

Safety Planning



Read this sheet with a support person or trusted worker.
Writing a safety plan can involve hard talks and heavy feelings.

What is a safety plan?

A safety plan documents worries. It lists some ideas about how these worries can be managed and made smaller.

A safety plan can help you and your support people know how to keep you and bub safe.

Safety plans and child protection

Child protection may want to see 'evidence' of how you will look after bub.

Making a safety plan shows that you are serious about working together with child protection.

A safety plan can show that you are taking positive steps.



The safety plan should be written.
Otherwise it will not be accepted by child protection.

How do I create a safety plan?

A safety plan has a list of:

- 1 The 'red flags' that child protection is worried about
- 2 Your strengths and your family's strengths
- 3 How you will respond to 'red flags' to make sure bub is safe and well.



What child protection sees as a 'red flag'?

Knowing how child protection thinks can help you write a safety plan responding to their 'red flags'. Some of these 'red flags' are unfair. 'Red flags' might include labels and judgments about someone and the things that have happened to them.

Common 'red flags' child protection may be worried about during pregnancy include:

Being a young first-time parent:

Young people are more likely to have contact with child protection when they are pregnant.

Criminal record:

Living with someone who has a criminal record can be a 'red flag' to child protection. You can ask child protection if they have concerns about other people in your life.

Previously living in state 'care' (E.g., out-of-home care):

Your pregnancy is more likely to come to the attention of child protection when you are living or have previously lived in state care. This includes out-of-home care and prison.

Family violence:

Child protection may be worried about physical harm happening to bub when there is family violence during pregnancy.

Housing worries:

If you are homeless, couch-surfing or have housing worries, child protection might worry that bub won't have a safe place to live.

Missed pregnancy care (prenatal) appointments:

Missing pregnancy care (prenatal) appointments might be a 'red flag' for midwives and child protection. It is important to rebook your pregnancy care (prenatal) appointments.

Parents living with disability:

Parents living with disability are more likely to have child protection contact. This includes intellectual disability.

Mental health worries:

Parents living with mental health worries are more likely to have child protection contact.

Substance use worries:

Parents using substances, especially while pregnant, are more likely to be reported to child protection.



Writing your strengths down

Everyone's safety plan is unique. It is based on each family's strengths and the ideas they put together.

All families have strengths. These are things that are good for bub's wellbeing.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, culture is a strength.

Some other things child protection might see as a strength are:

Social supports -

- These are the supportive relationships you have.
- They can be people who are paid (e.g., workers) or not paid (e.g., family).
- Child protection might want you to have paid and unpaid supports.



Paid supports might be:

- Aboriginal Health Workers
- Support Groups
- Counsellors
- Aboriginal midwives
- Trusted workers

Unpaid supports might be:

- Your partner
- Immediate family (E.g., mum, brother)
- Elders
- Extended family (E.g., cousins, aunt)
- Friends
- Trusted people in community

Good health care and healthy food -

- These are the health decisions you make during your pregnancy.

This can include:

- Going to the doctor
- Going to pregnancy care (prenatal) appointments
- Eating well (eating fruits and veggies, cutting back on junk food)
- Keeping healthy (E.g., exercise, cutting back or stopping smoking).





TIP!

Child protection might want to know:

- If you use drugs while pregnant
- If you drink alcohol while pregnant
- If you smoke cigarettes while pregnant

Healthy relationships between adults, like partners and family members -



- This means strong, positive relationships in the family.
- It's about support and all the positive people in bub's life.
- Sometimes child protection only thinks about healthy relationships between parents. But Aboriginal family is bigger than this.
- Healthy relationships may look like an Aunty, Nan or Dad's side of the family coming to pregnancy care (prenatal) appointments.

Parenting skills and understanding how babies grow up -

- Raising a baby is a big job. Learning more about what to expect, and how to help your baby grow up safe and strong can help.
- Parents with older children already know how babies grow up.

TIP!

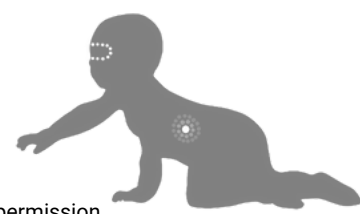
Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people grow up looking after a lot of babies, like nieces, nephews, and cousins – this is a strength and should be documented.



Safety planning: Next steps



- ⦿ The safety plan should be written down.
- ⦿ Any changes to the safety plan should be written down.
- ⦿ Any big changes in your life (E.g., new house, new partner) should be written in the safety plan.
- ⦿ The safety plan should be looked at and used – by parents, their supports (paid and not paid) and workers (including child protection).
- ⦿ Depending on where you live, child protection might be involved in creating a safety plan with you. For example, in Western Australia, safety planning is part of pre-birth meetings.





