

ENGAGING FAMILIES

Making Visits Matter



FIELD GUIDE

Department of Children and Families
Division of Youth and Family Services



ENGAGING OUTCOMES



Engaging skills demonstrate the ability to...

Develop trusting relationships with families by demonstrating genuineness, empathy, respect, and competence by utilizing key skills and techniques to develop these core competencies.

Develop an effective working agreement. Effectiveness means that the family and worker agree on the family's problem, and underlying need that must be addressed to resolve the problem, as well as their roles and responsibilities.

Identify the family's functional strengths and underlying needs.

Use a solution focused approach.

Identify, engage and prepare family members and their identified supports to work together.

*see kids
not just
as they are...*

*but as strong as their
families can become.*

CORE CONDITIONS

GENUINENESS

Make sure your nonverbal behavior, voice tone and verbal responses match and are congruent.

Communicating trustworthiness and acceptance

Being able to express yourself naturally without artificial behaviors

Being open and receptive

Be Yourself!

EMPATHY

Recognizing the person's experience, feelings and nonverbal communication

Communicating with words your understanding of the person's experience

*Communicating with empathy
results in more openness in people!*

RESPECT

Communicating warmth

Showing commitment

Recognizing and using a
person's strengths

Being open-minded

COMPETENCE

Listening

Commitment

Making progress toward goal

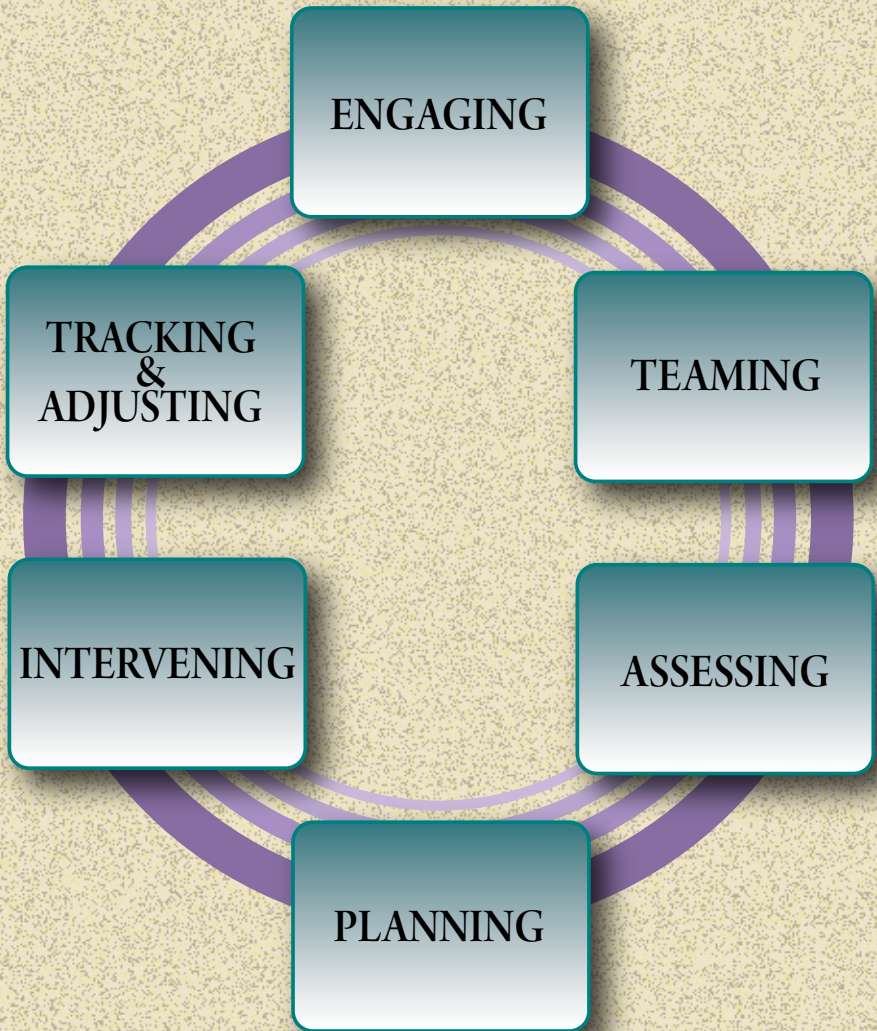
Follow-through

Being open-minded

Being knowledgeable

Providing and welcoming feedback

PRACTICE WHEEL



What is...

