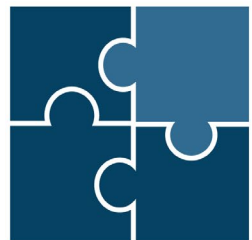


Module 5:
Case Planning Considerations
for Families Affected by Parental
Substance Use & Co-Occurring Disorders
Child Welfare Training Toolkit



National Center on
Substance Abuse
and Child Welfare

Acknowledgement

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Learning Objectives

After completing this training,
child welfare workers will:

- Differentiate between safety and risk factors for families affected by parental substance use
- Assess for child safety with knowledge of specific indicators related to the child, parent/family, and the home environment
- Define, identify, and promote caregiver protective capacities and protective factors with knowledge of how these serve to mitigate identified safety threats
- Use safety and risk assessments to inform safety planning with clear and actionable steps to increase child safety and family unification whenever possible
- Identify, plan, and respond to a parent's potential return to use with knowledge of recovery management plans to support parental stabilization
- Understand the limitations of drug testing with knowledge of best practice considerations for use in child welfare settings
- Advocate for improvements to quality family time to support reunification goals and objectives
- Identify, plan, and determine family readiness for case closure with coordination of aftercare services and supports

Assessing for Safety, Risk & Protective Capacities



Parental Substance Use as a Condition Associated with Removal—Let's Talk About It!

Large Group Discussion

Minimum Sufficient Level of Care



Child-Specific



Unbiased



Consistent

Assessing Effects of Parental Substance Use on Children & Families

A parent's use of alcohol or other drugs can affect their ability to safely parent their children by **decreasing** their ability to...



Provide adequate supervision



Ensure educational or medical needs are being met



Provide daily structure and routines



Ensure basic needs are being met

Differentiating Between Safety & Risk Factors

What is a
safety factor?

What is a
risk factor?



Differentiating Between Safety & Risk Factors for Families Affected by Substance Use & Co-Occurring Disorders

Small Group Activity

Potential Indicators to Support Your Assessment of the Home Environment



Home conditions



Safe storage of
controlled substances



Safety hazards



Safe sleep space



Drug paraphernalia
in the home



Changes in home
conditions that
weren't there before



Considerations for Assessing Child Safety

age
of the child

Child's visibility in the
community

special needs
of the child

Parent-child
interaction

Additional Considerations for Assessing Child Safety



**Current
engagement in
treatment**



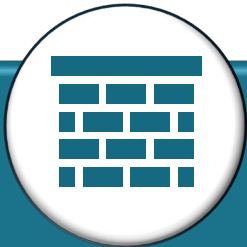
**History of
seeking help
or treatment**



**Past recovery
time**



**Level of parent
insight into risk
factors**



**Strong support
system**



**Another adult
living in the
home**



**Strengths of
the family**

What Are Caregiver Protective Capacities?



Behavioral

Cognitive

Emotional

Protective Factors Strengthen Families

What Are
They &
How Do
We Build
on Them?



Nurturance and
attachment



Parental
resilience



Social connections



Knowledge of
parenting and
child development

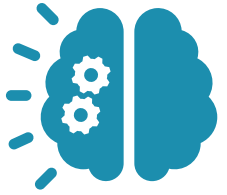


Concrete support
in times of need



Social-emotional
competence of
children

Practice Examples for Cases Involving Parental Substance Use



Example #1

Example #4



Example #2

Example #5



Example #3

Example #6



Protective Factors Strengthen Families

Safety Planning for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders



Safety Planning



Written documents detailing in-home protective interventions



Allow children to safely remain in the home if protective interventions mitigate the identified safety threats



Developed during the initial assessment and continued through ongoing services



Routinely monitored and updated based on family's changing circumstances and needs

Contents of the Safety Plan



Description



Action Steps



Routine Monitoring



Signatures

Additional Safety Planning Considerations for Families Affected by Substance Use & Co-Occurring Disorders



Natural Supports

**Alternative Living
Arrangements**

**Realistic & Achievable
Action Steps**



Case Planning for Potential Return to Use

Understanding the Nature of Return to Use

Part of the recovery process

Similar rates as other chronic medical conditions

Good indicator for the need for treatment modifications



Identifying Potential Return to Use Indicators

Small Group Activity

Physical Appearance

Nodding off during treatment or service contacts

Change in hygiene levels, observed weight loss

Presence of scabs, sores, or puncture wounds

Signs of active withdrawal (e.g., flu-like symptoms)

