

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



MARCH 2024 FIRST STEP IN THE ANALYTIC PROCESS OF SAFETY PLANNING

The first step in the analytic process of safety planning is to set up a conversation with the family for success. While the safety determination has already been established, the ins and outs of how the danger plays out day-to-day, and what options are available to shield children from the impact of the danger, requires the family's input.

The best way to begin these discussions is by having an outline (not a script) of what areas to cover. We can design this conversation by thinking about how we talk to families about negotiables and non-negotiables and work in conjunction to develop a plan that meets the needs of the family, the tribe if involved, and the Child Welfare Professional.

Stages of Negotiation

Tips to think about for discussion to keep the conversation on track.

1 **Preparation and Planning:** How do we create a win-win?

- How the safety determination will be discussed. Transparency regarding the decision made by the child welfare staff and supervisor: Be clear on the identified danger. What was the critical thinking process that led you to this conclusion? Think about how you will help families understand this without using child welfare jargon.
- Enter a room with a clear idea of what is necessary to ensure safety and have options thought out for how it might be achieved. During stressful periods a family member may rely on your expertise to give examples.
 - It's the role of the Child Welfare professional to explain the pieces in a way the family can understand.
 - Explain what a safety plan is in a way the parent can fully comprehend. What might it look like and how can we get there? Provide examples of what a safety plan could include based on the danger identified.
- Be clear that safety planning is a process that requires negotiation as the elements come together.
- Outline the roles of the CW professional, the tribe if involved, and the Parents/Caregivers. Pay particular attention to the strengths and protective capacities identified during the assessment process as these are essential roles for the parent to continue, thus non-negotiables.



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2 **Definition of Ground Rules:** What are the limitations to safety planning? When does this plan have to be implemented? How will the safety plan end? If an agreement cannot be reached, what are the next steps?

3 **Clarification and Justification:** Both the CW professional and the family will be given time to explain and clarify decisions and thought processes. For you, this will be an opportunity to explain to the family your position on negotiables and non-negotiables. Give details about the elements that must be included in the plan to shield from the impact of the identified danger, this is known as critical times and circumstances. The family will be offered time to explain their position, and this is where you may gain further understanding about how they are feeling heading into this planning. The conclusion of this stage is clarifying that both the CW professional, and family have a mutual goal.

The goal of Child Welfare: Least restrictive, least intrusive intervention possible. You may ask the family to identify and describe their goal to look for a mutual agreement.

4 **Collaborating and problem solving:** This will be the essence of the negotiation process. The CW professional and family will be negotiating strategies that will best achieve the goals established during the clarification process. You will need to be prepared with the information you gathered during the preparation and planning process to explain the safety determination(s). This ensures you are operating as objectively as possible, and the safety decisions are based on relevant and sufficient information rather than feelings and potential biases. This portion is highly dependent on communication skills, active listening and providing feedback. Everyone included should be prepared to offer ideas and suggestions.

5 **Closure and implementation:** Once the negotiations have concluded, put them in a written agreement for everyone to have a copy.

Example: Early in the discussion, if reaching a mutual goal for the safety plan, this is great to document to come back to in future conversations. A good tip is to review everything that has been agreed upon to ensure it's acceptable to everyone included.



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Reflection on Content

Thinking specifically about your role and what your county can/cannot offer, how clear are you regarding what is negotiable and non-negotiable during safety planning? Are you clear on how to explain what is required and how to explain the areas in which the family's input is critical?

Action Item

Create an outline to have a discussion around the safety planning process (regardless of where you may be in the process). Are the elements between the safety determination and the components of the plan clear to the family? Having a clear understanding about where you've been and where you're going should result in the creation or continuation of progress.