DCYF Safety Framework
&
Lessons learned from the Tort perspective

Child Welfare, DCYF

Revised Date: April 19, 2022
Child Welfare Programs Division | Approved for distribution by Jasmine Hodges, Safety Program Manager

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Learning Objectives for this presentation

- Become familiar with **terminology** and definitions used throughout the DCYF safety framework.
- Understand the **purpose** of each step within the safety framework
- Learning from what has **worked well** from a legal **tort** perspective.

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What is the purpose of having a Child Safety Framework?

- Informs and guides child safety decisions throughout the life of a case

- Provides precise language and clear definitions

- Strengthens child safety assessment and planning

- Will guide appropriate placement decisions using critical thinking and standardized tools to reduce bias.

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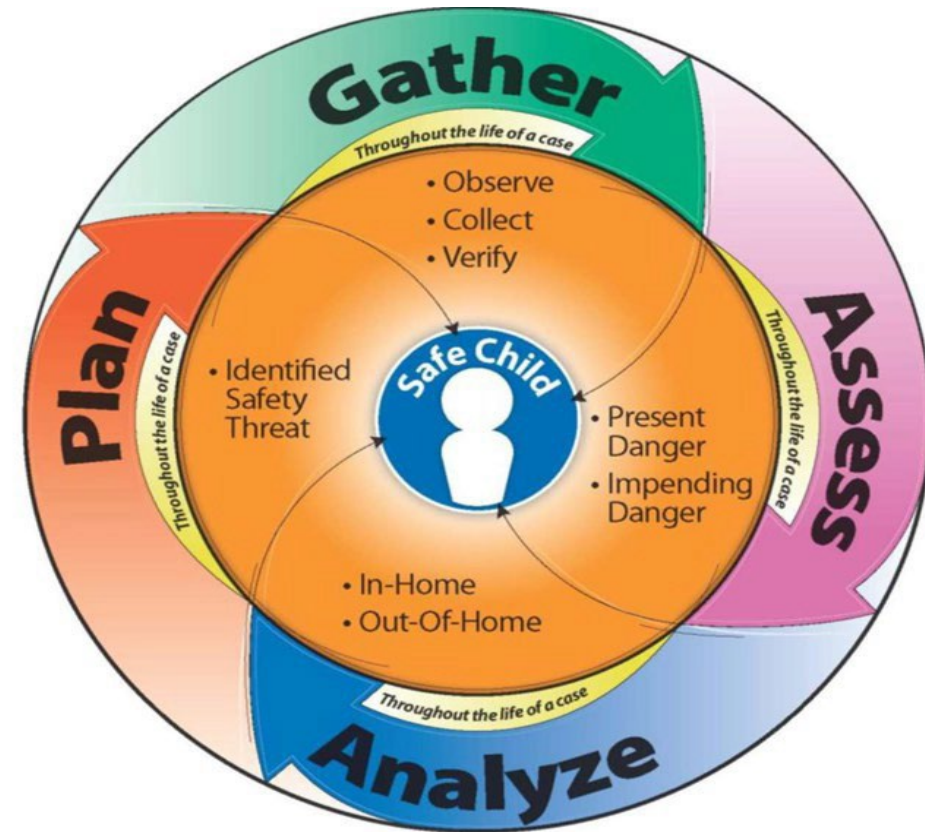
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Child Safety Framework is continuous & fluid

This graphic provides a high level overview of how professionals in all program area continually assess safety throughout the life of a case.

