

Protective Capacity Assessment: Purposes and Decisions Reached

Four **purposes** of the Protective Capacity Assessment are as follows:

- Build partnerships with parents.
- Direct conversations with parents regarding identified Safety Threats.
- Raise awareness and seek agreement with parents about “what must change.”
- Focus change strategies on enhancing diminished protective capacities.

The following **decisions** are reached by the conclusion of the initial PCA. The decisions must be regularly re-evaluated throughout the life of the case to guide case planning and implementation and to measure progress.

- Are safety threats being sufficiently managed in the least restrictive way possible?
- Can existing protective capacities (strengths) be built upon to make needed changes?
- What is the relationship between identified safety threats and currently diminished protective capacities?
- What is the parent’s perspective or awareness regarding safety threats and their relationship to diminished parental protective capacities?
- What are parents ready, willing and able to work on in the case plan?
- What are the areas of disagreement between the parents and the Department regarding what needs to change?
- What change actions, services and activities will be used to assist in enhancing diminished parental protective capacities?

PROTECTIVE CAPACITY REFERENCE

Enhancing Protective Capacities in the Case Plan: What Behavior Must Change

Protective Capacity

Personal and caregiving behavioral, cognitive and emotional characteristics that specifically and directly can be associated with being protective to one's young. Protective capacities are personal qualities or characteristics that contribute to vigilant child protection.

Criteria for Determining Protective Capacities

- The characteristic prepares the person to be protective.
- The characteristic enables or empowers the person to be protective.
- The characteristic is necessary or fundamental to being protective.
- The characteristic must exist prior to being protective.
- The characteristic can be related to acting or being able to act on behalf of a child.

Behavioral Protective Capacities

<p><u>The caregiver has a history of protecting.</u></p>	<p>This refers to a person with many experiences and events in which he or she has demonstrated clear and reportable evidence of having been protective. Examples might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People who've raised children (now older) with no evidence of maltreatment or exposure to danger.• People who've protected his or her children in demonstrative ways by separating them from danger, seeking assistance from others, or similar clear evidence.• Caregivers and other reliable people who can describe various events and experiences where protectiveness was evident.
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<p><u>The caregiver takes action.</u></p>	<p>This refers to a person who is action-oriented as a human being, not just a caregiver.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who perform when necessary. • People who proceed with a course of action. • People who take necessary steps. • People who are expedient and timely in doing things. • People who discharge their duties.
<p><u>The caregiver demonstrates impulse control.</u></p>	<p>This refers to a person who is deliberate and careful; who acts in managed and self-controlled ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who do not act on their urges or desires. • People that do not behave as a result of outside stimulation. • People who avoid whimsical responses. • People who think before they act. • People who are playful.
<p><u>The caregiver is physically able.</u></p>	<p>This refers to people who are sufficiently healthy, mobile and strong.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who can chase down children. • People who can lift children. • People who are able to restrain children. • People with physical abilities to effectively deal with dangers like fires or physical threats.
<p><u>The caregiver has/demonstrates adequate skill to fulfill caregiving responsibilities.</u></p>	<p>This refers to the possession and use of skills that are related to being protective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who can feed, care for, supervise children according to their basic needs. • People who can handle, manage, oversee as related to protectiveness. • People who can cook, clean, maintain, guide, shelter as related to protectiveness.

