



Key Concept: *“The Protective Capacity Assessment”*

The **Protective Capacity Assessment** is a collaborative process between the caseworker and the parent to examine and understand the behaviors, conditions or circumstances that resulted in a child being unsafe. The collaborative process identifies enhanced protective capacities that can be employed to promote and reinforce change, and diminished protective capacities that must change in order for the parent to regain full responsibility for the safety of the child.

The Initial Protective Capacity Assessment

- Builds on the information gathered during the initial CPS assessment
- Is the first intervention after the completion of the CPS assessment
- Allows for the development of a case plan focused on addressing the changes that must occur for the family to assure child safety.

The Ongoing Protective Capacity Assessment

- Is the process of continually observing and measuring change
 - Is the focus of face-to-face contacts with the family throughout the life of a case
- Provides the caseworker with information to document observable, measurable change.

The purpose of developing a case plan based on a Protective Capacity Assessment is:

- The parents and child welfare staff mutually understand(or agree on) the protective capacities that must change; and
- To provide a written case plan identifying the observable, sustained changes that, when accomplished, will increase protective capacity, and reduce or eliminate a safety threat.

There are four stages involved in an Initial Protective Capacity Assessment:

1. Preparation – This is the caseworker’s time to review the case history and to plan for how to conduct a focused protective capacity assessment. The planning process will include the following:

- Ensure you have the information needed to begin the assessment
- Consider what more you need to understand
- Decide how best to approach the family

2. Introduction

- Introduce yourself
- Introduce the **Protective Capacity Assessment** process with parents
- Discuss roles, responsibilities, expectations, issues and concerns



- Explain child welfare involvement, authority and obligations
- Review and explain court processes, and parents' rights
- Discuss self-determination, latitude, boundaries and consequences of parents' choices.
- Listen and understand a parent's point of view

3. Discovery

- Jointly identify specific enhanced and diminished protective capacities directly related to child safety
- Jointly discover what must change for a parent to regain and sustain responsibility for the child's safety
- Determine what the parents are willing to work on
- It is important to include discussion about what is working well
- Keep it simple – aim to come to agreements on contents of a case plan.

4. Case Planning

- Decide “what are we going to do”
- The plan grows out of the process of the **Protective Capacity Assessment**.
- It brings the caseworker and the parents to agreement on:
 - **What is going on now**
 - **What must change**
 - **What must eventually exist**

It is important to remember client self-determination in the Protective Capacity Assessment process.

- Personal choice is fundamental to change regardless of circumstances
- Keep in mind that personal change is an internal matter

For more information about the **Protective Capacity Assessment**, you are encouraged to reference the Child Welfare Procedure Manual, Chapter 3, Section 5 and Chapter 3, Appendixes, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5. The Procedure Manual can be found at http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/safety_model/index.html#pm

Two definitions from Oregon Child Welfare Administrative Rule that are closely linked to the **Protective Capacity Assessment** are:

"Safety threat" means family behavior, conditions or circumstances that could result in harm to a child.



"Protective capacity" means behavioral, cognitive, and emotional characteristics that can specifically and directly be associated with a person's ability to care for and keep a child safe.