

SAFETY APPENDIX 5: PARENT/CAREGIVER PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES

The following Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities areas of assessment are related to personal and parenting behavior, cognitive and emotional characteristics that specifically and directly can be associated with being protective to one's children. Protective capacities are personal qualities or characteristics that contribute to vigilant child protection. They are "strengths" that are specifically associated with one's ability to perform effectively as a parent in order to provide and assure a consistently safe environment.

Assessment of a parent/caregiver's capacity to protect a child begins with identifying and understanding how specific safety threats are occurring within the family system. At this point in the case process a CPS professional determines what specific Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities are associated with the threats to child safety. The following definitions and examples should be used as a tool in assisting a CPS professional in identifying the specific Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities that must be enhanced.

Children are unsafe because of threats to safety that cannot be controlled or mitigated by the parent/caregiver. Together, the CPS professional and family identify strategies to enhance their capacity to provide protection for their child. For Ongoing CPS there are three questions to answer which will then direct case planning:

- what is the reason for CPS involvement (safety threats)?
- what must change (Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities associated with identified safety threats)?
- how do we get there (Case Plan directed at enhancing Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities)?

Through the family assessment and planning process, the Ongoing Services professional identifies enhanced and diminished Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities. Enhanced protective capacities are strengths that can contribute to and reinforce the change process. Conversely, diminished protective capacities are the focus of the Case Plan or Permanency Plan. These are the areas that must change in order for parents/caregivers to resume their role and responsibility to provide protection for their children and create a safe home.

Assessing and understanding Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities is the study and decision-making process that examines and integrates safety concerns into the Case Plan or Permanency Plan. It begins with the first meeting with the parents and child and is related to understanding personal and parenting behavior as well as cognitive and emotional characteristics that can be directly associated with being protective of one's children. This assessment is directly related to understanding and managing Impending Danger Threats and correlating those identified threats to diminished Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities. Diminished protective capacities are then addressed in the Case Plan or Permanency Plan.

Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities

Behavioral Protective Capacities	Cognitive Protective Capacities	Emotional Protective Capacities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a history of protecting • Takes action. • Demonstrates impulse control. • Is physically able. • Has and demonstrates adequate skill to fulfill caregiving responsibilities. • Possesses adequate energy. • Sets aside her/his needs in favor of a child. • Is adaptive as a parent/caregiver. • Is assertive as a parent/caregiver • Uses resources necessary to meet the child’s basic needs. • Supports the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans and articulates a plan to protect the child. • Is aligned with the child. • Has adequate knowledge to fulfill care giving responsibilities and tasks. • Is reality oriented; perceives reality accurately. • Has an accurate perception of the child. • Understands his/her protective role. • Is self-aware as a parent/caregiver. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to meet own emotional needs. • Is emotionally able to intervene to protect the child. • Is resilient as a parent/caregiver. • Is tolerant as a parent/caregiver. • Displays concern for the child and the child’s experience and is intent on emotionally protecting the child. • Has a strong bond with the child and is clear that the number one priority is the well-being of the child. • Expresses love, empathy and sensitivity toward the child; experiences specific empathy with the child’s perspective and feelings.

Definitions and Examples

The following definitions and examples are not to be applied as a checklist, but rather provide a framework in which to consider and understand how to direct CPS services to reduce or eliminate threats to child safety by enhancing Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities. **Behavioral Protective Capacities**

1. The parent/caregiver has a history of protecting

This refers to a person with many experiences and events in which they have demonstrated clear and reportable evidence of having been protective.

- People who have protected their children in demonstrative ways by separating them from danger; seeking assistance from others; or similar clear evidence.

- Parents/caregivers and other reliable people who can describe various events and experiences where protectiveness was evident.

2. The parent/caregiver takes action.

This refers to a person who is action-oriented in all aspects of their life.

- People who proceed with a positive course of action in resolving issues.
- People who take necessary steps to complete tasks.

3. The parent/caregiver demonstrates impulse control.

This refers to a person who is deliberate and careful; who acts in managed and self- controlled ways.

- People who think about consequences and act accordingly.
- People who are able to plan.

