



Safety Model Improvement Project

Model Office Field Test
Fall 2016

The Arizona Department of Child Safety



Mission of this project:

Building consistency and capacity to provide high quality services to children and families

Goal:

To make the right safety decision for every child using a clearly defined decision making process.

Strategies: DCS will focus on four key strategies to accomplish this goal

1. People
2. Process/ Practice
3. Technology
4. Partnerships

Project Overview

- This project is being championed by the Casey Family Foundation and will incorporate concepts from Family Engagement, ACTION for Child Protection, and Protective Factors Framework
- The project is ultimately being driven by the need to
 - reduce additional trauma experienced by children who have been removed and then quickly returned;
 - decrease the number of children in out of home care;
 - reduce the time children spend away from their families; and
 - modernize decision making practices with an evidence-based model
- The safety model is essentially the same, however, it is being “renovated” with the most current definitions and best practice methods for making safety decisions
- The following present danger assessment and planning policy is just the beginning of the Safety Model Improvement Project
- In the future, additional policies will be updated, including assessing family functioning in investigations and on-going, assessing impending danger, and safety planning techniques

Objectives and Timeframes

Scope: Test the application of draft policy and procedures on present danger assessment and planning

Objectives:

- Test draft present danger assessment and present danger plan policy and procedures in real life scenarios
- Receive feedback on the clarity of the draft procedures
- Receive input into the utility of the Present Danger Plan form
- Evaluate the effect of this procedure on removal rates
- Test data collection and accountability structures
- Gather ideas for installing this practice in other areas with fidelity

Present vs. Impending Danger

What is the difference between present and impending danger?

Why is it important to make a distinction?

A child is in present danger when there is:

- an **immediate, significant, and clearly observable*** family condition, child condition, or individual behavior,
- that obviously endangers a child *right now* or threatens to endanger a child *at any moment*, and
- *requires immediate action* to protect the child before the Child Safety Specialist can leave the child/ family,
- prior to a comprehensive family functioning assessment being completed.

***NOTE:** This is distinctly different from impending danger; the safety threshold criteria

In present danger, the dangerous situation:

- **is in the process of occurring**, which means it is happening right in the presence of the Child Safety Specialist (for example, a young child is alone on a busy street);
- **just happened** (for example, a child presents at an emergency room with a serious unexplained injury);
- **happens all the time** (for example, young children were left alone last night and are likely to be left home alone again tonight; or a newborn was born substance exposed and is likely to be discharged at any moment; or the child will be accessible to perpetrator upon release from school); or
- requires an immediate protective action because **the alleged safety threat cannot be immediately ruled out and if the allegation is true, the child is in present danger** (for example, a child has serious unexplained injuries or there are current allegations of sexual abuse).

Present Danger Conditions

- Draft policy provides an updated list of conditions that represent present danger *when they are endangering a child right now, or threaten to endanger a child at any moment.* See Handout 1.
- When one of these conditions exist, *considering the present danger definition of immediate,* there is present danger and a present danger plan is required.

Implement a present danger plan prior to leaving the child/ family

- A present danger plan:
 - provides the child(ren) with responsible adult supervision and care
 - so that the child will be safe while the Child Safety Specialist completes a comprehensive family functioning assessment to determine if impending danger exists; and
 - is the least restrictive and intrusive option to manage the safety threat.
- A present danger plan is meant to be **immediate, short term, and sufficient** to control the present danger.

Immediate, Short term, Sufficient Means...

- **Immediate** means that the plan is capable of controlling the present danger the same day it is created. Before the Child Safety Specialist leaves the child/ family, the present danger plan must be in motion and confirmed.
- **Short term** means that the plan only needs to control the particular present danger situations until sufficient information can be gathered and analyzed to determine the need for a longer term safety plan. Present danger plans should be sufficient to control the present danger until the Family Functioning Assessment is complete (including an analysis of impending danger).
- **Sufficient** means that the adults who will provide care and supervision to the child(ren) are responsible, available, trustworthy, and capable of fulfilling their responsibilities within the present danger plan. It must be confirmed that the responsible adults are willing to cooperate with and capable to carry out the protective actions needed to keep the child safe.

Present Danger Plan Options

- Engage with the parents, youth, extended family, other members of the family network to determine the best plan
- In-home, Combination and Out-of-Home present danger plan options exist
 - In-home: Child remains with at least one parents or alleged perpetrator leaves the home
 - Combination: Child is with someone other than a parent part of the time (child care, relative, other member of family network, etc.)
 - Out-of-home: Child is separated from the parents 24/7
- Procedure lists them from least intrusive to most intrusive (*Out-of-home options are a last resort)
- The option of child living with a member of the family network 24/7 is allowable when:
 - Least intrusive options would not be sufficient to control safety threats
 - The parents have been informed that they have the right to not agree to this plan and to an attorney and hearing if DCS decides to remove their child
 - The plan has strict time limits.

When can an in-home or combination present danger plan be implemented?

- The caregivers have a **suitable place to reside** where an in-home or combination present danger plan can be implemented.
- There is confidence in the **sustainability** of the in-home or combination present danger plan in the residence of the caregivers.
- The **home environment is calm and consistent enough** for an in-home or combination present danger plan to be implemented and for safety monitors and safety services providers to be in the home safely (the home is not chaotic or dangerous to providers, and there is general predictability of family functioning).
- The **caregivers are willing** for an in-home or combination present danger plan to be implemented and have **demonstrated that they will cooperate** with the safety monitors, safety service providers, and safety actions identified in the present danger plan.
- The **caregivers possess the necessary ability/capacity** to participate in an in-home safety plan and complete the actions identified in an in-home or combination present danger plan.
- There are **sufficient resources** within the family or community to perform the safety monitoring and safety services necessary to manage the identified threats.

Present Danger Plan Selection and Oversight

- Implement the **least intrusive** present danger plan
 - Consider the unique circumstances of the family
 - Consider caretaker protective capacities
- **Inform the parents that they have the right to an attorney and a hearing**
- If a present danger plan involves the use of a safety monitor, **fully assess the safety monitor's capacity, willingness and availability** to protect the child
- The **Child Safety Specialist maintains responsibility and accountability for the sufficiency and implementation** of the present danger plan, which includes oversight to ensure that all responsible parties are carrying out the actions and duties in the plan
- A **Child Safety Program Supervisor must be involved** in developing the present danger plan and **must approve the plan** prior to the Specialist leaving the family

Present Danger Plans are Time Limited

A present danger plan should not be in place for more than 14 days. Within the 14 days, the Family Functioning Assessment must be prioritized in order for the Child Safety Specialist to complete an analysis of impending danger and determine the need for a safety plan in order to replace the present danger plan.

A Team Decision Making meeting should be considered if impending danger has been assessed and exists; if there is need for a long term safety plan due to an unsafe child; or if there are other barriers to ending the present danger plan.

Present Danger Assessment and Planning

- Questions?
- Feedback?
- Continued considerations:
 - Family engagement
 - Assessing family functioning
 - Best practice
 - Minimize trauma
 - Bias and “gut reaction”