Gather

Assess

Analyze

Plan

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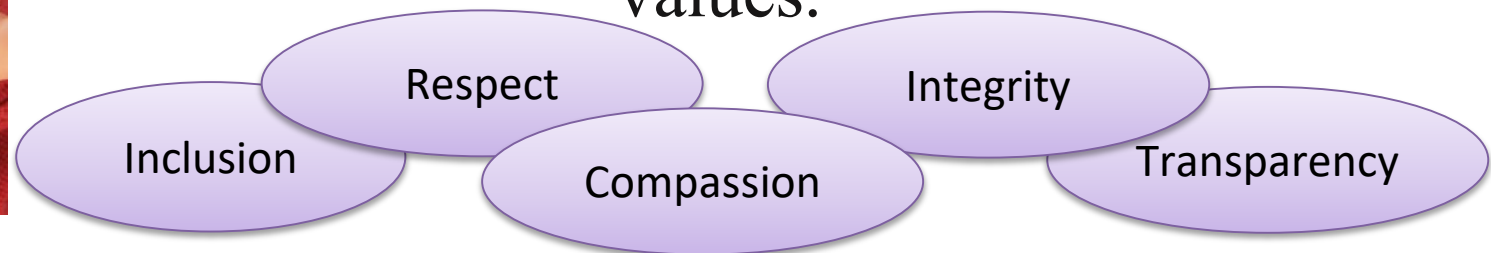Washington State Department of
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Strengthening Child Safety Practice

Child safety is DCYF's first priority and must be assessed continuously throughout the life of a case

Discussions about safety can be hard. DCYF is committed to a standardized framework to reduce bias and increase critical thinking while honoring agency values.

Respect

Integrity

Inclusion

Compassion

Transparency

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Child Safety

Children are **SAFE** when there are no *present* danger or *impending* danger threats *OR* the caregiver's protective capacities control all known safety threats

Children are **UNSAFE** when they are vulnerable to present or impending danger *AND* caregivers are unable or unwilling to provide protection

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Maltreatment

of

RISK

The likelihood (chance, potential, prospect) for parenting behavior that is harmful and destructive to a child's cognitive, social, emotional and/or physical development and those with parenting responsibility are unwilling or unable to behave differently.

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Risk Factors and Safety Issues

- **Risk Factor:** A situation that can be linked with a harmful result over time.
- **Safety Issue:** A situation that is linked with a major harmful result in the near future.

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Present Danger

Present danger is *immediate*, *significant*, and clearly observable *severe harm* or *threat of severe harm* occurring in the present

Present Danger is assessed at every contact DCYF has with a child.

Present Danger

✓Immediate and significant
✓Clearly observable
✓Occurring in the present
✓Child **MUST** be protected from the present danger
✓Child may or may not need ongoing protection – Assess for Impending Danger

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Impending Danger

Parenting **behavior** that is harmful and destructive to a child's cognitive, social, emotional or physical development *that is likely to occur in the immediate or near future* that **could result in** one or more of the following outcomes:

- ✗ Serious or severe harm
- ✗ Injury requiring medical attention
- ✗ Life endangering illness
- ✗ Death

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Present Danger

Present Danger threats are controlled by immediate protective actions

Protective Action Plans are limited in scope and time; we do not have all the information but we cannot walk away without taking action

Impending Danger

Impending Danger threats are controlled by safety plans

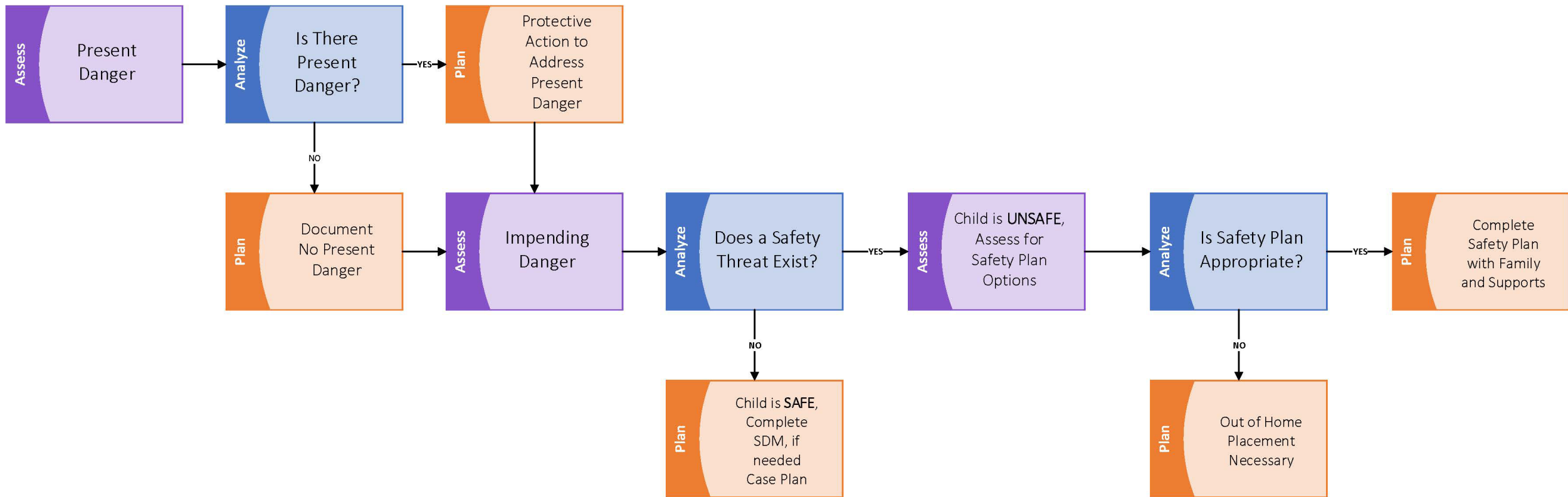Safety plans are developed with families and other child safety supports

