ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support is committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities that come into contact with the child protection system. This document should be read in conjunction with the Aboriginal Service and Practice Framework 2016-2018, designed to support and sustain this commitment.

Aboriginal law and culture is central to the health, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal people. The Department for Child Protection and Family Support recognises that:

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the first people of Australia;
• the cultures of Aboriginal people are dynamic and continue to evolve and develop in response to historical and contemporary circumstances;
• dispossession, interruption of culture and intergenerational trauma have significantly impacted on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, and that they share a continuing legacy of resilience, strength and determination;
• Aboriginal people and communities are diverse in gender, age, languages, backgrounds, sexual orientations, religious beliefs, family responsibilities, marriage status, life and work experiences, personality and education levels; and
• the contributions of all Aboriginal people to generating new ideas and innovative solutions to improve health, safety and wellbeing are valuable.¹

Language - The word Aboriginal is used throughout this document and is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Family and domestic violence is a prevalent issue in the Western Australian community. The Department for Child Protection and Family Support has developed workplace policies and procedures for supporting staff who are experiencing or perpetrating violence. To find out more, click here.²

¹ Adapted from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023.
Table of Contents

4 Introduction
   Relevant resources

6 Underpinning evidence

7 Safety planning
   What is a safety network?
   Role of the safety network
   Safety planning
   Establishing a safety network and developing a safety plan
   Engaging families

9 Danger statements and safety goals

10 Personal safety plan

11 Identifying family or community members to be part of the safety network
   Adult victim
   Perpetrator

13 Identifying professionals to be part of the safety network

14 Meeting with the adult victim and safety network to safety plan

16 Meeting with the perpetrator and his safety network people
   Examples of behaviours to be demonstrated

20 Monitoring and review
   Is it working?

22 Contact for the purpose of assessment and analysis

23 References

24 Appendix One
Introduction

Safety planning for cases where a child has been significantly harmed, or is likely to be significantly harmed as a result of exposure to family and domestic violence requires a multi-faceted approach that works toward increasing safety for the child and adult victim, and managing and reducing the risk posed by the perpetrator of violence and abuse.

The aim of this toolkit is to support child protection workers to use the knowledge and principles of evidence based family and domestic violence intervention to inform child protection safety planning including developing safety networks, building personal safety plans and planning for contact (in cases where a child is in care). Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the intersection of these components.

The toolkit is grounded in the Signs of Safety: Child Protection Practice Framework and the information, resources and materials developed for Signs of Safety Aboriginal Way. The processes outlined in the toolkit can be adapted to a range of safety planning contexts such as immediate safety planning, safety planning following a Safety and Wellbeing Assessment, Child Centred Family Support or reunification planning.

The primary client in mind during the development of this resource is Aboriginal children and their families. Aboriginal children account for more than half of all children in the Department’s care. A prevalent and significant issue within Aboriginal families is family violence. Up to 1 in 2 Aboriginal women and children experience intimate partner or family violence (ABS, 2008). Aboriginal women are 35 times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be hospitalised as a result of a family violence assault (AIHW, 2006), and are significantly over-represented as victims of family violence homicide (Ombudsman, 2014). It is therefore imperative that assessment and safety planning processes are tailored to Aboriginal children, people and families as a first priority, particularly in the area of family violence.

Relevant resources

This assessment toolkit should be read in conjunction with the following practice guidance:

*Family and Domestic Violence Policy* (includes definitions of ‘exposed’ and ‘act of family and domestic violence’)

1.2 Signs of Safety – The Department’s Child Protection Framework

4.1 Assessment and Investigation Processes

5.1 Assessing Emotional Abuse - Family and Domestic Violence

5.2 Safety Planning Emotional Abuse – Family and Domestic Violence

5.3 Responding to Perpetrators of Emotional Abuse - Family and Domestic Violence and related resource Perpetrator Accountability in Child Protection Practice

*Emotional Abuse – Family and Domestic Violence Assessment Toolkit*

Please note: This resource includes example questions and prompts to support the safety planning process. These questions are provided to support child protection workers to plan for their work with families, safety networks and partner agencies. They should NOT be used as a script.
Figure 1. Safety Planning Emotional Abuse – Family and Domestic Violence

Assessments of safety must consider the risks posed by the perpetrator of violence to the child and the adult victim.

Safety planning in cases of emotional abuse – family and domestic violence involves developing a personal safety plan for the child and adult victim, establishing a safety network to reduce, manage and monitor the risk posed by the perpetrator, engaging the perpetrator and making arrangements for safe contact (if relevant). The foundations for safety planning are eliciting strengths and safety, being clear about the behaviours that need to be demonstrated, and considering the unique characteristics and circumstances of the child and family.
Underpinning evidence

The perpetrator of violence is the source of danger to the child and adult victim. Safety cannot be achieved if the risk posed by the perpetrator is not managed.

