About Child and Family Practice Fidelity

Why Fidelity Matters

Fidelity assessment is a way to assess the behavior of an organization to understand how well a practice is being implemented and supported across various parts of the organization.

By setting up clear transparent processes for assessing leadership, practice, and organizational supports, fidelity assessment is an important part of creating a learning environment and using key implementation data for outcome and system improvement. Rather than focusing on individual performance, fidelity assessment helps everyone get on the balcony, focus on organizational behavior, and work together to support incremental changes while facilitating individual growth.

> Fidelity assessment is an important part of creating a learning environment and engaging everyone in implementation.

Approach to CPM Fidelity Assessment

The CPM guides effective and equitable service delivery and decision-making through the use of clear sets of behaviors identified for agency leadership, staff working with children and families, and for the organization as a whole in supporting use of the practice model. Tools have been developed to assess fidelity in each of these areas.

- *Leadership Fidelity Assessment*
  - Based on the CPM Leadership Behaviors
  - Developed for directors, managers and supervisors
  - Makes use of self-assessment, assessment by others, and/or direct observation

- *Assessing Implementation Supports*
  - Based on key drivers of successful implementation identified in research
  - Assesses key areas of Organizational Readiness, Workforce Development, Strengthening Partnerships, and Data for Understanding and Improvement
  - Developed for use by agency implementation teams

- *Child and Family Practice (CFP) Fidelity Assessment*
  - Based on CPM Practice Behaviors
  - Developed for staff working with children and families
  - Inquires about agency support for key practice behaviors
  - Makes use of Self-Assessment and Direct Observation

Using the Child and Family Practice (CFP) Self-Assessment Tool

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This assessment tool focuses on 10 areas of practice that are key in understanding where the agency is in its journey to establish the practice model as the way that families experience the child welfare agency, and that staff experience agency supports. The assessment is organized under 5 core elements: Foundational Behaviors, Engagement, Assessment, Teaming, and Services & Transition. In addition, the tool seeks perspective on the extent of agency support that staff working with children and families are experiencing as they implement the practice model and build skill in using the behaviors with children and families.

This tool is completed as a self-assessment by social workers and other staff working with children and families. The goal is not to have the highest score possible, but to generate data about where practice model implementation is going well and where staff are struggling or experiencing barriers. This enables the agency to sustain and spread successful strategies, and to identify areas where greater support or barrier busting is needed to better promote staff success.

CFP Self-Assessment

THINK BROADLY – Consider your behavior across the diverse families and situations you have been working with in recent months. You may find some behaviors you use consistently across families, some used inconsistently, and others not generally used. Bring that awareness into your mind and rate yourself based on that complete view of your practice and behavior.

BE HONEST – Fidelity assessment is not about individual performance; it is about how well the agency is supporting and sustaining use of the practice model. So be clear-minded and honest in your assessment. This will generate data and awareness about what is working well and where agency supports need to be improved.

Using the Child and Family Practice (CFP) Direct Observation

This tool was designed to supplement the CFP Self-Assessment in order to provide aggregate data to help broaden the agency's understanding of CPM implementation progress and fidelity. While Self-Assessment data is based on each worker's perception of their own behavior across an entire caseload, Direct Observation focuses on actual interactions between a worker and family during a discrete event or set of interactions. As a fidelity assessment best practice, Direct Observation offers a CPM-trained observer's ratings of real-time interactions to be considered alongside Self-Assessment data to broaden understanding of local CPM implementation and support. Similar to the Self-Assessment, the Observation tool focuses on the same 10 areas of practice organized under the 5 core elements of Foundational Behaviors, Engagement, Assessment, Teaming, and Services & Transition.

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Understanding that Direct Observation is more burdensome than Self-Assessment, the Observation tool was designed to be used flexibly based on local resources and needs. Some jurisdictions may decide to do as few as 2-3 Direct Observations annually or semi-annually, while others may have teaming or supervision processes that allow for a greater number of Direct Observations. For example, supervisors might be asked to complete the Observation tool by accompanying one worker per month or quarter for a field visit (the case could be randomly selected from worker's caseload), or the agency might focus supervisor observation in discrete areas of the tool (such as Engagement or Assessment) based on local implementation goals or system improvement strategies and needs.

