

## Texas CPS Practice Model: Planning

Hi, my name is Angela Pie, I'm the CPS practice model specialist at state office and I will be presenting information to you today regarding the CPS practice model core competency, planning. With that in mind, here are our objectives for today:

Planning involves:

- building strategies
- prioritizing
- time frames
- and planning is also about leverage with the skillful use of our authority.

So as we've done with our previous core competencies we asked you to define that particular competency. So today I'd like you to take a moment to think about how do you define planning.

The practice model defines planning as the process of setting goals, developing strategies and prioritizing tasks and schedules in order to accomplish the agency and family goals that were developed throughout the teaming process. We also want you to remember that planning provides a clear picture of what safety will look like in the family so that everyone knows what needs to happen to close the case. Planning represents one of the six core competencies. It is one of six distinct but connected skill sets that we are required to carry out in order to help us achieve forever safety for children, youth and families at every stage of service.

I'd like us to remember that good child protection work should organize our practice at every stage of service by directly targeting and building future safety with families and all of their support people, including professionals. Today we're going to target planning with children, youth and families as well as their safety networks. We want to remember that planning moves the responsibility for the safety of each child back to the family and their safety network. We want this community of caregivers to help us decide, organize and carry out the everyday experience that the child that will promote their well-being. What I think is unique about today's webinar is that it expands an opening quote you might remember from our teaming webinar that "it takes a village to raise a child, not a mother or therapist." For our staff being a caseworker, we are all part of that village and over the course of the next 30 to 45 minutes I hope you will see the importance and relevance that in order for our village to raise a child in safety we all must have a skill set at planning this very important task on behalf of every child we work with.

So as we've done with each of our core competencies I'd like you to take a moment to reflect about how our three questions,

- What are we worried about?
- What's working well?
- And what needs to happen? Actually applied to planning.

We want to remember that planning has to involve the family and their safety network. The family and their safety network will play a large role in determining what will happen to build future and forever safety for children and youth. One of the missions of our practice model is to partner with families. When we partner, we do our best to plan in such a way that the roles of parents and their safety networks are broad, focused, and driven by our expectations that they will be more involved. If we do this, then we will zero in on and notice some of those day-to-day moment-to-moment strengths and resources that all family members have. So what does planning look like for the children, youth, and families we serve?

Let's take a look at the following five points that will help us better understand what planning means for us in our casework practice. We want to remember that an open case means that we are involved in the lives of the family. An open case means there is usually some harm that involves danger, there's also risk, meaning that a child is not safe. However, to manage harm, danger and risk, families need to have goals. Something tangible, specific, or concrete that they can work towards. It's our job to make sure that the goals focus on protective actions that will counter danger and create safety. So what does planning look like for the children, youth and families we serve? Let's take a look at the following five points that will help us better understand what planning means for us in our casework practice. Clearly planned goals allow us to describe and evaluate how new behaviors and actions are moving us away from the problems. These goals can serve as a template that helps workers, families as well as their safety networks know when there is enough safety to close the case.

Second, planning involves creating strategies. Creating strategies helps us move towards making family goals a reality. This is not easy because we are asking every adult to think of ways to make this happen. It's not our job to tell them what they should do, rather planning gives the strategizing back to the family and their safety network. They need to empower themselves and develop new ways of making each child and youth safe. The best way to start strategizing is to ask a lot of questions. Questioning helps everyone think harder about the situation and how best to achieve forever safety for the child or youth.

Third, we prioritize. By prioritizing, we mean that the plan we develop has a first step, second step, a third step and so on. Yes, we have our bottom line. Especially when danger is imminent in a child is unsafe with no plan. However, families and their safety networks should be able to sort this out. Yes, they might initially need our help, but if we respectfully show them the priorities, we are being honest. Being honest is a good way for us to move our partnership with the family forward.

Forth, planning is like the route you take to a location. This is called a trajectory. With our monitoring, parents and safety networks schedule the specifics of how they will achieve their goals. It's taking steps with the family and safety network toward something tangible. Namely forever safety.

