

# Northern Service Area

## Initial Safety Assessments 2<sup>nd</sup> Round - Safety Model QA Review



**Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services  
Quality Assurance**

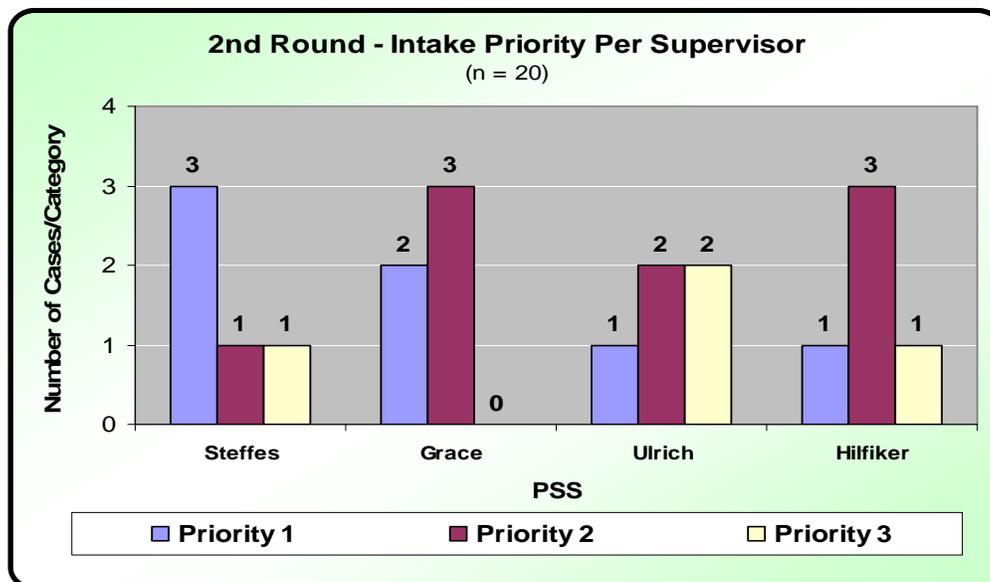
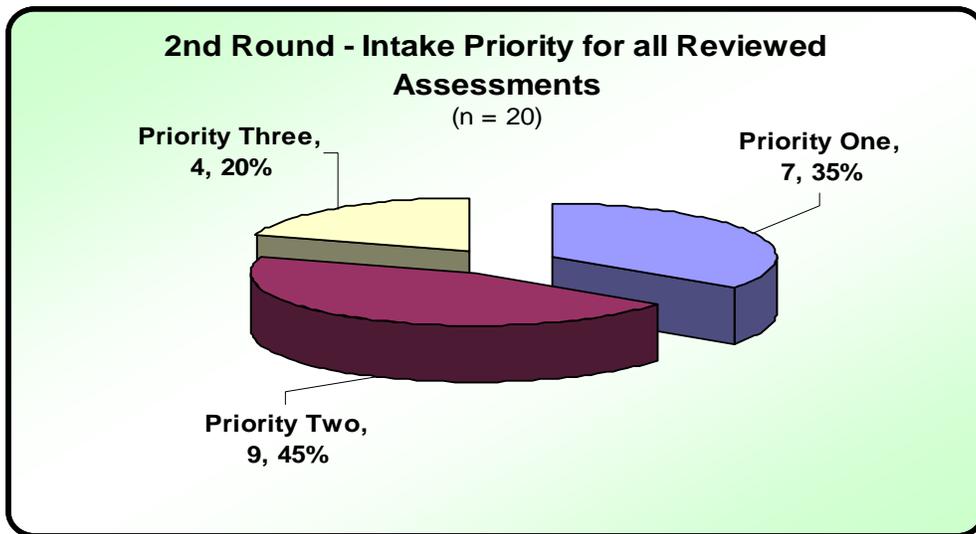
January 2009

Quality Assurance (QA) Team completed second round of Initial Safety Assessment Reviews in November 2008. A total of 20 finalized Safety Assessments were randomly selected by QA staff from four Children and Family Services Supervisors (CFSS). Review consisted of five assessments from each NSA Supervisor: Benita Steffes, Erin Grace, John Ulrich, and Tami Hilfiker.

