

Mega Monitoring Project:

Family Advocacy Center

Paige Azuma

**THIS IS AN EXAMPLE PROJECT TURNED IN BY MS AZUMA FOR THE
COURSE: QUALITY MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOCIAL
SERVICES**

**UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
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THE COURSE WAS TAUGHT BY CURTIS MCMILLEN

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I. Overview of the Family Advocacy Center Programs

In partnership with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Families First operates Family Advocacy Centers (FAC) at four centers in the Chicago land area. The FAC operates with a twofold purpose: 1) to provide information, resources and support to those families who are at-risk of entering the DCFS system; and 2) to facilitate the reunification of children returning home by assisting families in navigating the DCFS system.

The FAC's continue to shift services to focus on children ages' birth to six, parents and guardians, and larger family systems in order to achieve permanency. To support this shift, the FAC staff continue to participate in DCFS meetings, complete Early Childhood developmental screening trainings, receive Early Childhood Development training from the Early Childhood Specialist at Family Focus and incorporate Early Childhood related documents into the reporting and quality assurance structure.

Each center has developed and implemented a community-based recruiting strategy that has resulted in a strong increase in families and children served. While Families First has only begun providing FAC programs at these four centers in the past three years, in FY12 the FAC's exceeded their contractual enrollment numbers requiring that 200 children be served though the services provided at the centers. All four centers served a total of 266 children in 153 families. * In order to focus on program recruiting, each center provides a monthly update on participant numbers at the FAC Managers meeting and strategizes on ways to share information about FAC services to families in need. Additionally, any family in the community may access resources and services through the FAC and complete a family assessment.

DCFS requires quarterly reports from Families First that measure clients who receive services or are referred to other organizations, percentages of children who return or stay in the home after completion of the Program and percentage of clients who do not re-enter the DCFS system. Aside from the contractually required measurements for DCFS, Families First currently collects its own data to gauge how frequently FAC participants utilize other Families First services and how satisfied they were with the services they received.

* Enrollment numbers taken from 2013 Agency Impact Report

II. SWOT Analysis

Strengths: The major strength of the FAC Program at Families First are the competent and dedicated staff that make up the FAC team. Each of the FAC managers for this program holds Masters degrees in either Social Work or Early Childhood Development. The FAC staff also has a strong understanding of the needs of families within the DCFS and are able to tailor treatment plans for each family. Participants in the FAC program not only have access to FAC services such as crisis counseling and nontraditional respite care, but they also have the opportunity to utilize a variety of other services that are provided at the Families First centers.

Another strength of the FAC's are the professional development opportunities provided to FAC staff. These training opportunities occur each quarter and include topics related to early childhood development. By providing these training opportunities Families First is ensuring that the FAC staff are as equipped as possible to provide high quality services to our families.

The final strength of the FAC's is the new alignment of DCFS organizational goals with Families First's mission of Family Support. The DCFS's rebranding has lead to a stronger connection between the mission of the department and that of Families First. DCFS is now focused on cultivating protective factors within families through family support models. This focus aligns with Families First's mission based on the principles of family support, in which children are secure when their families are supported and strengthened.

Weaknesses: While both Families First and DCFS share a focus on family support, there are several potential weaknesses in regards to this partnership. The first is that difficulty related to information sharing between DCFS and Families First. The DCFS contact person for Families First has changed several times in the past year, which has made it very difficult to receive timely information from DCFS.

The second weakness this program faces is the creation of the new DCFS database. It is now required that all information collected on FAC program participants be entered into this database. Unfortunately, Families First has its own dated client database that is not compatible with the new DCFS system. This means that FAC staff will now have to enter the same client information into two separate databases. This new requirement will add an additional, time-consuming component to the FAC staff's workload that will take away from their time providing services to families.

The third weakness that the FAC's face is the lack of Spanish speaking staff. In the past few years Families First has seen a shift in the demographic of clients that utilize services at the Aurora and Evanston locations. These two FAC centers have begun to serve more Latino clients but do not have the adequate staff resources to do so. Currently there are no Spanish speaking FAC staffs at the Evanston site and not enough Spanish speaking FAC staff at the Aurora sight to meet the needs of the FAC families.

Opportunities: Increased publicity regarding the success of the FAC's in the FY12 year provides an opportunity for Families First to become one of the leading family support service providers in the area. This recognition would increase the agency's collaborations

with other community organizations that provide services to children and their families. Increased collaboration would lead to a stronger network of services that Families First could provide to our clients.

