

Topic 23: Safety Plan Services

Link to [CPS Procedure](#)

Link to [CINA Procedure](#)

Safety plan services (service code A53X) is an intensive time-limited service package targeted to children and families who:

- ◆ Come to the Department's attention through either a child protective or CINA assessment and
- ◆ Are determined by the Department worker to be conditionally safe and in need of services to monitor and promote safety during the assessment period.

Safety plan services are purchased services targeted to children and families during a child protective assessment or a CINA assessment that are intended to:

- ◆ Keep children safe from neglect and abuse;
- ◆ Maintain or improve a child's safety status through provision of timely and culturally sensitive safety enhancement interventions;
- ◆ Provide the family with needed resources; and
- ◆ Encourage and support the family to begin making positive changes immediately.

Safety plan services provide a flexible array of monitoring activities and interventions to supplement the family's protective capacities needed to keep children safe. Services may be provided in the child's home or in locations as specified in the child's safety plan.

The service is provided on a time-limited basis of a maximum of two 15-calendar-day units of service during the 20-business-day child protective assessment or CINA assessment. The date of the Department referral is considered the first day of services.

Eligibility Criteria

Cases eligible for safety plan services will consist only of children who:

- ◆ Have been determined by the Department worker to be conditionally safe during the course of a child protective or CINA assessment,
- ◆ Have a safety plan developed by the Department worker, and
- ◆ Have been determined by the Department worker to need safety plan services to prevent their removal from their home or current placement.

NOTE: For purposes of safety plan services, a "case" is defined as:

- ◆ The child or children on whom the Department has initiated a child protective or CINA assessment; and
- ◆ Any whole, half, or step siblings of that child or children who reside in the same household; and
- ◆ The parents, stepparents, adoptive parents, or caretakers of the alleged abuse victims.

Not all children receiving assessment may be referred for purchased safety plan services. Examples of situations where safety plan services will not be purchased include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Upon determination that the child is in a "conditionally safe" status, a safety plan is developed with the family, and the Department determines that the family's own informal supports and existing community resources are sufficient to assure safety during the assessment without the need for purchased services.
- ◆ The safety assessment determines that the child is in an "unsafe" status, and the worker moves forward with plans to remove the child from the home.
- ◆ If a safety assessment determines that the child is in a "safe" status, the case cannot be referred for safety plan services.

Assignment to Contractor

The Department has entered into contracts with contractors within each of the following service areas: Ames, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Dubuque, Sioux City, and Waterloo; and with contractors within each of the two sub-areas in the Cedar Rapids and Des Moines service areas. Contractors were selected through a competitive bidding process.

Within each contract area, a Case Referral Assignment Tracking System will assign new case referrals to the two contractors on a 50/50, every-other-case referral basis. The system will be designed to ensure that each contractor is at equal risk of receiving complex, difficult cases. This system has the following features:

- ◆ The case referral assignment process will be used for both safety plan services and for family safety, risk, and permanency services referrals.
- ◆ If a contractor is assigned a case for safety plan services and that case later needs family safety, risk, and permanency services, the same contractor will maintain the case for those services.
- ◆ The system allows for case-specific assignment overrides to provide service continuity for cases in which a case previously received services from one of the contractors or its subcontractor, and either the family or Department worker believes it would be beneficial for services to be delivered by that contractor or subcontractor.
- ◆ If an override assigns a case outside of the alternating assignment order, the Case Referral Assignment System will recognize this change and equalize future referrals.

Contractor Expectations

Each contractor providing safety plan services is required to meet the following expectations:

- ◆ The contractor must be available to take Department referrals 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- ◆ The contractor must call the Department worker back within one hour of any new referral received.
- ◆ The contractor must make face-to-face contact with the alleged child victims and parents, or with others identified on the Department safety plan, within 24 hours of the time of the initial Department referral call.

