



# **Group Supervision Process: Creating a Safety Planning Trajectory Timeframe**

Part of the Signs of Safety Implementation Documents  
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## Thinking About Trajectory

What is meant by trajectory? Essentially the trajectory for the case is the pathway that needs to be taken to get to the end goal; e.g. reunification and/or case closure. Trajectory work within the Signs of Safety approach refers to the process worked through with families and other key stakeholders, as outlined in the Signs of Safety, 'Roadmap: Family-Owned Safety Planning' (located at the end of this document) and the training handout 'Creating a Safety Planning Trajectory' prepared by Andrew Turnell (additional handout).

There are 10 steps in creating a safety planning trajectory:

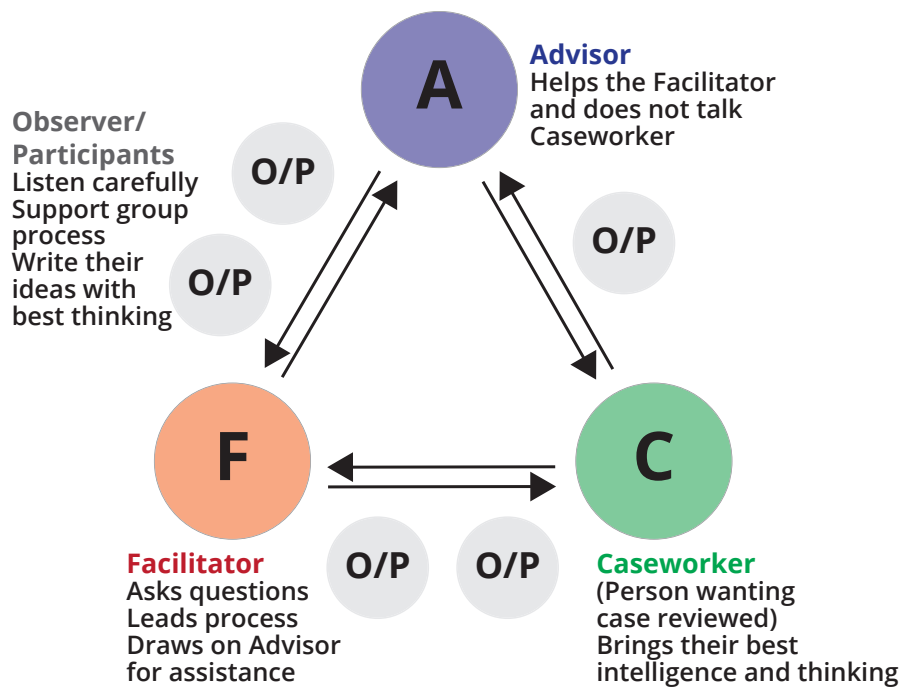
- Step 1: Create clear, compassionate Danger Statements and Safety Goals.
- Step 2: Create a Safety Scale matched to each of the Danger Statements and Safety Goal pairs.
- Step 3: Detailed questions to elicit meaningful existing strengths and safety.
- Step 4: Finding networks.
- Step 5: Working with children.
- Step 6: Words and Pictures explanation.
- Step 7: Building the Safety Plan.
- Step 8: Bottom lines.
- Step 9: Timeframe.
- Step 10: Monitoring.

This group supervision process will focus on creating a timeframe (step 9). If the worker is needing to focus on the prior steps, it is recommended that the 'Signs of Safety Supervision Process: Mapping' is followed.

## Group Supervision Process

This Signs of Safety group supervision process is designed for groups of 4 to 10 people. It revolves around the caseworker who brings forward the case. (Sometimes, of course, there is a number of people bringing forward the case). The facilitator leads the group process, assisted by an advisor. Other group members are involved as observers/participants. The roles of each are described in the diagram on the next page.

The entire group, but in particular the facilitator and advisor, must focus on the process and not get caught up or over-organised about the content and detail of the case. This process is all about growing the capacity for the team to create together a fast process for working through, and getting direction in, a case. As with every meeting in child protection, effective meetings are always led skilfully.



## Group Process

### 1. Introductions (2 to 3 minutes)

If the group is new to the group supervision method, the facilitator should introduce the process, including a quick description of each person's role:

- The facilitator is the ONLY person who talks directly to the caseworker.
- The advisor acts to assist the facilitator to lead the process.
- The observers/participants have the opportunity to learn by staying out of the content of cases and focusing on analysis and judgement processes, thereby assisting the worker to gain a better overview of the case and the direction he/she wants to take.