Finally, planning is not a do what you want to argue the family free reign. When we plan, our bottom line is always safety. At the same time, we want to leverage our influence to be deliberate and shift families' involvement with us for the better. By purposeful partnering our authority takes on a different face as the participation and good decision-making of parents actually increases. Naturally, with any new policy or practice raises the question, why do I need to do this. Does this mean what I've been doing is wrong or is this just another quick fix. These questions often bring up strong feelings just as any organizational shift in policy and practice would. The following points though explain how planning is part of the agency shift towards using a practice model to guide our casework here in Texas.

In the past, we have had some child protection workers that have overlooked family and friendship networks, focusing instead on professionally driven interventions. Sometimes we have focused most of our energy on family and making it our responsibility for deciding the how and whats of service plans. As of late, there has been a shift in thinking that maybe services do not necessarily equate with safety. To change our practice, the field staff are working more towards partnering with families. In particular bringing families and their safety networks into the critical decision-making process. Planning actively seeks out the safety network as a natural extension of the family and community. The safety network becomes a big part of the solution to the family's challenges.

Children should also play a big part in the planning process. They will always remain front and center and must have a voice. Children are able to help us in this planning process by telling us who they feel safe with. They are allies in planning. They are capable of telling us what should happen in their lives so that they can feel safe. Transparency and engagement are skills that also have a place when planning. We know that the one key factor likely to increase a child's safety is the positive cooperation or as we say partnership that occurs between the caseworker and family. Being clear, honest and open with families about our worries is being transparent. Listening, empathizing, complementing, and respectful questioning is about engaging. All are necessary components of planning.

We also know that the best predictor of future harm is passed harm. We see it over and over with cases that are reopened. When we take time to plan with families, we need to make sure to look out for and acknowledged protective actions by parents and caregivers. By keeping passed harm in our rearview mirror, we are able to track what the family needs and what success they have achieved.

If planning goes well and parents are successful with reunification or with case closure, we can be confident that they have taken charge and demonstrated the ability to provide care and safety. On the other hand, if in planning for safety the parents are unable to provide the care that is needed we know every opportunity has been given to do so. Decisions to make other living arrangements for children will be based on the behaviors and actions of the parents. Finally, planning means we open the door to secrecy to the family and to the network. We know that child abuse tends to be kept quiet and in the closet for a number of reasons. By planning, we respectfully open the conversation to what the worries are. For example, by using danger statements that create transparency. This kind of transparency allows us to be open and honest about the seriousness of our involvement. It also allows the safety network to support the child and can act as a front-line response to preventing future harm.

So now, let's take a look at the central features of planning with children, youth and families. Or with families and their safety networks. These represent the key elements of what we might look for as we facilitate planning. First, planning with children and families should be action oriented. Task assigned to caregivers and safety network members are behaviorally specific and directly related to dangers as well as permanency and well-being barriers. Plans make good use of what caregivers are already doing to keep the child or youth safe and strengthen those behaviors for the times when the situation becomes unsafe. Likewise planning with children will also take on a behavioral role. One that helps children take steps forward. When a child says I don't want Uncle Fred coming to the house because he's usually high and acts scary. Our role is to help the family think out the pros and in particular the cons in respect to Uncle Fred. However, we also want to plan for what behaviors we will see in the child and what they will be doing that's good for them when Uncle Fred is not around. Second, planning is rigorous. This means we make use of every part of our critical thinking and planning with everyone for forever safety. To do this we moved from the global to the general and specific. Here it's less about the child being safe when mom is home but more to what needs to happen hour by hour when mom is home that demonstrates to everyone the child is safe. Rigor also includes looking at the triggers, the tensions, the roadblocks that are part of daily living that have to be measured and planned for. Rigor is also about thoroughness in planning and about us always challenging ourselves at thinking outside of the box. Shared agreements are the third characteristic of planning.