Engaging: Effectively establishing a relationship with children, parents, and essential individuals for the purpose of sustaining the work that is to be accomplished together.

Teaming: Assembling, becoming a member of or leading a group to bring needed resources to the critical issues of children and families. Realizing that child welfare is a community effort and requires a team.

Assessing: Obtaining information about events that brought the families into our services and the underlying needs that drive concerning behavior. Looking for issues and strengths within the children and within the families. Determining the ability, willingness, and availability of resources for achieving safety, permanence, and well-being for children.

Planning: Tailoring the planning process to each child and family, including the design of steps that move children and families to a better level functioning. Assessing circumstances, resources, making decisions on direction, evaluating plan effectiveness, reworking as necessary, celebrating successes and facing consequences of setbacks.

Intervening: Interceding with actions that decrease risk, provide for safety, promote permanence, and establish well-being. Skills may range from finding housing to changing a deeply embedded, multi-generational pattern of thinking and behaving.

Tracking and Adjusting: Maintaining a level of diligence and attention to the family, the team, and planned interventions to assure that all actions are effectively addressing child and family needs and are incrementally moving the child and family towards safety, permanency stability, and well-being for the short and long term view.

STEPS FOR WORKING WITH RESISTANCE

“Resistance is a predictable and natural emotional reaction to feeling forced to change or when facing difficult issues. Resistance occurs as a response to feeling vulnerable, out of control and threatened by change”.

Step 1: Recognize the Cues

Identify the form of resistance.

Identify the emotions you feel in reaction to the form of resistance.

Be aware of the nonverbal messages.

Trust your own feelings and accept them as cue.

Step 2: Manage your emotions and reactions

Examine your emotions and select ways you can manage them effectively.

Remind yourself resistance is a normal response.

Do not take the expression of resistance personally.

Identify the positive intent.

Step 3: Reflect the form of resistance you observe and allow silence

Use reflection to state in a neutral way the form of resistance you are seeing and hearing.

Use “I” messages such as, “When I asked about the affect of your drinking on the children, I notice you change the subject”.

Then fall silent and allow this reflection to “echo” for them.

Step 4: Use active listening and empathic reflection to help them discuss their vulnerability

Now is the time to be quiet and help the person more clearly discuss their feelings of vulnerability or their concerns about control.

Use your empathy, active listening, attending, reframing, and clarification, which will enable the person to explore their vulnerability. Ex., “If it were true that your drinking has had a negative affect on your child, what would that mean to you?”

DEVELOPING A WORKING AGREEMENT

Step 1: Personal Expression

In this step, you will express how you feel about being with the person(s). A personal disclosure will convey your genuine interest in resolving or addressing the issue at hand. It is effective modeling to take the risk to express emotions.

Step 2: Understanding the Problem

In this step, you will express what you view as the immediate issues to be addressed. Your understanding of the problem can help you develop empathy if you and the family members view the problem in a similar way. If there is not full agreement about the problem, it opens the discussion so that reflections or other interpersonal helping skills can be used to gain clarity and mutual understanding.

Step 3: State What You Want and What You Can Provide and,

Step 4: Have Others State What They Want and What They Can Provide

This is the time when you will clarify what you want from family members and what you are willing to provide. You will also clarify what the family members want from you and are willing to offer you. Where you start will be based on previous work with family members. Sometimes you may want to start by asking, “What is it that you want from me?” Or you may want to be more directive and tell them what you can provide and what you want from them. So you need to decide which comes first, Step 3 or Step 4.

