

SIGNS OF SAFETY IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE & THE INFINITY LOOP



An effective model of practice is essential, and Signs of Safety® has been honed by workers' experience and has a substantial evidence base. However, a model of practice is not sufficient to transform children's services. For this to occur, the organization must change with the practice, it needs to be aligned to the practice.

Implementation science indicates that a persistent and comprehensive approach is

required for effective implementation. While some outcomes are apparent quickly, widespread and sustainable adoption and outcomes take time.

What we've learned alongside some of the great organizational change thinkers of our day, is implementing Signs of Safety is an ongoing, iterative effort that begins with a solid foundation during its formative, first 2-3 years, and continuously improves upon itself for many years to come when given the space, structure, discipline and time to do so. We construct our model of implementation of the Signs of Safety through four key themes of implementation which are not neat, separate silos; rather key aspects that are inextricably linked, and fuel one another in a perpetual growth cycle of analysis, decision, execution, evaluation, and reflection (then start over):

Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful. (George Box)

Organizational Alignment: creating aligned policies, priorities, partnerships and practice within the Signs of Safety approach including alignment of within the agency and alignment with external partners & programs.

- **Internal alignment includes:** a project plan (for multiple years), effective project management and governance, Signs of Safety policy documentation, and over time aligning all policies and procedures with Signs of Safety, HR policies (hiring, promoting, disciplining, evaluating), IT and recording systems, communication plan, BOD support, national support.
- **External alignment includes:** a written partner engagement and collaboration strategy to co-create and define shared success with all organizations, groups and individuals who may support the family and/or the children in their work, such as schools, mental health providers, other service providers, foster families, churches, resource centers, CASA, courts, police, and others.
- **Implementation Project Management Structure:** Critical roles must be defined and given the authority, resources, responsibility, accountability and visibility to carry out the key aspects of the implementation. To guide, plan, resource, execute and track the implementation, the following structures will be created and/or further developed:

One common project/change management structure in Signs of Safety implementation

Group/Title	Function/Chair	Potential Members
Steering Committee	Function: Oversight, resource allocation, measurements, managing up, alignment of outside actors Chair: Exec Leader; COO, CEO, Dpty Commissioner	Key: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All key senior management functions Implementation team representation Branch managers Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners Courts/legal Board member
Implementation Team	Function: On-the-ground planning, link to/from practice, feedback loop, learning plans Chair: Signs of Safety Implementation Lead	Key: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representative supervisors Other organizational leaders Practice workgroup representation Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners Other organizational & areas, non-CP
Practice Workgroup/User Group(s)	Function: Rapid feedback of practice and other aspects of the implementation Chair: Supervisor or Implementation Lead	Key: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers (primarily) Supervisors Family-facing staff Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admin staff Partner staff Families, or family advocates
Implementation Lead (for first 18-24 months)	Function: Program management, organize & execute key aspects of the implementation, project planning, organizational activities Reports to: COO/Exec	Professional/Personal Qualifications/Characteristics: Individual with practice knowledge, able to maneuver between exec leaders and supervisors and workers, strong working relationship with partners, emblematic of the S/S principles, humble, curious, growth mindset



Learning: more broadly defined than ‘training’, learning extends beyond specific skills training and workshops. Ten percent of learning happens in formal training environments, with the other 90% taking place in mentoring and day-to-day practice. For learning to translate into practice change, it must build sustainable practice skills, depth of practice, breadth of learning across the agency and partners, while growing internal capacity for leading, mentoring and coaching within the Signs of Safety Framework. Learning includes basic training for practice staff and advanced training and practice leader development for supervisors and other key positions, and over time deliberate workplace-based strategies, and individual and group supervision aligned to Signs of Safety.

Leadership: including a clear and explicit organizational commitment to Signs of Safety, with strong, visible and engaged senior management demonstratively focussed on practice, managing and leading the organization in ways that are consistent with the practice approach, and critically, fostering a safe organization (building confidence that workers will be supported through anxiety, crises and contention).

Meaningful Measures: measuring key areas of impact from the perspective of families, workers, supervisors and the agency as a whole, through qualitative information from families, staff and partners informing practice development and implementation, a succinct set metrics for monitoring, and research for evaluation.

Implementing the Signs of Safety across any organization simultaneously requires great structure and great flexibility. Many great ‘change makers’ across the globe often recited the mantra, “Be stubborn on vision, and flexible on the journey.” A worthy consideration as you embark on this important adventure.

