

## Module 10: Family Assessment Analysis

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**Office of Children  
and Family Services**



## Introduction and Rationale

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The Family Assessment Analysis is one of the most critical parts of the FASP, and can be a challenging section to complete. The Family Assessment Analysis asks caseworkers to identify what behaviors and conditions need to change to support the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children involved. It is also used to document what hinders or promotes change in these areas. The Family Assessment Analysis requires the caseworker to take information gathered in other parts of the FASP and integrate it into a clear, comprehensive picture of the family situation.

This module assists caseworkers in writing clear, consistent, and comprehensive narratives that focus on the most significant child welfare issues, needs, concerns, strengths, and changes in a case at this time.

## Purpose of the Family Assessment Analysis and Its Relationship to Other Parts of the FASP

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The Family Assessment Analysis looks beyond symptoms, events, or circumstances to gain an understanding of why child welfare concerns exist or continue. A well-written Family Assessment Analysis will help caseworkers, and the family, to understand what progress has been made, what current areas of concern still exist, and what can be used to promote further progress.

The Family Assessment Analysis represents the culmination of the caseworker's information gathering activities. The assessment narratives should be consistent with information that is documented in the progress notes and other sections of the FASP (e.g., Safety Assessment, RAP, SNR Scales, and Foster Care Issues, as appropriate). However, the Family Assessment Analysis is more than just a recitation of the facts documented in these areas. It serves as a bridge between the information gathering portions of the FASP and the change-oriented Service Plan.

The Family Assessment Analysis brings together various aspects of a case, enabling the caseworker to view the case as a whole, to establish priorities, and to begin to shape the Service Plan. A well-written Family Assessment Analysis will provide a solid foundation for development of a clear, focused, change-oriented Service Plan, which supports a shared understanding of priorities and concerns between the caseworker and the family.

An understanding of what causes or sustains problematic behaviors or conditions helps both the caseworker and the family to focus on addressing these root causes, rather than merely problematic symptoms; to identify barriers which need to be addressed in order to create or sustain long-term change; and to identify strategies for change that have a greater likelihood for success by matching intervention strategies to individual and/or family strengths, needs, styles, and skills. The identification of family and child strengths will help the caseworker and the family to pursue opportunities and resources that can promote and support change.

When done effectively, the process of formulating the Family Assessment Analysis:

- Engages the family in a self-evaluation of needs, progress to date, and preferred alternative future
- Acknowledges progress and change that has occurred
- Seeks to understand why key behaviors and conditions are occurring or persisting

- Identifies the underlying conditions and contributing factors, and what is necessary to bring about real and lasting change
- Examines the family's readiness for change by assessing the conditions for creating change (i.e., present discomfort, emotional security, internalization of responsibility, efficacy, and ability to envision a preferred alternative future)
- Seeks out motivators and opportunities for change, while establishing priorities for further progress
- Includes various points of view from the family members and others involved

The Family Assessment Analysis will help workers and the family focus more clearly on what has already changed, what still needs to change, and what might help to promote or sustain this change. It also helps to assess and recognize when sufficient change has occurred for a case to be closed, or when the direction of a case may need to change in order to promote and provide for safety, permanency, and well-being of the children.

### Collaboration in Developing the Family Assessment Analysis

Because the Family Assessment Analysis forms the basis for the Service Plan, it must reflect the needs and priorities in all aspects of a case. When more than one worker contributes to a FASP, the team must work together so that a consistent understanding exists and a collaborative effort takes place. Those with a CONNECTIONS role of Case Worker, and who are contributing to the SNR Scales and Foster Care Issues sections of the FASP, should also contribute a concise narrative to each section of the Family Assessment Analysis, appropriate to their work with an individual child or portion of the family. It is the Case Planner's responsibility (utilizing the Case Planner Summary function) to integrate the various contributions into a coherent, unified whole.

Multiple caseworkers contributing information to a FASP must plan accordingly, to allow the Case Planner sufficient time to bring all the relevant contributor pieces together in one coherent, unified FASP.

#### *Tip*

To provide for coordination of efforts, when there are multiple contributors to a FASP, it is best to determine in advance who completes which areas within a FASP and within what timeframes. This allows everyone to know what is expected of them and to plan accordingly so the FASP will be a more complete and accurate record of current family functioning and progress.

