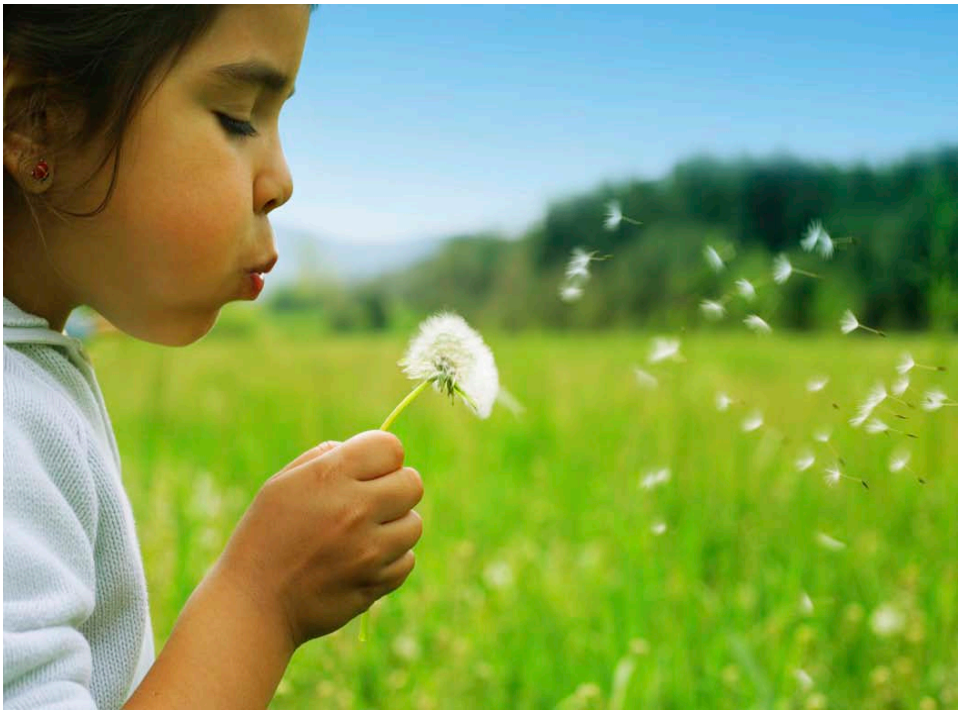
Nebraska Statewide

Initial Safety Assessments

Round 4 - Safety Model QA



Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Quality Assurance

Report Date: June 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report: Initial Safety Model QA Round 4
Statewide

The Quality Assurance Team completed the fourth round of Initial Safety Assessment Reviews in the Fall 2010 through the Spring 2011. The period under review was October 2009 – March 2010. The QA Team completed 638 reviews out of the 5400 (11.8%) eligible Initial Safety Assessments documented in N-FOCUS for the State during the period under review. The report also includes some reviewer comments and observations. Charts and table containing data from the reviews are attached to the report.

This most recent review indicated the following strengths or areas with highest percentage achieved:

- 77% - other children residing in the home were interviewed during the assessment.
- 89% - the non maltreating caregiver was interviewed during the assessment.
- 90% - the maltreating caregiver was interviewed during the assessment.
- 98% - reviewer agrees with the worker's assessment of present danger.
- 81% - sufficient information was collected regarding the extent of maltreatment.
- 82% - reviewer agrees with worker on all safety factors identified "yes".
- 76% - safety factors identified as "yes" contained justification for the identification of impending danger.
- 92% - reviewer agrees with workers conclusion that the child is unsafe.
- 93% - the suitability of safety plan participants was completed.
- 96% - safety plan ran continuously as long as safety threats were present.
- 91% - safety plan was adjusted as threats increased or decreased.
- 94% - conditions of return included a description of how an in home safety plan would work to keep the child safe.

All other areas of the review indicated a percentage achieved lower than 80%. However, the following areas showed the most need for improvement or the lowest percentage achieved:

- 46% - other adults living in the home were interviewed during the assessment.
- 34% - interview protocol was followed during the assessment.
- 56% - immediate protective action plan was implemented in cases which had identified present danger.
- 48% - sufficient information was collected regarding parent discipline practices.
- 49% - sufficient information was collected regarding general parenting.
- 41% - sufficient information was collected regarding adult functioning.
- 37% - sufficient information was collected in the six domains to accurately assess the 14 safety factors.
- 37% - reviewer agreed with the worker on all safety factors that were identified as "no".
- 40% - reviewer agreed with the worker's conclusion that the child is safe.
- 12% - the overall safety plan was judged to be sufficient by reviewers.
- 49% - conditions for return were established.

The Quality Assurance Team completed the fourth round of Initial Safety Assessment Reviews in the Fall 2010 through the Spring 2011. The period under review was October 2009 – March 2010. The QA Team completed 638 reviews out of the 5400 total Initial Safety Assessments documented in N-FOCUS for the State during the period under review.

Summary of All Findings:

Data collected from the fourth round of Initial Assessment reviews in the State indicated the following (green indicates 90% and above, yellow 75 – 89% and red 74% and below):

Initial Response:

- 68% - initial contact with all child victims was made within the required time frame.
- 77% - other children residing in the home were interviewed.
- 19% - reason for not interviewing the other children in the home was contained within the documentation.
- 46% - other adults living in the home were interviewed.
- 89% - the non maltreating caregiver was interviewed during the assessment.
- 90% - maltreating caregiver was interviewed.
- 34% - interview protocol was followed.
- 14% - documentation for the deviation from the interview protocol.

Present Danger & Immediate Protective Action:

- 3% - worker identified Present Danger during contacts with the child and/or family.
- 98% - reviewer agreed with the worker's assessment of Present Danger.
- 56% - Immediate Protective Action (IPA) plan was implemented for cases that identified Present Danger.
- 80% - documentation indicated the reason for IPA was explained to the parent/caregiver.
- 100% - IPA included a provision for oversight
- 40% Oversight requirement was sufficient to assure that the IPA was implemented in accordance to assure child safety.
- 70% - Oversight plan was followed by the worker or other designated person.
- 70% - IPA contained the parent's willingness to cooperate.
- 80% - IPA contained the description of person (s) responsible for protection action.
- 70% - IPA contained confirmation of person responsible for protective action: trustworthiness, reliability, commitment, availability and alliance to plan.
- 20% - IPA contained a description of how it will all work.
- 30% - IPA contained time frames.
- 70% - IPA were sufficient.

6 Domains/Collateral Info/Identification of Relatives/ICWA:

- 81% - sufficient information was documented in the Maltreatment domain.
- 60% - sufficient information was documented in the Nature domain.
- 66% - sufficient information was documented in the Child Functioning domain.
- 48% - sufficient information was documented in the Parenting Discipline domain.
- 49% - sufficient information was documented in the General Parenting domain.
- 41% - sufficient information was documented the Adult Functioning domain.
- 41% - collateral information was incorporated when necessary.
- 62% - worker identified maternal relatives.

- 46% - worker identified paternal relatives.
- 77% - ICWA information was obtained.

Safety Evaluation:

- 37% - documentation was sufficient to provide a reasonable understanding of family members and their functioning.
- 38% - documentation was sufficient to support and justify decision making.
- 37% - documentation was sufficient in the 6 domains to accurately assess the 14 safety factors.
- 82% - reviewer agreed with worker on safety threats – safety factors marked "YES".
- 76% - safety factors marked "yes", documentation contained a justification for the identification of impending danger.
- 37% - reviewer agreed with worker on safety factors marked "NO".
- 40% - reviewer agreed with the worker's conclusion that the child was safe.
- 92% - reviewer agreed with the worker's conclusion that the child was unsafe.

Safety Plan:

- 12% - reviewer judged the overall Safety Plan to be sufficient.
- 83% - suitability of Safety Plan participant was sufficient.
- 47% - Safety Plan oversight was sufficient.
- 31% - contingency plan was appropriate.
- ***27% - contained promissory commitments. * Lower number is better.***

Protective Capacity Assessment (PCA):

- 38% - Protective Capacity Assessment was conducted.
- 66% - PCA documentation reflects consensus between the worker and the family.
- 89% - PCA identified enhanced protective capacities.

Conditions of Return (COR):

- 49% - COR was established for children in out of home care at the end of the assessment.
- 94% - COR included how an in home Safety Plan would keep the child safe.

Background Information:

Nebraska Safety Intervention System: The Nebraska Safety Intervention System (NSIS) was developed with the assistance of the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services to improve our safety interventions with children and families throughout the state. Nebraska has been working with the Center since 2005 to review models used by other states, to select the model Nebraska would use, and to develop Nebraska specific materials. The model is a research based best practice model that provides workers the tools to better assess safety for children and families throughout their involvement with DHHS. More specifically, the NSIS:

- Improves safety decisions;
- Involves supervisors to a greater degree in all aspects of decision-making;
- Provides clarity of purpose for initial and continuing safety assessment;
- Provides clarity of purpose for ongoing work with families;
- Improves the ability to assess and professionally support decisions;
- Increases the equity and fairness for all families; and
- Improves case planning and focus for safety related interventions.

It is important to note that the model is applied to cases involving child abuse and neglect only. The NSIS is not used in cases involving youth who are committed to state custody by the juvenile justice system, unless the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory indicates a safety concern in a youth's family.

NSIS implementation began in April 2007 in the Western Service Area, continued throughout the state and was fully implemented in the spring of 2008. Service areas were asked to begin NSIS implementation as soon as they completed training. Under this implementation plan, all new child abuse and neglect reports are assessed using NSIS. Each service area was also asked to develop and implement a transition plan to ensure that all current cases were evaluated using NSIS by October 2008.

REVIEW FINDINGS:

Approximately 12% (11.8%) of the Initial Safety Assessments completed in the State during the period under review were assessed by the reviewers.

Initial Response/Contact Information (Chart 1):

During the period under review (PUR), 638 Initial Assessments were reviewed across the State. *Please note; not all of the Initial Safety Assessments reviewed had an intake on the system that listed a victim, non-maltreating caregiver and maltreating caregiver.*

- Initial contact with child victim was made within the required time frame in 68% of the Safety Assessments (415 out of 614 instances).
- The other children residing in the household were interviewed in 175 out of 226 or 77% of the applicable cases.
- The non-maltreating caregiver was interviewed in 219 out of 247 or 89% of the applicable cases.
- The other adults in the home were interviewed in 57 out of 123 or 46% of the applicable cases.
- Interviews with the maltreating caregiver occurred in 90% or 535 out of 595 assessments where there was an identified maltreating caregiver.
- Interview protocol was followed in 34% or 211 out of 617 assessments. For those assessments that did not follow protocol reviewers were able to find documentation to indicate the reason for protocol deviation in 57 out of 406 assessments (14%).

Present Danger and Protective Action (Charts 2 & 3):

- Present danger at the initial contact with the child victim and/or family was identified by CFS Specialists in 17 out of 638 assessments (3%).
- Reviewers agreed with the worker's assessment of Present Danger in 98% (627 out of 638) of the assessments.
- Immediate Protective Action (IPA) was taken in 10 out of 18 (56%) assessments that had identified present danger. Present danger was indicated in 17 assessments, but data indicated there were 18 assessments that had an IPA. This discrepancy maybe attributed to reviewer error or IPA being implemented when present danger did not exist.
- Documentation indicated that the reason for IPA was discussed with the parent/caregiver in 8 out of 10 assessments (80%).
- The Protective Action Plan contained an oversight provision in 10 out of 10 (100%) reviewed plans.
- The oversight requirement was sufficient to assure the Protective Action was implemented in accordance with expectations in order to ensure child safety in 4 out of 10 (40%) reviewed plans.
- The worker followed the plan for oversight of the Protective Action in 7 out of 10 (70%) plans.
- The Reviewers indicated that the overall IPA documentation was sufficient in 1 out of 10 (10%) plans.
- 7 out of 10 (70%) plans contained the parent's willingness to cooperate.
- 8 out of 10 (80%) plans contained the description of the person (s) responsible for the Protective Action.
- 7 out of 10 (70%) plans contained the confirmation of the person responsible for the Protective Action: trustworthiness, reliability, commitment, availability and alliance to the plan.
- 2 out of 10 (20%) contained a description of how the Protective Action will work.
- 3 out of 10 (30%) contained time frames of the Protective Action.
- Reviewers found that the Protective Action was sufficient in 7 out of 10 (70%) plans.

Domains (Chart 4):

- **Maltreatment –** Sufficient information was collected in 81% (519 out of 638) of the assessments.

  Reviewer Comments:
  - *Provide conclusion/overall analysis from interviews – include findings/conclusion.*
  - *Provide details about symptoms, events and circumstances related to maltreatment.*
  - *Include information from and about the children/victims regarding the maltreatment allegations.*
  - *Interview or include information for everyone listed as perpetrators.*
  - *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 60% (380 out of 638) of the assessments.

  Reviewer Comments:
  - *Need to include caregiver's explanation of maltreatment.*
  - *This section needs to include worker's analysis of lengthy history of intakes received on families.*
  - *Summarize and discuss the major influences of the overarching causes of abuse and neglect.*
  - *Include analysis of events/factors and historical information surrounding the abuse and neglect.*
  - *Include information about circumstances of past removals and whether or not those circumstances relate to current maltreatment.*
  - *Caution run on narratives, information needs to be separated into other domain areas.*

- **Child Functioning –** Sufficient information was collected in 66% (418 out of 638) of the assessments.

  Reviewer Comments:
  - *Need to include current information and address changes in child functioning.*
  - *Summarize and incorporate information gathered from ongoing contacts with child, family and providers.*
  - *Include parents and/or caregivers perceptions of the child. What conclusions can be drawn from the worker's contact with all parties regarding the child's behavior and development?*
  - *Include worker observation of child (ren).*
  - *Include description and information to support overarching statements surrounding child's development or behavioral difficulties.*
  - *Need to assess all children living in the home.*

- **Disciplinary Practices –** Sufficient information was collected in 48% (305 out of 638) of the assessments.

  - ***Reviewer Comments:***
    - *Need to include current information and address changes in disciplinary practices.*
    - *Incorporate information gathered from contacts with the child, family and the providers. Include statements from providers working with the family regarding their observations of parent discipline.*
    - *Include situation/purpose and detailed information in which the parent implements discipline for the child (ren), length of discipline, future discipline plans in assessments involving infants, children's statements of discipline in the home, patterns of discipline with older children.*

- **General Parenting –** Sufficient information was collected in 49% (312 out of 638) of the assessments.

  - ***Reviewer Comments:***
    - *Need to include current information and address changes in general parenting practices.*
    - *Incorporate information gathered from contacts with the child, family and the providers. Include statements from providers working with the family regarding their observations.*
    - *Include information regarding routines within the home, include past parenting of children that may have been relinquished or terminated, family activities, parent satisfaction, parental roles.*
    - *Include parenting for all individuals living in the home if they take a role in caring for the children.*

- **Adult Functioning –** Sufficient information was collected in 41% (263 out of 638) of the assessments.

  - ***Reviewer Comments:***
    - *Need to include current information and address changes in adult functioning.*
    - *Summarize information gained during contacts with the adults involved.*
    - *Need to include information for all adults living in the home.*
    - *Include information about employment history, financial assistance, community or family supports, Mental Health, Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse information.*
    - *Discuss the nature of adult relationships within the home (marriage and other relationships).*

Collateral Source (Chart 4):

- 93% or 592 out of 638 assessments indicated that information should have been collected from a collateral source. Collateral information was collected in 41% (242 out of 592) of the applicable assessments.

