

### **What is a Safety Plan?**

- It is a plan that parent(s)/caregiver(s) may agree to follow to protect their child(ren) from an identified threat to the child(ren) safety. The Immediate Safety Plan is not a custody or visitation order. Only a judge has the power to issue such orders.

### **What are the goals of a Safety Plan?**

- To protect vulnerable child(ren) from identified threat of serious harm or dangers;
- To make reasonable efforts to address the serious harm or danger that the family and the CPS Specialist have identified as placing the child(ren) at risk of separation from the home.

### **Development of a safety plan should:**

- Involve the parent(s)/caregiver(s) and safety network members in the development of the safety plan as much as possible.
- Utilize the families own resources first
- Involve the alleged perpetrator when possible and done without compromising the child(ren) safety.
- Develop interventions to accommodate a timeframe taking in account weekends, holidays, and hours during the daytime.
- Take in consideration the tradeoffs the family may have to make in order to implement the safety plan.
- Be conscious to not create further trauma to the family.

### **Immediate Safety Interventions should meet the following criteria:**

- Immediately available – can be implemented right now
- Action Oriented – steps/agreements that are active and focused on the safety concern
- Flexible access – safety resources are located in acceptable proximity and can be called upon for immediate response.
- Immediate impact – actions or resources that do what they are supposed to do to achieve the objective; keeping the child(ren) safe.
- No promissory commitment – Safety interventions will never rely on parental promised to stop the threatening behavior. Safety interventions should provide an alternative action or a third-party protective factor to assist in controlling the danger statement.

### **Past Harm/Future danger:**

- This section should describe what has happened to involve DCF, and the danger to the child(ren). This section can also explain how there is not sufficient existing safety to keep the child(ren) safe from the danger. Future danger is what DCF is worried will happen based on the danger to the child(ren).

### **To prevent the worries from starting we will:**

- This section should describe the action steps that need to be taken to reduce the danger to the child(ren). This could also include the safety goal. The action steps should be developed with the parent(s)/caregiver(s). All identified safety network members who have action steps within the Immediate Safety Plan will have to agree to the follow through with the steps they have been assigned by the family.

**If the worried do start, we will respond by:**

- There may be times the child(ren) may be in danger while the Immediate Safety Plan is in place. This section describes the steps that will need to be taken in the event the plan does not work and the child(ren) become unsafe.

**These are out safe and supportive people:**

- Any safety network member actively involved in the Immediate Safety Plan should be listed along with their contact information.

**Monitoring/Timeframe:**

- This section should include a timeframe for how the Immediate Safety Plan will be in effect and how the plan will be monitored.

**Next Steps:**

- The CPS Specialist will make copies of the Immediate Safety Plan for the parent(s)/caregiver(s) and safety network members.
- The Immediate Safety Plan should be evaluated, readjusted, or modified as needed.

**Common questions from parent(s)/caregiver(s):**

**What if there is already a court custody/visitation order in place and I agree to an Immediate Safety Plan, but the other parent does not agree to it; am I required to obey the Immediate Safety Plan or am I required to obey the Court's order?**

The Immediate Safety Plan cannot override a court order. However, parent(s)/caregiver(s) may choose to agree to alter their custody or visitation to accommodate the safety needs of a child, so long as they understand that all court orders remain effective until they are modified or terminated by a Judge. A person wishing to terminate participation in the Immediate Safety Plan should notify the Child Protection Specialist and the other parties involved in the plan.

**What happens if I believe that obeying the custody or visitation order may put my child(ren) safety at risk?**

If you believe obeying the custody or visitation order will place the safety or health of your child(ren) at risk, or if you believe your child(ren) may have been victims of a crime, you should call law enforcement and/or seek medical attention for the children. You should also report your belief to your attorney and seek legal advice on what further actions should be taken, and the CPS Specialist involved in the Immediate Safety Planning of your child(ren) should be notified immediately.

**What if I change my mind after I agree to an Immediate Safety Plan?**

The CPS Specialist has no power to enforce an Immediate Safety Plan or punish someone for violating the plan. If you want to withdraw from the Immediate Safety Plan you can do so at any time, however prior to terminating the Immediate Safety Plan you should contact the CPS Specialist involved in the Immediate Safety Planning of your child(ren) immediately. If the Plan is not being followed and the CPS Specialist has reason to believe that failure to follow an Immediate Safety Plan may place the child(ren) safety at risk, the CPS Specialist may send information to their local District Court or law enforcement for further action.

**Can the CPS Specialist change or terminate the Immediate Safety Plan?**

The CPS Specialist may terminate or modify the plan at any time. This may include terminating any services provided by DCF or it may involve modifications to the plan in order to address the threat of danger more effectively. The CPS Specialist will notify all participants of this change. The CPS Specialist may take any action believed necessary to carry out duties and responsibilities as provided by law.

**What if I have agreed to an Immediate Safety Plan, but the other parent either has not agreed to the plan or has violated the terms of the plan?**

An Immediate Safety Plan is voluntary. DCF has no power to require the other parent to agree to follow an Immediate Safety Plan and has no power to punish the other parent for violating the terms of the plan. If the CPS Specialist has reason to believe that failure to follow an Immediate Safety Plan may place the child(ren) safety, health or welfare at risk, the CPS Specialist may send information to their local District Court or law enforcement for further action.

**Should I get an order of protection (sometimes known as an “ex-parte order” or a “restraining order”) against the other parent?**

DCF’s employees are not attorneys and they cannot give you legal advice. That is a question that you will need to talk to your attorney about.

**What is an order of protection, “ex-parte order” or restraining order”?**

These are emergency orders that the court can enter to keep someone who is abusing someone else away from them until the court can hold a hearing to decide what to do. Orders can be entered to protect both adults and children. These orders are only entered for a limited period of time. You can apply for an order of protection at the Courthouse. Again, if you are concerned about the safety of you or your child(ren) you should get advice from an attorney about whether an order of protection is right for you.

**Should I involve an Attorney?**

You have a right to consult with an attorney before agreeing to this plan. DCF’s employees are not attorneys and they do not give legal advice.