Step 5: Gain Agreement

In this step you clarify with family members what steps and tasks will be done and by whom. If there are things you want from them that they cannot provide, this should be clear. If there are things they would like from you and you cannot provide that should be clarified.

tasks in the process of change

Following are some tasks that a worker or support person can do to assist a child, parent or caregiver with each stage and to empower them to achieve and maintain their desired behavior.

Stage 1: Clearly Defining the Problem/Need

- Ask each person to describe their perspective of the problem/need. Observe the family member at times when the problem occurs (if possible).
- Provide feedback to the person about your observations.
- Help family members see discrepancies among what they say, and what they do and the outcomes they want and the outcomes they are getting.
- Help the family member define a vision for their desired change.

Stage 2: Ending and Loss

- Specifically describe what needs to change.
- Examine secondary changes and their effects.
- Determine who will lose what or what each person will have to let go. Acknowledge the losses.
- Expect and give permission to grieve.
- Try to find ways to compensate for the losses.

Stage 3: Ambivalent Discomfort Zone

- Recognize and normalize feelings.
- Examine the ambivalent feelings about the change and address ways of managing the pull toward old behaviors.
- Identify and use strong role models to guide the individual forward.
- Describe and view the situation from a positive perspective.
- Select small steps and implement small incremental steps.

Stage 4: Practicing the Desired Behavior

- Specify with the team exactly what new behaviors will be practiced.
- Recognize that people will be ready to commit to the new balance at their own pace.
- Reinforce in a variety of ways the purpose behind achieving their desired outcome.
- Reiterate problems experienced; plan in case a relapse occurs.

Stage 5: Maintaining the Desired Behavior

- Revise the plan for change so it focuses on support and reinforcement of the desired change.
- Empower people to take a more active role.
- Identify ways to lessen your role while assuring that progress for the family continues.
- Help the person determine ways to use their informal and formal supports on an ongoing basis.
- Put steps or supports in place to recognize the risks for regression or relapse to the old behaviors and identify a back-up safety plan in case relapse occurs.
- Help the person develop the new skills that may be necessary to maintain their behavior.

LET'S GET ENGAGED

Optimum Distribution of Skills



- Formulating Options
- Suggestions
- Strengths & Needs
- Based Feedback
- Professional Advice

- Attending
- Recognizing Strengths
- Encouraging Expression of Feelings
- Validation
- Conciliatory Gestures
- Ventilation
- Reflection
- Normalization & Universalization
- Self-Disclosure
- Objectivity

- Summarization
- Clarification
- Questions:
 - Open
 - Closed
 - Indirect
 - Solution Focused
- Concreteness
- Reframing

eliciting solutions when tracking and adjusting plans with parents

- ① **Build on a shared vision.** Start with the places of strong agreement and resonance between yourself and the family. Be able to point to times when the family demonstrated strengths related to this area of the work they have been doing. Help the family see that tracking and adaptation is a shared process to insure that the family goals for the children are met.
- ② **Identify what has gone according to plan.** Again, even if it means going non-sequentially through the plan, identify what has worked and gone well. Help the parent and/or caregivers operate from a sense of efficacy and success which can give them strength and openness to look at where the plan has gone awry.
- ③ **Be honest about the areas that are tough.** Acknowledge the barriers to successfully overcoming such issues as substance abuse, trauma recovery, mental illness, cognitive and developmental challenges. Help the family normalize relapse and failings as part of the process and as understandable.
- ④ **Create and recreate a shared commitment to live up to the children's needs, even when it means re-visioning the original plan.** Acknowledging that while normal, some relapses and vulnerabilities may exact too high a price from children which can help parents have a deeper commitment to change and a more thorough back-up plan.
- ⑤ **Remind the family that they can create and call upon their "team," even if you don't use formal teaming as practice.** Many of our families spiral downwards because they are afraid to ask for help. Once you know that something is not working, part of the job is to help the parent fix it; the other part is to help the parent find other supports.

