

**Stafford County
Comprehensive Services Act Program
Guide for Parents**



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Introduction

Your child and family may be eligible for assistance through the Virginia Comprehensive Services Act Program for At-Risk Youth and Families if your child meets the following guidelines:

- Is under the age of 18, or in some cases, under 22*; and,
- At risk of having serious emotional or behavioral difficulties; and,
- In need of services from multiple county agencies.

This handbook describes how your family can get help through the CSA Program in Stafford County.



* Youth aged 22 and under who are eligible for special education services and whose Individual Education Program (IEP) requires education in a private school or residential placement, are eligible for CSA services until the last day of the school year in which they turn 22 years of age.

What is the Comprehensive Services Act (CSA)

In 1992, the Virginia General Assembly passed the Comprehensive Services Act for At-Risk Youth and Families. This act improves efforts to meet the needs of families with children and youth who have, or are at risk of having, serious emotional or behavioral difficulties.

The goal of the CSA is to keep families together and provide services within the child's home and community whenever possible. Through teams mandated by the CSA, state and local agencies are brought together to provide services that are intended to:

- Preserve and strengthen families.
- Identify needs and help families as early as possible.
- Provide services in the least restrictive setting possible.
- Develop service plans to meet the specific needs of children and families.
- Increase the communication between families and county agencies.
- Encourage public-private partnerships in serving families.
- Provide more community control and flexibility in the use of funding.

Who receives services under the CSA?

Youth who may be eligible to receive services fall into one of two groups*:

Mandated

Youth for whom services to be provided are mandated by the law include:

- Youth in foster care and those determined to be imminently at-risk for placement into foster care
- Youth who require placement in a residential treatment facility outside of the community and have entered into a parental agreement for placement.
- Youth who are special education eligible and the youth's Individual Education Program (IEP) requires that the youth receive education in a private day or residential school setting.

Non-mandated

Youth for whom services to be provided may not be mandated by law include: Youth served through the Juvenile Court, Community Services Board, public schools and other county/city human services agencies who require assistance through the family's or public agencies' resources. CSA non-mandated funds must be available in the community; otherwise these youth may be put on a waiting list for consideration of funding.

*Eligibility for CSA funding is determined by various laws (in education, juvenile justice, and social services) and by the Stafford County Community Policy and Management Team.



Teams Working Together

The Stafford County CSA Program has two teams that work together to implement and guide the CSA Program. These teams are:

- Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT)
- Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT)

Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT)

The Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) is a team formed to help you and your family solve problems, explore services and financial resources, and make a plan for the changing needs of your child and family. The Stafford County FAPT meets most Wednesday's during the school year and twice a month during the summer months. The Team meets in various locations in the county. Your case manager will schedule your FAPT meeting and, with your assistance, completes the necessary paperwork to have for the meeting. This paperwork includes an assessment of your household income. You will be required to contribute to the services recommended financially. There is an appeals process that can be explained to you by your case worker if the assessed amount will cause undo hardship to your family. You will need to sign a release allowing this Team to discuss your case. Along with the Team members other individuals present at the meeting include; the case manager, you and your child (if appropriate), and sometimes an intern from one of the agencies represented. All individuals present at the meeting will sign a confidentiality statement.

You and your family are an essential part of the FAPT process. Together you and the Team will develop a Individual and Family Service Plan (IFSP). The IFSP is a written plan that includes information about the strengths and needs of your child and family. The plan will also include presenting situation, goals and objectives both long term and short term, strategies and services, and who will be responsible for the implementation of the services.

Your FAPT meeting will last approximately 45 minutes. The chairperson on the Team will explain the process of the meeting and will have all individuals present introduce themselves and explain what agency they represent. The case manager will present any information they have, written and verbal, in order for the Team to gain an understanding of your child and family. You will also have an opportunity to discuss your concerns and add any information you think is relevant to the process. The Team may ask you, the case manager, or any family members in attendance questions about some of the information that was presented.

After an open discussion of the information, services requested, and resources available, the FAPT will make a recommendation for services*. The chairperson will restate the plan objectives and services approved to make sure that everyone understands and is aware of his or her responsibility for plan implementation.

Decisions are made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached a vote is taken by the members. Majority vote will determine the services approved.

Once the Team has recommended the services and authorized funding you will have a chance to agree or disagree to the IFSP developed by signing the corresponding line on the plan. Members will also have the right to agree or disagree by checking the agree or disagree line on the plan. Once the plan has been signed you will either receive a copy of the plan before you leave.

Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT)

This is a policy-making and management team that oversees the implementation of the CSA program and, makes FAPT member appointments. The CPMT develops local policies and procedures for CSA, develops the CSA fiscal policies, coordinates long-range community-wide planning for resources and services needed by children and families in its community, oversees the management of the CSA budget, helps agencies work together, hears FAPT decisions, and performs other management duties. The CPMT is also responsible for implementing new legislation affecting the CSA program.

Members of the CPMT are mandated by the State of Virginia to represent their agency. The parent representative as well as the private provider representative are appointed by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors. Members include

- Executive Director, Rappahannock Area Community Services Board
- Director, Stafford County Social Services
- Director, Court Services Unit
- Representative, Stafford County Board of Supervisors
- Representative, Stafford County Department of Health
- Representative, Stafford County Schools
- Private Services Provider
- Parent Representative

* CSA funds are limited for non-mandated youth and are not always immediately available for FAPT approved services. If funds are not immediately available, your child will be placed on a waiting list and your case manager will keep you updated on the availability of funds. The FAPT may suggest alternative services while you wait for the requested funding to become available.

How is an Individual Family Service Plan Reviewed?

The FAPT approves services in approximately 3 month increments*. If a family would like to request a continuation of services the case manager will need to request a FAPT review prior to the service end date for continuity of services. During that review the Team that initially agreed to the services would meet again to discuss what progress has occurred on the goals set forth in the IFSP.

*The Team will sometimes approve less than 3 months in order to review the case earlier to make sure that services are effective and that child/family is benefiting from these services.

What are the responsibilities that CSA has to me?

Most importantly, you have the right to understand the local CSA process:

- You should receive information on the local CSA process and timelines for receiving referrals
- Your FAPT needs to notify you before your child is assessed for services
- You should be able to understand the information you receive and it should be delivered in your preferred language, if possible
- You are to consent and agree in writing before beginning any services, except when ordered by the court
- You may have the opportunity to read records, challenge information, give permission for release of records and be provided a written copy of the records unless ordered otherwise by the court
- You have the ability to receive assistance from your Case Manager as well as members of your family, friends, advocates or support persons
- You will have the opportunity to review the assessment and service plan
- You can disagree with the assessment and service plan, or any part of the service plan, and you can place your concerns in writing to the FAPT and/or CPMT
- You have the right to participate and be present for the entire FAPT meeting and discuss your child and family strengths and needs and to participate in decisions that apply to you and your family

What happens if you don't agree with the FAPT's decision?

Once the FAPT has made a recommendation of services the services are written on the Individual and Family Service Plan (IFSP). That plan will be signed by all members present at the meeting. As the parent/guardian of the youth you will have the option of agreeing or disagreeing with the IFSP.

If you disagree with the FAPT recommendations you may submit a written letter of appeal no later than 10 days following the receipt of the FAPT decision. FAPT appeals are heard by the Stafford County Community Policy Management Team (CPMT). All letters of appeal should be submitted to:

Stafford County CPMT
c/o Stafford County Human Services Office
PO Box 339
Stafford, VA 22555

Fax number: 540-658-1097