

What is the Signs of Safety?

- A strengths-based, safety-organized approach to child protection case work.
- Revolves around a risk assessment and case planning format that integrates professional knowledge alongside local family and cultural knowledge and balances a rigorous exploration of danger/harm alongside indicators of strengths and safety.

The aim is to work in partnership with families to increase safety and reduce risk by focusing on the family's strengths, resources and support networks.

Three Core Principles of the Signs of Safety (SoS) Approach

- Child protection practice and culture tends towards paternalism—a professional knows what is wrong and how to fix it (medical model). SoS seeks to create a more constructive culture using specific tools and processes for professionals and families to engage and partner to address child abuse and maltreatment through 3 core principles:
1. Establishing constructive working relationships and partnerships between professionals and family members, and between professionals.
 2. Engaging in critical thinking and maintaining a position of inquiry.
 3. Staying grounded in the everyday work of child protection workers.

Four Domains for Inquiry

1. What are we worried about? (past harm, future danger, and complicating factors)
2. What is working well? (existing strength and safety)
3. What needs to happen? (future safety)
4. Where are we on a scale of 0 to 10? Ten means there is enough safety to close the case and 0 means it is certain the child will be abused.



Mapping

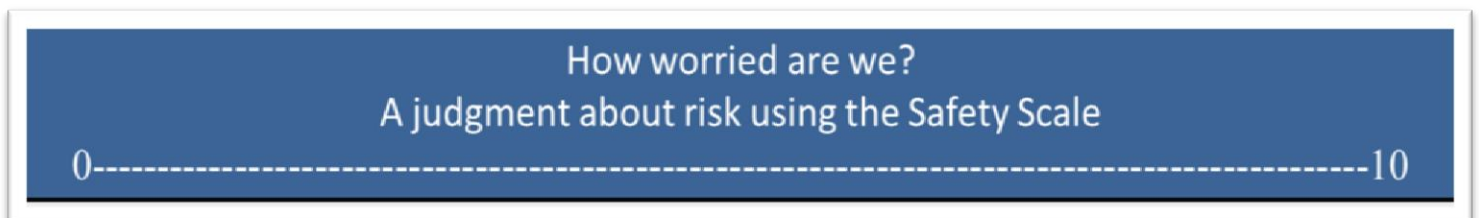
- The Signs of Safety is a conversation with a family about the safety of children.
- We build a joint understanding of the situation causing harm and what needs to happen to build child safety.
- Our conversation is recorded on a Four Column Form.
- This process is called “mapping” the case.

Four Column Form

- The original SoS Three Column Form was adapted to a Four Column Form by Alberta (Region 1) to collapse assessment and planning documents into one.

Mapping is Critical Thinking

What are we worried about?	What’s working well?	What needs to happen?	Who will do what to build safety?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm statements • Danger statements • Complicating factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing safety • Strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency safety goals • Family safety goals • Next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety actions, tasks, rules



Signs of Safety – Involving Children

- Children involved in child intervention have reported they feel like “pawns in big people’s games and then have little say or contribution in what happens to them”.
- Many children do not understand why they are in care.
- Primary reason is lack of straight forward tools and practical guidance.

