Safe and Together™ Model Practice Tool

Mapping Survivors’ Protective Capacities

**Step 1: Describing the Survivor’s Full Spectrum of Efforts to Promote the Safety and Well-Being of Children**

- List everything that is known about the survivor’s actions to protect and safeguard the children\(^1\)

- List everything that is known about the survivor’s actions to minimize the impact of the perpetrator’s behaviors on the children\(^2\)

- List the survivor’s parenting strengths\(^3\)

---

\(^1\) The actions can also be called safety plans. These actions may include: removing the children from the room, having a code word with the children, standing between the perpetrator and the children, developing plans with the school or family members to prevent the perpetrator from getting them, having the children stay with another person or many other active protective efforts.

\(^2\) Some examples may include: talking with the children about their experiences and feelings, maintaining stability for the children, getting the children into therapy, getting the children into an activity/sport, defending the children, saying positive things to and about the children.

\(^3\) Some examples may include: has consistent rules, routines and discipline, nurtures the children, the children and the survivor have a clear attachment, provides financially for the children, ensures the children’s needs (food, education, shelter, clothing, medical treatment) are taken care of, provides fun for the children, supports the children’s social development, provides love for the children.
• List the survivor’s strengths, resources, other protective efforts*

• List what is unknown about the survivor’s full spectrum of efforts to promote the safety and well-being of the children. Develop a plan for finding out about these efforts:

Step Two: Implications for Practice

• Are the survivor’s protective efforts contextualized by the perpetrator’s pattern of coercive control?*
  
  No ☐  Yes ☐  Unknown ☐  More information needed ☐

• Is the survivor’s full spectrum of efforts to promote the safety of well-being documented?
  
  No ☐  Yes ☐

• Has the system worked to partner with the survivor as a general practice?
  
  No ☐  Yes ☐  Unknown ☐  More information needed ☐

---

4 Some examples may include: having a support network; maintaining family or social relationships; using formal resources like therapists, advocates or law enforcement for support; actions taken by the survivor to protect herself from abuse; acting as a positive role model for the children; maintaining employment; obtaining state assistance; working with housing or other systems to provide stability for the family; knowing what is safest for her family.

5 For example, if a perpetrator threatened to kill the survivor if she went to get a court order, then getting a court order would not be looked at as a protective effort contextualized by the perpetrator’s behavior. If, however, a perpetrator had threatened to take the children away from the survivor if she tells anyone what he’s done, then if she denies the abuse while the perpetrator is present, that would be a protective effort contextualized by the perpetrator’s behavior.
• Are services coordinated and designed to support the needs of survivors specifically in promoting the safety and well-being of children?

No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

Step Three: Fact Based/Strength Based Versus Failure to Protect Practice

• Is case practice with the survivor built around strengths and facts rather than on “failure to protect”?  

No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

• Write a statement that will be in the case narrative documenting the concern about the safety and risk for the children in a fact based, strengths based manner (If the concern is domestic violence, the facts should include the perpetrator’s pattern of coercive control and the survivor’s active protective efforts): 

6 Practice based on “failure to protect” would include documenting survivor’s decision making as the safety concern for children rather than documenting the perpetrator’s pattern as the safety concern. “Failure to protect” based practice also would include filing petitions on or removing children from the survivor based on the relationship status, the survivor’s feelings/love toward the perpetrator or the survivor’s refusal to get a court order for protection. Strengths based practice would include documenting the survivor’s strengths and protective capacity and contextualizing the survivor’s behaviors based on what we know about the perpetrator’s pattern of behaviors. Fact based and strengths based practice would mean that removals of children or petitions filed in court would be focused on perpetrators’ specific pattern of behaviors and risk to children’s safety.

7 An example: Despite Ms. Smith’s best efforts, Mr. Smith continues to threaten the safety of the children by threatening, harassing and using the children as a weapon. Ms. Smith is working to safe guard the children from these behaviors by varying their travel route so he cannot follow, listening to calls between the children and their father and then talking to the children about how they feel about his calls, and maintaining stability for the children by keeping a consistent routine, set of rules and expectations educationally and behaviorally.
Step Four: Gender Responsive Assessment and Intervention

• Is the perpetrator held to a high parenting standard, equal to that of the survivor?
  No ☐  Yes ☐  Unknown ☐  More information needed ☐
  o If the answer is no, unknown or more information needed, develop a plan to set higher or more equal parenting standards for the perpetrator:

  o If the answer is yes, list the parenting expectations, roles and strengths of the perpetrator:

• Is the survivor given credit for actual parenting and protective capacity, regardless of gender expectations of her parenting?
  No ☐  Yes ☐  Unknown ☐  More information needed ☐
  • If there is more information needed, develop a plan for assessing for and documenting the survivor’s parenting in a gender responsive manner:
Step Four: Identifying Protective Efforts/Safety Planning

- Has the domestic violence survivor been able to build and maintain close bonds with the children despite the perpetrator’s efforts to disrupt or interfere with those bonds?
  