<p><u>The caregiver possesses adequate energy.</u></p>	<p>This refers to the personal sustenance necessary to be ready and on the job of being protective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are alert and focused. • People who can move, are on the move, ready to move, will move in a timely way. • People who are motivated and have the capacity to work and be active. • People express force and power in their action and activity. • People who are not lazy or lethargic. • People who are rested or able to overcome being tired.
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<p><u>The caregiver sets aside her/his needs in favor of a child.</u></p>	<p>This refers to people who can delay gratifying their own needs, who accept their children's needs as a priority over their own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who do for themselves after they've done for their children. • People who sacrifice for their children. • People who can wait to be satisfied. • People who seek ways to satisfy their children's needs as the priority.
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<p><u>The caregiver is adaptive as a caregiver.</u></p>	<p>This refers to people who adjust and make the best of whatever caregiving situation occurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are flexible and adjustable. • People who accept things and can move with them. • People who are creative about caregiving. • People who come up with solutions and ways of behaving that may be new, needed and unfamiliar but more fitting.
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<p><u>The caregiver is assertive as a caregiver.</u></p>	<p>This refers to being positive and persistent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are firm and convicted. • People who are self-confident and self-assured. • People who are secure with themselves and their ways. • People who are poised and certain of themselves. • People who are forceful and forward.
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<p><u>The caregiver uses resources necessary to meet the child's basic needs.</u></p>	<p>This refers to knowing what is needed, getting it and using it to keep a child safe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who get people to help them and their children. • People who use community public and private organizations. • People who will call on police or access the courts to help them. • People who use basic services such as food and shelter.
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<p><u>The caregiver supports the child.</u></p>	<p>This refers to actual, observable sustaining, encouraging and maintaining a child's psychological, physical and social well-being.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who spend considerable time with a child filled with positive regard. • People who take action to assure that children are encouraged and reassured. • People who take an obvious stand on behalf of a child.
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Cognitive Protective Capacities

<p><u>The caregiver plans and articulates a plan to protect the child.</u></p>	<p>This refers to the thinking ability that is evidenced in a reasonable, well-thought-out plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are realistic in their idea and arrangements about what is needed to protect a child. • People whose thinking and estimates of what dangers exist and what arrangement or actions are necessary to safeguard a child. • People who are aware and show a conscious focused process for thinking that results in an acceptable plan. • People whose awareness of the plan is best illustrated by their ability to explain it and reason out why it is sufficient.
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<p><u>The caregiver is aligned with the child.</u></p>	<p>This refers to a mental state or an identity with a child.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who strongly think of themselves as closely related to or associated with a child. • People who think that they are highly connected to a child and therefore responsible for a child’s well-being and safety. • People who consider their relationship with a child as the highest priority.
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<p><u>The caregiver has adequate knowledge to fulfill caregiving responsibilities and tasks.</u></p>	<p>This refers to information and personal knowledge that is specific to caregiving that is associated with protection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who know enough about child development to keep kids safe. • People who have information related to what is needed to keep a child safe. • People who know how to provide basic care which assures that children are safe.
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<p><u>The caregiver is reality oriented; perceives reality accurately.</u></p>	<p>This refers to mental awareness and accuracy about one’s surroundings, correct perceptions of what is happening, and the viability and appropriateness of responses to what is real and factual.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who describe life circumstances accurately. • People who recognize threatening situations and people. • People who do not deny reality or operate in unrealistic ways. • People who are alert to danger within persons and the environment. • People who are able to distinguish threats to child safety.
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<p><u>The caregiver has accurate perceptions of the child.</u></p>	<p>This refers to seeing and understanding a child’s capabilities, needs and limitations correctly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who know what children of certain age or with particular characteristics are capable of. • People who respect uniqueness in others. • People who see a child exactly as the child is and as others see the child. • People who recognize the child’s needs, strengths and limitations. People who can explain what a child requires,
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	<p>generally, for protection and why.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who see and value the capabilities of a child and are sensitive to difficulties a child experiences. • People who appreciate uniqueness and difference. • People who are accepting and understanding.
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<p><u>The caregiver understands his/her protective role.</u></p>	<p>This refers to awareness...knowing there are certain solely owned responsibilities and obligations that are specific to protecting a child.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who possess an internal sense and appreciation for their protective role. • People who can explain what the “protective role” means and involves and why it is so important. • People who recognize the accountability and stakes associated with the role. • People who value and believe it is his/her primary responsibility to protect the child.
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<p><u>The caregiver is self-aware as a caregiver.</u></p>	<p>This refers to sensitivity to one’s thinking and actions and their effects on others – on a child.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who understand the cause – effect relationship between their own actions and results for their children • People who are open to who they are, to what they do, and to the effects of what they do. • People who think about themselves and judge the quality of their thoughts, emotions and behavior. • People who see that the part of them that is a caregiver is unique and requires different things from them.
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Emotional Protective Capacities

