

Two Models for Working with DV in Child Welfare and Legal Settings

- The Safe and Together™ Model was designed specifically for working with families impacted by domestic violence within child welfare: <https://safeandtogetherinstitute.com/>
- The SAFeR Model was designed by the Battered Women's Justice Project is a model for working with domestic violence in legal settings: <https://www.bwjp.org/our-work/projects/safer.html>

Safety Planning

Safety planning is a central component to working with domestic violence survivors and their children. Safety plans are important tools that can be utilized in child welfare work at a number of different points in the case:

- When the children are still in the home, as part of the solution for preventing removal;
- With the survivor once the children are in care, as a way to empower them and provide tools to help keep themselves and their children safe;
- Prior to starting unsupervised visits; and/or
- As part of the process for moving towards protective supervision and case closure.

A safety plan is a specific, clearly outlined plan for the survivor to utilize when they are in danger. Safety planning must be done with the survivor and be driven by what they say is needed to keep them and their children safe. Safety plans driven by what professionals say is needed will not necessarily have the buy-in from survivors or utilize the significant knowledge that the survivor has about the perpetrator. When creating a safety plan, it is important to keep in mind the literacy level of the survivor.

Components of a safety plan can include:

- What to do if the perpetrator shows up (e.g.: children go to a neighbor's home, or go into their bedroom and lock the door, call police, call the permanency social worker).
- If the perpetrator is still in the home, what the survivor and children should do if the perpetrator gets violent (e.g.: children go to a neighbor and call grandma to pick them up).
- Phone numbers and specific people (supports) that the survivor can utilize if he/she is feeling unsafe. This information should all be written out.

There are a number of safety planning resources available online. Below are links to a few organizations that provide more information on how to safety plan.

- <http://www.thehotline.org/2013/04/10/what-is-safety-planning/>
- <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/help/develop-a-safety-plan/>
- <https://www.rainn.org/articles/safety-planning>

“Dos” and “Don’ts” of Working with Domestic Violence in Child Welfare

DO hold the perpetrator accountable for their abusive behaviors.

DON’T hold the survivor accountable for the perpetrator’s actions.

DO try to safety plan with the survivor.

DON’T make a Civil Protection Order (CPO) a requirement for the survivor.

Oftentimes, survivors have gotten protective orders in the past and found that the perpetrator does not obey them or that the situation got even worse. It is important to ask survivors about their past experiences with CPOs.

DO offer the survivor resources for therapy and safe housing.

DON’T interpret resistance to therapy or services as a sign that the survivor is not a victim of domestic violence.

DO remember that, on average, it takes a survivor seven times to leave a perpetrator for good.¹

DON’T view the survivor making contact with the perpetrator or going back to the relationship as failure.

DO require the perpetrator to demonstrate involvement in their child’s life and positive interactions for reunification.

DON’T hold the survivor to a higher standard than the perpetrator as a parent.

DO consider family therapy for the survivor and the children.

DON’T request or support couples counseling for a survivor and a perpetrator.

¹ 50 Obstacles to Leaving: 1-10 (2013), <https://www.thehotline.org/2013/06/10/50-obstacles-to-leaving-1-10/> (last visited August 17, 2018).