Signs of active intoxication (e.g., slurred speech, dilated or restricted pupils)

Behavioral Signs

Increase in work absences or change in employment status

Missed appointments or no returned contact with service providers

Increase in absences or truancy for school aged children

Observed changes to mood, attitude, and behaviors

Changes in parenting capacity (e.g., meeting basic needs, nurturance)

Condition of Home Environment

Change in level of cleanliness/organization

Increase in traffic in and out of family home at all hours of the day

Observed scents or odors, or attempts to mask scent or odors

Presence of trash waste (e.g., empty bottles or cans; foils, lighters, spoons)

Presence of drug paraphernalia (e.g., substances, other contraband, sharp objects)



Potential Indicators of Return to Use—How'd We Do?



Child Safety & Return to Use

Use of recovery management plans to increase:

Awareness of activators or triggers

Identified recovery supports

Steps to carry out to ensure child safety

Additional Considerations Regarding Return to Use

When parents on your caseload experience a return to use, it is **normal to feel disappointed, defeated, or like you might have failed the family** in some way.



Talk openly with your supervisor about these feelings, so they do not negatively or unfairly influence your ongoing work with families.



Parents can experience **depression, anxiety, helplessness, distrust, and self-blame** when a return to use occurs; and child welfare and treatment professionals should be there to **support parents who are already likely feeling guilty.**

Considerations for Drug Testing & Child Welfare Case Planning



Drug Testing in Child Welfare— What Does It Tell Us?

Large Group Discussion

Important Considerations for Drug Testing in Child Welfare Settings



1

Costly and limited in ability to determine child safety and risk

2

Overreliance on results for critical decision-making can result in harm to families

3

Absence of clear policies and procedures contributes to inconsistent practices



PRACTICE POINT 1

Drug testing is just one tool used to guide case planning and permanency decisions with families affected by SUDs.

PRACTICE POINT 2

Drug testing can provide a chance to discuss a parent's substance use and motivate them to follow their case plans and engage in treatment.





PRACTICE POINT 3

A strength-based motivational approach to engaging families supports the well-being of children and families.

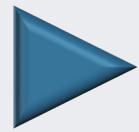


Considerations for Quality Family Time for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders

Visitation or Family Time— What's the Difference?

