

STAR  
SUCCESS  
THROUGH  
ADDICTION  
RECOVERY

Family Intervention Court

Participant Handbook



## **WELCOME**

Welcome to the Family Intervention Court (FIC), a component of the Harris County Success Through Addiction Recovery (STAR) program.

We recognize that if you are reading these words, things are not going too well for you right now. You have either had your children taken away from you, or you are facing a jail sentence for failure to comply with court orders. Regardless of the exact nature of your situation, one thing is certain – you have a problem with alcohol, drugs, or (most likely) both, and that is the reason you are where you are. Believe it or not, you couldn't be in a better place. The FIC is going to help you get your life back.

This handbook is designed to give you all the information you need to successfully participate in this program. However, no written guide can possibly answer every question. Please ask any FIC team member at any time if you are uncertain regarding program rules, policies, or any other matter related to drug court. There is no such thing as a dumb question; this is your life, and you are responsible to know what is going on.

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Family Intervention Court is to effectively provide for the safety and welfare of children by optimizing opportunities for the recovery and healing of substance abusing parents via early intervention, education, and treatment using a collaborative, multi-disciplinary, and judicially supervised approach to the entire family which balances understanding with accountability.

## **OVERVIEW**

### *Your Responsibilities*

Family Intervention Court is a long-term, judicially supervised program designed to assist you in your recovery from addiction. Although you as the parent are the main target of the interventions, the determining factor in **all** FIC decisions is what is in the best interest of the children. We hope, and will work very hard to ensure, that this includes your involvement in your child's life; however, this is up to you.

You will be referred to treatment programs based on the severity of your addiction and your current social situation (employment, housing, transportation, etc.). Active participation in all treatment activities is mandatory. Just showing up is not enough (although that is also required); you must participate in groups, complete all outside treatment assignments, and fully follow your treatment plan. Treatment length can be from 6 to 9 months, the biggest portion of which will be outpatient treatment. (Please see the Phase Description below.)

In addition to formal treatment, you are required to attend self-help recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and/or Narcotics Anonymous. Just as with treatment, just showing up at meetings is not enough. You are expected to learn and use the skills these groups teach; this includes getting and working with a sponsor. This activity will continue throughout your involvement in FIC, and hopefully afterwards as well.



You will participate in the development of a formal service plan based on your needs. This may include detailed assessments in the areas of education, job skills, social skills, physical health, parenting skills, and psychological functioning. Referrals to appropriate programs to provide assistance in identified areas will be provided so that you can effectively provide emotional, psychological, physical, and economic support for your self and your family. You are expected to make full use of all program referrals.

You will be held strictly accountable for your participation. That means that when you do well, you will be given full credit for your accomplishments. It also means that when you do not follow program rules you will be held fully responsible. To monitor your progress, you are subject to random alcohol and drug testing. You will also make regular court appearances to report on your progress. (See Phase Description below for how often you are expected to come to court.)

This is a brief description of the entire program. Make sure you read and understand all of the rest of this handbook, because you are responsible for knowing everything in it.

### Our Responsibilities

Just as you have responsibilities, so does the FIC team. We will, at all times:

- treat you with dignity and respect.
- make every effort to respond fully to any questions you have so that you always know what is expected from you.
- provide you with honest feedback on your progress in the program.
- respect your right to make choices, and allow you to experience the natural consequences of your choices.
- give you every possible chance to succeed.
- make the best possible choices for your child.

### **FIC TEAM MEMBERS**

The FIC is a team of judges, attorneys, and social services professionals. The team will review your progress and together decide on how best to assist you with your recovery. The team members, and their jobs, are as follows:

Judges: The FIC is fortunate to have the judges of the 247<sup>th</sup> District Court as team members. Judge Bonnie Crane Hellums and Judge Leta Parks are the leaders of the FIC team. The judges attend all team meetings and pre-hearing conferences and hold the team accountable for providing services and support for you. The judges will also hold you accountable for complying with program rules and regulations, and will discuss your progress with you at your court appearances.

