



Washington Safety Decision-Making Practice Follow-up Study

June 2022

Introduction¹

The Washington Court Improvement Program (CIP) is working with the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) to improve practice in the state. Goal 4 of Washington's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is focused on improving permanency in the state. Strategy 4.2 states that "DCYF staff and court partners will develop, understand, and articulate consistent language regarding DCYF's Safety Framework and implement changes in caseworker and court practice related to the Safety Framework." As part of this effort, a multidisciplinary group, including CIP, DCYF, AGO, the Court Improvement Training Academy, and the Office of Public Defense (OPD), with support from the Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC) developed an evaluation plan for a Hearing Quality Project related specifically to the safety framework. The evaluation provided baseline data to the PIP workgroup on practice within the courts on safety decision-making to inform planning for trainings and practice change efforts for the state. A series of Safety Summits were designed based on the baseline identified need and were implemented in the project sites between October of 2021 and February of 2022. These Safety Summits provided intensive multidisciplinary training and action-planning for the sites so that they could make practice changes related to the safety framework. Sites were evaluated 3-5 months post training to compare practice to the baseline hearing quality assessment. This report presents the methods and findings from that pre-post Safety Framework training evaluation. The findings should be used by the multidisciplinary group to identify areas where practice has changed as well as opportunities for enhanced efforts.

Method

The evaluation included both the case file review and the court observation instrument utilized in the original baseline assessment so that comparisons could be made. One addition was made to the case file review instrument – whether a safety assessment was provided to the court prior to each hearing. This was noted in King County's action plan, so the evaluation included it as a fidelity measure. Data collection and analyses were performed by the Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC).

Court Observation. A structured court observation instrument was used to capture data elements related to the safety framework, such as what specific language regarding safety is used

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at hearings, how often there is discussion related to safety threats, vulnerabilities, protective capacities, safety planning, conditions for return home, and what is preventing the child from returning home today. Court observation also tracked the judge and jurisdiction.

Case File Review. A structured case file review instrument was used to assess language provided to the court regarding safety decision-making, including safety planning, parent's protective capacities, threats, and vulnerabilities. The case file review instrument was also designed to capture details about family time, including whether language about family time includes the safety threat and justification for why a visit should be supervised. The case file review allows an opportunity to determine how information changes over time with updates that demonstrate ongoing safety assessments for the family.

Administrative Data. DCYF provided administrative data for seven counties (six that are CFSR counties) and Washington statewide for safety planning practice, including the percentage of cases with an in-home safety plan that result in removal within 6 month or 12 months. These data were provided at baseline and at follow-up (Spring 2022) for all sites that had a Safety Summit.

Sampling Strategy

The original evaluation included six of the eleven counties involved in the CFSR (Chelan, Grays Harbor, King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Spokane) and one additional county (Mason). However, the timing of the Safety Framework trainings did not allow for all sites to be included in the follow-up study. In order to be included in the follow-up, sites needed time to implement change. Therefore, only sites that had a training in 2021 were included in the follow-up sample. In addition, we needed site cooperation to get the information for the study.

Baseline. The baseline sample included cases opened in 2020 to ensure that it included case that were recent enough to be reflective of current practice. For court observation, CBCC examined a minimum of 10 Shelter Care hearings for each of the seven sites, to explore current practice related to safety threats. In addition, for four select sites (Grays Harbor, King, Mason, and Spokane), CBCC also conducted court observation of the first review hearing on the case (if there was one), in order to allow an opportunity to examine discussion at two points in time. For the four "intensive study sites," CBCC also conducted a structured case file review of the court case management system to review agency documentation (e.g., reports, petitions, case plans) and court orders related to the early case process, including Shelter Care through the Review hearing process.

Follow-up. The follow-up sample included fewer cases. Only five of the seven sites completed their training within the timeframe for the study (Chelan, King, Kitsap, Mason, and Pierce). Of those, we asked for a minimum of 10 Shelter Care hearings for each of the sites. For King and Mason, we asked for review hearings and access to a sample of case files. We were unable to coordinate data collection with Mason County, leaving only four of the original seven project sites in the follow-up sample.

Data Analysis

CBCC worked with the sites to collect data in a timely manner so that reporting could provide information back to the Washington PIP Team by the end of June, 2022. All data collected were aggregated into multiple datasets in Excel that were then exported to statistical packages for more robust analysis. There were some limitations to the data collection that impacted both the collection of data and ability for further analysis. The case file review was limited to the documents provided to the court and included in the court case management system as part of the record. That means that many of the agency documents associated with the case were not included as part of the review. Case plans, for example, were never included in the court case file, although petitions and some reports were provided and reviewed for this analysis. In addition, some of the case numbers randomly selected for inclusion in the study were not in frame for the current study. For example, there may be a transfer case that did not have the Shelter Care process in the county of interest or may not have had any documentation relevant to the questions of interest. This rarely occurred, but it did impact numbers for the sample. Finally, not all cases had made it to the review stage of the case process.

Samples

Because this study has a pre-post methodology, only sites that provided data in both timeframes were included in the evaluation. The court observation sample included 136 hearings, primarily Shelter Care from each of the four counties identified. Four of these hearings were dropped from analysis because they were continued (continued hearings are not complete hearings and do not include all of the discussion or findings of interest to this study). In addition, the King County sample included review hearings. Only King County included a case file review sample in the pre-post assessment. Table 1 below illustrates the total number of observations by county.

