



# SDM SAFETY ASSESSMENT: KEY ELEMENTS

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# RECOGNIZING TRADITIONAL STEWARDS OF THE LAND

EVIDENT  
CHANGE

# INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Put in chat:

- Name;
- Role;
- Knowledge of the SDM safety assessment (scale 1-5)



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES



Understand the SDM system and how the SDM safety assessment supports decision making



Learn the purpose, structure, and policy and procedures of the SDM safety assessment



Briefly discuss safety planning supported by the SDM safety assessment



Learn effective techniques for crafting documentation in support of SDM safety assessment completion



# WHAT IS THE SDM<sup>®</sup> SYSTEM?

A research- and  
evaluation-based  
decision-support  
system

# TOOLS ARE A PROMPT FOR PRACTICE



Tools do not make decisions.



People make decisions.



+



**Tools help people make better decisions.**

# What helps in making good decisions?



Consistency



Accuracy

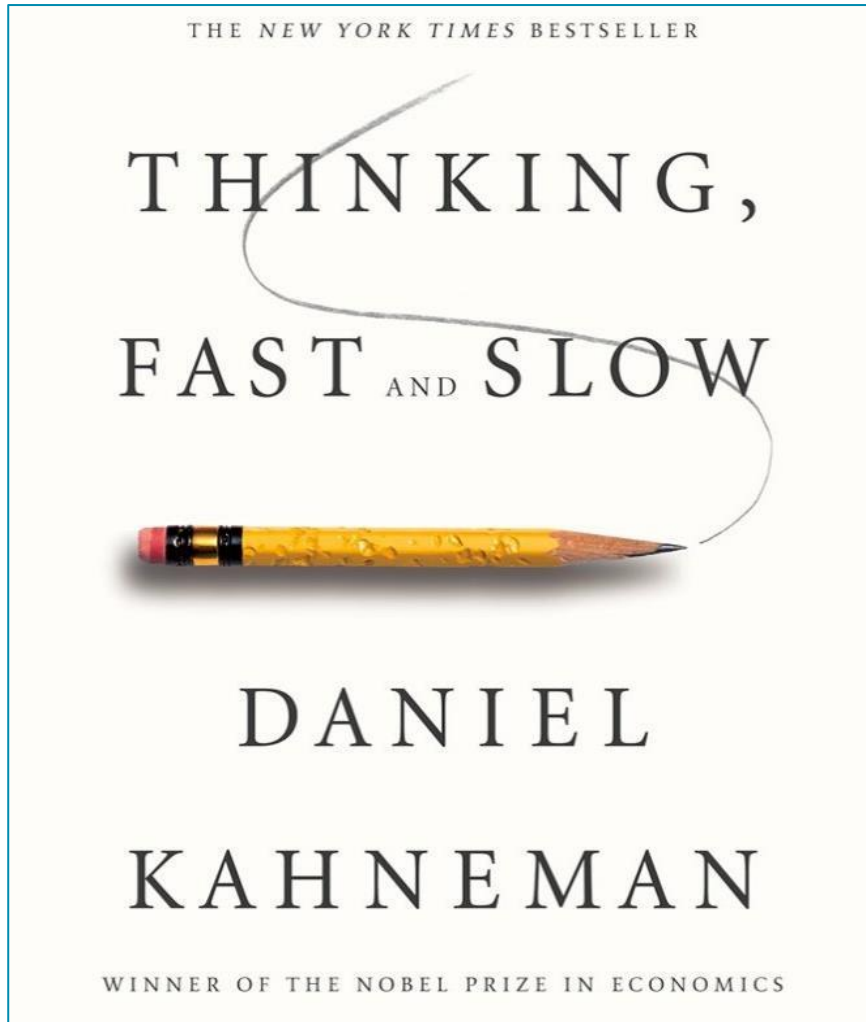


Equity



Utility

# Child Welfare and Cognitive Errors





## System 1: Intuitive



Fast



Unconscious



Automatic



Everyday decisions



Unnoticed errors

## System 2: Analytic



Slow



Conscious



Effortful



Complex decisions

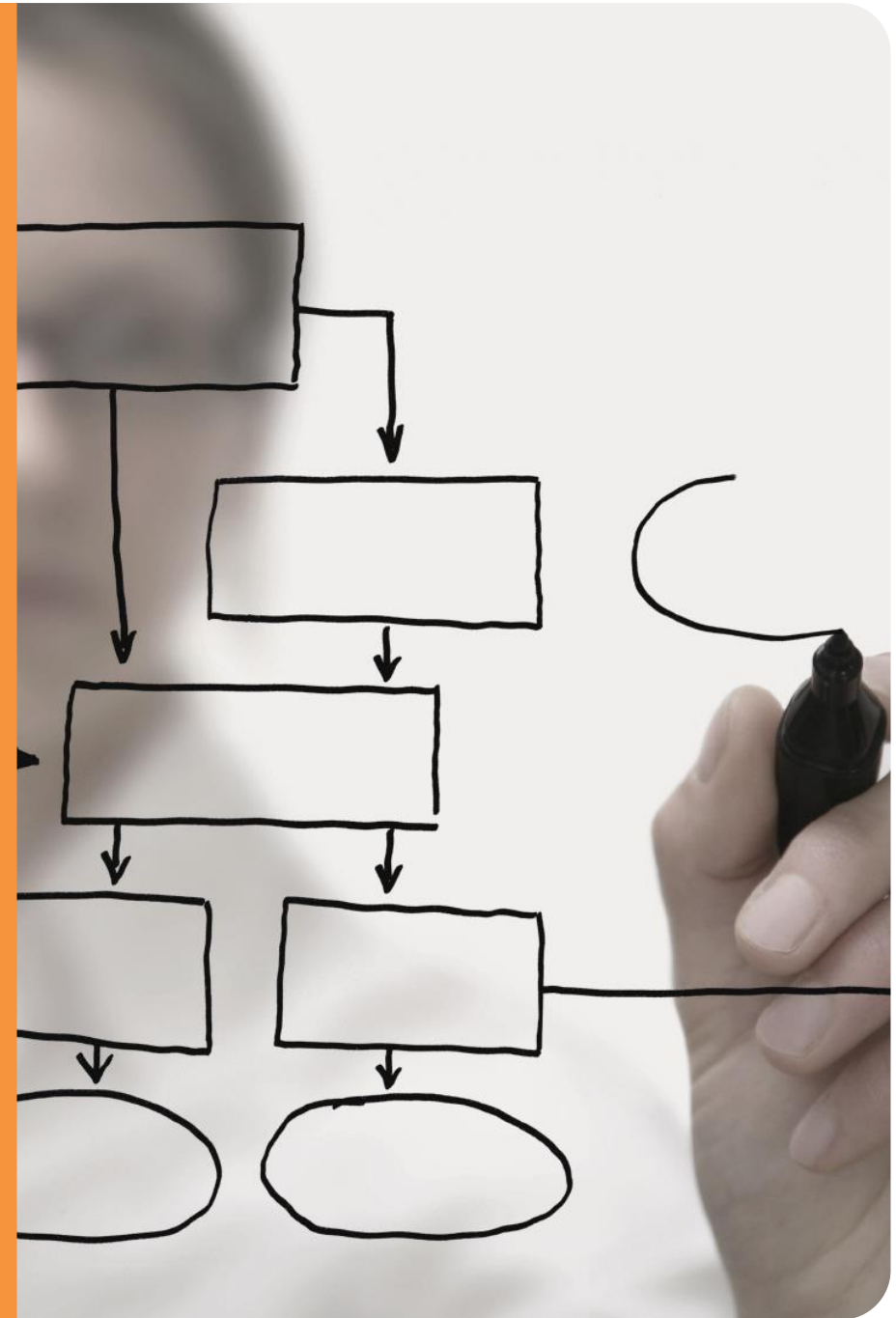


Check and balance

**SYSTEM 2**

can be activated with the SDM<sup>®</sup> model.

