

# New York FAR Quarterly

New York Family Assessment Response (FAR) Quarterly



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## Quality Assurance Review in Queens: Thoughts & Feedback from the Participants

Interviews collected by Lara Bruce, MSW, Butler Institute for Families

In January, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Butler Institute for Families, and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) in New York City hosted a family assessment response (FAR) quality assurance (QA) case documentation review. Several members of the Queens Borough Zone B FAR team, ACS, the New York City Regional Office (NYCRO), Albany Home Office, and the Butler Institute for Families comprised the review teams that examined 39 FAR cases from the first year of the implementation of FAR in the Queens Borough. While the findings are not yet available, the reviewers had several thoughts about the review process, what they learned, and what they will take back to their teams based on their experiences.

Here's what Adefunke Oyede, Child Protective Specialist Supervisor Level 1, and Dorett Graham, Deputy Director of Field Operations in Queens Borough, Zone B, had to say:

**Q: What do you think is the most important piece of the quality assurance case documentation (QA) process that others should know about?**

*Reviewer 1: Others should know about the engagement process, particularly when it comes to introducing the FLAG and sharing the outcome of the FLAG as it relates to the family measurable progress. Significant to this question is for staff to identify who completed the FLAG. The latter gives a clear picture of the family's*

*understanding of the situation and begin to develop a plan of action to make changes.*

*Reviewer 2: Also, the questions on the FAR Documentation Review Instrument serve as a solid base for the engagement process, in that it pulls from all areas (cause of concern, change needed, level of commitment, etc.) of discipline and, if done well, the reviewer has a good picture of the family situation and how the process evolved.*

**Q: What were some of the key takeaways for you and your practice as a result of your participation in the QA process?**

*Reviewer 2: The knowledge of what needs to take place before the seven-day assessment is completed; specifically, the importance of contact with the out-of-home parent within the same time period.\**

\*While it is a legal requirement that an out-of-home parent receive notification letters regarding the receipt of FAR services, it is not a requirement that they be contacted during the seven-day safety assessment, unless they have substantial contact with the children and a full safety assessment cannot be completed without assessing what, if any, danger they present to the children. However, contact with the out-of-household parent is an important element of FAR practice and should be considered in the early phases of a FAR case, where applicable.

*Reviewer 1: The importance of the key language used during the engagement phase that is reflected in the documentation. Communication between*

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the FAR supervisors and workers should also reflect the appropriate language.

**Reviewer 2:** I also learned that in some cases it is okay for the FAR process to be worker-led; and making inquiry into whether or not children are visiting with their father who lives at another location.

**Reviewer 1:** Discussions should be taking place not only around the introduction of the FLAG, but also around the outcome as it relates to family progress and where improvement is needed.

**Q: What information will you bring back to your team from your experiences?**

**Reviewer 1:** I printed the review questions and shared them with my unit and the supervisors in the area, because I believe if we follow the framework (as laid out in the FAR Documentation Review Instrument) and know what is expected of us, we cannot go wrong—we can only improve.

**Reviewer 2:** Taking credit for the work you do through documentation and having a record of pertinent documents in the case file provide a solid base on which consensus can be easily reached.

**Q: Did this look at your Zone B FAR work change any expectations you had for FAR in Queens?**

**Reviewer 1:** No, because I know we make sure we are doing the right things (following procedure) and the results of what we have done are what we expected. Also, knowing that we are on the right track (based on the preliminary outcome of the review) we can only improve and get better.

In addition, our expectation around the implementation of FAR NYC has always been solid. Having completed several safety checks with mostly positive outcomes (no child was found to be in imminent danger of harm), we remain optimistic and encouraged to proceed with the implementation of FAR NYC.