<p><u>The caregiver is able to meet own emotional needs.</u></p>	<p>This refers to satisfying how one feels in reasonable, appropriate ways that are not dependent on or take advantage of others, in particular, children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who use personal and social means for feeling well and happy that are acceptable, sensible and practical. • People who employ mature, adult-like ways of satisfying their feelings and emotional needs.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who understand and accept that their feelings and gratification of those feelings are separate from their child.
<p><u>The caregiver is emotionally able to intervene to protect the child.</u></p>	<p>This refers to mental health, emotional energy and emotional stability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are doing well enough emotionally that their needs and feelings don't immobilize them or reduce their ability to act promptly and appropriately. • People who are not consumed with their own feelings and anxieties. • People who are mentally alert, in touch with reality. • People who are motivated as a caregiver and with respect to protectiveness.
<p><u>The caregiver is resilient as a caregiver.</u></p>	<p>This refers to responsiveness and being able and ready to act promptly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who recover quickly from set backs or being upset. • People who spring into action. • People who can withstand. • People who are effective at coping as a caregiver.
<p><u>The caregiver is tolerant as a caregiver.</u></p>	<p>This refers to acceptance, allowing and understanding, and respect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who can let things pass. • People who have a big picture attitude, who don't over react to mistakes and accidents. • People who value how others feel and what they think.
<p><u>The caregiver displays concern for the child and the child's experience and is intent on emotionally protecting the child.</u></p>	<p>This refers to a sensitivity to understand and feel some sense of responsibility for a child and what the child is going through in such a manner to compel one to comfort and reassure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who show compassion through sheltering and soothing a child. • People who calm, pacify and appease a child. • People who physically take action or provide physical responses that reassure a child, that generate security.

<p><u>The caregiver and child have a strong bond, and the caregiver is clear that the number one priority is the well-being of the child.</u></p>	<p>This refers to a strong attachment that places a child’s interest above all else.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who act on behalf of a child because of the closeness and identity the person feels for the child. • People who order their lives according to what is best for their children because of the special connection and attachment that exists between them. • People whose closeness with a child exceeds other relationships. • People who are properly attached to a child.
<p><u>The caregiver expresses love, empathy and sensitivity toward the child; experiences specific empathy with the child’s perspective and feelings.</u></p>	<p>This refers to active affection, compassion, warmth and sympathy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who fully relate to, can explain, and feel what a child feels, thinks and goes through. • People who relate to a child with expressed positive regard and feeling and physical touching. • People who are understanding of children and their life situation.

Protective Capacity Quick Reference Guide

Behavioral Protective Capacities

1. The caregiver has a history of protecting.
2. The caregiver takes action.
3. The caregiver demonstrates impulse control.
4. The caregiver is physically able.
5. The caregiver has/demonstrates adequate skill to fulfill caregiving responsibilities.
6. The caregiver possesses adequate energy.
7. The caregiver sets aside her/his needs in favor of a child.
8. The caregiver is adaptive as a caregiver.
9. The caregiver is assertive as a caregiver.
10. The caregiver uses resources necessary to meet the child's basic needs.
11. The caregiver supports the child.

Cognitive Protective Capacities

1. The caregiver plans and articulates a plan to protect the child.
2. The caregiver is aligned with the child.
3. The caregiver has adequate knowledge to fulfill caregiving responsibilities and tasks.
4. The caregiver is reality oriented; perceives reality accurately.
5. The caregiver has accurate perceptions of the child.
6. The caregiver understands his/her protective role.
7. The caregiver is self-aware as a caregiver.

Emotional Protective Capacities

1. The caregiver is able to meet own emotional needs.
2. The caregiver is emotionally able to intervene to protect the child.
3. The caregiver is resilient as a caregiver.
4. The caregiver is tolerant as a caregiver.
5. The caregiver displays concern for the child and the child's experience and is intent on emotionally protecting the child.
6. The caregiver and child have a strong bond, and the caregiver is clear that the number one priority is the well-being of the child.
7. The caregiver expresses love, empathy and sensitivity toward the child; experiences specific empathy with the child's perspective and feelings.