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Protective Capacities

Behavioral, cognitive and **emotional** characteristics that can *specifically* and *directly* be associated with a **person's ability** and **willingness** to care and keep a child safe.

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DCYF Safety Framework

Assess — Present Danger → **Analyze** — Is There Present Danger?

- YES → **Plan** — Protective Action to Address Present Danger
- NO → **Plan** — Document No Present Danger

→ **Assess** — Impending Danger → **Analyze** — Does a Safety Threat Exist?

- YES → **Assess** — Child is **UNSAFE**, Assess for Safety Plan Options → **Analyze** — Is Safety Plan Appropriate?
  - YES → **Plan** — Complete Safety Plan with Family and Supports
  - NO → **Plan** — Out of Home Placement Necessary
- NO → **Plan** — Child is **SAFE**, Complete SDM, if needed Case Plan

Task	Purpose
Gathering Information (6)	Comprehensive information required to complete a global assessment, identify impending danger and develop quality plans
Identification of Safety Threat (17)	To identify the domain of concern which will help support specific catered plans to mitigate the threat to safety
Identification of Threshold Criteria (5)	To identify if a child is UNSAFE and is in impending danger
Safety Plan Analysis (4)	To assess information gathered to determine if an unsafe child is able to remain in the home with a safety plan

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Child Safety Framework

GATHER → Assess → Analyze → PLAN

Throughout the Life of Every Case

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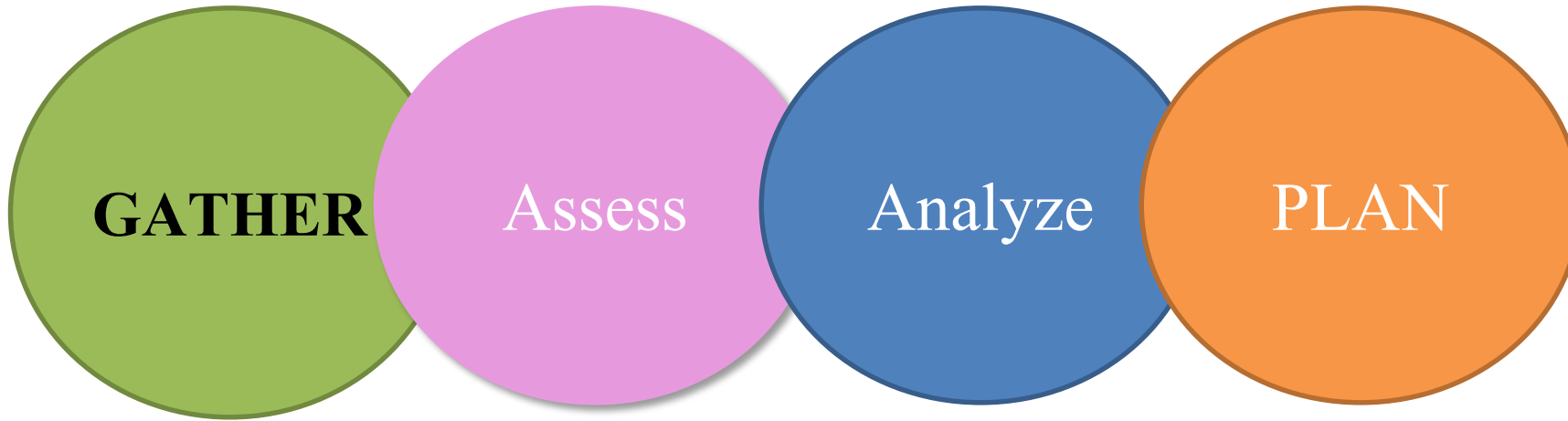
Gathering Information

