

## Caseworker's Role During the Protective Capacity Assessment

The caseworker-parent collaboration that occurs during Protective Capacity Assessment requires caseworkers to be versatile and competent when it comes to the “use of self” as a facilitator. The Protective Capacity Assessment is an activity that cannot be effectively completed in the absence of a caseworker actively facilitating the assessment process. The Protective Capacity Assessment is an ongoing Department intervention with families and, as such, it relies heavily on the caseworker's mentality, skills, techniques and direction.

### **Facilitation**

Caseworker facilitation in the context of the Protective Capacity Assessment refers to the interpersonal, guiding, educating, problem solving, planning and brokering activities necessary to enable a family to proceed through the assessment process resulting in the development of a change strategy that can be formalized in a case plan.

A caseworker's primary objectives for facilitating the Protective Capacity Assessment include:

- Building a collaborative working relationship with family members,
- Engaging the parents in the assessment process,
- Simplifying the assessment process for the family,
- Focusing the assessment on what is essential to child protection and child safety in the family's home,
- Learning from the family what must change to sustain child safety in the child's home,
- Seeking areas of agreement regarding what must change to sustain child safety in the child's home,
- Stimulating ideas and solutions for addressing what must change, and
- Developing strategies for change that can be implemented in a case plan.

Facilitation in the Protective Capacity Assessment involves four roles and several related responsibilities. The four facilitative roles within the Protective Capacity Assessment are: guide, educator, evaluator and broker. (Adapted from *Techniques and Guidelines for Social Work Practice* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. - Sheafor, B.W., Horejsi, C.R. and Horejsi, G.A. 1997)

## **Guide**

*The role of the guide involves planning and directing efforts to navigate families through the assessment process by coordinating and regulating the approach to the intervention and focusing the interactions with families to assure that assessment objectives and decisions are reached.*

- Engage family members in the assessment process and change.
- Establish a partnership with parents.
- Assure that parents are fully informed of the assessment process, objectives and decisions.
- Adequately prepare for each series of interviews; be clear about what needs to be accomplished by the conclusion of each of your series of interviews.
- Consider how best to structure the interviews in order to achieve facilitative objectives.
- Focus interviews on the specific facilitative objectives for each intervention stage.
- Redirect conversations as needed.
- Effectively manage the use of time both in terms of the individual series of interviews and also the assessment process at large.

## **Educator**

*The role of the educator involves empowering families by providing relevant information about their case or about “the system,” offering suggestions, identifying options and alternatives, clarifying perceptions*

*and providing feedback that might be used to raise self-awareness regarding what must change.*

- Engage family members in the assessment process.
- Be open to answering questions regarding the Department's involvement, safety issues, practice requirements, expectations, court, etc.
- Support client self-determination and right to choose.
- Inform parents of options as well as potential consequences.
- Promote problem solving among parents.
- Provide feedback, observations and/or insights regarding family strengths, motivation, safety concerns and what must change.

## **Evaluator**

*The role of the evaluator involves learning and understanding family member motivations, strengths, capacities and needs and then discerning what is significant with respect to what must change to create a safe environment in the family's home.*

- Engage family members in the assessment process.
- Explore a parent's perspective regarding strengths, capacities, needs and safety concerns.
- Consider how existing family/family member strengths might be utilized to enhance protective capacities.
- Focus on safety threats and diminished protective capacities as the highest priority for change.
- Clearly understand how impending danger is manifested in a family and determine the principal threat to child safety.
- Raise awareness and seek agreement with parents regarding protective capacities that must be enhanced that are essential to reducing impending danger.

- Seek to understand family member motivation; identify the stage(s) of change for parents related to what must change to address child safety.

## **Broker**

*The role of the broker involves identifying, linking, matching or accessing appropriate services for parents and children as needed related to what must change to create a safe environment.*

- Engage the family in the case planning process.
- Promote problem solving among parents.
- Seek areas of agreement from parents regarding what must change.
- Consider parent motivation for change.
- Collaborate and build common ground regarding what needs to be worked on and how change might be achieved.
- Brainstorm solutions for addressing safety related issues.
- Have knowledge of services and resources and their availability.
- Provide options for service provision based on family member needs.
- Create change strategies with families and establish case plans that support the achievement of the change strategy.

The following are some basic principles for interacting with family members during the Protective Capacity Assessment:

- Interpersonal engagement is fundamental to facilitation.
- Fully informed parents make for better working partners.
- Be prepared to work with an involuntary client.
- Empathetic responses encourage client engagement and participation.
- Developing partnerships with families requires that ongoing Department intervention does not take a paternalistic.

- Feel comfortable enough with your authority to consider ways to increase a family's sense of power and autonomy, specifically in terms of parent options and choices.
- Acknowledge that resistance to change and motivation to maintain certain behavior (status quo) is common among everyone.
- Be open to considering the healthy intentions embedded in problematic behavior.
- Demonstrate acceptance for individuals; maintain objectivity.
- In a collaborative working partnership, there are responsibilities for both the Department and the family; be clear about the Department's role and reasonable about what the Department can be expected to achieve.
- Recognize that ultimately the responsibility for change rests with parents/the family.
- Avoid arguing, demanding or expecting compliance; these are not intervention strategies.
- You can bring a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink.
- Be clear about Department expectations and the limits to negotiating, compromising or dismissing.
- The Department mission is assuring child protection by confirming child safety can be sustained in the child's home.