



FaDSS Grantee Program Administration Manual

FY 2026



Introduction and Overview

This manual provides information on the administration of the FaDSS program at the grantee level. Local program administrators and supervisors should review their agency's most recent grant application, contract, and the FaDSS program manual to ensure compliance with all policies, procedures and requirements.

Program History

The FaDSS program was created during the 1988 General Assembly to assist families receiving Family Investment Program (FIP) cash benefits and experiencing significant barriers to reaching self-sufficiency. Over the years, the program has evolved and expanded to serve a wider population of low-income families in all 99 counties. Prior to July 1, 2023, the program was administered by the Iowa Department of Human Rights. Effective July 1, 2023, the program is now administered by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Roles and Responsibilities

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) contracts with 15 grantee agencies to provide FaDSS services statewide. The Iowa HHS Council has grantmaking authority for the FaDSS program. The program is administered by HHS in the Division of Family Well-being and Protection in the Early Intervention and Support subdivision.

Key Program Contacts

Shelley Horak, Early Intervention and Support Director is the contract owner for all FaDSS contracts.

Shelley.Horak@hhs.iowa.gov

Page Humphrey, Community Services Bureau Chief, supervises the HHS FaDSS program staff and is the contract manager for all FaDSS contracts. She is responsible for the oversight of the program including policy, contract and fiscal management.

Page.Humphrey@hhs.iowa.gov

FaDSS Program Managers are responsible for supporting the FaDSS program. Their roles include grantee monitoring and technical assistance. Elizabeth Melcher and Elizabeth Patten are the FaDSS program managers.

Elizabeth.Melcher@hhs.iowa.gov

Elizabeth.Patten@hhs.iowa.gov

Karen Wilson provides administrative support to the program.

Karen.Wilson@hhs.iowa.gov

Justin Niceswanger, Contract Specialist, assists with the management of FaDSS grantee contracts, including amendments and claims.

Justin.Niceswanger@hhs.iowa.gov

Resources and Reporting Requirements

HHS maintains a Contractor Resources webpage, which can only be located with the URL. This is where program materials, including this guide can be found.

- [FaDSS Program Webpage](#)
- [Contractor Resources Webpage](#)
- [FaDSS Coordinator Contact List](#)
- [FaDSS Program Manual](#)

Grantees are required to report information to HHS at various intervals throughout the year. In addition to regular reporting, any of the events listed below are required to be reported immediately upon becoming known:

- Security breaches at the grantee agency level
- Death of an enrolled family member
- Ethical violations
- Breaches of confidentiality
- Termination/departure of staff working in the program or with access to Iowa FaDSS
- Fraud, including home visit falsification

HHS may request after-action plans from the grantee agency for any of the events requiring immediate reporting.

Funding

Program Funding

The FaDSS program is funded with a combination of State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds. Grantee funding allocations are determined by HHS and approved by the HHS Council.

FaDSS is a community-based program. It is expected that the local community will support FaDSS through Other Support. Other Support is broken into three categories: 1) Local Funds; 2) Co-Funds; 3) In-Kind. Other Support is required to be reported to HHS

FaDSS grantees are encouraged to procure Other Supports for their local programs, including:

Local Funds

Cash funds restricted by donors for use in the FaDSS program. Examples include funds allocated by the County Board of Supervisors in support of the FaDSS program or funds donated by a local community member to be utilized for the general operation of the FaDSS program.

Co-Funds

Funding or services that the organization budgets for support of the FaDSS program. Examples include Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds utilized for operation of the FaDSS program, other county/state/federal/unrestricted funding that the organization allocates through a budgeting process to utilize for operation in the FaDSS program or time committed by employees of the organization that is not billed to the FaDSS program and not considered the indirect cost rate.

In-Kind

Contributions provided by a third party. These supports may be in the form of goods or services (other than cash) and come from outside the organization. These supports must directly benefit the program. Examples include goods such as computers, software, furniture, and office equipment; services such as meeting space, photocopy and mail services; expertise such as legal, tax or business advice, marketing, website development and strategic planning; or goods/services that benefit families such as emergency assistance for food, clothing or other household items. Grantees are required to submit anticipated and actual amounts of other supports using the Other Support form. Requests for this information are sent to grantees during the contract award and closure processes.