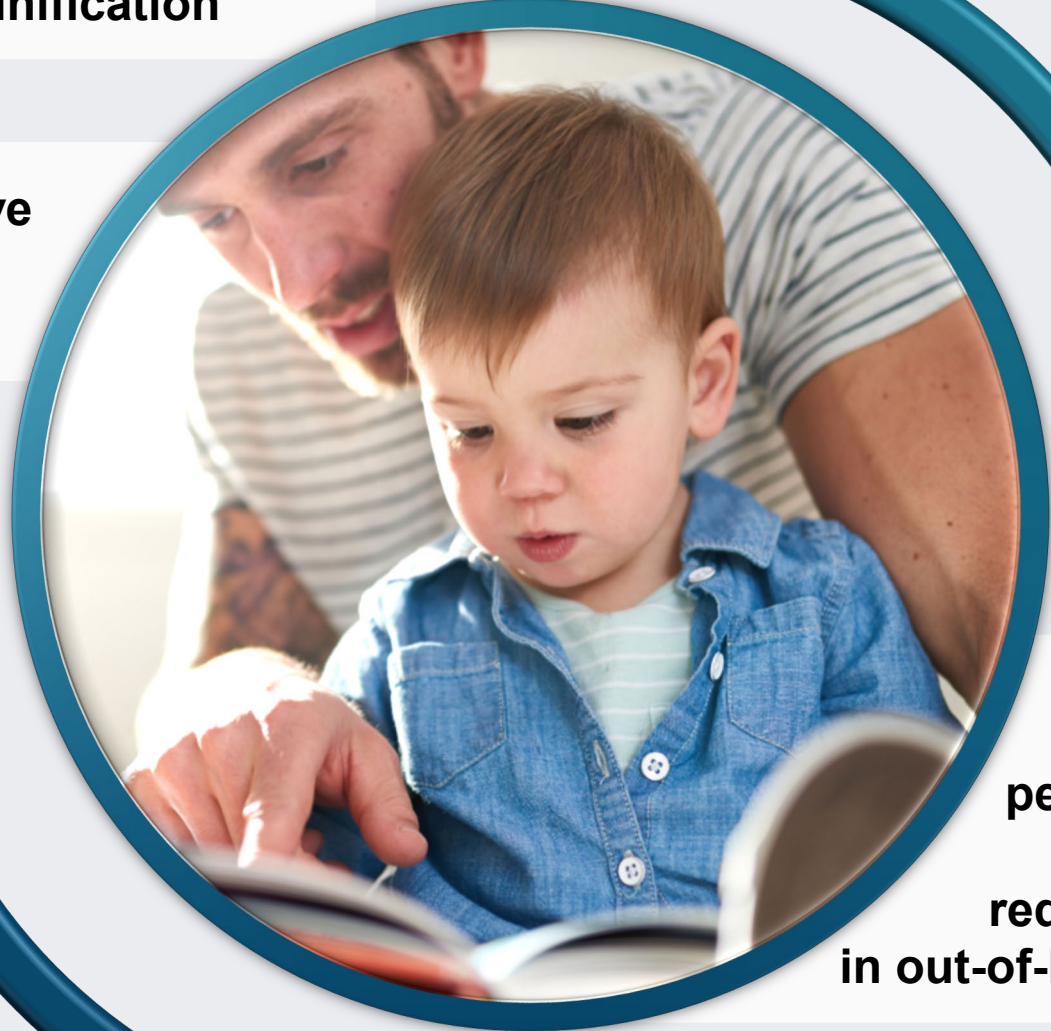


Frequent & Meaningful Family Time



**A greater likelihood
of reunification**

**Reduced negative
effects of family
separation**



**Expedited
permanency
and/or
reduced time
in out-of-home care**

**Decreased likelihood of
re-entry into out-of-home
care post reunification**



Characteristics of Quality Family Time



Frequent and scheduled for an appropriate length of time



Occur in a comfortable, safe, and family-friendly setting



Offer learning opportunities and real-time coaching



Result in progress toward family reunification goals

Moving Toward Family Recovery & Child Welfare Case Closure



Safety Planning for Case Closure



Build on the family's strengths



Establish a network of support



Collaborate with other
helping professionals



Incorporate the parent's
recovery management plan



Engage children in the planning
process when age appropriate

Determining Family Readiness for Case Closure



Recovery
Is Possible!



The Role of Peer Support in Case Planning & Successful Case Closure

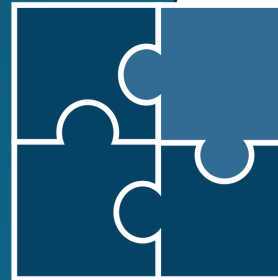
[Video by Children and Family Futures](#)

Contact

Contact the NCSACW TTA Program

Connect with programs that are developing tools and implementing practices and protocols to support their collaborative

Training and technical assistance to support collaboration and systems change



National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare



<https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/>



ncsacw@cffutures.org



Toll-Free @ 1-866-493-2758

References

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Resources

Resources, 1 of 2

- Children and Family Futures: [Trauma-Informed Drug Testing in Child Welfare: START's Approach Webinar](#) (2025)
- Child Welfare Information Gateway: [Protective Factors Approaches in Child Welfare](#) (2020)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Brief 1: Considerations for Developing a Child Welfare Drug Testing Policy and Protocol](#) (2021)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Brief 2: Drug Testing for Parents Involved in Child Welfare: Three Key Practice Points](#) (2021)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Child Welfare & Planning for Safety: A Collaborative Approach for Families with Parental Substance Use Disorders and Child Welfare Involvement](#) (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Engagement and Safety Decision-Making in Substance Use Disorder Cases](#) (2023)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Establishing Comprehensive Assessment Procedures and Promoting Family Engagement into Services. National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare](#) (updated 2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Identifying Safety and Protective Capacities for Families with Parental Substance Use Disorders and Child Welfare Involvement](#) (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Mitigating Safety & Risk for Children Affected by Parental Substance Use Disorders](#) (2023)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Planning for Safety in Cases When Parental Substance Use Disorder is Present](#) (2023)

Resources, 2 of 2

- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [*Safety and Risk Video Series*](#) (2023)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [*The Child Welfare Supervisor's Practice Guides to Safety and Risk—Practice Guide 2: A Child Welfare Supervisor's Guide to Planning for Safety in Cases When Parental Substance Use Disorder is Present*](#) (2024)