

Families First Family Focused Solutions

Policy 23.21

Effective: July 01, 2023

Introduction

Families First shall provide Family Focused Solutions as a support service that is available to customers.

Scope

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process for identifying customers who may benefit from Family Focused Solutions services and making referrals to Family Focused Solutions. Family Focused Solutions is designed to be a support service to aid customers in removing barriers to employment and/or education.

Policy

Family Focused Solutions

1. Family Focused Solutions (FFS) is available to all Families First assistance units (AU) that contain a child(ren) and/or an eligible adult who faces any barrier to work and/or education.
 - a. This includes both customers who are required to participate in a work and/or educational activity and customers who are exempt from the work and/or educational activity.
 - b. Children can also receive FFS simultaneously with their caretaker.
2. FFS will provide assistance to customers struggling with issues related to, but not limited to the following:
 - a. Physical or mental health,
 - b. Domestic violence
 - c. Substance abuse

- d. Learning disabilities or other developmental disorders,
 - e. Management of stress
 - f. Teen/young adult pregnancy and parenting,
 - g. Children's health or behavioral problems, and/or
 - h. Legal issues.
3. FFS counselors are available to all county offices. Some counselors may cover more than one (1) county, making them available to each county on a rotating basis.
 4. The Eligibility Counselor and TANF Case Manager will inform all Families First AUs of the availability and content of FFS.

Referrals

1. Families First customers receive referrals to FFS on the [HS-2946 Family Focused Solutions Referral/Feedback](#) form when a barrier or potential barrier to employment is identified.
 - a. Eligibility Counselors will refer customers who are exempt from the work and/or educational activity.
 - b. TANF Case Managers will refer customers who are mandatory participants in a work and/or educational activity and have had a barrier identified on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Screening Tool.
 - c. A customer can request a referral to FFS at any time while receiving Families First cash assistance. The customer does not have to provide a reason for the request.
2. The customer must agree to receive the referral for FFS.
 - a. If the customer agrees to be referred:
 - i. The referral to FFS is completed;

- ii. The customer is given the option of receiving a short-term temporary crisis exemption until the assessment is complete; and
 - iii. Participation in the work and/or educational activity will be evaluated upon receipt of the feedback from the FFS provider.
- b. If the customer does not agree to an FFS referral or does not complete the assessment:
- i. The refusal will be noted in the case file; and
 - ii. Other possible exemptions must be explored. If no other exemptions exist, the TANF Case Manager will engage the customer in work and/or educational activities.

Appointments and Communication

1. Information needed to complete the Personal Responsibility Plan (PRP) and the Individual Opportunity Plan (IOP) for work and/or educational activity provisions is shared between the Eligibility Counselor, TANF Case Manager, and the FFS counselor.
2. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the confidentiality of the customer/counselor relationship, some information related to FFS will not be shared with the Eligibility Counselor and/or TANF Case Manager.
 - a. If the customer chooses to share sensitive information with the Eligibility Counselor and/or TANF Case Manager, form [HS-2983 Family Focused Solutions Consent for Release of Confidential Information](#) must be completed.
3. When a referral is received, FFS will:
 - a. Contact the customer and schedule an appointment upon receipt of the referral.
 - b. Provide feedback via email of the customer's initial appointment to the TANF Case Manager or Eligibility Counselor within fourteen (14) calendar days of the referral. This feedback will include the scheduled appointment date and whether the

- customer attended the appointment, if that date has occurred.
- c. Complete the Self-Sufficiency Assessment and Matrix with the customer and submit the results along with any recommendations to the TANF Case Manager or Eligibility Counselor within thirty (30) calendar days of the referral.
 - i. The assessment results will include, but are not limited to, the following information:
 - 1) identification of the customer's barrier(s) to employment;
 - 2) an assessment of the customer's ability to participate in the required work and/or educational activity and the number of hours the customer is able to participate per week;
 - 3) a determination of any accommodations that are necessary to enable the customer to successfully participate in their work and/or educational activity, if required;
 - 4) identification of the customer's and the family's short-term and long-term goals; and
 - 5) identification of additional resources and services, such as Vocational Rehabilitation or other community agencies, based on the customer's assessment, the customer and family's goals, and length of services.
 - ii. If the assessment cannot be completed within the thirty (30) calendar day timeframe as a result of the customer missing appointments, this must be noted on the [HS-2946 Family Focused Solutions Referral/Feedback](#) form.
 - d. Advise the TANF Case Manager of the number of hours the customer will be participating with FFS and if the customer's PRP work and/or educational activity hours will require modification.

