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 Policy

SUBJECT:

Nevada Initial Assessment (NIA)

Effective Date	Amendment Number	Amendment Effective Date
June 13, 2018	2	July 1, 2019

SCOPE:

Assessing and documenting reports of child abuse and/or neglect.

SPECIFIC LEGAL and OTHER REFERENCES:

- Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)
- Assessment of an Identified Child for Alleged Injuries Policy and Procedures
- Case Transfer – CPS to Permanency Policy and Procedures
- Central Imaging CPE
- Confirming Safe Environments – Child Placement Assessment Policy and Procedures
- Diligent Search Policy and Procedures
- Eligibility CPE
- Family Court Process Policy and Procedures
- Institutional Investigations and Licensing Complaints Policy and Procedures
- [NAC 432B](#)
- [NRS 432B](#)
- [NV DCFS Policy 0513 Substantiation Policy](#)
- Warrants Policy and Procedures

PROGRAMS IMPACTED:

- Appeals
- Background Check
- Child Protective Services
- Intake
- Permanency
- Placement
- Resource Development and Support
- Safe@Home
- Team Decision Making

SUMMARY OF CHANGES:

Replaced procedures for accessing warrants with links to Warrants Policy and Procedures.
 Clarified consent requirements for present danger plans.

DEFINITIONS:

For a list of acronyms and a glossary of terms used throughout DFS refer to Acronyms and Glossary located on DFSNet.
 The following definition is specific to this Policy and Procedures (P&P).

Caregiver:

“Caregiver” is used throughout this Policy and Procedures to refer to any of the following individuals who are in a caregiving role:

1. Biological parent
2. Legal Parent
3. Legal Guardian
4. Non-custodial parent with occasional or routine contact with a child
5. Parent substitute
6. Step-parent
7. Extended family member who provides care to the child
8. Unrelated person living in the same household
9. Paramour/companion of parent

FORMS, PUBLICATIONS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL DOCUMENTS:

A Child Protective Services Guide for Parents and Guardians (FPI Library)

Child Placement Request & Well-being Information Form (in UNITY)

Confirming Safe Environments - Child Placement Assessment (FPI Library)

Department of Family Services Application for Federal Benefits (in UNITY)

Diligent Search Request (in UNITY)

NIA Intervention Manual on DFSNet

Notice of Child Protective Services Report Disposition (CPS Unsubstantiation Letter) (in UNITY)

Notice of Child Protective Services Institutional Report Disposition (CPS Institutional Closure Letter (in UNITY)

Present Danger Plan (PDP) (FPI Library)

Substantiation Letter, Fact Sheet and Appeal Request Form (in UNITY)

UNITY Web Help – Case Closure

Warrant to Access Home (in UNITY)

POLICY:**A. Purpose and Standards of the Nevada Initial Assessment (NIA)**

1. The purpose of the Nevada Initial Assessment (NIA) is to determine who the Department of Family Services (DFS) serves by assessing and reaching conclusions about caregivers who are unable or unwilling to protect their children from present and/or impending danger. This includes the assessment of caregiver protective capacities, children to determine their vulnerability, and the identification of and management of present and/or impending danger.
2. The NIA process provides a uniform, systematic, and guided approach to assist NIA Specialists and NIA Supervisors in making child safety decisions.
3. The NIA process is conducted upon receipt of Intake Assessment assignments involving alleged maltreatment and/or present or impending danger in familial, non-placement settings.
4. The target population for conducting the NIA is families in which the Intake Assessment has credible reported information of children that are alleged to be 1) maltreated and/or 2) in present or impending danger.
5. A NIA must not be conducted when allegations of maltreatment have occurred in institutional settings. Regarding foster care licensing violations of licensed foster homes, refer to the Institutional Investigations and Licensing Complaints Policy and Procedures for further instructions.

