



Group Supervision Process: Safety Planning

Part of the Signs of Safety Implementation Documents
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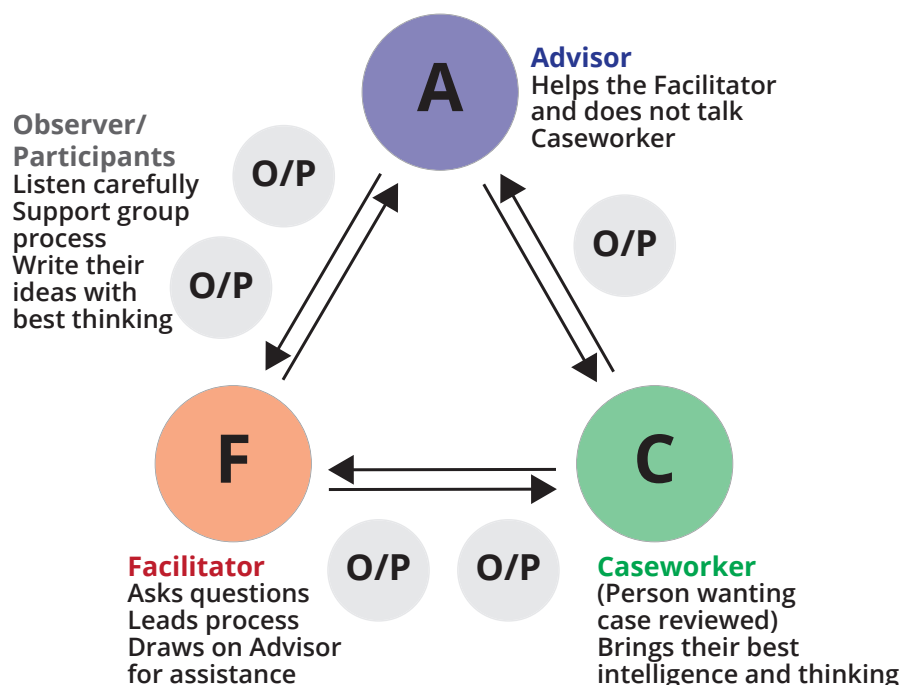
Signs of Safety Group Supervision Process: Safety Planning

Thinking About Safety Planning

Safety planning is the business end of child protection work. If professionals are to get out of the family's life and if the children are to return home, careful focus has to be given to how the parents and people who support them will live their everyday lives so the children will be looked after and be safe. This Signs of Safety Group Supervision Process: Safety Planning is one in a series of processes designed to guide professionals in digging into what is ultimately the most challenging question in child protection work: 'What do we need to see in order to be satisfied we can close the case?' It is recommended that participants in this group supervision process also refer to 'Creating a Safety Planning Trajectory' prepared by Andrew Turnell and the 'Roadmap: Family-Owned Safety Planning'.

Group Supervision Process

This Signs of Safety group supervision process is designed for groups of 4–10 people. It revolves around the caseworker who brings forward the case. (Sometimes, of course, there is a number of people bringing forward the case). The facilitator leads the group process, assisted by an advisor. Other group members are involved as observers/participants. The roles of each are described in the following diagram:



The entire group, but in particular the facilitator and advisor, must focus on the process and not get caught up or over-organised about the content and detail of the case. This process is all about growing the capacity for the team to create together a fast process for

working through, and getting direction in, a case. As with every meeting in child protection, effective meetings are always led skilfully.

Group Process

1. Introductions (2–3 minutes)

If the group is new to the group supervision method, the facilitator should introduce the process, including a quick description of each person's role:

- The facilitator is the **ONLY** person who talks directly to the caseworker.
- The advisor acts to assist the facilitator to lead the process.
- The observers/participants have the opportunity to learn by staying out of the content of cases and focusing on analysis and judgement processes, thereby assisting the worker to gain a better overview of the case and the direction he/she wants to take.

The facilitator has the professionals, the caseworker, and anyone directly involved in the case say who they are, what their role in the case is, and how long they have been involved in the case. The facilitator will probably need to prevent the professionals involved in the case from going into case content at this point.