## Winners of the Crucial Conversations Giveaway!

Congratulations to the four winners of the *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High* book by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler:

Alexandra Zubizarreta, Suffolk County DSS

Kelly Hurlbut (Sova), Oswego County DSS

Paige Rispoli, Orange County DSS

Patti Cuff, Cayuga County DSS



## Now Available: Final Evaluation Reports from the Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in CPS!

In 2008 the Children's Bureau funded the National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in Child Protective Services (QIC-DR). Three states (Illinois, Ohio, and Colorado) were selected to receive funding to evaluate the effectiveness of Differential Response. Here are the just-released findings in common across the sites for families receiving Differential Response services versus traditional child welfare services:

- No decrease in safety compared to families with traditional investigations
- More face-to-face and telephone contacts
- More services, more quickly, with an emphasis on mental health and concrete services
- Families very satisfied with services and more likely to request help in the future
- Higher initial cost, but lower cost over time

**READ THE FULL FINDINGS FROM EACH SITE:**

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/medicalschoo/department/pediatrics/subs/can/QIC-DR/Pages/QIC-DR.aspx>

# In Memory of a Member of the NY FAR Family: Teresa Ilinitch



Teresa Ilinitch

As many of you have already heard, in January, Teresa Ilinitch, one of the Butler Institute’s FAR contract trainers and a dear friend, passed away quietly in her sleep. She had been an active FAR trainer and coach for several years and will be deeply missed. She loved working in New York and was looking forward to her continued relationship with those of you she felt “sympatico” with after sharing your work so intimately. She told us many times how impressed she was with your ability to take a hard look at your agency’s struggles and come out on the upside of that exploration. She really loved FAR in New York and in her home state of North Carolina.

We know that many of you enjoyed Teresa’s wisdom, humor, and insight in her coaching role with your FAR teams. Below are some of the thoughts and experiences a few of you have offered to share.

*We have vivid memories of Teresa, as she and Brenda [Lockwood] spent a number of days with us coaching us. We are so sorry to know that she passed. On behalf of all of us at Rockland County FAR, we express our sincere condolences to her family and friends. She was a wonderful coach, full of experience and readiness to help. Our interactions with her are still fresh in our memory. We cherish the time we spent with her and these photos will enable us to remember her.*

-P.T. Thomas, FAR Supervisor,  
Rockland County DSS

*We had a very positive relationship with Teresa and wish her family and her co-workers all the love and peace at this sad time. She will be missed.*

- Paula Ross, FAR Supervisor,  
Rockland County DSS

*I am so sorry to hear Teresa passed away. We very much enjoyed working with her and will miss her enthusiasm and wonderful insight.*

- Diane Wilby, Deputy Commissioner,  
Director of Services,  
St. Lawrence County DSS



*Sprained Ankle: Even when life was throwing her lemons, Teresa was always smiling!*

*Teresa was a dear friend and colleague for almost 15 years. I cannot express the depth of my sorrow over losing her. She was vivacious, kind-hearted, and encouraging. It will be our honor and responsibility to carry her spirit forward and remain connected to the gifts she shared.*

- Leslie Wilmot, Director,  
Family Assessment Response,  
Butler Institute for Families

Teresa’s family and friends gathered on Saturday, March 1 to hold “A Celebration of Life” in honor of Teresa’s “Life of Light.” For more information please contact Lara Bruce, lara.bruce@du.edu, or 303-871-4509.



Teresa (seated center) and the Rockland County FAR team during a coaching opportunity.

**On behalf of Teresa’s family:**  
*We have been truly touched by your love, comforted by your words, and are grateful for every sentiment. She loved you all and each of you are instrumental in carrying her light onward.*  
**-Mara (Teresa’s daughter)**

## FAR Research & Practice Highlights

With the increasing amount of relevant information and research available related to the implementation of family assessment response (FAR) in the State of New York and around the country, it is often challenging to keep up. This new *FAR Research and Practice Highlights* segment in each of the upcoming FAR newsletters is intended to provide you with a summary of the latest information and research available. Hopefully, these summaries will provide you with an overview of research findings, conclusions drawn, recommendations, and next steps. A link to the full article will be provided, when possible.

*“Our own patterns of behavior are so automatic that we are not aware that they are patterns at all.”*

### PARTICIPANTS

Phase 1 of the study was conducted over six years and involved 32 children in a midwestern, suburban university community, 16 white and 16 African American children, ages eight to ten, and their families.

Phase 2 involved two groups of children: one from a predominately white metropolitan working-class neighborhood school, which drew nearly half of its students from a nearby all-black housing project, and another from a suburban neighborhood that was 90 percent white, and 10 percent black middle-class children.

