

## SUMMARY

**S**afety Organized Practice is both a framework for practice and a set of tools and strategies that help child welfare staff achieve engagement, assessment, teaming and planning with a family and their network, with the goal of improving child safety, permanency and well-being.

## PURPOSE

- Safety Organized Practice (SOP) is a collaborative child welfare practice model that aims to build and strengthen partnerships within a family and involve informal and formal support networks of friends, family, service providers and the child welfare agency.
- SOP uses strategies and techniques that align with the belief that a child and his or her family are the central focus, and that partnership and teaming exist in an effort to find solutions that ensure safety, permanency and well-being for children.
- SOP is both a *framework for practice* and a *set of tools and strategies* that help child welfare staff achieve engagement, assessment, teaming and planning with a family and their network. “Safety Organized Practice” is an umbrella term for the blending of a variety of solution focused-techniques, including the Consultation and Information Sharing Framework®/Safety Mapping, Structured Decision Making (SDM)®, Appreciative Inquiry, Cultural Humility, Group Supervision, Family Networks of Support, the Three Houses and Safety House, and Trauma-Informed Practice.
- This approach is designed to enhance practitioners’ skills in family engagement, rigorous assessment and critical thinking to create sustained safety, permanency and well-being for children, youth and their families.
- SOP has a distinct language, tools, strategies and key components that make up practice(s) used with families.

## KEY COMPONENTS

## Engagement Strategies

Engagement is the process of skilled inquiry to identify, assess and plan for the needs of the child and family. Skillful engagement by a social worker is itself an intervention to help families start thinking differently about their challenges and solutions and move them toward readiness for change. Engagement strategies in SOP include:

- The Three Questions: What is working well, what are we worried about, and what needs to happen next?
- Appreciative Inquiry, which helps practitioners focus on what is already working in order to help it grow.
- Solution-focused questioning, which includes use of scaling, exception, coping, position and preferred future questions, including the miracle question.

- Motivational Interviewing to help those who are fearful, reluctant or in protest (“resistant”) increase readiness for change.

The tools and skills of engagement are a necessary foundation for all other work in Safety Organized Practices.

## Voices of Children/Youth

Two key principles in SOP are:

- The understanding that children and youth likely witness much of what goes on in their families’ lives and can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of what is happening in the family.
- The belief that children and youth often can and need to collaborate with other stakeholders in their own safety planning and case planning.

Therefore, the extent to which a social worker can incorporate the child’s/youth’s perspective into their work is critical to successful child welfare practice. SOP supports children and youth being part of Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, safety planning and case planning, as appropriate to their age and development. Additionally, SOP offers specific tools/strategies for workers to engage children and youth in conversations about their families, their safety and their wishes for the future. These include:

- Three Houses to explore the child’s/youth’s perspective of what is working well, what they are worried about and what needs to happen next in their family.
- Safety House to explore the child’s/youth’s perspective on what would keep them safe in the future.

## Child and Family Team Meetings

The purpose of Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, sometimes called Family Team Meetings or family meetings, is to build agreements, decisions and behaviorally-based plans between Child Welfare, families, providers and other essential members of the youth’s and family’s support network. CFT meetings may be held to create a safety plan with the support of a network that will mitigate the need to

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>HARM</b>	Actual experiences of past/current harm to a child by a caregiver (parent).
<b>DANGER/RISK</b>	Worries about what specific caregiver behavior may cause harm to the child in the future.
<b>COMPLICATING FACTORS</b>	Things we are worried about but are not actual harm to the child by the caregiver.
<b>SAFETY</b>	Acts of protection by the caregiver demonstrated over time.
<b>SUPPORTING STRENGTHS</b>	Positive things in a family’s life that do not specifically address the danger.

separate a child from his/her family, to develop case plans, to circumvent or plan for placement changes, to plan for return home or case closure, or for any other need identified by the family or agency. With the right timing, meeting focus and people at the table, SOP CFT meetings meet the California Department of Social Services mandates for CFT. CFT meetings are a core strategy of SOP.