Current Funding Allocations & Capacity Assignments

Grantee Agency Name	Assigned Capacity	Funding
Four Oaks Family and Children's Services	216	\$1,090,586
Polk County Family Enrichment Center	210	\$1,050,478
Community Action of Eastern Iowa	135	\$666,944
West Central Community Action	95	\$501,793
Operation Threshold	81	\$404,324
Community Action of Southeast Iowa	76	\$357,213
Sieda Community Action	72	\$339,662
North Iowa Community Action Organization	62	\$314,377
Community Action Agency of Siouxland	61	\$310,542
Mid-Iowa Community Action	95	\$484,004
Upper Des Moines Opportunity	76	\$380,619
New Opportunities	42	\$230,000

Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation	42	\$230,000
Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc.	42	\$230,000
South Central Iowa Community Action Program	42	\$230,000

Grant Cycle & Awards

The current grant period extends three years. However, changes in administrative rules recently expanded the grant cycle from three years to five years at the discretion of HHS. Funding opportunities are posted on IowaGrants.gov and applications are submitted through that web-based system.

IowaGrants

HHS utilizes the www.iowaGrants.gov website to post funding opportunities and manage grants. The FaDSS program grant application is submitted through this website. Instructions for submitting grant applications are provided at the time of the notice of funding opportunity. IowaGrants External User Training can be [accessed here](#). The training includes an overview of navigating the IowaGrants system for external users including:

- Registration, Login and General Overview
- Application Process
- Grant Site Overview
- Claims Process
- Progress Reports
- How to Contact the IowaGrants Helpdesk

Work Plan Amendments

If during the program year, the grantee needs to make a substantive change to the program, a work plan amendment (WPA) may be requested. If changes to the work plan affect the current budget such that there will be an expected variance greater than 10% in any cost category of any funding line, it is expected that a budget amendment request and budget detail will accompany the request for work plan amendment.

Grantees can request a WPA by submitting a request through the Correspondence feature in the IowaGrant site or by emailing FaDSS@hhs.iowa.gov. WPAs are negotiated and approved in IowaGrants.

Fiscal Management

Funding allocations are determined by the HHS Council and subject to appropriation decisions made by the legislature. Each year HHS approves the funding allocated through the issuance of the grantee agency contract.

Monthly Expenditure Requests

Claims are submitted through IowaGrants. Claims must be submitted on a monthly basis by the 10th of the month following the period of reimbursement. The terms Reimbursement and Claims are synonymous in IowaGrants. Please view the IowaGrants External User training for step-by-step instructions for submitting monthly reimbursement claims.

Budget Amendments

Requests for budget amendments should be made at least one month prior to submission of expenditure report based upon the new budget. Budget amendments are negotiated and approved in IowaGrants. Grantees should use the Correspondence feature in the grant site to request a budget amendment or send an email request to FaDSS@hhs.iowa.gov. Once requested, the budget form in the grant site will be opened for negotiation. Once the grantee submits the negotiation, it will be reviewed and either approved or rejected with a request for more information.

Carry Forward Funds

Funding allocations are intended to be utilized in a 12-month contract period (July 1-June 30). Contract extensions for carry forward funds are no longer allowable.

Reduction of Funds

Grantees are expected to utilize their annual funding allotment within the contract period (July 1-June 30). However, staffing vacancies or other unplanned events may result in a grantee having excess funding. Iowa HHS reviews grantee expenditures and may initiate a budget amendment to reduce funding if the grantee is not utilizing funding in a timely manner. Grantee agencies can request a budget amendment to reduce funding if they anticipate not being able to fully spend their contract amount.

Other Supports Summary Reporting

The FaDSS [Other Supports Summary](#) is required to be submitted with the final claim of the program year. Any Other Supports utilized for FaDSS program operation must be reported to HHS. When completing the form, the standard rate for in-kind volunteers (unless they are providing a professional service, such as an attorney, accountant, or medical) in the state of Iowa is published annually at:

http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

Volunteer hours may be calculated at the published rate per person per hour.

Supervision Practice and Requirements

The FaDSS program has requirements for the supervision of families served in the program. The FaDSS program also has requirements that apply to the supervision of staff working in the program. Both are referred to as “supervision” but the next sections outline the requirements for each.

Family Supervision

FaDSS Coordinators are responsible for the oversight of their grantee agency FaDSS program. There are three main components required for providing supervision of families enrolled in the program. These requirements apply to all enrolled families, including families served by a FaDSS Coordinator/Supervisor. Supervision activities may only be performed by the individual(s) in the roles identified in the grant application.

File Reviews

File reviews are completed during the 6th month of enrollment and every six months thereafter for all enrolled families. The file will be reviewed the month following the family’s exit from the program. The State-provided [file review tool](#) must be used and documented in the family record. Supervisors are responsible for reviewing the initial eligibility determination during the sixth month file review. Every six months thereafter, the supervisor reviews the eligibility determination. If at any time, a family is found ineligible, the supervisor must review the determination to ensure accuracy. If a Lead Specialist or other staff member is completing file reviews, it is the responsibility of the designated supervisor to review their work and provide the feedback to Specialists. The file review checklist should be uploaded into the Documents tab of the family record or feedback on the findings from the file review should be documented in the Supervision tab of the family record.