Separation is not a proxy for safety because perpetrators often escalate their use of violence and abuse after separation and continue to have a role / presence in their child’s life (Cambell et al. 2003; Humphreys 2007). Safety planning must therefore work towards improving safety for the child and adult victim, and intervening with the perpetrator to manage and reduce the risk.

The most effective approach to reducing or managing risk is a coordinated community response.

Perpetrator interventions, including child protection, criminal justice and men’s behaviour change programs, are most effective when a coordinated community response is adopted. ‘Coordinated community response’ refers to professionals, family, and members of the community working together to monitor the perpetrator’s behaviour, exchange information about risk and safety, provide support to the child and adult victim, respond to further episodes of violence swiftly and with consequences (for the perpetrator), and provide consistent and repeated messages to the perpetrator that violence and abuse will not be tolerated (Gondolf, 2002; Mackay et al. 2015).

Perpetrators of family and domestic violence make choices to use violence. A non-violent choice/option is always available.

Perpetrators of family and domestic violence are calculated. Their use of violent, abusive and controlling tactics is often directed to specific people including their intimate partner, children and sometimes their immediate family. This behaviour is often referred to as ‘jekyll and hyde’ and demonstrates that the person using violence is in control of their behaviour and making choices about when, and to whom, they direct violence and abuse (Chung, 2014).

Safety planning is most likely to be successful if there is a strong working relationship with the adult victim.

Assessments and safety plans are more likely to be informed by risk and safety information if there is a good working relationship with the adult victim. Safety plans grounded in good information, and strong relationships, are more likely to be successful over time (Mandel, 2010).

Safety planning will be unsuccessful if the adult victim is held solely responsible for protecting her child and changing or containing the perpetrator’s behaviour.

Adult victims have limited capacity to stop or prevent a perpetrator from using violence. Assertive protective actions including separation, providing statements to the police and seeking a violence restraining order, can increase the risk to the adult victim and child (Campbell, 2003). The adult victim is a key partner in safety planning but is not SOLELY responsible for safety (Mandel, 2010).

Perpetrators are most likely to be motivated to change for their child

The greatest motivator for positive change for perpetrators of family and domestic violence is their child/ren (Mackay et al. 2015).
Safety planning

What is a safety network?
A safety network is a group of people who can respond to and manage the foreseeable threats and dangers to a child and adult victim. The concept of a safety network is borne from the adage ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ and is grounded in an understanding that:

- a child and adult victim is likely to be safer when they are visible in their community and the silence or secrecy that has surrounded previous violence and abuse is broken down; and
- the collective wisdom, strengths and capacity of professionals, family and community working together to create safety is stronger, more effective, and more likely to be sustained than when those parts are working in isolation.

Role of the safety network
A safety network is composed of partner agencies (‘professionals’), family and community. The role of the safety network is to manage and reduce risk to the child and adult victim AND (where possible) support behaviour change of the perpetrator of violence through implementation of a safety plan. The activities of the safety network may include, but are not limited to:

- providing practical and emotional support to the child and adult victim;
- monitoring and reporting risk and safety;
- increasing protections for the child and adult victim such as security, legal sanctions etc.;
- planning responses to further episodes of violence (threatened or actual) to ensure clear and consistent consequences for the perpetrator, and support for the child and adult victim;
- planning for different scenarios or events that are likely to be times of elevated risk such as attending cultural events, school pick up, perpetrator and/or adult victim using drugs or alcohol etc.; and
- supporting and monitoring the perpetrator to follow his safety plan.

Family, community and professionals serve complementary roles in the safety network. For example professionals are likely to be able to arrange increased protections for the child and adult victim and provide responses (statutory or otherwise) to further episodes of violence. Family and community are critical for supporting these ‘safety provisions’ to work such as providing practical and emotional support, monitoring and reporting risk and safety, reinforcing the safety plan etc.

Safety planning
Safety planning is a process that provides the safety network and (if engaged) the perpetrator with an opportunity to demonstrate that they can create safety for the child and adult victim. The safety plan must have clear danger statement/s and safety goal/s. These are the bookends for work with the family and the measures from which relative safety for the child and adult victim is assessed. Whether or not the perpetrator is engaged with the Department, the focus of the safety network and the safety plan is how the risk posed by the perpetrator can be managed and reduced.

The safety plan must articulate:

- how the perpetrator’s use of violence and abuse will stop or be managed;
- what will happen instead; and
- how the safety network and family will know that the child and adult victim are safe in relation to the danger statements.
Establishing a safety network and developing a safety plan

A trajectory for safety planning is summarised in Figure 2 below. Information, questions and prompts have been developed for each stage. The related page numbers for where this information can be found is in the diagram below.

