



**204:
Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates
Standard Curriculum**

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**For:
The Pennsylvania Child Welfare
Resource Center**

**University of Pittsburgh,
School of Social Work**

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**Agenda for the 3-Hour Workshop on
204: Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates**

Estimated Time	Content	Page
30 minutes	Section I Welcome and Introductions	1
25 minutes	Section II Out-of-Home Care Definitions	4
45 minutes	Section III Present Danger Assessments	8
20 minutes	Section IV Interval Policy	15
45 minutes	Section V Communicating Safety Concerns	19
15 minutes	Section VI Workshop Closure and Evaluations	26

Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates

Section I: Welcome and Introductions

Estimated Length of Time:

30 minutes

Quality Services Review Indicator(s):

- ✓ N/A

Learning/Performance Objectives:

- ✓ N/A

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, individual activity, large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Flip Chart Pads
- ✓ Flip Chart Stands
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ LCD Projector/Screen
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Masking Tape/Poster Putty
- ✓ Name Tents
- ✓ **Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual**
- ✓ **Handout #1: Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates PowerPoint Presentation**
- ✓ **Handout #2: Agenda/Action Plan**
- ✓ **PowerPoint Presentation:**
 - **Slide #1: 204: Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates**
 - **Slide #2: Ground Rules**
 - **Slide #3: Name Tents**
 - **Slide #4: Learning Objective**
 - **Slide #5: Agenda**

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Section I: Welcome and Introductions

Trainer Note: Prepare the training room in advance by placing name tents, markers, and handout packets (if using) at each table.

Have **Handout #1 (Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates)**, Idea Catchers, and the **Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual** (from this point forward referred to as the Resource Manual) at each table for each participant.

Have **PowerPoint Slide #1 (204: Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates)** showing as participants enter the room. Greet each participant as they arrive.

Step 1: Welcome

(5 minutes)

Welcome participants to the training. Introduce yourself including your name, area of expertise, current position, years of experience, and any other information related to the content. Pass around the sign-in sheet or have it available for signing during breaks on a table or podium at the side or back of the room.

Step 2: Housekeeping and Ground Rules

(5 minutes)

Start the training session promptly at 9:00 AM. Reinforce the established training room culture. Later—during introductions—reinforce other important guidelines as needed.

Inform participants that they should find **Handout #1 (Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates)** and Idea Catchers on their tables. They can use both documents to capture notes and any ideas they have.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #2 (Ground Rules)** and guide participants through reviewing all of the training room guidelines.

Step 3: Introductions

(15 minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #3 (Name Tents)** and guide participants through the completion of their name tents.

Instruct participants to write:

- the county in which they work in the top left corner of the name tent;
- their position in the agency in the top right corner;
- the amount of time they have been in their position in the bottom left corner; and

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- PDA if their county has implemented the Present Danger Assessment and AD if their county has been using the Alert to Affiliated Counties Document in the bottom right corner.

When the name and four corners are complete, ask participants to place their name tent in front of them.

Then ask each participant to introduce themselves including the information they recorded on their name tent. If their county has implemented the Present Danger Assessment or Alert to Affiliated Counties document, ask if their county has developed any specific policies surrounding either. Inform participants that later in the training you may call on them to offer their county's policies, as there are updates surrounding both.

Step 4: Review of Agenda and Overall Learning Objectives

(5 minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #4 (Learning Objective)** and review.

Share with participants, that since those attending have implemented the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment and Management Process, this training was developed specifically with them in mind. During this training, we will highlight and focus on the changes/updates that were made since participants were originally trained.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #5 (Agenda)** and distribute **Handout #2 (Agenda/Action Plan)**. Review the agenda and note that participants will see space which has been provided below each agenda item. At the end of each section, they will be asked to record how they will incorporate their new knowledge into practice.

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Section II: Out-of-Home Care Definitions

Estimated Length of Time:

25 minutes

Quality Services Review Indicator(s):

- ✓ Practice Review 4: Assessment and Understanding

Learning/Performance Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Define caregiver of origin.
- ✓ Define informal care.

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Flip Chart Pads
- ✓ Flip Chart Stands
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ LCD Projector/Screen
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Masking Tape/Poster Putty
- ✓ Name Tents
- ✓ **Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual**
- ✓ **Handout #2: Agenda/Action Plan, revisited**
- ✓ **PowerPoint Presentation:**
 - **Slide #6: Definitions**
 - **Slide #7: Caregiver of Origin**
 - **Slide #8: Informal Care**
 - **Slides #9 and #10: Informal Care Considerations**
 - **Slide #11: Action Planning**

Section II: Out-of-Home Care Definitions

Step 1: Definitions

(20 Minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #6 (Definitions)** and acknowledge that practice varies from county to county and certain terms are defined in different manners, depending on specific practice. To help provide clarity around terms relating to the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment and Management Process (SAMP), definitions have been provided for certain terms. They can be found beginning on page 90 of the **Reference Manual**.