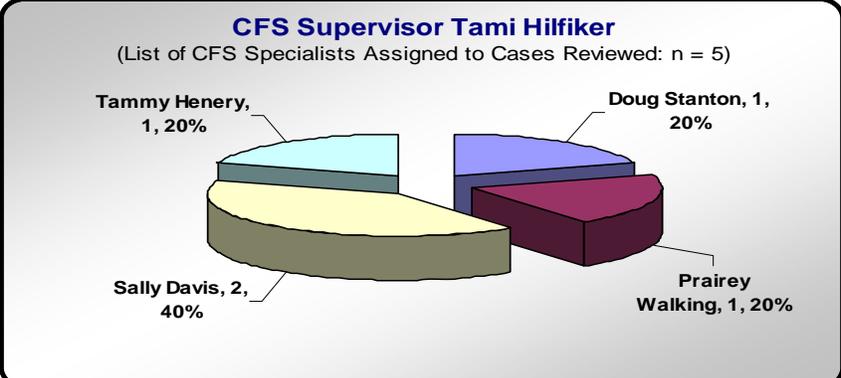
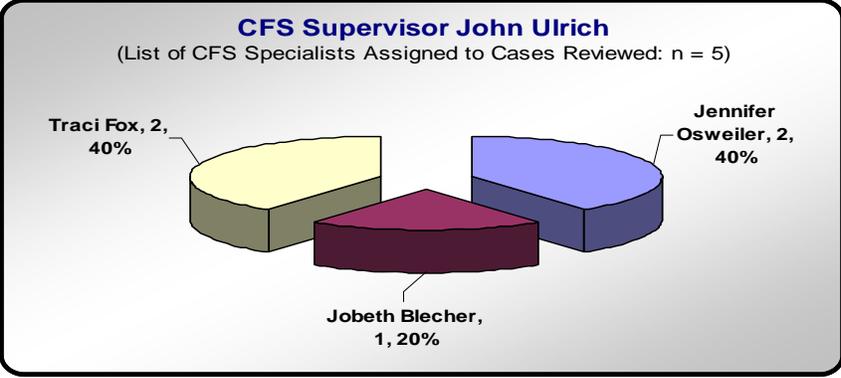
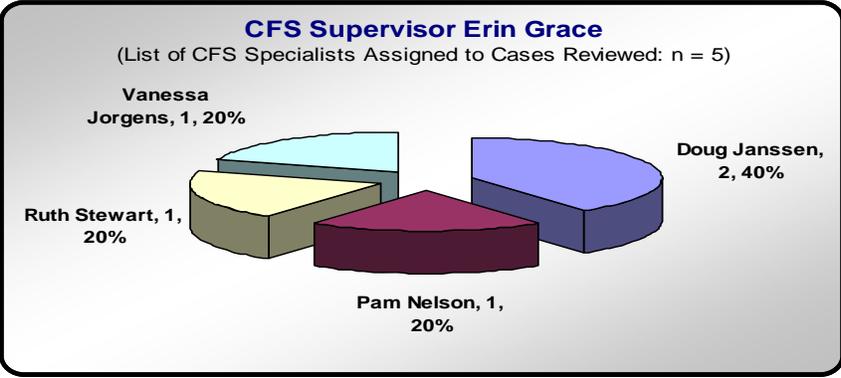
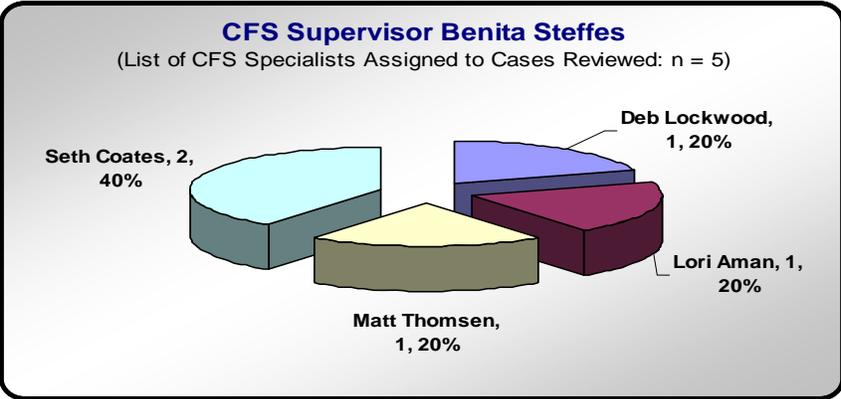
The first round of reviews of Initial Safety Assessment for NSA was completed in April 2008. A total of 75 finalized Safety Assessments were submitted to QA staff from five Children and Family Services Supervisors in NSA. The reviews consisted of fifteen assessments from each NSA Supervisors: Benita Steffes, Erin Grace, LaDonna Mead, Tami Hilfiker, and Tony Mitzel.

