

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: July 1, 2014
	Section 18: Initial Safety Assessment	Version: 6

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will complete an initial [Safety Assessment](#) (including a response and decision) within 24 hours of the initiation of every assessment and a subsequent Safety Assessment when there are:

- a. Changes in family circumstances;
- b. Changes in information known about the family;
- c. Changes in ability of protective factors to mitigate safety threats, and/or
- d. Changes at the point of a critical case juncture.

When child safety concerns are identified, DCS will always consider the viability of informal and community support services prior to considering involuntary removal of the child. When a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition must be filed, DCS will always consider an in-home CHINS if the child can be safe.

DCS will utilize the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting process to engage children and families throughout the assessment phase to assist in planning for child safety while identifying the child and family's strengths, informal supports and needs. See separate policy, [5.7 Child and Family Team \(CFT\) Meetings](#).

DCS will explore all possible safety options for the child with the non-offending parent in domestic violence situations.

DCS will assist the family with referrals when community services are deemed necessary.

DCS will continually reassess a child's safety based on the most current information available by completing subsequent Safety Assessments.

Change in Household Composition

If it is determined by DCS that a temporary change in household composition will provide the family with an opportunity to address the safety and risk issues present during the time of the assessment, a change in the household can occur if it is in the best interest of the child. (See separate policy 4.37 Change in Household Composition)

Code References

N/A

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Complete an initial [Safety Assessment](#) to determine if there are any safety threats present;

2. Determine if any protective factors are present to mitigate the safety threats;
3. Identify what safety responses will be used to control the threat to safety;
4. Utilize the CFT Meeting process to identify the child and family strengths and needs that will assist in planning for child safety;
5. Take necessary actions to remove the child (see separate policy, [4.28 Involuntary Removals](#)) if the child cannot remain in the home;
6. Document the details of the [Safety Assessment](#), response and decision by completing the safety assessment in the Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK) within one (1) business day of the safety assessment completion; and
7. Reassess safety immediately by completing a subsequent [Safety Assessment](#) when there are:
 - a. Changes in family circumstances;
 - b. Changes in information known about the family;
 - c. Changes in ability of protective factors to mitigate safety threats; and/or
 - d. Changes at the point of a critical case juncture.
8. Identify the appropriate Safety Decision. If no safety threat exists, consider recommending assessment closure with supervisor approval.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Successful interventions reduce risk and ensure the well-being of the child. Protective factors (nurturing and attachment to the child, knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development, parental resilience, social connections and concrete supports for parents) should be considered when assessing safety.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Safety Assessment](#) – Available in the MaGIK
2. [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243\)](#)
3. [IN Guidebook](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Purpose of Safety Assessments

The purpose of the safety assessment is:

- 1) To help assess whether any child is likely to be in immediate danger of serious harm/maltreatment which requires a protecting intervention, and
- 2) To determine what interventions (protective factors/safety responses) should be initiated or maintained to provide appropriate protection.

[REVISED] Safety vs. Risk Assessment

It is important to keep in mind the difference between safety and risk when completing this form. Safety assessment differs from risk assessment in that it assesses the child's present danger and the interventions currently needed to protect the child. In contrast, risk assessment looks at the likelihood of future maltreatment. In addition to the Safety Assessment Tool, FCMs should reference the [Family Functional Assessment \(FFA\)](#) tool when working with self-identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Safety assessment questions that may be helpful in determining the safety of LGBTQ youth can be found in the FFA tool.