

Safety Management within Safety Plans

Introduction

In a past article concerned with safety plans, we stated that the safety plan is a written arrangement between a family and the agency that establishes how impending danger threats to child safety will be managed. Now we turn to the questions:

- What within a safety plan manages impending danger threats?
- How are impending danger threats managed?

Safety Management

Safety management refers to the intervention used or specific action CPS takes to control impending danger threats to a child's safety. Safety management includes in-home, out-of-home or a combination of in-home/out-of-home actions. Safety management as an action refers to something specific that CPS does with *energy and boldness* to control a threat to a child's safety. The action to achieve safety management can be a formal service from a professional provider, an informal activity performed by a relative or volunteer, or both.

Safety management must be:

1. Capable of having an immediate effect;
2. Immediately available;
3. Always accessible; and
4. Sufficient to control the danger or threat of danger.

Safety management is concerned with *controlling* danger and threats of danger only – not changing family functioning or circumstances.

Safety management includes five safety management actions that can be applied alone or in combination.

Safety Action

Safety action may include formal or informal services or activities and may be provided by professionals, non-professionals and the family network.

Behavioral Management

Behavior management is concerned with applying action (activities, arrangements, services, etc.) that controls caregiver behavior that is a threat to a child's safety. While behavior may be influenced by physical or emotional health, reaction to stress, impulsiveness or poor self-control, anger, motives, perceptions and attitudes, the purpose of this action is only to control the behavior. This action is concerned with aggressive behavior, passive behavior or the absence of behavior – any of which threatens a child's safety. Activities or services that are consistent with this safety action include:

- Outpatient or in-patient medical treatment that provides medical care to control chronic physical conditions that affect behavior associated with impending danger.
- Substance abuse intervention – detoxification or management that controls intake; sobriety; monitors substance abusing behavior and addiction.
- Emergency medical care that treats immediate physical conditions that affect behavior associated with impending danger.
- Emergency mental health care that treats and manages acute mental health conditions that result in behavior associated with impending danger.

- In-home health care that manages health issues affecting caregiver behavior or health concerns affecting the behavior of vulnerable children (both as related to impending danger).
- Supervision and monitoring of caregiver behavior and stress and circumstances that influence caregiver behavior.
- Stress reduction.
- Disincentives, negative/positive reinforcement, alternative behavior options.

Crisis Management

Crisis management is specifically concerned with intervening to bring a halt to a crisis and to mobilize problem solving to return a family to a state of calm. For this action to apply as a safety management option there must be a sudden precipitating event or onset of conditions that immobilize caregivers' ability to solve their problems and manage their lives thus reducing their protective capacities to provide protection and basic care. The purpose of crisis management is crisis resolution and immediate problem solving in order to control the threat to child safety. Activities or services that are consistent with this safety action must specifically address the crisis and may include:

- Crisis intervention & counseling specifically focused on a crisis situation that is associated with or creating impending danger to a child's safety.
- Resource acquisition when the lack of resources creates a crisis or obviates the resolution of a crisis associated with impending danger.

It is likely that crisis management will be applied in conjunction with other safety actions.

Social Connection

Social connection is an action that reduces social isolation and seeks to provide social support. This action is versatile in the sense that it may be used alone or in combination with other actions in order to reinforce and support caregiver efforts. Keeping an eye on how the family is doing is a secondary value of social connection. Keeping the safety threshold in mind, this action may be useful with those who are failing to meet basic protective parenting responsibilities such as young, inexperienced parents; those who are anxious or immobilized emotionally; those who need encouragement and support; those who are overwhelmed with parenting responsibilities; and those who are developmentally disabled. Activities or services that are consistent with this safety action include:

- Friendly visitor.
- Basic parenting assistance and teaching fundamental parenting skill related to immediate basic care and protection.
- Homemaker services that provide social outlet for family members and are pertinent to family or home issues that are associated with impending danger.
- Home management that provide social outlet for family members and are pertinent to family or home issues that are associated with impending danger.
- Supervision and monitoring that occurs within routine in home contacts, within social conversations.
- Social support through the use of various forms of social contact formal and informal; with individuals and/or groups; focused and purposeful.
- In-home babysitting that allows for social contact, conversation and support.

Separation

Separation is a safety action concerned with threats related to stress, caregiver reactions, child-care responsibility and caregiver-child access. Separation provides respite for both caregivers and children. The separation action creates alternatives to family routine, scheduling, demand and daily pressure. Additionally, separation can include a *supervision and monitoring* function concerning the climate of the home and what is happening. Separation refers to taking any member or members of the family out of the home for a period of time. Separation is viewed as a temporary action that can occur frequently during a week or for short periods of time. Separation may involve any period of time from one hour to a weekend to several days in a row. Separation may involve professional and non-professional options. Separation may involve anything from babysitting to temporary out-of-home placement of a child or combinations. Activities and services that fit this action include:

- Planned absence of caregivers from the home.
- Respite care.
- Day care that occurs periodically or daily for short periods or all day long
- After school care.
- Planned activities for the children that take them out of the home for designated periods.
- Child placement: short-term; weekends; several days; few weeks.

Out of home placement that lasts from weeks to months is fits within this action.

Resource Support

Resource support refers to safety action that is directed at a shortage of family resources and resource utilization, the absence of which directly threatens child

safety. Activities and services that constitute resource support used to manage threats to child safety include:

- Resource acquisition related specifically to a lack of something that affects child safety.
- Transportation services particularly in reference to an issue associated with a safety threat.
- Employment assistance as an assistance aimed at increasing resources related to child safety issues.
- Housing assistance that seeks a home that replaces one that is directly associated with impending danger to a child's safety.

Safety Management and Safety Actions are Unique!

Repeatedly we've made a case for the differences that are apparent in safety intervention compared to other CPS involvement. We've emphasized the differences between maltreatment, risk of maltreatment and threats to child safety. We have said that safety plans and treatment/service plans are different. We strongly believe that the purpose of safety intervention and treatment or change intervention are uniquely different. So, here too, in that vein we call attention to the difference of safety management and safety action from other CPS service provision that occurs in a case.

Let's summarize this month's article by featuring the unique characteristics of safety management also referred to as safety actions.

- Safety management can be done by any responsible adult (see February 2004 article.)
- Safety management is focused exclusively on behavior, emotion, attitude, motive, intent or situations that are associated with impending danger threats to child safety.

- Safety management is not concerned with changing anything within a family or caregiver behavior.
- Safety management must have influence over specific threats to child safety.
- Safety management substitutes for deficient caregiver protective capacities.
- Safety management directs specific action, activity, arrangements, experiences, circumstances that control impending danger threats to child safety.
- The objectives for safety management must be achieved the first moment and every time that safety action is implemented.
- Safety management is dynamic as it changes and adjusts to differences and changes in threats to safety and caregiver protective capacity.
- Safety management and safety actions remain as a requirement as long as threats to child safety exist in a family and caregiver protective capacities are insufficient to assure child protection.