

TOOLKIT

FEBRUARY 2021

Safety Planning with Foreign National Children and Youth Survivors of Trafficking

USCRI-TVAP TRAFFICKING TOOLKIT SERIES



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This toolkit is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$23,343,349 with 100 percent funded by ACF/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), in partnership with Heartland Human Care Services (HHCS), developed this toolkit for service providers across the country and in U.S. territories who are committed to working with foreign national youth survivors of human trafficking. We thank all these agencies for meeting the needs of survivors of trafficking every day.

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PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

Foreign national minors in the United States who have been subjected to a severe form of trafficking in persons are eligible for certain benefits and services under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, as amended. The **Trafficking Victim Assistance Program**¹ (TVAP) funds case management services for qualifying minors.

This toolkit uses **notes, tips, activities, and checklists** to provide **practical strategies** for TVAP providers engaged in safety planning with youth survivors of human trafficking with special consideration given to safety planning with foreign national youth by recognizing the intersectional identities they hold and the physical and emotional risks to their safety that exist due to their various lived experiences of trauma.

Throughout the toolkit, the terms youth, minor, and child are used interchangeably and indicate persons under the age of eighteen except where a particular age range is specified for age-appropriate safety planning.

This toolkit explores ways to assess the safety of foreign national youth, details tips and tools to recognize and respond to crisis situations and provides age-appropriate strategies for maintaining physical and emotional safety in early childhood and in children and adolescent youth.

This toolkit presents key safety considerations for immigrants, including ‘know your rights’ information and information about voluntary departure and repatriation.

TOOLKIT ICONS



NOTES



TIPS



ACTIVITIES



CHECKLISTS

Values & Principles

The TVAP model of comprehensive case management fosters quality services to meet the unique needs of individual foreign national survivors of trafficking. Case managers deliver core services in a trauma-informed manner in partnership with individuals in need of services who are enrolled in TVAP.

TVAP providers prioritize participant safety and support participants in safety planning. Participants define safety for themselves while providers guide participants in addressing physical and emotional safety in their environments and in their relationships.

Safety Planning

The concept of safety is central to social work practice when working with all survivors of violence. When someone experiences human trafficking, their physical and emotional safety

¹ USCRI administers the Trafficking Assistance Program (TVAP) for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP).

are threatened. This loss of safety due to traumatic experiences can alter the way in which the brain processes events and therefore, the way in which survivors respond to stimuli.

To facilitate the healing process, organizations working with youth human trafficking survivors should help them to regain a sense of physical and emotional safety and build coping strategies for dealing with traumatic triggers.² Promoting a sense of safety is a core tenet of trauma-informed care.

Safety planning is a process or intervention in social work when working with victims of violence. **The goal of safety planning is to help clients identify and explore practical and feasible options to increase their safety and decrease exposure to harm.**

Safety planning involves working collaboratively with clients to develop strategies that can be implemented in various situations.³ As such, safety planning inevitably looks different for every survivor and may change over time depending on circumstances or crises that arise. **Safety planning is an ongoing process** that should be discussed at intake and periodically throughout the youth's case management to adapt to the individual's ongoing safety concerns.

For young people residing near their trafficker, this may mean a plan to stay safe and avoid any future interactions or a plan on how to handle a chance encounter.

Some young people may be in situations where their relationships are unhealthy, even if it is unrelated to their trafficking. This requires safety planning in a similar fashion. Safety plans should incorporate emotional safety, teach grounding strategies and coping skills for when a young person feels triggered, dissociates, or feels a loss of control.

NOTE

The inability to regulate emotions is common in young children, but when present to an extreme degree, it may indicate a history of trauma and/or an emotional or behavioral disorder.

1. **Emotional triggers, also known as trauma reminders**, are people, words, opinions, situations, or environments that provoke an intense and excessive emotional reaction within us.
2. **Dissociation** is a common defense reaction to stressful or traumatic situations that impairs the normal state of awareness and limits or alters one's sense of identity, memory, or consciousness.

A successful safety plan will:

- ✓ Assess current and potential risks and safety concerns
- ✓ Create strategies for avoiding or reducing the threat of harm
- ✓ Outline steps to stay safe in potentially dangerous situations
- ✓ Build in strategies for emotional safety, grounding, and regulation



² <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/braindevtrauma.pdf>

³ Logan, T.K., Walker, R. Advocate Safety Planning Training, Feedback, and Personal Challenges. J Fam Viol 33, 213–225 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-017-9949-9>

1 SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOREIGN NATIONAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Foreign national youth survivors face unique challenges in achieving safety with stigma, cultural norms, and their view of informal community support all impacting the ways in which they may choose to achieve safety. Youth without immigration status or youth who are living with sponsors without immigration status face risks to the preservation of the family unit and ultimately, their safety. Concerns about immigration enforcement and family separation are constant stressors for many immigrant families without legal status. It is imperative to take time to build trust, emphasize privacy and confidentiality, and develop culturally sensitive safety planning based on the survivor's priorities.⁴

⁴ Sabri, B., Nnawulezi, N., Njie-Carr, V.P.S. et al. Multilevel Risk and Protective Factors for Intimate Partner Violence Among African, Asian, and Latina Immigrant and Refugee Women: Perceptions of Effective Safety Planning Interventions. *Race Soc Probl* 10, 348–365 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-018-9247-z>



NOTE

A sponsor is an individual or entity to which the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) releases an unaccompanied child out of federal custody.⁵ This may be a family member, friend, or other verified relative. Sponsors are required to adhere to the terms of the [ORR Sponsor Care Agreement](#) until a child turns 18.

CHILD WELFARE

A case manager should discuss **confidentiality and its limits, mandated reporting, and informed consent** at the start of every visit with a minor and their family. It is important that these constraints be explained in a clear, age-appropriate manner in terms that the client can understand, so they are aware of a case manager's obligations to report concerns related to safety.