# BENEFITS OF STRUCTURING DECISIONS



# SYSTEM OBJECTIVES



Provide workers with **simple, objective, reliable** assessments to support their decisions.



Increase **consistency** and **accuracy** in decision making.



Provide managers and administrators with **management information** for improved program planning, evaluation, and resource allocation.

# THE SDM® SYSTEM AT EACH DECISION

Should this referral be investigated?



Intake  
Assessment

Can the child(ren) safely remain in the home?



Safety  
Assessment

Should a case be opened?



Risk  
Assessment

What interventions could address child and family needs?



FSNA

Can the child return home?



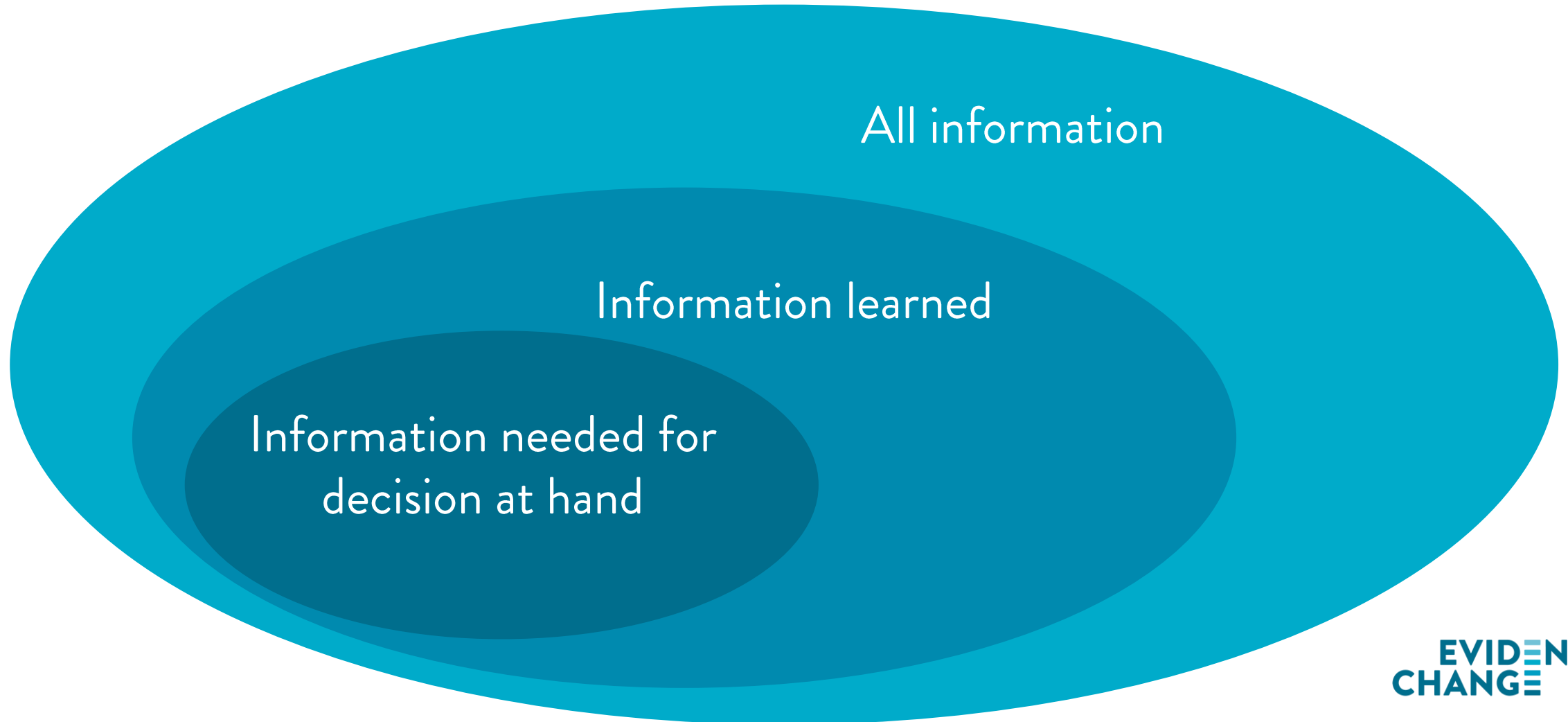
Reunification  
Assessment

Should this case be closed?