**This report contains detailed information from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of Initial Assessment Reviews.**

**Intake Priority (20 assessments reviewed): 7 were Priority One, 9 were Priority Two and 4 were Priority Three.**



The following charts contain a breakdown of reviewed assessments per worker for each Children and Family Services Supervisor:



The following is a summary of **2<sup>nd</sup> Round** Data from ALL 20 Initial Safety Assessment reviews. Charts for this overall data can be found in the attached excel file: *NSA Comparison Charts*. Charts in the excel attachment compares 1<sup>st</sup> Round and 2nd Round Initial Safety Assessment Reviews.

#### ***Initial Response/Contact Information (Chart 1):***

- Initial contact with child victim was made within required time frame in 75% of the Safety Assessments (15 out of 20 instances).
- Other children in the household were present in 30% or 6 of 20 of the reviewed assessments. Other children in the household were interviewed in 6 out of 6 instances (100%).
- 9 out of 20 (45%) of the reviewed assessments had a non-maltreating caregiver listed in the intake. The non-maltreating caregiver was interviewed in 9 out of 9 instances (100%).
- Other adults were present in 20% or 4 out of 20 of the reviewed assessments. 50% or 2 out of 4 of these adults were interviewed by workers.
- Interviews with the maltreating caregiver occurred in 100% or ALL of the reviewed assessments.
- Interview protocol was followed in 40% or 8 out of 20 assessments. For those assessments that did not follow protocol, reviewers were unable to find documentation to indicate the reason for the deviation from protocol in 10 out of 12 assessments (83%).
  - *Reviewer Comments: The contact sheet is hard to follow and suggest the same date and time of interviews for different individuals; maltreating caregiver was interviewed before non-maltreating caregiver; children were not interviewed privately; other adults in the home were not interviewed.*

#### ***Present Danger (Chart 2):***

- Present danger at the initial contact with the child victim and/or family was identified in one of the reviewed assessments (5%).
- Reviewers agreed with the worker's assessment of Present Danger in 19 out of 20 instances (95%). The only instance in which a reviewer disagreed with the worker's assessment was on a case in which the worker identified present danger and the reviewer disagreed with the worker's conclusion. *Please note that a review of this assessment indicated that the children were removed by law enforcement and were NOT in present danger when the worker had the initial contact with them. The worker did NOT need to complete an Immediate Protective Action Plan (IPA), however, since one was completed and finalized on N-FOCUS, it was reviewed by QA staff.*

#### ***Immediate Protective Action - IPA (Chart 3):***

- One Safety Assessment included a finalized copy of an Immediate Protective Action (IPA) Plan. This IPA was judged by the reviewer to be insufficient due the following reasons:
  - Reason for the protective action was **NOT** explained to the parent/caregiver.
  - While a provision for oversight was included in the IPA, the oversight requirement was **NOT** sufficient to assure that the Protective Action was implemented in accordance with expectation and assured child safety.
  - The IPA did **NOT** contain parent's willingness to cooperate.
  - The IPA did **NOT** contain a description of person(s) responsible for the protective action.
  - The IPA did **NOT** contain confirmation of the person responsible (trustworthiness, reliability, commitment, availability, and alliance to plan).
  - The IPA did **NOT** contain a description of the protective action (how it will work).
  - The IPA did **NOT** contain time frames (frequency and anticipated duration).