Case managers should follow the [mandated reporting guidelines for their state](#) as it relates to child welfare and concerns of trafficking.

FAMILY SAFETY

There may be times when a family living situation or sponsor placement turns out to be unsafe, risky, or even abusive. Case managers should regularly assess the risk and safety of the home environment in which a youth resides. It is important to consider that children may experience safety concerns in the home in two ways:

1. As a result of direct victimization (abuse, neglect, trafficking)
2. In their home environment (domestic violence, substance use among household members, mental illness of household members, trafficking of other adults in the home)

Safety plans should be customized to meet the specific needs of a minor's situation and may involve a caregiver or another household member.

In cases where children reside with a sponsor, it is especially important to understand what the sponsor knows about laws in the U.S. and to assist in educating the sponsor about those laws and legal requirements. This is especially

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ What is the relationship like with the family/sponsor?
- ✓ Does the family/sponsor know about the youth's lived experience of trafficking?
- ✓ Is the household safe? Are there observable cues that point to unsafe indicators, concerns, or victimization of any sort?
- ✓ What time alone can you spend with the young person to talk more about their safety in the home?
- ✓ Is the family/sponsor holding anything over the child as a form of exploitation?



⁵ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/sponsors>

true for information pertaining to a youth's right to education and federal and state standards on child labor. Sponsors may be unaware of laws that relate to mandates for education or age and work limits. They should be educated on this at the forefront, so they are aware of the repercussions of any violations of the law. **Case managers should always reference ORR's Sponsor Handbook when discussing the sponsor's obligations.**

Case managers need to be especially vigilant to issues that arise when a youth discloses they owe a debt or if the youth's sponsor believes the youth owes a debt for their journey to the U.S.

No one is permitted to force an unaccompanied minor to work in U.S., even if there is a debt. In a situation where it is identified that the sponsor relationship exhibits signs of abuse or neglect, or if the child is being forced to repay the family or sponsor's debts, or threatened or pressured to work, there may be an obligation to report this to the child abuse and neglect hotline in your state. Indeed, if it appears that the sponsor is trafficking the child, a [Request for Assistance](#) should be made to OTIP within 24 hours of having credible information of trafficking.

Reporting to the appropriate agency should always be done with full transparency and in coordination with the youth. Once a case is reported, a child welfare worker may find a new living arrangement for the youth if the home is deemed unsafe. During this time, it is important for the case manager to address this possibility and safety plan with the youth including a discussion about what to do if an abusive sponsor escalates abuse in response to the protective services report.

Other issues that sometimes trigger foreign national youth involvement with child welfare include cultural differences in disciplinary practices, untreated mental health problems

NOTE

A Request for Assistance is an online form that a provider should complete within 24 hours to request help for a minor who the provider suspects may have been trafficked. Providers may access the form through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) Shepherd system <https://shspfm.gss.acf.hhs.gov/eaasidentityserver/Identity/Account/Login/LoginSelection/>.

within families, and substance or alcohol abuse. Oftentimes sponsors are ineligible, based on their immigration status, for federal or state-funded services to address these vital needs which compounds existing family tension. In these cases, it is **important to educate and provide resources to families** to support them as they engage with child welfare, so they may remain together as a family if it is safe to do so.

FOSTER CARE AND UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS PROGRAMS

Unaccompanied children may be eligible for services through their state's foster care program or be eligible for the [Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program](#) (URM). URM follows the same state or county laws and regulations that govern domestic foster care, however, URM programs are separate from the domestic foster care system and they consist of agencies that have experience working with refugees and immigrants. URM foster families are oriented towards the particular needs of refugee and

foreign national youth and agency staff assists with special services that may be needed by foreign born youth like English as a Second Language, cultural identity and adjustment, or family tracing. Unaccompanied children under age 18 may be eligible for the URM program with their Eligibility Letter from the Office on Trafficking in Persons.

NOTE

Additional information about the URM program can be found in the Resources section of this toolkit.

For minors living in a foster placement or being removed from sponsors or families to enter foster placement, the case manager needs to:



- ✓ Assess the minor's immediate safety and contact law enforcement with any emergency concerns
- ✓ Contact the state's Child Protective Services immediately if the minor is without a caregiver
- ✓ Contact the ORR National Call Center to notify them that the minor is no longer residing with the sponsor or caregiver
- ✓ Ensure that the minor can access immediate support through the foster care program
- ✓ Coordinate services between TVAP and state foster care
- ✓ Liaise with ORR on the URM application and placement process (urmprogram@acf.hhs.gov)

CHILD ADVOCATES AND POST RELEASE SERVICES

In 2008, Congress passed the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA). As required by the TVPRA, ORR provides child advocates with access to information necessary to effectively advocate for the best interests of children with whom they are working. Many child advocates have a clear understanding of the safety issues present in a young person's life and continue to remain in touch post release when appropriate. In these circumstances, it may be helpful to work with a child advocate to assess risk and safety plan provided that the youth has granted the proper release of information.

The TVPRA also requires HHS to conduct follow-up services, during pending removal proceedings, for children for whom a home study was conducted. Home Study and Post Release Services (PRS) workers may also have unique insights into the home environment and safety concerns for youth.



Collaborative relationships with other service providers can be helpful in ensuring a youth's safety overall.

If a minor has been released from ORR custody with an Eligibility Letter, they should be assigned a PRS case manager until they are 18 years old. In some cases, minors that have been identified as victims of trafficking while residing with a sponsor will have an assigned PRS case manager for 90 days. An unaccompanied child residing with a caregiver and experiencing safety concerns may request PRS through the [ORR National Call Center](#). A PRS case manager can assist with identifying alternate placement options for a minor and provide more intensive case management.