Risk  
Reassessment

# HOW ARE THE SDM ASSESSMENTS HELPFUL?





# WHAT IS SAFETY?

Actions of protection, taken by the caregiver and supports, that address the danger and are demonstrated over time.

# Distinguishing Safety and Risk in SDM

## Safety Assessment

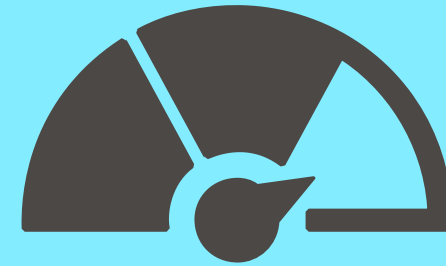


Is there an immediate threat of serious harm?

Informs: *The removal decision*

All items connected to NC law and/or contain caregiver, behavior, impact on the child

## Risk Assessment

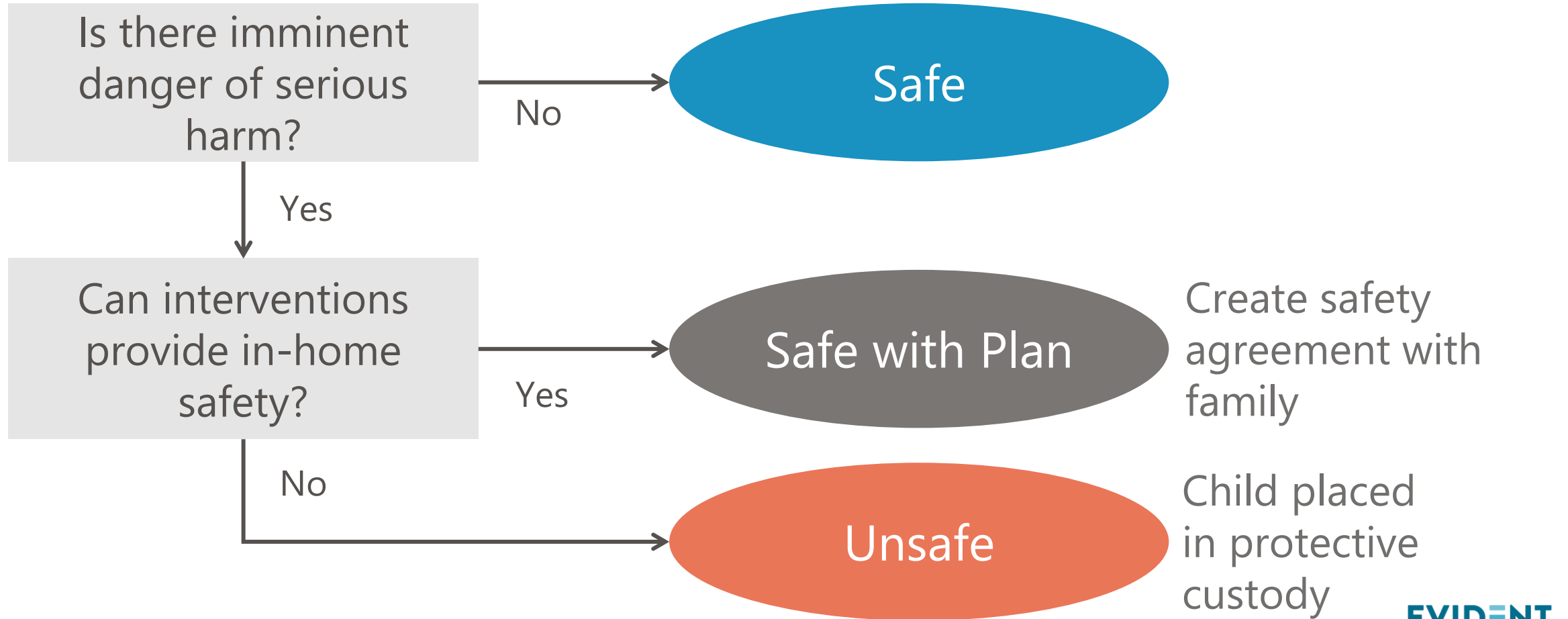


What is the likelihood of future system involvement?

Informs: *A prevention opportunity*

All items have a statistical connection to future outcomes we are hoping to avoid

# SDM SAFETY ASSESSMENT LOGIC







# SDM SAFETY ASSESSMENT: POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- Which cases
- Who
- When
- Decision

THE

CONSIDERATION

11. **DEFINITION.**—A contract which induces a party to perform a substantial part of the contract. It is the substance of the contract inducing the parties to perform.



Read to  
the  
period.



Examples  
are not all-  
inclusive lists.



Be aware of:

- AND
- OR



When  
unsure,  
ask others.



"Unasked" is  
different from  
"unknown."



Use professional  
judgment and  
critical thinking.

**Domestic violence exists in the household and poses an imminent danger of serious physical and/or emotional harm to the child.**

**Item or  
"stem"**

There is evidence of domestic violence in the household, AND the alleged perpetrator's behavior creates a safety concern for the child.