Structuring Tool Data

The CFP Self-Assessment and Direct Observation <u>are not intended to be measures of an individual</u>. The data will be aggregated and reported collectively. Data may be aggregated by position (such as social worker data, case aide data), or by program (such as ER, FM, FR/PP, etc.). There may be an anomaly to this in smaller agencies when there are only a few Direct Observations or only a few Self-Assessments in a particular position or program. In these situations, it is possible to report aggregate Self-Assessment scores across positions, programs or levels, and/or to use aggregate Direct Observation data not as its own set of data but in a summary form that highlights areas of similarity and difference compared to Self-Assessment results. This will provide a helpful check and balance on Self-Assessment results to flag where a deeper dive or more nuanced understanding of practice behavior might be helpful.

Data may also be aggregated for each item on the tools, to enhance understanding of CPM implementation strengths and opportunities in key behavioral areas. For example, Teaming behaviors in the Self-Assessment might show some strength but Direct Observation might highlight nuances in the teaming interactions that provide insights for the agency to strengthen its practice. The important thing is to keep staff engaged, maintain feedback loops across levels, and encourage and model the thoughtful use of data.

Staff Engagement with the Self-Assessment Process

Before the actual use of the Child and Family Practice Self-Assessment, it is important that the Leadership team meet and consider some important questions:

- Where do you see staff's progress in understanding the practice model and how it is intended to be used both on the front line and by leadership?
- Are staff in different places of development of their practice model skills and behaviors based on the positions or programs they are in?
- What strengths do you see in front-line staff that will help this assessment process?
- What worries do you have about using the Self-Assessment tool?
- What can you do to encourage and support honest ratings by your staff?

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- How can you help staff focus non-judgmentally on actual behavior (rather than intent)?
- What will build trust that the agency and its leadership will use assessment results in positive ways to improve organizational support for the practice and promote staff success?

The process will have five overall stages:

1	2	3	4	5
Orienting Staff to the Self-Assessment Tool	Completing the Self-Assessment Tool	Scoring the Self-Assessment Tool	Strategic Use of Direct Observation	Review of Results and What's Next?

1. Orienting Staff to the Self-Assessment Tool

A. Self-Assessment

When engaging in the assessment process, there are 10 major practice areas in the tool. Each includes 4 bullet points which are behavioral indicators of that practice area. Thinking about the diverse families and situations you have been working with recently, rate each bullet point to indicate the extent to which you exhibit that behavioral indicator in your practice overall.

B. Agency Assessment

After the 4 bullet points in each major practice area, there is an agency support question. This is a broad term including policy, training, coaching, supervision, agency culture and climate, barrier-busting, and other aspects of organizational functioning and leadership affecting your work with children, families, and others. Rate the extent to which you experience agency support for each practice area and its behavioral indicators.

C. Rating Scale

The three options for the self and the agency ratings are:

- **Not At All**
- **Sometimes**
- **Consistently**

D. Comments

Following the self and agency ratings for each major practice area there is a Comments box. List evidence for your ratings. Where support is rated "Not at All" or "Sometimes" clarify in what ways agency support could be improved to better support your use of the practice behavior.

2. Completing the Self-Assessment Tool

When completing this tool as a self-assessment, staff can fill it out individually during a group or unit meeting or be asked to complete it on their own by a specified deadline. The prior method will increase completion, but it may sacrifice more considered responses.

In order to support honest ratings about the degree to which practice behaviors are in place in the agency or additional agency support is needed, it is helpful to support an environment of anonymity. One element of this is to have a neutral party (inside or outside of the agency/department) be the recipient of the completed tools as well as the compiler of the data and creator of the aggregate reports.

The completed tools are given in person or via email to the person designated locally to receive and compile the results.

3. Scoring the Self-Assessment Tool

For a given time period (may be annually, semi-annually, quarterly, etc.), the compiler:

A. Converts self-assessment ratings for each of the 4 indicators into a scale from zero to four for each of the 10 practice areas along with an overall fidelity score. The conversion chart and an explanation of how to utilize it are found in Appendix A.
B. Incorporates the agency assessment ratings and clarification comments with the Self-Assessment results.
C. Brings all the data together in an aggregate report of results for the time period indicated. Individual scores are not reported because the idea is to understand and support the organization as a whole and not to invite comparison or a sense of someone being better or worse. This focus also encourages practice staff to think about their collective impact and success, as well as have frank discussions with supervisors and others about areas that reveal a need for growth and/or more targeted agency support.

Individual reports are optional and should be used for personal awareness only. They must not shift the focus from collective support to an individual focus. As staff submit their tool, they could indicate a desire for an individual scoring. Caution must be exercised however to preserve confidentiality both technically and practically (they should not be asked to share their scores.)

