

# S.A.F.E.R. kids

framework

prompts &  
templates



- S** seek information
- A** analyse
- F** formulate
- E** enact and empower
- R** review and reassess

A guided approach to risk assessment & mitigation planning in child protection

- New information
- Key decision points
- Outcomes of actions

Evaluate change and readjust

Undertake planned actions

- Mitigate risk**
- Increase **safety**
  - Decrease **severity** of harm
  - Decrease **vulnerability** of harm
  - Decrease **likelihood** of harm

- Plan**
- Actions
  - Responsibilities
  - Collaboration
  - Resources
  - Timelines

- Child or young person**
  - Age
  - Culture
  - Development
  - Health
  - Functioning
  - Attitude
- Parents or carers**
  - Attitudes to harm
  - Relationship with child
  - Functioning
  - Parenting capacity
  - Attitude to change & seeking help
  - Engagement with services & supports
- Source of harm**
  - Incident/harm causing behaviour
  - Severity
  - History & pattern
- Environment**
  - Other people
  - Physical, social & cultural environment
  - Service & support networks
- Opportunity for harm**
  - Access of alleged perpetrator
  - Exposure to harm

Gather information



Identify goals and actions needed to address risk

- Needs**
- Physical, social, emotional, intellectual, cultural & spiritual development
  - Physical, emotional, cultural & social safety
  - Permanency & continuity of care

- Severity**
- Type & degree of harm

- Safety**
- Strengths
  - Protection

- Vulnerability**
- Characteristics of child/young person
  - Opportunity

- Likelihood**
- Pattern & history
  - Beliefs & relationships
  - Complicating factors

- Harm consequence**
- Extreme
  - Serious
  - Concerning

- Harm probability**
- Highly likely
  - Likely
  - Unlikely

Analyse the collected information to determine the degree and probability of harm

- Risk**
- Immediate safety**
- Any risk of significant harm to the child or young person over the immediate assessment period
- Future risk (including cumulative)**
- High
  - Medium
  - Low

# S

## Seek information

## question prompts



### Information sources

- the child or young person
- the parents or carers who live with the child and parents who don't live with the child
- the extended family
- alternative carers
- professionals involved with the child or family, such as schools, kindergarten teachers, childcare centres, maternal and child health centres, family doctors, community health centres, family services, specialist family violence services and drug and alcohol services
- Aboriginal Child Specialist and Support Service
- migrant and refugee support services
- police
- CRIS and other information databases

### Openers

- What is the child's name, gender and date of birth?
- Does the child or their parents or carers identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
- Where does the child usually live? Who do the child usually live with? Is the child or young person in out-of-home care?
- Does the child go to childcare or school? If so, where?
- Who are the child's parents or carers?
- Which language is usually spoken at home? Is an interpreter required for the child or their parents or carers?
- Where was the child born and where were the parents or carers born? When did they first arrive in Australia and in Victoria?
- What cultural background does the child or their parents or carers identify with?
- Has the child or any of their siblings been involved with child protection before?

### Engagers

- How are things at home?
- Are you afraid of anyone at home?
- Who do you go to ask for help and support?

# S

## Seek information

## question prompts



### About the source of harm

#### Seekers

- What has happened to the child to make you concerned?
- Where is the child now? What condition are they in?
- Has there been any previous incidents or other concerns you've had about the child?
- What do you think might happen in the future?
- Has anyone witnessed incidents of harm towards the child or heard about them from others?
- Has the child disclosed abuse themselves? What did they say and to whom?
- How long have you been concerned? How have your concerns changed over time?

#### Delvers

- Is there any indication of physical injury to the child? Was medical help sought? When?
- Are there prior notifications? How many? What was the nature of these contacts? What was the outcome? Viewed together does the picture change?

### About the opportunity for harm

#### Seekers

- Who do you think is responsible for your concerns?
- What do you know about them?
- What is their relationship with the child like?

#### Delvers

- Is the alleged perpetrator the primary carer for the child?
- Does the alleged perpetrator accept responsibility for their role in the abuse? How do they demonstrate this?
- Is the primary carer (if not the perpetrator) able to accept their parental responsibility towards the child? Are there alternative carers within the family systems?
- Has the alleged perpetrator ever been investigated, charged or convicted of violent behaviour or any criminal behaviour?

# S

## Seek information

## question prompts



### About the Child or young person

#### Seekers

- How would you describe the child's health?
- Does the child have any ongoing health or physical problems?
- Are there any concerns about the child's learning, development and behaviour?
- Has the child's or young person's behaviour significantly changed recently?
- Has the child reached their developmental milestones?
- Has the child been assessed for an intellectual disability, developmental delay or learning disability? If so, what was the outcome?
- How would you describe the child's behaviour and emotional wellbeing?
- Are there any concerns about the child or young person's psychological health?
- Has the young person talked of suicide/attempted suicide?
- Has the young person been diagnosed with a mental illness?
- What are the child's wishes about the situation?
- Has the child experienced any family events that they may have been affected by? How were they impacted by the events?
- Does the child go to childcare, early childhood education or school? Does the young person go to school or work?
- Has the young person engaged in offending behaviour? Have they been involved with police or criminal proceedings?
- Is the young person involved with known or suspected sex offenders?

