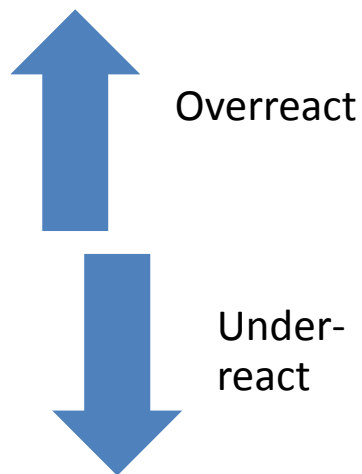


Crisis & Safety Planning Building the Right Balance

Patricia Miles
Portland, Oregon
Presented at Child Welfare Issues Conference
March, 2009
East Lansing, Michigan

Crisis: Right Size Response



- Too much reaction can cause
 - Paralysis
 - Dependence
 - Intrusion
- Too little reaction can cause
 - Danger
 - Mistrust
 - Anger

Some Thoughts About Crisis

- Definition: An unexpected or out of control event that causes pain, suffering or instability for the family
- Crisis and safety are two different things
- Consider the following areas:
 - **Duration:** Has the event gone on for long periods? Has it gone on so long that it has become familiar to the family
 - **Intensity:** In terms of the family's life is this event a higher level or degree than many other events that the family manages on a day by day level?
 - **Impact:** Does the event have a significant and noticeable consequence on the family's *stability*?

A Crisis is not necessarily.....

- When a child or family doesn't do what you wanted them to
- An opportunity to throw wraparound principles out the window
- A sign that all hope is lost and you should quit
- High impact or excitement for you
- A sign that your wraparound plan is not working

Crisis should be....

- Defined by the person having it
- An opportunity to practice strength based and creative interventions
- Expected, anticipated and planned for
- A test of a team's ability to stay together during the hard times
- A chance to uncover hidden needs missed in the original planning process

When to develop Crisis Plans

- Early enough in the process to assure anticipation
- When the team is willing to move to actions
- When the team is feeling supported enough to be creative
- When you "know" it's coming
- When agency pressures are mounting

Tips for Crisis Planning

- Avoid overreaction
- History counts: Pay attention to what happened before you got there
- Continue to ask and clarify about the family's experience
- Communicate the family's perspective to the team if the family is unable to communicate it
- Reach agreement with everyone about how you are defining a crisis
- Put the event in the context of the family's story, stressors and sensibility
- Reach agreement about the appropriate response
- Promote family choice even during a crisis, families can choose to live their life in crisis
- Identify the difference between a crisis situation and a safety situation

Good Crisis Plans

- Preserves the right of the family to continue to live in crisis
- Assures the "right" timed responses
 - Don't over-react
 - Don't under-react
- Addresses self care for all family members
- Respond with a holistic response
- Pays attention to family suffering
 - Allows staff to separate their emotional response from the family's emotional responses
- Negotiates next steps
- Reassure people that they can feel okay

Opportunities for Proactive Planning

- Crisis Planning
 - A time when you don't know what to do
 - Associates with a general loss of purpose
 - A sense of disequilibrium
 - Creates a sense of helplessness
 - Is different than safety planning
 - May or may not require immediate reaction
- Safety Planning
 - A time when basic health and safety is compromised
 - Requires a reaction to keep someone safe
 - A person may know what to do but choose not to do it
 - Should promote skills & abilities for increased safety
 - Requires immediate reaction
 - Is non-negotiable in Wraparound

Steps in Developing an On-going Crisis Response

- Review past crises
- Triage/order by families sense of the “worst”
- Develop “Reactive” and “Proactive” plans
- Implement plan with family and community partners
- Review after each implementation

Reviewing Past Crises

- Look at what's happened in the past
- Check with all family members
- Allow input from other team members
- Remember that a crisis is defined by the person having it

Triage and Select Crises for Plan

- Plan for the “worst”, build on the “best”
- Remember all parts of life (Domains)
- Have families define/brainstorm crises
- Have families rate severity of expected crisis

Developing Proactive Crisis Plans

- Proactive Plans
 - Focus on preventing crisis from happening
 - Typically augment or flex existing interventions
- Building on strengths & interests to avoid crisis
- Use formal and informal supports to avoid crisis
- Document who is responsible for what & when

Building Reactive Response

- Reactive Plans
 - Focus on what to do when it happens
 - Develop clear roles for team members
- Keep other team members involved through clear roles & responsibilities
- Develop lines of communication post-crisis
- Give everyone a crisis plan they can call their own

Implement the Plan

- Make sure whole team is aware of the plan
- File plan with community resources as needed
- Develop and use an emergency communication plan
- Stick with the plan as agreed as much as possible
- Maintain flexible response

Review After Each Implementation

- Review, as a team, within 48 - 96 hours
- Establish benchmarks to build a sense of progress
- Use institutional responses as last resort with a time limit
- Reinforce cool heads & calm hearts

Tips for Crisis Planning



- Build stabilization plans
- Build reactive & proactive crisis plans
- Hold crisis “drills”
- Inform community resources
- Avoid over-reliance on any one person
- Use crisis data to revise your plan

Big Ideas

- Crisis and safety are two different things
- Community defines safety or safe enough
- Family defines their own crisis