B. Objectives of the NIA Process

1. The NIA Specialist must work in conjunction with the NIA Supervisor or designee to ensure the following objectives are accomplished throughout the course of the NIA process:
 - a. Prepare and plan for conducting the assessment of the family;
 - b. Respond in a timely manner in accordance with content contained within the Intake Assessment;
 - c. Inform reported individuals of a community concern for the safety of their children;
 - d. Assess for the existence of present danger;
 - e. Establish a Present Danger Plan (PDP) when present danger exists;
 - f. Engage caregivers in a process that provides an understanding of the family and determines whether children are in present and/or impending danger;
 - g. Conduct a structured, thorough information collection process that includes relevant family members and collateral information sources;
 - h. Keep caregivers informed and appropriately involved in case decision making;
 - i. Reach a finding regarding the existence of child maltreatment consistent with statewide substantiation policy, Nevada statutes and administrative code;
 - j. Reach a finding concerning the existence of impending danger and meet emergency needs that become apparent;
 - k. Implement reasonable efforts to prevent removal from the parental home;
 - l. Utilize the Safety Plan Determination (SPD) criteria when children have been determined to be in impending danger to determine if a Safety Plan may be in-home or out-of-home;
 - m. Establish a sufficient and least intrusive Safety Plan when children have been determined to be in impending danger;
 - n. When an out-of-home Safety Plan has been implemented, establish understandable conditions that must occur for the child to return home as soon as possible with an in-home Safety Plan (Conditions for Return [CFR]).

C. NIA Questions

1. The NIA Specialist must make diligent efforts to gather behaviorally specific, detailed information related to each NIA question.
2. The NIA questions are specifically related to caregiver protective capacity and child safety.
3. The NIA Specialist is required to evaluate the following:
 - a. What is the extent of maltreatment?
 - b. What are the circumstances surrounding the child maltreatment?
 - c. How do the children function on a daily basis (including all children in the home)?
 - d. How do the adults (primary caregivers) function on a daily basis?
 - e. What are the disciplinary practices in this family?
 - f. What are the general parenting practices in this family?

D. Decisions of the NIA

1. The NIA Specialist must work in conjunction with the NIA Supervisor to ensure the following are addressed during the course of the NIA process:
 - a. Are there present danger situations that are in process of occurring?
 - b. What is the least intrusive PDP available?
 - c. If the PDP is out-of-home, are there present or impending danger situations that are in process of occurring in the out-of-home caregivers' home?
 - d. Has maltreatment occurred, or is it occurring?
 - e. Are there impending danger threats manifesting in the home resulting in one (1) or more unsafe children?
 - f. How can impending danger be managed by the most appropriate, least intrusive Safety Plan?
 - g. Can in-home safety services be utilized to keep children in the home safely while intervention proceeds?
 - h. Determine what CFR are required for any child placed when an out-of-home Safety Plan has been implemented.

- i. Determine if the child is safe in the placement.
- j. Determine if the family requires ongoing services or case closure.

E. Priority Response Timelines for Initial Contact

Coding	Identified Danger	Initiation of NIA: Time Frame	Response Type
Priority 1	Urgent/Emergency; Present danger	As soon as possible but no later than three (3) hours of report	Must initiate face-to-face contact
Priority 2	Impending danger identified; or reports involving a child fatality or near fatality (regardless of whether or not there are siblings in the home)	As soon possible but no later than twenty-four (24) hours of report	Preferred order of response: Initiate face-to-face contact Collateral contacts (face-to-face or by telephone) Case Review (NAC 432B.155)
Priority 3	Maltreatment indicated No danger threats identified	As soon as possible but no later than seventy-two (72) hours of report	Preferred order of response: Initiate face-to-face contact Collateral contacts (face-to-face or by telephone) Case Review (NAC 432B.155)

F. Present Danger

1. Present danger is an immediate, significant and clearly observable family condition or situation that is actively occurring or in the process of occurring and likely results in serious harm to a child.
2. The NIA Specialist must assess for present danger at the initial contact and ongoing contact with the identified child.
 - a. All decisions regarding present danger must include supervisory consultation.
3. A Present Danger Assessment (PDA):
 - a. Is a judgment about what factually exists, with or without explanation or the context of individual and family function.
 - b. Based upon what the NIA Specialist observes first hand, what is reported by eye-witnesses, and what is reported by others who have corroborative knowledge.
4. The NIA Specialist can conclude that present danger exists without an explanation beyond what the NIA Specialist encounters first hand or in process.
5. A Present Danger Plan (PDP):
 - a. Must be established any time present danger is identified.
 - b. Is an immediate (same day implementation), short term plan that provides a child with responsible adult supervision and care to allow time for the completion of the NIA process.
 - c. Is separate from the formal continuing Safety Plan that is established during the conclusion of the NIA process.
 - d. Must be capable of being in operation the same day it is created. Before the NIA Specialist leaves the home, the PDP must be active and confirmed.
 - e. Must be specific; planned to control the identified present danger threats; and sufficient to control present danger until adequate information can be gathered and analyzed, to determine whether impending danger exists and a Safety Plan is required.
 - f. Must be sufficient to manage safety until the NIA process is complete. The PDP is not intended to last beyond the NIA process, unless it is converted into the Safety Plan.
 - g. Expires when the NIA process is complete.
 - h. Must manage present danger and family conditions and behaviors associated with the present danger.
6. The NIA Specialist must regularly confirm that the PDP is working.
 - a. The NIA Specialist must verify that selected people are responsible, are available, are trustworthy, and are capable.
 - b. The NIA Specialist must confirm that parents are willing to cooperate with the PDP.

