

# HARM & RISK/DANGER STATEMENTS

## SUMMARY

Harm Statements and Risk (Danger) Statements ensure everyone involved with a referral or case has shared understanding of the caregiver's actions that harmed the child and that create worry about possible future danger.

## PURPOSE

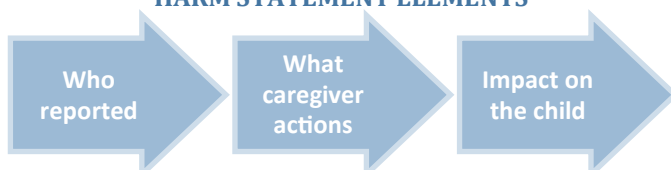
- Harm Statements and Risk (also known as Danger) Statements are brief, behaviorally-based statements that help families, network members, service providers and even staff become very clear about why Child Welfare is involved with the family and what we are worried may happen in the future.
- These tools help develop shared understanding regarding worries around the parent(s)' behavior and impact on the child, and also help focus the safety plan and/or case plan on the factors affecting the child's safety.
- Harm and Risk/Danger Statements are developed through the process of Safety Mapping in a Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting with a family and their network. Through this process, it is important to separate Harm and Risk or Danger from Complicating Factors.

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>HARM</b>	Actual experiences of past/current harm to a child by a caregiver.
<b>DANGER/RISK</b>	Worries that the caregiver's 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.

## HARM STATEMENT

- The Harm Statement is a clear, specific description of the parent(s)' past (or current) behavior and what harm happened to the child as a result.
- The Harm Statement contains three parts: who reported the concern (unless this violates reporting party confidentiality), what happened specifically, and impact on the child.

### HARM STATEMENT ELEMENTS

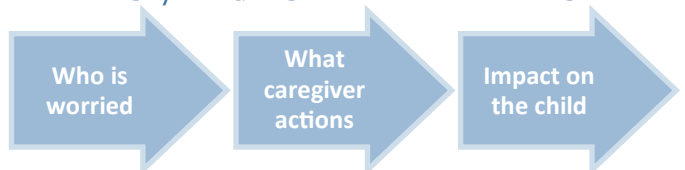


- There is not always a direct past impact on the child, even though what happened may be very worrisome. For example, mom passed out while the baby was in the crib, but nothing bad happened to the baby. In these cases, you can create a Risk/Danger Statement alone, and/or create a Harm Statement that addresses how a parent's actions or inactions *could* have impacted their ability to protect the child.
  - Sometimes parents are reluctant to agree to a Harm Statement in situations like this (i.e., they may say "But nothing actually happened to the baby!"); in that case, you can simply move on to creating a Risk or Danger Statement.

## RISK/DANGER STATEMENT

- The Risk Statement, or Danger Statement, is a clear, specific description of a parent's possible future behavior that may impact the child moving forward.
- The Risk or Danger Statement focuses on what we're worried will happen in the future if the parent's behavior does not change.
- The Risk or Danger Statement also contains three parts: who is worried, about what possible future behavior by the parent(s), and how it may impact on the child.

### RISK/DANGER STATEMENT ELEMENTS



## DEVELOPING HARM & RISK/DANGER STATEMENTS

- Harm and Risk or Danger Statements should align with the safety threats identified on the SDM Safety Assessment tool, or if no safety threats were identified, the area(s) on the SDM Risk Assessment tool that we are worried will cause future danger to the child.
- Developing a preliminary or "working" version of the Harm and Risk/Danger Statement can begin with the first phone call to the intake hotline, which is helpful in beginning to identify the harm that happened to the child, what we are worried may happen and what are the complicating factors involved. However, the true Harm and Risk/Danger Statements should be developed with the family and their Safety Network.

### Intake/Screening

- Ask thorough questions to identify the parent's behavior and the impact on the child. For example, if the caller says the mother is "mentally ill" or "using drugs," how do they know this? What does her behavior look like? What is the impact on the child?