### **Domains (Chart 5):**

- **Maltreatment** – Sufficient information was collected in 85% (17 out of 20) of the assessments.
  - *Reviewer Comments: Interview or include information for everyone listed as perpetrators. Include findings/conclusions and evidence to support findings, include removal of child, address all areas of concern in the intake. Caution run on narratives, information needs to be separated into other domain areas.*
- **Nature** – Sufficient information was collected in 25% (5 out of 20) of the assessments.
  - *Reviewer Comments: Information contained in domain is evidence and goes to support the finding, therefore should be contained in maltreatment. Include analysis of events/factors surrounding the abuse and neglect. Include pattern of why the abuse and neglect is occurring in the home. Include information about circumstances of past removals and whether or not those circumstances relate to current maltreatment.*
- **Child Functioning** – Sufficient information was collected in 90% (18 out of 20) of the assessments.
  - *Reviewer Comments: What conclusions can be drawn from the worker's contact with all parties regarding the child's behavior and development? Discuss nature of peer interactions, include worker's observation of child (ren), include description of overarching statements surrounding child's development or behavioral difficulties; need to assess all children living in home.*
- **Disciplinary Practices** – Sufficient information was collected in 50% (10 out of 20) of the assessments.
  - *Reviewer Comments: Include situations and detailed information in which the parent implements discipline for the child(ren), address the purpose of discipline, address future discipline plans in assessments involving infants, include children's statements of discipline in home and patterns of discipline with older children.*
- **General Parenting** – Sufficient information was collected in 70% (14 out of 20) of the assessments.
  - *Reviewer Comments: Include information about routines within the home, include past parenting of children that may have been relinquished or terminated, family activities, parental roles, include parenting for all individuals living in the home if they take role in caring for the children.*
- **Adult Functioning** – Sufficient information was collected in 60% (12 out of 20) of the assessments.
  - *Reviewer Comments: Need to include information for all adults living in the home; include information about community or family supports, include information for each adult's Mental Health, Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse, talk about the nature of adult relationships within the home (marriage and other relationships).*

### **Collateral Source (Chart 5):**

- 15 out of the 20 assessments indicated that information should have been collected from a collateral source. Collateral information was collected in 53% or 8 out the 15 assessments.
  - *Reviewer Comments: Incorporate the information gained from collaterals into the assessment. Sometimes a contact is recorded on the contact sheet but the information gained is not incorporated into the assessment. Suggest workers utilize the narrative portion in the contact sheet to document the family's relationship to the contact.*

### ***Maternal/Paternal Relatives (Chart 5):***

- Maternal relatives were identified in 60% of the assessments (12 out of 20).
- Paternal relatives were identified in 60% of the assessments (12 out of 20).
  - *Reviewer Comment: Documentation needs to contain at a minimum first name, last name, and location (city & state). Include in documentation parents' refusal to provide extended family information during assessment.*

### ***ICWA (Chart 5):***

- Information regarding ICWA was obtained in 70% of the assessments (14 out of 20).
  - *Reviewer Comments: Workers need to utilize the kinship narrative and include a statement as to how ICWA information was obtained by CFS Specialist. For example: If a worker states that ICWA does not apply to family or N/A, the worker needs to include a statement of how the worker learned that it did not apply.*
- *Good examples include:*
  - *Per mother/name and father/name child does not meet criteria for ICWA because of the following reason.*
  - *Father was asked about enrollment or qualification he may meet in Native American Tribe in which he denied eligibility for him or his son.*
  - *According to (parents/name), no Native American Tribal heritage exists within the family.*

### ***Impending Danger (Charts 4 & 6):***

**Impending Danger at the initial contact with the youth and/or family (Chart 4):** The worker identified impending danger at the initial contact with the child and family in 40% or 8 out of the 20 reviewed assessments. **The reviewer agreed with the worker's decision in 75% or 15 out of the 20 reviewed assessments.**

- Reviewer disagreed with the worker in 5 of the assessments in which the worker indicated that there was NO impending danger at the initial contact with the child and family. The reviewers determined that there was not enough information in the assessment to make a determination of whether or not impending danger was present at worker's initial contact with the child and/or family.

