Using Comprehensive Family Assessments to Improve Child Welfare Outcomes Ramsey County Community Human Services & University of Minnesota School of Social Work St. Paul, Minnesota

# **Baseline Focus Group Analysis**

Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

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#### Submitted by

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### Introduction

As part of the post-test evaluation of the Using Comprehensive Family Assessment to Improve Child Welfare Outcomes demonstration project, evaluators conducted focus groups at two points in time – one prior to implementation of CFA and one following implementation of CFA. The first round of focus groups (i.e., pretest) was conducted with four Program units within Child Protection.; the second round of focus groups (i.e., posttest) was conducted with all units within Child Protection. The purpose of the post-test focus groups was to understand how Ramsey County child protection workers perceive CFA and its impact on families. The following report provides an overview of the posttest focus group process, an analysis of the reported data, and recommendations for Ramsey County. Comparisons between pretest findings and posttest findings are highlighted where relevant.

### Methods

The posttest focus group process was conducted in the months of October, November and December 2012. During this time, a University of Minnesota evaluator facilitated seven focus groups composed of Ramsey County Child Protection workers. An eighth focus group was conducted with child protection staff from screening and unit case aides. These focus groups generally consisted of between 6 and 14 workers. In the focus group for screeners and case aides only three participants were present. Supervisors from each of the seven child protection units were not present, as questions about supervision were included in the focus groups. (Supervisor impressions and experiences with Comprehensive Family Assessment were collected during Supervisor Observations and Interviews. Analysis and recommendations were shared by evaluators in the Supervisor Observation Report distributed in March 2013.) The seven focus groups made up of child protection workers were held during standard unit meetings and were entirely voluntary. The focus groups lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were facilitated from a questionnaire of six multi-part questions. The focus group instrument is included in Appendix A of this report. One University of Minnesota researcher facilitated all eight focus groups.

Data were coded using Thematic Analysis procedures. A University of Minnesota evaluator initially coded all eight focus groups and continued to refine codes until themes emerged.

### Overview

Overall, focus group participants varied greatly in their impressions and feelings about using Comprehensive Family Assessment. In general, Family Assessment – Ramsey County's Alternative Response program units, had better impressions and appreciated many aspects of the CFA process. In contrast, Intake or Investigation units had a more negative perception about CFA and expressed more concern with the forms and processes associated with the practice change.

In addition to wide variety among workers' impressions about CFA, there was large variation in the interpretation and understanding of the CFA process. Some participants reported that using CFA limited their interactions with families. Rather than CFA's goal of moving practice away from the presenting problem toward a broader understanding of family circumstance and experience, these workers reported that the CFA process still highlighted the incident that brought the family into child protection. In contrast, many workers and units felt the Ramsey CFA model encouraged and supported an assessment that was deeper and more comprehensive.

## Moving Beyond the Presenting Problem

One of the primary tenants of Comprehensive Family Assessment is the belief that assessing families holistically is essential to providing meaningful child protection services. Historically in child protection, the focus has been on the "presenting problem", meaning an emphasis on examining and understanding the incident that is being investigated for maltreatment or that lead to the report. CFA suggests that looking only at the presenting problem often leads to service provision in child protection that is limited and may never truly address the primary concerns and safety threats that exist within a family structure (Schene, 2005) . Therefore a move toward understanding a family within a larger context through a more comprehensive assessment process allows child protection workers and agencies to more adequately address those issues. The idea is that this process then leads

to fewer crises, less recidivism and better outcomes for families (Schene, 2005).

In focus groups, workers were asked to discuss the intended change from a focus on an incident (i.e. the initial allegation) toward an orientation of understanding the bigger picture of family experience. As is true in most areas discussed with the focus groups, responses were varied. Themes emerged on both the positive and negative end of the spectrum related to "big picture". A number of workers reported that looking at the big picture and implementing a more comprehensive assessment was intrusive and overwhelming for families. "When we get cases, they want to know why we are asking the question. They want to know why asking those questions can best help their family. If they come in for educational neglect and we ask questions about family problems, they want to know why. We have do lots of explaining about how we are using CFA".

