

Safe & Together™

Shifting the paradigm: the intersection of domestic violence, child maltreatment and safety and well being

Safe and Together™ Model: Implementation and Sustainability Strategies to Create a Domestic Violence Informed Child Welfare System

Making the shift to a domestic violence informed child welfare system requires steps beyond the investment in an multi-day training package for staff and community partners.¹ Successful implementation of the Safe and Together model requires leadership, integration of Safe and Together model principles into policy and other steps to help ensure consistent, good practice in cases involving domestic violence. The following is a brief description of the a domestic violence proficient child welfare system²:

“Domestic violence best practice is consistent, dependable and pervasive. It includes a commitment to develop and maintain (institutionalize) domestic violence skills/practice. Domestic violence is built into organizational performance improvement plans or other quality assurance efforts. Child welfare regularly accesses expertise in the community and takes a leadership role in developing community capacity through the training of others as part of contracting. This level is characterized by all aspects of the system using the same framework, sharing a focus on keeping children safe and together with the non-offending parent, partnering with the survivor to that end and intervening with perpetrators.

From a Safe and Together model principles perspective:

- 1. Principle of keeping children safe and together with non-offending parent is shared between community partners and backed up with training, policy and services.***
- 2. Partnership with adult survivors is an established principle in policy and is infused throughout partner agencies and courts.***
- 3. Intervention with perpetrators is broad and multi-faceted.”***

Safe and Together model sites are often looking for strategies and tips to achieve domestic violence competency or proficiency and to address the general challenges associated with implementing a new practice paradigm such as staff turnover,

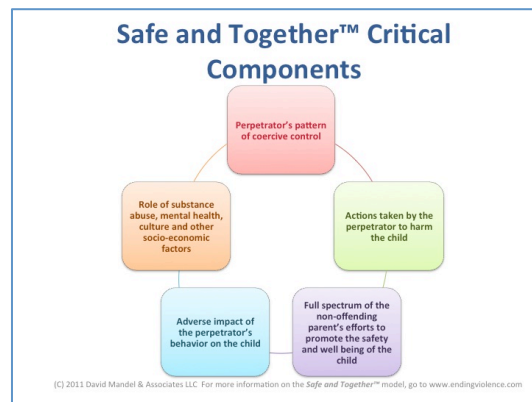
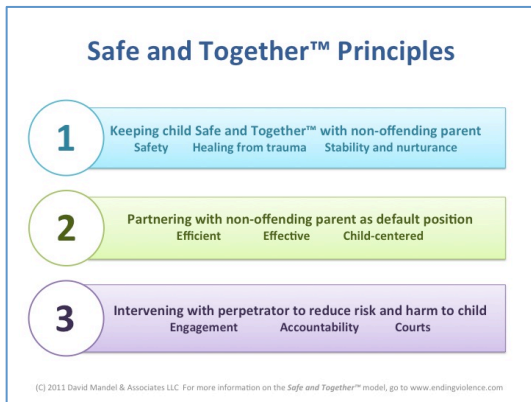
¹ Safe and Together model multi-day training packages usually focus on intensive skill based training on a small group of child welfare, domestic violence and other professionals. The belief behind this approach is that a core group of more thoroughly trained people can do more to change a system than a larger group that receives minimal training. The idea is that when a group receives intensive training along with the technical assistance to help practice it, they will directly experience the benefits of the approach, e.g. when they assess survivors for the full spectrum of their efforts to promote the safety and well being of children, they will directly experience how it improves partnerships with survivors. From this direct experience and deeper understanding of the model, they become advocates within their system for the practice paradigm shift associated with the model.

² From “Domestic Violence Informed Child Welfare System Practice Continuum Chart” developed by David Mandel, May 2013.

resistance to change and crisis oriented systems. They are also looking to maximize the results accrued from the investment in the Safe and Together model training.

This document was developed for the purpose of facilitating child welfare agencies trained in the Safe and Together model with post training implementation and sustainability strategies. These changes can help child welfare systems move from pre-competence to competence to proficiency in domestic violence practice. The document focuses on three areas:

- Dissemination of information about the Safe and Together model to staff and community partners
- Maintaining progress and learning
- Implementation tips



Disseminating Information about the Safe and Together Model

Staff who attend the Safe and Together model training can be expected to disseminate information to their peers and colleagues within their agency to support a shared framework, language and to enhance the competencies of staff who did not attend the training. Here are some suggestions for how to successfully do this:

1. Ask staff to present at unit meetings or in a group supervisory session to their colleagues. Topics can include: the components and principles of the Safe and Together model, assessing strengths and protective capacities of domestic violence survivors, intervening with domestic violence perpetrators, and the impact of domestic violence on children. Trainings can also focus on identifying domestic violence when a case presents with other issues such substance abuse or mental health. These trainings not only benefit those who were not able to attend the training but also reinforces the learning of the staff that attended the Safe and Together model training.

2. Ask staff who attended the Safe and Together model training to work with managers, supervisors and attorneys to create a format for documentation of domestic violence cases. Using the components of the Safe and Together model as a guide for this, develop a strategy for helping all staff document domestic violence cases more effectively.
3. Supervisors and others who attended the training can begin coaching staff around a) documentation, b) interviewing perpetrators, c) developing clear expectations/safety plans/case plans with perpetrators, d) partnering with survivors, e) safety planning with survivors, and f) articulating the impact of domestic violence on children.
4. Disseminate information about the Safe and Together model in any agency newsletter or through other means of agency wide communication.