	Pre Sample		Post Sample	
	Case File Review	Court Observations	Case File Review	Court Observations
King	21	39	19	39
Chelan	--	11	--	6
Kitsap	--	10	--	9
Pierce	--	10	--	15
TOTAL	21	70	19	69

Findings

Results are presented below by data collection method. Where appropriate, statistical comparisons are made to identify statistically significant² changes in practice over time. It is important to consider the findings in the context of the available information. Sample sizes were

² Statistical significance is a mathematical way to examine whether two numbers are actually different from each other. Traditional significance testing sets a value at .05 allowing for 5% margin of error. However, due to the limited sample size, we set ours to .10 (10% margin of error). That means we are 90% confident that these differences are not due to chance alone.

relatively small, especially considering three of the original seven sites are not included in the follow-up study. Findings are meant to illustrate whether and how practice may have changed related to the safety decision-making framework, and focuses primarily on safety information being presented to the courts. When a statistically significant difference is found, it is denoted with an asterisk (*).

Court Observation

Ninety-four (71%) Shelter Care hearings and 38 Review (29%) hearings were observed for the study. Of the 94 Shelter Care hearings, 46 (49%) waived or agreed to Shelter Care, which impacted the discussion at the hearings and 48 (51%) did not. Data are presented by hearing type below.

Shelter Care Hearings

Of primary interest to the study was the safety discussion that was held at each hearing. This was examined both as whether a safety topic was discussed in the hearing and how much that topic was discussed (i.e., at what level). Table 2 and Figure 1 below illustrates the percentage of time a specific topic was discussed at all during a hearing, comparing pre to post Shelter Care hearing samples. Table 2 also breaks this down further whether the Shelter Care hearing was waived (or agreed) or not.

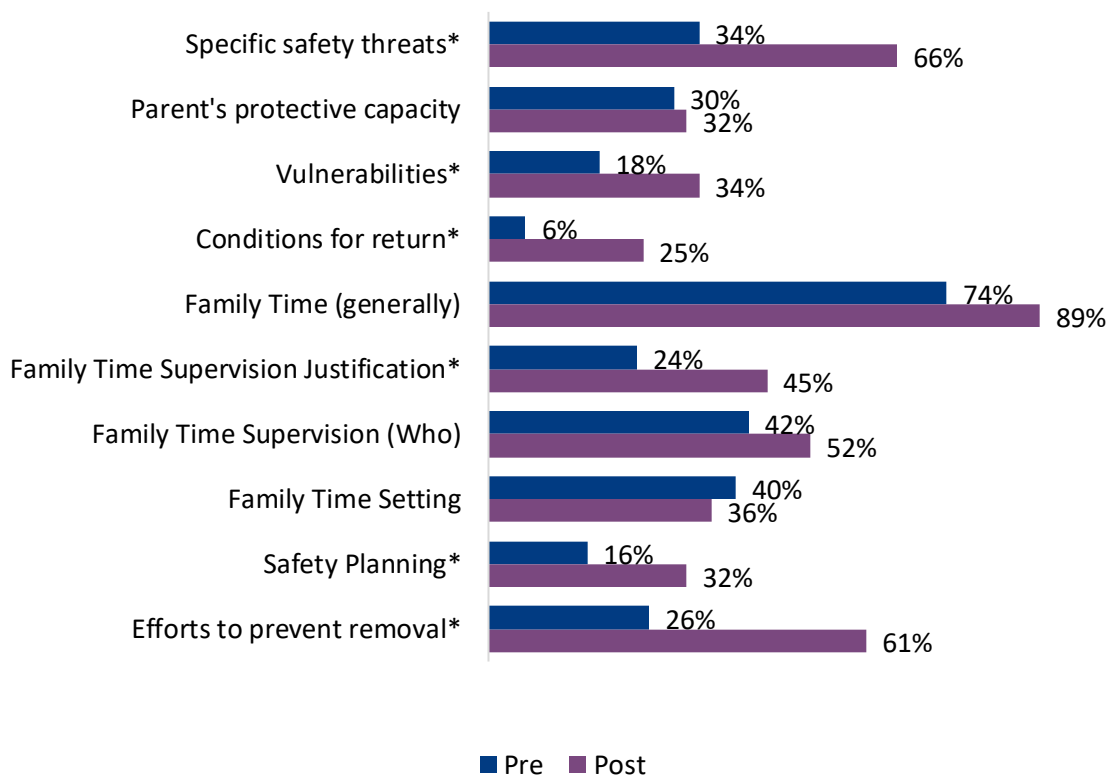
Discussion

	PRE (Baseline)			POST (After Safety Summits)		
	All Shelter Care (n=50)	Waived SC (n=28)	Not Waived (n=22)	All Shelter Care (n=44)	Waived SC (n=16)	Not Waived (n=28)
Agency efforts to prevent removal	26%	7%	50%	61%	31%	79%
Specific safety threats	34%	15%	59%	66%	44%	79%
Parent's protective capacities	30%	8%	59%	32%	25%	36%
Vulnerabilities (child)	18%	0	41%	34%	19%	43%
Conditions for return	6%	0	14%	25%	12%	22%
Visitation/Family time (generally)	74%	82%	64%	89%	87%	89%
Visit: Justification for supervision time	24%	25%	23%	45%	44%	46%
Visit: Level of supervisions (who)	42%	44%	36%	52%	56%	50%
Visit: Setting	40%	39%	41%	36%	25%	39%
Safety planning (in-home)	16%	0	34%	32%	7%	46%

Looking at all of the Shelter Care hearings (regardless of whether shelter care was waived or not), there was more discussion of all safety items in the post sample of hearings. The biggest increases were seen in the number of hearings discussing efforts to prevent removal (up 35% from pre to post) and specific safety threats (up 32% from pre to post). Statistical comparisons for discussion are reported in the next section.

When shelter care was waived, discussion of all safety items went up in the post sample of hearings, with the exception of discussion of visit setting which occurred more often (39%) in the pre sample than in the post sample (25%). When shelter care wasn't waived, discussion of all safety items at the hearings increased in the post sample except for discussion of parents' protective capacities (59% of hearings pre compared to 36% of hearings post) and discussion of visit setting (41% of hearings pre compared to 39% of hearings post). Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of hearings when a safety topic was discussed both pre and post training (regardless of whether Shelter Care was waived).