By continuing to provide FAC services, Families First will be able to forge relationships with other organizations that provide FAC services in their own communities. This would provide the organizations an opportunity to share effective strategies and best practices developed while providing services for FAC families. These resources gained could be beneficial to other programs within Families First.

Threats: The current threat to the future success of the FAC program within Families First is mainly financial in nature. At the beginning of FY13 DCFS changed its previous billing system from quarterly payments of block grants to a fee for service billing system. FAC staff must now track billable hours that they spend with FAC clients to receive payment for those services. This policy change has already increased the workload of FAC staff, which diverts staff attention away from the needs of the program participants, and could threaten the financial stability of the FAC program.

Another threat to the FAC program is the potential that the DCFS mission will not continue to be aligned with that of Families First. In an organization where the mission of family support is a theme in all of the services that it provides, partnering with an organization that does not hold these values may be difficult. If the DCFS were to shift its focus again it may create tensions between these two organizations.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sense of purpose from staff • Qualified staff • Ability to provide a variety of services • New alignment of DCFS with strengths based programming • Relevant training opportunities for staff 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing between FF and DCFS • Incompatibility between FF database and DCFS required data collection • Lack of Spanish speaking FAC staff
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborations with community organizations • Sharing opportunities with other FAC's • Ability to become one of the leading FAC centers in the area • Increased opportunities for staff professional development 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New fee for service payment plan • Disconnect between DCFS policy's and Families First mission

III. Destination Statement

Families First strives to become one of the leading providers of high quality family support services in Cook County by 2016. The Family Advocacy Center's will assist in reaching this goal by purposefully engaging families through the use of impactful strengths based support services that seek to meet the varied needs of the families it serves.

IV. Strategic Themes

The strategic themes identified by FAC program staff are, Engaged Families, Impactful Strengths Based Support Services, and Strong Partnerships with Organizations.

Engaged Families

In its most recent strategic plan, Families First emphasized the need for a greater level of participation from the families that utilize services at each center. In alignment with this agency

wide initiative to incorporate participant's input, FAC staff will also strive to include participant input in reshaping program components to better fit the ever changing needs of FAC families.

Impactful Strengths-Based Support Services

FAC staff will continue to strive to provide high quality, strengths-based support services. By providing these level of service the FAC program will work to become one of the leading FAC program providers in the area and create replicable best practices that can be duplicated at other centers.

Strong Partnerships with Organizations

FAC staff will strive to develop stronger relationships with the DCFS as well as other organizations whose mission is the support children and their families. These partnerships may be created as the basis for knowledge sharing and to cultivate potential funding.

V. Vital Perspectives

Consumer perspective: Families that utilize FAC services

Financial stewardship perspective: CEO and Senior staff monitors the financial health of the organization and the FAC program

Partnership Organizations perspective: DCFS and other partner organizations' perception regarding the FAC program at Families First centers

Learning and Growth perspective: The growth and professional development opportunities of the FAC staff and administrators

VI. Strategy Map

Strategic Theme	Engaged Families	Impactful Strengths Based Program	Strong Partnerships
Perspective			
Consumer Perspective	<p>FAC families are respected and validated by the FAC staff</p> <p>Parents feel that their input is used to enhance the services provided</p> <p>FAC families utilize optional programs at FAC</p>	<p>FAC participants that believe they are receiving high quality services</p> <p>FAC participants that believe they have power and influence over their own life</p>	<p>FAC participants that feel that Families First is able to access opportunities outside of the agency that will enhance their services</p>
Financial Stewardship Perspective	<p>FAC staff are more effective due to greater family engagement</p> <p>FAC staff increase billable hours due to greater family engagement</p>	<p>FAC staff continue to provide high quality strength based programs, which leads to successful outcomes for FAC participants</p> <p>Successful program outcomes will allow FAC staff to pursue other forms of supplemental funding</p>	<p>Successful outcomes for FAC families will help Family Focus make further connections with partner organizations</p> <p>New collaborations with reputable organizations will help to strengthen Families First's pursuit for supplemental funding</p>
Partnership Perspective	<p>Partner organizations see Families First's processes to further engage families as a model of best practice</p>	<p>Partner organizations see the benefit of providing strengths based programs and begin to adopt such practices</p>	<p>Partner organizations acknowledge Families First's effort to build stronger partnerships with other organizations with the purpose of knowledge sharing</p>
Learning and Growth Perspective	<p>FAC staff maintain up to date training on ways to engage parents in understanding their child's development</p>	<p>FAC staff seek new methods to provide services from a strengths based perspective</p>	<p>FAC staff explores opportunities to learn from the effective best practices of other organizations providing services to similar demographic of families</p>

