

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 needs to work on to increase the child's safety, belonging and wellbeing.

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

The key question to ask:

'What needs to be happening for Child Safety to be satisfied this child is safe?'

When to write a goal statement

Goal statements are used to plan an intervention with a child and their family. For each worry statement documented, ensure corresponding goal is incorporated into one of the goal statements.

Once developed, 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 emerging.

Document the progress made towards each goal in the case plan tabs, *Protection and belonging* and *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

Goal statements target either the reduction of risk of harm (physical, emotional, and psychological, as described in the *Child Protection Act 1999*) or concerns identified in the child strengths and needs assessment.

To begin, Child Safety need to be clear on what needs to be seen as changed. Then talk to parents, carers, children, and network members to explore their views and share Child Safety's position.

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. We are all more likely to put energy into achieving a goal we have been involved in creating.

Write the goal statement to focus on future behaviour, outlining what needs to be demonstrated over time to address each element of the corresponding worry statement to improve or maintain the child's safety, health and connection to family, community, and culture. Use the words the family members use to describe their actions.

Tip

Agreement about past harm is not necessary to achieve agreement in relation to the goals. When there is disagreement with Child Safety's version of how harm occurred or what the future worries may be, agreement can be gained for what both parties want for the child in the future.

The goal statement will outline:

- Who the goal relates to (within the family's network and part of the case plan)
- the specific vision for future safety, belonging and wellbeing for the child's (what will the child experience when the goal is achieved)
- what actions the specific person will take to progress the goal (and thereby address the specific worry)
- the required timeframe for demonstrating and maintaining the changes for Child Safety to be confident the change will be maintained.

For a child in long-term care focus goal statements to create a shared vision of the child's future safety, wellbeing and belonging and transition to adulthood (from 15 years of age).

Attention

Take care to **avoid** using:

- jargon (use straight forward language, ideally the words the family use)
- statements about stopping a behaviour (describe the preferred alternative behaviour)
- a list of services, or strategies to achieve the goal (attending a program may teach a new behaviour, but attendance is not the goal – using the new skills is the goal).

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

Specific and measurable

Achievable

Family owned

Endorsed by Child Safety

Time frame is clear

Young people have been involved and contributed to developing the goals.

Practice prompt

If feeling 'stuck' or struggling to write the goal statements, try using scaling question to determine the child's safety or belonging and wellbeing for 'right now.' Then ask what would you need to see happening for you to shift the rating to be a 10?

This process can be used with each person involved, to explore their views.

Further reading

Practice guide: [Collaborative assessment and planning framework](#)

Example goal statements

Example 1

What needs to be achieved?

Karen and David will work with Child Safety to change when and how they drink alcohol and smoke marijuana to be sure someone else is caring for Caitlin at these times.

Child Safety needs to see the Karen and David making these alternative care arrangements consistently for Caitlin for a period of 6 months to be confident they will continue to do this for Caitlin once Child Safety intervention ends.

How will we know it has been achieved?

- Caitlin will only be cared for by people who are not affected by drugs or alcohol and who everyone (Karen, David, Caitlin, Child Safety, and the network) agrees are safe people for Caitlin.
- Caitlin will have a parent who prioritises Caitlin needs, is present and available and who provides a child-proofed home.
- Caitlin will be receiving all the love, care, and attention she needs to grow and develop properly. This will include Caitlin's vocabulary growing, she will toilet train and engage in doing daily tasks independently (dress herself, helps with simple chores) and we will see her confidence to explore grow.

Example 2

What needs to be achieved?

Cathy and Dennis will work with Child Safety and a safety and support network of family, friends, and professionals to develop and use a plan which consistently shows:

- Greta and Matthew cared for by adults who communicate with respect by avoiding verbally abusive or controlling words and tone.
- Greta and Matthew cared for by adults who have access to transport and money so their basic needs (food, access to school) are met.
- The adults caring for Greta and Matthew provide reassurance to them as they need (when Greta or Matthew are feeling scared or confused).
- Greta and Matthew receive help and support to participate in and complete their schoolwork and attend school every week-day.

How will we know it has been achieved?

Child Safety and the network will have seen these actions working consistently for 9 months.

Example 3

What needs to be achieved?

Tiarna needs to be able to manage her mental health symptoms of depression and anxiety which can limit her ability to meet the needs of Henry and Josiah, including being present to play with them, feed, and bath them, show them love and connection so they feel loved, safe, and secure.

How will we know it has been achieved?

Tiarna will work with her mother Hazel, GP Dr Roses and counsellor Marissa at Wesley Mission to support her to manage the symptoms of using medication. Tiarna will have regular conversations with Dr Roses, her counsellor (Marissa) and her mother (Hazel). Tiarna will ask her mother Hazel for practical help with Henry and Josiah. Tiarna will demonstrate she is confident, stable and feeling good by playing, interacting and responding to Henry and Josiah's changing needs on a daily basis.

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