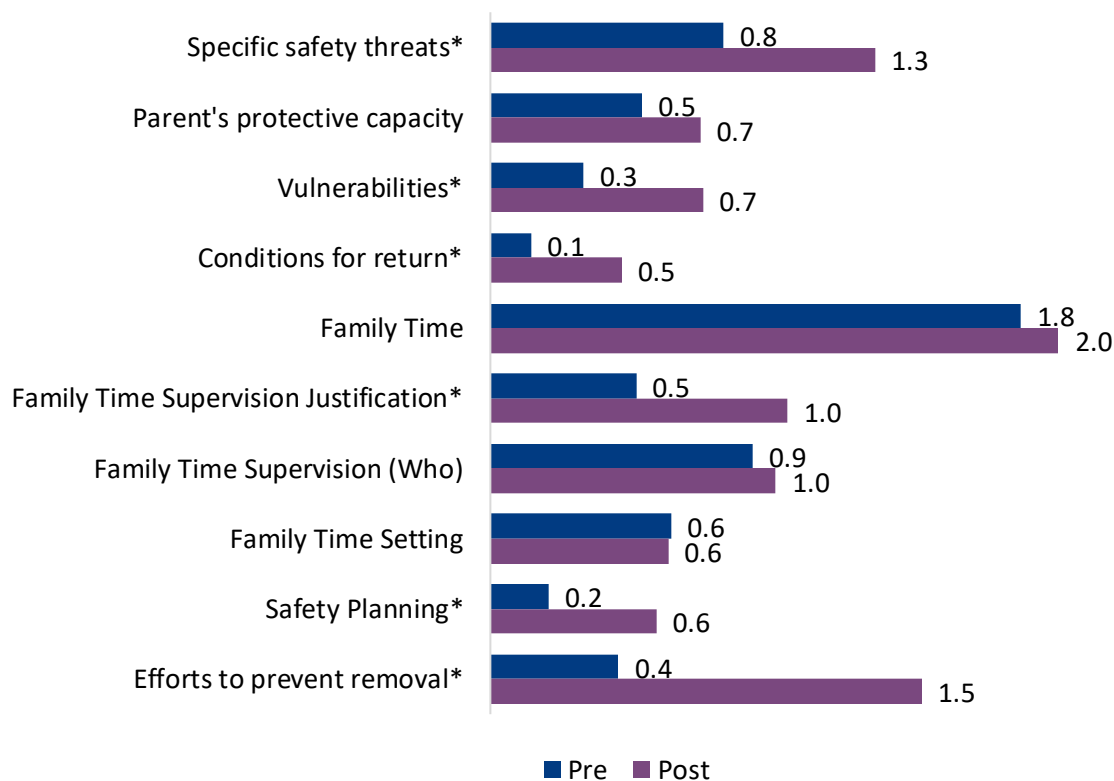
Figure 1: Percentage of Shelter Care Hearings with Safety Topic Discussed (pre n=50; post n=44)



Level of discussion of safety items was coded on a 4-point scale that included 0=no discussion, 1=statement only, 2=2-3 statements, 3=substantive discussion. Average discussion was calculated for each of the safety topics, with higher numbers indicating more discussion. Figure 2 below depicts the average discussion of safety items in Shelter Care hearings in the pre and post samples. Average discussion of all topics increased over baseline (with the exception of

discussing the setting of family time, which stayed the same from pre to post. Statistically significant increases from pre to post in average discussion at Shelter Care hearings were found for 6 of the 10 safety topics coded: specific safety threats (from .8 pre to 1.3 post); vulnerabilities (from 0.3 pre to 0.7 post); conditions for return (from 0.1 pre to 0.5 post); justification for supervision of family time (from 0.5 pre to 1.0 post); safety planning (from 0.2 pre to 0.6 post); and efforts to prevent removal (from 0.4 pre to 1.5 post). The biggest increase in average level of safety discussion from pre to post Shelter Care hearings was in discussion about efforts to prevent removal.

Figure 2: Average Discussion of Safety Items in Shelter Care Hearings



* indicates statistically significant difference (p<.10)

Judicial Inquiry

Judicial inquiry was measured as any time a judge asked a question from the bench. Judicial inquiry was coded as a yes/no item for each of the safety items. Table 3 presents the percentage of hearings in both the pre and post samples that judges asked questions about a given safety topic. Compared to the pre sample of Shelter Care hearings, judges asked significantly more questions in the post sample about: agency efforts to prevent removal (up 10%); vulnerabilities of the child (up 5%); and visitation generally (up 6%).

