

Modification of CFA Project

Ramsey County Community Human Services &
University of Minnesota School of Social Work

The RCCHSD CFA Model for working with families in child protection is currently beginning its third year. The original plan called for the following activities to occur (see Appendix A):

Year 3:

- Program:
 - Intake: Design CFA and pilot in Intake
 - Case Management: Amend CFA, train, and fully implement in Case Management
- Evaluation:
 - Intake: Evaluate fidelity¹, and conduct baseline management¹ and cost¹ studies in Intake
 - Case Management: Evaluate controlled trial, and conduct baseline management and cost studies in Case Management

Year 4:

- Program:
 - Intake: Conduct controlled trial in Intake
 - Case Management: Continue full implementation in Case Management
- Evaluation:
 - Intake: Evaluate the controlled trial in Intake (including fidelity to the model) and continue management study in Intake
 - Case Management: Continue management study in Case Management

Year 5:

- Program:
 - Intake: Amend CFA, train, and fully implement final model in Intake
 - Case Management: Continue full implementation in Case Management
- Evaluation:
 - Intake: Evaluate fidelity¹ in Intake, and conduct post-test cost¹, school¹, time¹, and management¹ studies in Intake; and disseminate findings
 - Case Management: Conduct post-test cost, school, time, and management studies in Case Management; and disseminate findings

¹ The purpose of this study is outlined in Appendix B

Despite concerted efforts by RCCHSD to implement the newly developed CFA model, unforeseen challenges have presented themselves, creating the need to request a modification to the evaluation. First, the original proposal allotted a short timeframe to develop the model to be used in Case Management. The model, though well-designed, may therefore need significant changes from its current version before it is ready for a formal evaluation. Additionally, initial interviews with workers in the intervention group (and corresponding case record reviews) have led the evaluators to believe that increased fidelity to the model is needed before an evaluation of the model can be undertaken. Therefore, we feel it is not appropriate to proceed with the evaluation plan as written, including the completion of a full case record review (in a controlled trial in case management) at this time.

Simultaneously, programmatic changes at RCCHSD have necessitated a revision of the proposed evaluation plan. In particular, RCCHSD is beginning to implement a project, Service Quality Assurance (SQA), which seeks to develop worker job descriptions, naming conventions, and new documentation requirements. These changes are *consistent with CFA* and the newly developed model; however, only *some* of the changes that will be incorporated in the SQA project are incorporated into the current model. SQA is scheduled to be piloted early in Year 3 and implemented agency-wide in the third quarter of Year 3. Because the SQA project draws heavily from CFA, significant intervention bleed – use of CFA components by the control group – will occur within the controlled trial for Intake and any postponed controlled trial for Case Management.

In light of these unforeseen challenges, we are proposing the following modifications to the original plan (please note that changes in the plan are italicized below and elaborated upon at the end of the modification proposal):

Year 3:

- Program:
 - Intake: Design CFA, pilot in Intake, and then *fully implement in Intake* (rather than conducting a controlled trial)
 - Case Management: Amend CFA, train, and fully implement in Case Management; and *incorporate cultural consultants' input into the model*
- Evaluation:
 - Intake: Evaluate fidelity, and conduct baseline management and cost studies in Intake
 - Case Management: Conduct a *formative evaluation* of the implementation of CFA, including a more *comprehensive evaluation of fidelity* to the model; and conduct baseline management and cost studies in Case Management

Year 4:

- Program: *Incorporate feedback* from Intake and Case Management into final CFA model and *fully implement* the final CFA model agency-wide
- Evaluation: *Evaluate fidelity* to the model (agency-wide), begin dissemination of findings, and conduct post-tests for the school and time studies, and continue management study

Year 5:

- Program: Continue full implementation
- Evaluation: Continue School Study post-test and dissemination, and conduct post-tests of cost and management studies

In summary, we propose to replace the controlled trials that were scheduled to begin October 2009 and October 2010 with an evaluation of the *full model* by comparing pre-test and post-test scores for cases from the following groups: Traditional Investigation without Case Management, Family Assessment without Case Management, and Case Management with Traditional Investigation Intake Services (the latter being further stratified by in-home, out-of-home, and 16/17-year-olds' out-of-home cases, as originally proposed). During the implementation phase we will continue to monitor fidelity as originally proposed.

We also propose to replace the family interviews that accompanied the evaluation at pre-test and post-test with an analysis of secondary data collected from the cultural consultant groups. Although thorough efforts were made to ascertain a representative sample of families who were involved with child welfare services in Ramsey County, the family interview sample is undoubtedly biased. The current sample is comprised mainly of families who were quite satisfied with their workers and the services they received from RCCHSD; families who felt their needs were not appropriately addressed or who were unsatisfied with their experience with RCCHSD are not represented in the sample. Therefore, the input of the sampled families is not as informative in the development of the model as originally conceived to be due to the inability to collect information that would identify growth areas for RCCHSD. However, information resulting from meetings of the cultural consultants is proving to be incredibly helpful in the development of the model.

The final modification that we propose is to alter our study of fidelity to become a formative evaluation of the model's implementation. Originally, we planned to interview three workers from the intervention group each month for a duration of three months, resulting in a sample of nine workers and representing approximately two-thirds of the workers in the intervention group. Case record reviews of one case per worker would also accompany the interviews. Because the first two rounds of the fidelity study have led us to believe fidelity to the model needs to be increased before the model can be evaluated, we propose to alter the format of the fidelity study to include an interview of *all* workers in the intervention group (with accompanying case record reviews), interviews with supervisors and managerial staff, as well as a week-long observation of supervisors in both the intervention and control groups. This latter addition is due to preliminary information from a variety of sources indicating that the supervisors' current activity/task load may not be able to accommodate the increased activities and dedicated time outlined in the new CFA model. Additional attention to this critical area of practice is warranted.

