for the family; 2. Identify family concerns and needs in order to access appropriate services; 3. Promote team-focused quality decision making; 4. Inform the development of comprehensive family plan
<p>C. Responsibility</p>	<p>All employees who work with child and family assessments shall ensure that the assessments are conducted appropriately and contain current and accurate information on the child/youth/family for each case type or program.</p>
<p>D. Training</p>	<p>All employees who will be utilizing assessment tools will receive appropriate training and/or certification. Assessment training will be documented in each employee’s training record and maintained by the Office of Professional</p>

	Development.
<p>E. Health Assessments</p>	<p>Part of the assessment process for children/youth in DCS custody is related to the child's/youth's medical and behavioral health. This includes assessment of immediate health concerns as well as ongoing health related issues. The basis for screening and follow-up of the medical and behavioral health needs of children/youth in DCS custody is Early, Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT). All health related concerns are addressed through the EPSDT process.</p> <p>Refer to policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <u>DCS Policy 20.5 Health Care Delivery at Youth Development Centers</u> ◆ <u>DCS Policy 20.7 TENNderCARE Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment</u> ◆ <u>DCS Policy 20.8 Reproductive Health Education and Services</u> ◆ <u>DCS Policy 20.12 Dental Services</u> ◆ <u>DCS Policy 20.19 Communicable Diseases</u> ◆ <u>DCS Policy 20.36 Health Services in DCS Group Homes</u>
<p>F. TFACTS Documentation</p>	<p>In the TFACTS system, each Quantitative tool (CANS, FAST, SDM, YLS, etc....) contains a narrative box that relates to a predefined section of the Family Functional Assessment (FFA). Any information entered in these boxes will automatically populate into the FFA. The location where the information will go is noted at the top of the narrative box (FFA Narrative – Assessment of Safety). These boxes were created to assist the worker filling out the assessment by reducing the need to switch between different tools in order to fully document their assessment of the child and family.</p> <p>Note: Please remember that in practice, a full description of why a box on a quantitative assessment was checked should be documented in detail on the FFA. Information can also be entered directly into the FFA when needed.</p>

<p>Forms:</p>	<p><u>CS-0777, Family Functional Assessment</u> <u>CS-0899, Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment</u> <u>CS-0906, Family Advocacy and Support Tool</u> <u>CS-0919, Youth Level of Service Needs Checklist</u> <u>Initial SDM Safety Assessment</u></p>
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<p>Collateral documents:</p>	<p><u>Alternative Life Skills Assessment Protocol</u> <u>Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA)</u> <u>CANS Case Protocol</u> <u>Documentation of the Family Functional Assessment Process Manual</u> <u>Family Advocacy & Support Tool (FAST) Use and Review Protocol</u> <u>Protocol For Family Functional Assessment Process</u> <u>Initial SDM Safety Assessment</u> <u>Interdependent Living Assessment</u> Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) <u>Structured Decision Making (SDM) Child Abuse/Neglect Screening Criteria</u> <u>Structured Decision Making(SDM)Response Priority</u></p>
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<p>Assessment:</p>	<p>The on-going process of organizing and analyzing the information gathered.</p>
<p>Child Protective Services Investigator (CPSI):</p>	<p>A DCS term used to identify the person under the CPS Multiple Response System (MRS) who investigates CPS allegations of severe abuse. This person is principally responsible for investigating allegations to uncover abuse, identify victims and perpetrators, and determine findings related to the allegations.</p>
<p>Child Protective Services Assessment Worker (CPSA):</p>	<p>A DCS term used to identify the person under the CPS Multiple Response System (MRS) who works with families who are involved in low- to moderate-risk CPS cases. This person is principally responsible for ensuring the safety of the child, while assessing and engaging the entire family in order to identify services and supports that can address the family’s needs.</p>
<p>Ecomap:</p>	<p>A map that provides a visual image of family members who reside in the household and the formal and informal resources in the community available to them.</p>