For planning to work there need to be two types of agreements. First parents and safety networks must minimally agree that our worries about child safety are warranted. A parent might not like the fact that we come into their lives but they must understand what our worries are. Second, parents and safety networks must agree upon what needs to happen. If we can get a parent to even minimally, agree that yes things have to change for the sake of their child the door opens for the parents and the safety networks to think hard about what needs to happen next. Finally, planning is skills based. We will always start with the three questions:

- What are we worried about?
- What is working well?
- And what needs to happen?

Asking questions can be difficult. Especially in the mist of a stressful situation, it might be challenging to think about what question to ask next when our knee-jerk reaction is to actually tell somebody what to do. However, questions and particularly solution-focused questions reflect behavioral detail to the three columns on the slide. They can help us slow down the planning process and reduce tension. Some when we are thinking of solution focused questions about what are we worried about. We might ask a parent, what do you think worries your child if nothing changes. When thinking of those solution-focused questions for looking at what's working well, we might make the comment to the parent - tell me about your best day as a parent. When we look to what needs to happen, we might say to the parent - what are two things that you are willing to do to work with us so that your children are not hurt again.

So now it's your turn, I want you to take a moment to think about, how do you think solution focused questions help the family and us during the planning process. Using solution focused questions and having conversations about planning, strength an individual our family's capacity to achieve their own best judgment about what he or she needs to do in difficult times. By helping them recognize their past successes, how they cope, what their future hopes and dreams are, their important relationships that will help in the planning process, their particular willingness, confidence, and capability to plan, and the times that they have overcome problems.

This table illustrates how you can dig deeper through the use of solution focused questions. so as we look at what's going well, the category of questions listed can be useful to parents who can tell you about their strengths or protective actions. We can bridge the protective actions to the future or to what needs to happen. The same might be said of what we are worried about. These questions help parents reflect on what will happen if nothing changes and if that's the case, what needs to be different. One last point I would like to emphasize in detail. Planning by the use of solution-focused questions is detail focused. We always want to elicit specific detailed information, whether exploring negative or positive aspects of the situation. We want staff to remember that solutions arise out of details, not generalizations.

We also want staff to remember that our approach is child center. Children are front and center in our work and they need a voice. Most times that voice will come through us. In the previous webinars we learned about engaging with children around the worries, what's working well, what they want changed and the importance of being trauma informed. Planning with children takes engagement to the next level. Children's perspectives are vital to building our case

trajectory. Planning is also one way to address their physical, developmental and personal needs as well as their need to feel safe.

So now, let's look at two tools that you might find useful when planning with children. The first is called three houses. It's a tool that uses the three questions, what are we worried about, what's working well, and what needs to happen which inform our assessments and interventions. The second is the safety house developed by Sonia Parker from Australia that many you will remember from the teaming webinar. The safety house exercise can also help us directly plan with the child. Finally, we want to review the importance of trauma informed practice and remember that trauma informed practice and planning cannot be underestimated.

So first, let's go over an example of the three houses. This is a very effective engagement and assessment tool. It also helps us plan for child every day and forever safety. First, we want staff to sit down with the child and we want to show them the three houses that they get to draw in. We have our house of worries, our house of good things, and our house of hopes and dreams. The house worries can really tell us a lot about what the child might be worried about or experiencing that we might not know as an agency. For example, the child that drew these three houses. We were there for a neglectful supervision case. However, in the child's house worries, there wasn't a picture of the child staying home alone and worried about where mom was. There was a picture of the child hiding under the table and had gone and mom's boyfriend in the house. When the worker went into further detail with the child, we were able to find out that mom's boyfriend at one point, had been selling drugs in the home, and somebody kicked the door in to rob the home of the drugs. That wasn't something that staff knew from the case intake or when the case was transferred from one state to surface to the next. Using this tool allowed us as an agency to find out more information about what was going on with the child and what was worrying him.

In the house a good things, we were able to see the positive people that were in the child's life. In this case, the child played on the soccer team and so you can see a soccer ball in the picture. We were able to see all the positive things that the child was experiencing and discuss those with him based on his illustrations. Then in the child's house of hopes and dreams, the child only drew himself, his siblings and his mom because the child did not want that boyfriend who is doing all the things that worried him living in the home. So as you can see, this tool can tell us a lot more information about what that child is experiencing, but it also relates to planning. It can help us develop an effective plan with the mom, about what needs to happen and the next steps for the family.

