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PA Child Welfare Resource Center

### Charting the Course towards Permanency for Children in Pennsylvania

Module 4:  
In-Home Safety Assessment and Management

Thursday, January 21, 2010

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### Ground Rules

- Be on time
- Training schedule: 9 – 4 w/breaks
- Sign/initial the Sign-in Sheet each day
- Provide constructive/motivational feedback
- Be respectful
- Take risks
- Ask questions
- No cell phones/text messaging

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### Name Tents

County	Unit/ Department
Length of time in current position	Name
	One or two characteristics that make children safe

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### Characteristics of Safety & Safe Environment

- An absence of or control of threats of severe harm
- Presence of caregiver protective capacities
- A safe home is experienced as a refuge
- Perceived and felt security
- Confidence in consistency

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### Information Explored to Identify Characteristics of Safety & A Safe Environment

- How the children are behaving in the home
- How caregivers are performing
- How the family is operating
- The caregiver's capacity to sustain continued safety
- How community connections sustain continued safety

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### Steps in the Safety Assessment and Management Process

```

graph TD
    subgraph MainFlow
        A[Assessment] --> B[Protective Capacities]
        B --> C[Analysis]
        C --> D[Safety Decision]
        D --> E[Safety Plan]
    end
    subgraph Sidebars
        D1[Documentation] --- MainFlow
        D2[Information Gathering] --- MainFlow
    end
  
```

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### Paradigm Shifts

1. A shift from allegation-based investigation/assessment to an information-based, analytical approach;
2. A shift from compliance-based Family Service Plans to change-based, individualized, behaviorally-specific plans;
3. Understanding that safety is the responsibility of all staff regardless of their role and function. That is, safety concepts and practice provide the focus for all interventions; and
4. Understanding that CYIS is an intrusive intervention, under state law and mandate, for children and families who cannot protect their children.

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### Review of Learning Objectives

### WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

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### Agenda

**Day 1**  
 Welcome & Introductions  
 The Safety Threshold  
 Present Danger Threats  
 Impending Danger Threats

**Day 2**  
 Connecting Safety Threats to the Casework Process  
 Caregiver Protective Capacities  
 Safety Analysis & Decision Making

**Day 3**  
 Safety Plan Management  
 Putting the Pieces Together – The Smith Family Safety Assessment  
 Workshop Closure & Evaluations

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### Types of Assessment

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### What is Different About...

- What is different about hearing a forecast of a thunderstorm; hearing thunder and seeing lightning in the distance; and standing outside in a thunderstorm?
- What is different about a house with a 4-year-old where matches are kept in a kitchen drawer; a house with a 4-year-old child who has matches in his dresser drawer; and a house where you see a 4-year-old trying to light a match?
- What is different about a house with a 6-year-old without heat in the summertime; a house with a 13-year-old without heat in the wintertime; and a house with an infant without heat in the wintertime?

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### Risk vs. Safety

Risk	Safety
Likelihood of future maltreatment	Current dangerous family conditions
Family functioning	Severe forms of dangerous conditions and maltreatment
Child well-being	Family conditions that meet the safety threshold
Unlimited time-frame	Present to immediate – near future time frame
Judgment about negative effects of future maltreatment	Judgment about the certainty of severe effects
Onset progressing to seriously troubled	Family situation and behavior that are out of control
Family situations that may be treated	Family situations and behavior must be controlled/managed
All aspects of the family life relevant to future maltreatment	A limited number of safety threats

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### Global Definitions

**Child Maltreatment**  
Parenting behavior that is harmful and destructive to a child's cognitive, social, emotional and/or physical development; and those with parenting responsibilities who are unable and/or unwilling to behave differently.

<b>Risk of Child Maltreatment</b> The likelihood (chance, potential, or prospect) for parenting behavior that is harmful and destructive to a child's cognitive, social, emotional, and/or physical development and those with parenting responsibility are unwilling or unable to behave differently.	<b>Unsafe Child</b> Children are considered unsafe when they are vulnerable to safety threats and caregivers are unable or unwilling to provide protection.
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**Safe Child**  
Children are considered safe when there are no safety threats, or the caregivers' are able to provide protection and/or control existing threats.

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### Pennsylvania Safety Threshold Criteria

<b>Serious</b> Serious harm could include serious physical injury, significant pain, and suffering.	<b>Vulnerable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A child's vulnerability is based on their emotional, behavioral, and cognitive functioning; health; and ability to care for himself/herself.</li> <li>A vulnerable child is susceptible to the effects of danger and is unable to protect himself from the danger.</li> <li>Vulnerability is not based on age alone. A teenage youth with disabilities that affect his emotional, behavioral, or cognitive functioning may be more vulnerable to a threat of serious harm than a younger child without any disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Observable &amp; Specific</b> The condition must be specific and observable in the form of behavior, emotion, attitude, perception, intent, or situation. The existence of condition is based on more than a gut feeling. The condition is clearly identifiable.	<b>Imminent - A Specific Time Frame</b> Imminent means the serious harm could happen anytime within the near future—from later today, tomorrow, or up to but not exceeding 60 days.
<b>Out of Control</b> When a condition is out of control, there is no apparent natural, existing means within the family network that can assure control.	