Assessment of Program Continuation

During the month of eligibility review, the [Assessment of Program Continuation](#) may be utilized to determine whether the FaDSS program is effective and a good fit for the family. Families who are otherwise eligible may not be exited from the program unless the Assessment of Program Continuation has been completed and the family has been staffed by the FaDSS Coordinator and State staff. A summary of the Assessment of Program Continuation must be documented in the supervision tab of the family record.

Service Intensity

At minimum, service intensity is reviewed the third month of enrollment, the sixth month of enrollment and every six months thereafter. Documentation is maintained in the Supervision tab of the family record in Iowa FaDSS.

Supervision (Family Staffing)

Family staffing sessions occur in the third month of enrollment, the sixth month of enrollment and every six months thereafter, or more frequently if needed. The family staffing sessions include the Assessment of Program Continuation to guide the conversation and assess the family's progress in the program. Family staffing sessions should occur anytime service intensity is reviewed. Documenting supervision of families should be completed in the Supervision tab in the family record in Iowa FaDSS.

Staff Supervision

FaDSS supervisors are responsible for implementing the FaDSS Coaching framework through monthly individual meetings with each Specialist to set, review, or revise their goals using the supervision coaching tools. Documentation is maintained at the grantee level.

Each Specialist carrying a caseload must have a minimum of two home visit observations completed by their supervisor each fiscal year. Part-time Specialists carrying a partial caseload are still required to have two home visit observations each fiscal year. FaDSS Coordinators regularly carrying a caseload of less than three families are not required to have home visit observations conducted for their caseload. Supervisors should use the [FaDSS Home Visit Observation feedback tool](#) to document home visit observations completed and provide feedback to Specialists.

Supervisor Caseload

The grant application includes the approved plan for providing uninterrupted, high-quality services to families in the event of a Specialist or Coordinator vacancy. Changes to the vacancy plan require a work plan amendment. The staffing structure is outlined in the grant application. Changes to the staffing structure, including caseload sizes, requires a work plan amendment. Coordinators providing supervision of more than 3 Specialists are discouraged from carrying a regular caseload (other than during periods of staff vacancy). Grantees are encouraged to consult with State staff to discuss modifications to staff structure, assigned capacity, and caseload size.

Onboarding FaDSS Personnel

FaDSS grantee agencies are required to comply with the personnel training and onboarding requirements set forth in the FaDSS Program Manual. State-provided trainings can be found on the [FaDSS Contractor Resources webpage](#). Along with the State-provided trainings, Supervisors are responsible for providing training and support to ensure the professional development of skilled Family Development Specialists in the FaDSS program. All documentation of training should be maintained in personnel files and will be reviewed as part of the monitoring process. Supervisors are encouraged to use the [FaDSS Training & Onboarding Tracking tool](#) for this.

Prior to Hire

A background check must be completed prior to the start date of new FaDSS personnel and maintained in the personnel file.

Within First Month

Within one month of the date of hire, FaDSS personnel must receive the mandatory reporter notice. Documentation of the notice must be maintained in the personnel file. FaDSS Confidentiality and Code of Ethics trainings must be completed within the first month of the date of hire. The Confidentiality Knowledge Check is completed with the direct supervisor and additional training provided, as needed. The FaDSS Code of Ethics quiz is submitted to FaDSS@hhs.iowa.gov. After reviewing the quiz responses, State staff will either provide a certificate of completion to be maintained in the personnel file or require that the supervisor follow up with staff to provide additional training prior to issuing the certificate of completion.

Within Three Months

Within the first three months of the date of hire, all FaDSS personnel must complete training on the following topics. Pre-recorded trainings are available on the Contractor Resources webpage, although grantees may opt to provide additional training to staff at their discretion.

- Assessment tools
 - Relationship Assessment Tool
 - Ecomap
 - Timeline
- Goal setting in FaDSS
- Self-Sufficiency Matrix
- Overview of the Iowa FaDSS Case Management System
- Documentation in Iowa FaDSS
- Program Eligibility

Within Six Months

Within the first three months of the date of hire, all FaDSS personnel must complete the [Iowa HHS Mandatory Reporter Training](#). Certificate of completion will be maintained in personnel records. FaDSS personnel must recertify every three years.

FaDSS New Worker Training

State provided New Worker training is held twice a year in person and is required for all new staff. This hands-on training includes recruitment and engagement strategies, assessments, goal setting, documentation and conducting skill-building activities with families.

Family Development Specialist Certification

Within one year from the date of hire, all Specialists and those providing family record supervision are required to complete either [Family Development Specialist Certification](#) or [Family Support Professional Certification](#).