Domestic violence perpetrators, in the context of the child welfare system, are parents and/or caretakers who engage in a pattern of coercive control over one or more intimate partners. This pattern of behavior may continue after the end of a relationship or when the couple no longer lives together. The alleged perpetrator's actions often directly involve, target, and impact any children in the family.

Incidents may be identified by self-report, credible report by a family or other household member, other credible sources, and/or police reports.

**Definition  
(threshold)**

Examples that support the existence of domestic violence may include the following:

- ⌚ The child was previously injured in a domestic violence incident.
- ⌚ The child exhibits severe anxiety (i.e., nightmares, insomnia) related to situations associated with domestic violence.
- ⌚ The child cries, cowers, cringes, trembles, or otherwise exhibits fear as a result of domestic violence in the household.
- ⌚ The child is at potential risk of physical injury based upon his/her vulnerability and/or proximity to the incident (i.e., caretaker holding child while alleged perpetrator attacks caretaker, incident occurs in a vehicle while a child is in the back seat).
- ⌚ The child's behavior increases risk of injury (i.e., attempting to intervene during a violent dispute, participating in a violent dispute).
- ⌚ Use of guns, knives, or other instruments in a violent, threatening, and/or intimidating manner.
- ⌚ Evidence of property damage resulting from domestic violence that could have a harmful impact on the child (i.e., broken glass and child could cut him/herself, broken cell phone and child cannot call for help).