## Family Assessment Analysis Window

### Family Assessment Analysis Window: Family View Tab

The screenshot shows the 'Family Assessment Analysis' window with the 'Family View' tab selected. The window title bar indicates the user is 'Collins, Kristy' and the case number is 'S:27200095/C:37200038'. On the left is a sidebar with 'Options', 'Case Planner Summary', and 'Help'. The main area has three tabs: 'Family View' (active), 'Behaviors/Contributing Factors', and 'Strengths'. Below the tabs is a table with columns 'Date of Entry', 'Author', and 'Status'. The table is empty, and a message states 'No match found for the criteria entered' with a 'Count = 0' and a 'New' button. Below the table is a text area with a prompt: 'What is the family's view of the situation at this time? What do they see as their most pressing needs and concerns? What does the family believe needs to happen in order for them to meet the needs of their children for safety, permanency and well-being? What do they want from Child Welfare or other services at this time?'. The text area has a rich text editor toolbar with options like Print, Bold, Italic, Underline, and Bulleted List. At the bottom of the text area are buttons for 'Save as Email', 'Save as Draft', and 'Reset'. A status bar at the very bottom shows various icons and labels: 'Sensitive', 'Required', 'AFCARS', 'Data Exists', 'Complete', 'Read-Only Mode', and 'Unsaved Changes'.

#### *Quick Tips for Completing the Family View Tab*

- Avoid including the caseworker's point of view in the assessment, as this is documented elsewhere in the FASP.
- Caseworkers answer the questions based on their discussions and interactions with family members about their view of their family situation, progress, needs, and priorities for further change.
- Before entering text in the narrative field, caseworkers should review what has been written in the other assessment tools of the FASP and progress notes to refresh their memory of key issues, needs, concerns, and recent changes.
- Describe the family members' point of view regarding key issues, needs, concerns, and recent changes.
- Include the input of all relevant individuals in the family who have a role or impact on the safety, permanency, or well-being of the children.
  - What are their most significant child welfare concerns and needs at this time?
  - What is their understanding of their situation at this time? What do they believe is the cause of these child welfare concerns?
  - What is their assessment of their own recent progress or lack of progress?
  - What outcomes would they most like to see happen within their family?

- |   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are they willing to do to make this change happen?</li><li>• What assistance from others do they want or feel would be most helpful?</li></ul> |
|---|

### *Family View Tab*

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When completing this tab, caseworkers need to provide the family's point of view on the current situation and circumstances affecting them. Keeping the information focused on the family's point of view allows for an assessment of what the family feels is important to address at this time and what areas they may feel are not as important. Although the family's and caseworker's views may differ, the caseworker's views are not addressed in this area; the other areas of the FASP document the professional's observations and assessments for current family functioning.

The questions here should be discussed with the family in an effort to gain an understanding of their view of current needs and concerns. This includes all members of the family (e.g., caretakers, children, other supports) who have an impact on safety, permanency, and well-being of the children in the home. Before writing this narrative, caseworkers should review what has been documented in the other assessment tools of the FASP (e.g., Safety Assessment, RAP) and the progress notes. This will support the caseworker in identifying key areas of child welfare concerns to address with the family and to gain an understanding of their point of view on these issues.

## Family Assessment Analysis Window: Behaviors/Contributing Factors Tab

The screenshot shows the 'Family Assessment Analysis' window for 'Collins, Kristy' with file path 'S:\27200095\C\37200038'. The 'Behaviors/Contributing Factors' tab is active. A table with columns 'Date of Entry', 'Author', and 'Status' is shown, but it is empty. Below the table, a message states 'No match found for the criteria entered' with a 'Count = 0' and a 'New' button. A text area for a narrative is present, with a prompt: 'Based on your assessment of safety, risk, and family functioning, what factors and underlying conditions interact to sustain the behaviors or conditions that warrant child welfare intervention?'. The text area is empty. At the bottom of the text area are 'Save as Email' and 'Save as Draft' buttons. A 'Reset' button is at the bottom right. A status bar at the very bottom contains various icons and text: 'I = Sensitive', '\* = Required', '\$ = AFCARS', '✓ = Data Exists', '(C) = Complete', '🔒 = Read-Only Mode', and '🔄 = Unsaved Changes'.