- ◆ The contractor must send the Department worker an e-mail confirming the date and time of the first meeting within 24 hours of the visit.
- ◆ The contractor must provide services according to the Department's individual safety plan.
- ◆ The contractor must use evidence-based practices to the greatest possible extent in order to keep children safe during the service delivery period.
- ◆ The contractor must maintain daily face-to-face contact, or daily face-to-face contact attempts, with the alleged child victims and parents or others identified on the safety plan, unless a different contact frequency is directed by the Department worker and specified on the safety plan.
- ◆ The contractor must immediately inform the Department worker of any safety issues or concerns regarding the children.
- ◆ The contractor must send the Department worker an e-mail contact summary within 24 hours of each contact with the child and family. If the contractor's e-mail service is down, this summary can be faxed to the Department worker.
- ◆ The contractor must attend all family team meetings on the case during the service period and attend any court hearings on request of the court or the Department worker.
- ◆ The contractor must respond within 2 hours, either by telephone or in-person, to any crisis that threatens the safety of the children and must provide a follow up report on the crisis to the Department worker.
- ◆ The contractor must send the Department worker via mail or e-mail a written summary report for each 15-calendar-day service unit within 24 hours of the 15th day. At a minimum, this report must include:
 - The date of the first face-to-face contact on the case.
 - Verification that case contacts and safety checks were conducted as indicated or directed on the Department safety plan.
 - Information on contractor attendance at any family team meetings and court hearings on the case.
 - Contractor responses to any case crises, and documentation that the contractor responded to the situation within two hours.
 - Information on any child removals that occurred during the service period.
 - Information on case safety status at service termination.

Service Activities

Safety plan services will be individualized and will focus on the issues and tasks identified for each case in the Department safety plan. Contractors are required to be flexible and tailor their interventions in response to the directions given to them in the *Safety Plan*. Core activities are expected to include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ **Safety checks and supervision** activities to make in-person visits to monitor and evaluate the safety of children in a family in order to carry out the safety plan. The focus is on regular monitoring and assessment of:
 - The protective capacities of the caregivers,
 - Vulnerabilities of the child, and
 - Threats of maltreatment to the child as defined in the [Safety Plan, form 470-4461](#).
- ◆ Activities to provide assistance and basic education for families regarding **household management** skills and capacities related to immediate safety issues identified in the safety plan.
- ◆ Either direct **transportation** by the contractor or provision of funding for transportation can be provided when transportation would assist in moving the child from “conditionally safe” to “safe” status. An example would be providing assistance for a child to access respite care to reduce family stress.

Safety service transportation should focus **only** on assisting on moving a child and or family to a safe condition and **not** on meeting other service-related transportation needs.

- ◆ Activities or provision of funding to help children and their family secure necessary **essential supports**, such as food, diapers, cleaning supplies, house fumigation, etc., and to connect the children and family to community resources and informal supports as identified in the safety plan.
- ◆ Activities to arrange for **respite** care or protective child care assistance, if identified in the safety plan.
- ◆ Activities to monitor and ensure that a parent is keeping **mental health or substance abuse treatment** appointments and is taking prescribed psychotropic medication, if appropriate to the case situation.
- ◆ Activities to inspect and monitor the safety of the **home environment**.

Payments for Services

The maximum rate for each 15-calendar-day unit of safety plan services shall not exceed the amount specified in the contract. However, if the Iowa Legislature enacts legislation to increase child welfare provider rates, the rates for safety plan services will be adjusted accordingly.

