

Safety Planning Tips

for Caregivers Experiencing Aggression in the Home

This information is intended as a guide only. It includes principles and sample wording that can be utilized in developing a personalized safety plan.

A safety plan...

- Is an essential component of an overall strategy to increase family capacity.
- Helps parents think through how to stay safe in unpredictable, frightening and intimidating confrontations.
- May give parents more time to get support if required, or de-escalate an argument that is happening or could potentially happen.
- Should not be so complex that parents forget to use it or so vague that it is not effective.

A safety plan will not remove all the risks.

Parents may still need to call for help, take extreme measures to protect themselves and their child or children, or leave the home suddenly.

Steps in planning:

1. Decide who will be involved

- Regional Parent Liaisons can help parents to do this part.
- It may be helpful to include all children in the home, in some capacity.
- It is sometimes best for a therapist or neutral party to initiate and/or facilitate safety planning to avoid triggering any of the family members.

2. Create safety statement for all family members

- Everyone in the family has a right to safety.
- See page 4 for an example, and page 5 for a template.



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3. Describe how the child appears in all emotional states

- Include when the child is calm/anxious/aggressive/attacking and what has generally been helpful in each state. For example, does the child increase breathing, pace the room, escalate language?
- What can the child do to calm self “quickly” when the signs start to show?
- Does distraction, or redirection help?
- Planning can help put the incident in context.
- Recognizing changes between emotional states can reduce anxiety and unpredictability for everyone involved.
- Attention to non-verbal communication may help parents to be alert and ready in advance of physical aggression.

4. Consider home storage and improvements to increase safety

- Should parents lock up knives, tools like screwdrivers, etc.
- Discuss where these can be safely kept and what kind of lock is needed.
- Consider other safety aspects of home, such as stopgaps on windows, etc., especially if the child has suicidal ideation/behaviour.

5. Identify safe locations inside the home

- Determine where family members can go if someone is not feeling safe or needs help to stay safe. There should be a charged or working phone in that location.
- Consider installing locks on some doors.
- Wait in safe space until the situation has calmed down and the child is no longer a threat. Once this has happened leave the room and ensure the child is safe and there are no dangers as a result of the behaviour.
- For adolescents, consider whether parents will ask them to leave the home.
- Discuss what that could look like and how to safely re-enter.

6. Keep spare keys in a safe place

- Find a place that only adults know about to keep spare sets for home and car.
- Keep some money aside to use a taxi, train or bus if needed.
- Explore where to go for safety outside the home.



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7. Consider who could provide assistance in an emergency

- This may include an informal network of friends/family/neighbours. For instance, a neighbour may be able to step in if they overhear an escalating situation (knock on door, call...).
- A code word may be helpful to notify other family members that a situation is escalating, and they should move to execute on the safety plan.

8. Create a list of easily accessible phone numbers

- Help the family become familiar with local crisis options and develop a list of who can be called.
- Make sure other children in the home know how and when to dial 911.

9. Consider in advance under what circumstances to call police

- Familiarize with options for calling police for help. In your area, is there a voluntary pre-registration for vulnerable people?
- Can you request that a mental healthcare staff attend with police?
- Are there other options?
- Consider having numbers ready for free legal advice for children who are old enough to be charged, and also for parents in case the child makes allegations against them.

10. Develop a possible script in case parent calls

For example “my child is not safe right now, they have FASD and trauma, and have a developmental age of _____”.

11. Communicate the plan to family members

Use simple, concrete language

After an incident:

1. Record dates, times and brief details about any aggressive behaviour. Explore the use of video cameras in the home to maintain a record of what happened.
2. Consider when and how to discuss the behaviour based on the approach most appropriate for the individual family. Some approaches recommend parents avoid discussing the behaviour for several hours to a day afterward. The parent may benefit from specialist advice on how to manage these conversations, and when to engage in them.



Sample Safety Plan

Note: this is an example only – your own safety plan will be UNIQUE for your family/home

Emergency Contacts



Local Police: 555-6060 (Ask for female officer)

CAS: 777-8999

Uncle Dave: 111-2222

Mobile Crisis: 233-3322 (Ask for Crisis Nurse)

Family Value Statement



Everyone in this home—including all people and animals living in the home or who visit the home—has a right to feel and to be safe: No screaming, hitting, shoving, punching, throwing objects, breaking things, etc.

Internal coping tactics

- Take space or time apart
- Go to their room
- Draw at the table
- Stop and Breathe

Warning Signs



(Thoughts, images, moods, behaviours that signal a crisis may be about to occur).

Examples: Starting to feel angry or yell, swear, call people names, threaten, break things, touch others without consent, etc.

If Child/Teen Does Not “Take Space,” Caregiver will:

- Tell Child to stop in firm, clear voice
- Go to bedroom, basement, etc.
- Remind Child that they will call the police if behaviour does not stop after X number of warnings.

Making the environment safe



- Remove sharp knives
- Glassware moved to top shelves only
- Medicine is locked up

If Child/Teen Does Not “Take Space,” other children in the home will:

- Go to bedroom, basement (safespace) if they do not feel safe or parents says code word
- Wait for Parent
- Call for Help

People/tactics that can provide distraction



- Grandma calling
- Neighbour stopping by
- Initiating snack time



Emergency Contacts



AFCCA TIPSHEETS

Safety Plan Template

**Note:*

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