### *Quick Tips for Completing the Behaviors/Contributing Factors Tab*

- Before entering text in the narrative field, review what has been written in the progress notes and other assessment tools of the FASP (e.g., Safety Assessment, RAP, SNR Scales, Foster Care Issues) to include key issues, needs, concerns, and recent changes.
- Keep the PPG as your focus of this narrative (i.e., the end result and/or permanency outcome the caseworker and the family are working toward).
- Use *Appendix 10A: Prompts for Learning about Needs and Underlying Conditions* to help identify the areas that may be supporting problematic behaviors.
- Describe current or continuing child welfare issues, needs, and concerns, and what underlying conditions and/or contributing factors are believed to be causing or sustaining them.
- Describe key changes and improvements since the last FASP was approved.
- Discuss factors that have created, hindered, or supported change in this family.
- Discuss the family's readiness for change at this time.
- The goal is for caseworkers to focus on current child welfare concerns, the factors supporting these concerns, and any progress with the behavior changes within the family.
- Caseworkers need to avoid focusing on compliance with services, solutions to the identified concerns, and services that are needed. These areas will be discussed in the Service Plan.

### *Behaviors/Contributing Factors Tab*

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The Behaviors/Contributing Factors tab provides the opportunity for caseworkers to identify why the current child welfare concerns are present or persist. The development of a comprehensive narrative on this tab directly supports the Service Plan and the goals that are created for the FASP. The narrative on this tab reiterates the concerns already noted, and presents the caseworker's assessment as to why these concerns exist, continue, or have been resolved.

In the narrative field, caseworkers need to first identify the current child welfare needs that require intervention. Using the other assessment areas of the FASP will help a caseworker to include all identified areas of concern for child welfare. After a concern is identified, caseworkers need to provide statements addressing the status of that concern at this time (e.g., has this particular issue improved, remained the same, or become worse since the last FASP?). It is not necessary to include a status statement in the Initial FASP, as this would be the first assessment for the case.

Next, caseworkers need to identify the underlying conditions and/or contributing factors that exist to support these concerns at this time. Examples of these could include the family's knowledge of parenting skills; their perception of what is acceptable parental behavior; culture; self-concept; and their own experience growing up. Identifying these areas is an essential piece to understanding what is influencing the behavior that is a concern to child welfare. Also, connecting the concerning behaviors to the underlying conditions and/or contributing factors that support them allows for an understanding of why these problem areas exist or remain a concern.

Finally, caseworkers need to include the impact the behavior has on the child. Doing so helps to explain why this is a child welfare concern to begin with. If this behavior does not change, what will the continued impact be on the child's safety, permanency, and well-being?

An example of a statement that includes the noted pieces (child welfare concern, statement of status, underlying conditions/contributing factors, and the impact on the child) could be:

"A significant child welfare concern at this time is Mr. Adams' continued use of corporal punishment when disciplining his children. Mr. Adams' behavior in this area has improved since the last FASP; however, there have been times when he used extreme means to manage his children during this assessment period. This behavior may be due to his childhood experiences of discipline and his continued alcohol abuse. The children are at risk of future harm of physical injury from these discipline techniques if they should continue. "

This statement provides the necessary elements as discussed, but does not go into great detail. The details of the situation (i.e., use of corporal punishment, alcohol abuse, Mr. Adams' childhood) would be discussed with clear, specific, and behaviorally focused language in the other sections of the FASP.

Caseworkers should complete a statement for each child welfare concern that is going to be addressed in the Service Plan. Completing the Behaviors/Contributing Factors tab in this manner provides caseworkers, and the family, a clear understanding of why these concerns are present, and will help to form the Service Plan in order to reach the desired child welfare outcome.

### *Tips for Getting Started*

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Getting started is often the hardest part of writing any narrative. Here are some suggested ways to begin this section of the Family Assessment Analysis narrative:

*For an Initial FASP:*

"The most significant child welfare issues/needs/concerns/presenting problems at this time are... "

*For a Comprehensive or Reassessment FASP:*

"Since the last FASP....

- ...there has been no/little/some/much progress toward the goal of (PPG) ..."
- ...there has been no/little/some/much change in the child welfare issues that led to the need for child welfare services/the children's placement and/or protection..."
- ...this family has/has not significantly addressed the issues which led to the need for child welfare services/the children's placement and/or protection..."

Then continue with a thorough discussion of each child welfare concern, and the underlying conditions and contributing factors that have been assessed to be causing or sustaining those concerning behaviors and/or conditions.