Protective Capacity Assessment

Exploratory Stage: Questions to ask

- Where were you born?
 - Were you born into a one or two parent family?
 - Who raised you?
 - What race, ethnic group, and spiritual practices do you identify with?
 - What race, ethnic group, and spiritual practices does your extended family identify with?
 - What was your relationship with your parents like as a child?
 - Who performed daily care?
 - Who worked outside the home?
 - How much education did your parents have?
 - Did adults in your home as a child experience addiction?
 - Did adults in your home as a child experience mental health problems?
 - Where do your parents currently reside?
 - Did you experience any abuse as a child?
- Do you have siblings?
 - Are you close to your siblings?
 - Do you have any concerns about any of your sibling's behavior?
 - Where do your siblings currently reside?
- Did you like school?
 - How far did you go in school?
 - Where did you attend school?
 - Are you still in contact with anyone who you attended school with?
- What was your favorite job?
 - Where else have you worked?
 - What are your work skills?
- What form of transportation do you prefer?
 - What form of transportation do you currently use?
- Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental illness?
 - Have you ever thought that you may be having emotional difficulties?
 - What are your triggers for stress?
 - How do you handle stress?
- How often do you drink alcohol?
 - How old were you when you first tried drugs?
 - Which drugs?
 - How often then and now?
 - Have you ever struggled with addiction?
 - Can you identify any triggers to your use?
- What is your current living situation?
 - Does anyone else live with you?
 - Where do you currently live?
 - Where else have you lived?
 - Is your current home safe for children? Discuss...
- Are you currently in a romantic relationship?

- How did you meet?
- Do you live together?
- What race, ethnic group, and spiritual practices does your partner identify with?
- Are they a parent?
- Have they met your children?
- How are they involved with your children?
- Have they had a care giving role?
- How do you get along?
- What types of things do you argue about?
- Have arguments ever gotten physical or violent?
- Who do you turn to for support?
 - Who in your community do you turn to for support?
 - Who in your neighborhood or friends do you turn to for support?
 - Who in your family and extended family do you turn to for support?
 - Who within your religious community do you turn to for support?
- Are there things about yourself as an adult that you would like to see change?
 - Are there things about you as a parent that you would like to change?
 - Are there areas that you would like assistance in making change?
 - Are there any services you are interested in attending in order to assist and support you in making change?
 - What things within your current environment and situation do you think should change so that your children can return to you?
 - Do you have a plan to make those changes?
- What can we (DHS) do to assist you with your plan?
 - Within your plan, how will you meet your child(ren)'s educational, mental health, medical, developmental needs?
 - Who would you like to have involved with and supporting your plan?
- Does your child have any particular needs?
 - What are some of your memories about how your child has grown?
 - Have there ever been behaviors from your child(ren) that concerned you?
 - Has your child's doctor ever mentioned medical or developmental concerns or issues?
 - Have any teachers ever approached you about educational needs?
- When things were going better for your family, what did that look like?
 - What was different?
 - What changed?
 - How did it change?
 - Who was in your home then?
 - Was there anyone helping support you, who?
 - Are they still involved or can they be involved again?

THE FIVE PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Concrete Supports For Parents

In order to explore . . .	Ask the parent . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent's view of the most immediate need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you need to [stay in your house, keep your job, pay your heating bill]?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steps the parent has taken to deal with the problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How have you handled this? What kind of response have you gotten? Why is this working or not working?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways the family handles other problems Current connections that might offer help for the new problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has worked well in the past? Are there community groups or local services that have been or might be able to offer assistance? Do you belong to a faith community? Do you have a relationship with a pediatrician? Is your child enrolled at a local school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other services and supports that would help the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you thought about _____[local program that provides housing, food, etc.]? Did you know that _____ provides [free homework help, meals on weekends, low-cost childcare]?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent's desire and capacity to receive new services, including completing applications, keeping appointments, and committing to the solution process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kind of help do you need to get to these appointments? When would be a good time for me to give you a call to see how it's going?

Nurturing And Attachment

In order to explore . . .	Ask the parent . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent is handling the basic needs of the child—nutrition, safety, health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does your child like to eat? • How much does your child sleep? • What happens during a usual day or night? At school? After school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent observes and attends to the child • Specific play or stimulation behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you spend time with your child, what do you like to do together? How long are you able to spend on that activity? • What kinds of games do you like to play with your child? • What does your child like to do? • What is your child's favorite book or story?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent responds to the child's behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does your child do when he/she is sad, angry, tired? • What happens when your child: _____[tantrums, bedwetting, skipping school]?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent responds to emotional needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know when your child is happy? Sad? Lonely? Hurt? • How do you comfort your child?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent demonstrates affection • How the parent models caring behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you show affection in your family? • How do you let your child know that you love him or her?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent recognizes accomplishments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your child's greatest gifts and talents? • How do you encourage these talents?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent provides a safe home and family environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All families experience conflict from time to time. What happens when there is conflict in your house? • How do you keep your child safe at home? In your neighborhood or community?