The start date for the safety plan service unit is the date of the Department referral, as noted and written on the *Safety Plan*. The contractor's ability to receive payment in a case will be evaluated and determined as follows:

- ◆ The contractor will receive the amount specified in the contract for the case if the contractor does all of the following:
 - Makes a timely response to the Department worker within one hour following the referral,
 - Makes face-to-face contact with the alleged victims and parents within 24 hours of referral, and
 - Sends an e-mail confirmation to the Department worker within 24 hours of the first contact.
- ◆ The contractor will be able to receive a payment for the case in the amount specified in the contract if the contractor maintains daily face-to-face contact with the alleged child victims and parents or others identified in the safety plan during the service delivery period, unless otherwise specified by the Department worker in the safety plan.
- ◆ The contractor will be able to receive a payment for the case in the amount specified in the contract if the contractor submits e-mail updates to the Department worker within 24 hours of each and every face-to-face contact or attempted contact with the alleged child victims and parents or others as identified in the safety plan during the service period.
- ◆ The contractor will be able to receive a payment of \$50 for the case if the children in the case did not experience any additional abuse or neglect while safety plan services were being provided.
- ◆ The contractor will be able to receive a payment of \$50 for the case if the safety status of the children in the case was maintained or improved by the end of the safety plan services.

Dispute Resolution Procedures

As part of the contracts with providers of safety plan services, the Department has implemented a protocol for resolution of service provision disputes that includes the following procedures:

1. If a Department worker directs a contractor (or subcontractor) to provide a level of interventions or supports beyond what the contractor feel is necessary or reasonable, the contractor may communicate the basis of that belief in writing or via e-mail to the Department worker and supervisor.
2. The contractor is expected and required to provide services at the level directed by the Department worker while the matter is being resolved and assessed by the Department supervisor.
3. The contractor and the Department shall make every effort resolve disputes at the lowest level possible, at the respective worker and supervisor level if possible, and generally within five days of receipt of the request for review.
4. The Department supervisor will notify the contractor of the decision resulting from the review via e-mail or through a written letter.
5. If a contractor is not satisfied with the results of the Department supervisor's review, the contractor may refer the case situation in writing or via e-mail to the DHS service area manager or designee for review.
6. The service area manager or designee will review the situation, the service interventions and supports requested by the Department worker, and the communication from the contractor concerning why this level of intervention is believed to be unnecessary or unreasonable, and make a decision, generally within seven business days of the date of the review request.
7. The decision of the service area manager or designee will be communicated in writing to the contractor. This decision will be the final decision.

In addition to this dispute resolution protocol for case specific situations, there will be contract oversight and advisory committees for each service area or subarea in which contracts are awarded. These committees shall meet at least quarterly to review service operation and resolve any service delivery issues.

Department service area and Central Office staff will meet with contractors during these committee meetings to identify case situations in which disputes have arisen and work to clarify contract performance expectations in order to improve service delivery.

Department supervisors should communicate with both their staff and social work administrator concerning cases in which contractors are using the dispute resolution protocol, so that general issues in these cases can be identified and considered by the contract oversight committee in making necessary program and contract adjustments.

Satisfaction Surveys

Under all contracts for safety plan services, results of family and Department worker satisfaction surveys are one method used to evaluate the contractor's performance.

The Department will develop family satisfaction survey with input from the selected contractors and will also design a Department worker satisfaction survey. The satisfaction survey process will work in the following manner:

- ◆ **Family satisfaction surveys:** Each contractor shall ensure that a copy of this survey is supplied to each family that receives safety plan services.
- ◆ **Department worker satisfaction surveys:** The Department will send the worker satisfaction survey electronically to every Department worker who referred a case to a contractor for safety plan services. When you receive a worker satisfaction survey, respond in a timely manner so that your perspectives on contractor performance can be used to help inform program improvement activities.

Survey results will be reviewed and analyzed by staff of the Department's Division of Results-Based Accountability and a report of the results for each contractor will be sent to the Department contract monitor. Each contractor is expected to achieve a minimum satisfaction level of 85% on both the family and Department worker satisfaction surveys each quarter.

A contractor that falls below this satisfaction percentage during any quarter will be required to prepare a program improvement plan that describes specific steps the contractor will take to improve the satisfaction results during the next six-month period. The contractor must submit the plan to the Department contract owner for approval.