Maintaining Progress and Learning

Staff who attended the Safe and Together model training should be practicing their new or enhanced skills when assessing for domestic violence or responding to already identified domestic violence. In order to help them in their efforts, the agency can find ways to support them in continuing and building on these skills. Here are some suggestions for supporting their progress and continued learning:

1. Supervisors, managers, attorneys and others within the agency can ask those who participated in the Safe and Together model training about what they learned and how they are using these new skills and concepts in practice. (This can happen after any training day, but also repeatedly over time after the training has finished.)
2. Supervisors, managers, attorneys and others can expect different, improved documentation or discussions reflecting the critical components from those who participated in the Safe and Together model training. When this is noticed, supervisors, managers and attorneys should ask these staff members about the changes and express to staff how these changes are supporting good practice and good outcomes for families. If changes haven't been noted, particularly in supervision, supervisors and managers should ask staff members who've participated in the Safe and Together model training what the training taught them that they could be using to enhance their documentation and discussion of domestic violence cases.
3. Agency management can develop a clear agency-wide expectation that all staff use the Safe and Together model principles to guide their practice.
4. The Safe and Together model components should be used to guide supervisory sessions, transfer conferences, case staffings, multi-disciplinary team meetings, family team meetings or other case conferences. The critical components should also be used to guide the groups in assessing risk and safety in domestic violence cases as well as in assessing strengths and protective capacities of survivors. The components also help guide a

discussion about the active role perpetrators have taken in adversely impacting children. These components help organize assessment information as well as help highlight missing information that could impact the case.

5. Create a regular (no less frequent than once a month in the beginning) Safe and Together model meeting for the staff who attended the training. This will support their practice by recognizing their enhanced skills, supporting their identification with the model and allow them to help each other with implementation of the model. These meetings will also provide insight into systemic changes that need to be made to become a domestic violence proficient child welfare system.
6. Encourage the use of the Safe and Together model to continue their learning and growth by reviewing their training material, visiting the Safe and Together model blog and website³, and continue to read domestic violence related literature.

Sustainable Implementation of the Safe and Together Model

There are various successful ways to promote the sustainable implementation of the Safe and Together model into child welfare practice and moving towards a domestic violence proficient child welfare system. Many of them involve using the trained Safe and Together staff to help guide and support system change. Here are some suggestions:

1. Encourage training for agency, community, and court leadership on the Safe and Together model.
2. Ensure that management, supervisors and attorneys have a working knowledge about the Safe and Together model in order to support the changes throughout the agency.
3. Child welfare management in child welfare can take a stance of expecting enhanced and improved practice related to domestic violence and child maltreatment. This can be done through discussion with staff, memos to staff and statements to community partners about changes being made in the agency. Expect all staff to utilize the Safe and Together model critical components to guide assessment of cases, use as a framework for case discussion in meetings, as well as document cases.
4. Child welfare management can seek to develop and/or maintain community partnerships with domestic violence agencies and batterer intervention programs. Child welfare presentations to community partners on its efforts to implement the Safe and Together model, with its clear emphasis on perpetrator responsibility and partnerships with adult survivors, can enhance trust and collaboration. Cross training and case discussions (or case practice) can support the use of the Safe and Together model and enhanced

³ www.endingviolence.com ; <http://safe-and-together.endingviolence.com/blog/>

community-wide practice related to domestic violence. Identify community collaboration meetings where the Safe and Together model critical components could be applied to as a structure for case discussions.

5. Connect Safe and Together model principles and critical components to other agency initiatives (such as differential response, father engagement, trauma informed care, Structured Decision Making, and others). The Safe and Together model can enhance practice related to most child welfare initiatives, often creating a synergy that supports successful practice changes on multiple fronts.
6. Use the Safe and Together model to review policy and practice from screening and intake to permanency. The review should not just include policy and practice related to cases that come into the system identified as domestic violence but should include looking at the co-occurrence of domestic violence with all other child abuse and neglect issues such as unstable housing, educational neglect and substance abuse. This comprehensive perspective should ensure good practice in each step of the case. For example:
 - a. Expect screening for domestic violence in every case, regardless of maltreatment.
 - b. Review the referral process and services for families experiencing domestic violence to ensure they are consistent with the Safe and Together model. This includes non-domestic violence services such as substance abuse and mental health treatment.
 - c. Review the development of neglect petitions to ensure consistency with the Safe and Together model.
7. Review current in-service training on domestic violence and other issues to ensure consistency with the Safe and Together model. Develop a plan for introducing new workers to the model. Use staff trained in the model to mentor new workers in utilizing the model to guide their practice.
8. Integrate the Safe and Together model critical components into evaluation, case review, performance reviews and other quality assurance efforts. This may include creating a process to review case documentation and practice and modifying data collection processes to capture the necessary information to evaluate model implementation. Staff that participated in the Safe and Together model training can be part of developing criteria and identifying strengths and deficits in case practice. Develop criteria to assess whether or not the case demonstrates:
 - i. Partnership with survivors of domestic violence.
 - ii. Interventions with perpetrators of domestic violence.
 - iii. Efforts to keep children safe and together with survivors of domestic violence.

- iv. Clear documentation of the perpetrator's pattern of coercive control.
- v. Clear documentation of the perpetrator's actions to harm children.
- vi. Clear documentation of the full spectrum of survivor's efforts to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.
- vii. Clear documentation about the full adverse impact of the perpetrator's behaviors on children.
- viii. The role of substance abuse, mental health, socio-economic and cultural issues in domestic violence cases.