The Child Safety Framework uses six areas of focus when gathering information.

1. Extent of maltreatment
2. Circumstances accompanying the maltreatment
3. Child functioning
4. Parenting disciplines
5. Parenting practices
6. Parent daily functions (outside of the role of parental unit)

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Gathering Information

Safety Assessment

Case plan

Risk Assessment

Extent of maltreatment

Circumstances Accompanying

Child Functioning

Parenting Disciplines

Parenting Practices

Parent Daily Functions
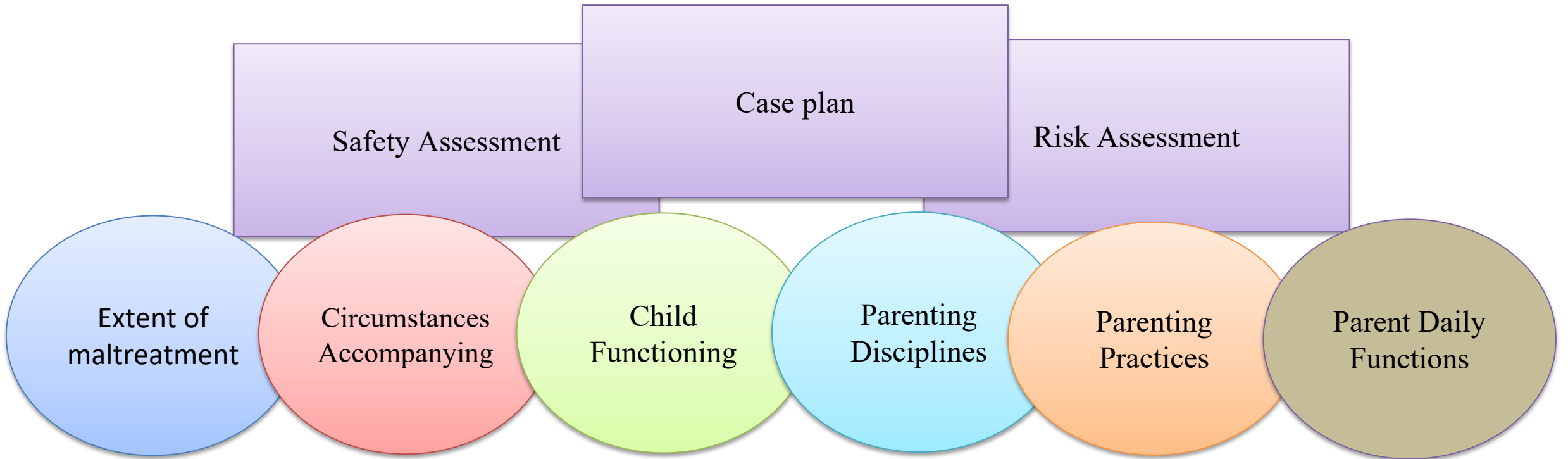
The same information is used to capture a global assessment around safety, risk and case planning needs.

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Child Safety Framework

Gather **ASSESS** Analyze PLAN

Throughout the Life of Every Case

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Safety Threat

DCYF currently has 17 safety threats defining different categories related to…

Family *behavior*, *conditions* or *circumstances* that create **present** or **immediate danger** resulting in *severe impacts* on the child.

