

Safety Revisions

Talking Points:

June 2022

Release and Beyond



Intro

This work is part of our Putting Families First initiative and the focus on supporting case management practice approaches and strategies in order to serve more children in their family homes. Changes to the safety assessment process will be intentional and iterative with specific attention to centering family voice, better identifying parental protective capacities, and attending to workforce needs.

Who was involved in developing these changes?

Stakeholders that were engaged in the June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release include: The Safety Revisions Workgroup which was comprised of counties from each region appointed by WCHSA (Adams, Douglas, Green Lake, Marathon, Waukesha); BRO Regional Coordinators; Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System; DMCPS.

The Safety Revisions Workgroup met four times over three months and made suggestions to improve danger threat language changes that will be included in the June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release. Additional feedback on the suggested new language was elicited by the Intertribal Child Welfare Committee; WCHSA; DCF's Equity and Inclusion Committee; and the Parent Leaders in Child Welfare Group.

The Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP) has been informed of these initial enhancements in order to accommodate the corresponding changes in CCIP training and outreach materials.



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families



Background

- Racial disparities occur at nearly every major decision-making point along the child welfare intervention continuum ([National Conference of State Legislatures](#)). Both nationally and in Wisconsin, there is an overrepresentation of certain racial and ethnic groups in the child welfare system relative to their representation in the general population ([National Center for Juvenile Justice Data](#)). Stakeholders identified the need for revisions to Wisconsin's current danger threat language and safety assessment process.
- Scope of the project: Enhance the current safety model (existing SAFE framework) to better facilitate a process to create comprehensive safety plans with and informed by families that better identify and document danger threats and protective capacities.
- Enhancements to the current safety model will be to the safety assessment process and will occur in phases over the course of several months. Initial enhancements will include danger threat language changes will be immediately reflected in standards and with the June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release.
 - ⇒ Scope of June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release: Update and refine danger threat language to be culturally responsive as well as, equitable and just. The June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release incorporates language changes that attend to buzz words, but do not change the intent of the danger threat.
 - ⇒ Scope of 2023-2024 eWiSACWIS Releases: Refine and improve the safety model processes to ensure safety decisions are informed by families, leverage parental protective capacities, and keep more children and youth safely in their homes. The 2023-2024 eWiSACWIS Releases will include combining danger threats and/or eliminating danger threats, as well as include improvements to the way danger threats and parental protective capacities are identified, and safety planning is documented in eWiSACWIS.



What did the Safety Revisions Workgroup do?

- The safety model enhancements that will be introduced in June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release are focused on eliminating buzzwords and subjective wording that perpetuates bias in the safety model's danger threat language.
- The [national Capacity Building Center for States](#) informed this process and defined buzzwords as “popular words, phrases, or jargon frequently used to quickly communicate ideas in a particular field or in popular culture. Buzzwords often are harmless in meaning and impact. However, they can be misleading and damaging when used to describe individuals and families in child welfare settings.”
- Some language was changed to more objectively reflect parent/caregiver behavior and its negative impact on child safety.
- Language did not change for every danger threat; more substantive changes to danger threats will occur in the 2023-2024 eWiSACWIS Releases (i.e. eliminating and/or combining threats) as noted above.
- Changes to danger threat language in the June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release **do not change** the original intent of the danger threat. There should not be a substantive impact on current case practice or documentation.
- The June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release includes initial improvements to 12 danger threats. There are several danger threats that the Safety Revisions Workgroup identified to have problematic, biased, and redundant language. These improvements, including elimination, consolidation and refinements, were beyond the scope of what could be included in the upcoming eWiSACWIS release and will be attended to by the Safety Revisions Workgroup for the 2023-2024 eWiSACWIS Releases.



Things to Note and Upcoming Learning Opportunities

- These initial enhancements to the safety model danger threat language will be announced through a DSP Informational Memo which introduces the new danger threat language in the appendices of [Child Protective Services \(CPS\) Safety Intervention Standards](#) Appendix 1 and Appendix 4). This will be included with the June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release which takes place on 6/11/22).
- Over the next several months, information will be shared regularly at DCF Regional Supervisor Meeting and at other pertinent stakeholder meetings. Stakeholder questions will be compiled into a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that will be updated periodically and posted to the safety revision website <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/safety-process-improvements>.
- The monthly Family First newsletter will also feature regular updates and information. The Family First newsletter is a great way to stay informed of the broader efforts DCF is leveraging in our state's Putting Families First strategic transformation work. If you are not already signed up to receive the Family First newsletter, please do so by going to: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/news>.
- DCF will be producing a video that provides an overview of the danger threat language enhancements that will be issued with the updated [CPS Safety Intervention Standards](#) and in the June 2022 eWiSACWIS Release later this Spring.
- DSP is working closely with WCWPDS and CCIP to coordinate where these language changes impact training and court-related materials.