



Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System's Applied Learning Communities

***Tool to Understand Danger & Evaluate the
Safety Plan During the Case Transition Process***

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Introduction

Safety management is Child Protective Services' (CPS) primary responsibility during the Case Transition Process. This tool helps to guide a focused conversation between the current and receiving CPS professionals so that danger to the child is understood, and everyone knows how it is being controlled in order to ensure the child is not severely harmed. This tool can be applied regardless of the type of protective action the agency has taken when a child is found unsafe (i.e., Safety Plan or Placement). When a Safety Plan is the protective action, this tool aids the CPS professional in evaluating the *sufficiency, feasibility and sustainability* of the Safety Plan (in accordance with CPS Ongoing Standards, pg. 5). At the end of Step 10, it will be clear whether modifications need to be made to the Safety Plan in accordance with CPS Safety and Ongoing Services Standards. Note: Application of this tool occurs in conjunction with other practice requirements outlined in CPS practice standards.

Applying the tool helps the CPS professional understand the agency's reason for continued involvement and the protective action to ensure the children are safe until their parents are able to do so independent of CPS.

The tool is relevant when:

- Participating in the case transition process, and
- Agency has taken protective action (Safety Plan or Placement)

Overview of the Tool

You will notice the questions are written to be used in one of two ways: 1. Interview questions to use between CPS colleagues when primary safety management is being transferred to a different professional, or 2. Prompts for self-reflection when the same CPS professional will remain responsible for primary safety management when the family transitions to Ongoing Services.

Steps 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 are **blue** and represent questions to ask/answer between colleagues. Ideally, they facilitate a conversation between the Initial Assessment and Ongoing Services professional involved in the transition. If the same person continues to work with the family from start to finish, it might be helpful to have a supervisor ask the questions prior to the point of case transition so you can decide if modifications to the Safety Plan are necessary.

Steps 3, 6, 8 and 10 are **red** and signal the CPS professional responsible for safety management during Ongoing Services to reflect on information learned and to make a professional judgement about it. Ultimately, these pages will help the CPS Ongoing professional go on record about the *sufficiency, feasibility and sustainability* of the Safety Plan so that they know if the Safety Plan needs to be modified at the time of transition.

Visual Prompts

 **What to Expect**

Provides information about what comes next, so you know what to expect.

 **Clue to Follow**

Indicates the information you are eliciting is connected to the examination of the *sufficiency*, *feasibility*, and *sustainability* of the Safety Plan. The information you learn will inform your use of professional judgement in Step Ten (*Document Your Decision*).

 **Don't Forget**

Reminds you to honor the author of the Safety Plan. As you know, we're seeking to understand the danger and the Safety Plan, not evaluate performance. As you ask your colleague questions, or reflect on your own work, it's important to remember CPS professionals make the best decisions they can with the information they have at the time. It goes a long way to acknowledge the importance of the work done so far. Expect aspects of the work to be incomplete or incorrect. The case is transitioning; it is a work in progress.

Instructions

Prior to applying the tool, be sure to address foundational information about: 1. who is in the household, 2. whether it includes any eligible or enrolled tribal members, and 3. what protective action the agency took with this family. Start by covering each of these items separately before you start Step One.

Household Composition

It is essential to know who lives in this family's household before applying the 10 Steps. This is important because it's possible the Initial Assessment does not include the adult functioning for all household members. This happens when people move in and out of the home during the course of the assessment, or there may be reason to believe someone resides in the home (e.g. mom's significant other), however, it has not been confirmed yet. The next CPS professional to work with this family will want to understand the adult functioning of all household members regardless if they are included in the Initial Assessment documented in eWiSACWIS. This will help them know which household members were considered in the Safety Analysis so they can reassess danger to a child if/when household composition changes, or previous suspicions are confirmed (i.e., mom acknowledges her significant other is in fact living in the home).

List all the household members, including those who may not be listed in the Initial Assessment. Indicate whether their functioning was considered in the Safety Analysis, by checking Yes, No, or Sort of.

Household Members:

_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Sort of
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Sort of
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Sort of
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Sort of
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Sort of

_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Sort of
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Sort of
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Sort of

 **Clue to Follow**

If the boxes “no” or “sort of” were checked above, revisit this section after you complete Step 2, then consider if incomplete information about those individuals impacts the assessment of danger you learn about in Step 2 (*Name the Danger*).

Genogram

Use this space to draw a genogram if it is helpful:

ICWA/WICWA Compliance

Now that you know who is in the household, it is critical to know if members of the family are eligible or enrolled in a tribe.

Eligible for tribal membership Enrolled tribal member

Notes:

Type of Protective Action

You know who is in the household and whether or not anyone is eligible or enrolled in a tribe. Next, clarify the type of protective action by simply checking the box below that applies:

Safety Plan Placement

 **What to Expect**

Knowing the type of protective action will be relevant when you get to Step 7 (*What's the Plan?*).

Step One

Understand What Information was Gathered

Information is powerful and supports CPS decision making. It's presence or absence informs what we do next with a family. It is important to first understand the type of information that led to the protective action. Think about your college studies. In order to evaluate a journal article, you often started by first flipping to the bibliography to know what sources informed its content. Similarly, start by learning what sources provided information and impacted CPS decision-making.

Once you complete the first step you will know what information informed the Safety Assessment & Analysis (e.g., medical records, police reports, etc) and you'll understand the sources of the information (i.e., non-vs mandated reporters). You'll also learn what information was requested, and its status (i.e., did the agency receive it and analyze it yet).

Instructions

Start by learning what sources informed the Safety Assessment, check all the entities below that apply:

- Tribal agency
- Interviews with Non-Household Members
- Consultations with Other Professionals
- School Record(s)
- Other: _____
- Interviews with Household Members
- CPS Record(s)
- Medical Record(s)
- Police Report(s)

Did you request records during the Initial Assessment in accordance with §146.82 (2) (a) 11 (e.g., medical or mental health records)?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

What, if any, information has the agency requested and not yet received?

Now talk about relevant information that the CPS Initial Assessment professional may not have been able to gather but thought was relevant. It is likely this information still needs to be gathered after the family transitions. When it is received it will likely require a CPS professional to analyze it.

The questions below will help to focus the conversation and ensure the next CPS professional knows what to “ear mark” for later, when more information is learned.

Don't Forget

Remember, families typically experience CPS involvement to be a crisis. That often means the Initial Assessment professional is gathering information in a high stress environment in which new information is emerging quickly. Acknowledge this reality so that the Initial Assessment professional knows you are gathering this input not to judge their performance, rather to inform your own decision-making about whether the Safety Plan remains *sufficient, feasible and sustainable*, so that you can decide if modifications need to be made.

1. What barriers did you experience when you gathered information (e.g., unable to engage non-custodial parent, nonverbal child in the home, over-worked CPS professional unable to gather information from all relevant sources)?

2. Is there remaining information that still needs to be gathered? If so, what do I need to do to get it?

What to Expect

In Step 2, you'll learn what information supports the unsafe finding in this family. What you learn in Step 1 (*Understand Information Gathered*) and 2 (*Name the Danger*) will prepare you to record your professional judgement for the first time in Step 3 (*Review the Quality of Information*).

Step Two

Name the Danger

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The Initial Assessment was completed by a CPS professional and it included a Safety Assessment & Analysis of the household. As a result, they are now able to “name the danger [to the child]”.

In Step Two, you will learn and review what specific Impending Danger threats impact the child and led to the unsafe finding. You’ll also learn when the danger threat is active at critical times (e.g., after school from 3-5 p.m., M-F) and circumstances (e.g., bedtime). In other words, you will know when the agency is worried the threat will be active and the child will be in specific danger. This information is valuable to you for two reasons:

- In Step 5 when you reflect on what you’ve heard so far and decide if you agree the CPS agency needed to take protective action in his case
- In Step 7 when you learn how the protective action is a fit for this case

In the long run, you will need to articulate the Impending Danger Threats to the family, providers, and courts so take your time with this step and ensure you have all the information you need to inherit the safety decision-making as if it were your own.

Given the importance of knowing and understanding the danger, review the information below for a refresher:

As you know, when CPS determines a child is unsafe, it means the threshold for determining if there is an active Impending Danger threat was applied. Threshold criteria, commonly referred to as OVOIS, includes:

- **O**bservable family condition
- **I**mminent
- **V**ulnerable
- **S**everity
- **O**ut of control

What to Expect

Families are complex. There are times when there is an observable condition in a family but it does not meet all of the threshold criteria. In CPS we often refer to these conditions as “high risk.” In Step 2 (*Name the Danger*), be sure you are only talking about observable conditions that crossed all OVOIS criterion. In Step 4 (*Know What Else to Pay Attention to*), you’ll have the chance to learn about other observable conditions that did not cross threshold criteria, but need to be carefully watched.

Instructions

In Step 2 (*Name the Danger*), have the person who completed the Initial Assessment, name the danger and talk about the critical times and circumstances when it is active in this household. Start by listing each of the Impending Danger Threats identified in the Safety Assessment & Analysis. Then, go through each of the threshold criterion to understand how the Initial Assessment professional justified the selection of the Impending Danger Threat(s). Additional *Impending Danger Threat* worksheets available in the Appendix.

 **What to Expect**

In order to determine if the Safety Plan is *sufficient, feasible and sustainable*, we want to know first what danger the Safety Plan intends to control, and what times and circumstances matter most. You will refer back to this information in Step 7 (*What's the Plan?*) when you learn how the protective action is controlling the danger.

Impending Danger Threat:

Observable

- Parental behavior, condition or family situation
- NOT a form/type of maltreatment, injury or harm already sustained
- Answers: I am concerned about the children's safety because...

Vulnerable

- All children under 18 are vulnerable
- NOT all children are vulnerable in the same ways
- Answers: How is each child in the household vulnerable?

Out of Control:

- Parent is able to control it
- Others in the home control it (think of all household members)
- Child is shielded from the impact (of the observable condition)
- Answers: Where do we see this going?

Imminent:

- Plays out in the next few weeks
- Pattern
- Answers: When is it likely to occur next?

Severity

- Officially name the danger here; use:
 - ✓CPS professional judgment
 - ✓Solid language (remember to be specific about what exactly it would look like...)
- Remember: Severe harm may not have happened yet

Impending Danger Threat:

Observable

- Parental behavior, condition or family situation
- NOT a form/type of maltreatment, injury or harm already sustained
- Answers: I am concerned about the children's safety because. . .

Vulnerable

- All children under 18 are vulnerable
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- Plays out in the next few weeks
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- Answers: When is it likely to occur next?

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- Officially name the danger here; use:
 - ✓CPS professional judgment
 - ✓Solid language (remember to be specific about what exactly it would look like...)
- Remember: Severe harm may not have happened yet

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- Parental behavior, condition or family situation
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- Answers: Where do we see this going?

Imminent:

- Plays out in the next few weeks
- Pattern
- Answers: When is it likely to occur next?

Severity

- Officially name the danger here; use:
 - ✓ CPS professional judgment
 - ✓ Solid language (remember to be specific about what exactly it would look like...)
- Remember: Severe harm may not have happened yet

Critical Times & Circumstances

Now consider what you learned about the danger in this household, and seek information about the critical times and circumstances when danger is active. Get a “snap shot” of the family’s week by filling out the calendar on page 12 (*Critical Times and Circumstances Calendar*). If one of the weeks during the month look different for some reason make sure to talk about it. For example, mom gets paid once a month and at the end of the month she is running low on funds and the critical times and circumstance look a little different because of it. Additional *Critical Times and Circumstances Calendar* worksheets available in the Appendix.

Critical Times & Circumstances Calendar

Week: _____

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning						
Afternoon						
Evening						
Overnight						

 **Clue to Follow**

If you select “no” for sufficient or relevant for any of the identified danger threats, it is likely a clue you need more information about the assessment of danger in Step 2 (*Name the Danger*). This needs to be resolved before you arrive at Step 6 (*CPS Authority to Intervene*) and 7 (*What’s the Plan?*).

When you answered “no” for either *sufficient* or *relevant*, use the space below to document questions you still have:

Notes:

Step Four

Know What Else to Pay Attention to

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Step Two, "Name the Danger", helped you know the reason the child, or children in this household are unsafe. You also gained understanding about how the threshold criterion were met to arrive at the Impending Danger Threat that was selected in this unique household.

It is likely there were other observable family conditions that did not meet the criterion but remain a concern. In other words, these are observable family conditions that are "high risk," but still safe (i.e., did not meet all threshold criterion for an unsafe determination). Talk about these here so the CPS professional who will be taking over primary safety management duties, knows what observable family conditions to pay attention to. That way, if the observable family condition deteriorates and meets threshold criteria in the near future, they can put safety service controls in place and update the Safety Analysis and Plan accordingly.

1. Imagine this family has a new referral in the next 6 months. What is your best guess about why the family was re-referred? How come?

2. What observable family conditions did you seriously consider, but rule out?

3. Of the observable family conditions you considered, but ruled out, at what point did you stop in the threshold (i.e., Observable, Vulnerable, Out-of-Control, Imminent, and Severity)?

4. Do you anticipate a change in family circumstances in the near future? How might this impact the danger in the family?

5. What do I need to pay special attention to in the next week, month?

 **Clue to Follow**

If an observable family condition has met some, but not all threshold criteria, you'll want to pay attention to it. If the observable condition deteriorates, the existing Safety Plan will no longer be *sufficient* and will require immediate modification.

Step Five

Understand the Perspective of the Person Who Gathered the Information and Made Decisions About It

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There are several factors that impact the CPS professional's experience with a family during the first 60 days. The process of gathering information can be stressful for the family and professional and because such information influences high stakes decisions it is doubly challenging for all involved.

With this in mind it is important to understand the perspective of the current CPS professional who gathered the information and made decisions about it. Hit pause and ask the questions below. It's a good opportunity to understand how the current CPS professional experienced the work with this family. It is also a way for the CPS Initial Assessment professional to reflect on their experience with the family and to get closure before the family transitions to Ongoing Services.

1. What stands out to you about this family?

2. What did you hear/see or smell while working with them that still sticks with you?

3. What does this remind you of?

4. What did you like about working with this family?

5. What did you not like?

6. Based on the answers in 4 and 5, what did it all mean for your work with the family?

7. What do you think needs to happen next so that this family gets the best service our agency has to offer?

Step Six

Stop and Reflect on Authority for CPS Intervention

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Note: This sheet is red because the step is completed independently by the CPS Professional receiving the case.

The first 60 days of working with a family can feel chaotic. Families are often in distress and CPS professionals are managing competing priorities and demands on their time. As everyone is getting to know each other and understand the nature of CPS involvement, information can change quickly and necessitate quick decisions. Once time passes and the nature of CPS involvement is better understood, there is reason to pause and revisit initial decision making to ensure it still makes sense based on what is known now vs. when the family was first referred to CPS.

Now that you know: 1. what information was gathered, 2. how it was analyzed (i.e., name the danger) and, 3. what to keep your eye on, now it's time to reflect on the need for CPS intervention. In other words, based on all the information you've heard so far, are you in agreement that Child Protective Services has the authority to intervene in this family's life? Your ability to answer this question is important because you will now be responsible for articulating the reason for CPS involvement to the family, providers and likely the court. For this reason, it's important you understand and agree with the need for continued CPS involvement.

Instructions

Review the information you gathered in Step 2 (*Name the Danger*) and revisit any remaining questions that came up for you in Step 3 (*Review the Quality of Information*). If you need further clarification about why any child in the home is unsafe, now is the time to get it. Once you have it, ask yourself the following questions:

Agree CPS has authority to intervene in this family's life on behalf of these children?

Yes No

When selecting yes, what, in your professional judgement have you heard so far, that confirms CPS must intervene in this family's life in order to ensure the children are safe and to prevent severe harm?

When selecting no, ask yourself: What additional information do you need to know in order for the assessment of danger and protective action to make sense to you?

Clue to Follow

If you disagree with the need for CPS intervention, it may be a clue that the case is not ready for case transition. Consult with a supervisor and refer to your agency policy for next steps.

If you agree CPS has authority to intervene in this family's life and a referral to Ongoing Services is warranted, then you are ready to continue applying the tool. Apply this step to both types of protective action (i.e., Safety Plans and Placement). Reference the appropriate headers for further guidance.

Instructions

When CPS finds a child unsafe, it takes protective action to control the Impending Danger Threats. Protective action may include a Safety Plan or Placement. Both types of protective action ensure the child is shielded from experiencing severe harm in the future. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of either type of Protective Action, it is important to review the information learned in Step 2 (*Name the Danger*). After review of the Impending Danger Threats and Critical Times and Circumstances, you are ready to proceed with asking questions related to the type of protective action taken. Below each protective action is listed with instructions for how to apply Step 7:

Safety Plan

When the Protective Action is a Safety Plan, you will know the following after completing Step 7:

- What safety service controls are in place to shield the child(ren) from severe harm
- How the family and providers understand the danger and experience the controls that are in place to shield the child

When the children are currently shielded from danger through the implementation of a Safety Plan in the home, ask questions on page 20-25.

Placement

When the Protective Action is Placement, you will know the following after completing Step 7:

- How come a Safety Plan is not an option
- What it will take for the parent to be willing and able in the future
- What services are needed for a Safety Plan to be implemented in the home

When the children are currently shielded from the danger through placement out of the home, ask questions listed on page 26.

Understanding How the Family and Provider Perceive the Danger and Their Role in Shielding the Child(ren)

Instructions

Understanding the current CPS professional's opinion about how the people implementing the Safety Plan think and feel about it helps the next CPS professional know if everyone is "still on board" and "on the same page." This information will help the next CPS professional decide if the Safety Plan is *realistic and sustainable* for the key people responsible for its proper implementation.

Clue to Follow

Remember if the Safety Plan is not *realistic and sustainable* for one or more persons involved (e.g., family member, provider or CPS professional), then it is likely a clue the Safety Plan is not *feasible and sustainable* and will need specific modifications to continue.

The following sections will guide you to ask questions about the family's perception and providers performance of the Safety Plan. This information will help you to evaluate the Safety Plan in Step 8 (*What Do You Think?*).

Family Perception

Clue to Follow

A Safety Plan is possible when a parent understands the reason for CPS involvement (even if they still disagree) and is willing and able to work with providers and the CPS agency to shield the child from it.

It is understandable that families typically agree to a Safety Plan as an alternative to Placement. Even though this is an understandable motivation, it is important to understand if this motivation inspires the parent to work the Safety Plan in the ways CPS needs them to implement it.

As the case transitions to Ongoing Services, it's important to ask how the family understands and perceives the Safety Plan right now. This helps ensure the Safety Plan remains *realistic* and "do-able" (or *feasible and sustainable*) for the family over time.

If the answers to these questions suggest the family's understanding of the danger and controls is incomplete, or if the family's perception of the controls or providers is wavering, it's important to consider whether elements of the Safety Plan need to be further communicated, adjusted, and/or modified going into Ongoing Service provision.

1. How would the parent(s) describe the danger in their own words?

2. How do you imagine the child(ren) would describe the Safety Plan is helping to shield them from danger?

3. What feelings did the parent express about the assessment of danger and the Safety Plan at first? Have their feelings changed across time?

4. What are the parent's 3 most compelling complaints about the Safety Plan?

5. How did the parent's willingness to participate in the Safety Plan change over time, if at all?

6. Whom did the parent recommend be a provider on the Safety Plan? How come s/he had this idea?

7. Based on your work with the parent, what other ideas did you have about who might be able to help in the future?

Provider Perception & Performance

Clue to Follow

Safety Response providers may be informal providers (e.g. extended family, friends, neighbors, and connections from faith or other organizations) OR formal providers (e.g., contract service providers, public health, day care or other services). The Safety Reference Guide lists qualifications for both types of providers. Please use the following pages titled "Provider Performance Evaluation" to determine whether or not each provider is meeting their necessary qualifications. Fill out the Provider Performance evaluations found on pg. 23-25.

Additional Provider Performance Evaluations available in the Appendix.

Provider Performance Evaluation

Provider Name: _____

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 provider shields the child(ren) from, and identify the critical time and circumstances when they perform this function:

Impending Danger Threat

Critical Times & Circumstances

_____	_____

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' role
- CPS need to take primary responsibility for assuring child safety in the current family circumstances
- CPS 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 distinguishes 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 least and ten being 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

Protective Action: Placement

When Placement is the Protective Action

When Placement is the protective action right now, it is helpful to know the reasons a Safety Plan is not possible. Seek answers to the following questions:

1. How come a Safety Plan is not possible right now?

2. If there is no Safety Plan because a parent is not willing or able, what needs to change?

3. What services would make a Safety Plan possible in the future?

STOP!

When Placement is the protective action, there is no Safety Plan to evaluate. Therefore, you do not need to complete the remaining steps. At this point, you understand the unsafe finding, why placement is the protective action and what needs to happen to transition to a Safety Plan in the future. You are finished for now.

Step Eight

So What Do You Think? Time to Ensure the Safety Plan is Sufficient, Feasible and Sustainable

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Note: This sheet is red because the step is completed independently by the CPS Professional receiving the case.

Now that you know the critical times and circumstances when danger plays out in this family and you understand what the agency has done to shield the children from danger at these times, it's time to evaluate the Safety Plan. According to Child Protective Services Ongoing Standards, the CPS professional receiving a case with an unsafe finding is responsible to "examine the Safety Plan to ensure it is *sufficient, feasible, and sustainable*" (pg. 5). As a quick refresher, when we are talking about *sufficient, feasible, 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

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

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

Yes No

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

Are decisions supported by facts and observations?

Yes No

Do all interventions shield the child from danger?

Yes No

Is the schedule for services clearly articulated?

Yes No

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

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

Yes No

Based on what you heard about the identified danger(s) in Step 2 (*Name the Danger*), and how the child is being shielded from danger in Step 7 (*So What's the Plan?*), in your opinion, is the danger controlled at the level needed right now?

Yes No

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)?

 **Clue to Follow**

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. Make sure to talk with your colleague or supervisor in Step 9 (*Flip the Script*) and 10 (*Document Your Decision*) about what aspects of the Safety Plan are not *sufficient*.

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)?

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

Yes No

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

Yes No

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

Yes No

**Clue to Follow**

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. Make sure to talk with your colleague or supervisor in Step 9 (*Flip the Script*) and 10 (*Document Your Decision*) about what aspects of the Safety Plan are not *feasible*.

Sustainable

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

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

Yes No

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

Yes No

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

Yes No

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

Yes No

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 to Follow**

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. Make sure to talk with your colleague or supervisor in Step 9 (*Flip the Script*) and 10 (*Document Your Decision*) about what aspects of the Safety Plan do not seem *sustainable*.

In Steps 1-7, you learned a lot of information about danger. How it plays out in the family and how it's controlled at critical times and circumstances. You also received clues about information that is particularly important to remember when you evaluated the Safety Plan in Step 8 (*What Do You Think?*). These clues either provide expectations  or reminded you how the information connects and helps you decide the *sufficiency, feasibility, and sustainability* .

No doubt, as you've applied the steps, you've been asking additional questions to seek further clarification and ensure you have the information you need to truly inherit the decisions made so far. It's just about time to go on record with your evaluation of the Safety Plan. This is your last chance to clear up any lingering questions before you document whether the Safety Plan is *sufficient, feasible, and sustainable* to continue implementing.

Note: If the family will work with the same CPS professional from Initial Assessment to Ongoing Services, you can still participate in this activity. Simply ask a colleague or supervisor to ask you these questions to help solidify your thinking about the Safety Plan you developed and will continue to implement.

Instructions

Up until now, you've been asking your colleague all the questions. Now it's your turn to hand your colleague or supervisor the list of questions below. They will ask you the questions to help you articulate your thoughts about the Safety Plan. The questions are written to be collaborative. At the end of the discussion, it will be clear to your colleague whether you think the Safety Plan is *sufficient, feasible and sustainable*. As they learn your thoughts, they will be able to provide clarification before you document the results of your evaluation in Step 10 (*Document Your Decision*).

Don't Forget

Start the conversation by identifying the strengths of the Safety Plan. Knowing what is working is important to understand so the receiving CPS professional knows what needs to continue. It is also a meaningful way to honor the work that has been done so far.

What Works:

1. What do you like about the Safety Plan as it is?

2. Where is it clear the children are shielded from danger during critical times and circumstances?

3. Where do you see evidence that I (CPS Initial Assessment professional) engaged the family to create the Safety Plan? Where does their “voice” show up?

4. Where do you see evidence that I looked for and honored the family’s existing structure, schedule, and routines to find what is critical to maintain?

Where Do You Have Worries:

Don't Forget

Remember, when a Safety Plan is first created the CPS professional is managing the competing demands of information gathering, analysis, and requirements when taking protective action. All these demands come with specific tasks to complete all while ensuring family engagement and participation. It is no surprise that a Safety Plan may include gaps that worry another CPS professional. It’s helpful to view feedback about worries and worst case scenarios as a peer consultation, between colleagues trained in the same discipline, not a judgement about you as a person or your work performance with this family. To get feedback, is to participate in professional development.

1. Where does the Safety Plan seem ambiguous or less clear for you?

2. What “weak links” might topple this Safety Plan?

3. When do you worry the children may not be shielded from danger?

4. Are there areas where you are not sure how to move forward?

Giving Feedback/Next Steps:

What is a scenario you thought of that would worry you if the Safety Plan remained in place as it is right now? Describe the scenario that you worry about in detail?

As of right now what is your evaluation of the Safety Plan? If the Safety Plan requires modifications, how can I be a resource to you?

**What to Expect**

As a result of the conversation you just had, it's likely the CPS professionals involved know if the Safety Plan is *sufficient*, *feasible* and *sustainable* because you arrived there together throughout the application of the tool. Now it is time for the receiving CPS professional to go on record about it in Step 10 (*Document Your Decision*).

Step Ten

Record your Decision about *Sufficiency, Feasibility and Sustainability* of the Safety Plan & Modify When Necessary

At this point you are caught up to speed and ready to hit the ground running with this family. You know a lot more about: 1. the family, 2. the danger, and 3. controls. You also have a good sense of how the family and providers are doing with the implementation of the Safety Plan. You had the opportunity to reflect on your opinions so far in Step 9 (*Flip the Script*). Now you are ready to go on record and say if the Safety Plan is *sufficient, feasible and sustainable* and when it is not you know what needs to be modified and communicated to the family and providers.

Below are some examples of times when a Safety Plan would NOT be *sufficient, feasible, or sustainable* and would therefore require modification:

- Child(ren) are not shielded from all identified danger at critical times
- Family member or provider is no longer willing or able to properly implement the Safety Plan
- Service to shield the child is no longer available when needed

Instructions

Answer the question below regarding the *sufficiency, feasibility and sustainability* of the Safety Plan. Then complete the relevant next steps.

I have examined the Safety Plan and ensured it is, check all that apply:

Sufficient *Feasible* *Sustainable*

When ALL 3 boxes are checked it means the Safety Plan is *sufficient, feasible and sustainable*. You're work here is almost done...

Before you go on record with the results, check the documented Safety Plan and determine if it needs to be updated so that what is documented and what you discussed matches. That way, if someone looks at the documented Safety Plan and reads the results of the evaluation, it makes sense to everyone. After you do this, you are done with the evaluation and ready to document your case note in accordance with documentation requirements outlined in CPS Ongoing Standards (pg. 7).

When one or more boxes is not checked, it means the *sufficiency/feasibility/sustainability* needs to be strengthened and the Safety Plan requires modification.

Based on which box(es) were not checked above, use the lines below to articulate what aspect of the Safety Plan needs to be strengthened and how it will be modified to ensure it.

Remember, modifications can be as simple as adjusting the timing of service provision and as sweeping as moving from one type of protective action to the other.

Sufficient _____ Modification: _____

Feasible _____ Modification: _____

Sustainable _____ Modification: _____

When modifications to the Safety Plan are necessary be sure to take the following actions in accordance with CPS Ongoing Standard requirements (pg. 7):

- Meet with family to modify the Safety Plan
- Communicate changes to all participants and providers implementing the Safety Plan
- Create a new Safety Plan in eWISACWIS
- Gain supervisory approval of modifications



Well done! By applying the 10 Steps you evaluated the Safety Plan to determine if it is *sufficient, feasible and sustainable*. The systematic approach increases your knowledge of the danger and how it's controlled, helping you make informed modifications when needed. You are ready to continue or assume primary responsibility for safety management.

Ten Steps at a Glance

The tool is instructive, providing context for the evaluation of the Safety Plan. Through repeated application of the tool, you will learn the significance of each step and it will become second nature to you. At that time, you will simply need to glance at the questions to accomplish the same task. When you reach that point, the following is a reference for you. Included below are the questions asked in each step. Note, it does not include the steps that are typically completed by the receiving work and appeared in **red** in the tool. We recommend you still use those pages and complete them independently.

- Step 1
 1. What barriers did you experience when you gathered information? (e.g., unable to engage noncustodial parent, nonverbal child in the home, over-worked CPS professional unable to gather information from all relevant sources)?
 2. Is there remaining information that still needs to be gathered? If so, what do I need to do to get it?
 3. Did you request records during the Initial Assessment in accordance with §146.82 (2) (a) 11 (e.g., medical or mental health records) that you have not received yet?
 4. What, if any, information has the agency requested and not yet received?

- Step 4
 1. What observable family conditions did you seriously consider, but rule out?
 2. Of the observable family conditions you considered, but ruled out, at what point did you stop in the threshold (i.e., Observable, Vulnerable, Out-of-Control, Imminent, and Severity)?
 3. Imagine this family has a new referral in the next 6 months. What is your best guess about why the family was re-referred? Assuming you have the time, do you volunteer to work with the family again? How come?
 4. Do you anticipate a change in family circumstances in the near future? How might this impact the danger in the family?
 5. What do I need to pay special attention to in the next week, month?

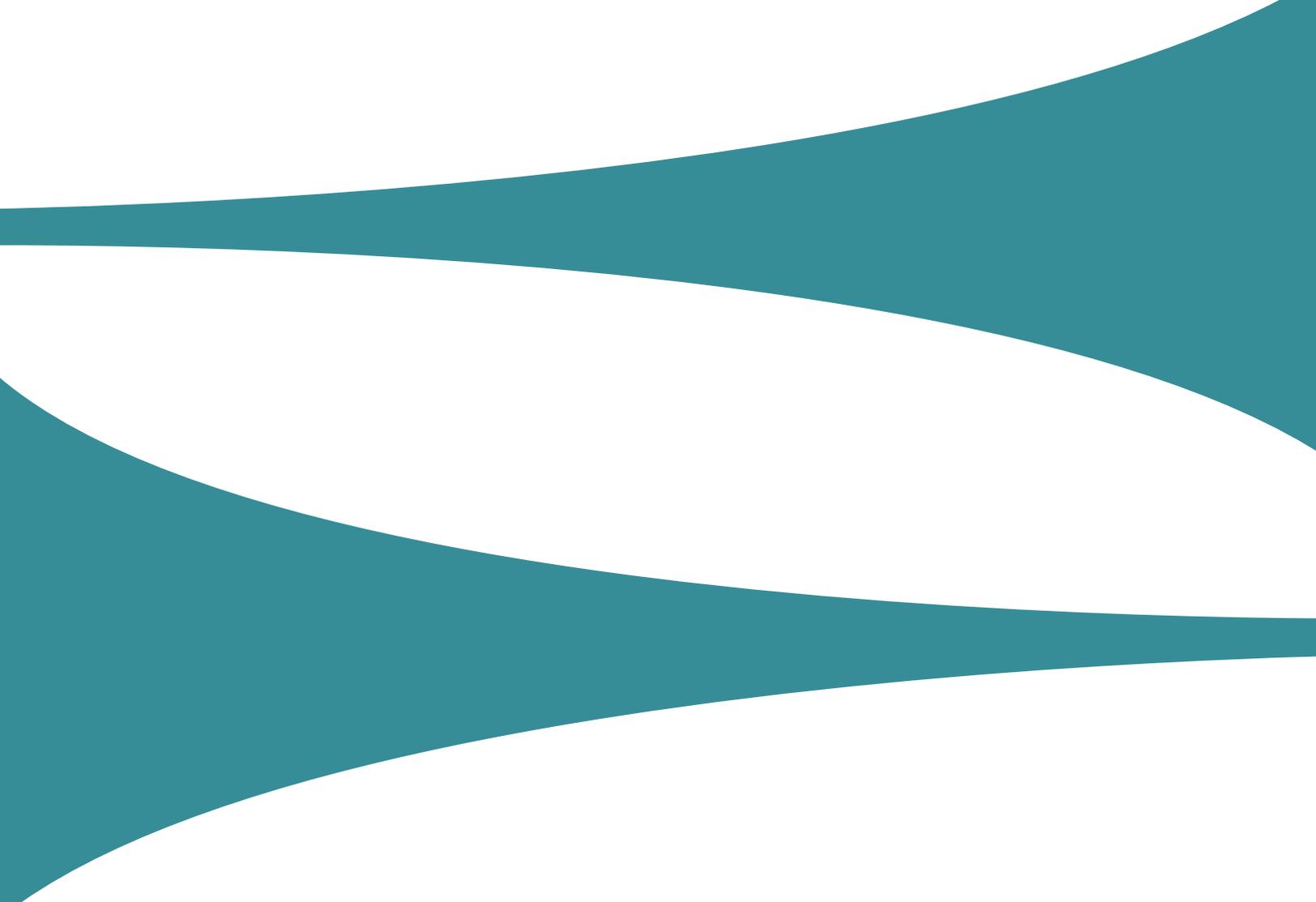
- Step 5
 1. What stands out to you about this family?
 2. What did you hear/see or smell while working with them that still sticks with you?
 3. What does this remind you of?
 4. What did you like about working with this family?
 5. What did you not like?
 6. What did it all mean for your work with the family?
 7. What do you think needs to happen next so that this family gets the best service our agency has to offer?