simple interviewing techniques to assist with exploration

- ❶ Use open ended, non-leading questions.
- ❷ Ask child to elaborate by saying, “What happened next” or “what did that look like, smell like, etc.
- ❸ Ask for feelings instead of naming them. For example, “What was that like for you?” instead of “That must have been scary.” If children think that you will complete the sentences for them, they may revert to a more passive role. Note: for kids who like to appear tough, the word “feelings” may create resistance. You may try “What did your gut tell you?”
- ❹ If the child is cognitively able to answer, ask questions that incorporate other experiences to get more clarification. For example, “When else have you felt that way?” or “What, if anything, did that remind you of?”
- ❺ Put the child in charge of what s/he shares-formally. For example, “What else do you think I should know?”
- ❻ Allow for silence. Conversations with children about safety and stability are often difficult and children need to pace their conversations with you.
- ❼ Respond to impending “shut down” with exception finding questions. For example, “Was there a time when you thought ‘X’ would happen, but it didn’t? What was different?”
- ❽ Use miracle and minor miracle questions when children cannot or have not articulated their worries. For example, “If a miracle happened and everything was as you would like it, what would that look like? How would you know?”

SOLUTION-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

The Solution-Focused Approach focuses on solutions rather than problems. Focus is on the families' strengths and abilities rather than their weaknesses.

These questions help family members define who, what, why, where, when and how of the problem and the solution.

- What happened when you decided to make this change in your life?
- Under what circumstances is this likely to occur?
- When this happens, what do you do?
- What are the positives for you continuing to stay in this relationship?
- Who else is concerned about this problem in your family?
- What would have to be different for you not to be afraid?
- How often did it happen last week?
- Who was there when it happened?
- Where were you when Johnny had his temper tantrum?
- When you decide to count to 10, what will you do differently?
- How will you make sure that your children are safe in the future?
- Where in the house do you feel most relaxed and calm?
- What part do you agree with and what part do you disagree with?
- What would your child say that he/she likes the most about the changes you've made in your life?

Past Success Questions

Through the interview process, you can focus on a family's past successes, that is, when the family member was functioning well enough not to require child protective services intervention.

- ▶ It's not easy to raise three children on your own. How did you do it?
- ▶ After having been through what you've been through, how did you find enough strength to keep pushing on?
- ▶ What do you need to do so that you'll feel good about yourself and in control of your life again?
- ▶ What would it take for you to bring back the confidence you had when you were in high school?
- ▶ Under what conditions have you been able to make your family safe?
- ▶ How have you been able to change/accomplish things that are important to you before?

Exception Finding Questions

These are the times when problems could have occurred but did not. You and the family need to examine who did what, when, where and how so that the problem did not happen. That information can be used to identify the abilities the family uses successfully.

- ▶ Tell me what is different for you at those times when you don't lose control?
- ▶ Tell me about the times, in recent days, when you could have hit your child (screamed at him, called him names, etc.) but somehow managed to handle it differently?
- ▶ Can you explain to me how you did that?
- ▶ In what other situations have you been able to manage your temper in such a way that you did not have to regret it later?
- ▶ I can see you have every reason to be depressed (upset, angry, disappointed, etc.). When you do suppose you get a little bit less depressed (upset, angry, disappointed, etc.)?
- ▶ How would you say you are different when you are a little less depressed (upset, angry, disappointed, etc.)?
- ▶ You are saying that you didn't drink (scream, hit the children, etc.) for three days last week. How did you do it?
- ▶ What would have to happen for you to do it more often?

Miracle Questions

This question literally asks family members to disregard their current troubles and for a moment imagine what their lives would be like in a successful future. The family can begin to see some hope that life can be different.

