



CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

SAFETY FRAMEWORK PRACTICE MODEL FOR CHILD WELFARE

Safety Framework Practice Model (SFPM) was implemented December 2020 per Social Services Redesign (SB 2124, 2019). SFPM brings consistent child welfare practice for all Human Service Zones whereby they intervene in families with children who are unsafe based on the presence of uncontrolled danger threats. SFPM uses standardized tools and decision-making criteria to make well-founded child safety decisions to ensure we intervene in families' lives only when necessary. Caseworkers must consider specific, key questions to determine the least intrusive and most appropriate level of intervention. SFPM reinforces safety planning within the home to reduce further trauma to the child. Removal from the home occurs only after it is determined in-home safety planning is not possible. When 1) the family has made significant progress in achieving the expected outcomes of the case; 2) child safety is being sustained in the child's home; and 3) the child's safety can be maintained without the ongoing intervention of safety service providers, the case is closed.

A **safe child** is one in which no threats of danger exist within the family, OR parents/caregivers possess sufficient protective capacity to manage any threats, OR the child is not vulnerable to the existing danger.



An **unsafe child** is one in which threats of danger exist in the family, AND the child is vulnerable to such threats, AND parents/caregivers have insufficient protective capacities to manage or control the threats.

Figure 1. Roe Lund, T., Renne, J. (2009). *Child Safety: A Guide for Judges and Attorneys*. ACTION for Child Protection, Inc.

Training

100% of Human Service Zone staff must complete Child Welfare Certification Training within the first year of employment. SFPM is woven throughout the 6-week curriculum. [607-05 Child Welfare Practice Policy Manual](#) includes the SFPM requirements for child welfare workers and supervisors. The [ND SFPM Field Guide](#) was disseminated to the workforce in March 2024 to provide procedural guidance. In addition, tools, forms, and technical assistance opportunities that support fidelity to SFPM are consistently offered to the child welfare workforce.

Fidelity Support

In July 2023 CFS implemented **Courageous Case Management Site Visits (CCMs)**, whereby Field Service Specialists and the SFPM Statewide Administrator travel onsite to meet with Human Service Zone case managers, supervisors, and directors to build on their strengths, address any challenges or barriers to implementing SFPM with fidelity, and strengthen collaborative relationships. During CCM Site Visits, the CFS team meets with zone staff about case situations that are particularly challenging with the end goal of determining which children continue to require our services and which can move/remain home safely with no further agency intervention. During 2023 CFS completed CCM Site Visits with seven Human Service Zones. During 2024 nine additional zones have scheduled. CCMs have been very successful per the 2023 cumulative data shown below.

In 22% of cases reviewed staff were supported to move toward case closure because interventions were successful.
Barriers to closing cases included lack of affordable housing, incarcerated parents, and lack of available services (e.g., mental/behavioral health, addiction treatment, in-home support, etc.).
The child welfare workforce highly value the tools, forms, and technical assistance provided by CFS.
96% of Human Service Zone staff who participated in a CCM Site Visit recommend other zones take advantage of this opportunity.

Table 1. ND HHS-CFS Courageous Case Management Site Visits data (2023).

Case Management Redesign



In May 2024 CFS, Human Service Zones, Tribal partners, and cross-agency teams began the **Case Management Redesign** project. Our child welfare system has experienced gains from previous redesign projects and has identified case management as the next program area to improve the manner in which we serve children and families while increasing efficiencies for case managers and supervisors. The focus of this project is to address the child welfare system's most significant challenges, create an improved workflow, and propel us forward to support stronger outcomes for families. It is expected to be an 18-month endeavor due to the project's sizeable scope.