

Virtual Contact with Safety Service Providers

This job aid helps the Child Protective Services (CPS) Professional conduct virtual meetings with the family and providers when a child is determined to be unsafe and there is a Protective or Safety Plan in place to ensure the child is safe.

When a child is unsafe, CPS takes protective action (i.e., implements a Protective/Safety Plan, or pursues placement). When the protective action includes a Protective or Safety Plan, CPS recruits informal providers (e.g., friends, relatives, and other people in a family's network), or formal providers (e.g., professionals hired by CPS to assist, for example, parent aid) to step in and shield a child from danger during critical times and circumstances when a parent or caregiver is not able to on their own. For our purpose here the term provider will be used to refer to In/formal Safety Service Providers.

Providers are essential partners to CPS and the family. When providers are not fulfilling their roles and responsibilities, an unsafe child is likely to experience danger because the provider is not there to shield the child from it. For this reason, it is important the CPS Professional routinely monitors the Protective or Safety Plan in accordance with practice standards. An aspect of monitoring the plan includes talking to the family and providers about how the plan is working. In this way, the CPS Professional learns if there are changes to adult or child functioning, and about the quality/frequency/availability and accessibility of necessary services. When the proper implementation of the plan is impacted by one or more of these variables, the CPS Professional modifies the plan to ensure the unsafe child is shielded from danger during critical times and circumstances.

Technology can be used to increase participation in these meetings so that the CPS Professional can meet with the family and providers together to discuss the implementation of the plan, and together make modifications. Meeting jointly with the family and providers reinforces the collaborative nature of the work and highlights the importance of transparent conversations. Families generally appreciate being included in conversations with providers because it puts the family at the center and demonstrates respect. Specifically, it puts the saying "nothing without me" into practice. In other words, if you are meeting to talk about my parenting and my children, then invite me to hear what is talked about, rather than doing it behind closed doors.

The following includes steps to take when facilitating a virtual meeting between the family and providers. As you discuss the implementation of a Protective or Safety Plan, keep in mind the material you read about in the primer entitled, COVID-19 Pandemic: A Change in Circumstances. This document, and others listed below, will support you as you decide if modifications are necessary.

- Ensuring the Safety Plan is Sufficient, Feasible, and Sustainable
- Safety Service Provider Role & Responsibilities Checklist

When in doubt...



Before Meeting



- Read the Protective/Safety Plan
- Review the danger and how it is being controlled
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Mail and request returns of all necessary Release(s) of Information
- Practice the various functions of the virtual platform needed during the meeting
- Prepare to help providers understand how the technology works
- Draft an agenda
- Consider what information providers need to review in advance

During Meeting



- Confirm the identity of participants when they enter the meeting space and before you share confidential information
- Ask participants to speak loudly and clearly
- Check to see if family &/or providers can hear each other and understand the information being shared
- Make sure technology is working properly for everyone on phone/video
- Decide how to manage one person talking at a time
- Determine how someone will alert others that they cannot hear what is being said (e.g., use chat box, raise hand)
- Agree on how to reduce background noise (e.g., only using microphone when speaking, mute otherwise)
- Affirm confidentiality and discuss Release(s) of Information
- Share your screen so family &/or providers can see the plan
- Use the whiteboard to take notes and make them visible to family &/or providers
- Focus the conversation on roles and responsibilities
 - Who is or will be performing what tasks or activities?
 - When are tasks/actions/activities occurring?
 - How will others know it is occurring?
- Confirm contact information for everyone to ensure communication after the meeting

After Meeting



- Redistribute the plan when modifications are made (if shared electronically be sure it is encrypted)
- Update your supervisor with the status of the Protective/Safety Plan
- Document in eWiSACWIS
- Monitor the plan in accordance with practice standards



Ensuring the Safety Plan is Sufficient, Feasible, and Sustainable

This job aid helps the Child Protective Services Professional (CPS) evaluate the Safety Plan to determine if modifications are needed to ensure it is working.

We evaluate Safety Plans based on whether they are sufficient (enough), feasible (realistic), and sustainable (least intrusive). These evaluations occur at standard intervals. Below is a series of questions to get a CPS Professional started in their evaluation of a Safety Plan. It is not exhaustive.

The questions invite the CPS Professional to consider the quality of a Safety Plan so that modifications can be made when necessary. CPS Professionals remain steadfast in their commitment to child safety. Now more than ever they seek to renew that commitment amid balancing public health and child safety concerns in the community. Given the rapidly changing circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be necessary to evaluate Safety Plans at greater frequency to ensure they are accurate and provide the protection needed. For that reason, supervisors and practitioners alike will find these questions useful.

As a quick refresher when we talk about sufficient, feasible, and sustainable, we mean:

SUFFICIENT: are the right safety service controls in place at the right time at the right level?

FEASIBLE: is the Safety Plan 'do-able;' meaning, it is not too much or too little from everyone's perspective (i.e., CPS, parents, children, and providers)?

SUSTAINABLE: can the Safety Plan be carried on into the near future; is it least restrictive?