- Does the caller know if there has ever been a time that the problem was not happening for the family? What did the parents' behavior look like during that time?
- Are there other things the caller is worried about in the family, but which are not harm or danger to the child?
- Include a preliminary Harm and/or Risk or Danger Statement in the Screener Narrative. Also specify any Complicating Factors that were identified.

#### Investigating Social Worker

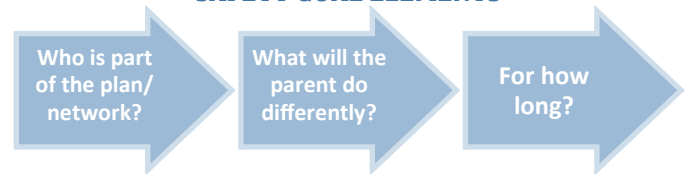
- After Intake has developed a working Harm and Risk/ Danger Statement, the investigating social worker should schedule a CFT meeting to conduct Safety Mapping with the family and develop the true Harm and Danger Statements with the family and their network.

*See SOP Quick Guide: Safety Mapping.*

#### SAFETY GOALS

- Safety Goals are developed from the Harm and Risk/ Danger Statements; they are clear statements, usually a few sentences long, about what actions the caregiver(s) will take to help everyone involved with the family know that the child will be safe.
- Safety Goals serve as the "goalpost" for what it will look like when the family successfully completes their safety plan or case plan.
- As much as possible, use the family's own language to create the Safety Goal.
- Make sure the Safety Goal clearly states the agency's bottom lines that will affect its decision-making.
- Safety Goals should align with the Risk/Danger Statement, SDM Safety Assessment and Family Strengths and Needs Assessment.

#### SAFETY GOAL ELEMENTS



#### USE IN PLANS & COURT REPORTS

##### Safety Plans

- In the safety plan, state the Harm and Danger Statements and Safety Goal developed with the family.
- Use the Harm and Danger Statements and Safety Goal to develop a behaviorally-based safety plan with the family.

*See SOP Quick Guide: Safety Planning.*

##### Case Plans

- In the case plan, state the Harm and Danger Statements that were developed with the family, as well as the Safety Goal.
- Use the Harm and Danger Statements and Safety Goal to develop a behaviorally-based case plan with the family.

*See SOP Quick Guide: Behaviorally-Based Case Plans.*

##### Court Reports

- In the court report, document the Harm and Danger Statements that were developed with the family, as well as the Safety Goal.
- Discuss the parent(s)' progress toward the Safety Goal, using behaviorally-based language to explain your assessment of how they are or are not meeting the goal.

#### SAMPLE HARM STATEMENT, RISK/DANGER STATEMENT & SAFETY GOAL

Harm Statement	Risk/Danger Statement	Safety Goal
The police reported that dad punched mom in the face and tried to strangle her while she was holding the baby and 4-year-old Jeremy was in the room.	CWS, mom and grandma are worried that dad will do something to hurt mom in the future and that the baby or Jeremy will get hurt when dad hurts mom, that the baby and Jeremy could have their brain development and well-being affected by watching their dad hit or strangle their mom, or that dad could even kill mom and the children will be left without their mother.	<p>Dad will work with a network of family, friends and professionals to create a plan that will show everyone that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He will not text, call or contact mom or her family members outside an agreed-upon schedule.</li> <li>• He will make sure mom has total access to her own money and full control over seeing her own family and friends.</li> <li>• He will always refrain from calling mom names, hitting her, or using any other forms of violence.</li> </ul> <p>Mom will work with a network of family, friends and professionals to create a plan that will show everyone that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She will reach out to her support people to manage her feelings about being by herself.</li> <li>• She understands the reasons she stayed in a relationship where there was violence, how to identify signs of violence, and how to keep herself and her children safe from exposure to violence in the future.</li> </ul> <p>CWS will need to see this plan in place and working continuously for at least 6 months to reassess whether to recommend shared custody with dad.</p>

**Note:** Use the parents' actual names, not "mom" or "dad," in the Harm Statement, Risk/Danger Statement and Safety Goal