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### Risk to Safety Continuum

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### Present Danger

- **Immediate** - This means that what is happening in the family is happening right before your eyes. You are in the midst of the danger the child is subject to. The threatening family condition is in operation. Its effects can result at any moment.
- **Significant** - Referring to a family condition, this means that the nature of what is out-of-control and immediately threatening to a child is onerous, vivid, impressive, and notable.
- **Clearly Observable** - Present danger family conditions are totally transparent. You see and experience them. There is no guesswork. A rule of thumb is: If you have to interpret what is going on, then, it likely is not a present danger.

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### Present Danger Threat Categories

Maltreatment	Child	Parent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maltreating Now</li> <li>• Face/Head</li> <li>• Serious Physical Injury</li> <li>• Premeditated</li> <li>• Several Victims</li> <li>• Life Threatening Living Arrangements</li> <li>• Unexplained Injuries</li> <li>• Bizarre Cruelty</li> <li>• Sexual Abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent's Viewpoint Of Child Is Bizarre</li> <li>• Any Vulnerable Child Is Unsupervised or Alone for Extended Period</li> <li>• Child Fearful</li> <li>• Child Needs Medical Attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents Are Unable to Perform Parental Responsibilities</li> <li>• Parents Described As Dangerous</li> <li>• Parent Out of Control</li> <li>• Parent Intoxicated</li> <li>• Spouse/Partner Abuse Present</li> <li>• Family Will Flee</li> </ul>

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### Impending Danger Is...

- Impending danger refers to threatening conditions that are not immediately obvious or currently active but are out of control and likely to cause serious harm to a child in the near future.

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### Pennsylvania Safety Threats

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### Interview Protocol

- The following protocol should be used when:
  - Conducting interviews when the child is in the home to obtain safety related information
  - Introduction with parents (whenever possible)
  - Interview with the identified child
  - Interview with siblings
  - Interview with the non-alleged maltreating parent
  - Interview with the alleged maltreating parent
  - Closure with parents/family

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### Documentation Example #1

Mr. Jones has an ugly habit, like most alcoholics, of refusing to take responsibility for his actions and blaming everyone else.

Mr. Jones reports that he drinks at least a six-pack of beer every night and that it does not affect him. Mr. Jones reports that he has never been diagnosed as an alcoholic. Mr. Jones reports that he was unjustly charged four times with D.U.I. in the past and was convicted of two. He reports that he was so charged with D.U.I. because the "police have it in for him." He also reported that the children made too much noise in the car and that they distracted him from the road.

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### Documentation Example #2

A whole bunch of Mr. Jones' neighbors came outside. They complained about his crazy wild parties every night of the week. Mrs. Albertson was one of the neighbors.

Mrs. Albertson, Mr. Jones' next-door neighbor, located at 555 Main Street, phone number 555-1000, approached this worker as I was leaving Mr. Jones' home. Mrs. Albertson reported that Mr. Jones has parties "every night" at his home. She reports that she has personally called the police on "three separate nights" this week. Mrs. Albertson reports that "many other neighbors have made the same complaints" to her.

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<b>Documentation Example #3</b>	
<p>The mother upon ascertaining that her child would not return home due to ecological factors was observed to decompensate.</p>	<p>After I told Ms. Nader, the mother, that I could not recommend her child to return to her home at this time as it had been condemned by the health department, she fell on the floor crying and sobbing.</p>
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<b>Documentation Example #4</b>	
<p>The child was very ill-mannered at school.</p>	<p>Molly, a 6-year-old first grade student, was observed, by this worker, arguing with her teacher, Ms. Applegate at Chester Elementary School. Molly was heard telling her teacher that she would not "do a damn thing" the teacher told her to unless she was allowed to "go to the playground." Molly was observed shaking her fist in Ms. Applegate's face and stomping her feet. Ms. Applegate reported that Molly will behave in a similar manner whenever the class is transitioning to another class such as art, music or gym class.</p>
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<b>Documentation Example #5</b>	
<p>Ms. Berry is a single very attractive stylish woman with an uplifting laugh and sense of humor.</p>	<p>Ms. Berry reports that she feels good about herself and enjoys making other people feel good about themselves including her children. Ms. Berry also reports that it is important to her that she and her children dress in stylish clothes and that she will spend money on clothing rather than food, rent, and medication.</p>
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### Interval Policy

During the Assessment/Investigation

- Within three business days of the agency's first face-to-face contact with the identified child and/or caregiver(s) of origin;
- Within three business days of the identification of additional evidence, circumstances, or information that suggests a change in the child's safety.
- At the conclusion of the investigation/assessment, if there is not a change in the safety of the child, an additional worksheet does not need to be completed.