Safety Plans

Case plans

Protective Action plans
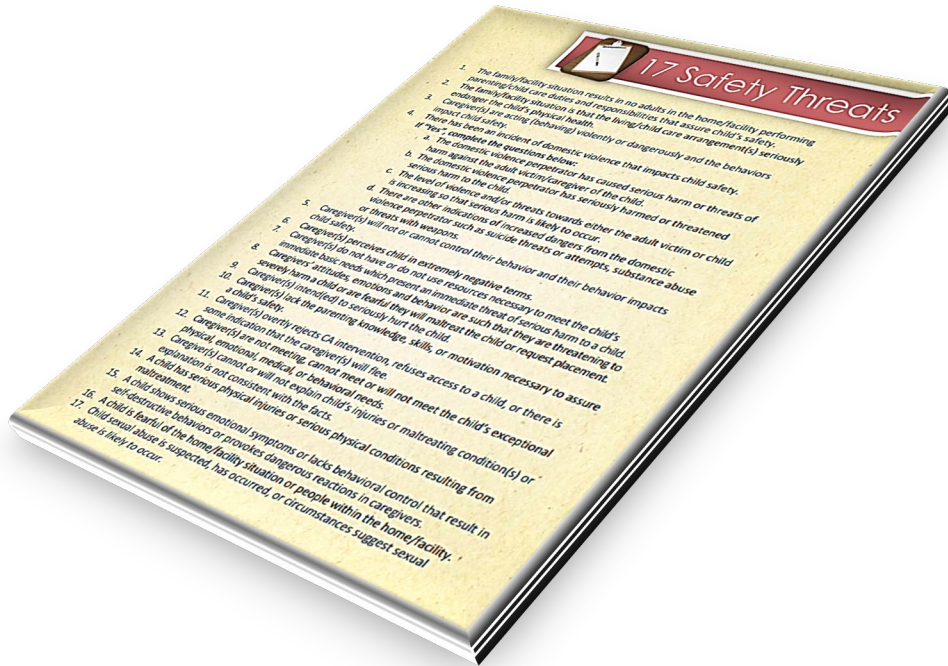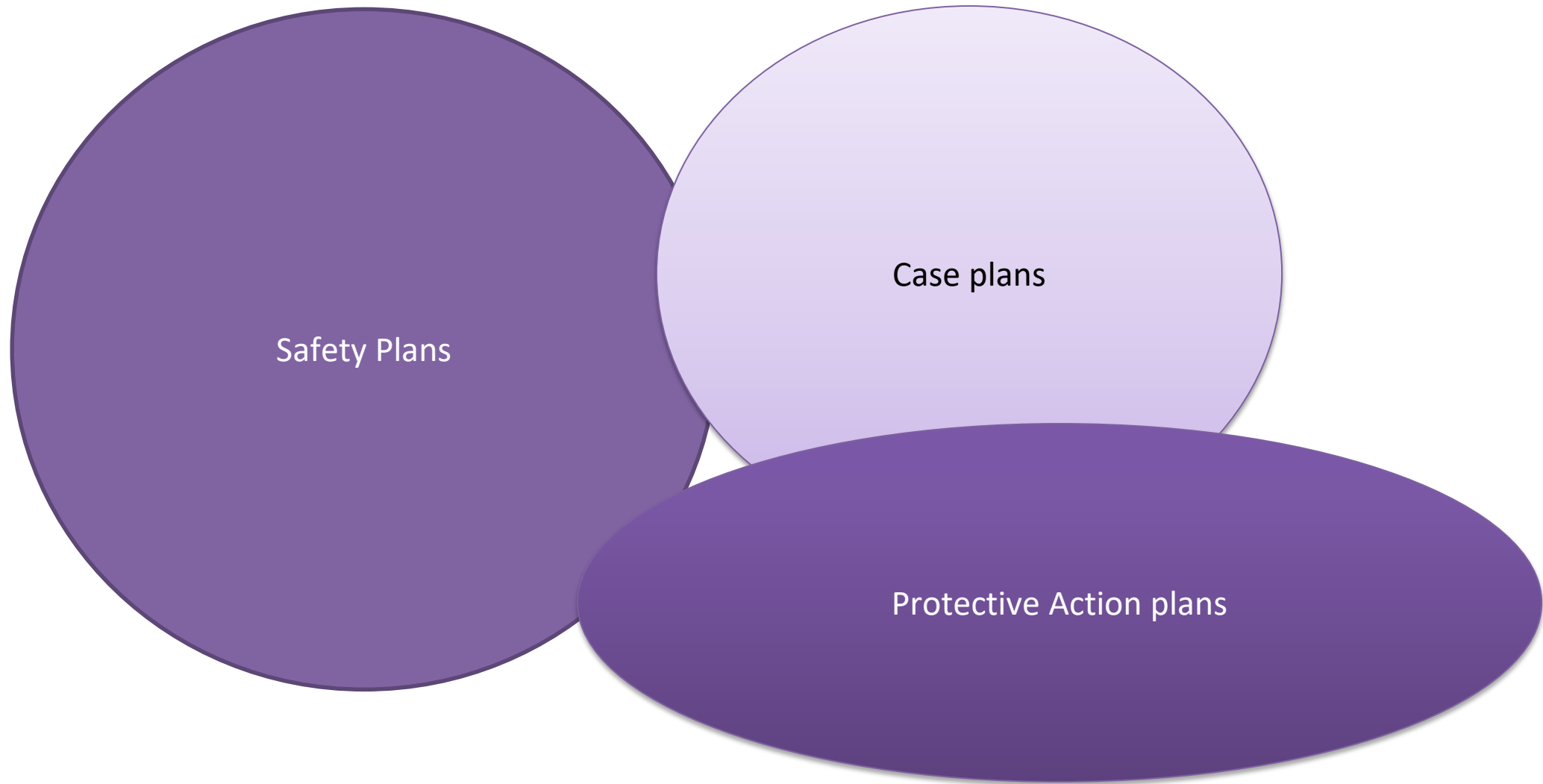
Safety Threshold