  No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

- What are the specific strategies the survivor has engaged in to comfort the children regarding the domestic violence and related stressors?\(^8\)
  
  No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

- Has child protection had a strengths-based conversation with the survivor about her safety planning/actions taken to protect the children?
  
  No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

- Has child protection identified (check all that apply):
  
  - The survivor’s ability to articulate or identify what the perpetrator is like/does prior to using violence?\(^9\)
  - Actions the survivor has taken in the past to protect herself and/or the children that the survivor identified as helpful?
  - Actions the survivor has taken in the past to attempt to protect herself and/or the children that the survivor identified as NOT helpful?
  - Actions the survivor plans to take to protect herself and/or the children moving forward?

- If the survivor’s plans and past actions have not been identified, develop a plan to learn about these actions:

---

\(^8\) Stressors can include the perpetrator being out of the house, the children missing the perpetrator, housing instability, living in shelter, witnessing the perpetrator’s arrest, missing family or friends, changing schools, etc.

\(^9\) Some examples of what survivors may identify include: the perpetrator’s voice raising, the perpetrator criticizing specific things, the perpetrator turning red in the face, the perpetrator turning pale, the perpetrator blinking a lot, etc. These can be varied and specific to the perpetrator’s pattern.
• Are the agency’s expectations of the survivor reasonable? Could they be accomplished by any person in a similar circumstance?

  No ☐  Yes ☐  Unknown ☐  More information needed ☐

Step Five: Partnering with Survivors

• Does the survivor know how child protection has identified her strengths, protective and parenting efforts?

  No ☐  Yes ☐  Unknown ☐  More information needed ☐

• List the survivor’s strengths, protective efforts and parenting efforts that should be validated by child protection:

• Develop a plan for partnering with the survivor and how you think that plan may benefit the agency (be specific if there are opportunities for specific statements or conversations that can be had with the survivor):\(^\text{10}\)

---

\(^\text{10}\) An example: I plan to meet with mom and tell her that I see how hard she's working to protect the children and that we consider it a strength that she has been able to keep them safe to this point. In return, as an agency I expect that having this conversation will lead to better conversations about how she can work with us to safeguard the children. Specifically, I will tell mom that despite dad's behavior, she has managed to keep the children in school, physically healthy and respectful.
Step Six: Collaborating with Domestic Violence Advocacy Agencies and Other Providers

• Is the survivor engaged in any services or with any provider?
  No □ Yes □ Unknown □ More information needed □

• Have we, in child protection, informed advocates or other providers about our assessment of the survivor's strengths and protective capacity?
  No □ Yes □ Unknown □ More information needed □

• Have we had conversations with providers or advocates about the survivor’s issues and needs without blaming the survivor for the perpetrator's choices?
  No □ Yes □ Unknown □ More information needed □

Step Seven: Assessing Parental Protective Capacity in Survivors and Perpetrators

Nurturance and attachment:

• Does the survivor demonstrate a strong bond with the children?
  No □ Yes □ Unknown □ More information needed □

• Does the perpetrator demonstrate a strong bond with the children?
  No □ Yes □ Unknown □ More information needed □

• Has the perpetrator interfered with the survivor's bond with the children/ the children's attachment to the survivor?
  No □ Yes □ Unknown □ More information needed □

Knowledge of Parenting:

• Does the survivor demonstrate knowledge of parenting skills, child development and/or children’s needs?
  No □ Yes □ Unknown □ More information needed □

• Does the perpetrator demonstrate knowledge of parenting skills, child development and/or children’s needs?
  No □ Yes □ Unknown □ More information needed □

11 It is important to separate survivors and perpetrators out in assessment and documentation. In many instance, survivors’ strengths exist despite perpetrators' efforts to interfere with survivors’ parenting. Assessing survivors’ strengths can also give additional information about perpetrators' patterns of coercive control and their own parenting capacity.
No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

• Does the perpetrator demonstrate respect for the survivor’s parenting skills?

No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

Accessing Supports:

• Does the survivor have access to formal (employment, transportation, services) or informal (family, friends, place of faith) supports?

No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

• Does the perpetrator have access to formal (employment, transportation, services) or informal (family, friends, place of faith) supports?

No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown ☐ More information needed ☐

• Has the perpetrator interfered with the survivor’s access to formal or informal supports?