**Impending Danger at the end of the Initial Assessment (Chart 6):** The worker identified impending danger at the end of the initial assessment in 8 out of the 20 cases reviewed. Reviews of all 20 assessments indicate the following:

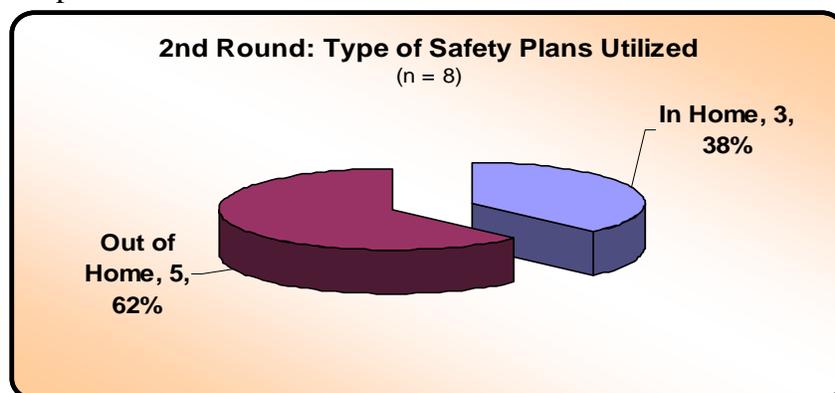
- 13 out of 20 (65%) of the reviewed assessments contained sufficient information to provide a reasonable understanding of family members and their functioning.
- 16 out of 20 (80%) of the reviewed assessments contained sufficient information to support and justify decision making.
- 10 out of 20 (50%) of the reviewed assessments contained sufficient information in the six domains to accurately assess the 14 factors.

Safety threats were identified in 40% or 8 out of 20 of the reviewed assessments.

- The reviewer agreed with the worker on all of the safety factors identified “yes” in 100% of these assessments (8 out of 8 instances).
  - Within the safety factors identified “yes”, 7 out of 8 (88%) contained threshold documentation for identification/justification of impending danger.
- The reviewer agreed with the worker on all of the safety factors identified “no” in 60% or 12 out of all 20 assessments reviewed.
- Safety Assessment Conclusion:
  - The worker determined that the child was UNSAFE at the conclusion of the safety assessment in 8 out 20 (40%) of the reviewed assessments. The reviewer agreed with the worker’s decision that the child was UNSAFE in all 8 assessments (100%).
  - The worker determined that the child was SAFE in 12 out of 20 (60%) of the reviewed assessments.
    - The reviewer agreed with the worker’s decision that the child was SAFE in 58% or 7 out of these 12 assessments.
    - The reviewer disagreed with the worker’s decision that the child was SAFE in 42% or 5 out of these 12 assessments. The reviewers determined that the information in these assessments were not sufficient to make a determination of safety (impending danger).
      - Although there was not enough information to make a determination of impending danger, these Safety Assessments did not rise to the level of Service Area Administrator notification.

**Safety Plan (Charts 7 & 8):** The worker determined that the child was unsafe in 40% or 8 out of the 20 reviewed assessments. Safety plans were established at the conclusion of the safety assessment in ALL eight of these assessments (100%).

- 38% or 3 out of 8 of the safety plans were in home safety plans. A reviewer indicated that the worker should have considered utilizing a combination safety plan in 1 case in which an in of home safety plan was utilized.
- No combination safety plans were utilized.
- 62% or 5 out of 8 of the safety plans were out of home safety plans.
  - A reviewer indicated that the worker should have considered utilizing either an in home or combination safety plan in 1 case in which an out of home safety plan was utilized.



- 50% or 4 out of 8 safety plans completed contained a sufficient contingency plan.

**Examples of sufficient contingency plan:**

*Note: The intent of having a sufficient contingency plan is to have workers think ahead, anticipate situations that might come up and make a plan to deal with them. A good contingency plan is an actual backup plan with names and information of individual(s) that will take over or complete safety actions if the original safety plan participant is unable to do so. A good contingency plan is one that can prevent the need for immediate caseworker notification or action.*

**For Out of Home Safety Plans:**

1.) *If (NAME) approved relative provider is unable to care for the (child/youth), the relative care provider will contact the child's caseworker and the child will be placed with (NAME) another identified and approved relative provider.*