- e. Verify the customer's active Families First status monthly.
 - f. Advise the TANF Case Manager and/or Eligibility Counselor within three (3) business days of termination of FFS services.
4. The TANF Case Manager or Eligibility Counselor must notify FFS within three (3) business days of taking action to close the Families First case.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

1. There are exceptions to the confidential relationship between the FFS counselor and the Families First customer:
 - a. Incidents or suspicion of physical and/or sexual abuse or neglect of a child must by law be reported to the appropriate authority.
 - b. Incidents of direct threats of harm to self or others will be reported to the appropriate agency or persons.
 - c. Information can be disclosed as a result of a court order or subpoena.
 - d. Information can be disclosed to medical personnel in a medical emergency or to qualified personnel for research, audit, or program evaluation.
2. When discussing confidentiality during the initial assessment, the FFS counselor will present [HS-3229 Family Focused Solutions Services Informed Consent](#) for the customer to sign stating that he/she agrees with and understands these exceptions to the confidentiality policy.
3. FFS cannot be provided to a customer who will not sign the consent form. If the customer refuses to sign the consent form, the FFS counselor will notify the TANF Case Manager and/or Eligibility Counselor who made the initial FFS referral about this refusal. The TANF Case Manager and/or Eligibility Counselor will then remove FFS as a support service.

Post-Assessment Feedback

When the assessment has been completed, the FFS Counselor will provide the feedback information to the TANF Case Manager or Eligibility Counselor who will:

1. Review the feedback results.
2. Document the FFS assessment results in the case record.
3. Determine appropriate next steps as outlined in [Family Focused Solutions Procedures](#).
4. Make the final decision on a need for an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation.

FFS Activities and Job/Search Readiness

1. If a customer is participating in FFS activities, up to two (2) hours of FFS activities can be countable toward Job Search/Job Readiness hours as outlined in policy [23.13 Families First Work and/or Educational Activities](#).
 - a. If the customer chooses to count FFS activity hours toward Job Search/Job Readiness hours and fails to participate in FFS, any non-compliance is subject to sanction.
 - b. In order to receive support services, the customer must be engaged for at least one (1) hour of other work and/or educational activity in addition to the FFS activity.
2. If the customer is not participating in Job Search/Job Readiness or the Job Search/Job Readiness limitations have been exhausted, the FFS activity will only be treated as a support service.

Existing Treatment Programs and Domestic Violence Safety Plans

If a customer indicates that they are in a treatment program or has initiated a safety plan to escape domestic violence, the TANF Case Manager or Eligibility Counselor should offer an FFS referral.

1. FFS counselors will not change a customer's existing treatment program or safety plan.
2. FFS counselors will assess the customer's situation to determine if other services are needed in addition to the treatment program or safety plan.
3. FFS will offer services in addition to the treatment program or safety plan without interrupting the existing plan.

Transitional FFS

The FFS provider may offer transitional services for up to six (6) sessions over a three (3) month period

following the closure of the Families First case for any reason to support the family's transition.

Supporting Documents

[HS-2983 Family Focused Solutions Consent for Release of Confidential Information](#)

[HS-2983sp Family Focused Solutions Consent for Release of Confidential Information \(Spanish\)](#)

[HS-2946 Family Focused Solutions Referral/Feedback](#)

[HS-3229 Family Focused Solutions Services Informed Consent](#)

[HS-3229sp Family Focused Solutions Services Informed Consent \(Spanish\)](#)

Families First ADA Screening Tool (internal use only)

[Family Focused Solutions Procedures](#)

[23.13 Families First Work and/or Educational Activity](#)

Definitions/Acronyms

Term	Definition
Treatment Program	A mental health, drug and/or alcohol, or process addiction therapeutic regimen.
Safety Plan	A personalized, practical plan that includes ways to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave. Safety planning involves how to cope with emotions, tell friends and family about the abuse, take legal action, and more.
Abbreviation	Expansion
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
FFS	Family Focused Solutions
IOP	Individual Opportunity Plan
PRP	Personal Responsibility Plan

Supersedes

23.20 Family Focused Solutions, eff. date 02/15/2018

Approval History

Approved By	Approver Title	Approved Date	Effective Date
Clarence Carter	Commissioner	06/20/2023	07/01/2023
Danielle Barnes	Commissioner	01/29/2018	02/15/2018

Revision History

Date	Version	Location of Change	Description/Reason for Change
06/20/2023	07/01/2023	Introduction, Scope, Family Focused Solutions, Appointment and Communications, Referrals, Exceptions to Communications, Post-Assessment Feedback, FFS Activities and Job/Search Readiness, Existing Treatment Programs and Domestic Violence Safety Plans, Documentation, and Definitions/Acronyms.	Updated the language to remove references to ECMS and ECMS contractors. Replaced client representative with TANF case manager. Deleted sections or parts of sections, removed 'his/her' and replaced with 'their', and completed other language updates.
01/29/2018	02/15/2018	N/A	New Policy

Approved By	<i>Clarence H. Carter</i>	Approval Date	06/20/2023
Authority	Tenn. Comp. & Regs. Ch. 1240-01-49	Effective Date	07/01/2023
Application	All TDHS Family Assistance Staff and Contractors		