

Safety Set:

Planning for and Responding to Crises in Child and Family Mental Health Services

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Safety Plans



- Every comprehensive service plan should include a safety assessment and a plan for managing any significant risk of harm to self or others
- Safety issues will differ widely in type and severity from one family to the next
- A safety or stabilization plan is often the foundation for additional planning
- Remember that a crisis can also be an opportunity for change
- Safety first, but the more others do, the fewer coping strategies family members will have for the next time

Key Elements

- What are the concerns based on prior observed events and behavior?
- What was the context, antecedents, roll-out and impact of earlier events or behaviors?
- What adjustments to environment, interactions and expectations are most likely to reduce the likelihood of further events or behaviors?
- Given past patterns of roll-out, what strategies for diversion or de-escalation are likely to be most effective?
- Should the behaviors or events re-occur what hierarchy of response is most likely to protect the safety of the community, family and focus person?
- Who should be involved in implementing this plan and responding if necessary in a crisis situation?

Template for a Safety Plan

Family:	Date:
Primary Concern/s:	
Examples of Prior Situations:	
Prevention Strategies:	Redirection/De-escalation Strategies:
Response Strategies:	Call List:

Developing a Collaborative Plan

- Since each safety plan is unique, an interactive process involving the focus person, his or her family and affected community members is most likely to produce an effective set of strategies for prevention, de-escalation and response.
- One model to use for this process is the one developed by Turnell and Edwards in their book, *Signs of Safety*.

Solution-Focused Inquiry

1. Seek to understand the point of view of each family member (including the values, beliefs and meanings family members present in their stories).
2. Find exceptions to the problem (and thus create some hope for both the helper and the family).
3. Discover family strengths and resources (and thus build partnership and keep problems from overwhelming everyone involved).
4. Focus on goals (and make room for both the family and the agency to both have goals).
5. Scale safety and progress (and make room to compare the family and the worker's sense of these things).
6. Assess willingness, confidence and capacity (and don't try to implement a plan for changes before you have client buy-in).

Crisis Response Strategies

- When a critical event has occurred and an immediate response is necessary, that response should still follow a disciplined process to insure that client, family and community safety are protected, and to reduce the likelihood of further crises.
- The most widely recognized model for structuring this response is described in Albert Roberts' Crisis Intervention Handbook.

Crisis Response Stages: *ARPEGIA*

- **A:** Plan and conduct a crisis **assessment**, including **lethality** measures
- **R:** Establish **rapport** and rapidly develop a working **relationship**
- **P:** Identify major **problems**, including the last straw or crisis **precipitants**
- **E:** Deal with **feelings** and **emotions**, including active listening and validation
- **G:** **Generate** and explore **alternatives** and **options**
- **I:** Develop and **implement** an **action plan**
- **A:** Establish a **follow-up** plan and **agreement**

» Albert R. Roberts, *Crisis Intervention Handbook*

» Note: The anagram has been added and does not appear in Roberts.

Review and Revise

- When a crisis event occurs as part of an ongoing relationship, then you want to implement your crisis response plan and later, maybe a day or so, come back and review the plan and see what needs to be changed, both in terms of preventative and responsive components.
- The following framework can be used to deconstruct a critical event and identify strategies for reducing risk in the future.
- To complete the framework, gather an analysis group, start with the top middle square and work backwards and forwards and down to fill in as complete a picture of the event and its precipitants and fallout as possible.
- Use this information to update the safety and action plans

Critical Event Analysis

Context	Antecedents /Triggers	Key Event	Effects	Responses
Conditions Influences Pressures	External Accidents or Events	Where? Environment Timing	Harm to others	Formal Consequences
Unmet Needs/ Driving Forces	Other's Acts and Decisions	Who else? Interactions Audiences	Harm to youth	Hidden Reinforce- ments
Options for meeting needs	Youth's acts and Decisions	What did youth do and not do?	Natural consequences	Remaining unmet needs