Within the new model workers are asked to collect information in a number of areas of family functioning. These "domains" as Ramsey County calls them, include: 1. Behavioral Health/Mental Health Issues, 2. General Parenting including Discipline Practices, 3. Substance Use/Abuse Issues, 4. Housing/Environment/Physical and Medical Needs of the Caregivers, 5. Family Relationships/Social Supports, 6. Child Characteristics/Child Functioning/Child Well-Being (Educational, Physical, Developmental and Emotional Needs); Medical Issues; Violence in the Home/Other Significant/Traumatic Events, 7. Caregivers Day to Day Life Skills; Level of Functioning; Communication Style; Medical Issues that May Impact Parenting, 8. Historical/Individual Trauma/Violence in the Home or Community/Other Significant Events that may be Impacting Behavior, 9. Caregiver's Employment/Financial Stability; Income Management. Discussions associated with the CFA shift toward big picture included strengths and concerns related to the engagement and rapport building process. Workers reported on both ends of the spectrum. Many felt that CFA aided and supported the engagement process while others suggested the in-depth nature was intrusive and had the potential to hinder building a relationship.

Some participants reported that the CFA process did indeed help them gather more information, but that the increased information was not necessarily relevant to their practice or response to families. "I think we gather information we normally didn't in the past. The model says it is supposed to be more helpful, but I don't see that it adds to it [our assessment]. We are gathering information because we have to fill it in, but it is not usually Traci LaLiberte, Ph.D. <a href="mailto:lali0017@umn.edu">lali0017@umn.edu</a> or Jenny Gordon <a href="mailto:Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us">Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us</a> School of Social Work, University of Minnesota

related to the reason we are in talking to family". A related concern from an Intake Unit is that the focus on big picture does not fit with the work of Intake. One participant stated that the practice of investigations is guided by statute and therefore must focus on why the family came to the attention of child protection.

Yet another perspective that workers reported in focus groups was that the CFA process established by Ramsey County did not serve its intended purpose. These participants suggested that the revised assessment practices did not look beyond the presenting problem. Rather, assessment continued to focus on the maltreatment allegation in spite of revised forms and altered practices. "For investigations it is difficult not to be incident-based. We are out there because an incident occurred".

A final concern reported in this area was related to external service providers and child protection partners. There was a concern that workers have seen systems and professionals who partner with child protection (county attorney, judges, service providers, Guardians ad Litem, etc.) do not have a full understanding of the philosophy associated with CFA. As a result, these professionals have on occasion used information from an in depth assessment to change or build upon a case plan, even when these changes are not related to safety. The larger concern here is that families' openness and honesty can be used against them in the return of their children or in the progress they make toward case closure.

Conversely a number of workers described an opposite phenomenon. They reported that discussing families' functioning beyond the maltreatment allegation aided in engagement. By looking at the broader context with a family, some workers reported they were able to build stronger relationships with family members, as well as build a stronger assessment. "Absolutely [we've seen differences in practices with families after using CFA]. Families are less intimidated. The way we approach and talk with them...they know they are part of it. We are working together. We are not 'The Agency'". With a stronger assessment, workers who reported positive features of the move toward big picture understanding also reported that the assessment lead to the provision of more meaningful services for families. "The way we handled case management in the past and now is different. Now in FA we have the same services CM had access to. We now have a wider range of what we can provide for clients. I have been pleased from management standpoint Traci LaLiberte, Ph.D. Lali0017@umn.edu or Jenny Gordon Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us School of Social Work, University of Minnesota

in that I can get more for my clients". Service provision will be explored in more depth later in this report. In addition to assisting in service provision, it was reported that using the CFA process and its focus on the big picture allows for workers to identify family strengths and protective capacities earlier on in work with families.

## **Cultural Components**

All focus group participants were asked about their impressions of how CFA addresses and includes family culture. For the most part, participants consistently reported that addressing family culture remains an area for improvement. Ramsey County, and child protection practitioners in general, are not strangers to the need for increased culturally relevant practice. However, workers reported a disconnect between wanting to provide culturally relevant assessment and services and concrete elements of the model that support this practice. "I would like to see, if you are going to address culture in the assessment, it needs to be more than one question. It needs to be an established domain. Maybe pull downs (like for letters) culture could be 'x, y, z' and have a cheat sheet. Just because my family is white, doesn't mean they identify with white culture. I would like something tangible". Participants reported that the model was still lacking an overall inclusivity of family culture, as well as specific cultural prompts, particularly in CFA forms (e.g., the domains within the Family Functional Assessment and the Intake Narrative).

Participants suggested that further additions to the model, including altering the CFA forms, would aid in moving toward a more culturally appropriate response for families involved in child protection. Suggestions included additional training for all staff, and continuing to work with Ramsey County's cultural consultant who has been facilitating dialogue about culturally-relevant practice with child protection workers. Workers also reported frustration with lack of culturally specific services available for family referral, with specific comments related to culturally relevant services for African American families. "A frustration for me with services, the only things we offer is in home parenting and mentoring. There needs to be more culturally-specific [options]".

