

The following information is intended to give basic information about **The Children's Services Act (CSA)**, formerly called **The Comprehensive Services Act for At-Risk Youth and Families**. The [Children's Services Act](#) is a Virginia law passed in 1993. The law provides funds to pay for services for eligible children and youth who have **serious emotional and/or behavioral challenges and who meet specific eligibility criteria**.

What is the Purpose of CSA?

The purpose of the CSA is to:

- Create services to meet the needs of individual youth and families.
- Increase interagency collaboration and family involvement in service delivery.
- Preserve and strengthen families.
- Provide services in the least restrictive environment while protecting the welfare of children and youth consistent with public safety.

What Type of Services Could the CSA fund?

The CSA funds a variety of services that focus on the needs of the individual child and the family. The services are community-based whenever possible, or may be residential when needed, and should be developed in partnership with the child and family. The services may be provided through public agencies such as mental health, social services, schools, and court services, or they may be available from private service providers.

Some examples of individualized services could include substance abuse counseling, mental health counseling, respite care, psychological evaluations, transportation services, home-based therapy, family counseling, parent training, therapeutic foster care, job coaching, recreation, and educational placement.

Who is Eligible to Receive Services under the CSA?

- Children and youth who require placement in a private school for special education, as determined by their Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Youth who are in foster care or eligible for foster care prevention services.
- Youth who are eligible for services through a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) Parental Agreement.
- Youth who have or are at risk of significant emotional or behavioral problems who require services from more than one agency or are at risk of residential placement.

How can my Family get Help from the CSA?

You may get help by contacting either your local school, Community Services Board, local Health department, Juvenile and Family Court Services, or local Social Services department. Tell them your situation and ask for a referral to the **Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT)**. You may also contact your [local CSA](#) office. If someone in your family is already receiving services from one of the agencies listed above, contact someone at the agency and tell them what you think your child and family need. Every community refers families to a FAPT differently. Any agency mentioned above will tell you how things work in your community.

Who is the FAPT Team?

The FAPT Team is a group that helps assess the strengths and needs of individual youth and families. Then together with the family, they decide what services to recommend, prepare a plan, and monitor the plan's progress. The FAPT team includes staff from local community services boards, court service units, department of social services, public schools, and private providers. Your family, your child if appropriate and your case manager, if you have one, are part of the team. Other service providers who know your child may attend along with friends or family advocates you invite. Some of these of these teams have a different name and may include other people.

What's in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)?

Each FAPT member knows of services available in his own agency or in your community that may meet the needs of your family. The parent/guardian is a FAPT member and provides valuable information about the child and family. FAPT members share ideas and suggestions. This sharing of ideas takes time; but results in a plan that should meet the needs of your family. Once your team has agreed on the needed services, the information is written in an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The family must sign the plan in order for it to be implemented and can ask for a review if they disagree with the plan. The IFSP will include:

- Who will receive services;
- What services are needed;
- Why they are needed;
- When these services will be provided;
- How long they will last; and
- What the costs of the services are.

Family Participation is Required by Law

Families play an active role in developing all aspects of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

- Families are consulted each step of the way during assessments, planning and implementation of the plan.
- Families share their knowledge to help teams understand what the best way to meet their child's and family's needs.
- Each [FAPT Team](#) is required to have a member who is a parent and who brings the parent and family perspective to the team.
- Every service plan developed by the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) must have the approval of the parent(s) before it is carried out unless a court of law orders the service.

Who Pays for CSA Services?

The state pays for the majority of CSA services through the state funds. Local governments also contribute matching funds to pay for services in their community. Parents or other responsible persons contribute to the cost of CSA services based on income and other factors. You cannot be denied services due to an inability to pay.



A Little Family-to-Family Advice on Attending your First FAPT Team Meeting

This advice is excerpted from information provided by the Alexandria Community Policy Management Team.

Often families do not know what to expect when they are first notified that their child is scheduled for a Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) meeting. The following information by families who have been through the FAPT process will help you and your child prepare for your first FAPT meeting.

Q: Why do I have to go to a FAPT meeting?

A: Children have better outcomes if agencies and families work together to develop a plan of services for the child. FAPT is a way for everyone to be at the same table to share ideas and make a plan.

Q: What sort of help is available through a plan for service?