VII. Potential Directional Goal Statements

Consumer perspective

- Increase parent participation in optional activities for FAC participants
- Increase parental satisfaction in the services provided by FAC staff

Financial stewardship perspective

- Increase billable hours for FAC staff
- Increase the amount of additional funding sources to support the FAC program

Partnership Organization perspective

- Decrease the number of clients that are the indicated subject of additional reports of abuse or neglect up to a year after program completion
- Increase the partnerships between other organizations providing services to families

Learning and growth perspective

- Increase FAC staff feelings of confidence in their ability to meet the needs of their clients
- Increase FAC staff feeling of confidence in their understanding of family support practices and their use in working with program participants.
- Increase FAC staff feeling of confidence that they have been adequately trained in early childhood topics

VIII. Measurements

Measure #1

FAC staff billable hours with clients, per quarter

Related departmental goal: Increase billable hours by FAC staff

Perspective: Financial Stewardship

Source: FAC quarterly reports, which include fee for service billing hours compiled for each FAC staff member.

Description: The Director of Quality Assurance compiles all billable hours for the FAC on a quarterly basis. Billable hours included any contact that FAC staff has with program participants, which are recorded in quarter hour time increments. Each FAC staff member records their own hours for each quarter after which they are combined with all other FAC staff for the quarterly report, which is then submitted to the DCFS contact.

Families First has only recently begun collecting this data due to the recent shift in DCFS's payment policy. Previously, FAC's would provide the number of children and families served each quarter.

Justification: This measure is vital to understanding the financial stability of the FAC program. Due to the shift in funding from DCFS from a quarterly payout to a fee for service payment system, it is important for Family Focus maintain high levels of contact with the participants in the FAC programs. This is necessary to understand if FAC is recording enough billable hours to ensure that Families First will not lose funding. If Family Focus were to ignore this measure, FAC staff may be at risk of losing their jobs due to insufficient funds from DCFS.

Measure #2

Parent satisfaction of services received through FAC

Related departmental goal: Increase parental satisfaction in the services provided by FAC staff

Perspective: Consumer

Source: Client Exit Survey

Description: Upon completion of the FAC program parents are asked to take an anonymous parent survey. This survey will be used to gauge both the level of confidence the parent has in his/her parenting ability after program completion as well as how satisfied that parent was with the services that the FAC program provided. FAC staff will include this survey in the exit assessment done for all FAC participants, which ensures a high return rate. While this satisfaction data is self-reported by FAC families, we believe that it is reliable data due to the anonymous nature of the data collection method.

The metric to measure parental satisfaction in this survey this was developed internally by Families First staff. The question asks:

How satisfied were you with the services you received from the FAC program?

5. Very Satisfied
4. Satisfied
3. Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
1. Very Dissatisfied

Justification: This parent satisfaction measure is important if Families First wants to continue to provide high quality services to the families utilizing FAC services. Based on the FAC's destination statement, it is necessary for FAC staff to collect this data to ensure that program participants are not only engaged but also feel they are receiving the highest quality of services.

Measure #3

Parental participation in optional FAC activities

Related department goals: Increase parent participation in optional program activities

Perspective: Consumer

Source: Attendance logs and activity sign in sheets collected by FAC staff

Description: FAC staff collect attendance logs and sign in sheet for activities provided to FAC parents that are not mandatory such as respite care, parenting support groups, and family nights. Attendance numbers for these events are compiled monthly by FAC staff. It is important to note that this form of data collection may not be the most accurate way to gauge attendance at such events. Often times parents forget to sign in when attending these events which will lead to smaller total participation numbers for each month. This measure may not give staff an accurate count of the number of parents utilizing these additional services.

Justification: This measure is vital in the agencies understanding of parental involvement. If one of the goals of the FAC program is to create more engaged parents it is important to see how many parents utilize services that they are not required to participate in. Greater involvement in these activities shows the level of interest and commitment a parent has to both the program and the organization. The FAC program offers parents and children unique opportunities to utilize services apart from the counseling and support services required through the DCFS contract. This measurement will help FAC gain a better understanding of the types of activities FAC families and parents engage in at each of the centers.