Table 3. Percentage of Shelter Care Hearings Where Judge Made Inquiry

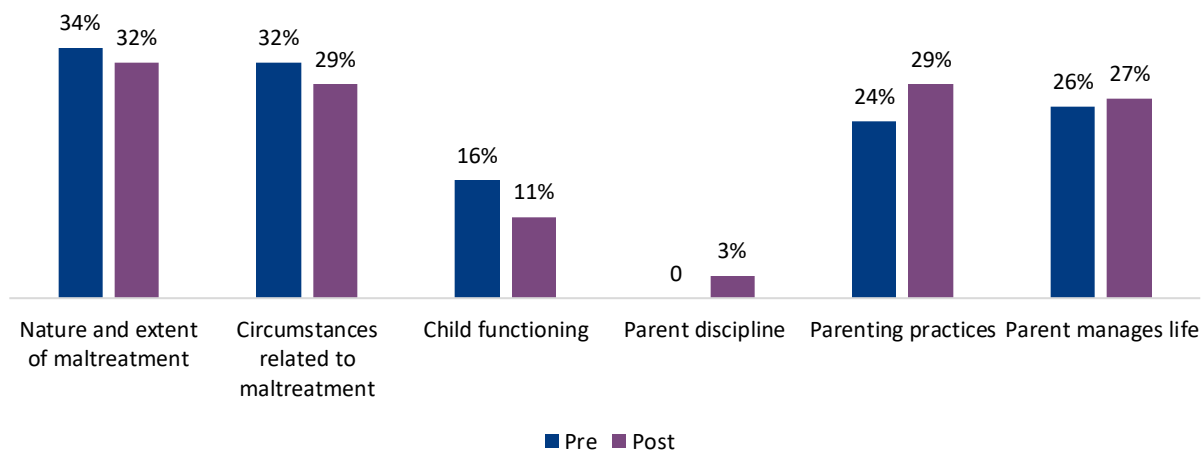
	PRE (n=50)	POST (n=44)
Agency Efforts to prevent removal*	8%	18%
Specific safety threats	14%	18%
Parent's protective capacities	10%	9%
Vulnerabilities (child)*	0	5%
Conditions for return	4%	5%
Visitation/Family time (generally)*	35%	41%
Visit: Justification for supervision time	12%	5%
Visit: Level of supervisions (who)	18%	2%
Visit: Setting	12%	7%
Safety planning (in-home)	6%	5%

* indicates statistically significant difference ($p < .10$).

In addition, coders explored how often there was discussion of contextual safety information related to a series of questions that judges could ask to be more informed about safety related decision-making. Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of Shelter Care hearings where these items were discussed by pre and post samples. There was slightly more discussion of parenting practices, how the parent manages his or her life, and parent discipline in the post training sample. But there was slightly less discussion in the post training sample of the nature and extent of maltreatment, circumstances related to maltreatment, and the child's functioning. None of these differences between pre and post were statistically significant.

Judges rarely made active inquiry related to these contextual items. In 4% of hearings, judges inquired about circumstances related to maltreatment or overall parenting practices, and in 3% of hearings judges inquired about how parents managed their own life.

Figure 3: Discussion of Additional Safety Contextual Information at Shelter Care Hearings (pre n=50; post n=44)



Findings on the Record

At 26% of Shelter Care hearings, judges made a verbal reasonable efforts finding in the pre sample compared to 42% in the post training sample. This was a significant difference between pre and post. While judges made significantly more verbal reasonable efforts findings in the post sample, their findings were less likely to include detail (this finding was also significant).

Safety Analysis

Coders observed whether *anyone* in the hearing demonstrated a thorough safety analysis in the discussion. That is, was there something that indicated that someone had considered the safety threats in relation to child's vulnerabilities. Coders noted some evidence of this analysis in 21% of hearings observed in the pre sample, and 32% of cases in the post sample. While this trended in the right direction, it did not reach statistical significance.

Advocacy

A final measure in hearings was attorney advocacy. Advocacy was determined by whether the attorney for the parent or advocate for the child argued for something for their client. In particular, in-court advocacy focused on whether there was argument regarding the safety threat, that parent's protective capacities were enhanced, that conditions for return had been met, or there was argument for enhanced visitation (either longer, or less supervision). There were no differences in advocacy for any of these items between pre and post training.