In Phase 3, observations of 12 children from the Phase 2 sites were conducted in their homes. The inclusion of a third phase allowed for the addition of new themes that emerged from the field observations in Phase 2.

### FINDINGS

Lareau identified two categories of parental functioning as being present in identified class groups. One is **“concerted cultivation,”** a name she coined to describe the extensively involved type of parenting that middle-class parents demonstrate, one that encourages an “emerging sense of entitlement” in their children.

The second is **“accomplishment of natural growth,”** a term coined to describe the working class parent’s belief that as they provide love, food, and safety, their children grow and thrive. This strategy does not focus on

## Invisible Inequality: Social Class & Child Rearing in Black Families & White Families

Summarized by Jeanne Ferguson, FAR Manager, Butler Institute for Families

**Citation:** Lareau, A. (2002). *Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. American Sociological Review, 67, 747-776.*

### INTRODUCTION

I was in Ulster County where we had a lively discussion about the differences in parenting style and social assumptions based on class that affect our work with families. I was reminded of this research and shared some of it with their family assessment response (FAR) team. This article is a fascinating presentation of the parenting differences seen in families based on race and class.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Annette Lareau [Department of Sociology, Temple University] sought to:

1. Explore how familial beliefs and values are transmitted to children. Her hypotheses were that social class does indeed create distinctive parenting styles and that parents differ by class in the ways they define their own roles in their children’s lives, as well as in how they perceive the nature of childhood.
2. Create “conceptual umbrellas” that might be useful in making comparisons across race and class and for “assessing the role of social structural location in shaping daily life” (p. 749).

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developing the special talents of each child that middle-class parents seem to emphasize, but relies on developing self-reliance in their children so they can negotiate their own life paths successfully.

She describes these behaviors and activities as “dominat[ing] the rhythms of family life” (p. 752). Not surprisingly, while each of these three elements in daily living was so crucial, the families themselves rarely mentioned any of them: “Our own patterns of behavior are so automatic that we are not aware that they are patterns at all.” In order to explicate the way these characteristics of family life contributed to the development of individual children and the shape of their lives, she presents two specific children: *Alexander*, and *Harold*.

*Alexander’s parents were identified as depicting “concerted cultivation.” Alexander was involved, through his parents’ arrangements, in music, church, athletics, and academics. He interacted extensively with his parents verbally, with his parents seeking his opinions and providing reinforcement, and encouragement for his unique ideas and contributions to conversation.*

Both parents spent considerable amounts of their time supporting and facilitating his participation in all of the organized activities that are typical of middle or upper-class children in the U.S. They explained this investment of time, interaction, and money in their son as being a sort of insurance

that he would have the best possible opportunity to have “a happy and productive life” (p.757). Alexander’s parents did not invest a great deal of time in cultivating the support of extended family, although there were numerous family members nearby.

*Harold’s parents were receiving public assistance, and everyone in the family was acutely aware of their lack of money. His mother did not see her son’s opinions as important, therefore she did not feel they needed to be cultivated and developed through daily conversations. She saw her role in raising her children as that of an adult, whereas the children were seen as children who were expected to take directions from adults. Harold’s mom sent him out into the world (the neighborhood and school) and expected him to handle himself in ways that would teach him how to survive, and yet provide safety. The extended family network was seen as very important and trustworthy, so the time Harold spent with his friends and relatives was seen as stimulating and safe.*

Lareau concludes that “race is less important than class in shaping childrearing patterns” (p.753). The observations and interviews in this cohort of subjects revealed that while “in the broader society, key aspects of daily life were shaped by racial segregation and discrimination” (p. 760), the most significant differences between the families were defined by class, not race.

Lareau identified three aspects of family life that she felt could be seen to portray the distinct characteristics of each family approach to parenting:

1. Organization of daily life
2. The use of language
3. Social connections



One striking measure of how families differed in the construction of their lives was the number of organized activities children engaged in: 4.9 current activities for middle-class children, 2.5 activities for working-class children, and 1.5 activities for poor children. When race was included, “black middle-class children had slightly more activities than white middle-class children, largely connected to more church involvement, with an average of 5.2 activities compared with 4.6 for whites” (p. 761). Additional research (Hofferth and Sandberg, 2001a, 2000b) suggests that as a parent’s education increases, the number of activities per child increases as well.

