

ASSESSING CAREGIVER PROTECTIVE CAPACITY



Complete an assessment of each parent and/ or caregiver's capacity to protect their child(ren) by identifying and understanding how specific safety threats are occurring within the family system. The DCS Specialist determines whether each parent/caregiver has demonstrated the specific protective capacities associated with the identified threats of danger to a child. The identification of caregiver protective capacities should be supported by information collected during the Family Functioning Assessment.

DEFINITION

Protective capacities are personal and parenting characteristics that specifically and directly can be associated with being protective of one's children. They are "strengths" that are explicitly associated with one's ability to perform effectively as a parent/caregiver in order to provide and ensure a consistently safe environment. A caregiver with the following characteristics ensures the safety of his or her child and responds to threats in ways that keep the child safe from harm.

BEHAVIORAL <i>actions and performance</i>	COGNITIVE <i>knowledge, understanding and perceptions</i>	EMOTIONAL <i>feelings, attitudes, and identification with child</i>
Parents are more likely to be protective when they have a history of being protective, especially if they control their own impulses in parenting situations. Parents are successful when they are able to set aside their own needs for their child(ren)'s.	Parents are more likely to be protective when they understand their protective role; recognize when their child's safety is threatened; and have an accurate perception of their child. Parents are successful when they can accurately recognize their child's needs; possess adequate knowledge about child development, parenting, and protection; and have realistic expectations for their child(ren).	Parents are motivated to be protective when they demonstrate love toward their child; are sensitive toward their child; and have empathy for their child(ren). Parents who are emotionally bonded to their child and feel a positive attachment to their child are more likely to be protective.

BEHAVIORAL PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES

Parent/ caregiver has a **history of protecting**.

He or she has demonstrated clear and reportable evidence of being protective of their child(ren) in many instances. Some examples include: raising children (now older) with no history of maltreatment, has demonstrated ways of protecting their child(ren) by separating them from dangerous situations, or has sought assistance from others. During an assessment, the parent or caregiver and/ or the child(ren) can each describe events and experiences where the parent/ caregiver has protected their child(ren) in the past.

Parent/ caregiver **takes action**.

He or she takes action, is assertive and responsive, and is physically able to respond to caregiving needs such as running after young children, lifting children, and is able to physically protect their child(ren) from harm consistently. They may have physical limitations, however, demonstrates the ability to accommodate those limitations in order to take action as needed.

Parent/ caregiver **demonstrates impulse control**.

He or she consistently acts thoughtfully regardless of outside stimulation, avoids whimsical responses, and thinks before acting. The adult is able to plan in their actions when caring for children and making life choices. They are not impulsive, acting upon their urges/ desires, nor highly influenced by others. A parent/ caregiver's ability to control their impulses results in positive effects on their family.

Parent/ caregiver **sets aside his or her needs in favor of the child**.

This refers to adults who can delay in gratifying their own needs, who accept their child(ren)'s needs as priority, over their own. He or she has demonstrated (through their actions) that they place their child(ren)'s needs above their own by waiting to be satisfied, sacrificing for their children, and through seeking ways to satisfy their child(ren)'s needs as a priority, without being prompted.

Parent/ caregiver has and **demonstrates adequate skill to fulfill caregiving responsibilities**.

Parent/ caregiver is able to adequately feed, care for, and supervise the child(ren). He or she clearly has the skills necessary to cook, clean, maintain, guide, and shelter their child(ren).

Parent/ caregiver is **adaptive and assertive as a caregiver**.

This refers to an adult who is flexible and adjustable, is able to accept things, is creative in their caregiving, and is able to come up with solutions and ways of behaving that may be new, needed, and unfamiliar by fitting to the needs of their child(ren). The parent/ caregiver has sought assistance in changing their behavior in the past.

COGNITIVE PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES

Parent/ caregiver **plans and is able to articulate a plan to protect the child(ren)**.

The adult has developed, either currently or in the past, plans to protect the child(ren). He or she is realistic in the planning and arrangement about what is needed to ensure child safety. He or she is aware of danger and is focused on the processing and development of a plan for safety. The adult is willing and able to seek assistance in developing plans and/ or accessing resources to assure child safety, if needed.