In spite of these concerns some participants did report that CFA practice encourages consciousness of culture and forces workers to keep family culture in the forefront of their

work together. "[CFA] forces people not to assume what someone's culture is. We ask families do they feel comfortable with me. It makes me more conscious". However, focus group discussion around culture appeared to move beyond CFA practice alone. It was clear that understanding and implementing culturally relevant practice, while relevant to CFA, was also a broader discussion. Culture is essential to practice and policy throughout the agency. Participants included in their discussion of culture policies and practices related to Indian Child Welfare, work with non-English speaking families, and racial disparity and disproportionality. These conversations and concerns are not unique to Ramsey County, but clearly require further exploration and attention.

## Supervision

Within focus groups, participants were asked to talk about how supervision practices have changed with the implementation of CFA practice. Similar to the question about culture, responses from participants were about supervision under CFA, but also included broader thoughts and concerns related to supervision practice within the county. With regard to CFA practice, workers felt strongly that it was important for supervisors to have both a deep understanding and commitment to CFA practice. Workers reported that supervision under CFA requires some changes in how supervision is delivered. With CFA, supervisors need to focus on cases and the CFA process. Supervision must include discussions that are case-related and focus on worker processes and decision making.

Conflicts that interfere with this focus on case-based supervision were reported. Participants suggested that supervision is guided by other county initiatives, including the Service Quality Assurance (SQA) project that forces supervisors to emphasize administrative functions, rather than supportive or educative themes (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002), . Workers reported that supervisors feel pressured to pay particular attention to whether or not certain documents and processes are complete and spend less time talking with workers about families and their decision making based on their assessments. As a result, a number of participants reported that supervision has not changed substantially with the implementation of CFA.

In contrast, some workers did report that supervision under CFA has helped to clarify supervisor expectations. "My supervision was CFA driven. When I had supervision it was all about CFA. I knew which cases to discuss.... When I had supervision, I knew what to expect and how discussion was going to go. All decisions were based on the model. Period. I could argue for four hours and she would say, what does CFA say"? Participants discussed the early days of CFA implementation and how case mappings and group supervision benefitted workers and aided them in feeling supported in practice. A number of participants suggested that this strategy for case-based supervision should be reinstituted. "Mapping what we were doing – that was intentional. That was incorporated and it has been off and on. Even with that off and on approach it has helped new staff and help people come up to speed on all sides. Grounds people in the model".

A number of participants commented that training for supervisors should continue and remain consistent. Additional training for newly hired supervisors need to be implemented to ensure supervisors understand the needs of workers utilizing a CFA practice approach, and to build an understanding of the larger goals of a CFA practice model.

### Services

Workers were asked to share their experiences with changes in service provision or recommendations under CFA practice. Discussions related to services were shared by workers throughout the focus groups including related to culturally relevant services and connecting a big picture assessment to a limited service array. With a specific focus on services, workers reported that there was an overall need for a broader service array. Although a number of workers reported that with CFA practice they have a better understanding of families' needs, service availability has not changed with the implementation of CFA. "We have information on why a family is homeless for five years, but with limited resources, we have the information but we cannot really do anything with the information. I am not able to help. They continue to bounce from place to place".

Beyond limited services available for client referral, workers also identified concerns about collateral training in CFA. Although there was recognition that some work had been

done by Ramsey County's CFA leadership team in providing CFA information and expectations to contracted service providers, a number of participants still felt that collaterals did not understand the shift from compliance-based to behaviorally-based changes. As a result service providers are not always providing reports and documentation that aid families or workers in addressing concerns on case plans. Conversely, participants also acknowledged that some service providers have changed the way they provide and report service provision to families involved in child protection. In spite of these complications, some participants reported being able to identify particular services that are most relevant for families earlier in the process.

Specific to focus groups with Intake workers, some participants discussed feelings of frustration about the perceived disconnect between CFA practice and the role of Intake/Investigations. With regard to services, some Intake workers talked about urine analysis and mental health assessments as services that are typically used within their units. However, discussion among the workers in one focus group in particular lead to the conclusion that these are not services. The definition and understanding of services is somewhat unclear across the agency. Within Intake it was stated that UAs and mental health assessments are not services because they are not provided to address a family need. Rather, they are required to help a worker in their assessment and maltreatment determination process. Therefore the focus on service provision under CFA does not seem to "fit" with the practices of a formal child protection Intake/investigations process.