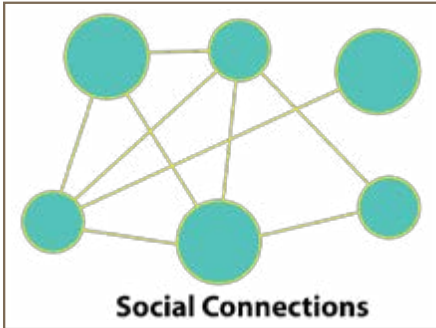


This study found that middle-class parents spent a tremendous amount of time and emphasis on reasoning and reinforcement of their children’s views. Working-class and poor parents spend much less time on developing their children’s opinions about the world. They tended to use “firm directives

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and they expected prompt, positive responses.” Their children are given the basics of life, (e.g., food, comfort, shelter) and are trusted to learn from their experiences in both their internal and external environments how to make their way in the world (p. 764).



Relative to the social relationships of these children with other children or with adults, Lareau found that the presumed positive adult-organized activities that middle-class children were so involved in led to weak social ties. The range and extent of their frequent activities limited how much time they were able to spend with extended family, and the social connections they did make within the activity-related peer groups often discontinued when the activities were over.

The parents of middle-class children established weak ties with social peers as well. In contrast, working-class and poor families were much more likely to see or speak with extended family daily. Similarly, interactions with police, courts, schools, and other governmental agencies were shaped by social class as well. Even though they weren't asked directly, members of both white and black working-class and poor families

offered negative comments about these types of official resources, indicating their level of trust was low. They cited fear as a dominant reason for their feelings of mistrust of these officials. They described worrying about authorities who would “come and take our kids away” (p.765). Significantly, Lareau noted that “no middle-class parents mentioned similar fears about the power of dominant institutions.” Lareau also discusses the apparent consequences to the children’s perceptions of their lives, based on the parenting styles they experienced. For middle-class children, what was seen was an emerging sense of entitlement resulting in an ability to interact with adults in way that seemed to reveal an expectation of accommodation by systems (teachers, doctors, etc.) so they could have things their way. Working-class and poor children, by contrast, demonstrated an emerging sense of constraint, one that showed up as an increasingly predictable disinterest in interacting assertively with adults in positions of authority. They observed their parents to be cautious and less assertive, less verbal, and asking fewer questions of professionals who had power over them.

Consequently, the children replicated the parents’ reticence in engaging with school staff, for example, and were less likely than their middle-class counterparts to try to influence their environments. Lareau noted that this behavior of working-class and poor parents with professionals was not observed in every sphere of their lives, so it does not follow that this passivity is a

dominant characteristic.

## CONCLUSION

In presenting the most compelling findings of this research, Lareau suggests that “it is the interweaving of life experiences and resources, including parents’ economic resources, occupational conditions and educational background, that appears to be most important in leading middle-class parents to engage in concerted cultivation and working class and poor parents to engage in the accomplishment of natural growth” (p. 772). She goes on to conclude that the evidence of this study does suggest that class position influences critical aspects of family life: time use, language use, and kinship ties. She also concludes that there are reasons for the development and effectiveness of each parenting strategy that reinforce the continuation of childrearing patterns based on the realities of life.

This research resulted in an expanded understanding of how class influences the way families interact with powerful systems, such as Child Protective Services. It is useful for us to understand not only how families perceive the power that we represent, but why it may be logical and reasonable for them to do so in order to maintain the integrity of their families.



## Write for the FAR Quarterly!

- *Have you had a crucial conversation with a family in FAR or a co-worker?*
- *Have you used the 3 Houses, Wizards and Fairies, or other FAR tool with children or youth you are working with?*
- *Do you have a promising practice you want to share with other counties?*

Contact Missy Berglund, [Missy.Berglund@du.edu](mailto:Missy.Berglund@du.edu) or 303-871-3836, for more information or to submit your story today!