2. Genogram (3–5 minutes)

The facilitator draws the family genogram to include the basic information of age along with the names of the immediate family parents, partners, children, extended family members, and relevant friends. This should include clarifying where children are living, if not with one or both parents. Again, to keep the process focused, this is not the time to describe case information.

3. Background Information (3–5 minutes):

The facilitator gives the worker 3–5 minutes to provide an overview of the case. The facilitator might ask: 'What makes this an open case?' or 'Where are things currently at?' or maybe 'What is happening with this family that has prompted you to bring this case forward?' The worker should be allowed to talk without interruption. The facilitator and observers should make notes of the worker's exact words and begin to analyse the information. While listening, the facilitator can make notes at the side of the whiteboard and should not be trying to 'map' the case by locating information into particular columns. The more experienced workers become at using the process, the more succinct they will be at providing the critical information that is needed to move through the process.

4. Worker's Focus (3–5 minutes)

This is **THE MOST** important part of the preparatory steps because it provides clear focus for the facilitator and group.

Broadly, the focus of this session is about safety planning for the case that the worker has brought forward. Development of the safety plan is an exercise that is undertaken with the family and not done to them. The facilitator asks the worker questions to refine the focus of the session and determine what specifically the worker would like to get out of this session.

5. Safety Planning: Large Group Exercise

The focus of this exercise is to prepare the worker to undertake safety planning with the family. The safety plan will be created by the professionals asking the parents and network as many questions as possible to think through these issues and to come up with their best ideas and plans about how they can ensure and show the children will be safe and looked after no matter how difficult things get in the future.

Part One – Questions for Crucial Issues

- 5.1 Everyone thinks through and lists all the crucial issues that need to be discussed and addressed in building a meaningful safety plan, such as stress, alcohol and other drug use, mental illness, violence, etc. Everyone develops their best questions for the worker to take to the family and network. The task for the family and network is to think through what rules will need to be put in place and followed in order to address the danger and achieve safety. When creating questions for this purpose, everyone develops questions from different perspectives; e.g. from the child, neighbour, grandparents, best friend, teacher, judge's perspective. Use lots of relationship questions.
- 5.2 Participants share their responses in groups of 3–4.
- 5.3 The facilitator seeks a sample of questions from the large group to share with the worker who has brought the case forward.
- 5.4 The facilitator asks the worker: 'What questions do you think will be most useful to you?'
- 5.5 The group provides a copy of their questions to the worker who has brought the case forward.

Part Two – Bottom Line Requirements

- 5.6 Everyone thinks through and writes down what they believe must be the bottom line requirements for this safety plan.
- 5.7 The facilitator seeks suggestions for bottom lines from the large group to share with the worker who has brought the case forward.
- 5.8 The facilitator asks the worker what their ideas about bottom lines are and shares his/her own.
- 5.9 The facilitator leads a discussion about what the typical bottom lines would include and the importance of not overwhelming the family.

Part Three – Possible Safety Plan Rules

- 5.10 It is important that the family thinks through the rules that will need to be in their safety plan and followed in order to address the stated danger and achieve safety. The worker and decision makers must have a clear sense of what will and won't be acceptable rules in the safety plan; e.g. if the safety plan is addressing sexual abuse, there must be a rule that states the person who we are concerned will sexually abuse the child is never alone with the child.

Part Four – Next Steps

- 5.11 The facilitator now reviews the process so far with the worker by asking, 'What has been most useful so far?' and checking to see if the worker is clear on their next steps to move towards developing a safety plan with the family. If the worker needs support to develop a plan of next steps, the facilitator does this now. If time permits, the large group could be involved in putting forward their ideas about what to do and when. The content developed from this session contributes to the development of the Safety Planning Trajectory Timeline.

6. Safety Planning: Individual Exercise

If time permits, the above process can be repeated with participants working on their own cases individually or in pairs.

7. Review and Next Steps

The facilitator now reviews the process so far by asking the worker: 'What has been most useful for you about the process so far?' Then the facilitator asks: 'On a scale of 0 to 10 – where 10 means I've got what I need from the consult already and 0 means I'm no better off or any clearer than when we started – where are you?' If the group has stayed on track, the worker should be rating relatively high at this stage. The facilitator then asks the worker if this is this enough for now. If the answer is yes, end here.

