

**To:** Child Justice Advocacy Center Supervisor  
**From:** FAR Consulting  
**Re:** Family Support Initiative Organizational Management Recommendations  
**Date:** January 29, 2024

### **Introduction**

The Family Support Initiative (FSI) is a pilot program spearheaded by Seattle's Child Justice Advocacy Center (SCJAC). Opening in 2016, the FSI provides families with legal, social work, and parent advocate support for issues affecting the safety and stability of children. The FSI's virtual staff includes Director Jennifer Clancy, an in-house social worker, a contracted attorney, and a contracted parent advocate. Clancy's authored FSI flow chart illustrates a high-level explanation of FSI case processes and staff responsibilities. However, staff struggle to obtain clarification from Clancy over more intricate questions regarding the FSI's reporting structure and other intraoffice decisions. This communication gap produces employees who await decisions, take initiatives without consulting other team members, and organize impromptu in-office meetings that unintentionally alienate other staff causing the FSI's high turnover. **If the FSI's leadership does not clarify role expectations and establish a direct reporting structure, employees' attempted process improvements will silo employee responsibilities, and a create disproportionate workload that contributes to turnover and negatively impacting FSI's ability to fulfill its mission.**

Turnover reduces organizational resources, prevents mission completion, and endangers the FSI's reputation. Without explicit role responsibilities, the FSI employees quarrel amidst overlapping processes, are reluctant to collaborate, and create unbalanced workloads that contribute to employee attrition. For example, the FSI's social work employee construes comforting families as her *social* duty and, in response, brings snacks to legal meetings. Simultaneously, the FSI's attorney believes she owns *legal* meetings and forbids snacks. This conflict results in their social worker departing from the FSI. In a separate scenario, the FSI staff excluded the involvement of their social worker in devising a procedural solution, thereby increasing the workload of the parent advocate, isolating the social worker, and ultimately resulting in the departure of both employees from the organization. **This memo provides solutions to clarify employee role responsibility and establish a direct reporting structure that reduces the FSI turnover.**

### **Proposal:**

In response to the challenges being faced by the FSI, we are proposing two recommendations to enhance organizational clarity and mitigate turnover rates:

- **Establishing Clear Role Responsibilities for Each Position:** Clearly outlining specific duties and ensuring a comprehensive understanding among staff about their individual roles as well as those of their team members alleviates unnecessary workloads, dispels confusion regarding responsibilities, and enhances the overall efficiency of the organization. This can be achieved by orchestrating comprehensive meetings where team members and management can collectively define role responsibilities. These documented sessions will encourage open discussions, ensure each member's perspective is considered, and foster a sense of accountability and clarity within the team. This proactive approach is designed to address current challenges and prevent similar issues from recurring.
- **Improving the Direct Reporting Structure:** Direct reporting encourages open communication by providing employees the opportunity to speak up, participate, and swiftly address concerns, preventing any further frustration that contributed to previous turnover. The updated direct reporting structure addresses role-related issues and empowers employees to contribute to organizational enhancements. This is achievable through the institution of

weekly meetings between employees and Clancy, fostering an environment where concerns related to current roles can be promptly identified and addressed.

### **Implementation Tactics:**

The future success of the FSI program is dependent on the Executive Director and staff's willingness to embrace change. First, Clancy must agree and implement organizational structure through the mechanisms described in the proposal. Second, the FSI staff must allow time to implement these changes and adapt to a new workflow. While Clancy acknowledges her failure to implement organizational structure in the initial stages of the pilot program, she has not recognized her lack of communication and presence. This has negatively impacted staff and created a culture that lacks trust. Clancy may continue to struggle with open communication and receptiveness to staff concerns as she becomes the direct report for her staff. Therefore, documenting and communicating clear role responsibilities, reestablishing the Executive Director as the direct report for staff, should be accomplished through an in-person meeting. All employees must agree and commit to open dialogue and organizational structure to improve outcomes.

Regarding the establishment of role responsibilities, Clancy should give the staff a finalized organizational chart detailing roles/duties and areas of focus along with a concise job description following the initial meeting. The organizational chart and job description will be available online ensuring all parties have access. This chart will provide an understanding of how staff fit into FSI's efforts and how their work affects the future success of the program. Any updates or relevant information will be shared to promote transparency and communication.

Pertaining to the improvement of the direct reporting structure, Clancy must schedule one-on-one weekly check-in meetings with staff to prevent duplicated or overlapping work, address concerns, and foster effective collaboration. For example, Clancy must ask staff: How is your current workload? Do you have any concerns or issues with the handoff of participants? What can I do to help you accomplish your goals? Communicating and supporting staff will be crucial in establishing an effective and efficient program.

### **Conclusion:**

The FSI grapples with challenges arising from unclear employee responsibilities and the absence of a direct reporting structure. Clearly delineating roles and implementing a direct reporting system addresses these issues. However, inherent risks can impede the success of the proposal: Clancy could refuse to facilitate direct reporting responsibilities. Additionally, Clancy may be resistant to staff ideas because of her limited capacity and varied responsibilities which would reinforce the FSI's segmented culture. This behavioral regression would continue the FSI's pattern of employee turnover and threaten the FSI's success.

Despite these risks, the benefits outweigh the proposal's potential challenges. *Clearly outlined roles* create enhanced organizational clarity, reduced role conflict, and a more balanced workload. This contributes to staff retention and fosters a healthier organizational culture where employees value each other's input and collaborate effectively. The proposed *direct reporting structure* provides a dedicated platform for open communication, allowing team members to voice concerns and actively contribute to organizational improvements. Embracing these recommendations creates an efficient, transparent, and harmonious work environment that contributes to the long-term success of the Family Support Initiative.

### **References:**

*Switch, How to Change Things When Change is Hard* (Heath & Heath): This article influenced our recommendations for the adoptive challenges in the personal management situation. The article states, "For anything to change, someone has to start acting differently." Clancy continued working with the same management style and processes even though the staff turnover was a clear sign of issues stemming from a lack of organizational structure. The question posed in this article is, "Can you get people to start behaving in a new way? Clancy must address staff retention, work culture, and onboarding that outlines role responsibilities. She is not sure how to address the problem, because she has not acknowledged her ineffective management skills. The article mentions teams will have understanding without motivation if you reach the rider and not the elephant. The role responsibilities can be outlined, and the staff can understand their role, but without effective management the process will not be successful.

*Motivating Employees in a New Governance Era: The Performance Paradigm Revisited* (Perry, James, Debra Mesch, and Laurie Paarlberg):

The proposed solutions for the Family Support Initiative's challenges align with the reading's emphasis on the positive impact of employee participation. By establishing clear roles and responsibilities through collaborative meetings and implementing a direct reporting structure, our proposals aim to create a work environment where employees feel valued and involved in organizational processes. This resonates with the passage's statement that shared decision-making leads to higher satisfaction and commitment in the workplace. Overall, both the proposal and passage highlight the importance of fostering open communication and giving employees a platform to contribute for enhanced organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

*Organizing Groups and Teams* (Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal):

The FSI's practice of unsuccessfully conferring with Clancy over task or process decisions is emblematic of one-boss structure failures described in the text: an overloaded boss produces delays or bad decisions and subordinates quickly become frustrated with directives that are late or out of touch. Because FSI's staff only have broadly defined responsibilities and do not have clarification of more intricate tasks, we utilize the text to capitalize on the successful traits of the one-boss structure in our proposal: creating clear expectations, basic structures, defined roles, and are interdependency.