Figure 2. Safety Planning Trajectory

- Danger statement and safety goal (page 9)
- Personal safety plan (page 10)
- Identifying family, community and professionals to be part of the safety network (page 11)
  - Identifying professionals to be part of the safety network (page 13)
- Meeting/s with adult victim and safety network to develop safety plan (page 14)
- Meeting/s with perpetrator and his safety network people to identify the safer behaviours that he will demonstrate (page 16)
- Monitoring and review (page 20)

Engaging families

A range of tools and resources for engaging families in discussion about safety planning are available through the Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework and Signs of Safety Aboriginal Way. These resources include, but are not limited to, culture linkables, yarning pages, solution focused scaling questions, three houses (or culturally appropriate equivalent), words and pictures, family maps, social network maps, genograms or family trees.

For principles of good practice engagement refer to the Emotional Abuse – Family and Domestic Violence Assessment Toolkit or click here.
Danger statements and safety goals

Danger statements and safety goals are detailed in the *Emotional Abuse – Family and Domestic Violence Assessment Toolkit*. Click here and scroll to page 29.

**A note on safety goals and ‘safe enough’**: At all times, the focus of the Department is to work towards increasing safety and protections for the child and adult victim, and managing and reducing the risk posed by the perpetrator of violence. Risk can be managed by either, or a combination of, the following strategies:

- working with a safety network including professionals, family and community to develop a safety plan that among other things monitors risk and safety, increases protections, provides timely and consistent responses to further episodes of violence and abuse, and consistent consequences for the perpetrator; and

- supporting the perpetrator to exhibit ‘safer behaviours’.

In either case, it is important that the child protection worker considers what is a reasonable and achievable safety goal for the Department, family and safety network e.g., what is safe enough? For example, in circumstances where a perpetrator continues to use violence is it ‘safe enough’ that the adult victim has and uses a safety plan, professionals are engaged and have implemented supportive and statutory protections, family and community provide practical and emotional support, and monitor risk and safety? The answer to this question will depend on further assessment and analysis including considerations about the severity of ongoing violence and the rigour of the safety plan. The threshold for the decision about if it is ‘safe enough’ is whether or not the adult victim and child are likely to suffer further **significant** harm from either a single episode of violence or abuse, or cumulative exposure to violence and abuse over time.

The Department’s role is preventing child and adult victim from suffering significant harm. Working within a framework of ‘safe enough’ is less likely to penalise adult victims for behaviours that are out of their control. ‘Safe enough’ does not diminish the Department’s responsibility to manage risk and improve safety for the child and adult victim, but it sets more realistic goalposts and bottom lines.
Personal safety plan

Personal safety plans can be as simple as managing the risk for a night or weekend, to a more detailed longer term plan that includes escaping an episode of violence, staying safe at work, home and school, safe people to contact, and important documents to keep together in case the adult victim and child need to leave their house/accommodation in a hurry.

A personal safety plan may be completed with the adult victim by a child protection worker or a family and domestic violence support service.

See the links below for personal safety plan templates. They should be used as a guide and adapted to the unique needs and circumstances of the adult victim and child.

Personal safety plan, click here for the template attached to the Family and Domestic Violence Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework.

Personal safety plan for Aboriginal women, click here for a template produced by 1800 RESPECT.

To support safety planning with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women click here for translated materials and story boards. These resources were produced by the Department of Social Services.

The adult victim’s personal safety plan must NOT be shown to the person using violence.

Please note that a personal safety plan is not a ‘contract’ with the adult victim. It is plan that they may use at their discretion to build upon existing strength and safety strategies.
Identifying family or community members to be part of the safety network

**Adult victim**

Victims of family and domestic violence can find it difficult to identify family or community members to be part of the safety network due to social isolation, family and community colluding with or protecting the perpetrator, or family and community feeling powerless because of their own fear of the perpetrator. These factors must be considered when developing the safety network and identifying the role of individuals in the safety network. Outlined below are example tools and questions for exploring family and community members who may be part of the safety network.

**Social network maps or eco-maps**

Developing an eco-map or social network map with the adult victim and child (depending on the child’s age) will assist in developing a clear picture of who already has regular contact with the adult victim and the child, how they are involved with the family, what they may already be doing to keep the child safe, and who may have a role in the safety network for the adult victim and the child. For more information about developing social network maps see related resource Developing Social Network Maps with Aboriginal People and The Family Map (eco-map), [click here](#).  

**Questions to ask the adult victim**

- Who are the people you would trust most with yours and your children’s safety? Why is that? Can you tell me more or give me an example?
- Who would your children say is important to have in a safety network?
- Who could the children talk to if they are worried about what is happening at home?
- Who are the people your children feel safest with?
- Who knows about [perpetrator] [list relevant behaviours]? What do they know? How did they react/respond when they found out? Do they do or say things to help or support you?
- Who do you think could help keep you and your child/ren safe?
- Who supports you when things aren’t going well? Tell me more / give me an example?
- Who else has helped you before? What did they do to help?
- Who has been able to have difficult conversations with [perpetrator] in the past, about his behaviour or anything else?
- Who does [perpetrator] listen to?