IMMIGRATION CONSIDERATIONS

Know Your Rights

It is important for immigrant families to understand their rights. These rights protect all people, regardless of immigration status. To enter an undocumented person's home, immigration officers need either 1) a valid warrant signed by a judge or magistrate or 2) the permission of the person. Undocumented families should avoid opening the door, if possible. A warrant does not mean an undocumented person has to answer questions. They can remain silent and show officials a Know Your Rights card like the one displayed below.

Case managers should ensure that foreign national youth and families are aware of their rights and how to exercise their rights. Case managers should support families in connecting with attorneys to be screened for immigration relief and help families to plan in the event of family separation. All members of the family need to know how to follow the plan.

The plan should include a way for family members to access all immigration or other important documents. These include:



- ✓ Children's school emergency contact information
- ✓ Children's immunization records
- ✓ Children's birth certificate (whether it is from U.S. or another country)
- ✓ Children's social security card (if applicable)
- ✓ Children's passport
- ✓ Attorney's contact information (if applicable)
- ✓ Intention of Parents for Care for Minor Child
- ✓ Temporary Parental Consent Agreement

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS CARDS

**I AM
EXERCISING
MY RIGHT
TO REMAIN
SILENT.**

Please be informed that I am choosing to exercise my right to remain silent. I am also exercising my right to refuse to sign anything until my attorney reviews it. If I am detained, I request to contact my attorney immediately. My attorney's contact information is:

Name _____

Phone _____

I know that...

- | | |
|--|--|
| ① I have rights. I have dignity. I am not alone. | ④ Anything I say can be used against me. |
| ② I have the right to speak to my attorney. | ⑤ I have the right to remain silent in ANY situation. |
| ③ I have the right to refuse to sign anything before my attorney reviews it. | ⑥ I can show officials this card or say out loud that I am remaining silent. |

SÉ QUE...

- | | |
|--|--|
| ① Tengo derechos. Tengo dignidad. No estoy solo. | ④ Cualquier cosa que diga se puede usar contra mí. |
| ② Tengo el derecho a hablar con mi abogado. | ⑤ Tengo el derecho a permanecer en silencio en CUALQUIER situación. |
| ③ Tengo el derecho a negar a firmar cualquier documento antes de que mi abogado lo revise. | ⑥ Puedo mostrar esta tarjeta y anunciar, "I choose not to answer." (Practica en inglés.) |

Caregivers should plan in advance with children to let them know where important documents are located, who they can trust to call, and how to contact an attorney, if they have one.

The plan should make arrangements for the ongoing legal custody of children if parents or other legal custodians are detained.



Keeping important numbers for case managers, attorneys, or trusted friends and family in a safe, easily accessible location for children, as well as copies of documents can help children be prepared in case something happens to their caregiver. It is important to prepare children without instilling a sense of fear.

Voluntary Departure & Repatriation

A minor or their family member may determine with their immigration attorney that it is in their best interest to return to their country of origin

NOTE

Voluntary Departure is an option for clients that may have limited forms of immigration relief to return to their home country voluntarily to avoid the longer-term consequences associated with a final order of removal.

through Voluntary Departure. Clients should always consult with an immigration attorney about their legal options.

In the case that a client decides to return to their country of origin, the case manager should discuss safety planning around their return, especially if there were concerns of trafficking in their home country. A case manager can also support the client with resources for repatriation and ongoing case management services when available in their country.

Risk of Separation from Family or Sponsor

When a single mother is detained by immigration authorities without the opportunity to make care arrangements for her child, that child may be turned over to the foster care system without any idea of what happened to his mother.”

—From Blog, “My Mother’s Story” by Wendy Cervantes, Vice President, Immigration and Child Rights Policy, First Focus

Parents and sponsors may ask to make a phone call to ensure that the young person is cared for and tell Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) staff, including the person processing them at the detention center and the Deportation Officer, that they have youth in their care that require support. This will not always result in being released but may help the parent or sponsor figure out a plan for care of the child.

2 APPROACHES TO SAFETY PLANNING

ASSESSING RISK

A safety assessment is a standard way to collect information on threatening conditions and current, significant, observable threats to the safety of a youth. A safety assessment is conducted to determine the degree to which a youth is likely to be in danger in the immediate future.

A risk assessment is the analysis of information to determine the degree to which key factors are present in a situation that increase the likelihood of harm to a child or adolescent.



When assessing for risk or planning for safety, ensure the minor is interviewed in a private space, away from caregivers or other household members, and that **confidentiality, mandated reporting, and informed consent** are addressed at the start of the conversation. Questions to consider may include:

- ✓ Does the minor report feeling safe?
- ✓ Does the minor report feeling pressured to work or provide income to the household?
- ✓ Does the minor have access to a safe and comfortable place to sleep?
- ✓ Is the minor provided with food and other basic items?
- ✓ Is the minor eating and sleeping well?
- ✓ Does the minor report experiencing nightmares?
- ✓ Has the minor expressed thoughts of self-harm?
- ✓ Does the minor report being disciplined in a way that indicates possible abuse or neglect?
- ✓ Does the minor have a network of social support, or safe, trusted adults that they can rely on?
- ✓ Is the minor enrolled in school?
- ✓ Does the minor feel comfortable attending school?
- ✓ Has the minor received any threatening messages or unwanted communications?
- ✓ Is the minor engaged in social media in a way that compromises the minor's safety?



Based on a minor's response to these questions, a safety plan can be customized to meet the child's needs. In the case of suspicions of abuse, neglect, trafficking, or risk of harm to self or others, proceed with your state's mandated reporting guidelines and where necessary, report to 911, Child Protective Services, law enforcement, a crisis response team, or the National Human Trafficking Hotline.