2.) *If (NAMES) foster parents are unable to care for the (child/youth), the foster parents will contact the child's caseworker and the child will be placed with (NAME) identified respite care provider or (NAME) identified traditional or agency foster care provider.*

**For IN Home Safety Plans:**

1.) *If (NAME) relative safety plan provider is unable to be at (NAME) family home as expected from 4-6pm. Then (NAME) will contact (NAME) another relative safety plan participant who will substitute for them during that time. If both are unavailable due to a family emergency then (NAME) the pastor's wife will substitute for them during that time.*

2.) *If (NAME) a contractor providing safety services for the family is unable to do what they agreed to do, they will notify the caseworker and (NAME) another safety service contractor will be utilized.*

**Examples of insufficient contingency plan:**

- 1) *The placement unit will need to find another placement.*
- 2) *Child will be made a state ward and placed into foster care.*
- 3) *This is an out of home safety plan and there is not a need for a backup plan.*
- 4) *The assigned caseworker should be contacted.*
- 5) *Their designee will take over*
- 6) *None*

- 50% of 4 out of 8 of the safety plan contained sufficient information to support the decision made with regards to suitability of safety plan participants. A total of 5 assessments contained a completed suitability of safety plan participant form(s), however, only 4 of these suitability forms contained sufficient information.
  - *Reviewer Comments: Need to ensure suitability is completed for all participants including two-parent foster families, providers and informal supports. Include background checks on suitability.*
- 75% or 6 out of 8 safety plans addressed who was going to make sure the child was protected.
- 25% or 2 out of 8 safety plans addressed what action is needed.
- 50% or 4 out of 8 safety plans addressed where the plan and action are going to take place.
- 13% or 1 out of 8 safety plans addressed when the action will be finished.
- 13% or 1 out of 8 safety plans addressed how it is all going to work and how the actions are going to control for safety.
- 0% or none of the safety plans contained caregiver promissory commitments.
 

*(Note: This question uses a reverse scale: Lower number is better as we do not want the safety plans to contain caregiver promissory commitments).*

- 38% or 3 out of 8 safety plans involved in home services.
- While all 8 safety plan forms addressed the oversight question, only 50% or 4 out of 8 safety plans contained sufficient oversight requirements to assure that the plan was implemented in accordance with expectation and was assuring child safety.
- One out of the 8 safety plans was not adjusted by the worker as threats increased or decreased.
  - *Reviewer Comments: The children were placed with one provider (NAME1) from 8/19-9/11. The children were then placed with another provider (NAME 2) from 9/11-10/08 and then were placed back with the first provider (NAME 1) on 10/08. The only safety plan found on file has a begin date of 9/10/08 which includes a suitability form and information about the 1<sup>st</sup> provider (NAME1). There are no updated safety plans and no completed suitability of safety plan participant form for the 2<sup>nd</sup> provider (NAME2).*

**Protective Capacity Assessment (Chart 9):**

- At the time of the reviews, only 3 out of the eight applicable assessments contained a finalized copy of the Protective Capacity Assessment (PCA). All three PCA's identified caregiver enhanced protective capacities, however, only one out of the 3 assessments reflected that a consensus was reached between the worker and the family about what must change.

**Conditions of Return (Chart 9):**

- At the time of the reviews, only 2 out of the 5 applicable cases included a finalized copy of the Conditions of Return. Both Conditions of Return forms included information on what specific behaviors must be present in the home to ensure and sustain safety.

*NOTE: The QA tool does not assess whether or not the worker met their time frame in documenting the PCA or the Conditions of Return on N-FOCUS. The QA team only reviews the quality of the PCA and the Conditions of Return if it is finalized on N-FOCUS at the time of the review.*

## SUMMARY

**Data collected from 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of reviews in the Northern Service Area indicated the following:**

### **Strengths:**

- \* 100% of the time workers interviewed all other children in the household.
- \* 100% of the time workers interviewed all non maltreating caregivers.
- \* 100% of the time workers interviewed maltreating caregiver(s).
- \* 100% of the time the reviewers agreed with the worker's determination of a child being unsafe at the conclusion of the safety assessment.
- \* 95% of the time reviewers agreed with the worker's determination of present danger.
- \* 90% of the reviewed assessments contained sufficient information in the child functioning section.
- \* 88% of the assessments with safety threats marked as "YES" contained sufficient justification of threshold criteria.
- \* None of the Safety Plans included caregiver promissory commitments.
- \* 88% of the safety plans adjusted as threats increased or decreased.