**Of people suggested or nominated by either the adult victim or perpetrator:**

- Does [name] know anything about [perpetrator’s] use of violence or abuse?
- Is [name] influenced by [perpetrator]? Can you give me an example?
- Is [name] frightened of [perpetrator]?
- Do you think [name] would be willing to call the police or the Department if they had concerns for the safety of you or the children?
Perpetrator

The perpetrator should identify two or more people (not his partner) who will support him to follow a safety plan. The people identified should be individuals that the perpetrator respects and listens to and may be a friend, relative, community member or professional. It is important that the people identified are not fearful of the perpetrator and would be able to challenge him (when safe to do so) if he does not follow the safety plan. Questions to help identify safety network people are below.

Questions to ask the perpetrator

• Who are the people who have helped you in the past when things haven’t been going well?
• What did the person do that was helpful? Tell me more about that?
• Who do you trust and respect that would not be afraid to have honest conversations with you?
• Who are the people you would trust most with your children’s safety? Tell me more?
• Who would your children say they feel the safest with?
• Who are the people who know all about [list behaviours]? 
• Who do you know that you could tell about your involvement with the Department and would support you to become the dad you want to be?
• What could [name person] do to help you be a safer parent and partner? What would this look like?
Identifying professionals to be part of the safety network

Involving professionals in the safety network is a must! Without professionals, the capacity of the safety network and the safety plan to manage and reduce the risk posed by the perpetrator will be limited. This is true even in cases where the perpetrator is engaged and says he wants to change. When deciding which professionals to invite to the safety network consider:

- Which agencies are already involved with the family or may hold information about risk?
- Which agencies are not currently involved but may have a role in the safety plan such as:
  - monitoring the risk and reporting violence to police and child protection;
  - providing swift and consistent statutory responses at every opportunity following a report of family and domestic violence such as police, corrective services (if the perpetrator is on parole or a community based order) and/or the Department;
  - using available protections within civil, criminal and family law systems such as protective bail, parole conditions, parenting orders, violence restraining orders or GPS monitoring;
  - restricting or eliminating contact with the child; and
  - building supports and protections around the child and adult victim to improve physical security, providing emotional and practice supports, increasing risk monitoring and promoting consistent reporting of further acts of violence or other crimes.

See Appendix One for a list of government agencies and community sector services and their respective roles and responsibilities in responding to family and domestic violence.
Meeting with the adult victim and safety network to safety plan

Safety plans should cover the following dimensions:

- practical and emotional support for the child and adult victim;
- monitoring and reporting risk and safety;
- increasing protections for the child and adult victim;
- planning responses to further episodes of violence (threatened or actual); and
- planning for events and scenarios associated with escalated risk such as attending cultural events, school pick up, perpetrator and/or adult victim using drugs or alcohol.

As a general rule, the safety plan should be able to stay relevant and effective whether or not the adult victim and perpetrator are in a relationship together and whether or not the perpetrator is successfully engaged by the Department to participate in safety planning.

The questions outlined below are example prompts for identifying strengths and safety that exist and can be built on, or other options/resources/responses that can increase protection and reduce and manage risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Danger statement</th>
<th>Safety goal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Talk through the danger statement]</td>
<td>[Talk through the safety goal]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any surprises or worries about the danger statement?</td>
<td>Are there any surprises or worries about the safety goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your worst fear for Mum?</td>
<td>What is your best hope for mum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your worst fear for the child/ren?</td>
<td>What is your best hope for the child/ren?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your biggest worry about [perpetrator’s name] behaviour?</td>
<td>What is the biggest strength or opportunity that we can work with to create safety?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there times when the violence or abuse is worse? What is different about those times?</td>
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</table>

**Exploring exceptions [this will inform strengths, and the discussions to have with the perpetrator]**

- Are there times when the violence and abuse is not as bad? What does this look like? What is different about these times?
- Can you think of any times when [perpetrator] has chosen to do something different instead of yelling, throwing things or hurting [adult victim and child]? What was different about that time?
- Can you think of a time when [perpetrator] was [list behaviours] and he stopped or was interrupted? What happened? What happened next?
  
  *If members of the safety network say that dad is only violent when he drinks / uses drugs*

- What is it like at home when [perpetrator] hasn’t been drinking or using drugs? What would the kids say are the best things about these times? Would the kids say that there are still times when they get frightened of dad, even when he is sober?


**Exploring strengths**

- Tell me the things that impress you most/makes you proud about [adult victim]?
- Tell me some of the things that [adult victim] has done to keep herself and the children safe?
- What would the children say are the things that [adult victim] does to keep them safe and happy? *(explore existing safety strategies)*
- Are there times when you know that he might ‘go off’? How do you know? What do you do when that happens?
- Are there places in your community where you feel safe? Tell me about that? Have you gone there before when you were frightened? What happened?
- Are there women’s places in your community? Can you go there / have you been there before when you felt unsafe? What happened?
- Tell me about the things you have done in the past to help [adult victim and child] stay safe?
- What do you think needs to happen for mum and the children to be safe?
- What else can you do to help [adult victim and child] stay safe?
- What do you think others could do?
- What would you do if [explore different scenarios and consider safety options for each]? *Can include any situation that presents a risk of harm to the adult victim and child.*
- What worries you about doing (any of the above)?