- ▶ If you could paint a picture for me of what your family would look like if all this were solved, what would that picture look like?
- ▶ If you had a magic wand and could grant yourself one thing that would solve the problem/meet the need that your family is now facing, what would you wish for?
- ▶ If you had three wishes, what would they be?
- ▶ If the miracle were to happen what would be the first change you notice about yourself?
- ▶ If you were to take these steps to make this change, what would you notice different around your house?

Scaling Questions

These questions can be used to assess self-esteem, self-confidence, investment in change, prioritization of problems, perception of hopefulness, etc.

- ▶ On a scale of 1-10, with 10 meaning you have every confidence that this problem can be solved and 1 meaning no confidence at all, where would you put yourself today?
- ▶ On the same scale, how hopeful are you that this problem can be solved?
- ▶ What would need to be different in your life to move up just one step?

Coping Questions

These questions help you to find the areas of resiliency that support people in troubled times. It also helps to identify the personal strengths and other

- ▶ What has and is making it possible for you to cope?
- ▶ How do you keep making it work for you and your family?
- ▶ I'm sure there are days you want to pack it up and leave. What helps you stay?
- ▶ There are a lot of things people are asking you to do for your children. What helps you meet those demands?
- ▶ How come it's not worse, given all the things you are going through?
- ▶ Wow, how did you do it? It must have been very tough just to get through the week.
How did you manage to stay sober for a whole week, considering all that is happening in your life? How did you find out what to do when having a craving?

examples of strength based questions

For Families

- What were you like as a child?
- Who has had the biggest influence on your life?
- What makes you happy? What is the best time you ever had?
- Who are your closest friends and why are they special to you?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What are the best things about you? Your family? Your neighborhood?
- What do you admire the most about your parents?
- What do you like best about your son/daughter?
- How do you “blow off steam?”
- Describe the best time you ever had with your son/daughter.
- When was that and what was your life like at the time?
- Who helps you out when you’re in a crisis?

For Kids

- What is the best thing you can tell me about yourself?
- What is your favorite color? Subject in school? Sports figure? Musician? Person? Pet?
- Who is your best friend and what would they tell me about you?
- If you could live anywhere, where would you live and why?
- Do you have a favorite pet? What do you like about your pet?
- Name two good things about your family? Your school? Your neighborhood?
- Who in your family are you most like? Why?
- Who do you admire most in your family? Why?
- What do you like to watch on TV? Why?