Family Development Specialist Certification training is the preferred training option for FaDSS personnel. Provided by the University of Iowa National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice, this training is offered in-person twice a year over four days. The [Family Support Professional Certificate](#) is an option for Specialists who have extensive experience in home visiting. This online, self-paced training is provided through the Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals.

Ongoing Annual Training

Each fiscal year, FaDSS personnel are required to participate in 10 hours of professional development training. Record of trainings and certificates of completion should be maintained in the employee's personnel record.

Supervisor Requirements

Qualifications

Individuals that supervise staff that provide direct family development services are qualified by:

- An advanced degree
- A bachelor's degree and two years of experience working in the health, human services, or education field
- An associate's degree and four years of experience working in the health human services, or education field
- Other combination of education and experience AND a waiver granted by State Staff
- Family Development Supervisor Training Certificate obtained within 2 years from the date of hire for individuals with fewer than 2 years supervisory experience

If a Supervisor does not have a degree, the grantee will complete the [FaDSS Supervision Requirements Waiver Request form](#) to outline the combination of education and experience for review by the State Staff. This waiver will be kept in the employee's personnel file.

In some instances, the individuals performing the supervision requirements outlined in this section may not be the direct supervisor of the Specialist(s). If they are not, the program supervisor is responsible for ensuring the quality, consistency and all required elements of the work performed.

Participation in Required FaDSS Program Activities

It is the expectation that Coordinators will participate in the four FaDSS Coordinator meetings scheduled throughout the year. These meetings are important times to get updates and training from State staff that will then be shared with Specialists and other agency personnel. If meetings are missed, Coordinators are responsible for following up with their State staff for information that was missed. Coordinators will also attend the regional and statewide IFDA training and encourage as many Specialists to attend as possible.

State staff will reach out to Coordinators to schedule the Quarterly Calls set for July, October, January and April. Prior to the meeting, Coordinators will provide their State staff with their Quarterly data report. This will assist State staff in preparing for the call so time can be spent during the meeting on grantees' current goals and priorities.

Attachments

- [Stepping Stones to Specialist Success](#)
- [Specialist Competencies Appendix](#)
- [Coordinator Competencies](#)
- [Organizational Self-Assessment](#)

Appendices

Appendix A: FaDSS Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan (CLIP)

Appendix B: FaDSS-PROMISE JOBS Collaboration Guidance

Appendix A: FaDSS Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan (CLIP)

Advancing learning, accountability, and impact across Iowa's FaDSS network

Purpose of the CLIP

The Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan (CLIP) is a practical and adaptable guide designed to help FaDSS program leaders strengthen the quality, effectiveness, and consistency of their local programs. It outlines a step-by-step approach for using data and evidence to inform decision-making, improve service delivery, and support better outcomes for families.

The CLIP helps programs answer key questions:

- *What's working?*
- *Where are we falling short?*
- *How do we improve over time?*

When implemented effectively, the CLIP fosters a culture of curiosity, accountability, and continuous growth. It is both a learning tool and a mechanism for shared accountability across the FaDSS network. Box 1 highlights key elements of this approach.

What is the CLIP?

The CLIP is a structured, statewide process that local FaDSS programs use to reflect on performance, identify strengths and gaps, and guide strategic improvements. Programs can use the CLIP to focus on specific components (e.g., service quality, staff development, family outcomes) or conduct a comprehensive review of overall program quality and effectiveness.

By using a common set of tools and approaches, the CLIP promotes consistency, transparency, and fairness in how programs

Box 1. What's new?

This approach builds on the strong foundation of FaDSS and introduces key shifts to strengthen learning, accountability, and performance:

- **More intentional use of data** to guide decision-making at all levels of the organization.
- **Refreshed tools**—such as the updated Stepping Stones framework and file review checklist—to support consistent and meaningful reflection.
- **Expanded peer-to-peer learning** opportunities that allow programs to share strategies, troubleshoot challenges, and learn from one another.
- **Stronger support systems** to help programs meet or exceed performance benchmarks through targeted guidance and capacity building.
- **Clear accountability structures**, incorporating supportive and corrective measures to address underperformance and drive continuous improvement.
- **Enhanced training and technical assistance** tailored to meet the evolving needs of FaDSS local staff and leadership.

across Iowa assess and improve their work. It enables comparison across programs, supports peer learning, and provides a shared language for evaluating impact.