Be careful about what gets documented in any safety assessment to avoid complications to a young person's immigration case. If the youth disclose illegal activities, recording that activity may cause harm if discovered by subpoena during a criminal trial. This factor should always be taken into consideration when putting into writing any specific information about activities that might have occurred during the trafficking itself. The youth's historic account of risks of harm should be part of a verbal conversation and not recorded in the case file. Instead, safety planning should focus on future strategies to assist the youth when in present or future danger and those strategies and methods for implementation are recorded in the case file.

PHYSICAL SAFETY

When considering the physical safety of children, it is important to consider all the people in their lives who may potentially compromise their physical safety, including people in their life who may still have ties to their trafficker. All caregivers and interpreters should be screened to ensure there are no connections or ties that may put a child at risk of harm.

In addition, it is important to know if the youth is living, attending school, or traveling through areas where they may have been harmed in the past, to identify alternate routes or strategies that will enhance their level of overall safety.

Plans that address physical safety would also address circumstances where physical violence is imminent, including the identification of safer rooms or places without dangerous items like knives or other weapons that could put them at increased danger if an episode of violence were to occur. **A well thought out safety plan will address a strategy for where to go, who to call, and how to safely exit a situation if there is risk of injury.**

MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Mental health is the ability to process situations and experiences without feeling overwhelmed.

Emotional health is the ability to express and manage emotional experiences effectively.

For youth who have experienced trauma, maintaining mental and emotional health may be difficult because of the neurobiology of trauma and the changes it can create in the brain early

in life. A youth who has experienced complex trauma may have an overactive amygdala that makes the brain more sensitive to cues in the environment that could be dangerous, including things they smell, touch, and see, that may put them on high alert.



A traumatized hippocampus has trouble assessing threats accurately, which could lead to being triggered by non-threatening environmental cues.⁶ This is the reason some people panic if they are even in proximity to similar environments where something harmful once took place.

To maintain mental and emotional health, safety plans should incorporate information about situations that make a person feel unsafe. Emotional safety plans should include coping skills, grounding techniques, self-soothing strategies, and mindfulness to help regulate the emotions and restore feelings of safety.

An emotional safety plan should include:



- ✓ Personal warning signs of real or perceived threats
- ✓ Coping strategies that have worked in the past, and/or new strategies to try in the future
- ✓ People who can offer support such as friends, family, professionals, or crisis supports

⁶ <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/braindevtrauma.pdf>

Recognizing Crisis

A crisis is any situation that overwhelms a person to the point where their normal coping mechanisms are no longer effective. If you notice that a client you are working with is experiencing crisis, it is important to make a referral to a qualified crisis response agency.

If the situation is urgent, but response time can wait up to several hours, contact your state or local mental health crisis team to have the client evaluated on-site.

If there is no apparent risk of harm to self or others, but you have concerns about the client's mental health, discuss a mental health referral with the minor and family. If the minor has an existing mental health provider, request a release of information from the family to communicate your concerns with the provider.

NOTE

Refer to your agency's policies regarding assessing for harm to self or others and responding to crisis.

Possible signs of crisis include:



- ✓ Inability to cope with daily tasks, including hygiene, eating, or sleeping
- ✓ Rapid mood swings that include increased energy or pacing and sudden depression
- ✓ Agitation, including verbal threats, violence, out-of-control behavior, or destruction of property
- ✓ Abusive behavior that harms others or creates self-injury, including drug or alcohol abuse
- ✓ Loss of touch with reality or an inability to recognize family and friends, appearing confused, or hearing voices
- ✓ Isolation from family and friends, and less interest in activities
- ✓ Unexplained physical symptoms like headaches, stomachaches, or general complaints of not feeling well

3 AGE-APPROPRIATE SAFETY PLANNING

Safety planning should look different for children in early childhood (3-10) than it does for children and adolescents (11-17). While young people who have experienced human trafficking are often resourceful and resilient, it is important to make sure you have age-appropriate conversations that give youth the language to talk about safety as they define it and design feasible plans to use when they are in danger.

NOTE

Children's development will vary based on a variety of factors, and their chronological age may not align with their developmental milestones. Please refer to these age ranges as a guideline and apply an approach that best meets your client's needs.



EARLY CHILDHOOD (AGES 3-10)

Young children may be better able to draw an unsafe situation or visualize what safety would look like, rather than putting it into words. A safety plan for children in this age range **generally utilizes drawings or an emoticon dictionary to visually display feelings and express feelings when physical or emotional safety is threatened.**

Young children should be taught how to contact a person who can help them when they feel unsafe, this includes memorizing a number for emergencies, including calling 911. For very young children, teaching them to use a cell phone and land line phone may be necessary. This should be practiced along with staying on the phone with 911 operators. Other common elements are identifying a safe place to go in an emergency both inside and outside of the space where they may typically reside. Young children



For very young children, teaching them to use a cell phone and land line phone may be necessary.

need to think about where to go and how to identify a space that will not include weapons or hard surfaces, such as those typically found in bathrooms and kitchens. Young children also need to be taught not to hide in small spaces, like in a closet or under a bed, when they feel threatened. This can be dangerous and may trap them. Talking through safer alternatives is necessary.

Prior to making a safety plan with young children, it will be necessary to have a general conversation about safety and to ask questions that will elicit responses that you can use to help a young child think about safety. Some sample activities and questions include:

ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



Draw yourself when you feel safe. What things make you feel safe? Which people make you feel safe? Where do you feel safe?

Draw yourself when you are afraid or in danger. What things make you feel afraid or unsafe?

What is your phone number and address? Practice writing your phone number and address (ages 6+).

Who do you feel like you can call if you need help? Is that a family member? Is that a person from school? Is that your case manager or an attorney?

What is the phone number of your safe adult? Where can you keep this number safe if you need it?