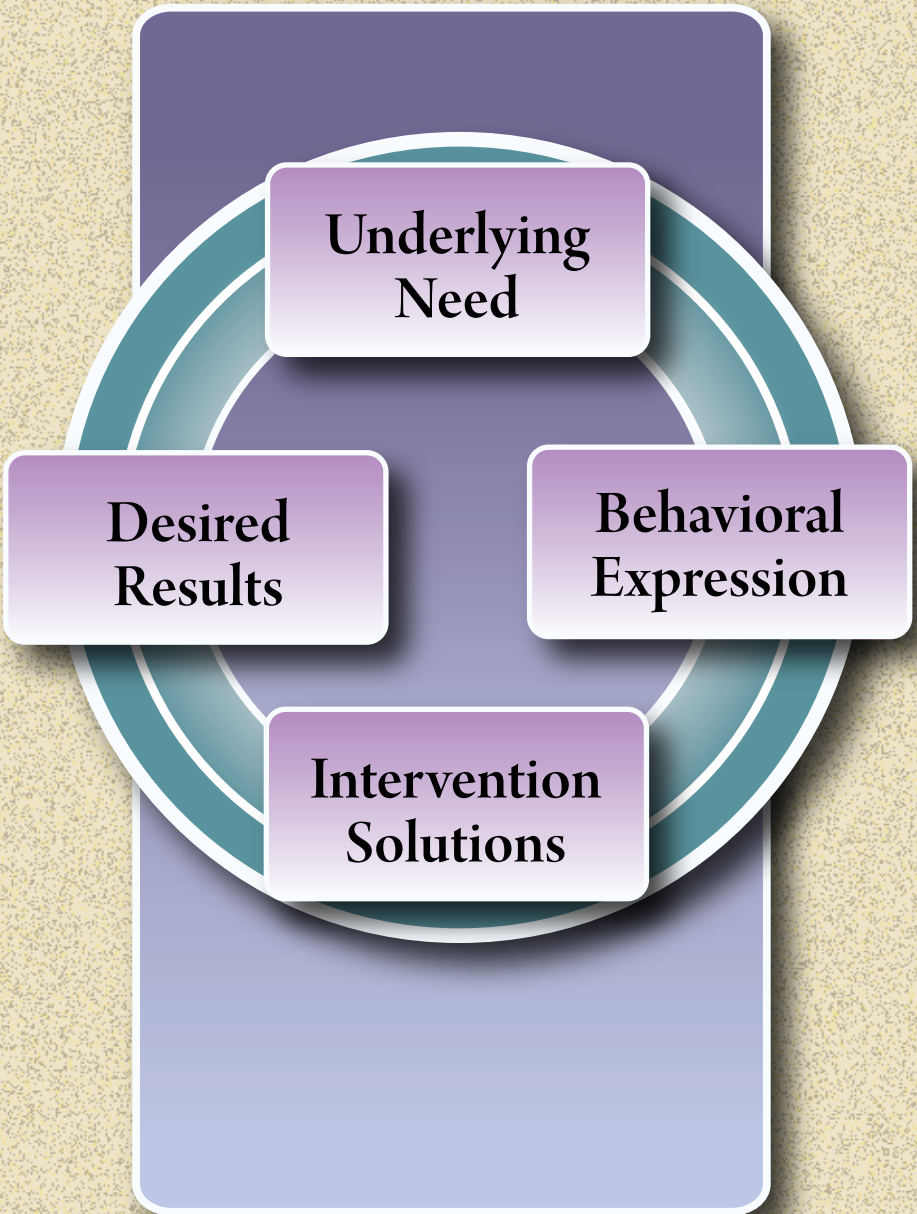
Questions to Help Families Identify Family and Informal Supports

- When (the incident/call/crisis) happened, who was the first person you called?
- Are there family members who have been supportive and helpful over the years?
- It appears you've been able to cope with this situation for a long time. Who have you relied on for help and support?
- Who at your child's school do you trust? What have they done that has been the most helpful?
- Do you have neighbors who are aware of your situation and can help you?
- Are there any activities in your community for your child?
- Was there a professional you worked with who you really felt helped?
- Do you belong to a religious group? Have you ever?
- Would you want some help in order to reconnect with that community?
- Are there any supports/services you would be interested in joining in your community?
- Are there any professionals who you would like to have on the team because of their expertise? Who?
- Does your son or daughter have any friends who they listen to? Could that person be on the team?

Questions to Promote Focus on Safety and Stability

- Ask children to describe what goes well in the family and what could go better or what doesn't go well.
- Using genograms and eco-maps or pictures of the household, have child describe each person to you in detail. Using pictures, also have them describe relationships and how each person expresses feelings, "How do you know when "X" is happy? Sad? Angry?"
- Ask children to describe the things that make them believe that the family will and won't be able to keep working on the things that are difficult for them.
- Ask children how other people can tell if things are going well and how they can know if things are not going well.
- Ask children when they know they belong? How do they know?
- Use Scaling and Comparison Questions. Thinking of how things are now, compared with when we first met or you met your first worker, would you say things are better, worse or some of each? Probe for description.
- Have child rate safety in relative terms. Thinking of the time just before you met your first worker, do you think you and your family are more safe, less safe or some of each? Probe for description.
- Build Safety: Thinking of the items when you have felt like you knew who you could count on, who has really been someone you could trust and turn to? (This also helps build a safety plan for the future).

CYCLE OF NEED



needs and need statements

A need may be a requirement that is essential to all human beings such as the need for shelter, food, affiliation or nurturance. In working with families in planning, a need is often a description of the underlying conditions that are the source of the symptoms or the behavioral expressions of problems that a family may be encountering. Sometimes when we positively reframe problems we get at the need.

