

Safety Planning Tips*

Safety planning is always necessary when working with an identified or possibly trafficked child or youth. CPS teams, case planning teams and other related professionals are responsible for developing safety plans that are **flexible, individualized for the youth, and reviewed and updated regularly**.

Additionally, safety plans must provide for **physical, psychological and emotional safety**, which includes referring youth to trauma informed service providers who are knowledgeable about sex trafficking, preferably one with a **lived experience expert**.

Staff must develop a safety plan WITH any identified trafficked child or youth to increase the likelihood of the plan succeeding. The youth is their own expert and know what they can tolerate. Safety planning should never be overwhelming or stressful. It should be a mechanism to relieve stress through a set of actions that can increase well-being.

Safety planning should include:

- Assessment of current and potential risks and safety concerns
- Consideration of whether the parent or person legally responsible is involved in the child or youth's trafficking, or did not protect the youth from trafficking
- Working together to develop strategies to avoid or reduce the threat of harm (e.g. avoiding routes where the trafficker is known to frequent).
- Agreeing upon actionable steps for the child or youth to take to stay safe in potentially dangerous situations
- Providing 24/7/365 contact numbers for service providers and information about resources
- Planning of leaving the trafficker vs planning if staying with the trafficker
- If the youth is "at-risk" for trafficking, focus on the importance of harm reduction
- Update the plan regularly (have a safety check in during each contact to see if the plan is still viable or needs modification)
- Provide a copy of the plan if the youth wants it. Remember that in unsafe situations, if the exploiter finds a written plan, there may be harmful repercussions.

Absent Without Consent (AWOC) - Return from AWOC Debriefing

If a youth leaves their home or placement without consent, this is known as Absent Without Consent (AWOC). Concerns related to AWOC can include

- Where was the youth?
- What did the youth do while away?
- Who were they with?
- Who provided for basic needs?

These are questions for your consideration, not for direct provision to the youth. AWOC debriefing needs to occur sensitively to not re-traumatize and to avoid any feelings of judgment.

To Debrief with the Youth Upon Return From AWOC:

- **WELCOME** the youth back and inquire as to their **immediate needs**.
- Have a **conversation** with the youth to find out why they left and what could change to prevent further AWOCs.
- **If you are from ACS or a provider agency (foster care, prevention services, detention services), you are required to use the OCFS Debriefing Tool (Attachment B of 16-OCFS-ADM-09)**
 - Do not read the tool to the youth.
 - Become familiar with the questions on the tool and engage youth in conversation relevant to the questions.
 - Rephrase the questions as needed without changing the content for a more comfortable conversation.
 - If you are new to using the tool, keep a copy nearby and refer to it as needed. Explain to the youth that this is guidance for you, not for them.
 - Ensure the youth does not obtain the tool from you.
- **Update the Safety Plan based upon the discussion.**

WHAT NOT TO DO	WHAT YOU CAN DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Not Make Assumptions about how the youth feels about the trafficker, or whether the youth is ready to leave the life, or whether the youth considers themselves a victim • Do not take the youth’s reaction personally • Do not project your own ideals onto the youth • Do not ask unnecessary questions or for details • Do not judge • Do not display disappointment or disapproval • Be aware of body language, facial expressions, voice fluctuations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide encouragement and support • Affirm, affirm, affirm! • Understand teen development: Cognitive, Social-Emotional, Physical • Recognize the impact of trauma on cognitive development/decision making • Cultural sensitivity, Gender sensitivity • Address the culture shock of the reality of leaving the life • Anticipate stress and plan for stress reduction • Recognize the power dynamic • Assess your own expectations and biases

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