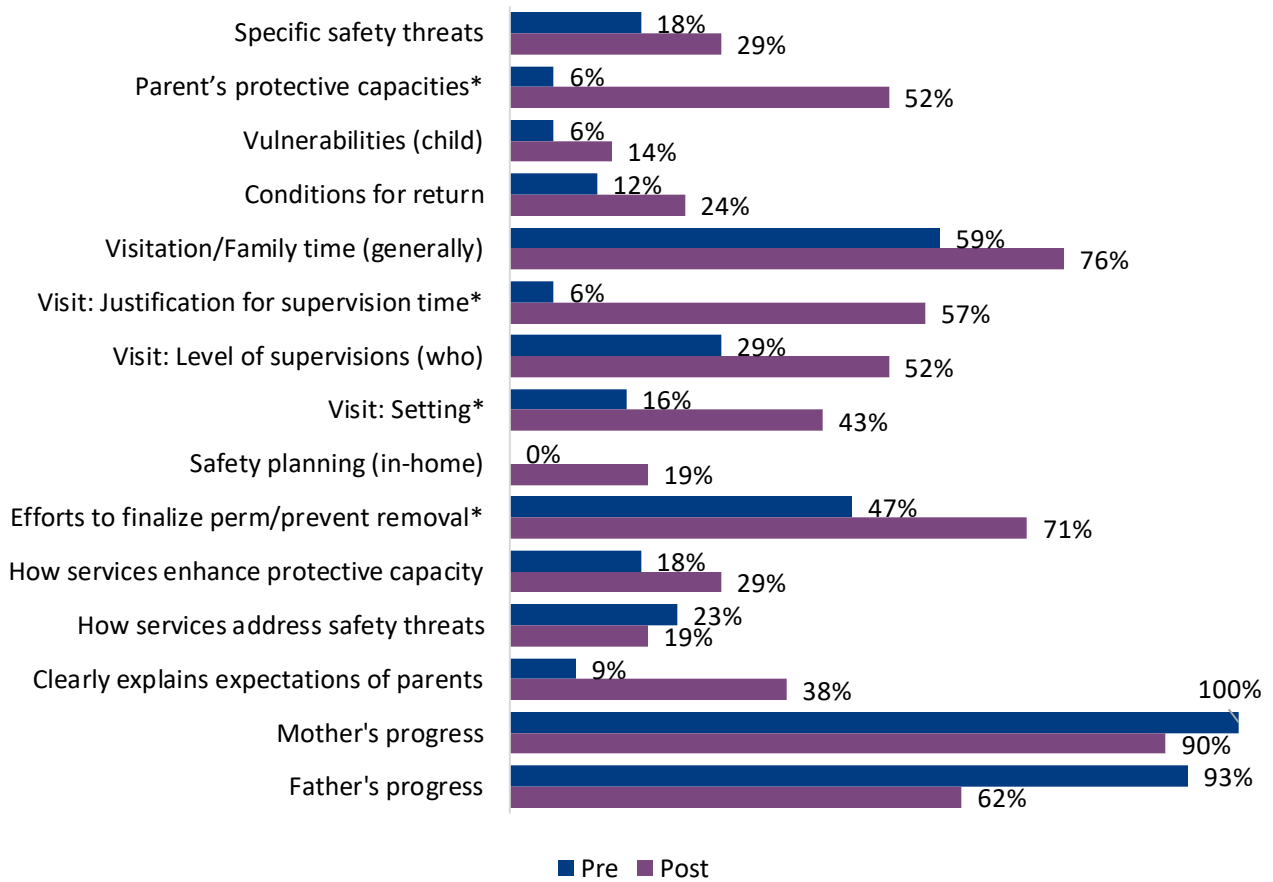
Review Hearings

Thirty-eight review hearings were observed for King County, with 17 in the pre sample and 21 in the post sample. Similar items were explored for review hearings as Shelter Care hearings, including discussion, judicial inquiry, and findings on the record.

Discussion

Figure 4 shows the percentage of Review hearings where a specific safety item topic was discussed. Significantly more Review hearings post-training discussed parent's protective capacities (up 46%); justification for supervision time (up 51%); visitation setting (up 27%); and efforts to finalize permanency (up 24%). An additional 8 safety items also saw increased discussion post-training, although those differences from pre-training were not statistically significant. Three safety items (how services address safety threats, mother's progress and father's progress) were discussed in more Review hearings pre-training. These differences were also not statistically significant.

Figure 4: Percentage of Review Hearings with Topic Discussed

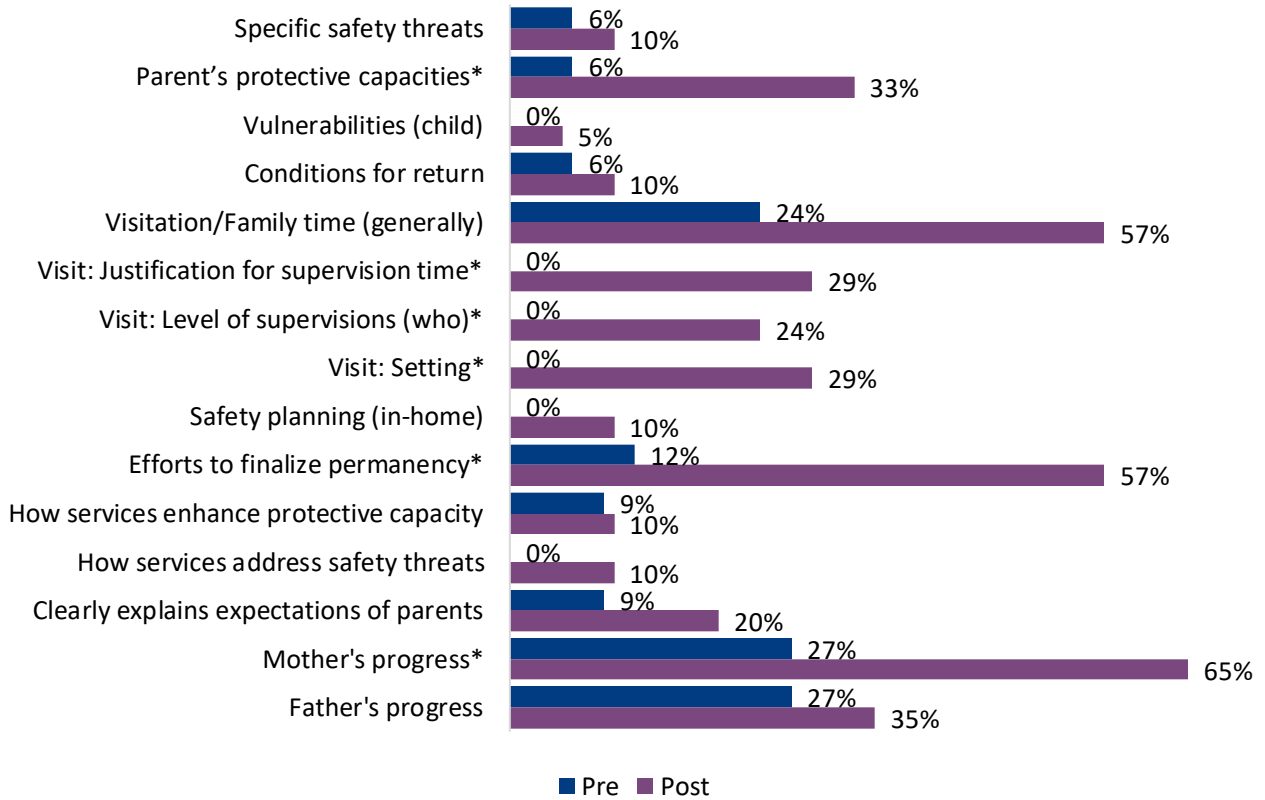


* indicates statistically significant difference ($p < .10$).