4. Strategic Use of Direct Observation

While self-assessments are an efficient way to gather information from staff, it can be difficult for anyone to observe their own behavior or separate out their "intent" from their "behavior." Direct observation, while less efficient than self-assessment, more reliably measures fidelity, especially when trained observers use an observation tool that anchors ratings to specific behaviors or practices. To make strategic use of Direct Observation, it is

helpful to consider local opportunities to gather observation data in a way that minimizes the burden on staff. Here are some helpful questions to consider:

- What strengths do you see in front-line staff and your child welfare system that will help with Direct Observation?
- What worries do you have about using the Direct Observation tool? What partners could you outreach to or what steps might be taken to help manage, prevent, or resolve those worries?
- What would help staff be more receptive to or feel more comfortable being observed?
- What strategies would limit or avoid burden on staff? Are there existing processes that could be leveraged (such as family team meetings, home or field visits by workers, etc.)?
- Are there staff who already play a role in assessing or supporting CPM practice to act as observers (such as supervisors, trainers/coaches, etc.)?
- What approach might encourage and support staff to participate in Direct Observation?
- What strategies are critical to ensure the identity of the person observed and their ratings remain anonymous?
- Are there PDSA's (small tests of change) that could help you gather information about observation opportunities that might work locally?
- What will build trust that the agency and its leadership will use Direct Observation to focus organizationally and not individually on improvement?

As a plan for Direct Observation is put in place, the completed Observation tools are given in person or via email to the same person designated to receive and compile the Self-Assessment results.

5. Review of Results and What's Next?

Review of Results

A. Self-Assessment results will be reported in aggregate for the whole agency as well as for subgroups. Subgroups must be sufficiently large to ensure anonymity. Subgroups would include task areas (Emergency Response, Family Reunification, etc.) or staff type (Social Worker, Social Work Aid, etc.). Depending on the agency structure additional subgroups may be identified but always with an awareness that this is about supporting improvement and not feeding into a culture of competition or comparison. The intent of reporting about subgroups is to enhance the agency's ability to focus improvement and support efforts in strategic areas.

B. Self-Assessment reports will provide an aggregate number by averaging scores across each of the 10 major behavior areas as well as across a total fidelity score. More in-depth analysis is possible by drilling down to aggregate scores for each

of the 4 sub bullet behaviors for a more nuanced understanding of strengths and challenges. In addition, the text from the comments section of the tool should be compiled and listed for each item.

C. The "agency assessment" questions on the Self-Assessment Tool (two questions on each item where respondents rate the level of support and modeling that they experience from the agency and the leadership) are also aggregated and can be reported with the Self-Assessment scores or separately. Given the relationship between effective implementation supports and fidelity to a practice, these "agency assessment" scores will be invaluable in interpreting and clarifying the Self-Assessment data.

D. While Direct Observation ratings are also aggregated, there may be too little data to maintain anonymity and create a report to be shared. In this case the compiler can provide the Self-Assessment data with a summary of the Direct Observation results, simply noting areas where Self-Assessment and Direct Observation ratings are in a similar range (Self-Assessment and Observation averages are only 1 point difference) and those where the ratings between the two instruments vary (averages are 2 or more points difference). This will add another valuable perspective in reviewing and interpreting Self-Assessment data.

E. Additionally, given the importance of effective implementation supports to achieve fidelity, as well as the parallel design and construction between the CPM leadership and practice behaviors, implementation assessment data and aggregate fidelity data for agency leadership can both add important understanding and perspective in interpreting practice-level fidelity data. By looking across all three legs of the fidelity assessment stool (leadership behaviors, implementation supports, and practice behaviors), areas of strength or growth across leadership, system supports, and practice levels may be uncovered, leading to a more strategic and focused support plan.

F. Finally, the use of the above tools provides an opportunity to measure agency fidelity over time. Aggregate report results from a subsequent time period can be compared with an initial or earlier result to see the impact of agency support strategies. This review will be strongest if trends in data over time are reviewed from all three fidelity perspectives (leadership, implementation and practice). It is always important to consider any other circumstances that could impact scoring results. Staffing changes, agency restructuring, Federal or State policy changes, pandemics, the state of the general community or partnering agencies, and a variety of other dynamics should be noted.