**Exploring opportunities to manage and reduce the risk, and increase protections**

- [service] what can you do/offer to assist with:
  - increased protections for the adult victim and child?;
  - monitoring the risk and reporting further worries or episodes of violence?;
  - responses to further episodes of violence/; and
  - managing times of increased danger?

See **Appendix One** to prepare more specific questions, related to the agencies and services present at the meeting.
Meeting with the perpetrator and his safety network people

Safety plans for the perpetrator must include behaviours that need to be demonstrated to the Department, adult victim, children and safety network to satisfy the safety goal. The role of the perpetrator’s safety network people, can include but is not limited to:

- being available to be contacted by the perpetrator when he needs support;
- challenging abusive behaviour, language or attitudes which support violence;
- reminding the perpetrator of the rules of the safety plan;
- providing alternative accommodation or assisting the perpetrator to find alternative accommodation if it’s not safe for the perpetrator to return to the home;
- assisting or reminding the perpetrator to attend any appointments with the Department, behaviour change programs, mental health, drug and alcohol services;
- supporting the perpetrator in meetings with the Department; and
- providing the case manager with feedback about the perpetrator’s progress and any worries about safety.

The questions outlined below are example prompts for identifying strengths that can be built on, or other options/resources/responses that can increase protection and reduce or manage risk.

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<td>What is your best hope for mum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your worst fear for the child?</td>
<td>What is your best hope for the child/ren?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your worst fear for dad?</td>
<td>What is your best hope for dad?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explore children’s views [these kinds of questions are most likely to elicit motivation to change]**

- What would the kids say is the best thing about you as a dad? Tell me more about that? How often do you do those things together? When? Why? What gets in the way of it being like this all the time?
- What would the kids say frighten them most about you/dad? Tell me more about that? How often? When? Why?
- [Safety network] what have you seen dad do to make his children strong and safe?

**Explore exceptions, strengths and opportunities for safety with perpetrator and safety network**

- Is there a time when you have started to [list behaviours] and you have stopped? Tell me more about that? What did you do instead? What makes it hard for you to do that at other times? What could you change so that you can do that more often?
• What have [safety network] been able to do in the past to help you choose not to be violent?

• What would be the smallest or earliest feeling or sign that things are getting heated and you know you are going to start shouting, throwing things, pushing or hitting? What could you do instead when you notice that first feeling? How can [safety network] help you with that?

• What happens when your partner gets scared and tries to leave before things escalate?

• What worries you about her leaving for a while, whether it's a few hours, overnight, or for a few days? What would make you feel less worried?

• What would be the safest thing for your partner, your children, and yourself? What can you do to make this happen? How can [safety network] help?

• Are there times when you are more likely to [list behaviours]? Tell me about that? What is different? What could you do to avoid that next time? What could [safety network] person do to help you with that?

• How can you show the Department, your partner and the safety network that the children will be safe?

Questions to ask the safety network

• How can you support [name] to do things differently?

• What would/can you do if [name] is [list behaviours]? Tell me more about that? Is that something that will work all the time or do we need to think about other situations? What are some other options or strategies that we might be able to use as well?

• Would you be willing to call police or the Department if you were worried about anyone’s safety? What worries you about doing that? Would those worries stop you from calling?

• What would you do if you were worried that things are getting worse and someone might get hurt or frightened? How do you think dad would react if you did that? Dad how would you react?

• How will the Department know when the safety plan is being followed and things are going well? What will this look like? How will you know?

• How will the Department know when the safety plan isn’t being followed and things are not going so well? What will this look like? How will you know?
Collusion and reflection:

Perpetrators of family and domestic violence often try to engage workers and safety network people in stories/narratives that minimise their responsibility for violence. When workers engage in discussion about other people (e.g., adult victim) or circumstances (e.g., substance use) being responsible for violence, this is ‘collusion’ and serves to strengthen the perpetrator’s world view that they are not responsible or at fault. Collusion can increase risk to child and adult victims due to the perpetrator being further emboldened, and will likely undermine safety planning.

To avoid collusion, child protection workers should focus on the danger statement and a future focus about what needs to happen to satisfy the Department that it is safe enough to close the case.

After any contact with a perpetrator, it is important to reflect on the information obtained and what it means for the Department’s assessment of risk and safety. Reflections should be recorded as part of the case note and are just as important as the information obtained from the perpetrator and safety network people. Some example reflection questions are provided below:

- On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “[name] denies using violence or abuse’ and 10 is ‘[name] made full and specific disclosures about his use of violence and abuse’, where would you scale [insert name]? What does this tell me about likelihood of further harm?

