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# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES  
*Helping people. It's who we are and what we do.*



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MTL # 0510-01102024

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FROM: Tonya Hernandez, Deputy Administrator, Division of Child and Family Services

## POLICY DISTRIBUTION

Enclosed find the following policy for distribution to all applicable staff within your organization:

### 0510 Nevada Safety Assessments

This policy is/was effective:

- This policy is new. Please review the policy in its entirety
- This policy replaces the following policy(s): MTL # 0510-091708 Policy Name: Nevada Safety Assessment
- This policy has been revised. Please see below for the type of revision:
  - This is a significant policy revision. Please review this policy in its entirety.
  - This is a minor policy revision: (List page number & summary of change):
  - A policy form has been revised: (List form, page number and summary of change):

## NOTE:

- Please read the policy in its entirety and note any areas that are additionally required by your agency to be in compliance with the policy enclosed.
- This is an **ALL-STAFF MEMO**, and it is the responsibility of the person listed above to disseminate the policy enclosed to appropriate staff within his/her organization and to ensure compliance.
- The most current version of this policy is posted on the DCFS Website at the following address: <http://dcfs.nv.gov/Policies>  
Please check the table of contents on this page for the link to the chapter you are interested in.

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**0510 Nevada Safety Assessments**

**Policy Approval Clearance Record**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Statewide Policy</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Administrative Policy</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>DCFS Rural Region Policy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>New Policy</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Modified Policy</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>This policy supersedes: 0510 Nevada Safety Assessment</b>
<b>Date Policy Effective:</b>	01/09/2024
<b>Attorney General Representative Review:</b>	12/13/2023
<b>DCFS Deputy Administrator Review:</b>	01/09/2024
<b>DMG Original Approval</b>	01/09/2024
<b>DMG Review:</b>	01/09/2024

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Safety assessments are an ongoing process for evaluating family functioning to determine whether there are negative family conditions that are out of control and therefore pose an imminent safety threat (present or impending danger) to a child. This policy outlines all formal safety assessments, including what they are and when they occur and informal safety assessments that occur during case management.

**AUTHORITY**

**Federal:** [SSA Section 424 \(f\) SSA Title IV, 422\(c\), I: 42 U.S.C. 675 Sec. 475\(5\)\(c\); 42 U.S.C. 675 Sec. 471 \(a\)\(31\); Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, Reauthorized 2003-2010;](#)  
**NRS:** [NRS 432B.020; .030; .040; .042; .080; .130; .140; .150; .153; .157; .159; .180; .190; .220; .260; .270; .300; .330; .340; .350; .360; .370; .390; .3905; .391; .393; .396; .553; .580; .6205; .6213; .625; .626; NRS 127.2827; NRS128.107; NRS 392.281, .287; .289; .297; .303; .305; .313; NRS 432C](#)  
**NAC:** [NAC 432B.155; .180; .185; .190; .200; .210; .220; .230; .240; .260; .315; .400; .405; .1366.](#)  
**Other:** [Adoptions and Safe Families ACT 1997, D.L. 105-89](#)

**DEFINITIONS**

**Agency which provides Child Welfare Services:** In a county whose population is less than 100,000, the agency is a local office of the Division of Child and Family Services; or in a county whose population is 100,000 or more, the agency of the county, which provides or arranges for necessary child welfare services. May also be referred to as “Agency” or "Child Welfare Agency”.

**Caregiver Protective Capacities (CPC):** A caregiver’s personal (individual) parenting characteristics, including behavioral, cognitive and emotional, specifically and directly associated with being protective of one’s child. These characteristics can contribute to a state of danger that a child is routinely exposed to and therefore is considered diminished CPC

1. **Behavioral-** Specific action, activity, or performance resulting in parenting and protective guidance.
2. **Cognitive-** Specific intellect, knowledge, understanding and perception resulting in parenting and protective vigilance.
3. **Emotional-** Specific feelings, attitudes, identification with a child, and motivation resulting in parenting and protective vigilance.