Here is an example of the safety house. I want you to think of how you could plan with the child in this case. The sidewalk addresses reunification. The answers to each of the sections of the

house reflects our planning around what the child wants. The next steps include strategizing and finding a way to meet those needs. With the child's permission, the safety house, along with the three houses from the previous screen become powerful tools for engaging and planning with the family and safety network.

We also want to remember the impact of being trauma informed to planning. Being trauma informed helps us identify the outcomes of life events that are terrorizing and threatening the children. Our focus and attention when planning with children, depends upon our understanding of to what extent the child has actually been traumatized. When discussing trauma, there are three categories that we want you to keep in mind.

- Acute
- Chronic
- and complex

As a rule of thumb, most of the children we talk to are survivors of complex trauma. So what and how can we plan? There are three essentials. First, we need to be aware of the child's reaction, as well as our own. Second, we want to offer choices to the child that include start time, stop times, breaks, location, content and anything else that helps the child feel safe and in control of what happens when there with us. And third, we want staff to remember that it's okay to ask for help. Sometimes, it is good to take a step back. And planning might involve other professionals.

Next, let's talk about planning with families with their safety networks. Although the planning rationale and characteristics outlined above are applicable to both. the process of planning might be somewhat different. First, I want to reemphasize that when we plan with families we want parents to be proactive in decision-making. Planning starts on day one and will be ongoing throughout the life of the case, no matter what stage a service. This type of planning might involve day-to-day decisions and tasks that families have chosen. Planning is meant to be collaborative and constructive and also framed by a questioning approach. Planning is also transparent because we have laid out our bottom lines. These are the changes that we need to see to have the confidence that the child is safe in order for us to close the case.

When planning with the family we need to look at our bottom lines, which are those agency goals. Agency goals help us define the problem and help push the family to find their own way of making it solvable. Next, take a look at the family goals column. Family goals involve the presence of new protective actions or behaviors that are most likely to address the harm and dangers. Most of us have had the experience that when our relationships are positive, families are able to identify what they need or what they want. Working towards incremental attainable objectives is the most effective approach to helping caregivers make those changes that keep

their children safe. These plans need to be family driven and action oriented. The who, where what or when in the next steps column refers to how some changes will occur. We want to sure that when strategies are put into place, families are demonstrating behaviors that increase the overall safety and well-being of each child. Sometimes, we see that plans make good use of what caregivers are already doing to keep the child and youth safe and strengthen those behaviors at times when the situation is unsafe. Another way planning occurs is when we gather the family support system or the safety network. If children are at the center of our work within the family and the safety network form a layer of protection around the child. From the outset, our planning will be able to identify and gather friends relatives and professionals in and around the immediate family who can support current and future safety. As planning proceeds, there will be those non-abusive caregivers who are committed to building safety and who share worries about the safety of the child with us.

Now, let's talk about planning with the safety network. We look families and safety networks to create a picture and plan of what good safety will look like in the family so everyone knows what needs to happen to close the case. So let's lay out a general roadmap that will help us with our planning with safety networks. We want remember that our cases are not cookie-cutter cases. When planning with families and safety networks it will be different for each case. So let's look at the beginning of our roadmap. Before proposing a safety planning process to parents it is vital that all professionals who are significantly involved in the case fully understand and agree with offering the parents and safety network this opportunity. Without this preparatory work the planning and/or reunification or the case closing process can often be derailed because key professionals either were not involved at the beginning or did not understand what was being offered to the family and weren't committed to it. Getting all key professionals to buy-in is essential before going to the family. If professionals pullback or oppose the process when it's underway the family might become angry and feel tricked into working on a safety planning process only to find out that the professionals weren't committed to it in the first place.

Including the safety network might be challenging. Often there will be some reluctance on the part of parents to involve outsiders. A safety network meeting should be the bottom line that tests our skills at engaging parents. However, the skillful use of our authority as a formal leverage and our persistence should keep the conversation transparent and moving forward. as we pointed out in the teaming webinar building the safety network can include using safety circle tools or even resources found from the family finding website.