Where is a safe place you can go if you need to leave the house? Is there a place nearby you can go? How do you get there? Who is there?

When should you call the police? Practice pretend dialing 911 and staying on the phone with the operator.

What are your ideas about how you can feel safe?

When working with young children, simple, effective safety planning is key:

- ✓ Memorize an emergency number: 911 (or other)
- ✓ Identify a safe, trusted adult aside from the primary caregiver
- ✓ Practice calling 911 and trusted adults
- ✓ Identify a safe location in case of emergency
- ✓ Save the trusted adult's contact information and location address in a safe, easily accessible location



CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS (AGES 11-17)

Children and adolescent youth, between 11 and 17 years of age, are usually more able to describe safety in words, but this should not be assumed. **Children's developmental abilities and lived experiences can vary greatly, and case managers should assess each youth based on the various responses and behaviors observed.**

Safety plans with adolescent youth should assess their overall patterns and risk-taking behaviors,

consider online and social media use, and advise youth on strategies to maintain privacy and overall safety.

Prior to making a safety plan with adolescents, it will be necessary to explain to them why you are having a conversation about safety and to ask questions that will help them to consider their own safety practices. Some sample activities and questions can be found below and in the Tools & Resources section at the end of this toolkit.

ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS FOR CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS



A Safety Plan is a tool to help you prepare to feel safe in the future. The decision to act on the plan is always your decision to make, but we hope going through the process of planning will make it easier to put it into practice if you ever need it.

Describe a situation when you felt safe. What made it feel safe? What elements, thoughts, people, places, materials, spaces made it safe for you?

Describe a situation in which you did not feel safe. What was it about the situation that made it feel unsafe?

ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS FOR CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS



You are the expert of your life – you know the risks involved in your situation best and you may have survived through dangerous situations already. Any safety plan you create takes your existing knowledge of how to keep yourself safe and puts it onto paper so that you have a well thought out action plan should you ever need it.

Here are some questions that might help with this task:

Who can you call if you need someone to talk to?

Where can you stay tonight that is safe?

Where can you stay more long term that is safe?

Who can be on your emergency contact list?

Who can keep extra clothes, money, an extra set of keys, and copies of important documents for you?

Where can numbers be written so you can always find them?

What social media sites are you on?

What can you do to make sure you are safe when using social media?

How can you keep information private from people that you don't want to find it?

Who can you talk to if someone makes you feel uncomfortable online?

What are your boundaries with online chatting?

Summarize the safety plan you created in partnership with your case manager.

Some suggestions for maintaining safety online include:

- ✓ Let a trusted adult know if there are unwanted or suspicious contacts online
- ✓ Keep personal information, including location, private
- ✓ Don't talk to strangers online
- ✓ Block any unwanted contacts, including those related to trafficking



A safety plan for adolescent youth should give them ideas of the kinds of ways they can achieve physical and emotional safety. Their safety plan should incorporate discussion of triggers and coping strategies.



Safety planning can be done at any time. A five-minute safety plan over the phone with a teenage client may be more effective than a longer, written safety plan. Use your discretion with each client and engage them in how they feel their safety can be best achieved.

Safety Planning for Every Age

| Don't | Do |
|--|---|
| ✗ Suggest a safe person or place. | ✓ Ask the client who they feel safe and comfortable reaching out to in an emergency, and where they feel comfortable going. A person you may think is safe may not be a safe person to the client. |
| ✗ Assume a phone will be accessible during an emergency. | ✓ Ask the client to memorize 911 and a trusted person's phone number and identify where they can find a phone if the phone in their home is not safely accessible. Phone numbers can be written into reversed pant pockets or other hidden, easy to access spots. |
| ✗ Scare, overwhelm, or retraumatize while safety planning. | ✓ Discuss simple action steps like going somewhere safe; not intervening between fighting people; and remembering emergency numbers. |
| ✗ Suggest responsibility for any past harm. | ✓ Emphasize that their safety is important to you and that any harm is not ok and not their fault. |



Set boundaries and expectations with clients about your role as a case manager while safety planning. While a case manager may be available during working hours, the client should be aware that a case manager is not a 24-hour emergency contact. Provide the client with 24-hour emergency hotline numbers and ask them to identify a safe person they can contact if or when their case manager is unavailable to assist them.

4 OTHER ISSUES IN SAFETY

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Talking about healthy relationships can help youth to understand and set good boundaries and prevent issues that arise when they are not provided with guidance about developing healthy relationships. Emotional aspects of romantic relationships can be difficult conversations with adolescent youth but in the absence of such discussions, youth are at risk for abuse or victimization.

There are several ways to talk about healthy relationships. Start with asking youth about how they want to be treated. Emphasize that good relationships have trust, honesty, respect, and communication. Healthy relationships allow people to develop personal interests outside of the relationship.





Remember to offer both examples and non-examples of healthy relationships and define healthy and unhealthy relationships with youth.

Many factors can define an unhealthy relationship but, in general, unhealthy relationships are characterized by an imbalance, where one person wants to have control or power over the other person. This manifests differently in different age ranges but typically includes name calling, insults, or withholding affection or resources. At its worst, this includes violent acts, stalking, or physical injury.

Help youth to define and set their own

boundaries. Help them to articulate what they would do in response to various warning signs that boundaries are being broken and who they can turn to for help.

A sample activity that can be applied asks youth to rate how healthy a behavior is on a continuum of healthy to abusive.

EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Emotional safety is just as important as physical safety. **Emotional safety means that you can express your emotions and manage your situation in healthy ways.** Young children and adolescents process tragic or traumatizing events in different ways and dealing with upsetting

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

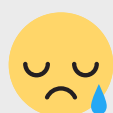
How I want to be treated



HEALTHY



UNHEALTHY



ABUSIVE

Take each item below and place it on the continuum based on where you think it falls (healthy, unhealthy, abusive):

- Checking your phone
- Constantly checking up on where you are
- Encouraging you to meet your goals
- Calling you names in front of their friends
- Telling you when they are upset with you and why
- Pressuring you to text inappropriate photos
- Making decisions together
- Making you feel guilty when you spend time with others
- Pressuring you to do something you don't want to do
- Getting jealous when you do better on a test or assignment
- Telling you that you have to be back at a certain time
- Shoving you when you fight
- Controlling who you talk to and when

experiences is a process that can involve many feelings over a long time.

Some youth benefit from talking with adults about emotions. Other youth prefer to engage in usual activities but may display behavioral changes or complain of physical ailments. In very young children, regression is a common response. They may begin bedwetting, thumb sucking, or revert to baby talk. It is important for case managers and supportive adults to seek professional help for children showing signs of regression and not to shame or try to control their regressive behaviors.

Teaching children how to recover from bad situations is a lesson that will help them throughout their lives. The GROW Coaching Model is one example of activities that a case manager can use with youth.

A discussion about emotional safety can include the following questions:



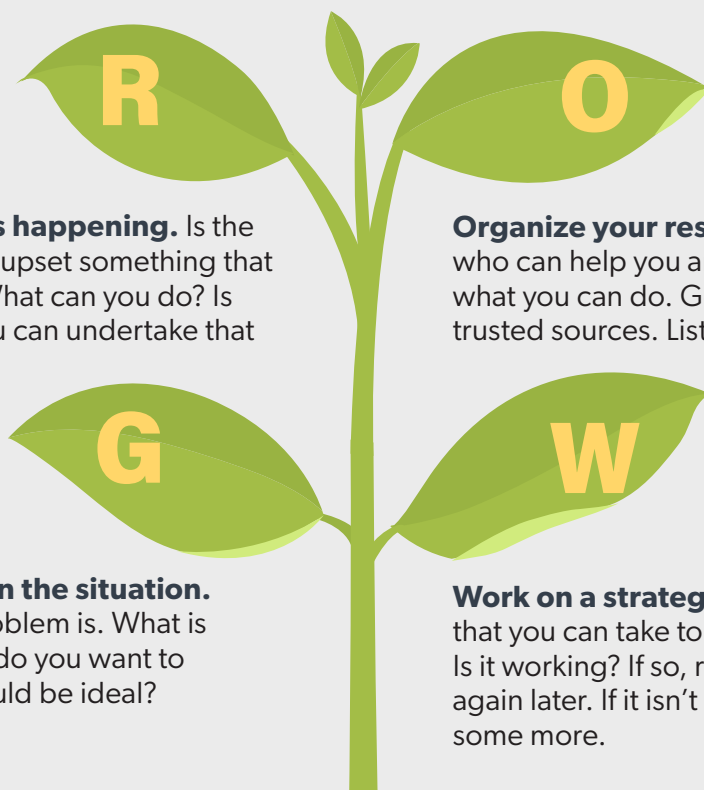
If you are feeling upset, where do you feel that in your body? Do your shoulders tense? Does your stomach cramp? Do you get a headache?

How do you usually respond if you are upset? Do you have trouble sleeping? Do you eat too much or not enough? Do you hideout someplace? What do you do?

Who is someone you can talk to if you are upset? Do you have a trusted friend? Is there a safe family member to call? Do you have a therapist? Do you know the crisis line number?

THE GROW COACHING MODEL

To handle emotional upset, you can practice G.R.O.W.



Recognize what is happening. Is the reason that you are upset something that you can control? What can you do? Is there a task that you can undertake that will help you?

Organize your resources. Find out who can help you and make a list of what you can do. Get support from trusted sources. List out your options.

Ground yourself in the situation. Define what the problem is. What is happening? What do you want to happen? What would be ideal?

Work on a strategy. Select the action that you can take to help you feel better. Is it working? If so, remember to use it again later. If it isn't working—GROW some more.

Grounding techniques are another common way that case managers can assist youth in building emotional safety. Grounding techniques help keep youth in the present when they are overwhelmed with emotions or experiencing

emotional triggers (trauma reminders). There are a variety of grounding techniques and exercises that can assist youth as they attempt to self-soothe; one example is offered here.

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

Técnicas para poner los pies sobre la tierra



Take 5 deep breaths

Tome 5 respiraciones largas y profundas



What 4 things can you see?

¿Qué 4 cosas puede ver?



What 3 things can you touch or feel?

¿Qué 3 cosas puede sentir?



What 2 things can you hear?

¿Qué 2 cosas puede oír?



What 1 thing can you smell?

¿Qué 1 cosa puede oler?

5 SUMMARY & IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Survivors define their own safety—you can safety plan with them, but not for them. They are the experts in their own safety.

Discuss confidentiality every time. Ensure that a young person understands that confidentiality has its limits and that you are a mandated reporter. Involve and inform adolescents at each stage of mandated reporting so that they can anticipate how to plan for safety with you.

Avoid “you are safe now” language—you cannot guarantee that a young person will be safe. You can communicate that their safety is important to you.

Trust is established through actions. Build consistent rapport by being dependable and approachable and setting good boundaries with every client.

Prepare children to be safe without instilling fear in them. Children can contribute to their own safety but should not be made to feel responsible for actions that happened to them that were beyond their control.

If you have developed a safety plan with a client and want to test if it is meeting the guidelines for effectiveness, use the checklist below.

