

# SAFETY ORGANIZED PRACTICE QUICK GUIDE

## THE SAFETY HOUSE

NORTHERN  
CALIFORNIA  
TRAINING  
ACADEMY

### SUMMARY

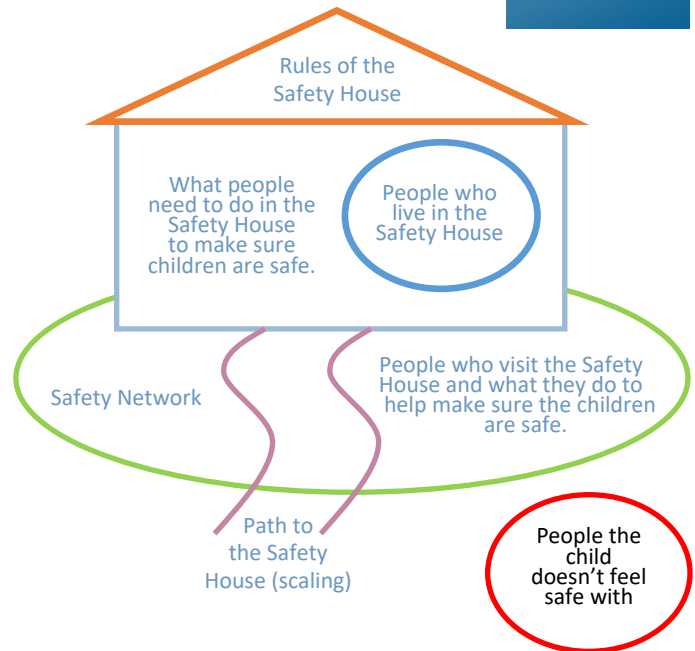
The Safety House is a tool for involving children in the safety planning process and informing behaviorally-based case plans. It can be used to seek a child's perspective in creating a reunification or family preservation plan.

### WORKING WITH THE CHILD

- Use the Safety House to incorporate the child's voice into case planning in Family Maintenance cases or transition planning in Family Reunification cases.
- Make the Safety House process as open and transparent as possible to parents and the child.
  - Explain to the parent(s) that the purpose of the tool is to get the child's perspective about what needs to happen to ensure his or her safety at home.
- Evaluate, on a case-by-case basis, whether to do the tool with siblings together or separately.
  - Completing it with siblings may reassure younger children and engage teens.
  - Completing it separately with each child can help you get information from their unique perspective.
- Explain to the child what the Safety House is and why you want to complete it.
  - "The Safety House is your ideas about how your home would be if you felt safe all the time. We'll talk about who can be at the house and what the rules of the house are so you can feel safe."
- Ask the child's permission to do the Safety House and tell them about confidentiality limits.
  - "Sometimes when I do the Safety House, kids tell me things I feel worried about and have to talk with other people about, but if so, I'll tell you I have to do that. Are you still OK to do the activity with me?"
- If the child wants an adult to stay near, ask them to sit apart from you and the child to quietly observe.
- Help the child draw the house framework as needed (or provide a pre-drawn template, if the child prefers).
  - Let them write or draw as much as they want.
  - Offer to write or draw if they don't want to.
- Check in with the child as you go.
- Watch for signs of trauma or stress; this can include the child seeming distracted or unable to sit still, "spacing out" or "checking out," or even leaving the activity. Know when kids have had enough, and stop if needed.

### INTERVIEWING FOR THE TOOL

- Have the child draw themselves in the inner circle of the house, with space to draw other people.
- Guide the child in completing the Safety House by asking the following questions.



#### People Who Live in the Safety House

- "Who else would live in your Safety House with you?"

#### What People Need to Do in the Safety House

- "Imagine that your home with your mom/dad was safe, and you felt as safe and happy as possible. What kinds of things would your mom/dad be doing?"
- "What are the important things your mom/dad would do in your Safety House to make sure you are safe?"
- "Are there any important things that need to be in your Safety House to make sure you are always safe?"