In order to determine that a threat exists, the following five criteria must be met:

1. Severe impacts on the child
2. Occurring immediate or in the near future
3. Out of control
4. Vulnerable child
5. Observable and specific

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Child Safety Framework

Gather → Assess → ANALYZE → PLAN

Throughout the Life of Every Case

Child Safety Framework

Gather → Assess → Analyze → **PLAN**

Throughout the Life of Every Case

Safety Plan Analysis

Assess: Child is **UNSAFE**, Assess for Safety Plan Options

Analyze: Unable to In-Home Safety Plan

Analyze: In-Home Safety Plan Appropriate

Plan: Out of Home Placement Necessary to Manage Safety Threat

Plan: Complete Safety Plan

Plan: Case Plan Include Protective Capacities, Child's Needs & Safety Services

The Safety Plan Analysis is based on a guide that delves into four different domains:

- **There is a parent/caregiver or adult in the home.**
- **The home is calm enough to allow safety providers to function in the home.**
- **The adults in the home agree to cooperate with and allow an In-Home Safety Plan**
- **Sufficient, appropriate, reliable resources are available and willing to provide safety services and tasks.**

Safety Plans

➢ Have an immediate effect, are accessible, and contain safety services and actions only.

➢ Will not be based on promissory commitment.

➢ Are developed with the family and are objective, clear, and understood by everyone.

➢ Control or manage impending danger threats to the child.

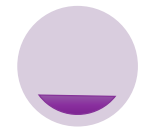➢ Can be in-home or result in removal (out-of-home).
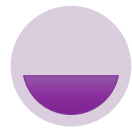
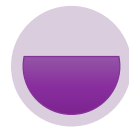What role can you plan in safety planning?