- On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “[name] demonstrated no understanding about the impact of their violence and abuse on the child’ and 10 is ‘[name] demonstrated full understanding of how his violence and abuse affects his child’, where would you scale [insert name]? What does this tell me about likelihood of further harm?

- Did [name] provide a meaningful contribution to discussions about safety? What is the likelihood that he will action these behaviours? What does this mean for assessments of risk / safety?

- Were there any red flags that I need to speak to the adult victim, police or other people about?

- The meeting increased or decreased my worries for the child and adult victim? Why?
Examples of behaviours to be demonstrated

**Behaviour change must be demonstrated consistently, and over a period of time, reported by multiple sources (adult victim, child & safety network).**

The table below contains behaviours that may be included in a safety plan for a perpetrator of family and domestic violence. The behaviours do not provide safety unless the perpetrator chooses to use them instead of choosing to be violent. Increasing use of the behaviours combined with a reduction in frequency and severity of violence may indicate that the perpetrator is moving towards change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviours which may indicate the perpetrator is moving towards change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour towards others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is respectful, this must include child, partner/ex-partner, safety network and family, and CPFS staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is safer including not using violence, threats, intimidation or abuse towards anyone (including pets), not damaging property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compliance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with conditions of Police Orders, Violence Restraining Orders or protective bail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with conditions of Family Court orders</td>
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<tr>
<td>with the CPFS safety plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with child support arrangements (if separated) without resentment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instead of choosing violence choosing to</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contact the Men’s Domestic Violence Helpline or FDV counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>call or visit his support person/safety network instead of using abuse or violence or ask his support person to pick him up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remove himself from the situation and do something else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leave house until he feels confident that he can return without being abusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>call the Police to prevent escalation, or encourages partner to call police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour impacting on partners access to resources and support</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respecting partner’s decision to leave the home if she feels unsafe by not attempting to intervene in any way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not restricting partner’s access to car or phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supporting partner’s contact with family, friends and support network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensuring partner has equal access to funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decision making (especially for major decisions) is shared equally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improved communication – discussing issues when calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discloses to his partner any past violence or child abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supports (ex)partner to access help by not attempting to interfere if she chooses to seek assistance from services including CPFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenting choices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supports partner’s parenting by not undermining her to, or in front of, others including the child/ren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children are not hearing yelling, screaming, verbal abuse or threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceases use of child as a ‘weapon’ to manipulate or control the mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respectful interaction with ex-partner at handover of children for contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listens to and validates his children’s experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supports partner’s efforts to provide medical/health care for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substance use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceased or reduced alcohol and/or substance use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staying away from the home while using/affected by substances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agreeing to the home being a liquor restricted premises</td>
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</table>

** For more information see Perpetrator Accountability in Child Protection Practice Appendix One – Indicators of Engagement for more information or [click here](#).
Monitoring and review

Agreeing to a safety plan does not in itself create safety. Safety is achieved when:

- the safety network has demonstrated that it is able to manage and reduce risk and increase protections for the child and adult victim; and/or
- the perpetrator has demonstrated that he is able to follow the safety plan and utilise safer behaviours/strategies instead of using violence.

In addition, risk is dynamic and safety plans need to be monitored and reviewed to maintain their relevance and currency for families. Regular reviews should be scheduled, particularly in the following circumstances:

- there is a change in circumstances that increase risk such as pregnancy, recent birth, separation, service of a violence restraining order, initiation of Family Court proceedings, the Department is taking intervention action, perpetrator loses their employment, increase or introduction of exacerbating factors such as alcohol or drug use or decline in mental health;
- the perpetrator is being released from remand/prison and or the perpetrator is in the community and criminal charges are coming to trial;
- the safety plan is not working;
- the safety plan is not being followed; or
- a serious episode of violence occurs.

Is it working?

When reviewing the safety plan it is important to probe about specific behaviours and instances. This is the only way to know that the safety plan has been put into action and whether or not it worked. Outlined below are a series of example questions and prompts for meeting with the perpetrator and his safety people, and meeting with the adult victim and the safety network.

Questions to ask the perpetrator and his safety network when reviewing the safety plan

- Tell me about a time when you chose not to use violence and did something else instead?
- What was different about your family after you did that instead?
- Tell me some of the things you have done to avoid [list behaviours]?
- What would your partner say you did or do differently?
- What would your children say has changed about you?
- Has there been a time when you didn’t choose to do something differently and you were violent or abusive?
- What made it hard for you to choose to do something else?
- How did your child and partner react? What did you do?
- What would make it easier for you to choose to do something else?
- What do others say about the changes you have made?
- What are your hopes for your family in 6/12 months?
To safety network people:

• How have you seen [name] follow the safety plan? Can you give me examples? What did [name] do? What did you do? What worked? Was there anything that didn’t work?