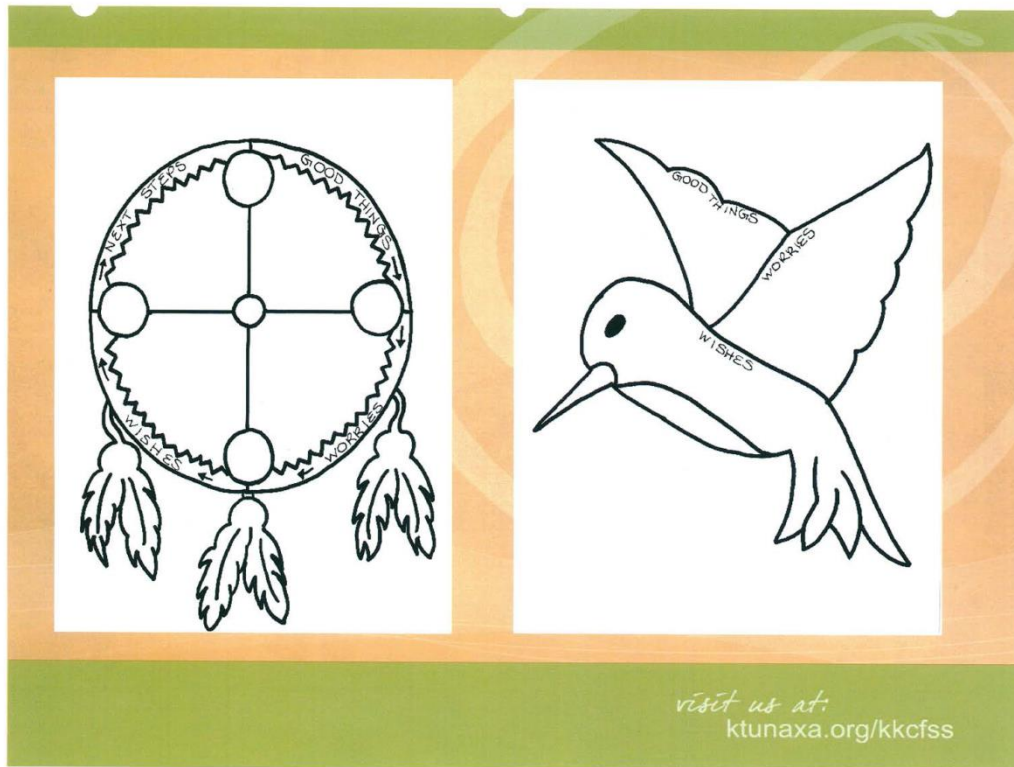
The Signs of Safety uses a number of specific tools to work on involving children:

1. Three Houses
2. Wizards and Fairies
3. Safety House
4. Words and Pictures

Three Houses



Three Houses Adapted



Wizards and Fairies

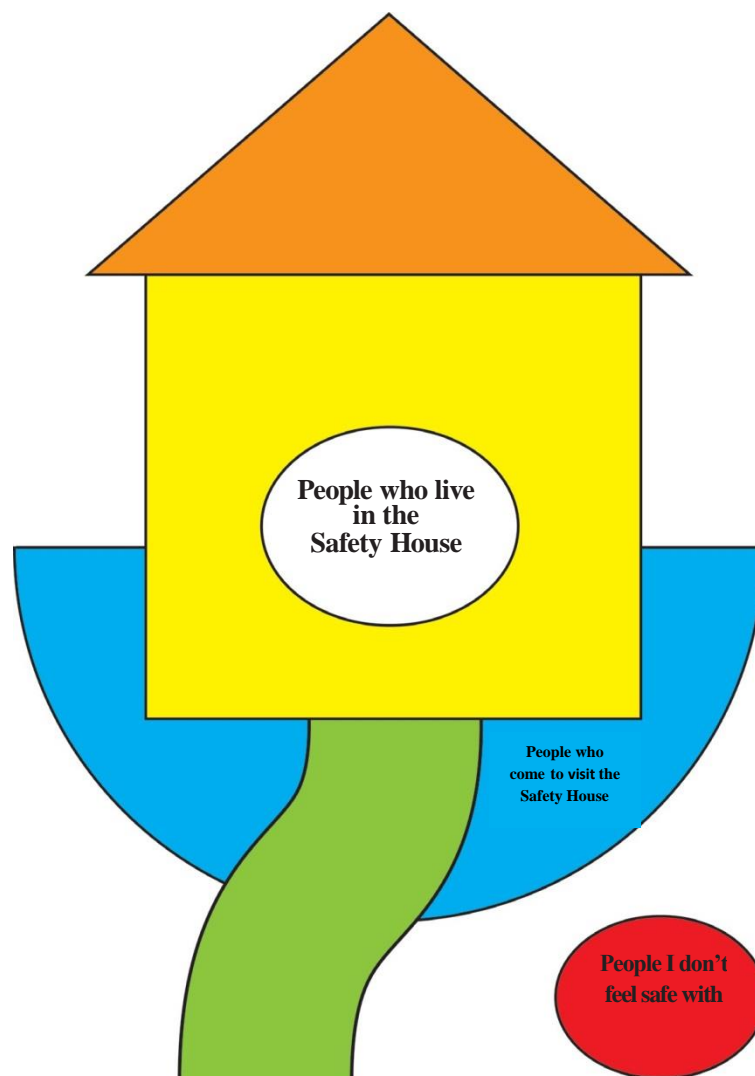


The Safety House

- This tool was developed by Sonja Parker from Perth extends the 3 houses and visually engages children in the safety plan.

Explore five key elements:

1. What will life look like in the safety house and the people who will live there?
2. Who the child thinks should visit and how they should be involved.
3. Who the child feels is unsafe.
4. Rules of the Safety House
5. Safety Path – path to the house as scaling for their readiness to reunite or safety in the home.

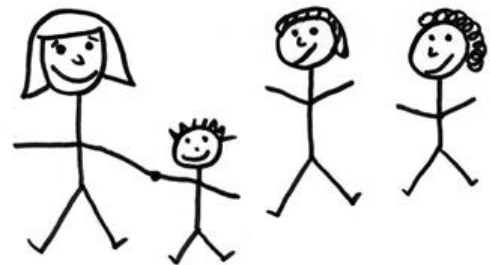


Words and Pictures

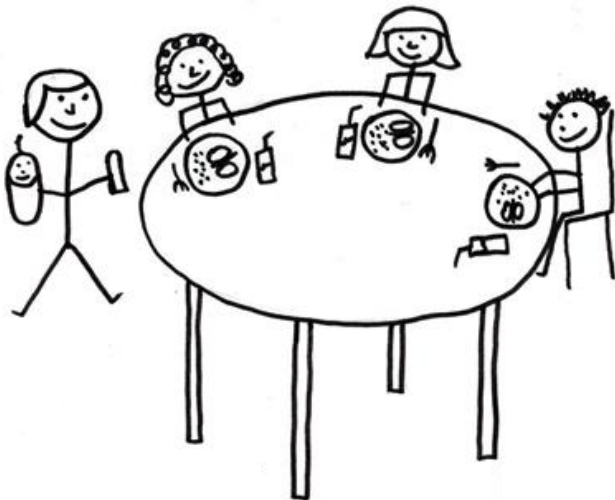
1. Mommy is never to be alone with Lisa, Bart or Maggie.



2. When you spend time with Mommy there will always be someone else there like Auntie Kate, Bill, Fred, Mary, Joe, Lyn--the pastor's wife, Margaret, Grandpa or Grandma. These are the safety people who love you and want to be sure you're safe.



3. When Mommy cooks or prepares food, everyone will eat the same food. Daddy or a safety person will get drinks for Maggie or Bart and prepare bottles for Maggie.



4. When Lisa, Bart or Maggie are sick, Daddy or one of the safety people will prepare the medicine. When Lisa, Bart or Maggie need to go to the doctor, Daddy will take them and Mommy will stay back or Mommy will take them and bring a safety person along.



Words and Pictures Explanation and Child Relevant Safety Plans

- “Words and pictures” is a process for informing young children about child protection concerns and a safety planning method that both involves and directly speaks to children.
- This is done without trivializing or minimizing the seriousness of the child protection concerns.
- As safety plans are about the children and setting up and living arrangements so everyone knows the children are safe, therefore important to involve the children and make the process understandable to them.

Safety Planning

- Safety planning within SoS is designed to create a proactive, structured and monitored process that provides parents a genuine opportunity to demonstrate they can care for their children in ways that satisfies child protection.
- Child protection workers will say there is a safety plan in place when what they actually have is a list of services the family must attend.
- Mantra of SoS – **A service plan is NOT a safety plan.** A safety plan is a specific set of rules and arrangements that describe how the family will go about everyday life and show that the children will be safe.

For more information:

