

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



MAY 2024 UNDERSTANDING PREDICTABILITY AND WHEN DANGER IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN

Understanding predictability is critical to developing a sufficient, feasible, and least restrictive safety plan. The more we can anticipate when danger is not active and when it will be, the better we can plan responses to shield children from impact. If we cannot anticipate when danger will be active, planning becomes much more challenging and will likely result in an overly intrusive plan or an insufficient plan potentially exposing children to danger.

The level of service is balanced with allowing the family the time and ability to operate normally when danger is not present and parental protective capacities are operationalized. This balance is not only strengths focused and beneficial to families but may also prevent service providers from burnout and the CPS professional from utilizing time and resources where they are not needed. Identifying critical points to prevent severe harm from occurring requires an assessment of each active danger in the home and getting a day-by-day, hour-by-hour, picture.

Actively constructing the “when” your critical functions are active in the household is highly dependent on your ability to use **professional judgement**. Professional judgement guides the analysis of the documented information, interviews, and observations. The following actions enhance professional judgement when working with families in child welfare.

Actions to Build Professional Confidence

Acknowledge your value as a professional: What are you proud of? What are your strengths? What feedback do you get about your work?

Build expertise and skill: Make a list of topics that will help you attain new skills as well as build on existing skills in working with children and families. What do you want to know more about? What do you struggle with? What are you curious about?

Prepare yourself for a contact to assess predictability of danger in the household: Find at least 3 resources you can use specific to the family condition(s) in the household. Create a list of questions to deepen your understanding.



MAY 2024

UNDERSTANDING PREDICTABILITY AND WHEN DANGER IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN

Additional questions for the family are developed using these techniques.

Think about the danger from a “day-in-the-life” perspective. What is happening up until the point of your involvement is likely how it will continue. Humans like predictability. People avoid stress and anxiety in their everyday life by keeping things as routine and predictable as possible.

Discuss self-efficacy. An individual's beliefs about their own abilities likely predict behavior because people have more control over themselves than external factors.

Have discussions about hardwiring. Many of the ways people and families operate has been created by their genetics, learning, and experiences. It may be difficult to explore predictability when one has been operating on autopilot for some time. Even though each person is unique, people often act in predictable ways because they have created household rules and a specific set of conditions to survive. By asking about what makes the family system run, it is possible to make educated hypotheses (that is, predictions) about how people will behave.





MAY 2024 UNDERSTANDING PREDICTABILITY AND WHEN DANGER IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN

Reflection on Content

Think about a dangerous condition that was once brand new to you. Where is your professional knowledge about this condition now, and what were the steps you took to get there?

Action Item

Evaluate protective measures on a safety plan. Are you confident the critical functions are occurring only when the danger is predicted to occur? What information was gathered using your professional judgment that supports the critical times and circumstances covered on the safety plan?