## **Training**

Although there was rarely consensus between workers and units throughout posttest focus groups, there was one exception that was related to the theme training. Although the focus group questionnaire did not include a specific question related to training, it was a consistent theme across all focus groups. The primary consensus was that more CFA training was needed for agency staff, including workers and supervisors, as well as for collaterals and county partners.

Discussion around training included recommendations that there be standardized training processes for newly hired Ramsey County child protection social workers. At the Traci LaLiberte, Ph.D. <a href="mailto:lali0017@umn.edu">lali0017@umn.edu</a> or Jenny Gordon <a href="mailto:Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us">Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us</a> School of Social Work, University of Minnesota

time of data collection, workers reported that newly hired workers were being trained about CFA practice from their colleagues, and to a lesser extent, their supervisors. This lack of training for new workers, and lack of ongoing training for ongoing workers was resulting in inconsistent practice between workers and units. One of the primary concerns the workers reported during the pre-test focus groups was the widely varying practice between workers and units. Post-test focus group participants suggested that this was a real concern as more time grew between initial CFA training and current practice. Workers reported seeing shifting practices and understandings over time.

Some suggestions from workers that came up during focus groups to avoid practice shifts away from CFA practice included providing individualized training or coaching for staff, providing specialized or topical trainings, and establishing a training unit within the county to stabilize and standardize CFA trainings and practices.

### **CFA Process and Forms**

Comprehensive Family Assessment practice within Ramsey County is supported using standardized processes and forms. The primary forms are the Intake Narrative and Family Functional Assessment. In addition to forms that were introduced with CFA practice, Ramsey County also introduced a new method of documentation called DAP (Describe, Analyze and Plan). These were the primary topics that workers discussed in focus groups in response to a question about their experiences with changes in documentation that have accompanied CFA practice.

As was the consistent theme throughout questions and across units, there were a wide range of varying opinions expressed by participants related to documentation and CFA processes. On the positive end, workers reported that the standardization of forms like the Family Functional Assessment encouraged a more in depth collection of information about a family and then aided in the mitigation of personal biases that followed the assessment process. There was also the understanding that CFA forms, particularly the Family Functional Assessment, was a living document that could be built as relationships with families became more established and circumstances changed or new problems presented themselves.

Other strengths associated with documentation included responses suggesting CFA documentation allows workers to be more transparent with families. Respondents reported that the Intake Narrative helped present the broader picture of the family and that the Family Functional Assessment helped to organize the assessment.

Respondents on the other end of the spectrum felt that CFA documentation was time consuming and repetitive. Particularly within Family Assessment/One Family-One Worker units there was sentiment that the Intake Narrative and the Family Functional Assessment were redundant when the same worker was completing both forms. They reported that they were given specific instruction from management that they were not allowed to copy information from the Intake Narrative into the Family Functional Assessment and that this was an area of frustration. Some respondents reported that they felt the domains within the Family Functional Assessment were cumbersome and that families got lost in all of the questions.

Remaining areas of concern and confusion were reported around how to include indepth assessment information from the Family Functional Assessment into a case plan. With the standardized, state-provided case plans that are not CFA-specific, there were some reports that how and when to include assessment information into the case plan remained unclear.

Further confusion around how tools are utilized was apparent in focus groups. There was contrast in how workers reported using CFA forms and processes. Some workers reported asking families about functioning in each domain while informing families this was part of the County process, however burdensome. Other workers reported listening to a family's story or narrative and then fitting that narrative into the appropriate domains, and then using the remaining domains to guide their additional questions and assessment with families.

Another characteristic of Ramsey County's CFA process is the distinction between safety and risk. A number of participants reported that the safety threshold provides consistency and helps to keep kids safe in their homes. An associated safety-related concern from Intake is a bigger system issue. Some workers communicated a sense that the introduction of CFA forms and processes suggests that without the domains and a standardized process, workers would fail to make solid, well-supported safety decisions. "I Traci LaLiberte, Ph.D. <a href="mailto:lalio017@umn.edu">lalio017@umn.edu</a> or Jenny Gordon <a href="mailto:Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us">Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us</a> School of Social Work, University of Minnesota

rarely look at safety factors on cases. I already know what I am doing in the case. I know what a safety threat is, it is a formality that I complete it....but that is another screen that has to be completed, it doesn't help me make a decision".