**Examples**





# **FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILD VULNERABILITY**

# CHILD VULNERABILITIES PRACTICE

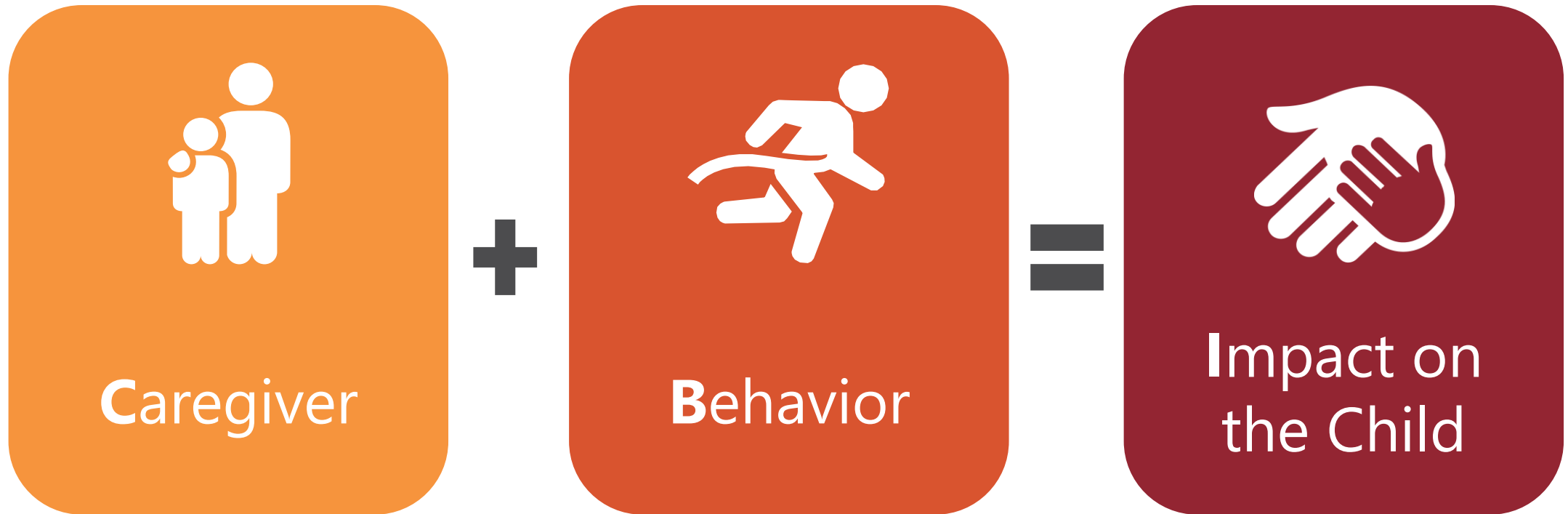
Samantha (age 17) is one of four children in the home. All children live with their father. Sophie (age 7) is diagnosed with ADHD and depression. She has recently been expressing some suicidal ideation. None of the children have known physical or cognitive disabilities. Samantha is currently in a wheelchair because she broke her leg during a soccer game. She will be in the wheelchair for at least another month.



# SAFETY INDICATORS

# SAFETY INDICATORS

Ask questions that reveal . . .