If no, ask, 'What else do you need to focus on?' and spend some time on that, usually by listening to the issue and getting questions created for that issue.

A low rating from the worker probably indicates the group process has gone off track significantly from what the worker wanted, or that the worker actually now wants something else or perhaps is feeling swamped and anxious about the case. Whatever the problem, the facilitator will need to back up and help the worker identify where the sticking point is and agree on a process to deal with that.

8. Review Process for Group

The advisor leads a review with the whole group about what was useful, what they learned, and any issues they have. (The review should not be about the content of the case).

How often do we Use this Group Process in the Agency or Team?

When presenting and teaching this group mapping process, these questions are often asked: 'How often should we do this in our agency? Do we do this in every case?'

This group process is designed to:

- build a shared, structured, collective team and agency culture, and process for thinking through cases using the Signs of Safety approach;
- enable child protection professionals to explore each other's cases, bringing their best thinking, including alternative perspectives, and to do this without getting caught in one or two people dominating or the group telling the practitioner whose case it is or what they must do;
- develop a shared practice of bringing a questioning approach to casework, rather than trying to arrive at answers.

This group process cannot be undertaken in every case discussion. However, the process can be replicated in individual supervision and when practitioners are thinking through cases for themselves.

Building and sustaining this sort of questioning culture for thinking through cases as a team usually requires this process being undertaken at least once every two to four weeks.

The process presented here offers quite a tight structure, because helping professionals often tend to default to individual supervision, so group supervision is not a normal part of most agencies' practice. Where group supervision is normal, the group conversations can often be very free form and unstructured with little sense of shared purpose. If the majority of quality supervision is individual, this creates a very privatised practice culture within the agency, places excessive pressure on the team leaders or supervisors to be the fount of all wisdom for all practitioners, and limits the capacity to draw on the knowledge and experience of peers. Many supervisors and practitioners shy away from group supervision or, if they have to participate, they do so in a constrained way because of previous bad experiences. It is strongly suggested that supervisors and teams follow the process offered here closely, particularly as they build the habit of group supervision in their teams. This process is safe, well tested, refined, and avoids group dynamics where one or two people dominate.

The advisor role is central to the success of the group process. The advisor should be very active, checking in regularly with the facilitator about their sense of direction and effectiveness of what they are doing. Likewise, the facilitator should quickly draw on the advisor if they are feeling stuck or unsure.

ROADMAP: FAMILY-OWNED SAFETY PLANNING

<i>What</i>	<i>How (Steps)</i>	<i>Ongoing Processes</i>	<i>Tools/Method</i>
DANGER STATEMENTS: <i>What</i> CPS is worried will happen to the child if nothing changes (the problem that has to be solved)	1 Develop your Danger Statements and Safety Goals Simple language, understandable to family 2 Identify Everything Constructive in Direct Parenting 3 Develop CPS Bottom-line Requirements 4 Develop CPS Timeframe and Trajectory for Closure 5 Build Informed Network with Family 6 Explanation for Children (and everyone else) 8 Building Safety Plan with Parents & Network	Authority Honouring Vision	Signs of Safety Mapping My Three Houses Signs of Safety Mapping My Three Houses, Safety Journal Family Safety Circles Words and Pictures, Mapping, My Three Houses Regular Review Meetings Family and Network must be given the opportunity to fail so they can demonstrate success, usually through an increasing process of contact. CPS must be mindful of the risk and manage this together with the family
<i>The practitioners journey with the family from the danger statements to safety goals through a structured process to create the final safety plan.</i> <i>This is the <u>how</u> of safety planning</i>	9 Monitoring by CPS and Network 10 Involve Child 11 Dealing with 'Denial' Issues 12 Create Final Child-centred Safety Plan	Conversation Compassion	Safety Object Practice Rehearsals of Rules, Safety Journal Similar-but-different Role Play Child-focused Safety Plan
SAFETY GOALS: <i>What</i> CPS needs to see to know the child is safe and they can close the case (not services).			