

Phase 1 Implementation Sites: FAMILY FUNCTIONING ASSESSMENT POLICY

Includes Present Danger Assessment, Family Functioning Assessment-Investigations, Assessing Safety Plan Sufficiency and Conditions for Return, Family Functioning Assessment-Ongoing, Ongoing Progress Evaluation

Explanation: This is a new suite of tools that capture an understanding of the family over the life of the child welfare case to support accurate analysis and decisions regarding child safety.

Benefit:

- Standard definitions and criteria for core safety constructs and measuring family progress
- Integrates assessment work throughout the life of case, beginning with Hotline, updated by Child Protection Investigator, and carried forward by Case Manager
- Maintains family assessment history for different points in time
- Person-specific information can be accessed from Person Management (for example, child functioning from different FFA's)
- Work completed in the field can be scanned and attached in lieu of duplicate data entry (Present Danger Assessment, Safety Plan)

Who is impacted:

- Hotline Counselors
- Child Protective Investigators (CPI)
- Case Managers (CM)

Policy / Decision surrounding practice:

1. **Standard Definitions:** Refer to Safety Methodology Reference Guide, July 8, 2013, for six information domains, present danger, impending danger, caregiver protective capacities, safety plan sufficiency criteria, child strengths and needs, stages of change, evaluating quality of family time, and evaluating progress.
2. **Present Danger Assessment**
 - a. For every report received, the CPI shall conduct a present danger assessment prior to leaving the site of the initial face-to-face contact with the child. The investigator shall also attempt to interview the child's siblings, other children in the home, parents, other household members, and alleged perpetrator during the same visit. If the initial contact with the child occurs outside the home, the follow-up interviews with the rest of the family and other household members shall, to the extent practical, also take place the same day.
 - b. The present danger assessment shall be documented in FSFN within 48 hours from the time the first child victim is seen.
 - c. When immediate safety actions are needed, the CPI shall use the least intrusive actions necessary to achieve protection of the child in his or her own home when appropriate.
3. **Family Functioning Assessment-Investigations**
 - a. Concurrent with or immediately following the assessment of present danger, the investigator shall continue to obtain additional information in order to assess for the presence of impending danger threats in the home and whether such threats can be managed based on the assessment of caregivers responsible for the child and their protective capacities.
 - b. Sufficient information must be gathered in the six information domains, validated and reconciled, in order to assess danger threats; the emotional, cognitive and behavioral

protective capacities of caregivers; and child vulnerability.

- c. There are five criteria that must be met in order to establish impending danger:
 - i. Observable: Danger is real, can be seen, can be reported, is evidenced in explicit, unambiguous ways.
 - ii. Out of Control: Family conditions that can affect a child and are unrestrained, unmanaged, without limits or monitoring, not subject to influence, manipulation or internal power, are out of the family's control.
 - iii. Vulnerable: Dependence on others for protection.
 - iv. Severity: Severity is consistent with harm that can result in pain, serious injury, disablement, grave or debilitating physical health conditions, acute or grievous suffering, terror, impairment, death.
 - v. Imminence: A belief that threats to child safety are likely to become active without delay; a certainty about occurrence within the immediate to near future.
- d. Documentation must describe in detail how family dynamics and conditions are consistent with the danger threshold.

4. Assessing Safety Plan Sufficiency and Conditions for Return

- a. As soon as an investigator or case manager has identified a present danger threat, prior to leaving the home, the worker shall determine if the immediate implementation of a present danger safety plan is sufficient to ensure the child's safety until the full assessment process can be completed.
- b. In-home safety plans must comport with five criteria outlined in Reference Guide.
- c. If at any time it is determined the child's safety cannot be managed through an in-home safety plan, the child shall be released to the other parent after completion of an "Other Parent Home Assessment" as appropriate, relocated through a family-designated arrangement, or removed and placed in protective custody.
- d. Conditions for return will be established for all children relocated or placed with another caregiver.
- e. In-home safety plan providers identified by the family will be subject to name-based background screening (child abuse history, local and state criminal records).
- f. If the investigator determines that the present danger threat is representative of a pervasive state of danger in the home (impending danger), the investigator shall conduct a safety planning conference to develop an impending danger safety plan to review what actions, if any, need to be revised or implemented to ensure ongoing safety of the child in the home, or development of an out-of-home arrangement as appropriate.
- g. Family-designated caregivers must have a complete local, state and national criminal background check **prior** to a child's placement.
- h. To actively review the sufficiency of a safety plan to keep a child safe, during the first 30 days of the plan children must be observed and interviewed, and safety management team members contacted at least twice weekly to determine the effectiveness of the plan and identify any updates to the safety plan needed.
- i. After 30 days and up to the point of the case transfer, the children must be observed and interviewed, and the safety management team members contacted at least once weekly by the investigator or case manager to continue to monitor the effectiveness of the plan in managing child safety.
- j. Sufficiency and appropriateness of in-home safety plan or status of conditions for return are re-assessed and documented in initial or updates to the family functioning assessment.

5. Family Functioning Assessment-Ongoing

- a. The family assessment completed by the case manager will build upon the assessment developed by the CPI and completed within 30 days of case transfer.
- b. The family assessment shall include:
 - i. Updated household composition and roles with respect to the care and protection of child(ren) in the household; identification of family resource network,
 - ii. Updated information domains to include parent and child history of exposure to trauma and how adult/child functioning has been impacted,
 - iii. A thorough analysis of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive caregiver protective capacities and which specific capacities will be the focus of a case plan,
 - iv. A thorough analysis of child well-being indicators, as age appropriate,
 - v. Confirmation of existing danger threats and a danger statement which describes the reasons for department involvement,
 - vi. Assessment of parent motivation to change,
 - vii. Family's input as to intervention and treatment preferences, support needs, and potential barriers to successfully achieving change, and
 - viii. A determination as to whether the current safety plan remains sufficient or, if the child has been placed by the department out of the home, whether the conditions for return have been met.
- c. Documentation in the FFA-Ongoing will describe the specific family dynamics that must be addressed and baseline measurement of protective capacities and child needs that will be used to evaluate progress.

6. Ongoing Progress Evaluation

- a. All information in the Family Functioning Assessment will be updated at critical junctures and no less than every three months to provide a current analysis of child and family functioning.
- b. In addition, each outcome in the case plan will be evaluated for progress using standardized definitions provided in Reference Guide.

On-line Training: Training for these changes is posted on the Center for Child Welfare's website:
<http://centervideo.forest.usf.edu/fsfnenduser/lifecycleintake/start.html>

Resources: Safety Methodology Reference Guide, User Guides, How Do I Guides, Topic Papers, Reference Data are posted on the Center for Child Welfare's FSFN website:
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/FSFN/FSFNactivation.shtml>

CONTACT INFO: If you have a question, submit it to the Center for Child Welfare's "FAQ" tab:
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/FAQs/AskaFAQ.shtml>