**Child:** A person under the age of 18 years or, if in school, until graduation from high school.

**Impending Danger:** When a child is living in a state of continuous danger. Impending danger is not always active but can become active at any time or may become active because of specific, stimulating

events, circumstances, or influences. Impending danger is not necessarily obvious or occurring at the onset of the NIA or in a present context (e.g., initial contact) but can be identified and understood upon more fully evaluating and understanding individual and family conditions and functioning through the NIA. A child in impending danger without safety intervention reasonably could experience serious harm.

**Nevada Initial Assessment (NIA) Process:** The investigative process in its entirety including the NIA document, Safety Plan Determination, Safety Plan, and Conditions for Return.

**Present Danger:** An immediate, significant, and clearly observable family condition or situation that is actively occurring or “in process” of occurring at the point of contact with a family; and will likely result in serious harm to a child. In process of occurring means it might have just happened (e.g., a child is left unattended in a parked car); or happens all the time (e.g., young children were left alone last night and might be tonight).

**Safety Assessment:** An assessment that evaluates family functioning to determine whether there are negative family conditions that are out of control and therefore pose an imminent safety threat (present or impending danger) to a child. This assessment can happen at any time during a case and can be formal or informal.

**Safety Assessment Conclusion:** The conclusion that a child is safe or unsafe based upon the assessment of safety threats, and evaluation of child vulnerability and caregiver protective capacities.

**Safety Intervention:** The action taken to respond to and manage present and impending danger (occurring as a result of NIA and during ongoing services) and case planning services to reduce or eliminate impending danger and enhance caregiver protective capacities (occurring as a result of ongoing CPS).

**Safety Threshold Criteria:** The safety threshold refers to the point when family conditions in the form of behaviors, attitudes, emotions, intent, situations, etc. manifest in a way to become a threat to child safety. The following five criteria must apply and be met:

1. Out of control family conditions that can directly 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.
2. Severity is consistent with anticipated harm that can result in pain; serious injury; disablement; grave/debilitating physical health conditions; acute/grievous suffering; terror; impairment; death.
3. Vulnerability is a child who is unable to protect him/herself and dependent on others for protection.
4. Imminence is a belief that threats to child safety could become active at any time; a certainty about occurrence within the immediate to near future.
5. Observable and Specific is a family condition that exists as impending danger is observable and can be specifically described or explained; the danger is real; can be seen; can be reported; is evidenced in explicit, unambiguous ways

**Serious Harm:** Evidence of serious physical injury, sexual abuse, significant pain or mental suffering, extreme fear or terror, extreme impairment or disability; death, substantial impairment or risk of substantial impairment to the child’s mental or physical health or development.

**State:** An alternate word for the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) or Family Programs Office (FPO).

**Unsafe Child:** A child that is vulnerable to present or impending danger and whose caregivers are unable or unwilling to provide protection.

1. A child is unsafe if there is Present Danger, which is the result of an incident or event where at that particular time; there is no caregiver who is adequately able or willing to provide protection.
2. After thorough information collection, a child is determined to be unsafe if there is Impending Danger, which is the result of ongoing diminished caregiver protective capacities resulting in caregivers who are unable or unwilling to provide protection.

**Vulnerable Child:** A child who is dependent on others for protection, basic needs and is exposed to circumstances that she or he is powerless to manage, and susceptible, accessible, and available to a threatening person and/or persons in authority over them. Vulnerability is judged according to age, physical and emotional development, ability to communicate needs, mobility, size and dependence and susceptibility.

**Young Adult:** A person who is at least 18 years of age but less than 21 years of age and whose plan for permanent placement adopted pursuant to NRS 432B.553 was, on their 18th birthday, a permanent living arrangement other than reunification with their parents.

## **STANDARDS/PROCEDURES**

### **1. Safety Assessment Overview and Objectives:**

The purpose of a Safety Assessment is to assist caseworkers in reaching conclusions about child safety through the assessment of caregiver protective capacities, child vulnerability, and the identification of and management of present and/or impending danger to determine if a child is safe in their home of origin, in an out-of-home placement and during visitation.

The Safety Assessment process provides a uniform, systematic, and guided approach to assist caseworkers and supervisors in making child safety decisions. All caseworkers who interact with children and families have a responsibility for the ongoing assessment for safety of children. Safety assessments can be both formal and informal, and occur throughout the life of the case.