- ✓ Is this safety plan personalized to the unique situation?
- ✓ Is this safety plan feasible and involve people that the young person would actually reach out to in case of emergency?
- ✓ Does this safety plan focus on improving safety in the young person’s chosen environment through a harm reduction framework?
- ✓ Does this safety plan detail concrete action steps for times when safety is compromised?
- ✓ Does this safety plan include information about who will be called with ideas for keeping their numbers somewhere safe?
- ✓ Does this safety plan identify where to go in an emergency?
- ✓ Does this safety plan identify what to do if the trafficker finds or contacts them after they have left?
- ✓ Does this safety plan consider how to handle the situation if family or friends are also at risk of harm?
- ✓ Did we discuss flashbacks or triggers that may present themselves and does this safety plan address emotional safety?
- ✓ Does this safety plan consider immigration enforcement actions that may separate youth from sponsors or family?
- ✓ Does this safety plan include a way to contact an attorney and is their attorney’s number on hand to assist if needed?
- ✓ Have we set a date to regularly re-evaluate this safety plan?
- ✓ Do youth know how to reach me if circumstances change and the safety plan needs to be updated?



6 TOOLS & RESOURCES

ACCESS USCRI-TVAP SAFETY PLAN HERE

[English](#)[Spanish](#)[Tagalog](#)[Chinese](#)[Marshallese](#)

TVAP providers are required to complete a safety plan during intake.

Addressing safety is part of initial and ongoing TVAP service planning and support services. Case managers help participants evaluate the degree of danger they are currently in and provide valid, straightforward information regarding available options to enable them to make the best decision(s) for themselves and their families. For example, a safety plan should be completed for a participant who moved into a new neighborhood or started ESL classes at night and is unfamiliar with their surroundings. A safety plan will evolve as a participant's situation changes and as more trust develops with the case manager. The development of a safety plan is based on each individual's needs. Each participant must be provided emergency information to know where to access the nearest hospital or who to contact. We strongly encourage service providers to openly discuss and address safety concerns with participants.



Service providers do not have to submit this safety plan to TVAP staff for enrollment. However, they are required to maintain a copy of the safety plan in the case file and give the participant a copy of the plan.

RESOURCES

TVAP

[TVAP Safety Planning Webinar](#), Center for Healing at JCCA, February 2020

OTIP

To submit a Request for Assistance for a Foreign National Minor Victim of Trafficking
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/resource/rfa-0>

OTIP (CONTINUED)

OTIP Monthly Webinars: Responding to Child Victims of Trafficking

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/training-technical-assistance/resource/monthlywebinars>

National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center SOAR Training

<https://nhttac.acf.hhs.gov/soar>

Shepherd Case Management System

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/victim-assistance/shepherd#:~:text=An%20Eligibility%20Letter%20is%20issued,same%20extent%20as%20a%20refugee>

CHILD WELFARE

Child Welfare Information Gateway, State Statutes for Mandated Reporting

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>

Polaris Project Safe Harbor Issue Brief

<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2015-Safe-Harbor-Issue-Brief.pdf>

ORR Sponsor Care Agreement

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/orr/sponsor-care-agreement-1-31-20.pdf>

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/urm>

Unaccompanied Alien Children Program

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/unaccompanied-alien-children-program>

IMMIGRATION CONSIDERATIONS

Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) Know Your Rights Toolkit

<https://supportkind.org/resources/know-your-rights-%20ice-raids/>

Women's Refugee Commission Parental Rights Toolkit

https://s33660.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Parental-Rights-Toolkit-ENGLISH_web-1.pdf

Southern Poverty Law Center, Georgia Immigrant Family Preparedness Guide

https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/leg_ijp_immigrant_family_preparedness_guide_english_2019_update_1.pdf

IMMIGRATION CONSIDERATIONS (CONTINUED)

Child Advocate Referral Form, The Young Center

<https://usw.clienttrack.net/15/portal/default.aspx?CustomerID=TYC&PageID=59>

Voluntary Departure, American Immigration Council

https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/practice_advisory/voluntary_departure_when_the_consequences_of_failing_to_depart_should_and_should_not_apply.pdf

REPATRIATION

USCRI El Salvador

<https://refugees.org/uscric-el-salvador>

KIND Guatemala/Honduras

<https://supportkind.org/what-we-do/international/central-america-mexico/return-reintegration-project/>

Covenant House (Casa Alianza) Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua

<https://www.covenanthouse.org/casa-alianza>

IOM Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

<https://www.iom.int/assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration>

SAFETY PLANNING

Blue Campaign, How to Talk to Youth About Human Trafficking

https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/blue_campaign_youth_guide_508.pdf

National Human Trafficking Hotline Safety Planning Resources

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/faqs/safety-planning-information>

Online safety for youth, NetSmartz (resources available in Spanish)

<https://www.missingkids.org/NetSmartz>

Polaris Online Safety Tips for Survivors of Trafficking

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/faqs/safety-planning-information#Social%20Media>

New York State Office of Children & Family Services, Responding to Commercially Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Youth

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/human-trafficking/assets/docs/OCFS-Handbook-for-Office-print.pdf>

EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Crisis Prevention Institute 10 De-Escalation Tips

https://www.crisisprevention.com/CPI/media/Media/download/PDF_DT.pdf?code=BLIT01DT&src=Blog

Women's Advocates, Emotional Safety for Children

https://www.wadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Emotional-Safety-for-Children_DAP_PPT_12-2020.pdf

Child Welfare Gateway, Supporting Brain Development in Traumatized Children & Youth

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/braindevtrauma.pdf>

TRAFFICKING PREVENTION

The Blue Campaign

https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/blue_campaign_youth_guide_508.pdf

The Blue Campaign Wallet Cards

<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/materials/indicator-card>; <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/blue-campaign/materials/tip-card-first-responders/bc-tip-card-first-responders-english.pdf>

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) | National Center for Missing and Exploited Children |
| 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733) | National Human Trafficking Hotline |
| 1-800-RUNAWAY or text 66008 | National Suicide Prevention Hotline |
| 1-800-273-8255 or text START to 741741 | National Runaway Safeline |
| 1-800-950-6254 | National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) Helpline |
| 1-800-799-7233 TTY Service 1-800-787-3224 | National Domestic Violence Hotline |
| 1-800-203-7001 or text the word NINOS to 66467 | Office of Refugee Resettlement National Call Center Helpline English flyer , wallet card Spanish flyer , wallet card |
| 1-800-898-7180 | U.S. Immigration Court Hotline |

ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



Draw yourself when you feel safe. What things make you feel safe? Which people make you feel safe? Where do you feel safe?