#### Visiting the Safety House

- "Who would come visit you in your Safety House to help make sure you are safe?"
- "When they visit you in your Safety House, what are the important things they need to do to help you be safe?"
- "How often would they visit?"

#### Rules of the Safety House

- "What do you think the rules of the house would be so that you and everyone would know that nothing like \_\_\_\_\_ would ever happen again?" (Use the child's specific worries from the Three Houses or other prior interviews.)
- "What else?" (Keep prompting for more rules.)
- "If your (sister/brother/grandma/auntie) was here, what would they say the rules should be?"

#### People the Child Doesn't Feel Safe With

- "When you go home to live with mom/dad, is there anyone who might live with you or come to visit who you would not feel completely safe with?"

### Path to the Safety House

- “If the beginning of the path is where everyone was very worried and you weren’t able to live with your mom/dad, and the end of the path at the front door is where all those worries are fixed and you will be completely safe living with mom/dad, where do you think you are now?”
- “If the beginning of the path is that you feel very worried that if you go home to live with mom/dad, she/he will start \_\_\_\_\_ again and not be able to look after you, and the end of the path at the door is that everything in your Safety House is happening and you’re not worried at all that mom/dad will \_\_\_\_\_ again, where are you right now?”
- “What would need to happen for you to take one step closer to the door?”
- Work to elicit concrete details from the child to narrow the focus specifically on the impact of the caregiver’s actions, identifying *harm/danger* and *safety*.

### WRAPPING UP

- Explain you would like to share the child’s Safety House with their parent(s).
  - Ask the child if they want to be there to share it or want you to do so without them.
  - If they do not consent to share with their parent(s), ask if there is a “safe” person they would like to share their Safety House with.
- In cases of immediate child safety threats, explain what you need to do and why, and what will happen next.
- End with closure of the Safety House process.
  - Tell the child they did a great job and give specific praise whenever possible.
    - For example: “You wrote so well! You were so clear about what the rules are in your Safety House! It’s so brave how you were able to say exactly who could visit and who couldn’t.”
  - Ask if they have any worries about doing the Safety House or if they think there is anything you should change for next time you complete it with another child.
  - Thank them for doing the Safety House with you.

### SHARING WITH PARENTS

- Begin by explaining the Safety House process and ask what the parent thinks the child might have said about their Safety House.
  - Who do they think the child would want to live in the house?
  - Who do they think the child wanted to visit them, and who they did not want to ever visit the house?
  - What do they think the child would want the rules to be?

- Show the Safety House to the parent. Ask what they notice most, what their child’s Safety House brings up for them, and what they think needs to happen next.
- Observe the parent’s reaction to the child’s words and pictures.
  - Do they agree with the child’s house rules?
  - Do they agree about who can live there, visit and not visit?
  - Are there rules the parent thinks need to be added to keep the child safe?
- Ask the parent what they think would need to happen for the Safety House to be a reality.
- On a scale of 1-5 (or 1-10), how ready does the parent think they are to create the Safety House the child described?
  - Use scaling coaching to explore the parent’s self-scoring. For example, if they are a 3, what would it take to get them to a 4? If they are a 5, why are they a 5 and not a 4?

### UTILIZING THE INFORMATION

#### Using the Safety House with the Network

- Use the Safety House to bring the child’s voice into the Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting process.
  - A child should never be returned home if there is not a Safety Network in place that has been part of a CFT meeting process.
- When developing a Family Maintenance case plan or a plan for transition home that incorporates the child’s Safety House, specify how the Safety Network will support the plan.
- Develop “fire drills” to test the capacity of the Safety Network to follow through on the plan.
  - For example, if the plan is that the child will call grandma to be picked up if mom or dad are doing \_\_\_\_\_, have the child actually practice calling grandma once a week and have grandma come to the house.

#### Case Plans

- Use the information the child provided for the Safety House to help define what behaviorally-based case plan objectives for the parent(s) would look like.

#### Court Reports

- Use the information gained in the Safety House process to incorporate the child’s/youth’s perspective, in their own words, into your court report.