FIC Coordinator: This team member is responsible for the administration of the FIC. The Coordinator is responsible for obtaining, collecting all pertinent information regarding your case from your treatment program and any other services in which you are participating. This information is then provided to all FIC team members at your pre-hearing conference. If you are in FIC because of contempt proceedings, the coordinator will also serve as your caseworker. The coordinator is also responsible for providing you with an orientation to the



FIC, and is available to answer any questions you have regarding the program, or to respond to any concerns or complaints you may have. In the space below, write the Coordinator's name and phone R

Regina Jones, LCDC Phone: 713-368-6594

Parent Attorney: This team member is your lawyer. He/she will provide you with legal advice regarding your case, and will make sure your interests are protected at all times. Your attorney will attend all FIC hearings and proceedings where your case is discussed, participating in all team decisions regarding your case and hold the FIC team accountable for providing appropriate services for you. Any legal questions you have concerning your case should be addressed to this team member. In the space below, write your attorney's name and phone number:

Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Prosecuting Attorney: This team member represents the other side in your case. If you are involved in a CPS case, he/she represents CPS; if you are involved in a contempt action, the prosecuting attorney represents the other parent or the court. In either case, this team member will ensure that the viewpoint of the other party in this case is fully represented. The prosecuting attorney will attend all FIC hearings and proceedings where your case is discussed, participating in all FIC team decisions regarding your case and monitoring the team for compliance with all applicable state laws.

Child's Attorney: Consistent with our focus on the best interest of the child involved in this case, your child's interest will be represented by an attorney. This team member's job is to look out for the best interest of the child. The child's attorney will attend all FIC hearings and proceedings where your case is discussed, and will participate in all FIC team decisions regarding your case. In the space below, write your child's attorney's name and phone number.

Child's Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

FIC CPS Caseworker: If you are involved in a CPS case, your caseworker will be your primary contact with the FIC team. This team member is employed by CPS and will ensure that all appropriate guidelines are followed as regards your case. The caseworker, with your input, will be primarily responsible for development of your service plan. The caseworker will also coordinate visitation with your children. He/she will attend all FIC hearings and proceedings and participate in all FIC team decisions regarding your case. In the space below, write your caseworker's name and phone number:

Caseworker: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Treatment Providers: The FIC uses existing treatment programs to provide both residential and outpatient treatment. Each facility is licensed by the state of Texas and specializes in addiction treatment. You will be referred to the program most appropriate for your case; we will consider the severity of your addiction, location, and availability of transportation in choosing your program. You will receive a complete orientation to each program, be assigned a primary counselor, and be informed of each program's rules and regulations



before participation. You must sign authorizations for the treatment program to provide FIC with regular progress reports. Successful completion of each stage of treatment is required to successfully complete the FIC. Treatment stages/requirements are: residential detoxification (3 to 10 days), ambulatory detoxification (3 to 10 days), intensive residential, (30-90 days), supportive residential (30-90 days), intensive outpatient (6-12 weeks, 10 hours/week), supportive outpatient (6 to 12 weeks, 2-5 hours/week), and aftercare (1-2.5 hours/week, for approximately 1 year).

STAR Partners: STAR Partners are educational institutions, community-based agencies, social service agencies, and faith-based organizations that provide important services such as literacy training, job training, and child-care. They also provide suggestions for new services and tell FIC about new programs. During your time in FIC you will interact with several STAR Partners, depending on your specific needs.

## **THE FIC PROGRAM**

### Program Phases

The FIC program consists of four phases, or levels. The length of time to successfully complete the program is between 12–22 months; exactly how long you take is entirely up to you. You will begin in Phase I, and during this time you will help develop your service plan. This plan will be ruler by which your progress is measured. If you make good progress toward service plan goals, you will win incentives and move to the next higher phase. If you don't, you may receive sanctions, which can include a return to a lower phase (for example, being moved from Phase III to Phase II).