Measure #4

Successful client completion of the FAC program

Related departmental goals: 90% of clients will not be the indicated subject of additional reports of abuse or neglect up to a year after program completion

Perspective: Partnership Organizations

Description: This metric measures the successful client completion of the program by monitoring the return rate of FAC participants within the DCFS system. In partnership with DCFS, Families First will receive quarterly reports of any substantiated reports filed with DCFS against former FAC program participants. Previously, this data was collected and recorded through FAC staff by telephone.

To collect this data it will be necessary to follow several procedures:

- Initial agreement with DCFS to produce quarterly reports that provide information of any former FAC clients that have been indicated in reports of abuse or neglect within 12 months of FAC program completion.
- Effective communication between FAC managers and DCFS contact regarding the promptly receiving this data.
- Development of an implementation plan that is supported by both DCFS and FAC staff.
- FAC staff must obtain informed consent of FAC program participants stating their knowledge of this information sharing between Families First and DCFS.
- Clearly stated option for FAC families to opt out of this report and still be eligible to receive all FAC services.

Justification: This measurement would provide the most accurate information regarding program success and prevention of child abuse and neglect in former program participants. Obtaining this information directly from DCFS ensures a greater level of reliability and validity in the data. This data will be more accurate than previous attempts to follow up with past program participants by telephone. FAC staff struggled to contact many former FAC participants in this way due to disconnected or changed telephone numbers.

Measure #5

90% of current FAC staff has completed professional development trainings each quarter

Related department goal: Increased number of clinicians that participate in quarterly professional development trainings

Perspective: Learning and Growth

Source: Training attendance records collected by FAC managers after each training

Description: This measurement will be collected from the quarterly training sign in sheets collected by each FAC manager. This measure will take into account the loss or addition of FAC staff throughout the year. New hires will not be counted in the total staff number until three months after their initial start date or after the first training opportunity that occurs after the employees start date.

Justification: The measure of training opportunities that FAC staff participates in each year is gives the organization a better understanding of how staff can be supported in their own professional development. For the FAC program to achieve its goal of high quality services the staff implementing this program need to be adequately prepared.

Measure #6 - (Planned for future implementation)

Parental input on gaps in service

Related departmental goal: Increase the offerings of services that Families First families find relevant to their specific needs

Perspective: Consumer

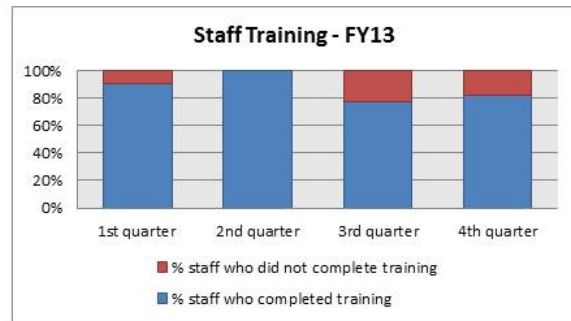
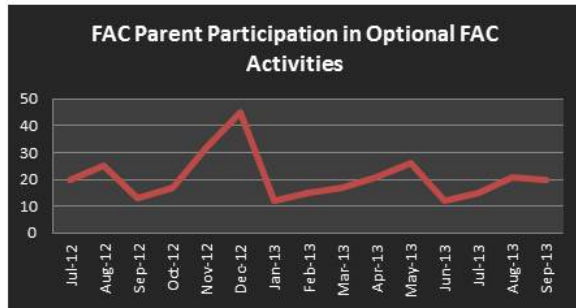
Source: Client Exit Survey

Description: Clients will be asked to give their input on the services provided through the FAC program. The following questions may be asked; what services did they find most helpful, were the services offered at the right times, were the activities publicized enough and in the right methods? Considerable thought will need to go into the development of the survey questions