### **2. Formal Safety Assessment Milestones:** At the following stages of the child welfare agency's intervention with a family, the caseworker is required to complete a formal safety assessment.

- a. The initial intake assessment;
- b. The initial face-to-face contact with the child;
- c. Any time the agency is considering removal of the child(ren) from the custody of their parents;
- d. Before any unsupervised visitations between the child and their parents;
- e. Before returning the child to the custody of their parents;
- f. Any time a significant event or change occurs that affects the household of a parent of the child or a foster parent or other care provider. This includes changes in household members, a birth, marriage, death, or major illness of any household member;
- g. Before each court hearing;
- h. Any time, as determined by the agency, there is an indication that the safety of the child may be jeopardized;
- i. After reunification of the family of the child; and
- j. When case closure is imminent.
- k. In accordance with the SAFE/SIPS practice model.

### **3. Informal Safety Assessments:**

Informal safety assessments are conducted throughout the life of the case during child, parent/caregiver, and collateral contacts. Information gathered during informal assessments help inform the caseworker whether the child is safe, if there are any concerns that need to be addressed, and prompts a formal safety assessment to be completed when safety concerns are identified.

- a. Occurs during all caseworker visits and interactions with child(ren), parent(s), and/or caregiver(s)
- b. Examples of caseworkers' observations during contacts that informally assess safety:
  - i. **Observations of the environment**
    - i. Cleanliness of the environment;
    - ii. Hazards (exposed wires, storage of chemicals, medications, weapons);
    - iii. If a home environment, necessities such as food, clothing, and bedding for the child(ren) and;
    - iv. Individuals in the environment or who have regular access/can be found in the environment.
  - ii. **Observations of parent/caregiver and child interactions**
    - i. Communication and interaction;
    - ii. Perceptions;
    - iii. Behaviors,

- iv. How parent/caregivers respond to perception/behaviors;
  - v. Feelings of safety/security;
  - vi. Appropriate to child age/development/needs and;
  - vii. Ability to recognize and meet child needs.
  - iii. **Observations of parent/caregiver**
    - i. Stress within the family system;
    - ii. Coping skills;
    - iii. Ability to take action to meet own need;
    - iv. Emotional stability;
    - v. Cognitive abilities and;
    - vi. Financial means/services to support household.
  - iv. **Observations of child**
    - i. Meeting development milestones;
    - ii. Medical conditions;
    - iii. School attendance and progress;
    - iv. Behaviors;
    - v. How the child interacts socially with peers and others and;
    - vi. Emotional stability.
4. **Formal Safety Assessments:** The following formal safety assessments are completed to assess and analyze child safety for all children in their home of origin, in an out-of-home placement and during visitation. More than one formal safety assessment could be appropriate to utilize based on case circumstances and the caseworker should complete the most appropriate formal safety assessment. (For instance, if milestone 2.h. *Any time, as determined by the agency, there is an indication that the safety of the child may be jeopardized*, the agency could utilize a formal Intake Assessment, a Present Danger Assessment, or a Milestone Safety Assessment depending on the full case circumstances. Note, the agency should only complete one formal safety assessment to meet the requirement.)
- a. Intake Assessment (IA): This assessment is the decision-making method for evaluating reports concerning child abuse and/or neglect and threats to child safety in order to identify families that may be in need of intervention by the child welfare agency.
    - i. Occurs at the time an initial report is received.
    - ii. For further information refer to [0506 Intake and Priority Response Times Policy](#).
  - b. Present Danger Assessment (PDA): This assessment is a judgement or process involving observation, interpretation, identification and conclusion that a family condition, child condition, individual behavior or action or family circumstance places a child in immediate jeopardy, or Present Danger.
    - i. Occurs during initial contact with a child and anytime present danger is identified.
    - ii. For further information refer to [508 Nevada Initial Assessment Policy](#).
  - c. Conclusion of the Nevada Initial Assessment (NIA): This assessment is the decision-making method regarding whether or not impending danger exists.
    - i. Occurs at the conclusion of the assessment when completing the NIA.
    - ii. For further information refer to [508 Nevada Initial Assessment Policy](#).
  - d. Confirming Safe Environments: This assessment is used to verify that child(ren) are placed in a safe environment. There are two types of CSE assessments which are:
    - i. CSE – Child Placement Assessment (CPA):
      - 1. Occurs when present danger is identified and the child(ren) are going to be on an out-of-home plan or;
      - 2. When the child(ren) change placement.
      - 3. Refer to form [FPO 1006 CSE PDA](#).
    - ii. CSE – Instrument:
      - 1. Occurs:
        - a) Anytime the caseworker has concerns about the quality of the placement as a safe environment;
        - b) At least every 5 months post placement and then every 6 months thereafter, while parental rights are intact. At least every 180 days after parental rights are terminated are no longer intact or relinquished; and