#### Delvers

- Has the child previously experienced mental health issues? Did the child receive medical or psychological treatment or support? What was the outcome?
- Has the child attended any maternal and child health services? If so, when and where?
- Has the child been admitted to hospital? If so, when, where and why?
- Has the child experienced alcohol or other drug problems? Did the child receive medical or psychological treatment or support? What was the outcome?
- Has the child experienced or witnessed violence?
- Was the child born drug dependent, premature, with a birth defect, chronic illness or developmental delay?
- Does the child cry frequently or is difficult to comfort?
- Does the child have difficulty feeding, toileting or a difficult temperament?
- Does the child or young person exhibit any acting-out behaviour, such as running away, risk-taking and rule breaking?
- Has the child experienced separation or re-partnering of parents, death of a relative or friend, serious illness of parents, siblings, relatives or friends, parent's loss or change of job, move to a new house or school or a new baby, child or adult in the house? If so, how significantly did any of these events affect them?

# S

## Seek information

## question prompts



## About the parents or carers

### Seekers

- Have other children been subject to protective orders, been removed or died in the parents or carers care?
- Have any of the child's parents or carers experienced any events that they may have been significantly affected by? How were they impacted by the events?
- Have the parents or carers made efforts to address the situation? What was the outcome?
- What is the parent's or carer's relationship like with the child and any siblings? How do they describe it?
- What is the parent's or carer's view of their relationship with their partner?
- What cultural or religious views or practices does the parent follow? Do any of these impact on the child's, siblings' or other parent's safety and wellbeing?
- Can the parent or carer provide an explanation for any harm indicated towards the child or any limits to their ability to carer for the child? Is this consistent with evidence about what has or is happening?
- Who do the parents or go to ask for help or support?
- How well do the parents or carers engage with services or professionals in their community?
- Does the parent or carer experience any mental health issues?
- Is there a physical/emotional/intellectual disability impacting on ability to meet the child's basic needs?

### Delivers

- How do the parents or carers act towards the child or their siblings? How do the parents or carers discipline the child and their siblings?
- Have any of the child's parents or carers been admitted to hospital? If so, when, where and why?
- Have any of the child's parents or carers experienced alcohol or other drug problems? Did they receive medical or psychological treatment or support? What was the outcome?
- Have any of the child's parents or carers experienced or witnessed violence?
- Does either parent or carer have a history of institutional care, abuse or neglect as a child?
- Have any of the child's parents or carers experienced mental health issues? Are they or have they received medical or psychological treatment or support? What was the outcome?
- Have any of the child's parents or carers experienced gambling problems? Are they or have they received support? What was the outcome?
- Do the parents or carers demonstrate an inability to control their impulses and anger? What does the carer do when they get angry at the child or siblings?
- Has there been any periods of separation between the child and their parents or carers?

# S

## Seek information

## question prompts



## About the child's environment

### Seekers

- Are there other adults in the household or network with carer-type responsibilities for the child or young person?
- Are any adults who have carer-type responsibilities for the child or young person engaging in risk taking or other dangerous behaviours?
- Is the child or young person's primary peer or social groups engaged in risk taking or other dangerous behaviours?
- Are any other agencies involved with the child or family?
- What is the home environment like?
- What are the child's sleeping arrangements?
- What is a typical day like for the family? With whom does the child spend most of their time?
- What does the family do for fun?
- Is the family isolated or supported?

### Delivers

- How do the parents or carers interact with their neighbours and others in the community?
- How do services and professionals respond to the child or family?
- Does the family have formal (agencies) or informal (kin and friends) support system? Are the support systems enacted? Do the children have any allies in the system?



# Seek information

risk indicators



## Source of harm

### History and pattern

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Previous reports to child protection			
Previous incidents of maltreatment unreported to child protection			
Pattern of escalating or cumulative harm			
Child reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver			

## Opportunity for harm

### Access of alleged perpetrator

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Alleged perpetrator has access to child			
Alleged perpetrator has been investigated, charged or convicted of violent behaviour			
Alleged perpetrator is denying, minimising or otherwise not taking responsibility for abuse			

### Exposure to harm

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Child reports harm experienced			
Experience of or exposure to family violence by child			
Experience of or exposure to family violence by siblings			
Experience of or exposure to family violence by parents or carers			
Constant or escalating exposure of child or young person to inadequate protection or care in the family home			





# Seek information

risk indicators



## Child or young person

### Age

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
12 months or younger			

### Culture

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Child has lack of cultural or community connections and networks			

### Exposure to harm

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Low social competence			
Poor academic performance			
Child or young person is frequently absent from school, early childhood education or care			
Child or young person shows extremes in behaviour, such as overly compliant or demanding behaviour, extreme passivity, or aggression			
Child or young person is delayed in intellectual, psychological, physical or emotional development			
Child or young person is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)			

### Attitude

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Child seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home			
Responses to professionals or services are unusual, unexpected, or developmentally inappropriate			