• We know that there has been further violence and abuse including [reference any acts of violence and abuse known to the Department] what was different about this/those time/s? What could [name] have done differently? What would that look like? How could you support that? Is there anything you could do differently? What would that look like?

Questions to ask the adult victim and her safety network when reviewing the safety plan

• Is the safety plan working for you? Can you give me an example? Tell me more about that?

• Are there parts of the safety plan that aren’t working so well? Tell me more about that? Why is that? What could we do differently?

• Since [date] has there been a time when [name] has frightened or hurt you? Can you tell me more about that? What did [name] do, what did you and the children do? Prompt re. relevant safety plan rules. Did [safety plan rule] work? Why / why not? What can we do different?

• We know that [detail episode of violence known to the Department e.g., police DVIR] can you tell me about what happened? What did [name] do, what did you and the children do? Prompt re. relevant safety plan rules. Did [safety plan rule] work? Why / why not? What can we do different?

• Have there been any times when you have felt frightened, or [name] has hurt you and you couldn’t use the safety plan or it didn’t work? Can you tell me more about that? What did [name] do, what did you do? What happened next? What could be different?

• Since [date] has there been times when [name] has followed his safety plan? Can you give me examples? What did he do? What did the safety network do?

• Is there anything about the safety plan that you would like to change?

To safety network people:

• One of the rules of the safety plan is [add detail]. Has this occurred or have you had to do that? Can you tell me more about it? What happened? What did you do? What did [name] do? What was the outcome / happened next?

Note: A commonly used indicator of safety planning success is a reduction in the number of police attendances for family and domestic violence. However, this is not necessarily a reliable indicator and must be viewed in context of the circumstances of the case and safety plan. For example, a decrease in Domestic Violence Incident Reports (DVIRs) may simply mean that the family has stopped reporting. Similarly an increase in DVIRs may not mean that the violence has increased but rather that the family and safety network are following the safety plan and calling the police when they feel frightened (which in some cases may be a preventative strategy).
Contact for the purpose of assessment and analysis

Figure 3 outlines considerations for contact along the continuum from zero safety, to safety goal achieved (ten). Please note that in cases where a child is in care, the case plan must include a plan for contact to inform assessment and analysis AND a safety plan that is focused on managing and reducing the risk posed by the perpetrator (as outlined in this document).

Contact will be very different for the adult victim and perpetrator therefore separate contact plans are required. Contact plans should be clearly articulated in regards to timeframes and the behaviours that need to be demonstrated in order to progress to the next ‘stage’ of contact. Contact may progress at different rates for the adult victim and perpetrator.

**Figure 3. Planning contact**

Assessments of safety must consider the risks posed by the perpetrator of violence to the child and the adult victim.

**SAFETY ASSESSED AT 0 (zero):** Adult victim may have contact supervised by Department or a professional (e.g., refuge) to promote safety and offer support. Perpetrator may have no contact. To progress to a safety assessment of 1-2 perpetrator must have met with Department and agreed to develop a safety plan and words and pictures explanation for why the children are in care.

**SAFETY ASSESSED AT 1-2:** Adult victim may have contact supervised by Department, other professional, or safety network member (if safe enough). Contact should be high frequency e.g., 60–90 minutes, three times per week. Perpetrator may have contact supervised by Department or other professional it should be low frequency and medium duration e.g., 60–90 minutes once a fortnight / three weeks. To progress to the next stage of contact perpetrator should have commenced work on safety plan and words and pictures.

**SAFETY ASSESSED AT 3-5:** Adult victim may have unsupervised contact (if safe enough) or supervised by safety network member. Contact should be high frequency. Perpetrator should have contact supervised by Department employee or another professional. They may transition to supervision by safety network as they move closer to a five. Increase frequency. To move between a 3-7 on the safety scale, the perpetrator must demonstrate the behaviors in the safety plan as reported by the safety network and adult victim; and have explained to the child why they are in care using words and pictures.

**SAFETY ASSESSED AT 6-7:** Supervised joint contact, progressing to unsupervised. NB: This should only be considered if the adult victim and perpetrator are in a relationship, the adult victim says that they want this, and there are no orders stating that they must be separated e.g., VRO / protective bail. First occasion of joint contact to be supervised by Department.