Instructions

Take all the information you've learned into account, respond to the following questions to the best of your ability. The responses will help you determine if the Safety Plan, as is, is sufficient, feasible, and sustainable for your continued work with the family:

Sufficient

1. Are the right safety service controls in place at the right time at the right level?

Yes No

2. Is there adequate depth of information to support decision-making?

Yes No

3. Did the CPS professional consider the judgements of others, and also take ultimate responsibility for CPS decision-making (i.e., the current CPS professional did not rely on others, like law enforcement, medical, school staff, or family members, to make CPS decisions about danger and how to shield the child from it)?

Yes No

4. Are decisions supported by facts and observations?

Yes No

5. Do all interventions shield the child from danger?

6. Is the schedule for services clearly articulated?

Yes No

7. Is the role of providers described in sufficient detail? Do they know exactly what they must do and the intent of that action?

Yes No

8. Does the Safety Plan utilize providers that the family would consider to be “least intrusive” in their view of the family?

Yes No

9. Based on what you know about the Impending Danger and how the child is being shielded from it by the Safety Plan, is the danger being controlled at the level needed right now?

Yes No

10. When the answer is “no” to the above question, where is there a mismatch (i.e., safety service controls are not at the right level or during the right times and circumstances, OR there is more than necessary)?

Yes No

 **Clue**

When all the answers to the above questions are "yes" it is a clue the Safety Plan is likely *sufficient*.

If you answered “no” to any of the questions above it is a clue the Safety Plan likely needs modification so that the Impending Danger Threat is controlled at the right time and circumstances. Talk to your supervisor or staff about what aspects of the Safety Plan are not sufficient.

Feasible

1. Is the Safety Plan ‘do-able;’ meaning it is not too much or too little from everyone’s perspective (i.e., CPS, parents, children, and providers)?

2. Does the Safety Plan avoid relying on parental promises to control previously uncontrollable behavior?

- Yes No

3. Were the parents active in the development of the Safety Plan?

- Yes No

4. Does everyone involved (i.e., CPS, parents, children, and providers) understand their intended roles? And, have the resources been available to continue as is?

- Yes No



Clue

When all the answers to the above questions are “yes” it is a clue that the Safety Plan is likely *feasible* for everyone involved in implementing the Safety Plan.

If you answered “no” to any of the questions above, it is a clue the Safety Plan likely needs modification so that it is realistic or “do-able for everyone involved. Talk to your supervisor or staff about what aspects of the Safety Plan are not sufficient.

Sustainable

1. Can the Safety Plan be carried on into the near future; is it least restrictive?

- Yes No

2. Are the parents capable of reliably performing all activities required of them? Can they maintain this across time?

- Yes No

3. Does the Safety Plan avoid taking over responsibilities the parent is capable of performing?

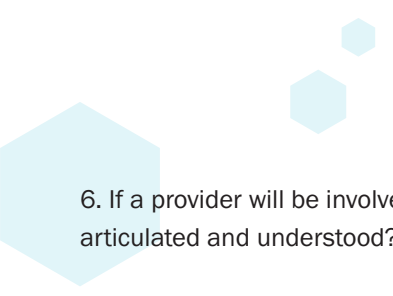
- Yes No

4. Does the Safety Plan integrate providers who can continue as part of the family support network after CPS is gone?

- Yes No

5. Can the role of the providers be reasonably sustained across time?

- Yes No



6. If a provider will be involved in the case plan too, is the priority on safety control responses articulated and understood? Is there a way to track this?

Yes

No

 **Clue**

When all the answers to the above questions are “yes,” it is a clue that the Safety Plan is likely *sustainable* for everyone involved in implementing the Safety Plan.

If you answered “no” to any of the questions above, it is a clue the Safety Plan likely needs modification so that it is sustainable across time, for everyone involved. Talk to your supervisor or staff about what aspects of the Safety Plan are not sufficient.





Safety Service Provider Role & Responsibilities Checklist

This job aid can be used by the CPS Professional to determine if a formal or informal provider is suitable for their role. It can also be used to evaluate the safety service provider's performance over time.

Safety Service Provider Name:

Safety Service Provider Type:

- Informal Formal

Check all the safety control responses the provider performs:

Separation

- Recreational Activities Daycare Respite Care

Concrete Resources

- Food/Clothing Services Housing Assistance Transportation Household Support

Social Connection & Emotional Support

- Social Supports

Supervision & Monitoring

- Supervision/Observation

Parenting & Home Management

- Basic Home Management Unique Child Condition Service Basic Parenting Assistance

Medical Services

- In-Home Health Care

Crisis Management

- Crisis Services



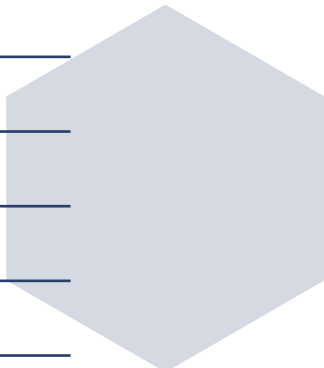


List the Impending Danger Threats that the safety service provider shields the child(ren) from, and identify the critical time and circumstances when they perform this function:

Impending Danger Threat

Critical Times & Circumstances

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Providers must have a clear understanding of why the child is not safe and how the Impending Danger Threats play out in the family. Ask the following questions to help you answer Q1 below.