4. The parent/caregiver is physically able and has adequate energy.

This refers to people who are sufficiently healthy, mobile and strong.

- People with physical abilities to effectively deal with dangers like fires or physical threats.
- People who have the personal sustenance necessary to be ready and on the job of being protective.

5. The parent/caregiver has/demonstrates adequate skill to fulfill responsibilities.

This refers to the possession and use of skills that are related to being protective as a parent/caregiver.

- People who can care for, feed, supervise, etc. their children according to their basic needs.
- People who can handle and manage their caregiving responsibilities.

6. The parent/caregiver sets aside her/his needs in favor of a child.

This refers to people who can delay gratifying their own needs, who accept their children's needs as a priority over their own.

- People who do for themselves after they've done for their children.
- People who seek ways to satisfy their children's needs as the priority.

7. The parent/caregiver is adaptive as a caregiver.

This refers to people who adjust and make the best of whatever caregiving situation occurs.

- People who are flexible and adjustable.

- People who accept things and can be creative about caregiving resulting in positive solutions.

8. The parent/caregiver is assertive as a caregiver.

This refers to being positive and persistent.

- People who advocate for their child.
- People who are self-confident and self-assured.

9. The parent/caregiver uses resources necessary to meet the child's basic needs.

This refers to knowing what is needed, getting it, and using it to keep a child safe.

- People who use community public and private organizations.
- People who will call on police or access the courts to help them.

10. The parent/caregiver supports the child.

This refers to actual and observable acts of sustaining, encouraging, and maintaining a child's psychological, physical and social well-being.

- People who spend considerable time with a child and respond to them in a positive manner.
- People who demonstrate actions that assure that their child is encouraged and reassured.

Cognitive Protective Capacities

11. The parent/caregiver plans and articulates a plan to protect the child.

This refers to the thinking ability that is evidenced in a reasonable, well thought out plan.

- People who are realistic in their idea and arrangements about what is needed to protect a child.
- People whose awareness of the plan is best illustrated by their ability to explain it and reason out why it is sufficient.

12. The parent/caregiver is aligned with the child.

This refers to a mental state or an identity with a child.

- People who think that they are highly connected to a child and therefore responsible for a child's well-being and safety.
- People who consider their relationship with a child as the highest priority.

13. The parent/caregiver has adequate knowledge to fulfill caregiving responsibilities and tasks.

This refers to information and personal knowledge that is specific to caregiving that is associated with protection.

- People who have information related to what is needed to keep a child safe.
- People who know how to provide basic care which assures that children are safe.

14. The parent/caregiver is reality oriented; perceives reality accurately.

This refers to mental awareness and accuracy about one’s surroundings; correct perceptions of what is happening; and the viability and appropriateness of responses to what is real and factual.

- People who describe life circumstances accurately and operate in realistic ways.
- People who alert to, recognize, and respond to threatening situations and people.

15. The parent/caregiver has accurate perceptions of the child.

This refers to seeing and understanding a child’s capabilities, needs, and limitations correctly.

- People who recognize the child’s needs, strengths, and limitations. People who can explain what a child requires, generally, for protection and why.
- People who are accepting and understanding of the capabilities of a child.

16. The parent/caregiver understands his/her protective role.

This refers to awareness and knowing there are certain responsibilities and obligations that are specific to protecting a child.

- People who value and believe it is her/his primary responsibility to protect the child.
- People who can explain what the “protective role” means and involves and why it is so important.

17. The parent/caregiver is self-aware.

This refers to a parent’s/caregiver’s sensitivity to one’s thinking and actions and their effects on a child.

- People who understand the cause – effect relationship between their own actions and results for their children.
- People who understand that their role as a parent/caregiver is unique and requires specific responses for their children.

Emotional Protective Capacities

18. The parent/caregiver is able to meet own emotional needs.

This refers to satisfying how one feels in reasonable, appropriate ways that are not dependent on or take advantage of others, in particular, children.

- People who use reasonable, appropriate, and mature/adult-like ways of satisfying their feelings and emotional needs.