- ***Reviewer Comments:***
  - *Incorporate the information gained from collaterals into the assessment that supports enhancement of parental protective capacities or discusses barriers to enhancing the diminished capacities.*
  - *Collaterals can include family team participants, providers working with the family, mental health professionals, etc.*

Maternal/Paternal Relatives (Chart 4): *In October 2008, clarification regarding the identification of relatives was provided to the CFS and Service Area Administrators. All cases will have relatives identified regardless of the safety determination.*

- Maternal relatives were identified in 62% (393 out of 638) of the assessments.
- Paternal relatives were identified in 46% (295 out of 638) of the assessments.

- ***Reviewer Comments:***
  - *Documentation needs to contain at a minimum the first name, last name, and location (city & state).*
  - *Include in documentation the parents' refusal to provide extended family information during assessment.*
  - *Strongly encourage workers to complete the kinship narrative. Workers should also review information entered in the kinship narrative during previous assessment and update as necessary.*

ICWA (Chart 4):

- Information regarding ICWA was obtained in 77% (490 out of 638) of the assessments.

- ***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 the worker indicates that ICWA does not apply to family or N/A, the worker needs to include a statement of how they learned that it did not apply.*

Safety Assessment Conclusion & Impending Danger (Charts 5):

The worker determined the child (ren) to be unsafe in 22% of the assessments (140 out of 638). The reviewer was in agreement with the worker's determination that the child was unsafe in 92% (129 out of 140) assessments.

The worker determined the child (ren) to be safe in 78% of the assessments (498 out of 638). The reviewers agreed with the worker's conclusion that the child was safe in 40% (201 out of 498) of the assessments.

- 37% (237 out of 638) of the assessments contained sufficient information to provide a reasonable understanding of family members and their functioning.
- 38% (242 out of 638) of the assessments contained sufficient information to support and justify decision making.
- 37% (239 out of 638) of the assessments contained sufficient information in the six domains to accurately assess all 14 safety factors.
  - The reviewer agreed with the worker on all of the safety factors identified **"yes"** in 82% (115 out of 141) of the applicable assessments.
    - Within the safety factors identified **"yes",** 76% (107 out of 140) contained threshold documentation for identification/justification of impending danger.

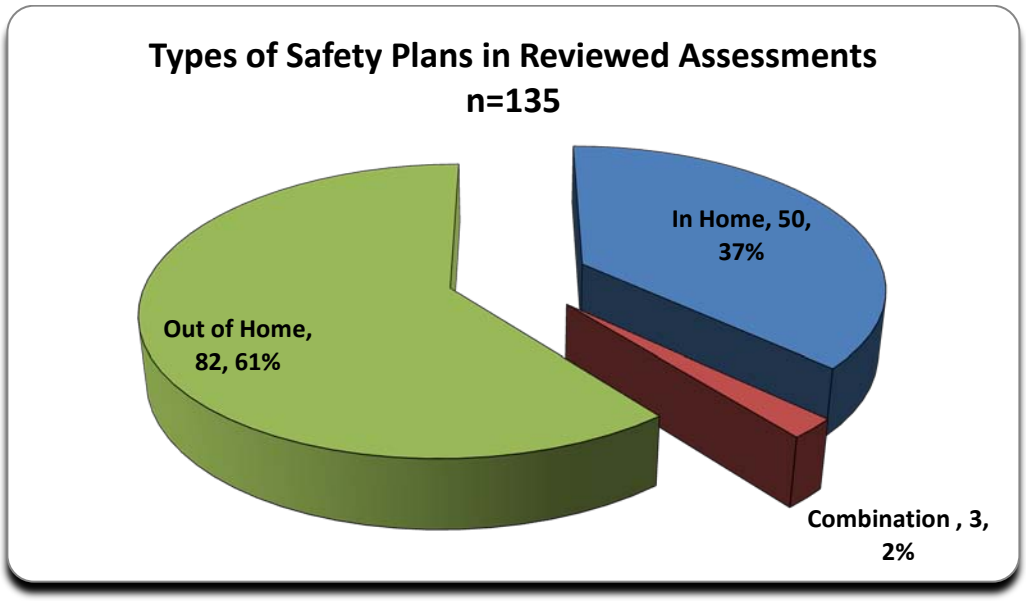
- The reviewer agreed with the worker on all of the safety factors identified **"no"** in 37% or 236 out of 638 assessments.

