Protective Capacity Assessment Guide

The PCA process begins immediately following the CPS assessment at the point the case is opened for services, whether or not the case is transferred to a new worker. The PCA is completed on both in-home and substitute care cases. The Initial PCA must be completed within 30 days unless a supervisor approves an exception. The PCA process is documented in the case notes as actions and contacts occur. It is the goal of the PCA to clearly identify both the diminished and enhanced protective capacities directly related to the identified impending danger safety threats. CPS identifies Impending Danger Safety Threats during the CPS assessment, and the ongoing caseworker identifies the diminished capacities that are directly causing the Impending Danger Safety Threat/s to occur.

Please note: This guide in not meant to replace policy or procedure but can be used as an outline to assist in understanding the basics of each stage of the Protective Capacity Assessment. Please refer to OAR 413-040-000 through 0032 and Chapter III Managing Child Safety in the Child Welfare Procedure Manual for further guidance: OAR 413-040-000 through 0032: [http://www.dhs.state.or.us/policy/childwelfare/manual_1/division_40.pdf](http://www.dhs.state.or.us/policy/childwelfare/manual_1/division_40.pdf)

CW Procedure Manual Chapter 3: [http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/safety_model/procedure_manual/ch03/ch3-section5.pdf](http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/safety_model/procedure_manual/ch03/ch3-section5.pdf)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Case #</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worker Name</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>PCA Start Date</td>
<td>PCA Complete Date</td>
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**Child Information**

List all children in the household.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Name</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
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**Caregiver(s) And Other Adult(s) Information**

List all caregivers and other adults the household.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
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**Impending Danger Safety Threats**

Identify and describe each impending danger threat determined during the CPS Comprehensive Safety Assessment and confirmed during the Protective Capacity Assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impending Danger Safety Threat/s</th>
<th>Description (Family Specific)</th>
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Stage 1: Preparation (Reviewing Information, Preparing for Next Steps)

The caseworker *must conduct the following activities within five days* of receipt of the case from CPS. (Remember, PCAs are required on both in-home and substitute care cases.)

- Review the CW case history, case documentation, actions and decisions of the CPS assessment. (Remember: The six domains are the building blocks of the PCA and should offer some preliminary information as to how the family functions.)

- Review the initial/ongoing safety plan by contacting all participants in the safety plan to determine whether the ongoing safety plan ensures the safety of the child. (This includes in-home safety plans and out-of-home safety plans.)

- If a child is in substitute care, review the Conditions for Return.

- Document the review of the in-home/out-of-home safety plan and Conditions for Return in the Department’s information system.

The caseworker plans their initial contact to help ensure an effective introduction stage:

- Thoughtfully plan the approach, including who to include and the logistics of the meeting. Plan the timing, location and circumstances of the initial contact (office, family home, neutral setting).
- Gather information from others through individual interviews or meetings for the purpose of identifying and understanding the needs, concerns, strengths, and limitations associated with the protective capacity of the parent and assessing the impact on the child’s safety. Consider grandparents, parents’ live-in partners, extended family, persons with significant attachment to the child, teachers, physicians, coaches, neighbors or members of the faith community. Those who know the family best may be able to appropriately contribute information and assist the parents in making necessary changes.

- Involve an Indian child’s tribe(s).

Contacts

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Time/date</th>
<th>Brief summary of contact:</th>
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Stage 2: Introduction (Family Officially Transitions From CPS to Ongoing)

The initial meeting with the parents is a time to build rapport, begin to build a partnership, provide information and allow the parents time to express themselves. This stage is the point of transition for the parents from the CPS case to the ongoing case. The caseworker will explain his/her job title, ensure the family has his/her contact information, and differentiate the goals of CPS (assessing child safety) and the ongoing worker’s role of managing child safety and partnering with the parents to resolve the reasons for child welfare.

The ongoing caseworker should do the following:

- Ask the parents to share their understanding of the reasons for CW involvement. Do they know and understand the identified safety threats?
- Be able to describe the caregivers’ reaction and perspective regarding the identified impending danger safety threats.
- Answer the parent’s questions openly and let them express their emotions. People are unable to move toward necessary change until their questions can be answered.
- Explain the importance of working in partnership and how together they want to understand how the situation/circumstances resulted in their children being hurt/unsafe.
- Evaluate the parent’s readiness for change. (Do they respond to phone calls; are they willing to consider change; are they available, and do they participate in visits; are they willing to engage in the PCA process?)
- If the parents are unwilling to commit to the PCA process, try to gain additional information and discuss with them the reasons they are unwilling. It is the ongoing responsibility of the caseworker to move the case forward and to continue to actively seek the parents’ involvement.
- Seek a commitment from the parents to participate in the process, express appreciation and reaffirm desire to partner with them.
- Set the date, time and place of the next contact.
- Document the Introduction Stage in OR-Kids Case Notes. (Who was present, location, relevant observations, behaviors, conditions, circumstances, etc.)
Stage 3: Exploration (Determining What Must Change)