19. The parent/caregiver is emotionally able to intervene to protect the child.

This refers to mental health, emotional energy, and emotional stability.

- People who are doing well enough emotionally that their needs and feelings don't immobilize them or reduce their ability to act promptly and appropriately with respect to protectiveness.

20. The parent/caregiver is resilient

This refers to responsiveness and being able and ready to act promptly as a parent/caregiver.

- People who recover quickly from setbacks or being upset.
- People who are effective at coping as a parent/caregiver.

21. The parent/caregiver is tolerant

This refers to acceptance, understanding, and respect in their parent/caregiver role.

- People who have a big picture attitude, who don't overreact to mistakes and accidents.
- People who value how others feel and what they think.

22. The parent/caregiver displays concern for the child and the child's experience and is intent on emotionally protecting the child.

This refers to a sensitivity to understand and feel some sense of responsibility for a child and what the child is going through in such a manner to compel one to comfort and reassure.

- People who show compassion through sheltering and soothing a child.
- People who calm, pacify, and appease a child.

23. The parent/caregiver and child have a strong bond and the parent/caregiver is clear that the number one priority is the child.

This refers to a strong attachment that places a child's interest above all else.

- People who act on behalf of a child because of the closeness and identity the person feels for the child.
- People who order their lives according to what is best for their children because of the special connection and attachment that exists between them.

24. The parent/caregiver expresses love, empathy, and sensitivity toward the child.

This refers to active affection, compassion, warmth, and sympathy.

- People who relate to, can explain, and feel what a child feels, thinks and goes through.

Examples of Demonstrated Protectiveness

Judging whether a parent/caregiver is and will continue to be protective can be accomplished by examining specific attributes of the person as identified in the previous definitions and examples. Confirmation of how those attributes are evidenced in real life demonstration will provide confidence regarding the judgment that a parent/caregiver is and will continue to be protective in relation to threats to child safety. Here are examples of demonstrated protectiveness:

- The parent/caregiver has demonstrated the ability to protect the child in the past while under similar or comparable circumstances and family conditions.
- The parent/caregiver has made appropriate arrangements which have been confirmed to assure that the child is not left alone with the maltreating person. This may include having another adult present within the home that is aware of the protective concerns and is able to protect the child.
- The parent/caregiver can specifically articulate a plan to protect the child. The parent/caregiver believes the child's story concerning maltreatment or Impending Danger Threats and is supportive of the child.
- The parent/caregiver is intellectually, emotionally, and physically able to intervene to protect the child.
- The parent/caregiver does not have significant individual needs which might affect the safety of the child, such as severe depression, lack of impulse control, medical needs, etc.
- The parent/caregiver has adequate resources necessary to meet the child's basic needs which allows for sufficient independence from anyone that might be a threat to the child.
- The parent/caregiver is capable of understanding the specific safety threat to the child and the need to protect.

- The parent/caregiver has adequate knowledge and skill to fulfill parenting responsibilities and tasks that might be required related to protecting the child from the safety threat. This may involve considering the parent's/caregiver's ability to meet any exceptional needs that a child might have.
- The parent/caregiver is cooperating with CPS' safety intervention efforts.
- The parent/caregiver is emotionally able to carry out his or her own plan to provide protection and/or to intervene to protect the child; the parent/caregiver is not intimidated by or fearful of whomever might be a threat to the child.
- The parent/caregiver displays concern for the child and the child's experience and is intent on emotionally protecting as well as physically protecting the child.
- The parent/caregiver and the child have a strong bond and the parent/caregiver is clear that his/her number one priority is the safety of the child.
- The non-threatening parent/caregiver consistently expresses belief that the threatening parent/caregiver or person is in need of help and that he or she supports the threatening parent/caregiver getting help. This is the non-threatening parent's/caregiver's point of view without being prompted by CPS.
- While the parent/caregiver is having a difficult time believing the threatening parent/caregiver or person would severely harm the child, he or she describes and considers the child as believable and trustworthy.
- The parent/caregiver does not place responsibility on the child for problems within the family or for Impending Danger Threats that have been identified by CPS.

Child Protective Services Safet Intervention Standards
Appendix 5: Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities