

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A WELL-WRITTEN AND RIGOROUS IMMEDIATE SAFETY PLAN

- 1. Identification of SDM® safety threats.** The Structured Decision Making® (SDM) Safety Assessment structure provides the framework for safety planning. When one or more safety threats are identified in a household, protective intervention should be considered to allow the child to remain safely in the home whenever possible and appropriate. If, after considering child vulnerabilities, household strengths, and protective actions, it is determined that in-home interventions can be initiated to control the safety threat, the safety decision is "safe with plan." A safety plan should clearly identify the SDM safety threat that would otherwise prompt protective placement if immediate actions were not put in place.
- 2. Clear description of caregiver actions or inactions and the impact on the child.** A safety plan should link each identified safety threat to a household-specific, behavioral description of a caregiver's actions or inactions that create danger for the child. Safety-Organized Practice formulation statements, called danger statements, may be used to structure this description. Statements should be written in plain language that the family understands (i.e., avoid jargon) and be as behavior specific as possible to support rigorous planning around how to best create safety.
- 3. Set of immediate actions to control the danger.** A safety plan should include a specific set of action steps by family members, network members, and others sufficient to immediately control the danger. A safety plan should only include actions or resources that are immediately available to mitigate the safety threat. Referrals to long-term services or resources that do not support an immediate change in the care environment are not sufficient to control the danger; they might be more appropriate for a case plan.
- 4. Network involvement.** At least one family or network member besides the caregiver must support the plan. Each participant must clearly understand the safety threat and be committed to their role in implementing the action steps to control the danger. They also must be involved in monitoring the safety plan.
- 5. Plan for monitoring.** A safety plan should clearly describe how the worker and family will monitor how well the plan is working and what actions to take if it is not working.
- 6. Time limit.** A safety plan must specify a specific timeframe—no more than 30 days—to remain in effect, or a specific date on which it will be reviewed and renewed, strengthened, or resolved into a long-term safety and support plan.
- 7. Signatures that indicate agreement.** Signatures must be provided from at least one legal caregiver, the child welfare worker, and at least one network member who agrees to be a part of the plan. Verbal approval should be obtained from the worker's supervisor.