### Mapping/Consultation & Information Sharing Framework®

The Consultation and Information Sharing Framework® and Safety Mapping are variations on a process of dialogue and inquiry designed to help social workers, supervisors, families and extended networks work together to evaluate the presenting factors, including harm and danger, risk, complicating factors, safety/acts of protection, and strengths; identify areas in need of additional exploration; and move toward group agreements about what needs to happen next to ensure the safety of the child or youth.

Mapping can also be used to assist youth and their teams to identify permanency or independence goals, what's working well, worries and next steps for a youth and their network.

### Safety Networks

A foundational tenet of SOP is that ensuring child safety requires involvement of responsible adults other than the caregiver(s) who caused the harm or danger. The Safety Network is a group of family, friends and professionals who care about the child, are willing to meet with CWS, understand the harm/danger concerns, and are willing to do something specific that supports the family and helps to keep the child safe. Safety network members can include extended family, friends, neighbors, tribal members, service providers and anyone else who can play a role in ensuring safety. A much-used phrase in SOP is “No network, no plan.”

### Harm and Danger Statements

Harm Statements and Danger Statements are a highly effective way of ensuring the agency, family and network are all on the same page about why the family is involved with Child Welfare. They are short, simple, behaviorally-based statements that can be used to help youth, family members, collaterals and staff working with the family become very clear about why CWS is involved and what CWS staff worry may happen in the future if nothing changes.

Harm Statements define what past or present parent behavior negatively impacted (harmed) the child. Danger

### A NOTE ABOUT THE INTEGRATED CORE PRACTICE MODEL & CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE CORE PRACTICE MODEL

**S**afety Organized Practice is congruent with the values and practice behaviors of California's Integrated Core Practice Model and Child Welfare Core Practice Model. Indeed, SOP takes the “what” of the Practice Models and translates it into the “how” of everyday work with children, youth and families, supporting engagement, assessment, teaming, transition, and service planning and delivery through the methods included in this document. SOP also focuses on prevention, which means working with families and their networks to ensure safety and avoid the trauma of unnecessary separation of children from their families, whenever safely possible.

Statements define what we're worried could happen in the future to the child if the parents' behavior does not change.

### Safety Goals

Safety Goals serve as the “goalpost” for what it will look like when the family successfully completes their safety plan or case plan. Safety Goals are developed from the Harm and Danger Statements; they are clear statements, usually a few sentences long, about what actions the parent(s) will take to help everyone involved with the family know that the child will be safe.

### Safety Plans

Any time there is a Safety Threat identified on the Structured Decision-Making Safety Assessment, a Safety Plan is necessary to keep the child in the home; without a Safety Plan that resolves the Safety Threat, the child will need to be separated from their family. Safety Plans are short-term plans with behaviorally-based action steps that specifically address the dangers the family and people identified in the Safety Network have agreed to resolve.

### Behaviorally-Based Case Plans

Behaviorally-based case plans focus on specific, concrete strategies and actions to effectively and permanently change the parents' behavior with regard to its impact on the child, rather than mere completion of or compliance with services.

### Cultural Humility

A cultural humility approach to the work requires that practitioners are self-reflective of our own bias and history that we bring to the work with families.

### Trauma-Informed Approach

A trauma-informed child- and family-service system is one in which all parties involved recognize and respond to the impact of traumatic stress on those who have contact with the system, including children, parents, staff and service providers.

### OTHER APPROACHES THAT ALIGN WITH SOP

California Child Welfare Core Practice Model |  
Child and Family Teaming | Child and Adolescent  
Needs and Strengths (CANS) | Review, Evaluate, Direct  
(RED) Teams | Safe & Together/Domestic Violence-  
Competent Practice | Structured Decision-Making |  
Visit Coaching (Family Time Coaching)