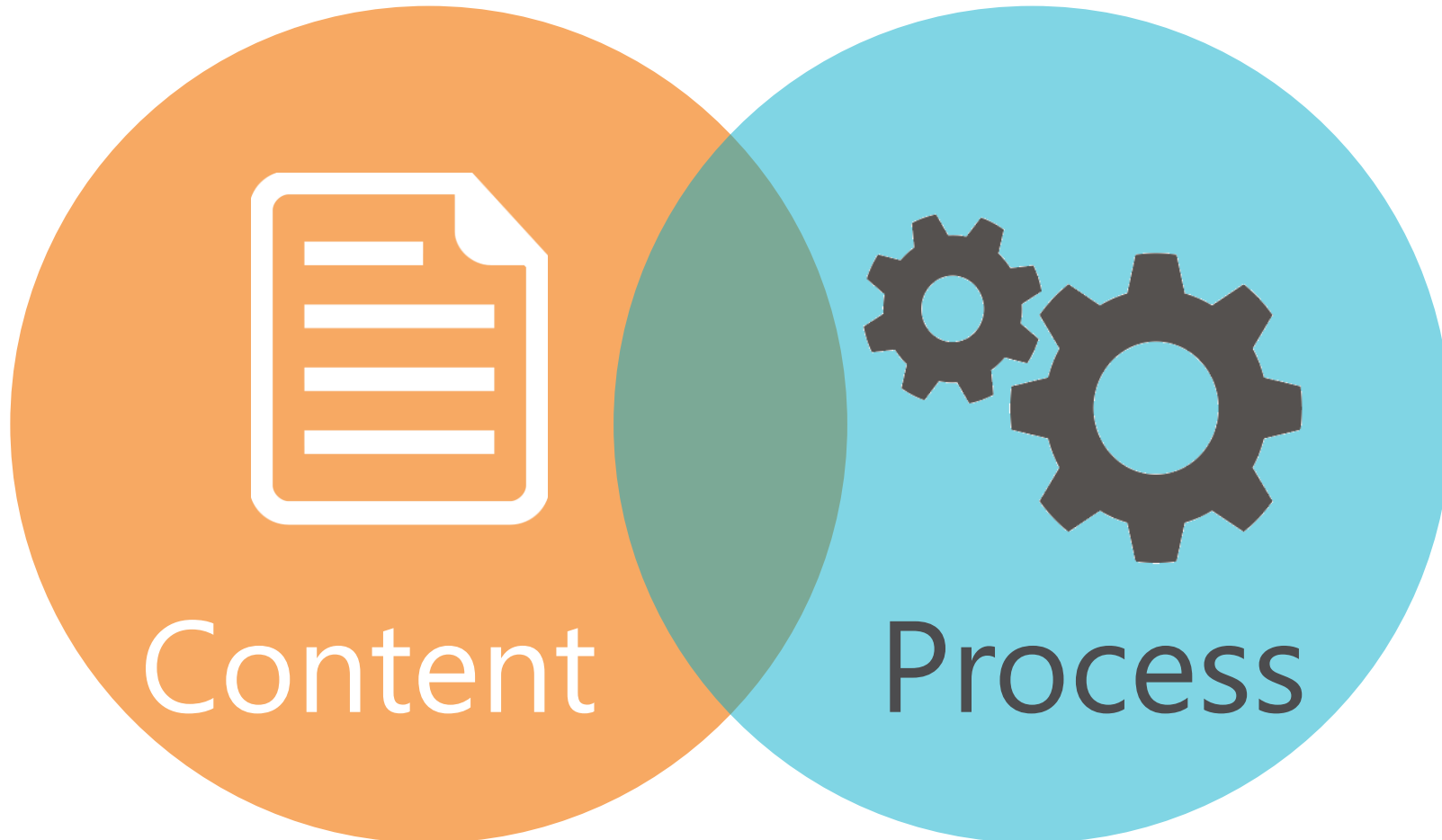
# SAFETY INDICATORS: PRACTICE A

Upon first face-to-face visit, worker noticed that the 10-year-old had a large bruise on his upper arm, as well as several smaller “fingerprint” bruises on his lower arm. When worker interviewed child alone, child said that his dad got mad when child got an answer wrong on his math homework. Child stated that his dad hit him with a closed fist on the upper arm as the child tried to shield himself. He said that dad then grabbed his arm and dragged him to his bedroom. Child said dad told the child he had to stay there the rest of the night. Child reports this happened around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. and that he did not get dinner that night.

# SAFETY INDICATORS: PRACTICE B

During a visit to the hospital, the worker found the mother to have been using alcohol and illegal drugs throughout her pregnancy. She had given birth a few days earlier. The infant is showing signs of withdrawal, has low birth weight and slow reflexes. The mother says her baby is fine and would like to leave the hospital soon so that she can take care of her baby at home.

# SAFETY PLANNING



# WHAT IS A SAFETY AGREEMENT?

A short-term, detailed, behavior-based plan that leaves actionable steps for the family and family's network to take in response to specific dangers.



# A SAFETY AGREEMENT . . .



Is an action plan for  
changed behavior



Responds to clearly  
identified danger  
indicators



Is short term and time  
limited



Must include family  
and the network



Has clear backup and  
monitoring plans



Designates a clear  
time for review



# SAFETY AND SERVICES ARE NOT THE SAME THING

- It is important to distinguish between behavior change and service compliance.
- Services can be a bridge to new safe behaviors over time. They go on the case plan but not a safety agreement.



# DOCUMENTATION

EVIDENT  
CHANGE

# THANK YOU

EvidentChange.org

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**EVIDENT**  
**CHANGE**

