

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES: EXPLORATION OF ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL IN-HOME SAFETY PLANNING LEARNING COLLABORATIVE



APRIL 2024 CRITICAL FUNCTION STATEMENTS

The goal of a critical function statement is to achieve clarity regarding the steps required in the safety plan to shield children from the identified danger. These statements fall under the category of non-negotiable as they are directly connected the assessment of danger describing what severe harm is likely to happen if the condition is active, or in process of occurring, or likely to continue in the next few weeks in the household.

The Identified Danger + Severe Harm Likely = Critical Function Statements that Protect the Children

Critical Function Statements must be:

Sufficient:

The right amount of critical function statements to cover the identified danger(s).

Realistic: Clear to the family as to what needs to be supplemented in response to the identified danger.

Least Intrusive:

The least disruptive means to ensure the children are safe and prevent severe harm from happening.

Tips for reviewing critical functions statements in an effective way:

1. Ensure you are clear about everything that must be covered and feel confident in delivering and explaining the non-negotiables should there be questions.
2. Don't give too many at once. The human brain finds it easier to understand and remember anything between two and five points before taking a break. The professional must consider communicating in a way that is conducive to a parent being able to understand what is being said and recognizing they are likely to be under a lot of stress.
3. Go slow. People tend to rush when giving instructions and talk at the same speed as their thoughts. Think about times in which you've been a listener and miss something and must ask for the person to repeat themselves. Consider dropping your speed by 50% of how you normally talk.
4. Check for comprehension. Allow time for questions but understand that due to stress, personal or environmental factors, there may not be any. Silence may not necessarily mean they grasp what you are saying and agree with the critical functions. In a respectful way, you can ask the person to explain their understanding back to you to ensure there are no gaps or misunderstandings.
5. Assure support. If the parents or caregivers leave the conversation with things unsaid, questions that arise or doubts, assure them they can always come back to you.



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Reflection on Content

Think about the way the non-negotiables are presented and discussed regularly with families. What can distract from keeping them laser focused on safety and how do you avoid that from happening?

Action Item

Evaluate a current safety plan (protective plan, safety plan, for children in placement what would be needed to return children to the home with a safety plan). What are the critical functions in place or needed that shield children from the identified dangers? Are the critical function statements sufficient, realistic, and least intrusive?