

# Safety Planning w/ Domestic Violence Workshop

Barry Salovitz, M.S.W.  
Sr. Director  
Casey Family Programs



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Quality safety plans  
require quality safety  
assessments & safety  
decisions



Quality safety  
assessments require  
targeted, valid & sufficient  
information



Targeted & sufficient  
information requires a  
forensic, collaborative,  
family system & family  
engagement lens



# Safety Management Components

- Safety threat/danger threat/present danger
- Child vulnerability
- Protective capacities
- Need for safety intervention
- Safety decision
- Child safety plan

# Safety Threat

Behaviors or conditions that may place a child in immediate danger of serious harm



# Control

“The ability to manage safety threats that place a child in danger of serious harm.”

*The children will live with their uncle while their mother is incarcerated, after she posts bail, and at least until the investigation is concluded.*

(limits access; establishes an estimated timeframe)



# Caregiver Self-Control

- Maltreating caregiver promises not to do it again; promises to “go get help”
- Problematic:
  1. Caregiver may not be in control. (ex., personality disorder, mental illness, competing priorities, addiction, etc.)
  2. Getting help does not immediately control safety threats or immediately supplement protective capacities



# Protective Capacities

Family strengths or resources that reduce, control, or prevent threats of serious harm from arising or having an unsafe impact on a child



# Supplementation of Protective Capacities

- Safety plans supplement missing or insufficient protective capacities
- Supplementation refers to “the addition of protective capacities to the family system without the removal of the child”
  - Mom’s friend from her church agrees to watch the kids for three hours after school each day so mom can find a job & the kids won’t be left unsupervised

# Vulnerability

The degree to which a child can avoid or modify the impact of safety threats;

Impact on danger level



# What's a Safety Plan?

Specific & concrete strategy for:

- Controlling threats of serious harm to a child(ren) or
- Supplementing protective capacities that are not presently sufficient to manage immediate safety threats for at least one child in the family



# What's Not a Safety Plan?

- Interventions expected to resolve safety threats
- Interventions that rehabilitate or address the conditions that must change to reduce the risk of future maltreatment or improve child well-being
- Interventions that are not capable of immediately controlling & mitigating the threat of serious harm

# Safety Plan Components

Specific & concrete control strategy;  
implemented promptly; specific to safety  
threat

- Action
- Responsibility I.D.
- Resources/People to Help
- Action Frequency
- Monitoring Responsibility I.D.

# Safety Plan Guidelines

- Employ the least restrictive (least disruptive & traumatic to the child) strategies possible while addressing the child's need for protection
- Supplement or introduce protective capacities within the family system
- Assess understanding, willingness & capacity

# Safety Interventions


Examples of controlling interventions may be:

- Voluntary kinship placements
- Restrict access of alleged perpetrator to the child(ren)
- Alleged perpetrator leaves the home (voluntarily or court order)
- Personal Protection Orders
- Protective day care




# Safety Interventions

More examples of controlling interventions may be:

- Detoxification
  - Home health nurse/parent aide/homemaker
  - Competent adult moves into the family home
  - Emergency supply of food, supplies, clothing, etc.
  - Medical or psychological crisis intervention
  - Concrete material/fiscal assistance
  - Intensive monitoring
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# Safety Plan Weaknesses

## Actual examples:

- “close monitoring”
  - “continue to provide services”
  - “casework counseling”
  - “needs to adjust to new living situation w/her children”
  - “will continue to work with the mother”
  - “father was spoken to & he states he will not use physical violence”
  - “follow the case plan”
  - “get her act together”
  - “will understand how to protect child”
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# Safety Plan Modification

- Modify the safety plan if safety interventions need to be changed or amended to ensure child protection
- Why would a modification be needed?
- How is a safety plan modified?


# Definition of Domestic Violence *Safe and Together Model*

- A pattern of coercive control perpetrated by one person against another in an intimate relationship.
  - abuse that occurs in relationships that have ended
  - Current & former partners who are not co-habiting
  - Is gender & sexual orientation neutral

# Child Maltreatment & Domestic Violence - Themes

- Avoid re-victimizing; victim's rights to self-determination
- Child protection & victim protection
- Batterer assessment & accountability
- DV dynamics (level and patterns of power/control & how exhibited, level of dangerousness, triggers, impact on children, barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, coping responses, cultural factors)

# Batterer Lethality Assessment

- Weapons possession
  - Mental health
  - Homicidal and/or suicidal ideation/attempts
  - History of 911 calls
  - Prior history of criminal DV
  - Stalking behaviors
  - Physical abuse/sexual abuse of children
  - Sexual abuse of victim
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# Increased Child Vulnerability

- Age
- Relationship to batterer
- Child perception of victim “protector”
- Special needs
- Child temperament



# Potential Safety Responses

- Shelter & safe houses
  - Emergency DV hotlines
  - Crisis DV counseling & intervention
  - Remove batterer
  - Add protective adults
  - Legal advocacy Law enforcement
  - Court involvement (PPO, DV Injunction)
  - Medical services
  - Emergency financial support
  - Transportation
  - Cell phones
  - Friends, neighbors, relative, faith community support
  - Role playing
  - Day care
  - Safe parenting time/exchange services
  - Housing
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