

PRACTICE GUIDE

Collaborative Assessment and Planning Framework

Goal statements

What are goals?

Goals provide a vision for the child's future safety, belonging and wellbeing. Goals are the basis of case direction and provide a clear picture of what everyone is working to achieve.

Goal statements describe this vision in concrete terms, identifying the safe and protective behaviours of parents that will need to happen in the future for Child Safety to be satisfied that the worries have been addressed and the child's safety, belonging and wellbeing needs are met.

The key organising question for the Collaborative Assessment and Planning Framework is "What do we need to see happening to be satisfied the child is safe?". Being clear about the case goals focusses everyone on the future and provides the parents with information about what they need to do to increase the child's safety, belonging and wellbeing.

When to write a goal statement

Whenever a **worry statement** is documented, a corresponding **goal statement** will be developed and recorded. Once the goal statements have been developed in relation to each worry statement, the goal statements remain the same over time and only change if the worry statements are updated or a new worry statement is added due to new harms or complicating factors.

Progress made towards achieving the goals is documented in the Protection and Belonging section and the Strengths and Resources section of the Collaborative Assessment and Planning Framework. Progress towards and achievement of goals by parents will be captured in the Review report. If progress is positive, this will be reflected in the likelihood of future abuse to a child being reduced.

How to write a goal statement

Each worry statement documented in the Collaborative Assessment and Planning Framework will have a corresponding goal statement. As worry statements respond to the three harm types outlined in the *Child Protection Act 1999* (physical, emotional and psychological), goal statements should as well. Goal statements may also be written to respond to concerns identified in the child strengths and needs assessment. **This is particularly relevant for children in long-term care.**

A goal statement focusses on the future. It outlines what needs to be demonstrated over time to address each element of the worry statement and to ensure the child is safe, well, connected to family, community and culture.

A goal statement will outline:

- who is part of the family's network and/or the plan
- what actions will be taken by the parent, carer and/or network to address the worry statement

- how long the behaviour will need to be demonstrated for Child Safety to be confident the behaviour will continue.

For example:

Tom (Dad) will work with Child Safety and a network to develop a plan that will show everyone that he will always use ways to discipline Sam that ensure Sam is always physically and emotionally safe in Dad's care. Child Safety will need to see this plan working for a period of six months to be confident that the plan will continue to work after Child Safety close the case.

Goal statements should be behaviourally focused. An effective goal statement is positive and outlines what we **will be seeing**, not the absence of something.

Tip: "Tom (father) will not use hitting to discipline Sam (son)" is not an effective goal as it focusses on the absence of something and does not outline the behaviours that Tom will put into action.

Goal statements need to be written in jargon free, family friendly language. The focus of a goal statement is always the parent's behavior to ensure the safety, care and wellbeing of the child; it is not a list of services that a family should attend. **Services are not goals.**

Tip: Wherever possible use the family's language, terms and descriptions and document the goal statement just the way the family says it. For example, if Mum says "Even if I get the wobbles the children will always be fed, get to school every day and the house will be clean", then this language can be directly used in the goal statement. For example:

"Mum will work with Child Safety and a network to develop a plan that will show everyone that even if Mum gets the wobbles, the children will always be fed, get to school every day and the house will be clean. Child Safety will need to see this plan working for six months to be confident that the plan will keep working after Child Safety close the case".

Tip: The mnemonic **S.A.F.E.T.Y** can be used to assist in creating meaningful goal statements:

- **S**pecific and measurable
- **A**chievable
- **F**amily owned
- **E**ndorsed by Child Safety
- **T**ime frame is clear
- **Y**oung people have been involved and contributed to developing the goals.

Tip: If you are stuck and struggling to develop goal statements, try scaling the child's safety (and/or belonging and wellbeing, as appropriate) right now and then ask what would you need to see happening for you to rate at a 10? This process can also be used with others to explore their views.

The most successful goal statements are refined and developed with the family and reflect a level of agreement between Child Safety and the family about what needs to happen. People are more likely to put energy into achieving a goal they had a hand in creating. The process of developing collaborative goal statements usually involves Child Safety getting clear on what they would need to see in the goal statements and then having conversation

with parents, carers, children and network to explore their views and to talk about and share Child Safety's views.

Tip: *Agreement about past harm is not necessary to achieve agreement in relation to the goals. Generally even if parents don't agree with Child Safety's version of how the harm occurred or the future worries, agreement can be gained in relation to what both parties want for the children in the future. For example, "Mum and Dad and Selina agree that the family will work with Child Safety and a safety and support network to develop a plan that ensures Dad is never alone with Selina to ensure Selina feels safe and supported at all times and so that there is no chance of future reports that Dad has touched her sexually. Child Safety will need to see this plan working for twelve months to be confident that the plan will keep working after Child Safety close the case."*

With young people in long-term care, where the focus is not on change in the parents or behavior, then goal statements can be used to create a shared vision of the young person's future safety, wellbeing and belonging and transition to adulthood.

Examples of goal statements:

Example of a goal statement for an investigation and assessment where harm and risk of harm have been substantiated

Child Safety, Sam (step dad), Mum and Zoe (young person) and a safety and support network will work together to create a plan that ensures that:

- Sam is not alone with the girls so that the girls are protected from future touching and Sam is protected from allegations of touching and everyone feels safe at home in the future Zoe will have the support she needs to recover from what has happened with Sam.
- The girls will have people they can talk to if they need help in the future.

Child Safety would need to see the plan working for 6 months to be confident that the plan will continue working and that they are able to close the case.

Example of a goal statement for an ongoing intervention case

Mum will work with Child Safety and a network of people to develop a plan that will show everyone that:

- The children are always cared for by a sober adult who can make safe decisions
- The children are always fed, supervised and looked after in a way that keeps them safe and is right for their age.

Child Safety will need to see the plan working for twelve months to be confident that they can close the case and the plan will keep working.

Example of goal statement for ongoing intervention (long-term guardianship to the chief executive)

Noah (young person) will work with Child Safety, Bronte (Mum), Mary and Rob (carers) and the School Guidance Officer to develop a plan about what needs to happen and what everyone needs to do to support Noah to make sure that:

- Noah lives with people who will help him to be safe and well and make sure he knows he is wanted and that people care about him.

- Noah knows who his people are and where he comes from.
- Noah does well at school and has the best chance possible of joining the Army after Grade 12.

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