Child Welfare Overview FY 2021

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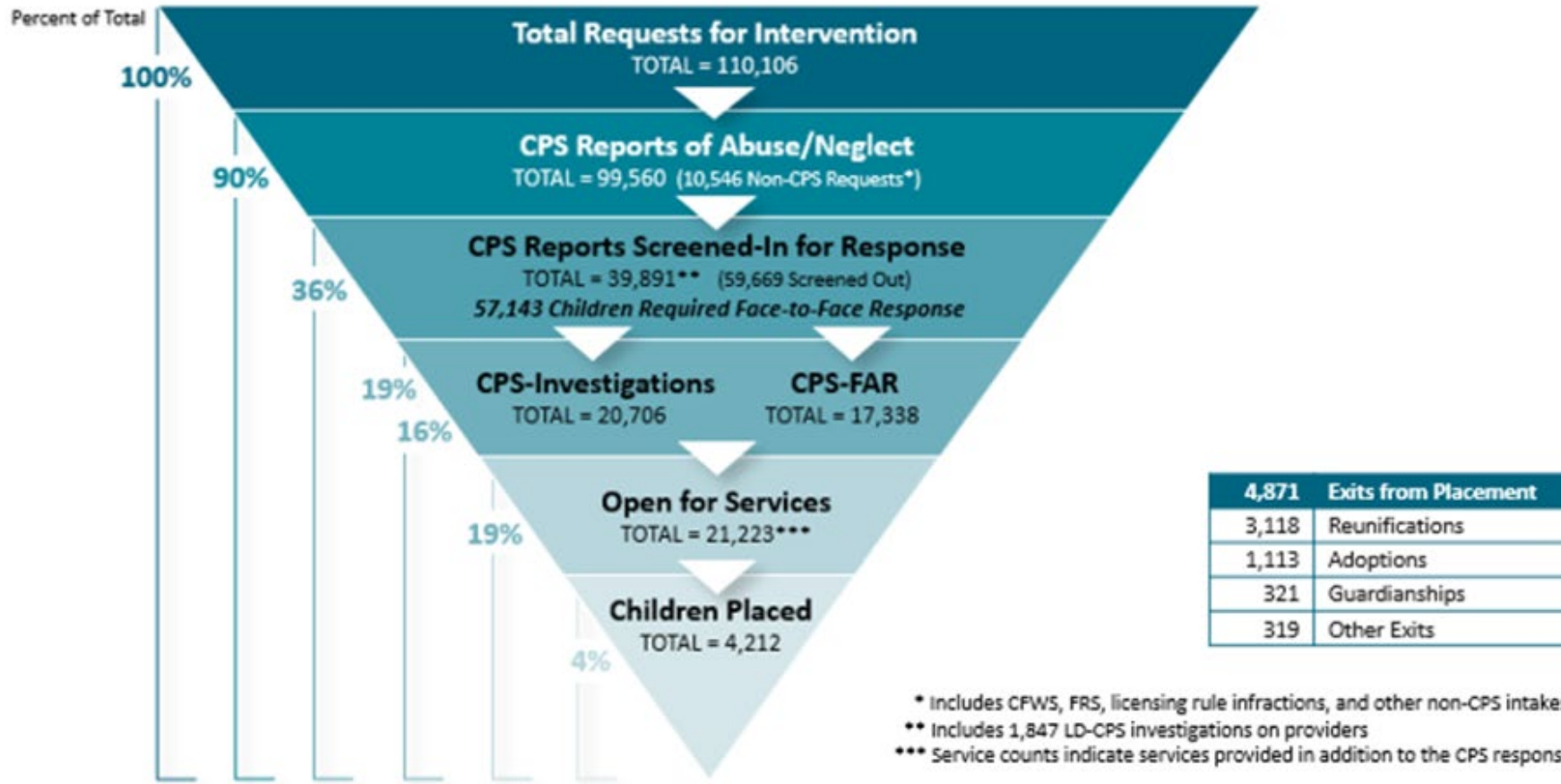
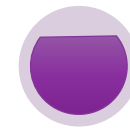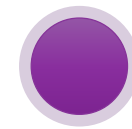# Using Safety Framework to Identify Imminent Physical Harm