Inform participants that we will only be reviewing the two terms that were changed during the updates, which include “caregiver of origin” and “informal care”. Refer participants to page 92 of the **Reference Manual**, display **PowerPoint Slide #7 (Caregiver of Origin)**, and review the definition of “caregiver of origin”.

Caregiver of Origin

- The adult(s) who holds the primary responsibility for the child’s care and safety (*i.e.* the child’s birth parent). In addition to birth parents, a caregiver of origin may be another person who operates in that capacity (*i.e.* stepparents, an adult companion of a child’s parent, a grandparent, an uncle or aunt, *etc.*). The caregiver(s) of origin resides with the child. This does not include people who care for a child temporarily, such as relatives caring for a child from time to time or care providers such as day care or other institutions, babysitters.

Inform participants that the definition is essentially the same. The first sentence of the definition was updated to state “...for the child’s **care** and safety.” The word care was added to the definition. The main reason this definition is being reviewed is that previously the term “caregiver of origin” was used interchangeably with the terms “home of origin”, “caretaker of origin”, and “family of origin”. To avoid confusion, the terms “home of origin” and “family of origin” have been removed from the **Reference Manual** and replaced with “caregiver of origin”.

Refer participants to page 90 of the **Reference Manual**, display **PowerPoint Slide #8 (Informal Care)**, and review the definition of “informal care”.

Informal Care

- Situations in which a child who is not in County Children and Youth Agency custody goes to live with an alternate caregiver on a temporary basis when Safety Threats are present and the child is unable to continue residing with the caregiver(s) of origin. These arrangements include those 1) made by parents/guardians prior to County Children and Youth Agency involvement or 2) agreed upon jointly between the parents/guardians and the County Children and Youth Agency when the situation occurs during the course of County Children and Youth Agency involvement.

Remind participants that Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Office of Children, Youth and Families (PA DPW OCYF) has established a standard that requires all out-of-home care settings be evaluated using the same criteria and expectations regardless of the setting. This means that kinship care homes, whether they are informal or formal, chosen by the family or not, and foster care homes will be assessed based on the same standards and the resulting safety decisions/responses will be the same.

Trainer Note: The audience should be familiar with this fact, however be prepared for participants to question the rationale for the inclusion of informal arrangements in this definition. Acknowledge that this represents a practice shift for many. By including informal arrangements in this definition we are not saying that informal living arrangements must meet all of the requirements set forth in the 3700 Foster Care Regulations, rather we are saying that when a child is removed from their home we have a responsibility to assure that child's safety. Remind participants of the Characteristics of Safety and a Safe Environment. These characteristics are to be in operation regardless of whether the child is in a licensed or informal home. For those who do not remember the characteristics, they will be reviewed later in the training.

Share with participants that we will now dissect the definition of informal care.

With **PowerPoint Slide #8 (Informal Care)** displayed, explain that it is the intent that these arrangements be temporary and that the child is to return to the home of the caregiver(s) of origin when the presenting issues are addressed and it is safe for the child to return home. Regardless of whether the arrangements were made (prior to or after County Children and Youth Agency involvement), the Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) Safety Assessment Worksheet should be used to assess the child(ren)'s safety in the out-of-home care setting and the In-Home Safety Assessment would also continue to be conducted on the caregiver(s) of origin to determine when it is safe for the child to return home or to modify the Safety Plan.

The term "temporary" is a subjective term that can be open to interpretation, but it is the position of the Department that these informal arrangements should not exceed 60 days unless there is an exceptional circumstance that is sufficiently documented in the case record. The intention is that the County Children and Youth Agency/child welfare professional make the distinction between "temporary" and "not temporary" based on intent. For example, if it is the intent that efforts be made toward reunification or that the child remain with the alternate caregiver until other arrangements can be made, the arrangement can be considered temporary. If the intent is that the child resides with the alternate caregiver(s) long-term, the intent is not temporary. As time and circumstances progress, the possibility exists that the situation might change. This will need to be assessed on an ongoing basis. If it is determined that the informal living arrangement needs to continue beyond a 60-day period, certain considerations must be made and documented in the case record. Display and review these considerations using **PowerPoint Slide #9 and #10 (Informal Care Considerations)**.

The term “prior to” refers to situations where the caregiver(s) of origin elected to move the subject child(ren) on their own accord prior to the County Children and Youth Agency becoming involved with the family, for which the trigger is the decision to accept the case for assessment or investigation.

The term “involvement” refers to cases that have been accepted for a Child Protective Services (CPS) investigation, General Protective Services (GPS) assessment, or accepted for service.

Ask participants to describe scenarios that may prove to be challenging to determine “temporary” and “prior to” that they have encountered previously, based on their county practice, or that may develop based on this definition. As discussion occurs, refer participants back to the definition of informal care as well as to the items which need to be considered if the placement will exceed 60 days. Assist participants in thinking through the scenario(s) to come to a consensus.