- How does the provider view the danger to the child (i.e., how do they conceptualize the problem)?
- What has the provider said/done that tells you they understand the Impending Danger Threat and critical times and circumstances when it is active?
- How does the provider think s/he is shielding the child from the danger (i.e., what is their practical, concrete understanding about what their role is preventing and how do they think they are ensuring the child is not severely harmed?)

Q1 The provider understands the Impending Danger Threats: yes no

Providers must understand the child’s need for protection and see that as the priority. Both formal and informal safety response providers must understand and respect:

- CPS’s role
- CP’s need to take primary responsibility for assuring child safety in the current family circumstances
- CP’s authority to direct their actions with the family and act accordingly

Q2 Aligns with CPS agency: yes no

They must have a clear understanding of what they are being asked to do and a thorough understanding of how they will spend their time when in the home (i.e., they know their job description). Pay attention to whether or not the providers distinguish between control and change. Ask the following questions to help you answer Q3 below:

- On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that the provider understands their role? What makes you this number? What would it take to move up 1 point on the scale?
- On a scale of 1-10, one being the least and ten being the most, how confident are you the provider is the right fit for the job? What makes you this number? What would it take to move up 1 point on the scale?

Q3 Understands Function: yes no

Knowing the critical time and circumstances when danger is active, determines the providers schedule. Formal service providers must have availability that is flexible enough to meet the family's need. Providers must be available when needed and be able to maintain that availability as long as the Safety Plan is needed. In both instances, the provider must understand why that particular schedule is critical to assuring child safety. Ask the following questions to help you answer Q4 below:


- When does the provider think they are responsible to shield the child from danger (i.e., what is their understanding of the schedule and their need to be available)?
- What, if any, life circumstances might change the provider's availability (e.g., is there a pressing health condition, upcoming move or vacation, change in work schedule, or job transition, etc)

Q4 Provider is available at Critical Times & Circumstances yes no

It is important to have confidence in a provider's ability to follow through with the Safety Plan. Ask the following questions to help you answer Q5 below:

- How would you describe the provider's commitment to the schedule?
- What tells you, you can count on them to perform their responsibility?

Q5 Provider is trustworthy & committed: yes no



The relationship between the caregivers and provider will be critical to the success of the Safety Plan. Even under good circumstances, it is often difficult for families to maintain their participation in a Safety Plan. If the provider's attitude is punitive or judgmental, it is likely to exacerbate the caregiver and impact their motivation/willingness to implement the Safety Plan. Everyone who works with the caregivers should be committed to encouraging them to resume their role as primary protector of the child as soon as possible. Ask the following questions to help you answer Q6 below:

- What does the provider think and feel about the family and their need for CPS intervention?
- What does the provider do that makes you think they are supporting and encouraging the caregiver's efforts?

Q6 Provider is supportive & encouraging: yes no

The Safety Plan is stronger if the provider has a clear picture of what problems require intervention and what that intervention should look like. Ask the questions below to help you answer Q7 below:

- What constitutes a problem that would require the provider to intervene?
- When a problem arises what will the provider do to solve it, and how do they plan to let the CPS professional know?
- How would you describe the provider's level of assertiveness with each of the adult household members? What examples have you seen that tell you they are comfortable and confident to assert themselves when necessary?

Q7 Provider recognizes signs of a problem and knows what to do: yes no

Virtual Support for Loved Ones

This job aid highlights support options for people who love those experiencing substance misuse. Includes phone support, and online meetings.

The COVID-19 pandemic and related physical distancing measures have impacted people who struggle with substance misuse. Services are no longer accessible in the same ways or are limited in their availability. Friends and family members are stepping in to provide increased support from a distance. This can become taxing for the person offering support. The following services are available for those who love someone who is experiences addiction (e.g., relative providers). The services listed here can be accessed at no cost using a smartphone or computer.

Phone and Online Support

Organization	Service	Method	Website
Nar-Anon	Offers a support network to those affected by someone else's addiction	Live chat and forum available	https://www.naranonchat.com/
Al-Anon	Utilize a 12-step focus for friends and relatives with a loved one who struggles with alcohol use disorder, or other substances	Phone and online meetings	https://al-anon.org/
Families Anonymous	Provides 12-step meetings for friends and family with a loved one who struggles with alcohol or other drugs	Online meetings	https://www.familiesanonymous.org/
SMART Recovery Friends & Family	Offers secular, cognitive-behavioral-based program for families and friends of someone recovering from substance abuse	Online meetings	https://www.smartrecovery.org/family/

Hoffman, J. (2020, March 26) Online help to stay sober during a pandemic. The New York Times.

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/health/coronavirus-sobriety-online-help.html?campaign_id=154&emc=edit_cb_20200430&instance_id=18083&nl=coronavirus-briefing®i_id=81014197&segment_id=26257&te=1&user_