The requirements for completion of each phase are clearly described in the chart below. Be sure to become familiar with the “Client Expectations”.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Client Expectations</b>	<b>Phase Completion</b>
<b>Phase I</b>  <b>6 – 12 Weeks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Admitted to &amp; actively participating in treatment</li> <li>•Completion of all assessments</li> <li>•Children's needs assessed</li> <li>•Abstinence</li> <li>•Education/Vocation plan development</li> <li>•Discharge/housing plan development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Weekly court appearances</li> <li>•Attend all treatment activities as scheduled</li> <li>•Donate all UA's as directed</li> <li>•Negative drug tests</li> <li>•Keep all appointments</li> <li>•Appropriate and consistent visitations with children</li> <li>•Maintain satisfactory progress toward service plan(s) goals</li> <li>•Obtain a 12-Step sponsor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Consistent court attendance</li> <li>•Completion of all required assessments</li> <li>•Consistent and appropriate visitations with children</li> <li>•Compliance with any sanctions</li> <li>•Compliance with all court orders</li> <li>•6 weeks of consecutive clean drug tests</li> <li>•Team recommendation</li> </ul>



<b>Phase</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Client Expectations</b>	<b>Phase Completion</b>
<b>Phase II</b>  <b>3 – 6 Months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued abstinence</li> <li>• Continued progress in treatment</li> <li>• Implementation of education/vocational plans</li> <li>• Development of relapse prevention plan</li> <li>• Progress toward stabilization of housing and job situations</li> <li>• Improvement in parenting skills</li> <li>• Improvement in interactions with children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court appearances every other week</li> <li>• Attend all treatment activities as scheduled</li> <li>• Attend all support group meetings as directed by treatment provider</li> <li>• Donate all UA's as directed</li> <li>• Negative drug tests</li> <li>• Appropriate and consistent visitations with children</li> <li>• Maintain satisfactory progress toward service plan(s) goals</li> <li>• Actively engage in step work with 12-Step sponsor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent court attendance</li> <li>• Timely completion of all treatment assignments</li> <li>• Consistent and appropriate visitations with children</li> <li>• Compliance with any sanctions</li> <li>• Compliance with all court orders</li> <li>• Completion of relapse prevention plan</li> <li>• Appropriate support group attendance</li> <li>• Minimum of 8 weeks of consecutive clean drug tests</li> <li>• No more than 2 positive drug tests</li> <li>• Team recommendation</li> </ul>
<b>Phase III</b>  <b>3 – 6 Months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued abstinence</li> <li>• Continued progress in treatment</li> <li>• Continued progress in education/vocation plan</li> <li>• Stable housing arrangement</li> <li>• Active use of relapse prevention plan</li> <li>• Development of aftercare plan</li> <li>• Completion of formal structured treatment programs</li> <li>• Family re-unification takes place or is imminent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly court appearances</li> <li>• Attend all treatment activities as scheduled</li> <li>• Successful discharge from formal treatment</li> <li>• Regular attendance at support group meetings</li> <li>• Ongoing, active step work with sponsor</li> <li>• Donate all UA's as directed</li> <li>• Clean drug tests</li> <li>• Appropriate and consistent visitations with children</li> <li>• Maintain satisfactory progress toward service plan(s) goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent court attendance</li> <li>• Timely completion of all treatment assignments</li> <li>• Initiation of aftercare plan</li> <li>• Consistent and appropriate visitations with children</li> <li>• Compliance with any sanctions</li> <li>• Compliance with all court orders</li> <li>• Appropriate support group attendance</li> <li>• Employment, or evidence of verifiable attempts (6/week) to find employment OR enrollment/attendance in education program</li> <li>• Minimum of 12 weeks of consecutive clean drug tests</li> <li>• No more than one positive drug test</li> <li>• Team recommendation</li> </ul>
<b>Phase IV</b>  <b>6 Months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued abstinence</li> <li>• Active participation in aftercare plan</li> <li>• Stable housing, employment, or educational status</li> <li>• Custody of children</li> <li>• Introduction to alumni mentoring program as mentor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court appearances as required</li> <li>• Consistent attendance at support group meetings</li> <li>• Continued step work with sponsor</li> <li>• Completion of all service plan(s) goals</li> <li>• Donate all UA's as directed</li> <li>• Clean drug tests</li> <li>• Appropriate and consistent interactions with children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent court attendance</li> <li>• Consistent and appropriate interactions with children</li> <li>• Compliance with any sanctions</li> <li>• Compliance with all court orders</li> <li>• Appropriate support group attendance</li> <li>• Demonstrated stability in housing, employment, and/or education program</li> <li>• No positive UA's</li> <li>• Minimum of 8 consecutive months of abstinence</li> <li>• Team recommendation</li> </ul>