Reviewer Comments:

- *In many instances, the safety assessment did not contain enough information to accurately assess all 14 safety factors.*
- *CFS Administrators were alerted when a reviewer had questions/concerns for the child's safety. Although the reviewers determined the majority of assessments did not contain sufficient information to determine impending danger, CFS Administrator notification was not necessary following review of the safety assessments.*

Safety Plan (Charts 6 & 7):

- The worker determined that the child was unsafe in 22% or 140 out of 638 reviewed assessments. Safety plans were established and implemented at the conclusion of the safety assessment in 135 out of 140 (96%) of the reviewed assessments. While there was 140 assessments that indicated unsafe children, there were only 135 safety plans reviewed. This discrepancy may be attributed to safety plans not being implemented in a timely manner following the conclusion of the assessment or reviewer error.
- The review of the 135 safety plans revealed the following:



- 37% (50 out of 135) of the Safety Plans were In Home Safety Plans. Reviewers indicated that the CFS Specialist should have considered utilizing an In Home Safety Plan in five additional cases.
- 2% (3 out of 135) of the Safety Plans was a Combination Safety Plan. Reviewers indicated that the CFS Specialist should have considered utilizing a Combination Safety Plan in eight additional cases.
- 61% (82 out of 135) Safety Plans were Out of Home Safety Plans. Reviewers indicated that the CFS Specialist should have considered utilizing an Out of Home Safety Plan in one additional case.
- Contingency plans were appropriately documented in 31% (42 out of 135) of the Safety Plans.

- Suitability of Safety Plan participant(s) was/were appropriately documented and contained sufficient information to support decisions made with regards to the suitability of the Safety Plan participants in 83% (112 out of 135) of the Safety Plans.
- 84% (113 out of 135) of the Safety Plans addressed who was going to make sure the child was protected.
- 61% (83 out of 135) of the Safety Plans addressed what action is needed.
- 76% (102 out of 135) of the Safety Plans addressed where the plan and action are going to take place.
- 21% (29 out of 135) of the Safety Plans addressed when the action will be finished.
- 30% (40 out of 135) of the Safety Plans addressed how it is all going to work and how the actions are going to control for safety.
- *27% (37 out of 135) of the Safety Plans contained caregiver promissory commitments. *Promissory commitment refers to the caregiver having responsibility to manage safety when it has been determined that the situation is out of control. Assessment needs to clearly document changes that caregivers have made to suggest their ability to manage safety.*Lower number is better for this indicator.*
- 43% (58 out of 135) of the Safety Plans involved in home services.
- The Safety Plan oversight requirement was sufficient to assure that the Safety Plan was implemented in accordance with expectation and was assuring child safety in 47% (64 out of 135) of the reviewed Safety Plans.
- Overall, 12% (16 out of 135) of the Safety Plans were judged to be sufficient by reviewers.

Reviewer Comments:

- *CFS Specialists need to evaluate the safety thresholds as if the children were residing in parental care without service intervention. In some instances, children were determined to be SAFE because of the services in place. For example: Upon completion of an updated safety assessment, CFSS concludes there are no safety threats due to implemented services and supports wrapped around the family, even though parent protective capacities have not been enhanced and safety threats would be present in the absence of those services.*
- *Safety Plans are to be implemented and active as long as threats to child safety exist and caregiver protective capacities are insufficient to assure a child is protected. A Safety Plan must: Control and manage impending danger; incorporate and control any present danger controlled by Protective Action; have an immediate effect; be immediately available and accessible and have supports and services that have immediate effect of controlling for identified safety threats. Safety Plans must NOT have promissory commitments.*
- *Suitability of Safety Plan participants should be completed for all participants including two-parent foster families, providers and informal supports. When appropriate, suitability must include background checks on suitability.*
- *The Safety Plan documentation should include a sufficient contingency plan. The intent of having a sufficient contingency plan is to have staff 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.*
- *Children and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) is responsible for oversight of the Safety Plan. Safety Plans will be monitored continuously, but no less often than once a week prior to completion of the assessment. Monitoring of the Safety Plan will involve face to face contact with the child and family and phone calls to Safety Plan*

participants. This monitoring may be done by the CFSS, or other person designated by the CFSS to provide monitoring. An individual Safety Plan participant cannot be designated to monitor the Safety Plan. As progress is demonstrated toward achieving the identified outcomes, the Safety Plan may be monitored less frequently, but no less than once a month. All monitoring activities will be documented and maintained in the case record. If monitoring is done by someone other than the CFSS, the CFSS will review the monitoring reports at least once a week.

