

HANDOUT #5: PARENT GUIDE TO TALK ABOUT AND FILL OUT THE SAFETY AND SUPPORT PLAN

If you don't have access to a professional to help fill out this plan, be sure to share it with any case workers, therapists, etc., that you are working with. It is important to discuss and create this plan before any major escalations happen, the sooner in placement, the better. Use a supportive, practical, conversational tone. Post it someplace the whole family has easy access to but is also a place that provides privacy if others come over.

Once completed for the child, take time to fill out a version for yourself. Share it with anyone you will be asking to support you and be sure to check in advance that they are able to do will be asking them to do.

Stay focused on strengths in these discussions. We hope for the best but prepare for anything, as we all need extra support sometimes.

- Spend time talking about how you will talk about these situations. Once a child identifies words to describe these situations, be sure to use them or terms you both come up with, so the conversations can be as accurate and respectful as possible. If the child prefers, change the Safety and Support Plan to include these words.
- This does not have to be one conversation, nor does it need to go in the order of the Safety and Support Plan questions. For example, you may choose to start with strengths or inspirations.
- Ask the child concrete questions such as—
 - How will I see that you're upset?
 - When you're upset, where do you feel like being or going?
 - Who do you like talking to help you feel better?
 - What safe things can you do to distract or calm yourself when you feel yourself getting upset?
- List specific things like drawing, journaling, taking a walk, shooting baskets, playing music, etc. If the child identifies activities that do not seem safe to do when they are upset, get creative to make them possible, if possible. For example, if the child relaxes after running, consider taking them to a setting where it's contained, like a track.
- Get specific as to what the child needs from you. Ask: What can I say or do to support you in feeling better and are there things I should avoid doing? Examples might include:
 - Giving me space
 - Letting me play games on my electronic devices
 - Listening but not talking
 - Letting me change a plan
 - Hugging me or not hugging me
 - Not correcting my language or music volume
 - Not telling me to calm down or threatening me with consequences



- Checking in on me
- Making my favorite meal
- If the people identified for support are not those that can be reached easily, acknowledge that those people are comforting, but list others who are more quickly accessible. This list should include at least one professional. Numbers should be on the list and known to you both.
- Be sure to discuss how other people, pets, or property could be affected during an escalation and if they need to go anywhere else, where, and how they would get there.
- Motivating things do not have to be interactive or involve others, they could be simple things like quotes, songs, inspirational websites, channels, etc. They may also include people no one has access to, including celebrities.
- After you've used the plan, be sure to debrief to see how it may need to be revised and updated. Choose a quiet time to do this, with a supportive, practical attitude. Subtract any shaming or blaming and allow for apologies/amends from any or all family members if they happen naturally in these discussions. Acknowledge feelings involved for all.