Core questions that drive the CLIP

At the heart of the CLIP are four guiding questions. These anchor continuous improvement efforts and help programs align their strategies, data collection, and action planning:

- 1. Are families better off as a result of the FaDSS program?**
Do we have evidence that families are making progress toward greater stability, economic mobility, and well-being? Are they getting jobs and advancing in them? Are they decreasing their reliance on public assistance programs?
- 2. Are specialists providing high-quality services that support family goals?**
Are family development specialists building strong relationships, using effective practices, and tailoring support to each family's needs? Are they visiting families in their homes? Are they serving families holistically, including youth and children?
- 3. Are agencies supporting staff to be successful in their roles?**
Do coordinators and specialists receive the training, supervision, and tools they need to engage families and implement the model with fidelity? Are they consistently using the tools for professional development and growth?
- 4. Is the local FaDSS program operating as a strong, high-functioning organization?**
Are leadership, systems, and partnerships in place to support sustainable, high-quality service delivery? Are organizations well-functioning? Do they regularly use data to drive decision-making and continuously improve?

Key components of the CLIP

The CLIP is more than a compliance tool—it's a mindset. At its best, the CLIP helps FaDSS programs move beyond checking boxes to become growth-oriented organizations that continually evolve to meet the needs of families. It honors the complexity of human services work while offering structure and support for continuous improvement. Below are the key components of the CLIP.

- 1. Data collection and use.** Use reliable, relevant, and timely data to answer the four core questions. Include both quantitative indicators (e.g., outcome tracking, fidelity data) and qualitative insights (e.g., family voice, staff reflection).
- 2. Structured program reflection.** Conduct regular reflection sessions—ideally quarterly—to interpret data, identify bright spots, and surface areas for growth. Use the core questions as a discussion guide.

3. **Action planning.** Translate insights into concrete action steps. Assign responsibilities, timelines, and metrics for tracking progress. Prioritize actions that are feasible, equity-focused, and likely to improve family outcomes.
4. **Follow-up and learning loops.** Revisit action plans regularly to assess progress, adapt as needed, and share what's working across teams. Celebrate small wins and use challenges as learning opportunities.
5. **Capacity building.** Support ongoing staff learning through coaching, training, peer sharing, and leadership development. Continuous improvement requires skilled, reflective practitioners at every level.
6. **Accountability and support.** Use CLIP findings to guide conversations with state leaders, funders, and partners. Document progress and challenges transparently. The goal is to learn and grow together.

The CLIP process

The CLIP includes three structured, time-bound components that promote continuous learning, support, and accountability:

- **Quarterly performance monitoring.** Ongoing tracking of key performance indicators to promote data-driven decision-making and collective accountability.
- **Annual program self-assessment and state consultation.** A structured internal review of program quality and impact, followed by planning and consultation with state staff.
- **Tri-annual Model Fidelity Review.** A comprehensive, independent review conducted by the state every three years. This review replaces the annual self-assessment during the year it is conducted.



Quarterly performance monitoring

Purpose: To ensure local FaDSS programs are making progress toward key outcomes for families and meeting statewide performance expectations.

What it is: Each quarter, local programs collect and report data on a core set of performance measures. These data are shared with the state and discussed across the FaDSS network to foster shared learning and support continuous improvement.

How it works:

1. **Submit quarterly data.** Local programs collect data on required measures and submit results to the state on a quarterly basis. Programs are expected to meet

performance benchmarks for key indicators. Table 2 includes the key performance domains and measures used for ongoing reporting.

2. **Participate in quarterly performance review meetings with network.** Program coordinators participate in quarterly network-wide meetings to review the data, reflect on trends, share insights, and identify areas for improvement. These sessions encourage peer learning and mutual accountability.
3. **Hold peer-to-peer exchanges.** The FaDSS state team will match each program coordinator with two program coordinators in different service areas for peer-to-peer exchanges. We recommend holding meetings at least once a quarter with each coordinator.
4. **Meet with state FaDSS team.** Program coordinator meets with state staff to discuss their performance and potential training and technical support needs.

Accountability process for underperformance: To maintain the quality and integrity of the FaDSS network, programs that do not meet all essential benchmarks in a given quarter will be identified as underperforming. The state will initiate a tiered performance improvement process to offer support while holding programs accountable for progress (see Table 1).

At any point in the process, the FaDSS state team may request a focused review by an outside party, such as The Adjacent Possible, to assess the situation and recommend additional supports or interventions.

The goal of this process is to help local programs succeed—not penalize them. However, repeated failure to meet core expectations could result in loss of funding or removal from the FaDSS network to ensure families across Iowa receive high-quality services.

Table 1. How FaDSS state team will handle consistent underperformance

Consecutive quarter(s) of underperformance	People involved	Steps FaDSS state team will take with local program
1	Program coordinator	Review the data, identify contributing factors, and determine immediate steps for improvement
2	Program coordinator Coordinator's supervisor	Assess the situation more deeply and begin developing a formal improvement plan

3	Program coordinator Coordinator's supervisor Executive director	Review progress on the improvement plan and adjust strategies as needed
4	Program coordinator Coordinator's Supervisor Executive director HHS leadership	Explore whether continued underperformance warrants contract termination or other corrective actions



Annual program self-assessment and CLIP

Purpose: To support local FaDSS programs reflect on the quality of the services they provide, their impact on families, and to help guide strategic planning for the upcoming program year.