Judicial Inquiry

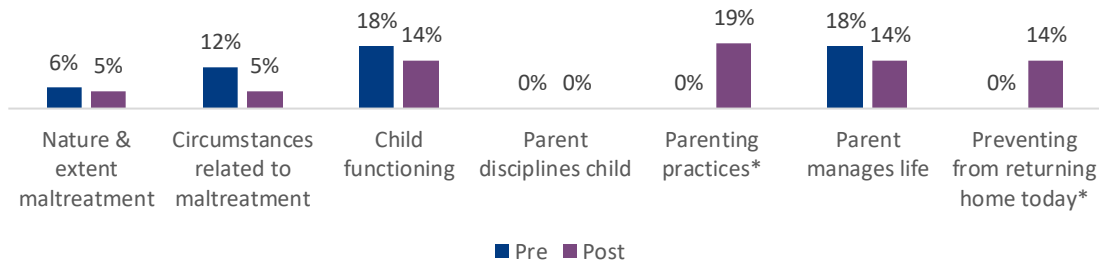
Judicial inquiry at Review hearings was measured as any time a judge asked a question from the bench. Judicial inquiry was coded as a yes/no item for each of the safety items. Figure 5 presents the percentage of hearings in both the pre and post samples that judges asked questions about a given safety topic. Compared to the pre sample of Review hearings, judges asked significantly more questions in the post sample about: parent's protective capacities (up 27%); justification for supervision time (up 29%); level of supervision – who (up 24%); visitation setting (up 29%); efforts to finalize permanency (up 45%); and mother's progress (up 38%). All of the other safety items also saw increased judicial inquiry in the post-training sample, but differences from the pre-sample were not statistically significant.

Figure 5: Judicial Inquiry of Specific Topic at Review Hearings



Coders also explored the discussion of contextual safety information in the Review hearings. Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of Review hearings where contextual information was discussed in the pre and post-training samples. Significantly more discussion was observed in the post-sample of hearings for two contextual items: parenting practices (up 19%) and what is preventing the child from returning home before (up 14%). The other contextual items were discussed more in the pre-training sample of review hearings, although none of the differences between samples for these items were statistically significant. None of the Review hearings in either the pre or post sample discussed parental discipline of the child.

Figure 6: Discussion of Additional Safety Contextual Information at Review Hearings



* indicates statistically significant difference ($p < .10$).

Judges rarely made inquiry regarding contextual safety items. In the pre sample, the judge only asked about how the parent manages his or her life at two hearings. The judge made no other contextual inquiries in the pre sample. In the post sample the judge did make inquiry in one hearing about circumstances related to maltreatment, child functioning, and parenting practices. Also, in two hearings the judge inquired about what is preventing the child from returning home. None of the differences from pre to post-sample, however, were statistically significant.

Findings on the Record

Fifty-two percent of Review hearings pre and 53% post had verbal reasonable efforts findings on the record. The pre-sample was more likely to include detail in the findings* (67% compared to 30%); however the post-sample was more likely to reference safety in the finding (15% compared to none of the pre-training findings).

Safety Analysis

Only 6% of Reviews had evidence of any safety analysis discussed in the hearing during the pre-training sample, and 10% had evidence of a safety analysis in the post-training sample. These differences were not significant.

Case File Review

The primary intent of the case file review was to identify what types of information the judge (and other stakeholders) receive prior to the hearings, specifically regarding safety analysis. It is important to note that case file reviews were limited to the information that was provided to the court and documented in the case management system. As a result, information such as case

plans were not included in the documentation reviewed. Further, as cases in the post-training sample were selected that opened after the trainings (October -December of 2021), most of the cases were limited to the initial Shelter Care hearing, with a few reaching disposition. As such, pre-post comparisons are only made for the Shelter Care hearing. All of the case files came from King County; 21 pre-training and 19 post-training.

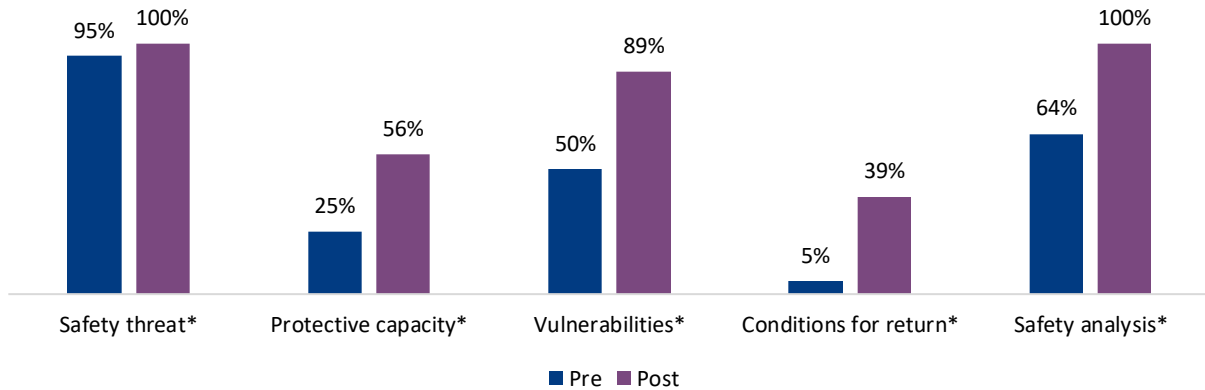
Shelter Care Documentation

The case file review first explored the type of information provided in documentation that came into the court *prior* to the Shelter Care hearing. This typically only included a dependency petition. Coders reviewed this information to determine the extent of safety decision-making related information that was provided to the court. Coders looked for basic safety information related to safety threats, protective capacities, vulnerabilities of the child, and conditions for return.

Coders reviewed the American Bar Association’s publication *Child Safety: A Guide for Judges and Attorneys* (Safety Guide) for background on these constructs and the types of information that would fit into each category. Case documents that the court would have received prior to each hearing were then coded to see what information they contained. In addition, coders explored whether the document included a safety analysis. According to the Safety Guide, “whether a child is safe depends upon a *threat of danger*, the child’s *vulnerability*, and a family’s *protective capacity*.” In determining whether there was a safety analysis, the coders explored whether the information provided included information about threats in relation to vulnerabilities and protective capacities. It was soon discovered that documents rarely discussed protective capacity, so credit was given to the site if they discussed safety threats in relation to child vulnerabilities. In 60% of all of the documents reviewed prior to the Shelter Care hearing, there was some evidence of a safety analysis.