What's Next:

Fidelity assessment data and discussions are integral to ongoing CQI processes. Remembering that improvement and growth are the work of the agency as a whole and that success and growth are best achieved with the support of the system, the essential

question is what the system and the individual(s) within it will do to sustain strengths and build in the areas where a need for growth is indicated. This CQI discussion should include all levels of staff and where appropriate, the voice of the community, parents, and youth. Be sure to bring forward the Implementation Assessment data as well as the text from the comments within the Self-Assessment Fidelity Tool. This will provide a starting place for the discussion. Also consider if there is additional data (such as CFSR) that might be particularly meaningful for the group to consider alongside fidelity assessment. The following are some possible discussion points that might facilitate such planning:

A. Data Debrief

- What thoughts do you and your staff have about what you will do with the information the fidelity tools have lifted up? What CQI questions can the fidelity data help to answer?
- How might you and your staff recognize strengths the fidelity tools have identified?
- What is the connection between the identified strength(s) and a positive impact on the families experiencing the system? Is there other CQI data or information that helps support that connection?
- Are people within or outside the agency aware of the strengths identified and their impacts? How might staff and partners be made aware and success celebrated?
- Based on the fidelity data (including the 2 "agency assessment" questions on the Self-Assessment), what supports seem to be working well for staff? Where do opportunities to improve support exist?
- What was learned by comparing Self-Assessment data with Observation data? Did additional insights or ideas for improvement come out of this?
- What new CQI questions has the fidelity discussion prompted? How might ongoing CQI processes and discussions evolve or change to address these new questions?
- Which areas of leadership, implementation support, and practice are priorities for the overall growth and success of your agency and the people within it? (Note: There may be more places to grow than can be addressed in the present moment so strategically identifying priorities will identify where to start.)

B. Development of Improvement Strategies or Supports

- In exploring how to work on priority areas, what is working now or what has worked in the past? Can those supports or strategies be bolstered or revived? (Note: if certain areas of practice are a priority, consider use of the Case Consultation Tool found in the Workforce Development Toolkit on the CalSWEC CPM Implementation Toolbox web page.)
- How might you and your staff support one another in areas identified for growth?
- Are there supportive resources available inside and/or outside of the agency that could be accessed?

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Appendix A: Scoring the 10 CPM Practice Behavior Areas in the Self-Assessment

In each of the 10 major practice areas in the Self-Assessment tool, there will be a separate rating for each of the 4 bullet points indicating the extent to which that behavior was exhibited:

- (N): Not At All
- (S): Sometimes
- (C): Consistently

Thus, each major practice area will result in a score derived from a combination of the ratings from the 4 bullet points. The colorful graphic below includes all possible combinations of ratings for the 4 bullet points and can be used to determine the score for each major practice area. By finding the row in the table that represents the combination of scores received for a particular practice area, the corresponding practice area score is in bold in the yellow header.

For example, if the area is "**Communicates in a clear and respectful manner.**" and the behaviors are scored as:
"C" "C" "S" "N" that combination is found at the bottom of the "TWO" box so the score for the area "Promotes Advocacy" would be 2.

Another example is if the area is "**Communicates in an open, honest, timely, and accountable way.**" and the behaviors are scored as:
"C" "N" "N" "S" that combination is found at the bottom of the "ONE" box so the score for the area "Seeks Feedback" would be 1. Notice that the order that they appeared in was insignificant. It is just the collection of that combination of 4 ratings.

The responses for the four behaviors in each area are translated into a fidelity level for that area from "0" to "4." While there are not descriptors for each number they can be understood as the place on the road to practice fidelity for that area. The very beginning of the journey is at "0" and arrival is at "4." The numbers in between indicate progress for the time frame at which the tool was completed. An area where the rating is "4" may still need support as it is possible to move backwards at a subsequent time. The total of those 10 numbers ("0's" "1's" "2's" "3's" and "4's") will provide an overall fidelity score which indicates the following.

Accomplished range	31-40
Acquiring range	18-30
Emerging range	6-17
Practice Note Yet Evident range	0-5

It is important to remember that these results are aggregated and averaged for all respondents as a whole for the organization or appropriate subpopulations and are not reviewed on an individual level.

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Zero			
N	N	N	N
S	N	N	N

One			
S	S	N	N
C	N	N	N
C	S	N	N

Two			
S	S	S	N
C	S	S	N
C	C	N	N
C	C	S	N

Three			
S	S	S	S
C	S	S	S
C	C	S	S
C	C	C	N

Four			
C	C	C	S
C	C	C	C