**While there continues to be a need for improvement in the other areas that were assessed, a comparison of the data collected from Rounds 1 and 2 of QA reviews indicate the following:**

### **Areas showing an increase in percentage achieved:**

#### **Initial Response:**

- All other children in the household were interviewed.
- Non maltreating caregiver(s) were interviewed.
- Other adults in the home were interviewed.
- Maltreating caregiver was interviewed

#### **6 Domains/Collateral Info/Identification of Relatives/ICWA**

- Sufficient information was gathered in the Maltreatment section.
- Sufficient information was gathered in the child functioning section.
- Sufficient information was gathered in the adult functioning section.
- Collateral information was collected when necessary.
- Worker identified maternal relatives
- Worker identified paternal relatives
- ICWA information was obtained.

#### **Safety Evaluation**

- Sufficient information – provide understanding of family members & their functioning.
- Sufficient information – justify decision making.
- Reviewer agrees with worker on safety threats – safety factors marked "YES"

#### **Safety Plan:**

Safety plan included an appropriate contingency plan.

Safety plan contained promissory commitment

Safety Plan involved in home services.

Safety plan ran continuously as long as safety threats are present.

Safety plan adjusted as threats increased or decreased.

## Areas showing a **decrease** in percentage achieved:

### **Initial Response:**

- Initial contact with child victim(s) was made within required timeframe.
- Interview protocol was followed and if not followed, documentation was included to document reason for deviation.

### **6 Domains/Collateral Info/Identification of Relatives/ICWA**

- Sufficient information was gathered in the nature section.
- Sufficient information was gathered in the parent discipline section.
- Sufficient information was gathered in the general parenting section.

### **Safety Evaluation**

- Sufficient information – to assess ALL 14 safety factors.
- Reviewer agrees with worker on safety factors “NO
- Documentation contained justification for identification of impending danger (threshold criteria).

### **Safety Plan:**

- Suitability of safety plan participant(s) was completed and contained sufficient information.
- Overall safety plan was judged by reviewers to be appropriate.
- Safety plan addressed “WHO”
- Safety plan addressed “WHAT”
- Safety plan addressed “WHERE”
- Safety plan addressed “WHEN”
- Safety plan addressed “HOW”
- Safety plan contained a sufficient oversight requirement.

### **Other Comments:**

- **Assessment of Present Danger** - The only instance in which a reviewer disagreed with the worker’s assessment was on a case in which the worker identified present danger and the reviewer disagreed with the worker’s conclusion. *Please note that a review of this assessment indicated that the children were removed by law enforcement and were NOT in present danger when the worker had the initial contact with them. The worker did NOT need to complete an Immediate Protective Action Plan (IPA) but since one was completed and finalized on N-FOCUS, it was reviewed by QA staff.*
- **Protective Capacity Assessments & Conditions of Return** *The QA tool does not assess whether or not the worker met their time frame in documenting the PCA or the Conditions of Return on N-FOCUS. The QA team only reviews the quality of the PCA and the Conditions of Return if it is finalized on N-FOCUS at the time of the review.*
  - Round 1 - There were no finalized PCA or Conditions of return found on N-FOCUS at the time of the reviews.
  - Round 2:
    - \* At the time of the reviews, only 3 out of the eight applicable assessments contained a finalized copy of the Protective Capacity Assessment (PCA). All three PCA’s identified caregiver enhanced protective capacities, however, only one out of the 3 assessments reflected that a consensus was reached between the worker and the family about what must change.
    - \* At the time of the reviews, only 2 out of the 5 applicable assessments included a finalized copy of the Conditions of Return. Both Conditions of Return forms included information on what specific behaviors must be present in the home to ensure and sustain safety.
- **Supervisory Checklist Review:** The reviewers also assessed the case using the same questions included in the Supervisory Review Checklist in the Assessment. The results of these reviews can be found in **Table 1** in the attached excel document (*NSA Comparison Charts*).