Concern about Safety

Conduct a Global Assessment

Impending Danger Identified

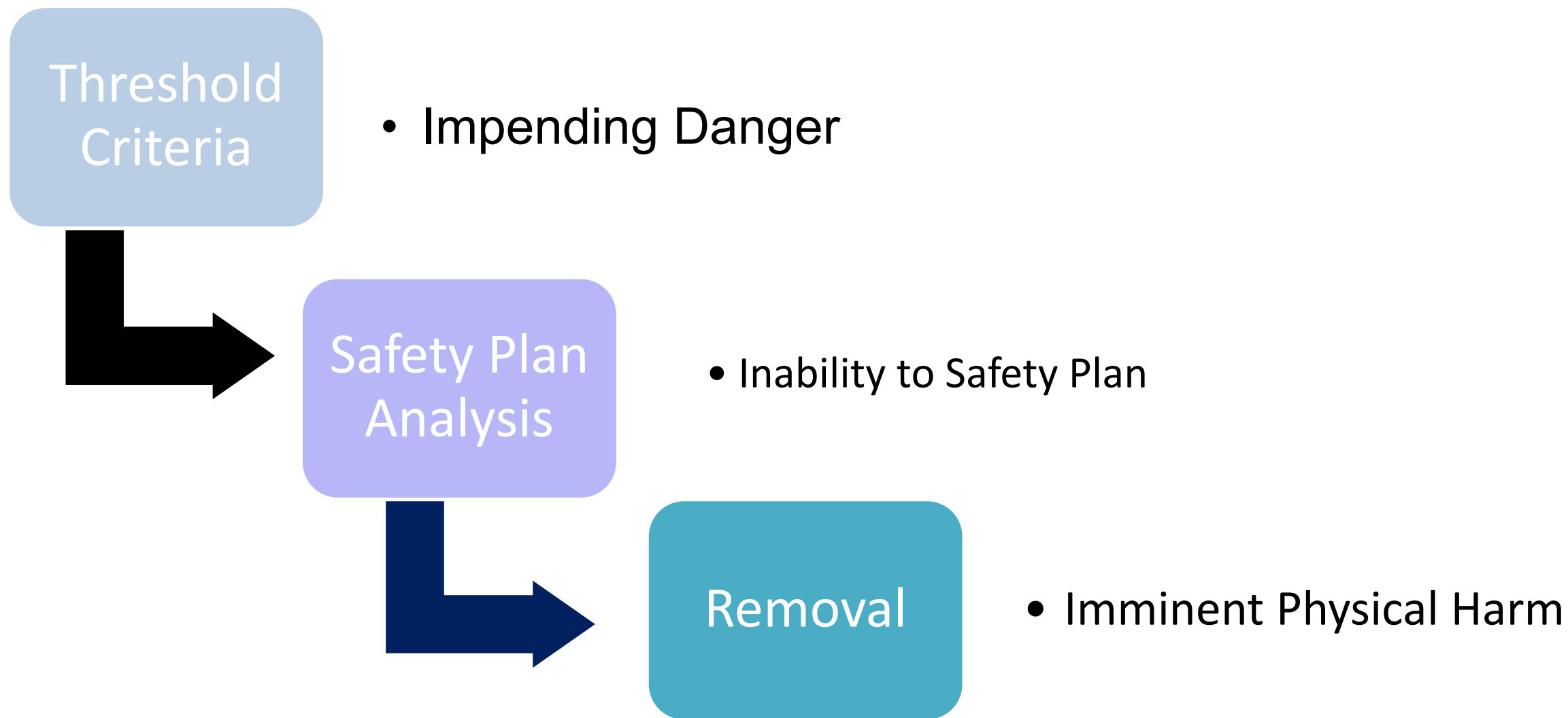Threshold Criteria Met

Safety Plan Analysis

Does not meet threshold criteria - SAFE

Threshold Criteria Not Met

Build a case plan depending on level of risk and service needs

**Need to remove
We can articulate imminent physical harm and the casual relationship**

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Threshold Criteria

- Impending Danger

Safety Plan Analysis

- Inability to Safety Plan

Removal

- Imminent Physical Harm

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Thank you!

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