7. Protective custody may be taken only when the child is vulnerable to present or impending danger within the home and the caregivers have insufficient caregiver protective capacities to manage or control the threats, making outside intervention necessary.
8. The NIA Supervisor is responsible for review and approval of the PDA and if applicable, the PDP.

G. Confirming Safe Environments – Child Placement Assessment

1. Refer to Confirming Safe Environments – Child Placement Assessment Policy and Procedures for further instructions.

H. Information Collection and Nevada Initial Assessment

1. The NIA Specialist must make every effort to engage children, caregivers, and other persons involved with and knowledgeable of the circumstances surrounding the information within the Intake Assessment as well as additional information that may be learned during the NIA process.
2. In order to establish the most effective working relationship with the family, and to conduct the NIA process, the NIA Specialist must be honest, open, and forthcoming with the family about the NIA process.
 - a. It is never acceptable to knowingly deceive, coerce, or trick family members. It is also not acceptable to threaten the family members with unrealistic consequences for their behavior.
3. As is reasonable in the context of the investigation, inform the family about the activities the NIA Specialist plans to conduct in relation to the family (e.g., unannounced visits, body checks, verification of the family's participation with service providers).
4. Explain the potential consequences of behaviors that have been identified as being unacceptable (e.g., law enforcement intervention, Family Court intervention, the children's possible removal).
5. The NIA Specialist must continually assess for present and/or impending danger including, but not limited to, any time during the NIA process with families when new information is learned, when there is a crisis or when a new report is received while a NIA process is underway.
 - a. If present danger is identified, the NIA Specialist must immediately consult with the NIA Supervisor and take action to protect the child.
6. The NIA Specialist and NIA Supervisor must remain alert to the presence of child abuse allegations other than those included in the original report. In the event that additional allegations are identified, those allegations must be evaluated according to the requirements of the NIA process.
7. Information must be collected and documentation must support the following questions and decisions by the conclusion of the NIA process:
 - a. Should child abuse or neglect be substantiated?
 - b. Are there impending danger threats manifesting in the home resulting in one (1) or more unsafe children?
 - i. If assessed that no child in the household is in impending danger, the case is closed.
 - ii. When assessed that a child in the household is in impending danger, the least intrusive, most appropriate Safety Plan must be implemented and the case must be opened for Permanency Services.
 - c. How is impending danger managed by the most appropriate Safety Plan?

I. Documenting NIA Activities

1. The NIA document and case notes serve as DFS's record of contacts in the NIA process.
2. All activities, including attempted activities, conducted by NIA Specialists, NIA Supervisors, and other DFS staff must be documented.

J. Children in Need of Temporary Care or Legal Protection

1. Children in need of temporary care or legal protection are those for whom both parents and/or usual caregiver, for reasons other than abuse/neglect, are physically unavailable to provide care and the parents/caregivers are unable to identify an alternative caregiver. This includes but is not limited to the situation listed below:
 - a. Child whose parents/caregivers has died and no other parent or members of the child's extended

family is available to provide care.

- b. Child who requires temporary housing because the child is found in Clark County as the result of parental abduction or has run away from another jurisdiction and immediate arrangements for the child's return to the child's parents'/caregivers' usual jurisdiction cannot be made.
2. The overall focus of DFS intervention for children in need of temporary care or legal protection is to assist the parents/caregivers in attempts to make child care plans for the children.
 - a. In the case of deceased caregivers, the focus of DFS intervention is to seek alternative caregivers for children.

K. Court Requested Home Studies: Children in Legal Guardianship

1. The Clark County courts may request assessments of a caregiver when a child has been placed in the legal guardianship of relatives or out-of-home caregivers as the result of previous DFS involvement.
2. The purpose of such home studies is to assist the court's determination related to the return of a child to the caregiver.
3. The NIA Specialist must assess whether the caregiver has resolved the issues leading to the child's removal.
4. The NIA Specialist must complete an assessment of any new issues threatening the child's safety and report findings/recommendations to the court.

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June 25, 2019

Approved Date