**SAFETY ASSESSED AT 8+:** Joint overnight contact. NB: This should only be considered if the adult victim and perpetrator are in a relationship, the adult victim says that they want this, and there are no orders stating that they must be separated e.g., VRO / protective bail.
References


## Appendix One

Please note the lists below are not exhaustive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of actions agencies can take to promote safety</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
| WA Police | Share information about victim risk and safety  
Share information about the perpetrator's history of violence and warnings about risk to the victim or workers  
Flag address for priority response  
Provide the victim with a 1800 duress alarm  
Identify opportunities to hold the perpetrator accountable including charges, police orders, argue for remand, argue for protective bail conditions (in cases where criminal charges are pending)  
Assist to prepare an adult victim for court  
Charge perpetrator with failing to protect a child from harm (s. 101 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004)  
Apply for a VRO on behalf of the adult victim  
Designate the case a ‘red file’ and actively case manage  
Witness protection for adult and child victims (extremely high risk) |
| Women’s Refuges | Share information about victim risk and safety  
Provide emergency accommodation  
Safety planning  
Provide outreach, support and counselling for adult victim and child  
Support the adult victim to become independent |
| Domestic Violence Outreach and Safe at Home | Share information about victim risk and safety  
Undertake a safety audit on the home/residence and increase security e.g., changing locks, and repairing damaged doors  
Outreach and support  
Safety planning  
Referrals to other services including counselling and accommodation |
### Men’s Domestic Violence Helpline

**1800 000 599**

- Counselling and support
- Safety planning
- Liaison with police
- Referral to other services for in person support/intervention
- Information and support for men who have experienced family and domestic violence (including information about accessing legal advice, accommodation and other support services for people served with a VRO)

### Women’s Domestic Violence Helpline

**1800 007 339**

- Counselling and support
- Safety planning
- Information and advice
- Referral to local advocacy and support services
- Liaison with police
- Support in escaping situations of family and domestic violence
- Referral to safe accommodation

### Department of Corrective Services

**Sharing information about perpetrator’s level of risk, compliance with interventions, release dates**

**Community (parole, community based orders)**

- Monitoring the perpetrator through supervision
- Referring matters back to court where offenders breach the conditions of parole / community based orders
- GPS monitoring
- Required by agreement (MOU) to participate in multi-agency case management for high risk DV offenders
- Group intervention via contracted services: Communicare, Relationships Australia & Anglicare
- Individual intervention programs via Adult Psychological Services
- Victim Notification Register

**Prisons (incarcerated offenders)**

- Group programs (where available)
- Monitoring correspondence and/or visits with the adult victim, child or other family
- Referring criminal matters to the police e.g., threats to kill
- Challenging violence supportive behaviours and attitudes by establishing direct consequences e.g., cancelling telephone privileges
| **Family Violence Service** | Sharing information about risk and safety.  
Developing safety plans  
Completing court-related documents  
Provide assistance and support when applying for a violence restraining order  
Assist to prepare for court and in-court support  
Provide information about ongoing court matters  
Assistance to access services such as counselling, police, legal assistance, medical care and other relevant agencies. |
| **Department of Housing** | Sharing information about risk and safety.  
Priority housing or priority transfer for victims of family and domestic violence.  
Upgrade security on the property.  
Forgive debt associated with damages where the adult victim can demonstrate that it was caused by family and domestic violence. |
| **Communicare** | Men’s behaviour change programs including a residential program (Breathingspace) and general program (Families Without Fear)  
DV Outreach for men (provides support and information)  
Partnerships for Family Safety (supports partners and ex-partner’s with information, referral, support and safety planning)  
Indigenous Family Violence (group program)  
Same Sex Domestic Abuse Group (provides information on FDV within same sex relationships, safety planning and information on where to get help) |
| **Anglicare WA** | Men’s Behaviour Change Program – Changing Tracks  
Financial assistance (emergency relief)  
Counselling for men and women  
Housing assistance for families who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness  
Parent and adolescent counselling – designed for young people who are 12-18 years old and their parents or carers who are frustrated or experiencing conflict. |
| Relationships Australia | Men’s Behaviour Change Program  
Family Abuse Integrated Response (FAIR) – free programs for men, women, young people and children who have perpetrated, experienced or seen abuse in their families or in their relationships  
Djinda Services – family violence legal service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Perth metro area |
|---|---|
| Centrelink | Social work counselling  
Referrals to other support services  
Financial assistance including:  
• income support payments  
• crisis payment  
• exemptions from seeking employment  
• exemption from collecting child support |
| Department of Education | Principals can ask to leave or restrict persons from the school grounds who pose a risk to the safety of a child or another person, this includes the power to:  
• order someone to leave the school premises (regulation 75);  
• power to detain (s119, s120(3));  
• issue a prohibition letter to stop someone from attending the school, breach of this order is a $2000 fine. |
| Health professionals | Share information about risk and safety for example clinic/emergency department presentations, injuries associated with a family and domestic violence assault etc.  
Monitoring or checking re safety / wellbeing of the child and adult victim (NB: this will vary depending on the health professionals role)  
Social work services (where available) |
| Department of Border Protection | Family violence provisions exist for some visa sub-classes in the family stream and the skilled stream (business). The family violence provisions enable the victim (if they are not the primary visa holder) to seek residency in their own right. For further information, [click here](#). |
| By-laws in Aboriginal Communities | Some Aboriginal communities have implemented by-laws that are aimed at creating safety for child and adult victims of family violence. |