The facilitator has the professionals, the caseworker, and anyone directly involved in the case say who they are, what their role in the case is, and how long they have been involved in the case. The facilitator will probably need to prevent the professionals involved in the case from going into case content at this point.

### 2. Genogram (3–5 minutes)

The facilitator draws the family genogram to include the basic information of age along with the names of the immediate family parents, partners, children, extended family members, and relevant friends. This should include clarifying where children are living, if not with one or both parents. Again, to keep the process focused, this is not the time to describe case information.

### **3. Background Information (3–5 minutes)**

The facilitator gives the worker 3–5 minutes to give an overview of the case. The facilitator might ask something like: ‘What makes this an open case?’ or ‘Where are things currently at?’ or maybe ‘What is happening with this family that has prompted you to bring this case forward?’ The worker should be allowed to talk without interruption. The facilitator and observers should make notes of the worker’s exact words and begin to analyse the information. While listening, the facilitator can make notes at the side of the whiteboard and should not be trying to ‘map’ the case by locating information into particular columns. The more experienced workers become at using the process, the more succinct they will be at providing the critical information that is needed to move through the process.

### **4. Worker’s Focus (3–5 minutes)**

This is THE MOST important part of the preparatory steps because it provides clear focus for the facilitator and group.

Broadly, the focus of this session is on creating a trajectory timeline for the case the worker has brought forward. Eliciting the background information will have established whether the focus is on reunification, preventing removal, or some other goal.

In developing the trajectory timeline, elements such as the number and type of meetings will be considered, along with who needs to attend, what tasks need to be achieved, and what the contact arrangements will be for the child where they are in care. The facilitator now asks questions of the worker to find out what the worker feels they need most help with. The facilitator might ask something like: ‘What do you need most help with in developing a trajectory timeline?’ The facilitator should dig in a little to get a clear, specific goal.

### **5. Creating a trajectory: Large Group Exercise**

- 5.1 The type of large group exercise undertaken will depend on where the worker is up to with the case and what they are wanting to get out of the session, as will have been established in step 4 of this group supervision process. Assuming the worker is wanting to create a trajectory timeline, the facilitator asks everyone to take a piece of paper and draw the following headings and subheadings as per Table 1 on the next page.
- 5.2 Individually and then in small groups (pairs or threes depending on the numbers of participants), work out what tasks/steps will be needed and how much time will be needed to work through these for each section. For instance, workers might decide that one or more children need to be interviewed using My Three Houses and estimate that this work could be done in weeks 3 through to 5 because there are four children to talk with. Tasks for the initial work might include engagement and preparation with key decision makers and stakeholders before presenting the proposal to the family; building a network, starting a safety

Dates	Tasks/Steps	Meetings	Contact Changes
Section 1: Initial Work			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Section 2: Safety Planning			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Week #:			
Section 3: Monitoring Until Case Closure			
Week #:			
Week #:			

Table 1: Please note that the number of rows needed may vary.

journal; developing an interim safety plan; and talking with the child using My Three Houses and creating a Words and Pictures explanation. Tasks for the safety planning would typically include conversations to review and refine the safety plan in safety plan review meetings; talking again with the child using My Three Houses; network members supervising contact; discussions about triggers and red flags; and plans for the first overnight stays if the child is in care. The tasks for the final phase of the trajectory timeline will be focussed on monitoring the effectiveness of the safety plan until enough time has passed that the case can be closed.

- 5.3 The facilitator asks the group to identify how many weeks participants decided would be needed for the initial work in this case. ‘How many weeks for the safety planning to take place and how many weeks would you say is needed for monitoring through to case closure?’ One of the most effective ways to do this is to ask who wrote down that one week was needed for the initial work. Then ask who wrote down two. Then three, and so on, doing the same for each section. Participants can indicate with a show of hands what they believe would be needed for this particular case.

5.4 The facilitator shows the trajectory timeline they have put together, noting that there is no right answer. The timelines that have been developed in this session are suggestions. It will be up to the caseworker to talk the ideas through with their line manager to see what the agency will accept and support. The proposed timeline then needs to be shared with other key decision makers and stakeholders to gain their agreement before presenting it to the family for their thoughts and ideas. There will be aspects of the timeline that are not negotiable. For example, the children cannot have overnight stays until after the delivery of the Words and Pictures explanation and unless there is an informed network in place.

## **6. Creating a Trajectory: Individual Exercise**

If time permits the above process can be repeated with participants working on their own cases individually or in pairs.