Trainer Note: Be prepared with examples of scenarios for “temporary” and “prior to” should the participants not be able to describe such scenarios. If so, assist the participants in thinking through the scenario(s) to come to a consensus.

Step 2: Action Planning

(5 minutes)

Prior to moving onto the next section, display **PowerPoint Slide #11 (Action Planning)** and refer participants to **Handout #2 (Agenda/Action Plan)**.

Ask participants to take a few minutes to jot down: *Something new I learned was...* and *I will incorporate this new knowledge into practice by...* for this section. Ask a couple of volunteers to offer what they recorded in the Action Plan.

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Section III: Present Danger

Estimated Length of Time:

45 minutes

Quality Services Review Indicator(s):

- ✓ Practice Review 4: Assessment and Understanding

Learning/Performance Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Recall the definition of Present Danger.
- ✓ Identify the 20 Present Danger concerns unique to out-of-home care settings.
- ✓ Explain the expectations surrounding completion and documentation of Present Danger Assessments.

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Flip Chart Pads
- ✓ Flip Chart Stands
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ LCD Projector/Screen
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Masking Tape/Poster Putty
- ✓ Name Tents
- ✓ **Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual**
- ✓ **Handout #2: Agenda/Action Plan, revisited**
- ✓ **Handout #3: Present Danger Definitions and Examples**
- ✓ **Poster #1: Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care – Flow Chart**
- ✓ **PowerPoint Presentation:**
 - **Slide #12: Present Danger Defined**
 - **Slide #13: Safety Responsibility Standard**
 - **Slide #14: Present Danger: Definitions and Examples**
 - **Slide #15: Documenting Present Danger Assessments**
 - **Slide #16: County Policies Surrounding Present Danger Assessments**
 - **Slide #17: Action Planning**

Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates

Section III: Present Danger

Step 1: Defining Present Danger in Out-of-Home Care

(15 minutes)

Referring to **Poster #1 (Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care – Flow Chart)**, state that Present Danger Assessments first appear in the fourth step of the Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care – Flowchart.

Acknowledge that the first three steps of the process are important – deciding that placement of a child is required, knowing the child to be placed, and matching the child with an alternate caregiver that can meet that child's unique set of needs, however we will not be reviewing them as no changes have been made to those steps of the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment and Management Process. The next step is the first time we see Present Danger Assessments.

Some agencies have continued to conduct Present Danger Assessments based on their training during the first rollout of Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care, some agencies have been conducting Present Danger Assessments with modifications to how they were taught, and some counties have opted to not conduct Present Danger Assessments. Remind participants that they have been trained on and are using the concept of Present Danger in the In-Home Safety Assessment and Management Process. Explain that this is the same concept but is applied somewhat differently to out-of-home care settings.

Assessing for Present Danger should be integrated into a child welfare professional's daily casework practice. Share with participants that child welfare professionals must be assessing for Present Danger at every contact regardless of the setting – with their caregiver(s) of origin, with a relative, in a foster home, or in an adoptive home. The child welfare professional should be observant of and assessing the environment in which the child is presently located.

It is possible that Present Danger can exist in out-of-home settings, regardless of whether the setting is a formally licensed home. No family remains static, they are ever changing and are impacted by a host of events that can strengthen or challenge them.

Just because a family has been approved as a foster home does not mean they are immune from the challenges that all families face. In addition, out-of-home families change over time, so we cannot approach contacts with blinders. Each time we make contact with children or providers, from before/at the time of placement until case closure, we need to see each potential placement setting with fresh eyes and with a neutral approach, controlling for our biases, whether they be positive or negative. Through this approach we have a greater opportunity to assess from an objective point of view whether this out-of-home placement currently is and will remain suitable and safe for each particular child.

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Share with participants the importance of recognizing that each child is different and unique. What may be a safe placement for one child may not be for another. As discussed earlier in the training, “knowing the child” and “identifying the placement” is critical. The gathering of information in the Six Assessment Domains assists the child welfare professional in making those critical decisions.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #12 (Present Danger Defined)** and explain that this definition is the same one used in the In-Home Safety Assessment and Management Process.

Ask participants what they would do if they conclude that a child is in Present Danger when they encountered a placement home and family?

Present Danger should compel an immediate action. When Present Danger is apparent, the child welfare professional should first respond by fully understanding the nature and quality of the danger. For instance, consider the child who is afraid of the kin situation. You may not want to use that fact as the sole basis for not placing, but this should compel you to examine in detail what the reality and source of the fear is. Is the child fearful because his grandmother has strict rules or grandmother will allow the parents to harm the child? Then a decision must be made about the need to avoid or maintain the home as a placement or to locate the child to another home.

Based on that understanding, which involves identifying and examining the Present Danger Safety Threat(s), the child welfare professional would take appropriate action to:

- address the Present Danger (if it is immediately remediable, perhaps like an environmental change, securing needed medical supplies for example);
- avoid using the home for placement; or
- place the child elsewhere (if the child has already been placed in the home).