This stage is the process of *joint exploration with the parents* of what must change in order for the parents to regain and sustain responsibility for their child’s safety. This stage helps identify the enhanced (strengths) and diminished protective capacities which are directly related to the identified Impending Danger Safety Threat/s. In other words, the diminished parental capacity is either causing the Impending Danger Safety Threat/s to occur OR causing the parent to be unable/unwilling to protect their child from the Impending Danger Safety Threat. It will likely take more than one contact with the parent to complete this stage. (Caseworker can utilize tool Stage 3 Exploration to assist in this process). The case worker should determine whether expert assessment/evaluations are needed to help assess the parental protective capacities.

- The caseworker’s goal is to reach an understanding/agreement with the parent/s on how the impending danger safety threats cause their child to be unsafe and what must change.
- The caseworker determines what the parents are willing to do.

Through discussion with the parents, the caseworker should develop additional knowledge about:

- Domestic violence, parents’ own childhood history of abuse/neglect, substance abuse, mental illness, criminal behaviors

**Expected Outcome Development:**

After there is an understanding/agreement of how and why the identified impending danger safety threats have occurred, the Expected Outcomes must be developed. It’s important to elicit the parent’s perceptions when developing the EO’s. Remember, these are developed around the diminished protective capacities that were learned during exploration with the parents.

Parent #1: _______________________________________

1. Determine the cognitive; emotional; and/or behavioral protective capacities that must be enhanced to create a safe home and then behaviorally state the measurable goal. (Use the Appendix 3.1 in the CW Procedure Manual link below)

http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/safety_model/procedure_manual/appendices/ch3-app/3-1.pdf
Examples: (1) Larry will learn to understand and describe his child’s needs for safety that require he think about and respond to Jimmy’s needs before his own. (2) Angela is able to control herself and her impulses by not exposing Angel to inappropriate activities in the home or allowing the presence of people who cause Angel to be fearful of her home environment.

a.

b.

c.

d.

2. Status of readiness to change (pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance):

3. Describe existing/enhanced parental protective capacities, and discuss how these can influence change:

4. Describe potential barriers to meeting the expected outcomes:
Parent #2: ________________________________________

1. Determine the cognitive; emotional; and/or behavioral protective capacities that must be enhanced to create a safe home, and then *behaviorally state the measurable goal*. (Use the Appendix 3.1 in the CW Procedure Manual).

   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 

2. Status of readiness to change (pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance):

3. Describe existing/enhanced parental protective capacities, and discuss how these can influence change:

4. Describe potential barriers to meeting the expected outcomes:
Child(ren) Needs: Identify and describe any services for child(ren) necessary to address their individual needs:

a. 
b. 
c.

Stage 4: Change Strategy and Case Planning

After the protective capacities are understood and well-defined, it is important to determine actions, services, or activities that will assist in facilitating necessary change by enhancing specific diminished protective capacities and helping the parents regain and sustain primary responsibility for their child’s safety.

Consider creative and flexible interventions such as support and assistance from individuals in the family system, community resources, and treatment providers along with structured services (such as family sexual abuse treatment, parenting classes, etc.) when appropriate to enhancing the identified diminished capacities.

During the final stage of the initial PCA, the caseworker and the parents work together to do the following:

- Prioritize what must change;
- Create an individualized Child Welfare Case Plan that documents the Expected Outcomes; and
- Select specific actions, services and activities to achieve the Expected Outcomes, and document these on the Action Agreement.

When thinking about where to start the process of change, consider the following:

- What expected outcomes related to diminished caregiver protective capacities are most likely to address child safety?
- What services can stimulate progress for change and could establish a foundation for further change?
- What do both the worker and parents mutuality agrees must change? Or, at least, what do caregivers agree to do?
- What issues, that if addressed, might have the greatest impact on enhancing caregiver protective capacities?
The assessment of the protective capacity continues throughout the life of the case and the findings of the PCA are updated at each 90-day review of the Child Welfare Case Plan and used to measure progress toward achieving the Expected Outcomes.