

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: December 1, 2009
	Section 19: Family Support/Community Services Plan for Conditionally Safe Children	Version: 3

POLICY

During the assessment the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will assist the child's family with the development of a [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) whenever:

1. A safety decision of "Conditionally Safe" has been determined; or
2. An assessment finding of "Substantiated" is reached but DCS will take no further direct intervention.

When domestic violence has been alleged, DCS will create a [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) upon initiation of the assessment and begin planning for the safety of the child(ren) and all family members. See Practice Guidance for assistance. The purpose of this plan is to:

1. Achieve immediate and long-term safety for the child(ren) and non-offending parent;
2. Provide safety options for the non-offending parent and the child(ren); and
3. Address behaviors demonstrated by the alleged domestic violence offender that pose a risk to the child(ren)'s safety.

Note: The [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) for the non-offending parent and child(ren) should not be shared with the alleged domestic violence offender. The Family Case Manager (FCM) should work with the alleged domestic violence offender to develop a separate [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#). If a case is opened, DCS will work with the family to transition both Family Support/Community Services plans into Safety Plans.

Following the completion of the Safety Assessment, a [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) will be created as quickly as necessary to protect the safety of the child.

Code References

1. [IC 35-37-6-1: "Confidential communication" defined](#)
2. [IC 34-6-2-34.5: Domestic or family violence](#)

PROCEDURE

The FCM will:

1. Discuss in detail with the family the implementation of either of the interventions below that were chosen as part of the safety response:
 - a. The family uses extended family resources, neighbors, or other individuals in the community to ensure the child's safety, and/or
 - b. The family receives services through community providers.

2. With the family's participation and input, write a [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) that describes in detail how, when, and by whom each intervention will be implemented;
3. Specify the consequences for the family if an intervention is not followed;
4. Specify how the FCM will monitor and support the family's compliance with the plan until the completion of the assessment;
5. Have the parent(s), guardian, or custodian(s) sign the plan; and
6. Re-assess the child's safety before closing the assessment. See separate policy, [4.25 Completing the Assessment](#).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Family Support/Community Services Planning with Assessments Involving Domestic Violence

DCS will partner with the non-offending parent and child(ren) to create a [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) in all assessments where domestic violence has been identified. If the non-offending parent has met with a domestic violence service provider to create a domestic violence Safety/Survival Plan, the [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) can be revised to incorporate the Safety/Survival Plan that was created.

Note: DCS will not create a Safety/Survival Plan with the non-offending parent and child(ren). Domestic violence Safety/Survival Plans can best be created by referring the non-offending parent to a domestic violence program in the community.

This [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) should address the following:

1. Safety for the non-offending parent and child(ren) until he or she can meet with a domestic violence advocate;
2. Referrals to domestic violence programs;
3. Financial assistance;
4. Other community services available; and
5. What will happen after the FCM leaves and/or DCS is no longer involved

The plan should include strategies to reduce the risk of physical violence and harm by the alleged domestic violence offender and enhance the protection of the child(ren) and non-offending parent. [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) for individuals living with domestic violence will vary depending on whether the non-offending parent is separated from the alleged domestic violence offender, thinking about leaving, returning to, or remaining in the relationship. Specific planning may include:

1. Engaging the non-offending parent in a discussion about the options available to keep him or her and the child(ren) safe, including what has been tried before;
2. Exploring the benefits and disadvantages of specific options, and creating individualized solutions for each family;
3. Utilizing the criminal justice and civil court systems to hold the alleged domestic violence offender accountable; and
4. Writing down a list of phone numbers of neighbors, friends, family, and community service providers that the non-offending parent can contact for safety, resources, and

services. This requires FCMs to stay current about resources, contacts, and legal options.

Including Children in the Planning Process

Child(ren) should be engaged in safety planning; however, they are not responsible for their own safety and should not be responsible for implementing the safety plan. If during the initial interview, child(ren) are unable to identify who they would call or where they would go in an emergency, work with them to develop a basic plan for safety.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Find a safe adult and ask for help whenever they experience violence. This may involve calling supportive family members, friends, or community agencies for help;
2. Escape from the house if an assault is imminent or in progress and where to meet an identified safe adult. If they cannot escape, discuss where they can go to be safe in the house;
3. Avoid being in the middle of the domestic violence;
4. Find a place to go in an emergency and the steps to take to find safety; and
5. Call the police or 911 when the violence begins.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) – Available in ICWIS

RELATED INFORMATION

General

The [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF53243/CW3425\)](#) is a written agreement between DCS and the parent(s), guardian, or custodian(s) specifying what extended family supports or community services will be utilized and how those will ensure the immediate safety of the child. The plan should contain action steps and these action steps should have deadlines for completion that do not extend beyond the end of the assessment. All actions should relate directly to the child's immediate safety. The extended [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) is a voluntary, nonlegally binding agreement with the family that cannot contradict any existing court orders, including, but not limited to child support and child custody orders.

Parental Involvement in Development

Involvement of the family in the development of a [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) is imperative. The greater the family's participation in this process, the more ownership they will have in a successful outcome. For this reason, it is critical that the FCM focus the discussion on the safety of the child and not on the allegation(s). When developing the plan with the family, the FCM should speak in such a way as to develop a common understanding that the safety of the child is contingent on their ability and willingness to follow the terms of the plan. If the family is hesitant or unwilling to create a plan and/or commit to abiding by the plan's terms, remind the parent that the child may not be safe under present circumstances.

Extended Family Support

Extended family members are often the most resourceful and most effective as resources for support and their interventions are least disruptive for the child involved. Family support services may consist of childcare, transportation, home management assistance and teaching of skills, and financial assistance for housing, food, or clothing on a short term basis.

Referring the Family to Community Services

Community services are an appropriate intervention if they help the family control or mitigate the identified safety factors. Examples include routine or emergency medical care or mental health care (outpatient), alcohol or substance abuse services, in-home health care, day care, respite care, child-oriented activities (e.g., Brownies, Boy Scouts), home management and/or life skills, parenting skills, individual or family crisis counseling, financial services, housing services, transportation services, food and clothing assistance, etc.

Child or Alleged Perpetrator Leaves The Home

A [Family Support/ Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) is not to be used when the composition of the household is changed either as a result of DCS intervention or voluntarily on the part of the family. In the event the household composition changes (e.g., the child leaves the home and goes to a relative home or the alleged perpetrator leaves the home), a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition will be filed in order to provide for due process for the affected household member. If the Child and Family Team (CFT) can then create a plan to keep the child safe, DCS can request that the petition be dismissed and an Informal Adjustment (IA) created.

Domestic Violence Advocates and Confidentiality

According to [IC 35-37-6-1](#) communications between victims of domestic violence and victim advocates are confidential, even if certain third parties are present when information is exchanged. Victim advocates cannot give testimony without victim consent in CHINS proceedings.