Identifying and understanding Present Danger is based on interviews, conversations, observations, and data collected from reliable family members or others familiar with the family. Information collection should occur with all persons who reside in the home or frequent the home regularly.

Display and review **PowerPoint Slide #13 (Safety Responsibility Standard)**.

There is no instance when a child should be placed or remain in an out-of-home setting if Present Danger is apparent and cannot be immediately addressed. Often times in the field we justify placing in situations that are highly questionable by saying that it is preferable to have children with family which is an argument that has merit. However, when we take children from unsafe situations there is no justification for placing or keeping them in an unsafe out-of-home care setting. When children are harmed in placement, it often is the result of this type of flawed thinking accompanied by a failure to recognize Present Danger.

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Share with participants that as child welfare professionals, our goal is to ensure that any home a child is placed in is safe. If a child has to be removed from their caregiver(s) of origin, the home they are placed in should be free of Present Danger and Safety Threats. If a Present Danger is active in a home, the child is not safe. Other options will need to be explored for the child.

Step 2: Present Danger Threats

(5 minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #14 (Present Danger: Definitions and Examples)** (*transition slide*).

Distribute/refer to the **Handout #3 (Present Danger Definitions and Examples)**. This handout is a listing of all of the Present Danger concerns and a few examples for each one. Inform the participants that the Present Danger definitions can also be found in the **Reference Manual, Pages 101-105**.

This list of Present Danger concerns emphasizes specific issues related to out-of-home care that may not be appropriate to In-Home Safety Assessment. (e.g., one or both caregivers believe that the child deserved what happened in the child's home.) This list is unique for assessing safety in out-of-home care.

Step 6: Documenting Present Danger

(20 minutes)

Up until this point, we have defined Present Danger in relation to out-of-home safety and explored the specific Present Danger concerns that are unique to out-of-home safety.

We know that we are always assessing for Present Danger at each and every contact, but what are the expectations surrounding documentation?

Ask participants if they can recall the intervals at which Present Danger was to be assessed for and documented previously.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #15 (Documenting Present Danger Assessments)**. Share with participants that there are key transition points for children in out-of-home care when they are more emotionally vulnerable and compromised. Share with participants that those two key points are 1) at the time of the initial placement and 2) at the time of any subsequent placement moves.

Ask participants to offer why they believe these transition points to be critical.

At the Time of the Initial Placement

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Children, who have experienced abuse and/or neglect from their caregiver(s) of origin, which led to identification of a Safety Threat and their subsequent removal, are dealing with the emotional and physical trauma from that abuse and/or neglect. In addition, they are dealing with the grief and loss of their parents, siblings, home, friends, school, and their belongings. They are potentially being placed in a resource home with people whom they do not know or with a kinship family with whom they may have only occasional contact. The future appears unknown to them. The child is in an emotionally compromised state.

At the time of any Subsequent Placement Moves

Children are removed from out-of-home settings and placed in other out-of-home settings for varied reasons. Maybe the resource family is having their own family issues and no longer wishes to continue to provide care. Perhaps the child is being moved due to his/her behaviors. Perhaps the resource family feels they can no longer meet the special needs of the child. Maybe an abuse or neglect issue caused the county agency to move the child for safety reasons. However, share with participants that the child is compromised for many of the same reasons that we just discussed: loss of the resource family, the resource siblings, the resource home, their school, and their friends. The future appears unknown to them. The child is in an emotionally compromised state.

It is imperative at these times that the child welfare professional ensure that the setting the child is being placed into is a safe environment. Therefore, child welfare professionals are required to fully document Present Danger Assessments at these key transition points.

Refer participants to the **Reference Manual, Page 151: Present Danger Assessment Worksheet: Out-of-Home Care Settings.**

Inform participants that the option now exists for child welfare professionals to document their assessments using the state provided Present Danger Assessment Worksheet (or comparable tool that includes all of the Present Danger components) **OR** structured case note. This will be determined by their county's policy.

At the two key transition points, documentation must be at a greater level of detail than during all other contacts. At the key transition points, if documentation is completed via a structured case note, the child welfare professional would provide the same information in the structured case note that would be provided if completing the worksheet. Ultimately, documentation should clearly illustrate how the child welfare professional reached their conclusion(s) surrounding the existence or lack of existence of Present Danger. If someone else read their documentation, it would be clear to them how the worker reached their conclusions.

Trainer Note: If participants ask about documentation requirements surrounding Present Danger outside of the two key transition points, inform them that the level of documentation required will be based upon their agency's policy.

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Trainer Note: The following is a non-exhaustive list of sources of information that can be considered and included in documentation surrounding Present Danger Assessments if participants ask:

- ✓ Information from agency records;
- ✓ Information from ChildLine;
- ✓ Information from the police;
- ✓ Is the out-of-home setting an active resource home in good standing;
- ✓ Has the child welfare professional worked with the resource home in the past or currently;
- ✓ Observations of how the out-of-home caregivers welcome the child into their home;
- ✓ Observations of the interactions between the out-of-home caregivers and the child;
- ✓ Observations of the interactions between others in the home and the child;
- ✓ Observations of the home - is the home clean and free of safety hazards; and
- ✓ Observations of how the child is responding to the out-of-home caregivers and their family.