#### Communication

Communication from upper level management was another theme that emerged from focus groups. Respondents suggested that communication was still unclear and inconsistent around CFA and a child protection practice philosophy. Workers discussed confusion about whether Ramsey County management was committed to providing social work services to families or whether they believed in a case management approach. This is an ongoing concern related to whether workers should "dig deeper" and focus on the big picture or provide an "in and out" response where the county's priority is focused on a timely response related to safety issues that does not necessarily take into consideration potentially unrelated concerns the family may be experiencing. The belief with a case management approach is that families benefit most from the least intrusive approach. The clear conflict between these two approaches and two messages has led to some reluctance to fully commit to a more comprehensive approach.

Another concern reported by workers is about the perceived priority of management to focus on billing. With the introduction of the Service Quality Assurance initiative, workers report feeling a pull between the philosophical underpinning of CFA which requires more time with families to complete an in depth assessment, and the push toward a focus on completing the appropriate documentation and checking the right boxes in SSIS. The perceived conflict between a focus on administrative functions and a focus on in-depth work and time spent with families in the field is a source of frustration across units.

## **Participant Suggestions**

Focus group participants were asked if there were changes to current CFA practice that they would recommend. A variety of responses were shared with the following highlights:

- Reinstate culturally specific workers. A few respondents felt that having workers
  that were hired to provide child protective services to particular communities
  (Hmong, ICWA, African American) was beneficial to families.
- Expand service array, with particular focus on expanding culturally-specific and culturally-relevant services. This includes considering contracts with less traditional service providers.
- In addition to those highlighted above, workers were consistently requesting more training, consistent training, and ongoing training. For further details please see the Training section above.
- Update CFA forms to eliminate redundancy with particular attention paid to revisions in forms for One Worker One Family in Family Assessment units.
- Update equipment, including purchasing new laptops and/or tablets, upgrades or refinement to the SSIS system, and other technologies that could enhance child protection work and ease the burden associated with documentation.
- Develop a case closing narrative
- Revise the Intake Narrative to use a format that allows families to tell their stories in a more cohesive narrative (omit domains).

### **Recommendations and Conclusions**

In summary, the majority of workers participated in the focus groups. As workers shared their insights and perspectives, a noteworthy pattern appeared across themes. Workers (on almost every theme) provided disparate comments and feedback based on their experiences. While some workers had very positive things to say about CFA and its implementation, other workers had less favorable perceptions. Therefore the following recommendations and conclusions are broad and intended to take into consideration the wide variability of response, but also to provide some guidance for moving forward knowing that these differences these exist.

#### Ramsey's Changes

Ramsey County's CFA leadership team made a number of changes discussed and recommended since University of Minnesota evaluators completed posttest focus groups in Traci LaLiberte, Ph.D. <a href="mailto:lali0017@umn.edu">lali0017@umn.edu</a> or Jenny Gordon <a href="mailto:Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us">Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us</a> School of Social Work, University of Minnesota

fall 2012. Notably the Family Functional Assessment and Intake Narrative were combined into a single form for use in One Family – One Worker Family Assessment units. This removed the redundancy that FA workers experienced. Another noteworthy change that was discussed in focus groups relates to training. Ramsey County's CFA leadership team devoted substantial energy to the development of an internal training team using a Trainthe-Trainer model to help sustain CFA practices beyond the demonstration grant. This recognition was meaningful given the historical practices reported by workers in Pretest Focus Groups. Administrators recognized that formal practice changes slowly, and workers can begin to implement assessment with varying degrees of intensity. Newly hired workers may not receive formal training in CFA practice. Therefore Ramsey County developed a plan for ongoing CFA training. Ramsey County chose to use a Train-the-Trainer model to sustain front line CFA practice. Workers with a demonstrated commitment to CFA were identified and selected as trainers. Training materials were modified and revised curriculum that includes didactic and interactive teaching methods were developed. The content was similar to trainings provided throughout the Implementation stages, but incorporated new case examples and interactive learning strategies.

The training plan that was established consisted of nine trainers with different functions. Four trainers were identified as "Stand up Trainers". The duties of this group of trainers are to facilitate new employee training as well as unit-wide "refresher" trainings. Ramsey County is in the process of having their internal trainers provide CFA training to each unit within the agency. This training will be provided annually to avoid drifting from established CFA practice. Annual CFA "refreshers" for all staff will be mandatory trainings.

A second group of five trainers was identified as coaches. The role of these trainers is to provide support to staff throughout the year in between unit-wide CFA trainings. Coaching is done with individuals or small groups of two or three staff. These trainers provide support, input and feedback to their colleagues on a day to day basis and can respond to questions as they arise. The trainers also work intensively with new workers as they take on their first cases as Ramsey County.

