

## SAFETY ORGANIZED PRACTICE

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Strengthening Families is a research-informed, cost-effective strategy to increase family stability, enhance child development and reduce child abuse and neglect. It builds five protective factors:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

Through the Strengthening Families Initiative, more than thirty states are shifting policy, funding and training to help programs working with children and families build protective factors with families. Many states also use the Strengthening Families approach to inform state prevention strategies, strengthen families in the child welfare system and engage parents and communities in building protective factors.

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### USING STRENGTHENING FAMILIES IN A SAFETY ORGANIZED PRACTICE MODEL IN CHILD WELFARE

The Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy offers rich opportunities for child welfare systems to increase their focus on well-being, deepen their partnerships with other agencies and systems and take a strength-based approach to their work with children and families.

Protective factors approaches are used in child welfare in two ways, often in tandem:

- By focusing on the child themselves and the protective factors that will help them thrive
- By focusing on the protective factors of caregivers to help them provide the nurturing environment that will support children

Strengthening Families can be used in conjunction with Safety Organized Practice to help identify family-specific risks for abuse and work with the family to develop plans for seeking support.

Implementing Strengthening Families also helps child welfare systems and workers to “speak the same language” as other providers of services to children and families. Strengthening Families efforts provide a cross-systems framework for family support and capacity building. State and local initiatives are led by cross-system leadership teams representing a diverse set of disciplines. In most states, Strengthening Families is being implemented broadly in settings as diverse as early childhood centers, family support programs, parenting programs and other venues that serve young children and their families. Child welfare systems can join in these efforts to develop greater supports for children and families, working together across systems toward common goals of building protective factors and improving child and family well-being.

Child welfare systems that have embraced a protective factors approach have found that it reenergizes family service workers, enriches partnerships with families and reduces tendencies for service providers to unknowingly work at cross-purposes.

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Safety Organized Practice (SOP): A Collaborative Practice is a holistic approach to collaborative teamwork in child welfare that seeks to build and strengthen partnerships within a family, their informal support network of friends and family, and the agency. SOP utilizes strategies and techniques in line with the belief that a child and his or her family are the central focus and that the partnership exists in an effort to find solutions that ensure safety, permanency and well-being for children.

Safety Organized Practice is informed by:

- Solution-focused Practice
- Signs of Safety
- Structured Decision Making/Risk and Safety Assessment research
- Group Supervision and Interactional Supervision
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Motivational Interviewing
- Cultural Humility
- Trauma Informed Practice

*~From The Center for Human Services, UC Davis.*

To learn more about Safety Organized Practice, visit

<http://humanservices.ucdavis.edu/Academy/pdf/121-171-Safety-organized-practice.pdf>

### HOW SAFETY ORGANIZED PRACTICE LINKS TO THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

At the root of both SOP and Strengthening Families is the common belief that all families have strengths and all families benefit from the development of informal supports that will sustain the family long after child welfare involvement has ended. The primary goals for Strengthening Families are optimal child development, reduced child abuse and neglect and strengthened families. The primary SOP and child welfare goals of safety, permanence and well-being go hand in hand with these goals. When practiced together, SOP and Strengthening Families provide a comprehensive approach to child safety. In addition, Strengthening Families brings child welfare a framework for case planning around the well-being of children and families.

**Parental Resilience:** SOP builds parental resilience by identifying family-specific risk factors for abuse and/or neglect and by working in partnership with the family to develop plans for seeking support and making safe choices in high risk situations. This enables the family to be better prepared when inevitable stressors present themselves and arms the family with the tools to manage these stressors in positive and productive ways. Trauma informed practice is a key element of SOP. Successful SOP implementation understands the long-lasting impact of trauma, helps families recognize and prepare for this impact and seeks to reduce further traumatization of children and families within the child welfare system.

**Social Connection:** SOP is strongly focused on helping families to identify natural informal supports and bringing those supports together in a transparent way that provides a safety net for the family. Cultural Humility is infused in the work allowing for families' unique cultural needs to be discussed and attended to. Through this process, family safety networks are actively engaged in the process of shared accountability for child safety.

**Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** SOP processes provide an opportunity to examine an individual parent's strengths and needs in terms of parenting skills and knowledge. Subsequent case planning can then provide supportive services to give parents access to accurate information and concrete parenting techniques.

**Concrete Support in Times of Need:** SOP practices not only provide an opportunity to link families with community resources, they offer families the opportunity to problem-solve and come up with their own plans for meeting concrete family needs. Other concrete supports such as mental health and substance abuse services are also addressed in Family Team Meetings.

**Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** Structured Decision-Making, a core component of SOP, specifically evaluates a child's risk and impact of prior exposure to abuse on the child's social and emotional states. SOP, being aligned with trauma informed practice, promotes the development of higher functioning self-regulation skills in adults and children.

SOP also includes child specific interview tools such as Three Houses and the Safety House that keep the "child's voice" at the forefront. This allows for not only understanding of the impact of abuse and/or neglect on the child but also for the child's involvement in planning for their own safety at an age-appropriate level.