Cases Accepted for Services:

- Within three business days of the identification of additional evidence, circumstances, or information that suggests a change in the child's safety. Note in IG: a change in safety refers to a positive or negative change to Safety Threats and/or the Safety Decision;
- Within three business days of following any unplanned return home from an informal or formal placement, along with risk assessment Within 30 days prior to case closure, along with risk assessment

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### In-Home Safety Assessment Instrument Fields

The following are the broad categories of information contained within the In-Home Safety Assessment Worksheet.

1. Identifying Information
2. Safety Threats Section & Rationale
3. Protective Capacities
4. Safety Analysis
5. Children Who Were Not Seen
6. Safety Decision
7. Signatures

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### Protective Capacity

- A specific quality that can be observed and understood to be part of the way a caregiver thinks (cognitive), feels (emotional), and acts (behavioral) that makes him or her protective.
- Protective capacities are **specific** and **explicit** strengths that *manage* and *control* safety threats.



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### Levels of Protective Capacities

- **Enhanced** – the caregiver has the capacity and is actively using that capacity to protect their children.
- **Diminished** – the caregiver has the capacity but is not using it, due to life circumstances or other reasons, to protect their children.
- **Absent** – the caregiver does not have the capacity at all.

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### Key Questions When Exploring Protective Capacities...

- What is going on now?
- What must change?
- What must eventually exist?

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### The purpose for safety intervention analysis...

- is to **analyze** the relationship between specific pieces of information for determining the **degree of intrusiveness** and the **level of effort** necessary for assuring that a CYS safety plan will be reasonably effective in protecting a child.

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**The purpose for safety intervention analysis... (cont'd)**

- “**Analyze**” has a different meaning than “assess.” Analyze means “to study closely in order to break down components or examine structure.”
- The **degree of intrusiveness** has to do with worker/supervisor judgment about what will be necessary to assure that a child will be protected.
- The **level of effort** has to do with the level of response, service or activity within a safety plan required in order to keep a kid safely in the home/prevent removal.

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**In-Home Safety Decisions**

- **Safe:** Either caregiver’s existing protective capacities sufficiently control each specific and identified safety threat or no safety threats exist. Child can safely remain in the current living arrangement or with caregiver. Safety plan is not required.

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**In-Home Safety Decisions, (cont'd)**

- **Safe with a Comprehensive Safety Plan :** Either caregivers’ existing protective capacities can be supplemented by safety interventions to control each specific and identified safety threat; or the child must temporarily reside in an alternate informal living arrangement. No court involvement is necessary; however a safety plan is required.

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**In-Home Safety Decisions, (cont'd)**

- **Unsafe:** Caregivers' existing protective capacities cannot be sufficiently supplemented by safety interventions to control specific and identified safety threats. Child cannot remain safely in the current living arrangement or with caregiver; agency must petition for custody of the child. Safety plan is required.

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### What is a Safety Plan?

- The safety plan is a written arrangement between a family and the agency that establishes how impending danger threats to the child/youth safety will be controlled and managed.
- The safety plan may remain in effect as long as needed (must be implemented and active as long as threats to child safety exist) and must be continually evaluated and modified as long as it is in effect.

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### A Safety Plan Must:

- **Control or manage present and or impending danger**
- **Have an immediate effect**
- **Be immediately accessible and available**
- **Contain safety services and actions only**
- **Not contain promissory commitments**

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### Types of Safety Plans

- Immediate/Preliminary Safety Plans
- Safety Plans



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### Information On A Safety Plan

- Consider the following questions:
  - Who** can make sure the child is protected?
  - What** role will the caregivers have?
  - What** action is needed?
  - Where** will the plan and action take place?
  - When** is this action going to be done?
  - Who** will make sure that the safety intervention(s) take place?
  - How** is it all going to work? – Are the actions sufficient enough to control safety threats?

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### Your Safety Plan Resources

- Would you be willing to work with all of the people on your list?
- Would you be willing to have your child live with all of the people on your list? What drives this decision?
- Would you prioritize who to turn to first?
- Are there any barriers that would prevent you from wanting that person(s) involved with a crisis in your family?

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### Safety Plan vs. Family Service Plan

Safety Plan	Family Service Plan
Purpose – manage	Purpose – change
Provider – informal/formal	Provider – informal/formal
Effect – immediate	Effect – longer term
Orientation – observation and activities	Orientation – goals and processes
CYS Responsibility – oversight	CYS Responsibility – facilitation

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### When is a Safety Plan Sufficient?

- A safety plan is sufficient when:
  - It is a well thought-out approach
  - Containing the most **suitable** people
  - **Taking** the necessary **action Frequently enough**
  - To **control** safety threats and/or **substitute** for diminished caregiver protective capacities.

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### The Smith Family Exercise

- Instructions for the Small Group – record on flip chart paper:
  - The assigned domain
  - Information gathered from Carley & Christian
  - Information gathered from Colin
  - Information gathered from Crystal

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**Information Explored to Identify Characteristics of Safety & A Safe Environment**

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- The caregiver's capacity to sustain continued safety
- How community connections sustain continued safety

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**Action Planning...**

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**Remaining Questions...**



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**Training Evaluations**



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**Thank You!!**



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