



SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS IN CHILD WELFARE

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A service of the Children's Bureau, a member of the T/TA Network



CPS Intervention Approach: A focus on safety and protective capacity

- **CPS Mission:**
 - *Assure that children are protected from maltreatment.*
- **CPS Outcome:**
 - *Caregivers protect their children on their own and assure a permanent safe environment.*
 - *Caregivers have sufficiently enhanced caregiver protective capacities.*
- **CPS Goal:**
 - *Eliminate, reduce, or effectively manage impending danger threats by enhancing caregiver protective capacity.*
- **Prime Objective:**

The Mentality Behind This Approach

- **Safety is the primary basis for intervention throughout the life of the case.**
- **Ongoing Child Protective Services can be more clearly defined around the use of safety concepts and criteria.**
- **The Case Planning process should be integrated with the Initial Assessment/Investigation.**
 - Utilize established information standard.
 - Apply consistent concepts and criteria.
 - Focus intervention.
- **The Case Planning process can be structured in such a way to encourage and direct caregiver involvement and establish consistent intervention objectives and decisions.**

Review of an Integrated CPS Intervention System

Initial Assessment: Problem Identification

- Involved because children are not safe.
- Children are unsafe due to impending danger threats and diminished caregiver protective capacities.

Safety Management: Assuring Protection

- Safety plans control impending danger threats and substitute for insufficient caregiver protective capacities.

Protective Capacity Family Assessment: Determining

What Must Change

- Safety (impending danger threats) is the focus of ongoing CPS involvement.
- Specific caregiver capacity behavior that must be enhanced to assure child protection/safety is the target of the case plan and treatment.
- CPS collaborates with caregivers.

Review of an Integrated CPS Intervention System

Implementation and Management of Case Plans:

Influencing Change

- Treatment reinforces enhancement of caregiver protective capacities associated with impending danger.

Case Plan Evaluation:

Measuring Progress

- Specific caregiver protective capacity behavior is measured.
- Treatment is complete when caregiver protective capacities are sufficient to protect against threats to child safety and assure a safe home.

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Key Concept

Threat of Danger?

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Vulnerable child?

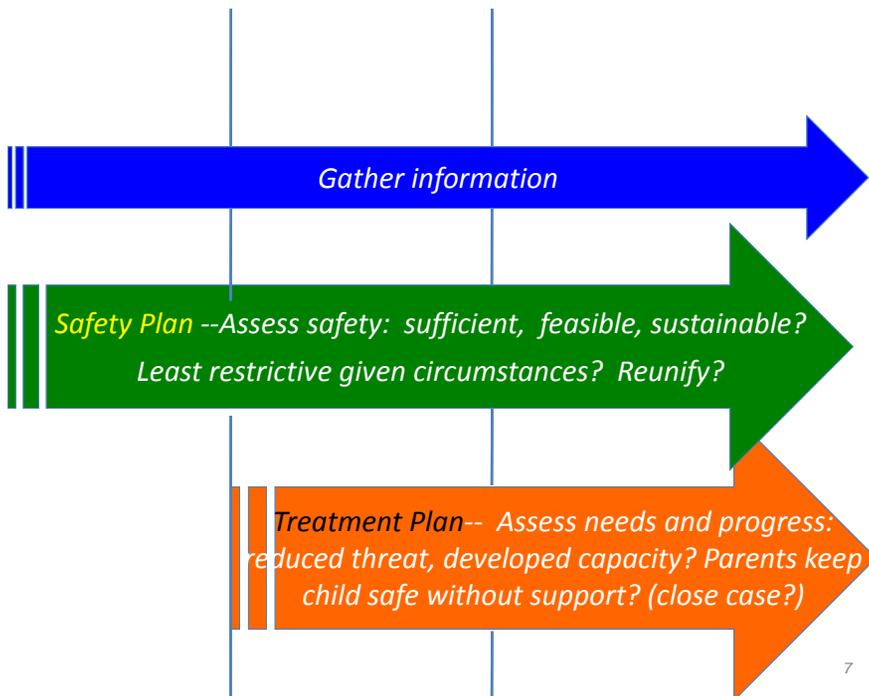
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Protective Capacity?