Draw yourself when you are afraid or in danger. What things make you feel afraid or unsafe?

What is your phone number and address? Practice writing your phone number and address (ages 6+).

Who do you feel like you can call if you need help? Is that a family member? Is that a person from school? Is that your case manager or an attorney?

What is the phone number of your safe adult? Where can you keep this number safe if you need it?

Where is a safe place you can go if you need to leave the house? Is there a place nearby you can go? How do you get there? Who is there?

When should you call the police? Practice pretend dialing 911 and staying on the phone with the operator.

What are your ideas about how you can feel safe?

ACTIVIDADES Y PREGUNTAS PARA NIÑOS PEQUEÑOS



Dibújate en un momento en el que te sientas seguro. ¿Qué cosas te hacen sentir seguro? ¿Quiénes te hacen sentir seguro? ¿Dónde te sientes seguro?

Dibújate en un momento en el que tengas miedo o estés en peligro. ¿Qué cosas te dan miedo o te hacen sentir en peligro?

¿Cuál es tu número de teléfono y tu dirección? Practica escribir tu número de teléfono y tu dirección (mayores de 6 años).

¿A quién sientes que puedes llamar si necesitas ayuda? ¿A un familiar? ¿A una persona de la escuela? ¿A tu administrador de casos o un abogado?

¿Cuál es el número de teléfono del adulto con quien te sientes seguro? ¿Dónde puedes conservar este número a salvo por si lo necesitas?

¿A qué lugar seguro puedes ir si tienes que irte de tu casa? ¿Hay algún lugar cercano al que puedas ir? ¿Cómo llegarías allí? ¿Quién está allí?

¿Cuándo debes llamar a la policía? Para practicar, simula llamar al 911 y hablar por teléfono con el operador.

¿Cuáles son tus ideas sobre cómo puedes sentirte seguro?



A Safety Plan helps you prepare for a time when you may feel unsafe. The decision to act on the plan is always your decision to make, but we hope going through the process of planning will make it easier to put it into practice if you ever need it.

Describe a situation when you felt safe. What made it feel safe? What elements, thoughts, people, places, materials, spaces made it safe for you?

Describe a situation in which you did not feel safe. What was it about the situation that made it feel unsafe?

A Safety Plan helps you prepare for a time when you may feel unsafe. You are the expert of your life – you know the risks involved in your situation best and you may have survived through dangerous situations already. Any safety plan you create takes your existing knowledge of how to keep yourself safe and puts it onto paper so that you have a well thought out action plan should you ever need it.

Here are some questions that might help with this task:

Who can you call if you need someone to talk to?

Where can you stay tonight that is safe?

Where can you stay more long term that is safe?

Who can be on your emergency contact list?

Who can keep extra clothes, money, an extra set of keys, and copies of important documents for you?

Where can numbers be written so you can always find them?

What social media sites are you on?

What can you do to make sure you are safe when using social media?

How can you keep information private from people that you don't want to find it?

Who can you talk to if someone makes you feel uncomfortable online?

What are your boundaries with online chatting?

Summarize the safety plan you created in partnership with your case manager.



Un plan de seguridad te ayuda a prepararte para un momento en el que no te sientas seguro. Siempre es decisión tuya actuar según el plan, pero esperamos que pasar por el proceso de planificación haga que sea más fácil ponerlo en práctica si alguna vez lo necesitas.

Describe una situación en la que te hayas sentido seguro. ¿Qué hizo que te sintieras seguro? ¿Qué elementos, pensamientos, personas, lugares, materiales o espacios hicieron que te sintieras seguro?

Describe una situación en la que no te hayas sentido seguro. ¿Qué hizo que no te sintieras seguro?

Un plan de seguridad te ayuda a prepararte para un momento en el que no te sientas seguro. Tú eres el experto de tu vida y quien mejor conoce los riesgos en tu situación, y es posible que ya hayas sobrevivido a situaciones peligrosas. Cualquier plan de seguridad que crees toma lo que ya sabes sobre cómo mantenerte seguro y lo pone por escrito para que tengas un plan de acción bien pensado en caso de que lo necesites.

Estas preguntas pueden ayudarte con esta tarea:

¿A quién puedes llamar si necesitas hablar con alguien?

¿Dónde puedes escribir los números para que siempre los encuentres?

¿En qué lugar seguro puedes pasar esta noche?

¿Qué redes sociales usas?

¿En qué lugar seguro puedes quedarte por más tiempo?

¿Qué puedes hacer para asegurarte de que estás seguro cuando usas las redes sociales?

¿Quiénes pueden estar en tu lista de contactos de emergencia?

¿Cómo puedes ocultar tu información privada de las personas que no quieres que la encuentren?

¿Quién puede guardarte ropa extra, dinero, un juego extra de llaves y copias de documentos importantes?

¿Con quién puedes hablar si alguien te hace sentir incómodo en línea?

¿Cuáles son tus límites para chatear en línea?

Resume el plan de seguridad que creaste con tu administrador de casos.

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

2231 Crystal Drive, Suite 350, Arlington, VA 22202

📞 703-310-1130 ✉️ uscri@uscridc.org

🌐 <https://refugees.org> [f](#) [🐦](#) [@](#)