The next step in planning is making sure that everyone in the safety network understands the danger. In most cases, we had preplanned with the family and they understand their responsibility to develop the safety network with our help. We want remember to let everyone



know why it is important that they are involved. Everyone should be clear about what happened to cause CPS to become involved and about the worries that need to be addressed by the safety case plan. Case plans are those agency goals, those bottom lines, that must be met to close the case. And our bottom line is always safety. Case plans may also include the goals that parents have worked on or hoped for or what behaviors they want to change. everyone's contributions are included here because we elicit what each participant thinks needs to change for the parent and for them to be confident that the children are safe. one way to move the family and safety network planning process along is to ensure that everyone's views are shared and understood. in addition, using tools such as the three houses or the safety house brings the child to the table and can be a good way of deepening the thinking and planning for the family.

so now let's look at the nuts and bolts of planning. The nuts and bolts of planning creates an agreed care plan by working from the case goals we have developed and from whatever else the safety network feels needs to be different. Planning is considered rigorous because we are asking everyone what they think the day-to-day care arrangements need to be within the family to achieve safety. This is a process of everyone working collectively on the who, what, or when arrangements that will achieve safety. What we want is a family and safety network agreement on what will happen, who will do what, and for how long. And in particular how the safety network might manage any setbacks. When planning, we'll also need to include how long the plan of safety will need to be monitored and reviewed and what will happen when we all agree that there is enough safety.

a key mechanism for planning is to deepen the engagement of the parent and safety network with the plan of care specifically made for each child. These should be straightforward and simple and age-appropriate list of rules about what is going to happen. Pictures to accompany the rules are prepared by the family and network to present to the child. Planning for this next-to-last task means that parents and their safety networks are committing to live by these rules in front of their children and the community. This results in a far stronger outcome for building forever safety than the parent simply making a commitment to us here at the agency. So take a moment to look at this example, we call it words and pictures. This safety plan shows everyone that Nicole will be safe at home with mom and dad. Nicole's rule number one, the most important rule, is that that Dad will not hit or threaten Mom or anyone else. Dad will not break things in the home. If dad is upset he will leave the house right away. What we've done here is written down the rules but Nicole also drew pictures to accompany the rules. We've been able to make sure that the child has a plan that is age-appropriate so that they understand what actions their parents, safety network members and even themselves need to take to ensure every day and forever safety.

A final step in planning with the family and safety network is to review behavior changes on an ongoing basis. We can check in with the children, the parents and all the members of the safety network to see how the plan of care is going. We want to write down specific examples of what's going well. Address what's working with everyone in order to refine the safety plan to address any concerns or worries. Ultimately, when there is consensus that parents have demonstrated behaviors needed to address safety and care of the children then the case can be closed.

We've discussed a lot of information today over the core competency of planning. As we close though, we want to review the professional caseworker and supervisor takeaways. We want staff to remember that good child protection work should organize all practice at every stage of service by directly targeting and building future safety with families and their safety network. We want staff to remember that planning moves the responsibility for the safety of each child back to the family and their safety network. Therefore, the responsibility in planning does not rest solely on agency shoulders. Planning with families starts right away from day one and involves setting goals, developing strategies and prioritizing tasks and schedules to meet those goals. This process is meant to be rigorous and the goals are meant to be attainable for the family. Planning also brings the children's voice to the table and we use this to meet their needs for well-being as well as for every day in future safety. Another outcome that we want staff to remember as a result of planning, includes those behaviorally specific task that are assigned and agreed to by caregivers and safety network members. These tasks are directly related to dangers as well as permanency and well-being barriers for each child. Finally, we want staff to remember that safety networks are a natural extension of every child and every family the safety networks will be critical partners in planning for how every child should live without abuse or neglect.

if you have any questions or comments then please feel free to email me Angela Pie at [Angela.Pie@dfps.state.tx.us](mailto:Angela.Pie@dfps.state.tx.us). Thank you.