### Treatment Types

Treatment programs are of two basic types, residential and outpatient. In a residential program, you live at the treatment center, participating in recovery activities throughout the



day. The vast majority of FIC participants begin in residential treatment. The length of stay in a residential program is between 30–90 days with scheduled treatment events averaging 30 per week.

After completing a residential program, you will move to an outpatient program. This type of program provides a specified number of hours of counseling each week (between 2–10 hours/week, depending on the level of care). You live elsewhere independently. Your outpatient treatment will last from 4–8 months; as you progress, your level of participation will decrease.

### Random Alcohol/Drug Testing

Throughout your participation in FIC you will be expected to provide urine, hair, and/or breath specimens for alcohol/drug testing. You will participate in a random testing program on a 24/7 basis, in some cases, you will be directed to call a phone number daily to see whether you must provide a specimen that day. You can also be tested at your treatment program, the courthouse, and/or if the FIC team believes there is good cause to do so. If you don't provide a specimen, we will treat that the same as a positive result.

The only way to recover from addiction is to not use alcohol and/or other drugs. Therefore, you are expected to maintain **total abstinence** from alcohol and/or any drug not prescribed for you by a doctor. If you test positive, we will assume you have used. Please don't try to explain away a positive drug test by claiming it was caused by second-hand smoke, or you just held it in your hand, or someone put it in your drink; we won't believe you, and you will do yourself more harm than good. Honesty is the best policy – remember, there is no situation that is so bad you can't make it worse by lying.

### Court Appearances

Your participation in FIC requires you to make frequent appearances in court. You will attend sessions held specifically for FIC participants. When attending FIC sessions you are expected to dress and act appropriately. Please observe the following guidelines:

1. Be on time for all court dates. If you know you will be late, contact either your caseworker or the Coordinator before the session begins.
2. Don't talk with your neighbor while court is in session, if you need to speak to your attorney, step outside the courtroom and move down the hall. Speak in a soft voice.
3. Do not leave the courtroom without approval or until dismissed by the judge presiding.
4. Turn off cell phones and pagers. Do not speak on a cell phone inside the courtroom at any time.
5. Do not wear:
  - headphones,
  - sunglasses,
  - hats or caps,
  - tube-tops, halter tops, tank tops, shorts, low-rider or excessively baggy pants,
  - clothing or jewelry with obscene or inappropriate writings or symbols,
  - revealing clothing,



- anything your grandmother wouldn't approve of.
4. Do:
    - dress neatly and cleanly,
    - maintain appropriate grooming and hygiene,
    - treat FIC staff and other participants as you would like to be treated.
  5. Do not use obscene or profane language.
  6. Do not eat, drink, or chew gum.
  7. Do remain in court until the judge excuses you.

### Incentives and Sanctions

Accountability is a two-way street. When you don't perform as you are supposed to, you will be given sanctions as a consequence. However, when you do perform well, you will be given sanctions as a reward. You therefore have total control over being sanctioned; if you comply with program rules and live up to your commitments, you will not receive sanctions and will instead receive incentives.

Behaviors that can result in sanctions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Positive or missed drug tests;
- Excessive absences from treatment activities;
- Failure to follow service plan;
- Lack of timely progress toward treatment goals;
- Failure to complete a court-ordered sanction;
- Missed court appearance;
- Missed appointment with any drug team member;
- Missed visitation with children;
- Continual tardiness for court appearances;
- Failure to comply with courtroom dress and behavior policies.