# Seek information

risk indicators



## Child or young person

### Health

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Condition (congenital or acquired) with complex medical and high care needs			
Malnutrition, poor weight gain or nutrition			
Self-harming behaviour or attempted suicide			
Bruises in the shape of a hand, grip, teeth mark, ligature, stick, or implement without or with inadequate explanation			
Lacerations, cuts, abrasions, and scars without or with inadequate explanation			
Injury (thermal, cold, intracranial, spinal, visceral or oral) or fractures			
Anogenital signs and symptoms or sexually transmitted infection			
Pregnancy			
Poisoning or other life-threatening event			
Fabricated or induced illness			
Emotional state inconsistent with age and developmental stage and unexplained by medical conditions, neurodevelopmental disorders, and known stressful situations			
Child or young person demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behaviour inconsistent with age and development			
Child or young person reports nightmares or bedwetting inconsistent with age and development			
Child or young person abuses alcohol or other drugs			
Frequent attendance at emergency departments and/or hospital admission			
Unusual pattern of presentation to, and contact, with healthcare providers			
Child or young person has poor hygiene or is consistently dirty and has severe body odour			



# Seek information

risk indicators



## Child or young person

### Functioning

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Child or young person has a disability			
Displays behavioural problems or challenging behaviour (such as hyperactivity, aggression, soiling, wetting or running away)			
Behavioural disorders or abnormalities inconsistent with age and developmental stage			
Marked changes in behaviour or emotional state inconsistent with age and developmental stage (such as extreme distress, withdrawal from communicating)			
Repeated extreme or sustained emotional responses that are disproportionate to the situation, inconsistent with age and developmental stage			
Dissociation unexplained by a known traumatic event			
Attachment problems (anxious, avoidant or unresponsive)			
Child or young person involved with police or youth justice			



## Seek information

risk indicators



## Parents or carers

### Attitudes to harm

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Parent offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for alleged harm			
Parent is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems			
Parent is secretive and isolated			
Parent is jealous or controlling with family members			

### Relationship with child

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Parental perception of child as problem			
Parent blames, belittles, or berates the child, or describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way			
Parental negativity or hostility towards a child or young person			
Parental rejection or scapegoating of a child or young person			
Parental use of violence, corporal punishment or harsh physical discipline with the child			
Child excluded by parents or carers			
Parent displays high criticism and low warmth			
Partner resents the child or other not biological child			
Parent has inappropriate or unrealistic expectations of child			
Parent fails to give child boundaries for behaviour			
Parent is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex			



## Seek information

risk indicators



## Parents or carers

### Functioning

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Parental mental health issues compromising functioning			
Intellectual, cognitive or physical disability compromising functioning			
Parental expression of anger, hyper-reactivity and low self-esteem			
Parental presentation with anxiety, psychopathy or depression			
Parental or partner conflict			
Parental personal or work-related stress			
Parental history of abuse, neglect or childhood trauma			

### Parenting capacity

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Poor provision of care or basic needs or parental unwillingness or incapacity to meet the practical or physical care needs of children			
Extended parental absences or limited appropriate supervision of child by parent			
Parent frequently leaves child to care for other children			
Parental misuse of drugs and alcohol			
Child or young person lacks sufficient clothing			
Failure to promote the child's appropriate socialisation (for example, involving children in unlawful activities, isolation, not providing stimulation or education)			
History of poor parenting			
Parental criminal justice involvement			



## Seek information

risk indicators



## Parents or carers

### Attitude to change and seeking help

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Parental unwillingness or incapacity to make and sustain changes to act protectively			
Parental hostility towards or passive minimal cooperation with services			
History of service interventions that have not resulted in any sustained improvement			
Parent failing to provide access to appropriate medical care or treatment			
Aggressive or threatening behaviour towards professionals			

### Engagement with services and supports

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Parental history of prior involvement with child protection both as children themselves and in relation to other children born to them			
Other children removed from parent's care			
Parental refusal or resistance to service involvement and failure to engage with services			
Pattern of missed appointments or avoidance of service providers			
Parental refusal to let health professionals speak to child on their own when it is a necessary part of the service, assessment or support process			



## Seek information

risk indicators



## Environment

### Other people

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
History of violence or abusive behaviour towards other adults or children			
Complex or disrupted family structure			
Increase in family or household size			
Family conflict present			
Low family cohesion			
Child excluded by extended family or community			

### Physical, social and cultural environment

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Lack of community or social networks			
Unsafe sleeping arrangements			
Homelessness, transient housing or frequent changes in housing			

### Service and support networks

Risk	Indicated	Verified	Evidence
Lack of or inappropriate services and supports			
Limited or ineffective engagement between services			
Lack of multiservice informed risk assessment and joined up multiservice responses			
Lack of communication and collaboration across services			



# Analyse

Date

Child's name

CRIS number



Safety

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

Severity

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

Vulnerability

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

Harm consequence

Likelihood

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

Harm probability

Risk

Immediate

Future







# Enact & empower

Date

Child's name

CRIS number



## Actions taken

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

## Outcomes

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

## Change in **safety**

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

## Change in **severity**

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

## Change in **vulnerability**

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

## Change in **likelihood**

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●

.....●