Need Statements Are Not

A need statement is not a service or intervention, such as a parenting class or a psychological; it is not a behaviorally specific statement or a statement of the problem; such as “the child is acting in a sexually reactive way” or “the parents use inappropriate discipline methods.” Need statements do not contain time frames, such as “the parent will achieve a recovery lifestyle within two months.” A need statement is not stated negatively, such as “the parent must do this or that or suffer the consequences.”

Possible Need Statements

The children need caregivers who provide discipline and guidance in ways which promote nurturance and attachment.

The children need caregivers who can meet their daily needs for supervision.

The caregivers need to live a recovery lifestyle that will meet the supervision and basic needs of their children.

Mom needs to be able to teach her child things in a positive way.

Dad needs support and guidance to become a more responsible father instead of just a provider.

Mom and Dad need to set limits in ways that are loving and consistent.

Needs for Safety and Caring

To feel loved

To be protected from getting hurt

To get the most out of school

To develop an attachment to at least one adult

To be cared for lovingly and protected from rough handling, abuse or injury

To achieve developmental milestones and age appropriate language skills

To be able to rely on a daily routine

To learn how to ask for what he wants and manage frustration without becoming aggressive

To have supervision that encourages activity without putting himself in danger

windows into child/family life: outcome indicators

SAFETY

Children are, first and foremost, free from child abuse and neglect.

Examples:

- In Home
- In Placement
- Post-Reunification

STABILITY

Children deserve predictable and continuous connections with people, places and things that contribute to their development and identify.

Examples:

- School
- Friendships
- Community
- Caring team of adults to look out for them. (caseworkers, caregivers, relatives, teachers, coaches, church).

WELL-BEING

Children's health and functioning is supported through assurance of formal and informal supports to provide them with optimal growth and developmental opportunities.

Examples:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Educational
- Vocational

PERMANENCY

Children need to know where they will grow up and to have lifelong connections to provide a sense of belonging.

Examples:

- A forever family
- A sense that although there may be more than one permanency option on the table, the adults are working together to provide for the child.

Visiting Practice Planning Guide:

Purpose for visiting at this point in the case

	KNOWN	UNKNOWN
Safety:		
Stability:		
Well-Being:		
Permanency:		

Non-Negotiable Bottom Line

SAFETY AND STABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Child Well-Being

- ▶ Physical well-being
- ▶ Mental health
- ▶ Relationship with peers
- ▶ School performance
- ▶ Motivation/cooperation to stay with family
- ▶ Relationship with parents/caregivers
- ▶ Relationship with siblings
- ▶ Interest
- ▶ Physical and mental limitations

Home Environment

- ▶ Housing stability
- ▶ Food/nutrition
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Safety in community
- ▶ Financial management
- ▶ Learning environment
- ▶ Habitability of housing
- ▶ Personal hygiene
- ▶ Income/employment



Parental Capabilities

- ▶ Supervision of children
- ▶ Mental health
- ▶ Disciplinary practices
- ▶ Physical health
- ▶ Developmental/enrichment
- ▶ Use of drugs/alcohol

Family Safety

- ▶ Physical abuse
- ▶ Neglect of child
- ▶ Sexual abuse
- ▶ Domestic violence
- ▶ Emotional abuse
- ▶ Environmental
- ▶ Institutional

Family Interactions

- ▶ Bonding with children
- ▶ Expectations of children
- ▶ Relationship between parents/caregivers
- ▶ Mutual support within the family

Signs of Safety
and
Stability/Strengths

Signs of Risks, Concerns
and
Underlying Needs

Adapted from:

Berg, Insoo Kim and Kelly, Susan

Building Solutions in Child Protective Services

W.W. Norton, 2000

The Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group

Making Visits Matter

Engaging Families and Building Trust-Based Relationships

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