Implementing these modifications in the evaluation will result in several benefits in the new CFA model:

- A stronger, more robust understanding of the issues associated with challenges in implementation across levels (worker, supervisor, management, policy)

- An erasure of the intervention bleed in Intake
- The creation of a feedback loop between Intake and Case Management units, which will assist in the development of one cohesive CFA model
- A better comparison of staff time involved in working with families in child protection (both pre- and post-tests conducted in the same calendar month)
- A larger sample size for the post-test school study
- An evaluation of the entire CFA model from Intake through Case Management

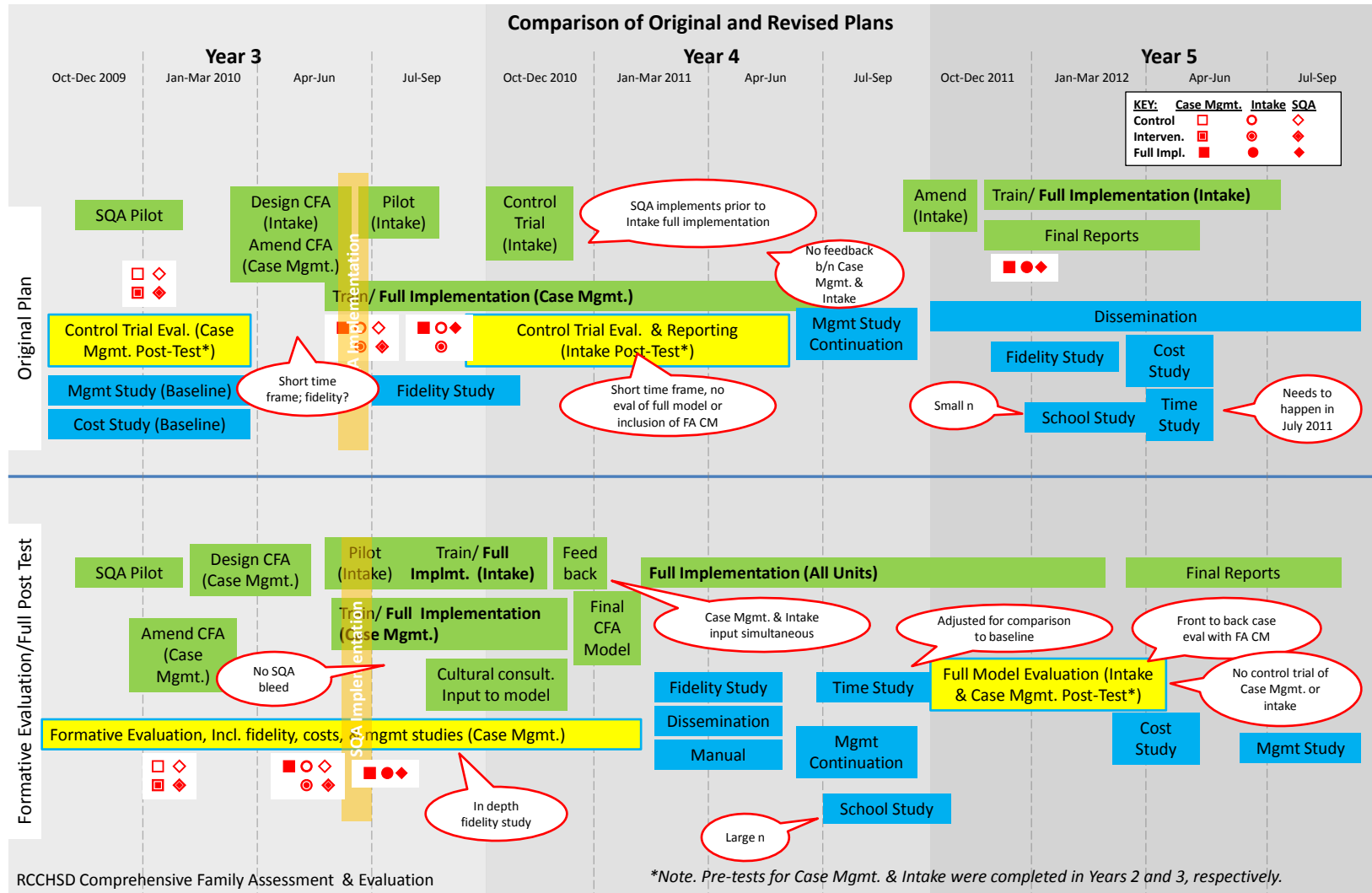
We thank you for your time in considering our request. We look forward to further discussing these modifications with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Jenny Gordon

On behalf of the Program and Evaluation Teams at Ramsey County Community Human Services & University of Minnesota School of Social Work

Appendix A



Appendix B

Purpose of Studies Included in CFA Evaluation

The purpose of each of the studies comprising in the remainder of the evaluation are as follows:

- Fidelity study – Determine the degree to which CFA is consistently implemented by RCCHSD according to specifications of the model
- Cost study – Determine costs associated with implementation, ongoing use, and differences in service delivery as well as any cost savings realized
- School study – Compare indicators of educational status (i.e., attendance rates, special education participation, mobility, use of other sources of support) for children served by RCCHSD pre-CFA to post-CFA implementation
- Time/Workload study – Understand the tasks that occupy staff time and the context in which these tasks occur, as well as the time and tasks each case receives
- Management study – Trace the quality assurance structure, process, and feedback loop as well as review and critique recent management change efforts as a means of developing transferability of the model
- Family Interviews/Cultural Consultant Input – Determine client satisfaction and outline areas for improvement in RCCHSD child protection services as a means of informing development of the model