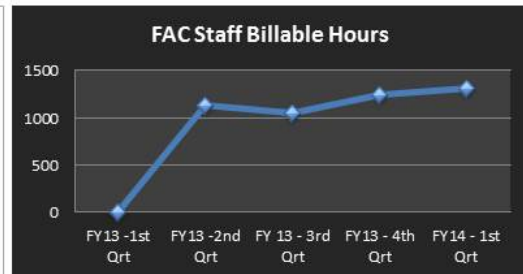
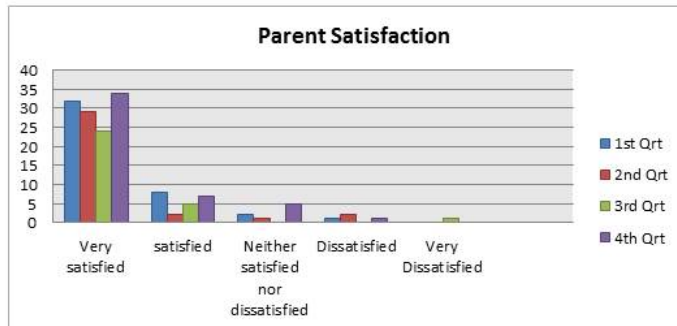
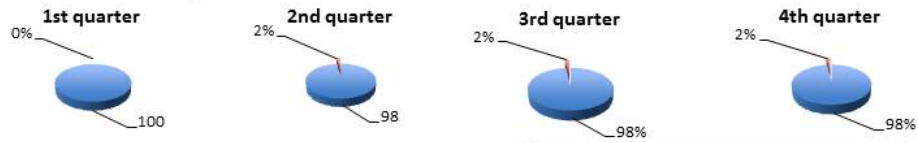
asked for this measurement. FAC staff will need to be conscious of the information they are interested in collecting and develop metrics accordingly. The qualitative data collected through this measure will be used to influence the direction of future services at FAC centers.

Justification: In an agency-wide attempt to incorporate the input of program participants in determining the future directions of programs this measure would allow FAC staff to gain a greater understanding of what FAC families view as important program components.

Family Advocacy Centers



Successful FAC Client Completion



IX. Critique

Balanced Dashboard

There are both strengths and weakness associated with the chosen dashboard measurements previously described. The measures chosen for our dashboard are relatively balanced. At least 1 of the 5 measures focuses on one for the four perspectives. Because our dashboard displays at least one measurement from each perspective it is a relatively well-balanced dashboard.

If Families First were to only focus on the measure of FAC staff billable hours (financial perspective) the measures related to consumer satisfaction or Learning and Growth may suffer. Each of these measures on this dashboard cannot be overlooked but all measurements focus on monitoring the quality of services provided in the FAC program. Three of the measures (staff training, billable hours, parent participation) require data that the FAC staff is either currently collecting or is easily accessible making these measure easy to implement.

The other two measures of parent satisfaction and successful client completion of the program will require new strategies to collect data. To monitor parent satisfaction in the FAC services they received, FAC staff will have to develop the survey questions that FAC parents are expected to take when they complete the program. Monitoring parents' successful program completion though recidivism rates provided by DCFS may also be present challenges. To implement both of these measure will require significant time outside of their regular tasks on the part of FAC staff.

Choice of Measures and Metrics

One of the potential weaknesses of these measures is the lack of standardized scales. Specifically the metrics used to collect the parent satisfaction measure and the proposed measure of a gap in services. It would be beneficial to have tested and proven measurement metrics but that may require Family Focus to invest money in purchasing a standardized measurement metric.

A suggestion would be to vet the Client Exit Survey by other Families First staff and Program participants before it is administered to ensure that the language of the questions are clear and concise. The wording of survey questions can have a great effect on the validity of the data that the survey tool is intended to collect.

Potential Roadblocks

One of the major roadblocks Families First should anticipate from the introduction of these measurements is the ability secure the appropriate data to measure FAC participants recidivism rates into the DCFS system within a year of FAC program completion. Successful implementation of this measure rests on strong communication between FAC and the DCFS staff as well as accurate data provided by DCFS.

One of the weaknesses described in the SWOT analysis was the previous lack or timely information sharing between DCFS and FAC staff. In the past its have been incredibly frustrating for our FAC staff to navigate this relationship. To be successful, the DCFS and Families First would need to develop a clear understanding of how this information will be collected, analyzed, and disseminated. While the implementation of these new measures are realistic, it should be noted that collecting data for these measurements may be time consuming

for already burdened FAC staff. Unfortunately, due the current financial state of the organization there is no extra funding to hire quality-monitoring staff. This may delay the implementation of several of these dashboard measurements.