What it is: Each year (except in State Review years), programs complete an internal self-assessment that includes structured reflection, data analysis, and goal-setting. This process culminates in a consultation with the FaDSS state team to review findings and strengthen plans for continuous improvement.

How it works:

1. **Complete an internal quality review.** Programs complete a comprehensive internal review to assess program fidelity and quality that includes:
 - a. Organizational Self-Assessment (includes outcome measures)
 - b. 360-degree leadership review using the Leadership Framework
 - c. Specialist self-assessments using the Stepping Stones tool (completed jointly with supervisors)
 - d. Synthesis of qualitative insights from:
 - File reviews
 - Home visit observations
 - Feedback from community partners (e.g., PROMISE JOBS, LIHEAP, Head Start, Parents as Teachers); surveys or interviews
 - Other relevant information

2. **Analyze performance and outcome data.** Programs analyze and compile outcome data to assess their impact on participating families. See Table 2 for performance and outcome data.
3. **Hold internal planning session to create CLIP.** Program coordinators share findings with staff to make meaning of the data, identify strengths and gaps, and set priorities for the coming year. From this meeting, the team will generate an Annual CLIP for state review.
4. **Meet with state FaDSS team to discuss CLIP.** Program coordinators meet with state staff to present their findings, discuss improvement goals, and receive feedback or guidance on their Annual CLIP. They may also discuss the course corrections from previous years Tri-annual Model Fidelity Review.

Accountability process: To ensure alignment between internal reflection and external evaluation, the state will compare each program's self-assessment results with the findings from the most recent performance data. Gaps or disconnects between the two may indicate the need for:

- Targeted training and technical assistance
- Support to improve internal reflection practices
- Deeper follow-up during the next review cycle

This comparison helps ensure self-assessments are rigorous and meaningful—not just compliance exercises.

Note: Programs are not required to complete a self-assessment and consultation in any year when they undergo a tri-annual State Quality Review.



Tri-annual Model Fidelity Review

Purpose: To provide an independent, external assessment of local FaDSS program quality that promotes continuous improvement, identifies strengths and challenges, and ensures consistency across the state.

What it is: Every three years, the state conducts a formal review of each local FaDSS program using a standardized set of quality measures. This review replaces the annual self-assessment for that year.

How it works

1. **State FaDSS team, independent consultant, and peer reviewer conducts virtual and onsite assessment of program.** The state team evaluates program quality using multiple sources including:
 - a. Organizational Assessment
 - b. Case reviews (using updated checklist)
 - c. Home visit observations
 - d. Interviews with families
 - e. Stakeholder feedback (e.g., PROMISE JOBS, community partners)
 - f. Staff and leadership interviews
2. **Meet with assessment team to review results.** The state presents key findings to the local program, highlighting strengths and identifying areas for growth.
3. **Update existing or create new CLIP.** Program leaders share the findings with staff to support internal learning, guide strategic planning, and drive performance improvement.
4. **Meet with state FaDSS team to discuss CLIP.** Program coordinators meet with state staff to present their findings, discuss improvement goals, and receive feedback or guidance on their CLIP.

Accountability process: If concerns about program quality are identified during the review, the state FaDSS team may require the local program to develop and implement a **compliance or improvement plan**. The plan will include concrete steps, timelines, and benchmarks for resolving the identified issues.

Note: Programs do not have to complete an annual self-assessment in years when they are undergoing their Tri-Annual Review.

Table 2. FaDSS performance measures and benchmarks

Service engagement and targeted outcomes	Benchmarks
Specialists complete monthly home visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed 75% of visits in the home (families served) Engage membeapendirs of the family during the visit 25% of the time (families served)
Family members meet their and their families' basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60% of employed families with child care needs have addressed those needs (exited families) 55% of families who set a transportation goal show improvement in that domain (exited families) 30% of families who set a housing goal show improvement on the housing domain (exited families)
Family members are connected to specialized supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of adult family members with substantiated mental health concerns access treatment (exited families) 90% of adult family members with substantiated substance use disorder concerns access treatment (exited families) 90% of adult family members with substantiated chronic and acute physical illness access treatment (exited families) 90% of adult family members with substantiated instances of domestic violence access treatment (exited families)
Family members build skills necessary for work and life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% engaged in skill-building activities (e.g., parenting, financial skills, work preparedness) (families served)
Family members engage in activities to support healthy child development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60% of families with children 0-5 are enrolled in early childhood programs (exited families)
Family members build peer connections and professional networks (social capital)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45% of families have increased their support networks at exit (exited families)
Family members make progress toward career and educational goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of families have made progress on their goals (made progress in at least one area of the matrix)
Employment outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of those who exit have increased household income (exited families) 30% of those who exit have improved their employment (exited families)

Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50% of those enrolled in education or training completed it (exited families)
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Appendix B: FaDSS & PROMISE JOBS Collaboration Guidance



Overview

The Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) and PROMISE JOBS (PJ) programs have a long history of collaboration and partnership. Both programs provide valuable services and support to vulnerable families statewide. For families participating in both programs, communication and collaboration among staff are essential for providing effective, coordinated services.