- c) After parental rights are terminated are no longer intact or relinquished, CSE-Instrument may be completed in place of a safety assessment.
2. Refer to form [FPO 0212B CSE Instrument](#).
- e. Protective Capacity Family Assessment (PCFA): This is an interpersonal, interactive assessment that engages caregivers in a partnership to clarify what must change to enhance Caregiver Protective Capacities and to inform case planning.
- i. Occurs when the permanency caseworker receives the case and must be concluded no later than 60 days after the removal of the child(ren) or the decision to provide services to the child and family.
  - ii. For further information refer to [0204 Permanency and Case Planning Policy](#) and [0211 Protective Capacity Family Assessment Policy](#).
  - iii. The Safety Assessment window in UNITY must be completed at the same time as the PCFA to indicate decisions regarding impending danger (see below).
- f. Protective Capacity Progress Assessment (PCPA): This is an ongoing comprehensive assessment process that utilizes specific criteria to evaluate progress toward case plan goals.
- i. Occurs within 120 days of conclusion of the PCFA and every 90 days thereafter, unless the PCPA is not required pursuant to [0212 Protective Capacity Progress Assessment Policy](#). For further information refer to [0212 Protective Capacity Progress Assessment Policy](#).
  - ii. The Safety Assessment window in UNITY must be completed at the same time as the PCPA assessment to indicate decisions regarding impending threat (see below).
- g. Facility Placement Safety Check: The agency and/or designee must assess the safety and well-being of the child in the facility at regular intervals, but not less than every 6 months.
1. If there are potential risks identified the agency shall continue to review the risk to ensure the risk does not become a safety concern. The potential risk should be staffed with a supervisor.
  2. For further information refer to [0902 Placement and Monitoring of Children in Residential Facilities](#).
- h. Safety Assessment: The Safety Assessment formally documents the agency's decision about impending dangers and allows for documentation of an updated SPD and Safety Plan in UNITY.
- i. Occurs when:
    1. Completing the PCFA and/or PCPA as required every 90-120 days, dependent upon agency business practice; and
    2. Safety Assessments must be completed on parents who signed a Consent to Adopt until the adoption is finalized; and
    3. Prior to case closure; and/or
    4. A Formal Safety Assessment Milestone is required and there are no other SAFE/SIPS model assessments (i.e. discontinued PCPA) applicable to the case circumstance or at a minimum of every 6 months. To document the safety assessment in UNITY, the caseworker shall:
      - a) Select 'new assessment' on the Safety Model page.
      - b) Select the appropriate type (if applicable).
      - c) Enter the date the household was assessed.
      - d) Select whether the assessment was a standalone Safety Assessment or PCFA or PCPA assessment.
      - e) Enter notes/comments (required).
      - f) Identify the household assessed.
      - g) Select the child to be assessed.
      - h) Identify the milestone that applies to the case circumstance.
      - i) Identify any impending dangers that apply to the household being assessed (*if any apply, the child is unsafe and the caseworker must staff with a supervisor.*)

**Timeline:** Policy/procedure development and implementation will adhere to any statewide policies when developing internal policy timelines.