As noted in Figure 7, nearly all of the documents (pre and post) submitted prior to the Shelter Care hearing addressed safety threats, although there was a statistically significant increase in the number of post-sample documents addressing safety threats (95% of pre and 100% of post). Significantly more documents submitted prior to the Shelter Care hearing in the post-sample cases referenced protective capacity (up 31%); vulnerabilities (up 39%); and conditions for return (up 34%). Significantly more documents in the post-sample of cases also included a safety analysis (up 36%).

Figure 7: Percentage of Shelter Care Documents That Included Specific Safety Information (pre N=21; post N=19)

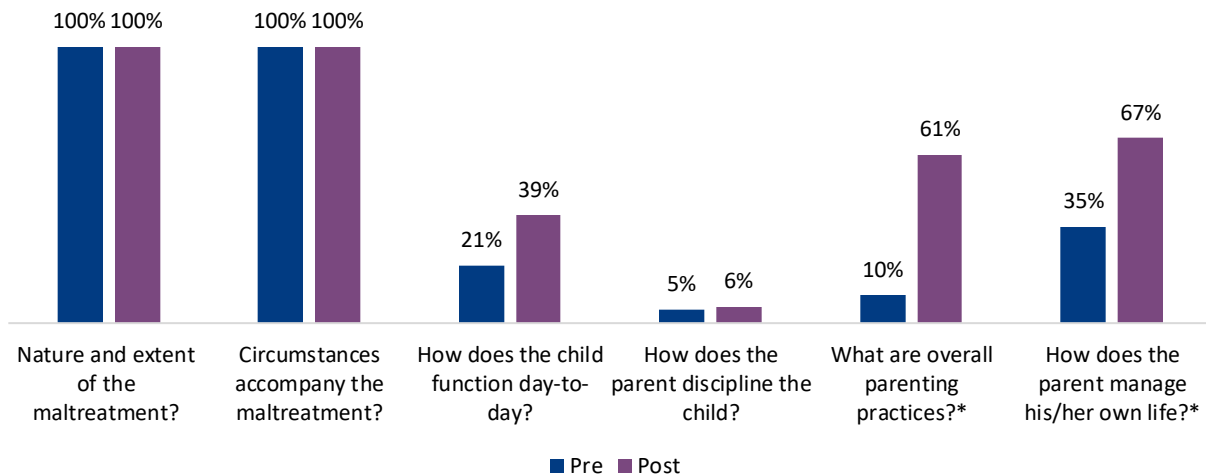


In addition, coders explored whether there was information in the case file about 6 key questions that judges are encouraged to ask to gain more contextual information about the safety of the child. These include:

1. What is the nature and extent of the maltreatment?
2. What are the circumstances that accompany the maltreatment?
3. How does the child function day-to-day?
4. How does the parent discipline the child?
5. What are overall parenting practices?
6. How does the parent manage his/her own life?

Figure 8 illustrates how often this information was provided in these documents. All of the documents in both the pre and post sample of cases included information about the nature and extent of maltreatment and the circumstances accompanying the maltreatment. There was a statistically significant increase in the post-sample of cases, however, in the number of documents with information about the parent's overall parenting practices (up 51%) and how the parent manages his/her own life (up 32%). Increases in documentation about the child's day to day functioning also increased post-sample (up 18%) but was not statistically significant.

Figure 8: Information on Safety Context in Documents Prior to Shelter Care (pre N=21; post N=19)



The review of documents also included whether there was a reason why supervision was required for any family time/visitation. Forty-two percent of the documents submitted prior to the Shelter Care hearing noted the reasons why supervised visits were being requested for the mother, compared to only 11% of documents in the pre-sample cases (this difference was statistically significant). For fathers, 25% of documents in the post-sample noted the reasons why supervised visits were being requested, and 13% of pre-sample cases (this difference was not statistically significant).

In addition a reasonable efforts finding was found in the Shelter Care order in 90% of all cases reviewed (91% of pre and 95% of all post). The finding included detail in 36% of cases and for 49% there was a reference to detail in the report/documentation provided.

Per King County’s action plan, there was a plan for an updated safety assessment to be filed at every hearing. While we did not collect pre data on this, 95% cases had a safety assessment filed prior to the Shelter Care hearing and 74% of Disposition hearings had one on file. It is important to note that these cases were still open and many had not yet reached disposition stage so the files may not have been updated completely at the time of our review.

Administrative Data

Administrative data were provided to determine how often cases have in-home safety plans in place and how often those cases result in the child being removed from the home. DCYF provided site level and state level data on the percentage of cases where a removal occurred within 6 months and the percentage of cases where removal occurred within 12 months of an in-home safety plan (see Table 4). Because the data are in aggregate, statistical comparisons are not made. However, project sites did decrease over time in the percentage of removals from a safety plan.