Knowledge Of Parenting And Of Child And Youth Development

In order to explore . . .	Ask the parent . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent's view of their child's strengths • Any problems or concerns identified by the parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you like about being a parent of an infant (or preschooler, or teenager)? • What are some of the things that you find challenging as a parent? • How would you like your child's experience to be the same as or different from your own?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent observes and interprets the child's behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does your child do best? • What kinds of things make your child happy? • What kinds of things make your child frustrated, sad, or angry? • What does your child do when happy? Frustrated? Sad? Angry?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways the parent is currently responding to the child's needs and behaviors • How the parent encourages positive behavior through praise and modeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What works best for your child when he/she is sad, angry, or frustrated? • How have you let your child know what you expect? • What happens when she/he does what you asked?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent understands the child's development • Any parental concern that the child's behavior appears to be outside the normal range 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think your child compares to other children his/her age? • Have others expressed concern about your child's behavior?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the parent can identify alternative solutions for addressing behaviors • Community, cultural, and ethnic expectations and practices about parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you seen other parents handle this? • What would your parents have done in this situation? • All parents use certain methods to teach their children how to behave or to address a behavior problem. What methods work best for you? • How does your child respond?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the parent encourages healthy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you challenge your child to try new things and do things on his/her own? • What works in encouraging your child to be more independent and competent?

Parental Resilience

In order to explore . . .	Ask the parent . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the parent identifies as his or her coping strengths and resilience • The parent's strengths in parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What helps you cope with everyday life? • Where do you draw your strength? • How does this help you in parenting? • What are your dreams for yourself and your family?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the parent identifies as everyday stressors • Stressors precipitated by crises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of frustrations do you deal with during the day? • Has something happened recently that has made life more difficult?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of stress on parenting • Impact of parenting on stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you able to meet your children's needs when you are dealing with stress? • How are your children reacting to [crisis]?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether there is marital stress or conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your spouse or partner support you in times of stress? • How does your spouse or partner help with parenting?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs that might be identified by a different family member (not all family members may identify the same needs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are other family members experiencing stress or concern? • How are they dealing with that? • Has anyone in your family expressed concern about drug or alcohol abuse?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term supports (respite care, help with a new baby, help during an illness) • Long-term strategies (job training, marital counseling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you are under stress, what is most helpful to you? • Are there places in the community where you can find help?

Social Connections

In order to explore . . .	Ask the parent . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent's social skills, willingness to join a group, and capacity to make and keep friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who can you call for advice or just to talk? How often do you see them? Would you be comfortable/willing to attend a parent group (or other group) just to see if you like it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent's current social support system, including family, friends, and membership in any formal groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have family members or friends nearby who help you out once in a while? Do you belong to a church, temple, mosque, women's group, men's group? Do you have a child in the local school or Head Start program?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent's desire for new friends and social connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kinds of things do you like to do for fun or to relax? Would you be interested in meeting some other moms and dads who also [have a new baby, have a teenager, like to cook, sing in a choir, etc.]?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent's potential strengths and challenges in making social connections (include concerns such as parent's language, comfort level in groups, access to babysitting and transportation, recent arrival in community) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some benefits of getting out or joining a group? What kind of support would you need in order to be able to get out for an evening? How does your spouse or partner help out so that you have some time with friends?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs that might be met with better social connections (for instance, respite care, a sympathetic listener, a role model) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would it help you to have more friends or acquaintances to call about _____? Would it help you to know other moms and dads who are dealing with _____?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent's interest in starting or facilitating a community group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would it take to get a group of parents together to _____?

Adapted from Working with Families: The Five Protective Factors at www.childwelfare.gov/preventing. The full version of this information is also used in the Core Life of a Case session Beyond the Assessment.