Protective Capacity Assessment (Chart 8):

- 38% (53 out of 138) of the cases had a Protective Capacity Assessment documented on N-FOCUS at the time of the review. There were 140 children that were found to be unsafe at the conclusion of the assessments, there is a discrepancy that may be attributed to reviewer error.
  - Documentation within the Protective Capacity Assessments indicated that consensus was reached between the specialist and family regarding what has changed or needs to change in 66% (35 out of 53) of the completed Protective Capacity Assessments.
  - The CFS Specialist identified the parent (s)' enhanced protective capacities in 89% (47 out of 53) of the completed Protective Capacity Assessments.

Reviewer Comments:

- *CFSS must complete a Protective Capacity Assessment (PCA) for a family in which a child has been determined to be unsafe. The PCA is an assessment to determine the enhanced and diminished protective capacities within the family.*
- *The PCA needs to be completed and documented on N-FOCUS within 60 calendar days of the initial custody date or 60 days from the begin date of the initial safety assessment.*
- *The PCA should be completed to reflect current parent protective capacities.*

Conditions for Return (Chart 9):

- At the time of the reviews, 49% (49 out of 101) cases included a finalized copy of the Conditions for Return on N-FOCUS. 94% (46 out of 49) cases included a description of how an in home safety plan would work to keep the child safe and what specific behaviors must be present in the home to ensure and sustain safety.

Reviewer Comments:

- *When children are residing outside the parent's/caregiver's home as part of a Safety Plan, everyone involved, especially the child's parents/caregivers, should be well informed about what conditions (circumstances that must exist in the home) are for the child/youth to be returned to the home.*
- *Conditions for Return need to be developed for children who are expected to be placed outside of the parental home for longer than 30 days. Conditions of Return need to be completed and documented on NFOCUS within 60 calendar days of removal.*

NOTE: The QA tool does not assess whether or not the worker met their time frame in documenting the PCA or the Conditions for 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.

Reviewers Overall Analysis and Conclusion of the Work:

For the purpose of a case review, the reviewer assessed the following information based on their review of the case. This part of the review contains the same information as those included in the Supervisory Review of the Nebraska Safety Assessment.

Question	% Achieved
The Nebraska Safety Assessment Instrument was completed correctly and completely.	25%
Documentation is on N-FOCUS	99%
Required Time Frames were met.	68%
A reasonable level of effort was expended given the identified safety concerns.	38%
Safety of the child/youth was assured during the assessment process.	42%
Sufficient information was gathered for informed decision making	37%
Available written documentation was obtained from law enforcement/others as appropriate.	71%
ICWA information was documented.	77%
Information was obtained about non-custodial parent, relatives, and other family support.	41%
An Immediate Protective Action was appropriately implemented to assure child safety.	6%
A Safety Plan was appropriately completed and implemented to assure child safety.	5%
A Safety Assessment was documented in accordance with required practice.	26%
A Protective Action was documented in accordance with required practice.	6%
A Safety Plan was documented in accordance with required practice.	4%
The family network and others were appropriately involved in the gathering of information.	40%
The family networks and others were appropriately involved in developing Safety Plans.	73%
Policy and procedures related to safety intervention were followed.	43%
Safety Plan is sufficient to protect child from threats of severe harm.	4%
Efforts to coordinate with law enforcement were documented.	89%
Interview protocols were followed or reason for deviation from protocol was documented.	43%
The appropriate definition was used in making the case status determination.	89%
The finding was correctly documented in N-FOCUS.	96%
Factual information supports the selected finding.	93%