The following are examples of possible sanctions you may receive:

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • reprimand from the judge              | • written assignments              |
| • community service                     | • spend a day in court             |
| • brief incarceration                   | • phase reduction                  |
| • pay for positive drug tests           | • extra drug tests at your expense |
| • modification of visitation with child | • termination from program         |

Examples of possible incentives you may receive are as follows:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| • recognition from the judge           | • increased visitation with children  |
| • decreased court appearances          | • certificates/awards for sobriety    |
| • gift certificates for food, clothing | • tickets to community activities     |
| • phase promotion                      | • appearance moved to front of docket |
| • credit for community services        | • travel privileges                   |



Remember, whether you achieve sanctions or achieve incentives is completely up to you. We hope you achieve many more incentives than sanctions. We would much rather praise and celebrate you for doing well, how about you?

### Overnight Travel

You are subject to random drug testing at any time, so your ability to travel away from home is limited. For example, if you are away from home and you are called to provide a specimen for drug testing, your failure to comply will be treated as a positive drug test. However, as you progress in the FIC program you can earn the opportunity to make short, out-of-town trips. The following conditions and procedures apply.

1. Only participants in Phases III and IV may obtain overnight travel permission.
2. You must discuss your travel plans with your caseworker *at least* one week prior to your scheduled travel. Your caseworker will review with you your progress in the program and determine whether to present your request to the FIC team. In order to be eligible for travel permission, you must:
  - have at least 12 consecutive weeks of demonstrated sobriety;
  - be current on all service plan goals and activities;
  - be fully engaged in all recovery activities, including treatment and 12-step groups;
  - ensure the travel will not interfere with scheduled child visitation arrangements.
3. If you meet the criteria, your caseworker will ensure you are on the next FIC docket. The team will discuss your case, and the judge will inform you of the decision.
4. If your request is granted, you must provide a urine specimen the same day you are scheduled to leave. You must also provide a urine specimen immediately upon your return. You will coordinate this with your caseworker. Failure to provide the urine specimen at either departure or arrival will be treated as a positive result.
5. Your travel must be exactly in the manner approved by the court. You must leave and return as scheduled. If your travel does not conform exactly to what was approved, you will be sanctioned unless the change was totally beyond your control (for example, a flight being cancelled). You must provide written and verifiable proof of the events.
6. If you have an emergency that requires overnight travel, call your caseworker or the FIC Coordinator to schedule an emergency appearance before the court.

If you don't follow these procedures, or do not meet the requirements described above, you will not receive travel permission, and any drug tests or program activities you miss will be counted against you.

### Program Completion

In order to successfully complete the FIC program, you must meet all the requirements listed in the "Phase Completion" portion of the *Program Phase* section. The length of time to do this is usually between 12–24 months.



If you fail to meet these requirements, you may be discharged unsuccessfully from the program. You will receive ample notice of the possibility of such a discharge before it actually occurs. Once you are unsuccessfully discharged from the FIC, the information obtained during your participation (other than the fact you were unsuccessfully discharged) will not be used against you in any other legal proceeding, UNLESS you claim the FIC program harmed you in some way. If you do make such a claim, your entire record of participation in the FIC program may be used. If you have any questions regarding this, please ask your attorney for clarification.

You may also be administratively discharged from the program if:

- you are charged with a violent criminal offense;
- a criminal investigation is opened into the circumstances of CPS involvement;
- you become physically or psychologically unable to participate in the FIC.



# Family Intervention Court

## Participant Hearing Check List

**Each time you attend your FIC hearing**, you are required to have in your possession the following items. Sanctions may be issued if you do not properly prepare and present.

- ☐ FIC calendar
- ☐ Pen/pencil
- ☐ Relapse prevention plan
- ☐ Discharge plan(s)/summary(ies)
- ☐ Family Plan of Service, if CPS case
- ☐ Pay stubs
- ☐ Proof of child support payments
- ☐ 12-Step meeting attendance verification sheet
- ☐ Financial information sheet
- ☐ Most recent completed step work
- ☐ Any assignments given by the court
- ☐ Documentation of a minimum of 6 attempts to obtain employment/week, if you are currently unemployed and have been approved to seek employment
- ☐ FIC participant handbook
- ☐ Proof you are actively engaged in obtaining your GED or working toward your educational goals
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_