=

“unsafe child”

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Information Drives
Decisions About Safety

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Six Questions/Six Categories

1. Nature of maltreatment
2. Circumstances of maltreatment
3. Child's day-to-day functioning
4. Parental discipline
5. Overall parenting practices
6. Parental life management skills

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Assessing Safety

- Vocabulary of assessment
 - Threat of Danger
 - Vulnerable Child
 - Protective Capacities
 - “safe child”

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Safety (Danger) versus Risk

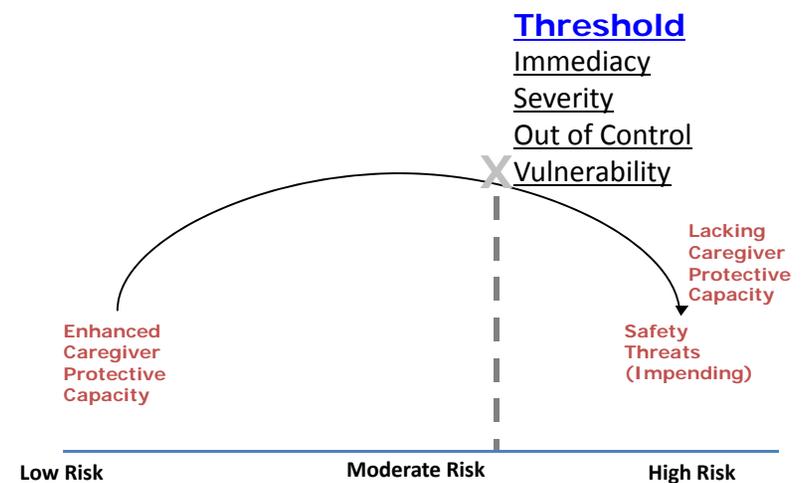
Safety → concerned about **imminence** and **severe** consequences due to things being **out of control**

Risk → broad concept regarding whether something **might** occur if there is not intervention; risk may be low, moderate, high.

- the critical question is whether or not the child is safe.

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Risk Continuum/Safety Overlay



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Vocabulary: Safe and Unsafe Child

- **Safe child**
 - “**Vulnerable**” children are safe when there are no “**threats of danger**” within the family or home **OR** when the caregivers possess sufficient “**protective capacity**” to manage or control any threats.
- **Unsafe child**
 - Children are unsafe when they are “**vulnerable**,” there are “**threats of danger**” within the family or home **AND** the caregivers have insufficient “**protective capacities**” to manage or control the threats, making outside intervention necessary..

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Vocabulary: Threats of Danger

A specific family situation or behavior, emotion, motive, perception or capacity of a family member

- observable
- out of control
- immediate
- severe consequences

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Present and Impending Danger

- **Present danger** means immediate, significant and clearly observable severe harm or threat of severe harm is occurring to a child in the present requiring immediate protective services response.
- **Impending danger** means a state of danger in which family behaviors, attitudes, motives, emotions and/or situations pose a threat which may not be currently active but can be anticipated to have severe effects in a child at any time

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Vocabulary: Vulnerability

- Vulnerability: degree of dependence on others for protection and care
- Assess vulnerability in light of *specific threats in this family*

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Obvious Vulnerabilities

- Age 0-6
- Physical, developmental disabilities or delays
- Poor health, physical capacity
- Inability to articulate danger

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Less Obvious Vulnerabilities

- Isolated from community
- Cannot anticipate or judge presence of danger
- Consciously or unknowingly provokes danger
- Emotionally vulnerable
- Impact of prior maltreatment
- Attachment (enmeshment), fear, insecurity re parent
- Unable to articulate problems or danger

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Vocabulary: Protective Capacities

Personal characteristics

associated with being protective,

That indicate protective vigilance, preparation and power to protect.