Safety Plan Example

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Examples

Safety concern

(List the safety concerns that your family may have or the concerns identified by child protection)

Housing worries.

I am couch surfing at the moment. This means I am still a bit unsure where bub and I will live. I know this is important. I want bub to have a safe place to grow and play in.

Family strengths

(List what your family strengths are)

I have lots of family members close by.

I have lots of supportive relationships like close family near me, and good workers (E.g., my midwife, Aboriginal Health Worker, lawyer, family support worker)

Safety goal

(What parents need to do to ensure that safety concern is addressed. Create goals that are SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-limited)

Get support for housing worries in time for baby's birth (i.e., at 6 months pregnant or earlier).

I will talk to my family, workers and child protection about housing options for me and bub.

How do strengths currently address concerns?

(List everyone's view of what parents and family are doing or have in place that help address safety concerns)

My Aunty will support me, and give bub and I a place to stay at her house after baby is born.

My other family members are going to help me to set up space in my Aunty's home for bub.

My family will help me with women's business when baby is born so I get support looking after bub.

My family support worker has put me on the housing register and is helping me to find a house of my own.

My Aboriginal Health Worker and my midwife are helping me with pregnancy care (prenatal) appointments so I can have a healthy pregnancy.

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What else could parents and/or family do?

(List everyone's view of what else parents and/or family can do to help meet the safety goal)

My family and I can speak to services (like Aboriginal housing services) and tell them I am pregnant. This might get me on a priority waitlist.

Who to contact to participate in the safety plan?

(List all the people that you think should be involved in writing the safety plan)

Mum, dad, Aunty, other family members

Workers – Family Support Worker, Aboriginal Health Worker

How will we know that the safety plan is working?

(Write down the ideal situation – what will happen if the plan works)

We will know the safety plan is working if I have written down options for where I can live.

I can live with family after bub is born.

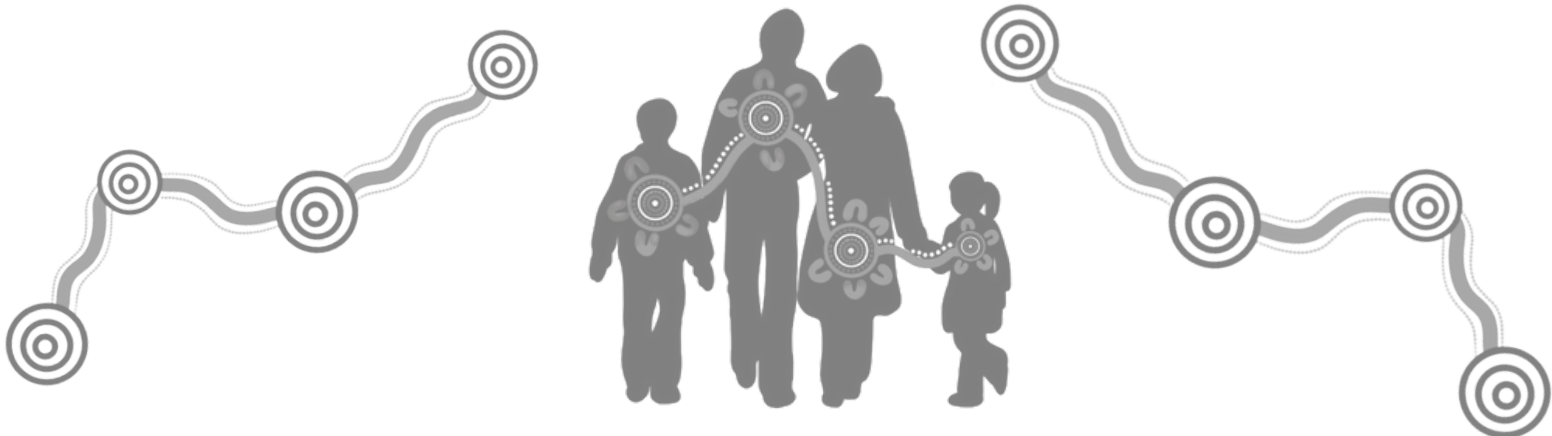
I am trying to get my own home with support.

If the safety plan is not working, we will:

(Write down your back up plans and what you will do if things don't happen the way you hoped they would)

If the plan is not working, I will need more support like help with emergency accommodation.

My nan said I can also stay with her but she lives interstate.



Disclaimer: This resource is part of a research project and is subject to change. Updated 17/03/2025. V1.2.

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