Ramsey County has also worked closely over the last year to build culturally responsive practice into CFA tools and processes. Much of this work was supported with Traci LaLiberte, Ph.D. <a href="mailto:lali0017@umn.edu">lali0017@umn.edu</a> or Jenny Gordon <a href="mailto:Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us">Jenny.Gordon@co.ramsey.mn.us</a> School of Social Work, University of Minnesota

the help of cultural consultant who met with units to understand needs and have broader discussions. Forms were revised to explicitly solicit families' cultural strengths and needs. This is an area that requires ongoing attention and dedication. Providing culturally responsive assessment and services is not a destination with an end point. Rather it is a process without an end date. Continuing a commitment to building and supporting culturally responsive practice in child protection is essential to ensuring families receive quality services within Ramsey County.

Beyond these three areas, Ramsey County can benefit from considering additions or changes to CFA practices based upon worker feedback. An initial step for consideration is the development of a strong communication plan throughout the agency. One of the biggest frustrations expressed by workers was lack of clarity and resulting confusion from conflicting messages from upper management. Building consensus in support for CFA practice among management of child protection is paramount. Without complete support for the overarching practice philosophy of CFA, the messages and goals of CFA will be threatened.

Related, there remain feelings among some workers, particularly within the Intake/Investigation units, that CFA does not fit the work of the agency. Training that focuses on how CFA can be used with flexibility to aid in engagement rather than intrude into the private lives of families could help build support for CFA practice if that is the model Ramsey County plans to continue.

In addition to cultural considerations, Ramsey County has devoted substantial time and consideration to supervision under the CFA model. Evaluative efforts have explored supervisor tasks using a weeklong, 100% time study where evaluators followed and coded supervisor tasks for a full week. In depth interviews were also included in the Supervisor Observation study. Recommendations related to supervision are provided in detail within the Supervisor Observation report. The information shared by participants in post-test focus groups reinforces the benefit of considering those recommendations to further support CFA supervision practice.

There are vast differences across units and within units related to each of the themes presented in this report. Therefore it would benefit Ramsey County to consider including in trainings the fundamental philosophical underpinnings of CFA practice and core expectations of workers and supervisors in all units and in all areas of practice (Intake/Investigations, FA, Program).

#### Conclusion

Perceptions and opinions of front line workers implementing practice are an important measure of the success and areas for continued growth of CFA implementation. Focus groups with Ramsey County Child Protection workers demonstrate that CFA practice is still valued but that workers implement CFA in different ways across the agency. Although inconsistent across workers and units, these findings can contribute to a modification and sustainability plan for CFA practice within Ramsey County. For example, as new legislation and mandates come down from federal, state and local sources, it will be imperative for Ramsey County management to make changes that are not are simply additions to current practice, but rather are thoughtfully enmeshed into current CFA practice. Taken together with other findings from the five year evaluation of CFA implementation, core findings and recommendations can be used to make data-driven decisions about the future of child protection practice at Ramsey County.

#### Appendix A

#### **CFA Posttest Worker Focus Group Questions**

Purpose: to understand how workers perceive CFA and its impact on families

Background: Since 2008 RCCHSD has been working on developing a new practice model for child protection assessment called CFA or Comprehensive Family Assessment. I am going to be asking you about your current practice model that has developed since then. For the purpose of being consistent, I am going to call the current assessment practice model CFA.

#### Questions:

- 1. What are your overall impressions of CFA?
  - a. Are there things about CFA that are helpful to you in your work with families?
  - b. Are there things about CFA that are still challenging in your work with families?
- 2. Differences between pre-CFA and CFA
  - a. Tell me about the intended change from focusing on the incident versus big picture with family. How is that working?
  - b. Tell me about the intended change from focus on compliance to change in behavioral terms.
  - c. Tell me about your experience with the changes in documentation that have accompanied CFA practice
  - d. Have you experienced a change in how you provide or recommend services for families under CFA? (prompt: type, requirements, characteristics, when)
- 3. What is your impression of how CFA works with/addresses/includes family culture?
- 4. What does supervision look like under the CFA practice change? (prompt: Is supervision different or the same? purpose?)
- 5. Family response to CFA
  - a. Have you seen any differences in practice with families after using CFA?
  - b. Any differences in the families' experience with the assessment process, engagement in the process or services used?
- 6. Are there changes to current practice that you would recommend? (e.g., training, procedures, documentation, assessment, etc.)