A: Many types of help are available. They could include mental health counseling, transportation, substance abuse treatment, education, recreation, in-home counseling, and a variety of other services as needed by your family.

Q: Do all children go to the FAPT?

A: No, only children who may need CSA funded services or who may benefit from the expertise of the FAPT. Many times, if you child or family is involved with two or more agencies and current services are not accomplishing the outcomes that are hoped for, this may result in a referral to the CSA program (FAPT).

Q: How was my family referred to FAPT?

A: Referrals can come from many sources. You can refer your child/family. The school, a case manager, a social service worker may also see the need for additional services and ask your permission to have a FAPT meeting.

Q: What happens at a FAPT meeting?

A: You (the parent/guardian), your child (if he or she attends), and the other FAPT members (agency representatives) work together to build the best service plan for your child. You are an important part of that process and provide valuable input.

Q: Why do so many people come?

A: In order to have as many ideas as possible and to be sure that all available services are known in preparing a comprehensive service plan for your child, staff from different agencies need to be present.

Q: Can I bring anyone with me?

A: Yes! Bring a family member, friend, minister, family advocate, lawyer, or anyone else for support. It is courteous to let your case manager of the CSA Coordinator know who you may be bringing.

Q: What should I do to prepare?

A: Write down your thoughts, concerns, and questions. If you have an advocate, use him/her as a sounding board. Think of your child's and your family's strengths. Write them down. Some families bring notebooks with family histories, assessments, and school records. Other families bring a blank notebook to write notes in. Remember that you are an equal partner in the decision-making process and what you know about your child and family is important information in the development of a service plan.

Q: Will my child's situation be discussed in detail?

A: Yes, it is necessary to discuss your child's situation in detail to prepare a proper service plan. All information discussed at the meeting is confidential.

Q: How should I dress?

A: Dress like you are going to an important meeting. Many FAPT members are in business clothes.

Q: What is most important to know before the FAPT meeting?

A: It is important to have an open mind. FAPT members can have excellent ideas about how to help your child. They are likely to know of help you did not know you could access. Their job is to create the very best plan for your child. They are on your side.

Q: What is my role in the meeting?

A: You are an equal member in the decision-making process. The meeting is an exchange of ideas among you, your child, and the FAPT. Keep an open mind about new ideas and services. Don't be afraid to participate. Tell the FAPT, "*This is the way my child is,*" "*This is what my child does.*" Ask questions! Make suggestions! If you don't believe a service plan will work, say so! You know your child best and what is likely to work.

Q: What kinds of questions will the FAPT ask me?

A: The FAPT may need to know details of your family situation to properly plan services. If you feel the questions are too personal, please let the FAPT know that the questions are difficult for you to answer at that time - your case manager may be able to speak with you at a different time about those particular questions.

Q: What kinds of questions will the FAPT ask my child if she comes to the meeting?

A: If the child is old enough, let him/her speak about his/her needs and what things might help meet those needs. Before going to the FAPT meeting, ask your child what he/she really wants. Include your child as a participant at the FAPT meeting. While the service plan is being developed, encourage your child to comment on it. Your child will be more willing to accept the service plan if he/she feels included in the decision-making. Tell your child to be open and honest. After all, this service plan is being developed to help your child be successful.

Q: Do I need to bring any records to the meeting?

A: The FAPT will have records, and your case manager should supply you with copies in advance of your meeting. Should your case manager fail to supply you with copies, be sure to ask for them! Bring anything you believe will help in developing your child's service plan at the FAPT meeting.

Q: Will a service plan for my child be developed at the FAPT meeting?

A: Yes. Don't feel rushed in the process of discussing and developing your child's service plan. You will be asked to review the finalized service plan and asked to sign it. Carefully study your service plan at the table before signing it! Be sure to take a copy of this service plan - don't leave without it.

Q: Can my child's service plan be changed after I agree to it?

A: Yes. If your child's service plan doesn't seem to be working, tell your case manager promptly. Changes and adjustments can be made! You will be amazed at some of the solutions the FAPT can come up with.

Q: If I don't have transportation or directions to the FAPT meeting will someone assist me?

A: Yes, if needed, your FAPT case manager will provide transportation and/or directions. Let your case manager know in advance.

This is a lot of information! Remember, always feel free to discuss any questions you may have with your case manager or family advocate. Help is available! Don't be afraid to ask.