## **7. Review and Next Steps**

The facilitator now reviews the process so far by asking the worker: ‘What has been most useful for you about the process so far?’ Then the facilitator asks: ‘On a scale of 0 to 10 – where 10 means I’ve got what I need from the consult already and 0 means I’m no better off or any clearer than when we started – where are you?’ If the group has stayed on track, the worker should be rating relatively high at this stage. The facilitator then asks the worker if this is this enough for now. If the answer is yes, end here.

If no, ask, ‘What else do you need to focus on?’ and spend some time on that, usually by listening to the issue and getting questions created for that issue.

A low rating from the worker probably indicates the group process has gone off track significantly from what the worker wanted, or that the worker actually now wants something else or perhaps is feeling swamped and anxious about the case. Whatever the problem, the facilitator will need to back up and help the worker identify where the sticking point is and agree on a process to deal with that.

## **8. Review Process for Group**

The advisor leads a review with the whole group about what was useful, what they learned, and any issues they have. (The review should not be about the content of the case).

## **How Often Do We Use This Group Process in the Agency or Team?**

When presenting and teaching this group mapping process, these questions are often asked: ‘How often should we do this in our agency? Do we do this in every case?’

This group process is designed to:

- build a shared, structured, collective team and agency culture, and process for thinking through cases using the Signs of Safety approach;
- enable child protection professionals to explore each other's cases, bringing their best thinking, including alternative perspectives, and to do this without getting caught in one or two people dominating or the group telling the practitioner whose case it is or what they must do;
- develop a shared practice of bringing a questioning approach to casework, rather than trying to arrive at answers.

This group process cannot be undertaken in every case discussion. However, the process can be replicated in individual supervision and also when practitioners are thinking through cases for themselves.

Building and sustaining this sort of questioning culture for thinking through cases as a team usually requires this process being undertaken at least once every two to four weeks.

The process presented here offers quite a tight structure, because helping professionals often tend to default to individual supervision, so group supervision is not a normal part of most agencies' practice. Where group supervision is normal, the group conversations can often be very free form and unstructured with little sense of shared purpose. If the majority of quality supervision is individual, this creates a very privatised practice culture within the agency, places excessive pressure on the team leaders or supervisors to be the fount of all wisdom for all practitioners, and limits the capacity to draw on the knowledge and experience of peers. Many supervisors and practitioners shy away from group supervision or, if they have to participate, they do so in a constrained way because of previous bad experiences. It is strongly suggested that supervisors and teams follow the process offered here closely, particularly as they build the habit of group supervision in their teams. This process is safe, well tested, refined, and avoids group dynamics where one or two people dominate.

The advisor role is central to the success of the group process. The advisor should be very active, checking in regularly with the facilitator about their sense of direction and effectiveness of what they are doing. Likewise, the facilitator should quickly draw on the advisor if they are feeling stuck or unsure.

# ROADMAP: FAMILY-OWNED SAFETY PLANNING

## WHAT

### DANGER STATEMENTS

What CPS is worried will happen to the child if nothing changes (the problem that has to be solved)

The practitioners journey with the family from the danger statements to safety goals through a structured process to create the final safety plan.

This is the how of safety planning.

### SAFETY GOALS

What CPS needs to see to know the child is safe and they can close the case (not services).

## HOW (STEPS)

1. Develop your Danger Statements and Safety Goals  
Simple language, understandable to family
2. Identify everything constructive in direct parenting
3. Develop CPS bottom-line requirements
4. Develop CPS timeframe and trajectory for closure
5. Build vision of process for family
6. Build informed network with family
7. Create explanation for children (and everyone else)
8. Build Safety Plan with parents and network  
Successive process where family **demonstrate** over time they can make children safe, regular review – honouring success and utilising struggles.  
Need to dig into critical issues – dynamics, triggers and stressful times that make abuse/neglect more likely. The family **must** either come up with or fully own all rules.
9. Monitoring by CPS and network
10. Involve child
11. Dealing with 'denial' issues
12. Create final child-centred Safety Plan

## Ongoing Processes

Authority Honouring Vision Conversation Compassion

## TOOLS (METHODS)

Signs of Safety Mapping  
Three Houses, Safety House

Signs of Safety Mapping,  
Three Houses, Safety Journal

Family Safety Circles  
Words and Pictures, Mapping,  
Three Houses, Safety House

Regular Review Meetings  
Family and Network must be given the opportunity to fail so they can demonstrate success, usually through an increasing process of contact. CPS must be mindful of the risk and manage this together with the family.

Safety House, Safety Object  
Practice Rehearsals of Rules,  
Safety Journal

Similar-but-different Role Play

Child-focused Safety Plan