If anyone indicated that they have implemented Present Danger Assessments during the name tent exercise, ask them if they are willing to share what, if any, policies their agency has surrounding Present Danger Assessments.

Display PowerPoint Slide #16 (County Policies Surrounding Present Danger Assessments).

OCYF is allowing the Present Danger Assessment to be completed by the county worker, a qualified worker, or the private provider worker. However, counties should establish policy surrounding who can complete the Present Danger Assessment, whether follow-up is required, and the timeframes concerning follow-up.

The county worker, a qualified worker, or the private provider worker is required to conduct and document a Present Danger Assessment prior to or at the time of the initial placement as well as at the time of any subsequent placement moves (*i.e.*, the key transition points).

Previously, if a private provider worker completed and documented the assessment, the county worker was required to conduct a follow-up visit to confirm the information within a certain timeframe, depending on the circumstances. The follow-up timeframe requirements are no longer in place; however county agencies should establish policy surrounding situations in which they are unable to personally place the child.

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It is important to stress that best practice requires that a child welfare professional accompany the child to the placement setting to help ensure continuity and a more comfortable and smooth transition for the child. It is recognized that circumstances do not always allow for this to take place. As in all circumstances, the child welfare professional must gather and document, in the record, sufficient information from the appropriate sources to determine whether Present Danger exists.

Trainer Note: Refer participants back to their county for their county specific policy regarding the documentation of the Present Danger Assessment and situations in which they are unable to personally place the child.

Step 7: Action Planning

(5 minutes)

Prior to moving onto the next section, display **PowerPoint Slide #17 (Action Planning)** and refer participants to **Handout #2 (Agenda/Action Plan)**.

Ask participants to take a few minutes to jot down: *Something new I learned was...* and *I will incorporate this new knowledge into practice by...* for this section. Ask a couple of volunteers to offer what they recorded in the Action Plan.

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Section IV: Interval Policy

Estimated Length of Time:

20 minutes

Quality Services Review Indicator(s):

- ✓ Practice Review 4: Assessment and Understanding

Learning/Performance Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Offer the intervals at which the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Worksheet must be completed.

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Flip Chart Pads
- ✓ Flip Chart Stands
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ LCD Projector/Screen
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Masking Tape/Poster Putty
- ✓ Name Tents
- ✓ **Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual**
- ✓ **Handout #2: Agenda/Action Plan, revisited**
- ✓ **PowerPoint Presentation:**
 - **Slide #18: Interval Updates**
 - **Slide #19: Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Intervals**
 - **Slides #20 and #21: Old Interval #3**
 - **Slide #22: Action Planning**

Section IV: Interval Policy

Step 1: Intervals

(15 minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #18 (Interval Updates)** (*transition slide*).

Refer participants to the **Reference Manual, Pages 93-94: Out-of-Home Care Policy**.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #19 (Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Intervals)** and share with participants that, for children in out-of-home care, including those in informal or formal placements, the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Worksheet must be completed at the intervals designated below:

- 1) Within 60 days, or 2 months, from the date of placement in the current setting.
- 2) Within 180 days, or 6 months, from the previously completed worksheet.
- 3) Within 72 hours upon the identification of evidence, circumstances, or information that suggests a negative change in the Safety Indicators yet the child remains in the home.

Trainer Note: The intervals according to the April 2011 Manual are provided below for reference purposes:

1. No later than 60 days, or 2 months, from the date of placement in the current setting.
2. Within 180 days, or 6 months, from the date of placement in the current setting and every 6 months thereafter, from the date of placement throughout the life of the placement. Note: this is not in conjunction with the CPP Review.
3. Within 72 hours upon the identification of evidence, circumstance, or new information that suggests a change in the child's safety. This includes:
 - New adult household members who are in the home longer than 30 days within the calendar year. Note: young adults who are already family members but are returning home from college would not be included in this interval.
 - Whenever there is a significant loss / change in the household that may impact child safety e.g. separation, divorce, serious illness, death, etc.
 - Information is received from another county that may impact a child's safety.
 - In conjunction with a Regional Office investigation:
 - If the child remains in the home throughout the time of the investigation.
 - If the child is returned to the home following an investigation.

4. If a case is transferred from one worker to another, assessments would continue to be completed as detailed in the above intervals.

When a child is moved to a different out of home setting, the process begins again with the Present Danger Assessment and then follows the above listed intervals.

Display **PowerPoint Slides #20 and #21 (Old Interval #3)** and share with participants that the sub-bullets / examples have been removed from old interval #3. Despite the deletion of the examples, similar information should be considered during Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessments. In addition, circumstances perceived as positive examples of change should be included as well.

Ask participants to offer some examples of positive changes within a family that may impact a child's safety in a negative way. Responses may include:

- marriage
- a new baby
- a new home
- a new job

Ask participants why these positive changes have the potential to affect a child's safety. They add new stresses, roles, finances, *etc.* Even though these are positive changes, they still have the potential to affect positively or negatively the family dynamics. Therefore, it is important to assess those changes and their impact upon the child/ren placed in that home.

Share with participants that when a child is moved to a different placement setting, the process begins again with a Present Danger Assessment followed by the first interval. The Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment and Management Process focuses on the safety of the child within a particular family. As discussed earlier in the training, a safe placement for one child may not be for another child. Each child and each out-of-home care family is unique. Therefore it is necessary, as child welfare professionals, to assess each home to ensure that it is a safe environment for the child. If a child is moved to a different placement setting due to safety concerns, it is necessary to complete the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Worksheet.

Remind participants that regardless of whether the child is in an informal or formal placement, In-Home Safety Assessments must continue to be completed for the caregiver(s) of origin. The In-Home Safety Assessment would be conducted as if the family were intact to determine whether reunification is possible or the Safety Plan should be modified.

Step 9: Action Planning
(5 minutes)

Prior to moving onto the next section, display **PowerPoint Slide #22 (Action Planning)** and refer participants to **Handout #2 (Agenda/Action Plan)**.

Ask participants to take a few minutes to jot down: *Something new I learned was...* and *I will incorporate this new knowledge into practice by...* for this section. Ask a couple of volunteers to offer what they recorded in the Action Plan.

Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates

Section V: Communicating Safety Concerns

Estimated Length of Time:

45 minutes

Quality Services Review Indicator(s):

- ✓ Practice Review 4: Assessment and Understanding

Learning/Performance Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ State the Characteristics of Safety and a Safe Environment and how they can be used to identify concerns about child safety.
- ✓ Contemplate considerations that should be made when determining appropriate lines of communication when concerns of child safety are identified.

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, small group activity, large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Flip Chart Pads
- ✓ Flip Chart Stands
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ LCD Projector/Screen
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Masking Tape/Poster Putty
- ✓ Name Tents
- ✓ **Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual**
- ✓ **Handout #2: Agenda/Action Plan, revisited**
- ✓ **Handout #4: Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Worksheet**
- ✓ **PowerPoint Presentation:**
 - **Slide #23: Concerns about Other Children in the Home**
 - **Slide #24: Characteristics of Safety and a Safe Environment**
 - **Slide #25: Information Explored to Identify Characteristics of Safety and a Safe Environment**
 - **Slide #26: Considerations for County Alert Process Policy**
 - **Slide #27: Action Planning**

Section V: Communicating Safety Concerns

Step 1: Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Worksheet Changes

(10 minutes)

Place enough copies of **Handout #4 (Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Worksheet)** at each table face down and instruct participants not to turn them over. After you have distributed all of the handouts, inform participants that they are going to participate in some friendly competition. Tell them, when you say go, to distribute the handout to each participant at the table. They must then identify the three changes that were made to the worksheet. The changes must be in the form of:

- additional information that must be recorded;
- information that no longer needs to be recorded; or
- a possible change in processes / procedures.

Changes that are grammatical in nature do not count (e.g., capitalizations, dashes, etc.). You may reward the table who identifies the three changes first with a small prize.

They must identify the following:

- Under Section I. Identifying Information, “Date Completed” was added to the top right-hand corner of page one of the worksheet.
- Under Section V. Safety Analysis, item number five was removed, which read, *“If another county has a child(ren) placed in this setting and the information gathered requires the completion of an Alert to Affiliated Counties Document as defined in the interval policy; record, in the space provided, the date that the Alert Document was sent to:*

Other county agency Provider agency Regional Office”

- Under Section VI. Safety Decision
 - Unsafe
 - The second bullet was changed. It previously read, *“If other children from another county are placed children in the home, contact the other county agencies, provider agencies, and Regional Office to inform them of the safety concerns.”*

Refer participants to the **Reference Manual**, Pages 120: Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment Worksheet Instructions and review the instructions for completing the “Date Completed” portion of Section I. After doing so, explain that you will now address the other changes in detail shortly.

Step 2: Concerns about Other Children in the Home

(15 minutes)

During the original training on the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment and Management Process, participants discussed the important variable of gathering information not only for the identified child, but also other household members, including other children in the home. The information we learn through conversations with and observations of other children in the home informs our Safety Decisions for the identified child. This information gathering process may also identify concerns about the other children in the home.

Display PowerPoint Slide #23 (Concerns about Other Children in the Home).

Communication between child welfare professionals throughout the system who have children in the same out-of-home care home is very important. This communication not only needs to occur within the county agency, but also with other CCYAs who have children placed in the same homes. If we identify information that has an impact on the other children in the home, it is important that the information is shared with the other county worker whether that worker is in another county or in your own agency. Unfortunately, in the state of Pennsylvania, this type of communication does not occur consistently.

To improve communication, it is expected that the child welfare professional consider the safety of all children in an out-of-home care home, regardless of whether they are that child's assigned worker. As a reminder, this does not mean that a formal assessment is done on each of these children by the child welfare professional. It does mean that the child welfare professional will observe other children who are in the home at the time of the visit and inquire about how they are doing from the resource caregiver(s) as well as from the children themselves. Ideally, child welfare professionals will speak with the children in private so they are more comfortable sharing. The child welfare professional will also discuss the other children with the child they are assessing, both to determine the nature and quality of the child-to-child interaction and also as a method of gathering information on all children in the home.

As previously discussed, out-of-home care families are dynamic not static. Each member of the family impacts another member. They face the same challenges all families face. These challenges can result from a negative or even positive life event. Therefore, as child welfare professionals, we must fully assess the entire family unit to ensure it is a safe environment. If we do not assess the entire family unit, we may miss something which could ultimately lead to a child being unsafe and possibly harmed. For example, in one case a child in an out-of-home care setting was seemingly being targeted and was the subject of extreme and harsh discipline. Meanwhile, a worker from another county had a child in that same home who was viewed as the "golden child" who could do no wrong. The worker for that child did not know, (was not informed) of the situation with the "targeted" child". Ultimately, it was discovered that both children were being subjected to the harsh physical discipline. If the worker for the "golden child"

had known about the situation, she could have been proactive in terms of looking at safety and the child would not have been maltreated.

Ask the group to think about their own experiences as child welfare professionals. Have there been instances in the past where information came to light after a child was harmed (or before) that, if known, would have changed the overall safety assessment/decision for that child? These examples clearly show how communication among child welfare professionals is critical.

Step 2: Identifying Concerns

(10 minutes)

Share with participants that the goal of Pennsylvania's Safety Assessment and Management Process is to ensure that children receiving CCYA services are in safe homes. The characteristics of a safe home should look the same whether it is an in-home family or an out-of-home family. As child welfare professionals, it is our goal to ensure that the families we are working with are a safe environment for the child.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #24 (Characteristics of Safety and a Safe Environment)** and share with participants that we use these characteristics to describe and define safety and a safe environment for our In-Home Safety Assessment and Management Process. But these characteristics describe safety in any home environment. We will use these characteristics as our barometer for safety and a safe environment regardless of the setting. Briefly review the characteristics using the summary below.

- **An absence of perceived or actual threats** – There are NO safety threats to the children: behavioral, emotional, or situational;
- **Presence of caregiver protective capacities** - A safe environment exists because those caregivers with the assigned task of providing a safe home are assuring that protection is occurring, available, and ongoing.
- **A safe home is experienced as a refuge** - A safe environment as a refuge for a child is the first and most obvious place a child thinks of and goes to be safe.
- **Perceived and felt security** - A safe environment is perceived and felt by a child as a place of security. This translates into how they view and feel about their caregivers.
- **Confidence in consistency** - A child needs to be able to count on a home remaining safe. Children and family members believe that the home environment will be safe each day.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #25 (Information Explored to Identify Characteristics of Safety and a Safe Environment)**.

To understand if the above characteristics are in operation we must gather information to determine the following:

- **How the children are behaving in the home** - Children who are in a safe home demonstrate a certain sense of comfort and security that comes from being in that home and feeling a sense of permanency.
- **How caregivers are performing** - This would include any adult who maintains primary responsibility for a child's safety. With caregivers who provide safe homes, it is easy to find examples of protective behavior.
- **How the family is operating** - Safe homes demonstrate observable interactions that are positive and consistent among all family members clearly showing boundaries, role clarity, effective use of resources, and coping mechanisms.
- **The caregiver's capacity to sustain continued safety** - Seek facts that will help provide clarity about caregiver plans, intentions, methods, feasibility, and commitment.
- **How community connections sustain continued safety** - Understand how formal and informal resources have been used and that the worker can anticipate will remain involved with the family.

Share with participants that as we review the above, we can see the connection to information gathering in the Six Assessment Domains, especially the domains of Child Functioning, Adult Functioning, General Parenting, and Parenting Discipline. This connection reinforces how critical information gathering is to the Safety Assessment and Management Process regardless of what setting a child may be in.

During the In-Home Safety Assessment and Management Process training, we viewed these concepts as an end state. In other words, when families became involved in the child welfare system due to active Safety Threats (or other concerns), we actively worked with these families to foster the development of these characteristics – to enhance their Protective Capacities. When thinking about out-of-home care, we can use these same characteristics, but we begin our work with the assumption that the out-of-home caregivers and their homes have these characteristics already in operation and that they possess enhanced Protective Capacities.

If a child is not experiencing all of these characteristics in their out-of-home care setting, a concern is present and should be communicated to the appropriate people.

Step 3: Communicating Concerns

(5 minutes)

Share with participants that they will now discover why the other two changes were made to the worksheet.

Refer to the **Reference Manual**, page 158: **Safety in Out-of-Home Care: Alert to Affiliated Counties**.

The Alert to Affiliated Counties Document is a form that is provided by OCYF. Previously, use of this document was required; however, that is no longer the case. Counties may choose to continue to use this document, but are not required to do so.

While use of the specific Alert Document is no longer required, it is still expected (and considered best practice) that other counties are notified when there are concerns that arise surrounding their children.

Rather than creating policy for the counties, it is the expectation of OCYF that each county establish its own policy surrounding the Alert Process. If anyone indicated that they have implemented use of the Alert to Affiliated Counties document during the name tent exercise, ask them if they are willing to share what, if any, policies their agency has surrounding notification of other counties.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #26 (Considerations for County Alert Process Policy)**.

Consideration in the policy should include:

- Who will be notified? (e.g., private providers, child welfare professionals from the same county, child welfare professionals from other counties, ChildLine, Regional Office(s))
- Who will be responsible for notification? (Additional consideration should be given to situations in which a private provider home has children from other counties. Who is responsible for notifying the other counties?)
- What information will be communicated?
- How will notification take place (verbal, written, etc.)?
- How will the notification be documented?
- Where will notification be documented?
- Where will records of notification be maintained?
- What timeframes will be associated with notification?

How will the type of concern present influence above considerations? (e.g., home conditions, substance use/abuse, failure to protect child from others, corporal punishment, injury)

Share with participants that notifying another county of concerns regarding their child is necessary. However, many times these children are placed in private provider homes. It is also best practice for the child welfare professional to inform the private provider of concerns regarding the child and the resource family. This allows the private provider to also assess the dynamics of their resource family and provide any support that may be necessary or to take other action.

In addition, depending on the concern, it may be necessary for the child welfare professional to contact their Regional Office. This is a decision that is made by the child welfare professional and their supervisor based on county policy.

If such notifications to a private provider or the Regional Office are necessary, as an option for counties to utilize, the Alert to Affiliated Counties Document allows for those notifications. However, since communication is critical in these situations, best practice dictates that phone contact be made with the respective parties (other county, private provider, Regional Office) first and then followed by written documentation.

Trainer Note: Refer participants back to their county for their county-specific policy regarding the Alert to Affiliated Counties Document.

Step 5: Action Planning

(5 minutes)

Prior to moving onto the next section, display **PowerPoint Slide #27 (Action Planning)** and refer participants to **Handout #2 (Agenda/Action Plan)**.

Ask participants to take a few minutes to jot down: *Something new I learned was...* and *I will incorporate this new knowledge into practice by...* for this section. Ask a couple of volunteers to offer what they recorded in the Action Plan.

Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Updates

Section VI: Workshop Closure and Evaluation

Estimated Length of Time:

15 minutes

Quality Services Review Indicator(s):

- ✓ N/A

Learning/Performance Objectives:

- ✓ N/A

Method of Presentation:

Large Group Discussion, Individual Reflection/Exercise

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Flip Chart Pads
- ✓ Flip Chart Stands
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ LCD Projector/Screen
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Masking Tape/Poster Putty
- ✓ Name Tents
- ✓ **Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual**
- ✓ **Handout #2: Agenda/Action Plan, revisited**
- ✓ **Handout #5: References**
- ✓ **PowerPoint Presentation:**
 - **Slide #28: Agenda**
 - **Slide #29: Review of Action Plan**
 - **Slide #30: Wrap Up and Evaluations**

Section VI: Workshop Closure and Evaluation

Step 1: Summary of the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment and Management Process

(5 minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #28 (Agenda)** and explain that we have covered each portion of the Out-of-Home Safety Assessment and Management Process that has been updated including:

- Out-of-Home Care Definitions
- Present Danger Assessments
- Interval Policy
- Communicating Safety Concerns

After stating each agenda item, ask the large group to offer the highlights of each section, making sure to fill in any missing pieces.

Inform participants that it will be important to become familiar with their agency's policies and procedures relating to the updates. Remind participants that full implementation of the process is required by July 1, 2013; however, the counties may choose to go to full implementation prior to that date.

Step 2: Review of Action Plan

(5 minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #29 (Review of Action Plan)**.

Direct participants attention back to **Handout #2 (Agenda/Action Plan)**.

Remind participants that this handout has been used throughout the training to capture information learned and how they plan to incorporate it into their practice.

Ask participants to review the notes they took throughout the past two days and add any additional information that they will find helpful to continue to implement the Out-of-Home Care Safety Assessment and Management Process into their casework practice.

Respond to any outstanding questions.

Step 3: Evaluations

(5 minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #30 (Wrap Up and Evaluations)**.

Have participants complete their training evaluations.

Thank participants for their participation.

References

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2009.) *Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual*.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2012.) *Safety Assessment and Management Process Reference Manual*.

University of Pittsburgh. (2012). *Charting the Course towards Permanency for Children in Pennsylvania: Module 8: Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care*. Mechanicsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center.

University of Pittsburgh. (2012). *204: Assessing Safety in Out-of-Home Care Overview*. Mechanicsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center.