



Family Safety Networks and Safety Organized Practice

Adapted from the Winter 2015 issue of Reaching Out

To support rigorous and ongoing safety planning in child welfare, Safety Organized Practice offers strategies for building a network of people around the child, communicating the risk statement to those in the network and enlisting their help in keeping the children safe (meeting the safety goal). This network is a key element of safety planning and should be formed as early as possible, ideally before an agency makes a decision about whether to remove a child from the home. From there, a successful and strong family safety network can help support the family through post permanency.

RATIONALE FOR BUILDING SAFETY NETWORKS

- CWS involvement is temporary.
- A once-a-month home visit by a social worker is not enough to ensure child safety; a network of permanent support people is needed to enhance safety.
- Families often have more people already involved in caring for their children than child welfare knows.
- CWS frequently ask clients to engage in "services," even when it does not directly address the danger. CWS could utilize a similar "push" to bring more people to the work of enhancing daily safety for children.
- Supporting the permanency and well-being of a child takes a "village" or a network of ongoing support, services, and love.

WHAT IS A FAMILY SAFETY NETWORK?

A group of family, friends, and professionals who:

- Care about the child
- Care about the family
- Are willing to meet with CWS
- Understand the harm/danger and risk concerns CWS and others have
- Are willing to do something that supports the family and helps keep the child safe

- Being specific about roles and responsibilities for each member of the network is critical; the more specific, the greater opportunity for success in meeting the child's needs (for example: "Grandma will pick up her granddaughter, Jane, every Tuesday at 3:00 while mom goes to parenting class.").

BUILDING THE NETWORK TO GO THE DISTANCE

The cultivation of a safety network is not just for "immediate" safety, but actually is the vehicle to promote long-lasting change that will continue to be enforced long after child welfare's involvement ends. SOP makes the distinction between "safety planning" and "service planning," noting that the culture of child welfare has been one of case management and service planning for some time—even while our goal is always the enhanced safety of children. SOP provides techniques and guidance for building a family safety network to enhance the daily, on-the-ground safety and well-being for children.

UTILIZING FAMILY SAFETY CIRCLES TO IDENTIFY THE FAMILY SAFETY NETWORK

The Family Safety Circle tool (sometimes called Circles of Support) is a visual tool to help child welfare professionals and family members have conversations about safety networks, the role of the safety networks and assessing who can be part of the safety network. Families identify the people that may be able to help them reach their safety goal, and provide ongoing permanency and well-being support to the child.

BUILDING A FAMILY SAFETY CIRCLE

Center: The child.

Inner circle: People in the family and the child's life who already know what happened (that led to child welfare services being involved). People who know the child, and who the child trusts.

Middle circle: People in the family and child's life who know a little, but not all, about what has happened, or know something happened but have very little information. People who could be of support to the child and family if asked to participate in the family's network of support.

Outer circle: People in the family and child's life who don't know anything about what has happened. Some questions that may help caregivers determine who is a part of their outer circle include:



After the first attempt to fill out the family safety circle is completed, it is important to keep working with the family to identify additional supports and the potential for a higher levels of support from within the circle. It is also important to identify people who may be of risk to the child and/or caregivers who should remain in the outer circle. Some of the following follow-up questions may be useful in attempting to move people from the outer circles to the inner circle, and to add additional supports into the circle:

- *Who can you move from the outer circles to the inner circle? What would it take to get them there?*
- *Who else from these outer circles do you think needs to be part of this inner circle?*
- *Is there anyone in these two outer circles who you have thought about telling or come close to telling, but you haven't quite gotten there yet?*
- *Who would others who are close to you and your children say needs to be in this inner circle?*
- *Who would your child want to have in this inner circle?*
- *Who do you think your social worker would want in the inner circle?*
- *Who of all of these people do you feel most comfortable with/most understood by and think would be important to have as part of the safety network?*

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- # RACIAL
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- ## NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S CONTINUING JOURNEY WITH SAFETY ORIGINATED PRACTICE
- By Susan Jones, Susan, Kathleen, and Leah
- As soon as you see the Northern California flag, it's hard not to think about the state's long history with child welfare. The state's child welfare system has a long and complex history, and it's one that's still evolving. The state's child welfare system has a long and complex history, and it's one that's still evolving. The state's child welfare system has a long and complex history, and it's one that's still evolving.
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