Eligibility Benefits Specialists at the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) determine initial and ongoing eligibility for the Family Investment Program (FIP). Many families receiving FIP cash assistance are required to participate in the PROMISE JOBS program administered by Iowa Workforce Development through a contract with the Iowa HHS. Many, though not all, families enrolled in the FaDSS program receive Family Investment Program (FIP) cash assistance.

Because a data sharing agreement is in place, a release of information is not required for communication between the Eligibility Benefits Specialist, PJ Case Manager and FaDSS Specialist. All information shared must be used only for the purpose of administration of programs, services, or assistance to families.

FaDSS Expectations for Collaboration with PROMISE JOBS

As with other partner programs, FaDSS Specialists should collaborate with PJ staff to support and coordinate services for families participating in both programs.

When working with families who are also participating in PJ, Specialists must ensure specific actions are completed at the time of referral, enrollment, throughout service delivery and when exiting a family from the program.

Referral and Recruitment

Throughout the referral and recruitment process when the agency is not operating a waiting list for services, FaDSS personnel should:

- Respond to the referral source with the name and email address of the Specialist who will be recruiting the family within 7 business days
- Within a month of receiving the referral, notify PJ of the outcome of the recruitment process, including:
 - The family enrolled in FaDSS
 - The family declined services
 - The Specialist was unable to reach the family
 - The Specialist needs more time to recruit the family beyond one month including the rationale for extended recruitment
- For enrolled families, ensure that the family record includes a current Family Investment Agreement (FIA) listing FaDSS as an activity

When the agency is operating a waiting list for services, FaDSS personnel should:

- Acknowledge the receipt of the referral within 5 business days

- Inform PJ that the family is placed on a waiting list for services within 7 business days from the date the referral is received
- By the 10th of each month, HHS-FaDSS staff will send a list of all families referred by PROMISE JOBS who are on the FaDSS waiting list or in recruitment to the PJ general email address.
- When the family comes off the waiting list, notify PJ within 3 business days
 - Include the name and email address of the assigned Specialist who will be recruiting the family
- Within a month of the family coming off the waiting list, notify PJ of the outcome of the recruitment process, including:
 - The family enrolled in FaDSS
 - The family declined services
 - The Specialist was unable to reach the family
 - The Specialist needs more time to recruit the family beyond one month including the rationale for extended recruitment

Service Delivery

While a family is enrolled in FaDSS and participating in PROMISE JOBS, FaDSS personnel should collaborate with PJ staff as appropriate to benefit the family. Changes in address, contact information, assigned worker and other important updates should be shared with PJ staff. FaDSS personnel should:

- Make reasonable efforts to attend FIA appointments when invited by the PJ worker and/or the family. If unable to attend, the Specialist should document the reason in the family record. If not present at the meeting, the Specialist should follow up with the family and the PJ worker after the appointment.
- Communicate in a timely manner any important information that may benefit the family or have an impact on the family's FIA, including but not limited to:
 - Changes in family contact information
 - Changes in family employment status
 - Barriers impacting the family's ability to participate or fulfill the requirements of their FIA
 - Changes in eligibility status, including the start of the transition period
- Communicate any changes in FaDSS personnel such as:
 - If the family changes Specialists
 - If the family transfers to another FaDSS grantee

Program Exit

When a family has a planned or unplanned exit from FaDSS, FaDSS personnel should:

- Notify PJ of the anticipated exit date as early as possible
- Notify PJ of the family's exit from the program within 3 business days
- Communicate any aftercare plans that may be relevant to the success of the family

If a family stops receiving FIP or participating in PROMISE JOBS while enrolled in

FaDSS, the notice of exit from FaDSS is not required.

PROMISE JOBS Expectations for Collaboration with FaDSS

The FaDSS program gives priority of service to families receiving FIP. Participation in FaDSS is voluntary. When families participating in PJ are referred to or enrolled in FaDSS, PJ should collaborate with the FaDSS Specialist to support the family.