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Three Types of Protective Capacity

Cognitive

- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Perceptions

Behavioral

- Actions
- Activities
- Performance

Emotional

- Feelings
- Attitudes
- Identification

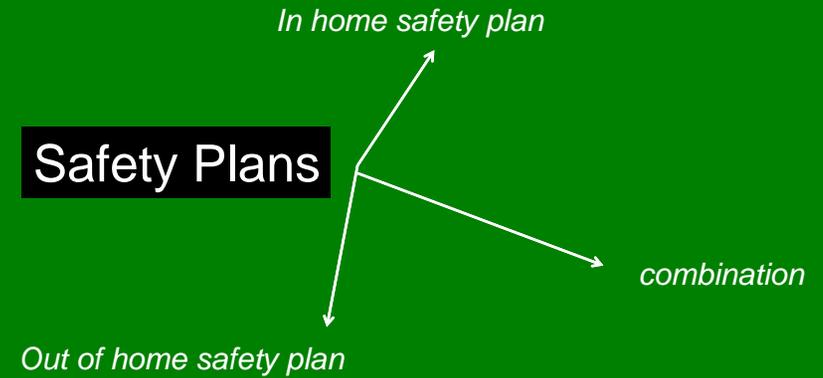
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Unsafe Child?

What now?

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Safety Plans



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Safety Plan

actions and services that will temporarily substitute for lacking parental protective capacity to control the threat of danger

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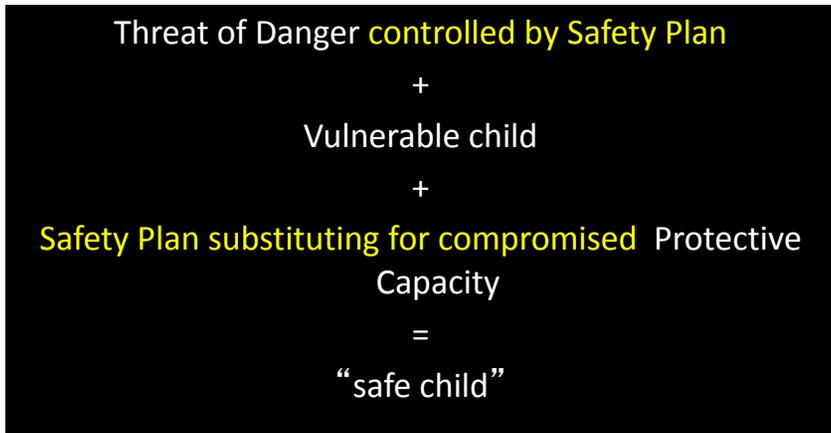
*A safety plan **controls** threats of danger*

It does not completely remove of them

Safety plans (in or out of the home) do not require parental change if it makes child safe

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Key Concept



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"CASE PLAN" § 475 [42 USC 675] ("The ASFA")

"A plan assuring that the child receives safe and proper care..."

Safety Plan

"and that the services are provided to the parents, child and foster parents in order to improve conditions in the parent's home, to facilitate return of the child to his own home."

Treatment Plan

Keeping track of two plans

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Safety Plan Must

- Immediately control or manage threat of danger
- Be made up of components (people and services) accessible when threat will be present
- Describe concrete, action oriented activities and tasks assigned to identified people
- NEVER rely on parental promises to control what has been assessed as out of control

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In-home safety plan?

With threats of danger clearly identified by defined criteria it becomes easier to assess whether agency could control them within the child's home

- **Managing Crises**
- **Providing Social Support**
- **Separating Parent and Child when necessary for safety**
- **Providing Resources (Practical Benefits the Family Might Otherwise Be Unable to Afford)**

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Is a plan...

- Sufficient?
- Feasible?
- Sustainable?
- How often and for how long would services be necessary?
- Providers available as often and for duration needed?
- Aware, committed and reliable people involved?
- Able to sustain the intense effort until parents are able to protect without support?

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Out of home placement/out of home safety plan only when

- it can be shown
- that **insufficient protective capacities** by adult caregivers exist;
- And
- that an **in-home safety** plan managed by CPS is **not sufficient, feasible and sustainable to control for safety.**

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Reasonable Efforts?

If an in-home safety plan would be sufficient, and the agency fails to consider or implement one, then the agency **has failed** to provide reasonable efforts to prevent removal (or to return child home).

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For more information/resources

www.nrccps.org

www.actionchildprotection.org

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