FAMILY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

This practice idea is a result of the work by teams in the BSC on Safety and Risk Assessments. These are practice ideas that you can start doing today that may improve your work with families in conducting effective safety and risk assessments.

EARLY TRANSPARENCIES WITH FAMILIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Engagement with families in the assessment or investigation process should start from the first visit. Initial home visits or decision meetings should include full disclosure of the agency’s process, a clear explanation of the safety and risk concerns, a review of the family’s referral history (if applicable), and a discussion of family strengths and needs.</th>
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<td>Why Try This?</td>
<td>Many families find the child welfare process confusing, and the use of jargon often means that families are unclear about the safety and risk concerns of the agency. Full disclosure and early transparency from the agency’s first contact will help ensure that families and workers can better work together to address safety and risk concerns, hopefully keeping children safe in their homes. Keeping the focus on clear definitions and goals of safety for kids increases transparency between the agency and families and leads to achieving concrete goals.</td>
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<td>How Can I Try This?</td>
<td>• Before your next initial assessment or investigation visit with a family, outline the agency’s safety and risk concerns and use guided questions to talk to the family about their strengths and needs. • Create a Parent Fact Sheet that clearly outlines your agency process and system for families.</td>
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<td>Success in the BSC</td>
<td>Pasadena: “Facilitator discussed risk and safety issues relative to allegations using standardized definitions each. These definitions were visible during the TDM process. Facilitator felt it created a more constructive and purposeful meeting. The family and CSW were fully engaged and remained focused on purpose for the meeting. This led to the creation of a comprehensive safety plan with input from all parties.”</td>
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<td>Things to Think about</td>
<td>Many BSC teams found that their agency was not using clear, consistent definitions of safety and risk. Creating standardized definitions for staff will lead to increased transparency with families.</td>
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<td>Tools and Links</td>
<td>FL5 Parent Fact Sheet</td>
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| Originally Tried | Florida Circuit 5
Pasadena, CA
Utah |
Florida Circuit 5 Parent Information Sheet

You have recently become involved in Florida’s child welfare system. Someone called the Department of Children and Families and expressed concern for the well-being of your child(ren). Safety and risk assessments are very important in determining how safe your children are with you in your home. The investigator will ask you questions, and your participation and cooperation is very helpful in creating a safe solution. We want to know the good things that you and your family do to take care of each other. We also need to know the things that can put your children at risk and how we can help to improve the situation.

Through the safety assessment, we need to evaluate the risk to your children and identify the things that could help your family/children.

The Investigator will ask you questions about:

- The allegation
- The previous criminal history of all household members over the age of 12
- Prior experience with the Department of Children and Families
- Friends, family, employers, neighbors, etc., who could provide helpful information
- How you manage your home/family, including food, clothing, money, management, sleeping arrangements, transportation, etc.
- Complicating factors—any issues that impact your best ability to care for your children

The investigator will also look around your home to make sure the environment is safe and decent. If you and the investigator identify safety or other needs, the investigator will make recommendations and can help locate services. Some interventions include:

- In-home services that help with parenting and household skills
- Asking someone in the household who may be posing a risk to move out
- Suggesting your children move in with family or friends until the situation improves
- In some cases, children are removed from their family’s home due to immediate danger. If that happens, you can still help make a plan for your children to return home. The court and a social worker will oversee the process and help you to make improvements.

A comprehensive behavioral assessment will be completed on your child. You and others will be asked to participate in the information-gathering process. This information will be used to identify the strengths and needs of your child and family. Once the assessment is complete, your child’s case manager will review the results with you and seek your input.

Although we recognize this can be a very stressful situation, your cooperation and assistance can make a big difference in coming up with solutions. We encourage you to participate in the safety plan and ask questions so that you understand the process.

Thank you.