## Family Assessment Analysis Window: Strengths Tab

The screenshot shows the 'Family Assessment Analysis' window for user 'Collins, Kristy'. The 'Strengths' tab is active, displaying a table with columns 'Date of Entry', 'Author', and 'Status'. Below the table, a message states 'No match found for the criteria entered' with a 'Count = 0' and a 'New' button. A text area for the narrative is present, with a prompt: 'What individual, family, and community strengths, resources and supports can be used to meet the family's pressing needs and support their ability to meet the child's needs for safety, permanency and well being?'. A rich text editor toolbar is visible above the text area. At the bottom, there are 'Save as Final', 'Save as Draft', and 'Reset' buttons. A status bar at the very bottom indicates various system settings like 'Sensitive', 'Required', 'AFCARS', 'Data Exists', 'Complete', 'Read-Only Mode', and 'Unsaved Changes'.

### *Quick Tips for Completing the Strengths Tab*

Before entering text in the narrative field, caseworkers should review what has been written in other assessment tools of the FASP to refresh their memory of strengths, resources, and opportunities that have been identified for the family as a whole and its individuals.

Caseworkers answer the questions based upon their discussions and interactions with family members and with other relevant individuals, such as service providers, who can provide input on the family's progress to date, strengths, resources, and other opportunities that may support change.

Document what might help to create, promote, or sustain positive change in this family. Some things to consider:

- What motivates the individuals in this family?
- What personal characteristics, skills, resources, and beliefs support them?
- What are they most proud of about themselves or their family?
- What successes or skills do they already have that can be expanded or built upon?
- What changes have occurred recently or in the past that demonstrate an ability and/or willingness to learn, grow, and change?

- What individuals, groups, and/or organizations are available to them that do or may assist them in the future? Whom do they want help from?

Describe how each listed strength and resource might be used to support or sustain change. Refer to *Appendix 10B: Categories of Strengths*.

## *Strengths*

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The narrative field on the Strengths tab is used to identify the family, individual, and community strengths a family has that can support child welfare outcomes for safety, permanency, and well-being. Caseworkers should again refer to the previous areas of the FASP to help identify what strengths are present. For example, in the SNR Scales, the ratings that are rated high may be a strength that can be used to achieve an outcome.

The answers to the questions on this tab are also based upon caseworkers' observations and interactions with the family and other collaterals. It is important to remember that other workers on a case may observe the family at different times and at different levels of functioning. This is an area of the FASP where multiple workers assigned to the case are able to contribute to the narrative. When caseworkers identify the strengths within the family, they then document how each listed strength and resource might be used to support or sustain change.

Completing this narrative effectively allows caseworkers to develop an understanding of the family's strengths so they can come to appropriate conclusions about safety, risk, areas of strength and need, what families are able to do to protect children, what really needs to change in families, and how to achieve that change.

## Appendix

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### 10A: Prompts for Learning About Needs and Underlying Conditions

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What are the individual's perceptions regarding how well his or her needs are met in the following areas:

- Shelter, food, and housing (survival)
- Physical and emotional safety (security)
- Significant relationships (affiliation)
- Feeling loveable, capable, responsible, and worthwhile (self-esteem)
- Making his or her own decisions (autonomy)
- Opportunities to grow (development)

What experiences has the individual had that might be influencing current behaviors?

How might the individual's values be expressed in his or her behavior?

What perceptions are influencing his or her behavior?

What beliefs are influencing his or her behavior?

In what ways are the person's capabilities reflected in his or her behavior?

How is the individual's self-concept influencing what he or she does?

How is the person's developmental status expressed in his or her behavior?

How does the person's family system influence his or her behavior?

How does the person's culture inform or influence his or her behavior?

## 10B: Categories of Strengths

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### *Cognitive and appraisal skills (problem solving)*

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Examples:

- Sees the world as most other people in the same culture see it
- Can understand the causes and effects of his or her own, and others' actions
- Can describe facts, events, and feelings so others understand them
- Looks ahead and plans for events and/or problems
- Learns and uses new skills to solve problems
- Can apply old skills in new situations to solve problems
- Considers and weighs various solutions for solving problems
- Accepts constructive criticism and makes changes based on it
- Is interested in learning new things, trying new experiences, and meeting new people
- Can manage money
- Gains feelings of competence and confidence from past and current successes
- Sets goals for self and makes efforts to achieve them
- Wants to improve current circumstances for self and family

### *Defense and coping mechanisms (coping skills)*

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Examples:

- Can control impulsive behavior when there would be negative consequences
- Can change plans when there are unexpected changes in a situation
- Can deal with daily irritations and annoyances of life without overreacting or falling apart
- Can think clearly and act in a way that is helpful in a serious crisis
- Acknowledges mistakes and asks self how things could be handled differently the next time
- Does not allow self to be treated with disrespect or to live in fear
- Finds little, safe ways to relieve pressure, relax, and comfort oneself
- Is frequently looking for new ways to manage stress, solve problems, and make ends meet
- Can use humor to deal with difficult situations or make others laugh, but not in ways that hurt or tear down others
- Remembers where they "came from" by maintaining and celebrating their past connections and heritage
- Is interested in learning new things, trying new experiences, and meeting new people

### *Temperamental and dispositional factors (emotional strengths)*

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Examples:

- Expresses affection, love, and concern for family members and intimate others
- Aware of and recognizes one's feelings (e.g., happiness, sadness, love, anger, grief)
- Naturally expresses the range of emotions without harming self and others
- Is generally positive about life and feels hope for the future
- Feels anger at injustice, betrayal, or personal hurt

- Can be flexible with gender roles
- Can appropriately express sexual feelings
- Conveys empathy and sensitivity towards feelings of others

### *Interpersonal skills and supports (relationships)*

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Examples:

- Has a friendly relationship with acquaintances, neighbors, store clerks, etc.
- Has a number of old and new friends who are seen regularly, are fun, and can be depended on.
- Has a deep and intimate relationship with one other person
- Has satisfying relationships with family members
- Can depend on family members and friends and accept their care and help when needed
- Performs social roles appropriately and feels satisfaction in them (e.g., parent, spouse, son, daughter)
- Can listen to others
- Can confide in some others and feel listened to
- Has realistic expectations in relationships and makes appropriate choices (e.g., does not constantly feel hurt, needy, betrayed, or used)
- Can deal with disagreement/conflict in a relationship
- Can forgive others; doesn't carry a grudge or seek revenge
- Wants financial and personal interdependence with others

### *External factors (capacity to constructively use resources outside of the self)*

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Examples:

- Knows what institutions/community agencies can provide assistance and is able to find them and get what is needed
- Knows how to find out about local resources and events and uses them to meet family needs
- Has adequate income to provide food, shelter, clothing, and some of the "little luxuries" in life for self and family
- Has good relationships with others in the immediate neighborhood and could call on them if necessary
- Is connected to other communities through culture, shared interests, or commitments (e.g., children's school or activities, community projects, church)
- Uses organizations, family, and friends as a way to preserve and celebrate meaningful cultural, ethnic, or religious events and traditions
- Is willing to seek help and share problem situations with trustworthy others

### *Insight (self-understanding)*

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Examples:

- Perceives cause and effect of behavior relative to the child's unmet needs for safety, permanency, and well-being
- Recognizes how own needs are expressed in behavior
- Gains feelings of competence and confidence from past and current successes
- Understands own needs and how they motivate behavior
- Recognizes progress, or lack thereof, in change-related activities
- Recognizes conditions that undermine safety or contribute to risk

### *Independence (ability to separate)*

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Examples:

- Can make decisions and take actions on own
- Maintains a physical environment that is safe
- Can stick with a task even through discouraging setbacks
- Can manage money
- Maintains good health
- Sets goals for self and makes efforts to achieve them

### *Morality (sense and value regarding right and wrong)*

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Examples:

- Has an understanding of right and wrong, from own cultural perspective
- Wants to improve current circumstances for self and family
- Values compassion, fairness, and decency
- Trusts others until given a reason to find them untrustworthy
- Is reliable and can be counted on to follow through and keep own word
- Speaks up and takes a stand or action against injustices
- Respects the rights of others
- Is willing to accept responsibility for own actions or role in problem situations
- Is responsible in sexual activities
- Is concerned about the meaning of life
- Engages in activities that express spirituality (e.g., religious affiliation and attendance, connecting with nature, meditation, exploring wisdom of traditions)

### *Spirituality*

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Examples:

- Is concerned about the meaning of life
- Is affiliated with a religion

- Connects with nature
- Meditates
- Explores wisdom of traditions
- Able to rely on faith/spirituality during times of crisis

### *Creativity*

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Examples:

- Can create emotional safety through healthy imagination and play
- Expresses feelings through art and creativity
- Appreciates creativity in others
- Gains satisfaction from engaging in activities that require designing, creativity, or artistic talent
- Uses creativity to deal with feelings of hurt or anger
- Uses art to gain perspective on self and life

### *Humor*

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Examples:

- Can laugh at self and situations
- Uses humor constructively to diffuse tension or deal with difficult situations (without hurting or insulting others)
- Uses humor to deal with feelings of hurt or anger
- Uses humor to gain perspective on self and life