



CT Child Safety Practice Model

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What is a safety practice model and how does it support child safety? A safety practice model maps out how agency employees, families, and stakeholders conduct their work together in an environment that focuses on keeping children safe from child maltreatment. The model guides the daily interactions of employees, families, and community members in their work with the child welfare agency, in conjunction with the standards of practice to achieve child safety outcomes by:

- increasing consistency of safety-related language
- increasing consistency of decisions and outcomes
- clarifying interactive expectations for frontline staff, supervisors, and community-based partners
- unifying the statewide internal and external understanding of applied safety concepts.

What is the CT Child Safety Practice Model? The Department of Children and Families is the child protection agency that works as part of the larger community-based system, and together we can integrate our work to effectively assess child safety, build upon families' strengths and protective factors to keep children safe at home and in their communities whenever possible, and engage families.

The **ABC's of the CT Child Safety Practice Model** describes our shared focus internally, externally, across all specializations, and at all levels of the system with DCF-involved children, young adults, parents, supportive extended family members, child-serving organizations, human services, and local, caring community members:

- A – To increase **Adult** parental protective capacities,
- B - To reduce **Behaviors** or conditions that are dangerous, where harm to the child is imminent, and
- C - To reduce **Child** vulnerability.

Six Core Components of the CT Child Safety Practice Model:

1. Safe and Sound Culture & Safety Science
2. Commitment to Equitable Safety Outcomes & Racial Justice
3. Comprehensive Assessment, Resources, Tools, and Protocols to Support Safety & Consistent Decisions
4. Supervision and Consultation to Inform Critical Thinking
5. Community Partners & Comprehensive Service Array focused on Safety
6. Supports for Kin, Foster, and Adoptive Families & Young Adults

Why are we doing this? The Department is a learning organization and as such, our practice continues to evolve. The Department works diligently to foster the Safe and Sound culture through workforce development so that staff will have shared values, skills, competencies, and supervision they need to achieve child safety. From our experience, we know that DCF can't do this work alone and is stronger when working alongside its partners. **The CT Child Safety Practice Model first and foremost, aims to ensure safety throughout all of DCF's assessments, responses, services, and operations across the entire child welfare continuum.** A safety practice model explains what we are doing, ways we will continue to refine, and it provides a roadmap so that people can join us in this work.

What will be different? We want to build upon what we have done well. The child safety work in Connecticut has been exceptional and we have a robust array of tools, policies, protocols, and resources. For example, we will continue to utilize SDM and refine our assessment skills. Most significantly, we intend to increase our work in more integrative ways - internally, externally, across multiple clinical, medical, educational disciplines, and at all levels of individuals, organizations, and communities. During the pandemic, we further recognized the importance of teaming and internal and external communication. We will be taking steps to enhance our child safety practices:

- Enhancing our Safety Planning Practices
- Delivery of Community-Based Services Through a Child Safety Lens
- Practice Profiles for Child Safety (DCF, Mental Health, Intimate Partner Violence, Substance Use, & Developmental Disabilities)
- Communication and Integrative Work (such as Schools, Medical Providers, Law Enforcement, & Child Advocacy Centers)

Next Steps: A full draft of the model will be released in Spring, 2021. Meetings will be scheduled with all divisions within the Department as well as our external partners to provide education around the model and elicit feedback. The feedback will be incorporated into the final version and will help to inform the implementation plan (i.e. development of practice profiles, safety plans, tools, training, coaching, guiding documents, community convenings, & ongoing strategies to safeguard children, together).