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Starting Date</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Actions to be Taken</b>
<b>Intake Assessment</b>	When a new report is received.	Report disposition must be completed by the Agency in a timely manner to allow for priority response time to be met.	Intake worker and supervisor	-Collect information and enter into UNITY - Supervisor determines disposition and priority response time (if applicable)
<b>Present Danger Assessment</b>	Date/Time face-to-face contact is made with alleged child victims.	Within one (1) business day of making face-to-face contact.  Complete PDA in UNITY within one (1) business day of assessing for Present Danger.	Caseworker	- Assigned caseworker initiates contact with the all alleged child victims. - Consult with supervisor about the existence of present danger. -Document PDA in UNITY. -Supervisor approval of PDA.
<b>Confirming Safe Environments – Child Placement Assessment</b>	At the time of Present Danger assessment or change of placement.	At regular intervals per agency business practice	Caseworker	-Caseworker and supervisor consultation. Caseworker documents in UNITY.
<b>Confirming Safe Environments – Instrument</b>	Ongoing for any child in a placement. The primary form of ongoing safety assessment after TPR or relinquishment.	At regular intervals per agency business practice.	Caseworker	-Caseworker will gather information from out-of-home caregivers and children. -Caseworker documents in UNITY -Supervisor approval of CSE-Instrument
<b>Conclusion of the Nevada Initial Assessment (NIA)</b>	Date of the initial contact with the family	-15 business days if PD identified - 30 calendar days if impending danger identified and no PD was identified -30 calendar days if no PD or impending danger	Caseworker	- Caseworker will gather necessary information to complete the NIA and complete all NIA UNITY documentation. -Supervisor and caseworker staff the NIA. -Supervisor approves NIA in UNITY.
<b>Protective Capacity Family Assessment (PCFA) and Case Planning</b>	After the completion of the NIA Process	Not to exceed 60 days from decision to provide services or date of removal	Caseworker	-Caseworker meets with the family multiple times. -Caseworker documents PCFA in UNITY.
<b>Protective Capacity Progress Assessment (PCPA)</b>	Initial PCPA within 120 calendar days and for on-going meetings every 90 days.	Initial PCPA will start at the conclusion of the PCFA. On-going meetings are subsequent to the initial PCPA.	Caseworker	-Caseworker and supervisor consultations. -Caseworker meets with the family. -Caseworker documents the PCPA in UNITY.

<b>Safety Assessment</b>	When completing PCPA and PCFA; case closure; or a Formal Safety Assessment Milestone is required and there are no other SAFE/SIPS model assessments	At completion of PCFA and PCPA prior to case closure when a Safety Assessment is required are there are no SAFE/SIPS model assessments.	Caseworker	-Caseworker and supervisor consultation. Caseworker documents in UNITY.
<b>Facility Placement Safety Check</b>	6 months after placement in a facility.	At regular intervals but not less than 6 months.	Caseworker	-Caseworker and supervisor consultation. Caseworker documents in UNITY.

**Documentation:**

**Case File Documentation (paper)**

File Location	Data Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow Agency business practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow Agency business practice</li> </ul>

**UNITY Documentation (electronic)**

Applicable UNITY Screen	Data Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All activities not documented in these safety assessment.; Supervisory Staffing's</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intake Form (INT200)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary Form to complete Intake Assessment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present Danger Assessment (ASM100)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PDA</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nevada Initial Assessment (ASM200)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NIA Document</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety Model (ASM000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access all safety model records</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protective Capacity Family Assessment (PCFA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protective Capacity Family Assessment (PCFA)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protective Capacity Progress Assessment (PCPA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protective Capacity Progress Assessment (PCPA)</li> </ul>

**JURISDICTIONAL ACTION**

**Development of Internal Policies:** Agencies which provide child welfare services shall develop internal policies and procedures as necessary and adhere to any statewide policies when developing internal policies.

**STATE RESPONSIBILITIES**

The State will provide technical assistance regarding program development and implementation to the Child Welfare Agencies.

**POLICY CROSS REFERENCE**

- Policies:**
- [204 Permanency and Case Planning Policy](#)
  - [0205 Case Worker Contact Policy](#)
  - [0211 Protective Capacity Family Assessment Policy](#)
  - [0212 Protective Capacity Progress Assessment Policy](#)
  - [506 Intake Policy](#)
  - [0508 Nevada Initial Assessment \(NIA\) Policy](#)
  - 0902 Placement and Monitoring of Children



**History and Updates:** This policy was effective on 12/27/2007 with revisions approved on 09/18/2008 and replaced with the Safety Assessment policy on 01/09/2024.

**ATTACHMENTS:** N/A