- Step 7
 1. How would the parent describe the danger in their own words?
 2. How do you imagine the child(ren) would describe the Safety Plan is helping to shield them from danger?
 3. What feelings did the parent express about the assessment of danger and the Safety Plan at first? Have their feelings changed across time?
 4. What are the parent's 3 most compelling complaints about the Safety Plan?
 5. How did the parent's willingness to participate in the Safety Plan change over time, if at all?
 6. Whom did the parent recommend be a provider on the Safety Plan? How come s/he had this idea?
 7. Based on your work with the parent, what other ideas did you have about who might be able to help in the future?
 8. How does the provider view the danger to the child (i.e., depending on whether they are in/formal how do they conceptualize the "problem"?)

9. If you were to guess what feelings the provider has about the unsafe finding what would they be (e.g., is a provider in disagreement with the assessment of danger, or are they overly zealous in their concern and it might get in the way)?
10. Are there any unique circumstances that may change these feelings in the future (e.g., will they feel differently if a parent starts in-patient treatment, gets a job, or leaves their significant other, or court dismisses the petition or criminal charges)?
11. How does the provider think s/he is shielding the child from the danger (what is their practical, concrete understanding about what their role is in preventing and ensuring the child is not severely harmed? What have they said or done that tells you this)?
12. When do they think they are responsible to shield in these ways (i.e., what is their understanding of the schedule and their need to be available)?
13. How would you describe their commitment to the schedule?
14. On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that each provider understands their role? How come?
15. When a problem arises for a provider, what will they do to solve it and how do they plan to let us (the CPS professional) know?
16. What, if any, life circumstances might change the way the provider is thinking about their role (for example, is there a pressing health condition, upcoming move or vacation, change in work schedule, or job transition etc).
17. 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?
18. On a scale of 1-10, one being least and ten being most, how confident are you the provider is the right fit for this job?
19. How come a Safety Plan is not possible right now?
20. If there is no Safety Plan because a parent is not willing or able, what needs to change?
21. What services would make a Safety Plan possible in the future?

Step 9

1. What do you like about the Safety Plan as it is?
2. Where is it really clear the children are shielded from danger during critical times?
3. Where do you see evidence that I (Initial Assessment professional) engaged the family to create the Safety Plan? Where does their "voice" show up?
5. Where do you see evidence that I looked for and honored the family's existing structure, schedule, and routines to find what is critical to maintain?
6. Where does the Safety Plan seem ambiguous or less clear for you?
7. What "weak links" might topple this Safety Plan?
8. When do you worry the children may not be shielded from danger?
9. Are there areas where you are not sure how to move forward?
10. What is a scenario you thought of that would worry you if the Safety Plan remained in place as it is right now? Describe the scenario that you worry about in detail?
11. As of right now what is your evaluation of the Safety Plan? If the Safety Plan requires modifications, how can I be a resource to you?



Appendix

Impending Danger Threat:

Observable

- Parental behavior, condition or family situation
- NOT a form/type of maltreatment, injury or harm already sustained
- Answers: I am concerned about the children's safety because. . .

Vulnerable

- All children under 18 are vulnerable
- NOT all children are vulnerable in the same ways
- Answers: How is each child in the household vulnerable?

Out of Control:

- Parent is able to control it
- Others in the home control it (think of all household members)
- Child is shielded from the impact (of the observable condition)
- Answers: Where do we see this going?

Imminent:

- Plays out in the next few weeks
- Pattern
- Answers: When is it likely to occur next?

Severity

- Officially name the danger here; use:
 - ✓CPS professional judgment
 - ✓Solid language (remember to be specific about what exactly it would look like...)
- Remember: Severe harm may not have happened yet

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Critical Times & Circumstances Calendar

Week: _____

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning						
Afternoon						
Evening						
Overnight						

Critical Times & Circumstances Calendar

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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Critical Times & Circumstances Calendar

Week: _____

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning						
Afternoon						
Evening						
Overnight						

Provider Performance Evaluation

Provider Name: _____

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 provider shields the child(ren) from, and identify the critical time and circumstances when they perform this function:

Impending Danger Threat

Critical Times & Circumstances

_____	_____

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

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

Provider Performance Evaluation

Provider Name: _____

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 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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- 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)?
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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

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