He or she is self-aware as a parent/ caregiver.

The parent/ caregiver understands the cause-effect relationship between their own actions and the effects on their child(ren). They are open to who and to what they do and the effects of what they do. They are able to think about themselves and judge the quality of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

Parent/ caregiver is intellectually able to fulfill caregiving responsibilities and tasks.

This refers to an adult who knows enough information about child development and basic care to assure their child(ren)'s safety. He or she also seeks to increase knowledge in correlation with their child's developing needs. They may have cognitive limitations, however, has supports and/ or resources to assist in knowledge development.

Parent/ caregiver recognizes and is able to accurately identify threats to child safety or recognize danger.

An adult who is attune with their surroundings, in particular to their perceptions regarding life situations, recognizes dangerous and threatening situations and people. He or she is really oriented and consistently operates in realistic ways.

Parent/ caregiver recognizes and has an accurate perception of the child's needs.

Parent/ caregiver consistently recognizes the child's needs, strengths, and limitations. They are able to appreciate the uniqueness and differences in children with acceptance and understanding. He or she is also sensitive to the child(ren) and their experiences. The adult is accepting and understanding of their child(ren).

Parent/ caregiver understands his/ her protective role.

This refers to awareness and knowing there are certain solely owned responsibilities and obligations that are specific to protecting a child. The adult believes it is their primary responsibility to keep their child safe. Parent/ caregiver is unwavering in their protective role and is able to articulate the significance of their role.

EMOTIONAL PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES

Parent/ caregiver is able to meet their own emotional needs (in appropriate ways, without the use of substances).

The adult recognizes and understands their own emotional needs and is effectively managing their needs in ways that do not interfere with their ability to parent and does not take advantage of others. Parent/ caregiver makes choices in regards to satisfying their feelings and emotional needs that are mature, acceptable, sensible, and practical. Managing their own emotional needs keeps the children safe from danger.

He or she is resilient as a caregiver.

The adult has demonstrated that they are able to recover from or adjust easily to stress, misfortune, or life changes. Recovery and adjustment are focused on maintaining their role as a caregiver and providing for protection of their child(ren). The adult is effective at taking action, coping, and able to withstand challenges and stress.

He or she is tolerant as a caregiver.

The adult is able to let things pass, i.e. they have a big picture attitude and don't overreact to mistakes or accidents. Parent/ caregiver maintains an even temper and patience under stressful circumstances. He or she is open minded and understanding as a parent/ caregiver.

Parent/ caregiver is emotionally stable and able to intervene to protect their child(ren).

This refers to the mental health, emotional energy, and emotional stability of the parent/ caregiver in providing protection. People who are doing well emotionally mean that their needs and feelings do not immobilize them or reduce their ability to act promptly and appropriately when needed. The adult is not consumed with his or her own feelings or anxieties. The adult is mentally alert and in-touch with reality.

Parent/ caregiver expresses love, empathy and sensitivity toward the child; experiences specific empathy with regard to the child's perspective and feelings.

This refers to active affection, compassion, warmth, and sympathy. The adult can fully relate to, explain, and feel what their child feels, thinks, and experiences. He or she demonstrates actions that are reflective of love, empathy and sensitivity and is able to explain their child's feelings and emotions and respond accordingly.

Parent/ caregiver is positively attached with the child and is clear that the number one priority is the well-being of the child.

This refers to a strong attachment that places the child(ren)'s interest above all else. The adult orders their lives according to what is best for their child, displays affectionate regard for their child and the child's experiences, and identifies their closeness with the child exceeds other personal relationships.

Parent/ caregiver is aligned with and supports the child(ren).

Parent/ caregiver demonstrates that they are strongly related and/ or associated with the child, thus showing compassion for the child by calming, pacifying, and appeasing children as needed. He or she is aligned with the child as demonstrated by their actions and responses towards the child. The parent/ caregiver identifies their relationship with the child as being the highest priority. The adult encourages and reassures their child(ren) and show compassion through sheltering and soothing the child(ren) and provides a sense of security.