Table 4. Percentage of Children With an In-home Safety Plan Removed within 6 and 12 Months				
Of Children with Safety Plan	PRE		POST	
	Removed within 6 months	Removed within 12 months	Removed within 6 months	Removed within 12 months
Project Sites	5%	7%	4%	4%
Statewide	4%	6%	4%	5%

Discussion of Findings

Safety Concepts. A primary purpose of the study was to explore safety decision-making after participation in multidisciplinary training. Four safety concepts were examined across court observation and case file review using a pre/post research design. These concepts were safety threats, protective capacities, vulnerabilities, and conditions for return. Key findings included:

- Safety Discussion and Inquiry at Shelter Care Hearings:** Post-training there were more Shelter Care hearings with a discussion of all safety items, with the biggest increases found for the number of hearings that discussed efforts to prevent removal. Average level of discussion of safety items also increased over baseline Shelter Care hearings, with statistically significant increases in average discussion for specific safety threats, vulnerabilities, conditions for return, justification for supervision of family time, safety planning and efforts to prevent removal. Judges also made significantly more inquiries about agency efforts to prevent removal, vulnerabilities of the child, and visitation (generally) in Shelter Care hearings in the post-training sample.
- Safety Discussion and Inquiry at Review Hearings:** Post-training there were significantly more Review hearings that discussed parent’s protective capacities, justification for supervision time, visitation setting, and efforts to finalize permanency. Judges also asked significantly more questions in the post sample about: parent’s protective capacities, justification for supervision time, level of supervision (who), visitation setting, efforts to finalize permanency, and mother’s progress. All of the other safety items also saw increased judicial inquiry in the post-training Review hearing sample, but differences from the pre-sample were not statistically significant.
- Judicial Findings:** Judges made significantly more verbal reasonable efforts findings in Shelter Care hearings post-training. However, findings were less likely to include detail. At Review hearings, judges’ pre-training reasonable efforts findings were more likely to include detail but the post-training findings were more likely to reference safety.

Safety Analysis. Safety analysis was defined as exploring safety threats in relation to child vulnerabilities and parent protective capacities. Within the study it was explored both in terms of discussion in court observation and information presented within the case file review. Key findings included:

- There was some evidence of more safety analysis in hearing discussions in both Shelter Care and Review hearings post-training (e.g., that someone had considered the safety threats in relation to child's vulnerabilities), but while trending in the right direction the improvement over pre-training hearings was not statistically significant.
- There was a statistically significant increase in the number of documents submitted prior to the Shelter Care hearing that addressed safety threats in the post sample (after trainings). Significantly more documents in the post-sample of cases also included a safety analysis, with more documents including a reference to protective capacity, vulnerabilities, and conditions for return.

Contextual Safety Information. Contextual safety information was defined as information that could contribute to a better understanding of safety for the family. It included six questions (or topical areas) about nature and extent of maltreatment, circumstances leading up to the maltreatment, how child functions day to day, how parent disciplines the child, overall parenting practices, and how parents manage their own lives. Findings from the study indicate:

- In the Shelter Care hearings, there was slightly more discussion about contextual factors related to safety in the post-training sample, although there was less discussion of the nature and extent of maltreatment, circumstances related to maltreatment, and the child's functioning. Judges also rarely made any active inquiry related to these contextual items in either the pre or post sample of Shelter Care hearings.
- For Review hearings, significantly more discussion was observed in the post-sample of hearings for contextual information about parenting practices and what is preventing the child from returning home. Unlike the Shelter Care hearings, judges made more active inquiry post-training about contextual safety information in Review hearings, but none of the differences from pre to post-sample were statistically significant.
- Significantly more documents submitted prior to the Shelter Care hearing in the post-sample of cases included contextual safety information about the parent's overall parenting practices and how the parent manages his/her own life.

Visitation. Visitation was explored from a safety decision-making perspective. In particular, it was explored whether there was information regarding the justification for supervised visitation. That is, what is the safety threat that requires supervision. Findings included:

- There was a statistically significant increase in discussion of the reasons for supervision at both the Shelter Care and Review hearings post-training.
- A statistically significant increase in the documentation of justification for mothers' supervised visitation from pre to post-training cases was found. While not statistically significant, there was also an increase in documentation of justification for supervised visitation for fathers in the post-sample of cases.

Safety Plan. The study explored safety planning in two ways. Administrative data was used to determine how often in-home safety planning is effective and court observation data was used to explore how often there is discussion of safety planning. Findings included:

- Both the Shelter Care and Review hearings had an increase in discussion of safety planning from pre to post training. For Shelter Care hearings, the average level of discussion of safety planning also increased post-training and represents a statistically significant improvement in the degree to which safety planning was considered at the Shelter Care hearing compared to pre-training hearings.
- While judges rarely inquired about safety planning in the Shelter Care hearings observed in either the pre or post-training samples, more judges inquired about safety planning at Review hearings. There was also an increase from pre to post-training Review hearings in safety planning inquiries, but this difference was not statistically significant.
- A review of administrative data found a decrease over time in the percentage of removals from a safety plan for project sites. We could not determine if this was a statistically significant decrease, but the data moved in the right direction.

While sample sizes for this study were relatively small, especially considering three of the original seven sites are not included in the follow-up study, a number of statistically significant improvements in application of the safety decision-making framework were detected from pre to post-training. In summary, this evaluation found significant improvements from pre to post-training in courts' discussion of and inquiry about key safety concepts. Judges made more verbal reasonable efforts findings on the record, and while the detail of those findings did not increase, more findings referenced safety. Significantly more documents in the post-sample of cases also included a safety analysis, with more documents submitted prior to Shelter Care including a reference to protective capacity, vulnerabilities, and conditions for return. We also found more discussion of and judicial inquiry about contextual factors related to safety in Review hearings post-training. Finally, there was a significant increase in information presented to the court and discussion in court regarding why supervision is needed in relation to a safety threat. While we cannot say that the Safety Summits *caused* this change in practice, there is a positive pre-post difference after the trainings.

These findings can be used to enhance Safety Summit discussions, particularly in areas where there was less change than expected. For example, discussion of what is preventing the child from returning home today and the conditions for return, are still pretty low. These discussion topics could be helpful in ensuring families fully understand the conditions for return so that they can successfully reunite with their children. Data should be reviewed with an eye toward successes and these opportunities to continue to improve safety discussions and decision-making.