Referral

PROMISE JOBS may refer a family to FaDSS at any time, regardless of if the agency has a waiting list or not. PJ will email the referral to the appropriate agency's FaDSS Coordinator, (who will assign a specialist once recruitment begins) and include the following information:

- Referral date
- Family name(s)
- Case number
- State ID number(s)
- Address
- Phone number
- Email address
- Immediate needs or concerns, as appropriate
- The current FIA; if the FIA does not include FaDSS and the family enrolls in FaDSS, renegotiate the FIA to include FaDSS and send FaDSS a copy of the updated FIA.

Service Delivery

While a family is participating in PJ and enrolled in FaDSS, PJ Case Managers should:

- Invite FaDSS Specialists to attend FIA appointments by emailing a copy of the Notice of Appointment (NOA) or Clear Written Reminder (CWR), if applicable, to the FaDSS Specialist informing them of the appointment to meet with the customer.
- Communicate in a timely manner any important information that may benefit the family or have an impact on the family's FIA, including but not limited to:
 - Changes in family contact information (phone number, address, email)
 - Changes in family employment status
 - Barriers impacting the family's ability to fulfill the requirements of their FIA
 - Changes in FIP eligibility status, including Limited Benefit Plan
 - Notice of Decision for Family Self-Sufficiency Grant (FSSG)
- Communicate changes in PJ personnel such as a change in PJ Case Manager.

Program Exit

When a family's FIP cancels, resulting in cancellation of PJ services, the PJ Case Manager should notify FaDSS upon discovery of the FIP cancellation and provide the FIP cancellation reason, if known, as well as the FIP negative date. When a family's FIP is reinstated or reopened, and PJ participation resumes, the PJ Case Manager should notify FaDSS upon discovery.

Communication Best Practices

Information about a family should always be communicated in a nonjudgmental, factual and strength-based manner with a clear purpose of how the information being shared will benefit the family and impact their participation in the PJ or FaDSS programs. When possible, it is best practice to notify the family of the information being shared prior to sharing it. Encouraging families to communicate directly with their PJ Case Manager and FaDSS Specialist is important and may include joint communication to support the family in doing so. It is important to ensure that families are aware of how sharing information between the two programs will help support their success and impact their participation in PROMISE JOBS.

There may be circumstances in which a family requests that staff in one program not share information with another program. Except for notifications of program exit, the family's request must be honored.

Joint Staff Meetings

The FaDSS and PJ supervisors will collaborate to jointly facilitate quarterly team meetings. At their discretion, meetings may be conducted in-person or virtually. Both programs are responsible for contributing to the agenda topics and meeting logistics such as date and time, location, calendar invitations, etc.

Meetings may be conducted across multiple teams for more efficient collaboration. It is the responsibility of supervisors at the local level to determine which regions/service areas/program staff will meet with whom.

Joint Family Staffing Sessions

Conducting a joint family staffing session can be a good opportunity to strategize, identify resources and solutions, and align efforts to meet the needs of families participating in both the FaDSS and PJ programs. Joint family staffing sessions are not required but are encouraged to be utilized when doing so would benefit families served in both programs. If a joint family staffing session is conducted, it must be done so in accordance with the guidance set forth below.

Joint Staffing Session Logistics

Staff in either program may request a joint staffing session for a mutually served family. Requests should be made via email and include the FaDSS Specialist, FaDSS Supervisor, PJ Case Manager and PJ Supervisor. Program staff should collaborate at the local level to coordinate their schedules when a joint family staffing session is

requested. Typically, joint family staffing sessions last about 30 minutes and occur virtually, however, they may be conducted in person at the discretion of local staff.

Joint Staffing Session Participants

If a joint family staffing session occurs, the following staff in each program must participate:

- FaDSS Specialist serving the family
- PJ Case Manager serving the family
- FaDSS Supervisor
- PJ Supervisor

Additional partners and the family may be invited to participate, as appropriate. Staff are responsible for obtaining releases of information in accordance with confidentiality policies.

Conducting Joint Staffing Sessions

Supervisors will ensure that the following framework is utilized to provide structure to the sessions:

1. Overview of the session structure, reminders
 - a. Strength-based, solution-focused, relevant, aimed solely at helping the family reach their goals
2. Recap family strengths and progress made
3. Overview of the family's goals
 - a. How are both programs supporting the family's goals?
 - b. What activities can be implemented to support skill development and goal attainment?
 - c. What resources have been or could be provided to support the family?
4. Overview of the challenges the family is experiencing that may hinder progress towards their goals
5. Identify what each program needs from the other(s)
6. Other relevant information
7. Next steps

Information may only be shared in the sessions if it is relevant and will be used for the benefit of the family. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that gossiping, triangulation and confronting families does not occur as a result of the staffing session. At times, information may be shared during a staffing session that the family has not disclosed to one of the parties. It is important to remember that the family has the right to share personal information if and when they choose to do so. The information exchange must always occur with the sole intention of benefitting the family. Information may not be shared outside of the session without signed consent from the family.