

## Understanding the Child Safety Decision-Making Process: An Overview

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## How does it help me in my job?

1. Reduce the unintended consequences of unnecessary removal
2. Common understanding of safety
3. The right information to make the right decisions
4. Understanding how an “unsafe” child can be maintained in their home

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## Resources for Safety Intervention



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### DCF Safety intervention standards

Refers to all the decisions and actions required through CPS involvement with the family to:

- Assure an unsafe child is protected.
- Respect the constitutional rights of each family member.
- Utilize the least intrusive intervention to keep a child safe.

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### KEY CONCEPTS

- Present Danger Threats
- Impending Danger Threats
- Vulnerable Child
- Parental Protective Capacities
- Protective & Safety Plan

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### Safety Equation

**Present Danger** or Impending Danger

+

Vulnerable child

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Parental Protective Capacities

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Unsafe Child

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### Present danger threats

An immediate, significant and clearly observable family condition that is occurring or "in process" of occurring at the point of contact with a family and will likely result in sever harm to a child.

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### Present danger threats

Four Categories:

- Maltreatment
  - Ex: The child has injuries to face or head
- Child
  - Ex: Child is unsupervised and unable to care for self
- Parent
  - Ex: Parent is unwilling to perform basic care
- Family
  - Ex: The family may flee

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### Controlling Present Danger Threats



A Protective Plan MUST be established as an immediate short term strategy in response to the identification of present danger threats.

- May be a voluntary arrangement between a family and agency
- Can be in home or outside the home
- Can be used in place of a TPC request to the court
- Can be an Emergency Removal (TPC)

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### Controlling Present Danger Threats



A protective plan involving emergency removal (TPC) must be used when present danger threats exists and family network or formal resources are NOT available or accessible or parents/caregivers are unable/unwilling to permit CPS to implement an alternative protective plan.

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### PURPOSE OF A PROTECTIVE PLAN

- Provides a child with adult supervision and care to control for the threat
- Allows for the collection of information that can be used to determine impending danger and parent/caregiver protective capacity.
- A protective plan give CPS time to analyze the information to assure the safety of the child in the **LEAST RESTRICTIVE** setting possible – **REASONABLE EFFORTS TO PREVENT REMOVAL**

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### PROTECTIVE PLAN - Examples

- **Maltreating or threatening person agrees to leave and remain away from the home and caregiver show protective capacity**
- **A responsible, suitable person agrees to reside in the household and supervise the child at all times.**
- **Child is cared for part time or full time through agreement outside the home by a friend, neighbor or relative**
- **A TPC is requested and child is placed in out of home care**

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### Safety Equation

Present Danger or **Impending Danger**

+

Vulnerable child

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Parental Protective Capacities

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Unsafe Child

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### Impending Danger Threats

A **foreseeable** 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 **sever effects** on a child at any time in the **future**.

- EX: One or both parents lack parenting knowledge, skills, or motivation necessary to assure the child's basic needs are met

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### Safety Equation

Present Danger or Impending Danger

+

**Vulnerable child**

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parental protective capacities

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Unsafe Child

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### Vulnerability

- ❖ Age (0-6 always vulnerable)
- ❖ Powerless
- ❖ Invisible
- ❖ Provocative
- ❖ Physical/Mental Disability
- ❖ Illness
- ❖ Defenseless

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### Safety Equation

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{Present Danger or Impending Danger} \\
 + \\
 \text{Vulnerable child} \\
 - \\
 \text{Parental Protective Capacities} \\
 \hline
 \text{Unsafe Child}
 \end{array}$$

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### Parental Protective Capacities

A **Parental Protective Capacity** is a specific quality that can be **observed, understood, and demonstrated** as a part of the way a parent thinks, feels, and acts that makes her or him protective

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Protective Capacities – Cont.

- **THINK:** Cognitive Protective Capacity
- **DO:** Behavioral Protective Capacity
- **FEEL:** Emotional Protective Capacity

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Cognitive Protective Capacities

Parental knowledge, understanding, and perceptions that contribute to protective vigilance. In general, whether the parent has the ability to understand his/her role to protect their child

- Articulate a plan to protect the child
- Has adequate knowledge to provide care
- Aligned with the child
- Accurate perception of reality
- Knows his or her protective role
- Self-aware as a caregiver

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Behavioral Protective Capacities

Behavioral protective capacities refer to the actions, activities, and performance that result in protective vigilance.

- Physically able to protect the child
- History of protecting others
- Exercises impulse control
- Sets aside own needs in favor of the child

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### EMOTIONAL PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES

Refers to feelings, attitudes and identification with the child and motivation resulting in the protective vigilance.

- Parent is able to meet own emotional needs
- Is tolerant as a parent
- Expresses love, empathy and sensitivity towards the child
- Is emotionally able to intervene to protect a child.

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### Safety Equation

Present Danger or Impending Danger

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Vulnerable child

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parental protective capacities

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**Unsafe Child**

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### Safety Analysis and Planning

- ✓ How and when do threats emerge?
- ✓ Home environment conducive to controlling the pattern of emerging danger?
- ✓ What outside actions or services are required to do that?
- ✓ Are required actions or services available at a sufficient level to control the pattern of emerging danger?

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## Safety Plan

Actions or services that will temporarily substitute for lack of parental protective capacity to control the threat of danger

- ✓ Must be Sufficient, Feasible, and Sustainable
- ✓ Only controls or manages threats of danger (not change)
- ✓ Must have an immediate effect in controlling threats
- ✓ People and services identified in the Safety Plan must be accessible and available when threats are present
- ✓ Will have concrete, action oriented tasks
- ✓ Never relies on parental promise to stop the threatening behavior

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## Safety plans vs. Case plans

### Safety Planning

- This provides you with your basis for your reasonable efforts.
- This planning is designed to control the threat only.
- This is immediate and action-oriented

### Case Planning

- To facilitate long-term change
- To enhance the protective capacities associated with the identified danger threats
- You need a safety plan within a case plan.

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## What to ask - Out of home placements

- Why was an in-home safety plan originally determined to be insufficient, unfeasible or unsustainable?
- How does the threat emerge? Intensity? Frequency?
- Can it be controlled with the children in-home? if so how?
- Can anyone substitute for the parent within the home to provide sufficient protective capacity to assure control of the threat of danger?

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**Is an in-home safety plan sufficient**

- Are parents living in the home, or do the “disappear” occasionally?
- Are parents willing to cooperate with an in-home plan?
- Is the household predictable enough that actions will eliminate or manage threats of danger?

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**Is an in-home safety plan sufficient ?**

- How often and long would services be needed?
- Are providers available to carry out services at appropriate times, frequency & duration
- Are people carrying out the in-home safety plan aware, committed and reliable
- Are safety plan providers able to sustain the intense effort until the parent can protect without support.

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**What is necessary to safely reunify?**

- No parental change is necessary
- What made an in-home safety plan insufficient, not feasible and/or unsustainable now has changed
- An in-home safety plan must be in place immediately upon return home
- Parents continue to work with service to become protective without intervention

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**Additional Resources**

**Child Safety Guide for Judges and Attorneys**

[https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child\\_law/ChildSafetyGuide.authcheckdam.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/ChildSafetyGuide.authcheckdam.pdf)

**Wisconsin DCF Safety Intervention Standards**

[http://dcf.wi.gov/Children/CPS/PDF/safety\\_intervention\\_standards.pdf](http://dcf.wi.gov/Children/CPS/PDF/safety_intervention_standards.pdf)

**Thank you!**

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