Elements of Good Safety Plans

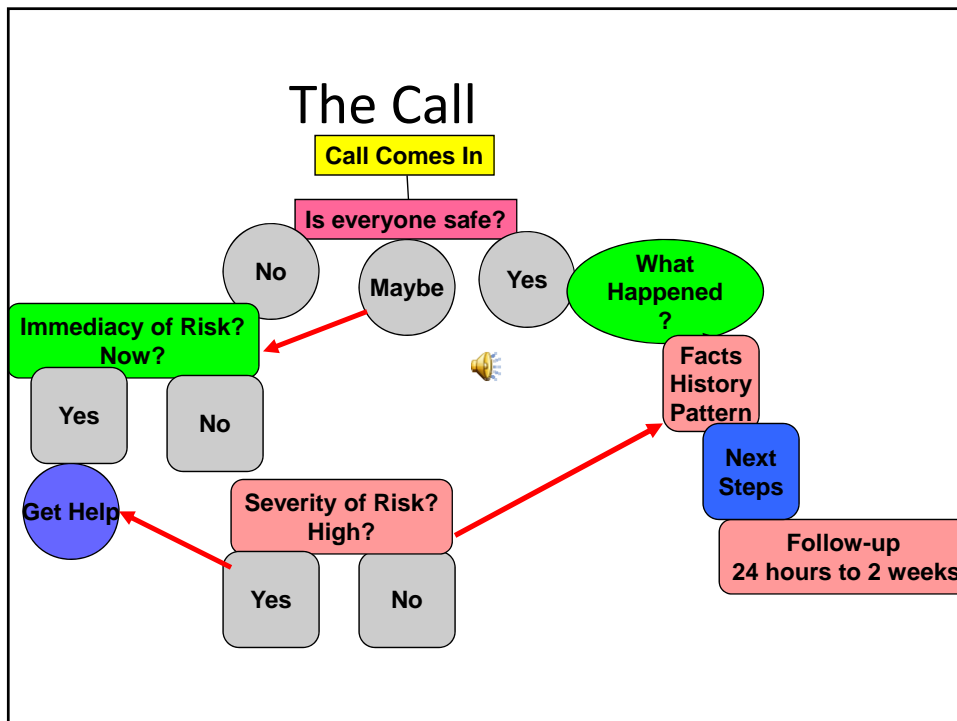
- Promote skills & capacities to avoid harm
- Assure family voice (negotiated before the event)
- Binding for all parties (family & system)
- Outer limits are established (when aren't you safe enough)
- Can be implemented without us
- Establishes "representatives" to speak for you
- Individualized about who does what and when
- Clarifies when it's over
- Witnessed by whole team
- Makes immediate decisions
- Reviewed & Updated

Joining with the Family

- **What** is the family's perception:
 - Of the risk?
 - Of Child Welfare's perception of the risk?
 - Of your perception of the risk?
- **What** are the limits:
 - What is the family willing to do?
 - What aren't they willing to do?
 - Has anyone spoken about the consequences of those stands?
- **How** do you balance:
 - Danger & Safety Factors
 - Agency & Family Goals
 - Family & Professional Knowledge

Big Question

- How to help staff and families know the difference between crisis and safety?



Review Immediacy & Severity of Risk in each of these situations.

- Engagement Phase
 - You go out to meet the family for the first time. There are no lights on. Parent indicates they lost their electricity due to nonpayment. They have a wood stove & kids ages 11, 8, 2 and a newborn.
- Planning Phase
 - You are developing the initial plan of care and something seems to be unsaid. One of your system partners asks for a break, approaches you and says, "I think that Mom is being hit by her son. When are you going to address that?"
- Implementation Phase
 - You call a mother who you've been working with for the past two months. The Plan of Care is done and the team has met regularly. She says, "you can take your strengths & needs. My life just fell apart last night." It seems that Child Welfare removed the 2 years old when Mom and her boyfriend had an altercation & police were called.
- Transition Phase
 - You are planning the "graduation" party for this family and team. You get a call indicating that the 12 year old youth was just expelled from school for the rest of the year due to behavior. His single dad has just

Connecting with Families

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About Crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Normalize the experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We all have times when we don't know what to do" – Define a crisis as a time when you're not sure what to do – Ask the family to define times when it has happened to them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Talk about harm & risk – Use legal mandates & concerns – Ask the family what their (Child Welfare Worker, Probation Officer) would say – Find a way to talk about initial conditions – Explain that this <u>will</u> result in Wraparound response |
|---|--|

Risk Scaling

Person's Perspective

- Define the event or risk
 - What, Who, When, Where
- Ask the person to rate on a scale:
 - What the likelihood of it happening again, *from their perspective?*
 - What is the likelihood that someone will suffer harm if it did happen again, *from their perspective?*

Community Perspective

- Define the event or risk
- Ask the person to rate on a scale:
 - What the likelihood of it happening again, (from a)) (police, child welfare, probation)?
 - What the likelihood that someone will suffer harm, *if you were the person harmed?*

Tips for Addressing Risk

- Assume positive intent
- Define the facts of the event in a respectful manner
 - Avoid describing your reaction to the event
- Identify that risk looks different from other views
 - The person at risk, the person who is initiating the event, the bystander
- Reach agreement about the concern
 - Either that there is a risk or that there will be community action
- Generate who will do what, when and the next steps

Another Big Idea

- Higher risk equals a greater the need for multi-dimensional, high frequency practice.

Five "R"s of Safety Plans



Possible Activities for Each “R”

- **Regret:** Ways regret causes people to act or not act, methods for self forgiveness
- **Risk:** Overview of cycle of violence, what is it, how does it happen, how it impacts families
- **Rehabilitation:** Development of reasonable safety plans, holding safety drills, teaching people what to do when things are unsafe
- **Restoration:** Methods to repair the harm, make amends for the damage, restore the confidence of those harmed and the community
- **Reconnection:** Building communities to “pay attention”, creating communities to rally around the victim & the family

A Multi-Dimensional Safety Plan

- **Risk:** J, 14, has sex with older men. She was molested by her mother's boyfriend when she was young. She has been in placement & now is home with her dad.
- **Restoration:** J, needs to learn the difference between sex & intimacy. Dad is affectionate & proactively tells his daughter each day how lucky anyone would be to spend time with her.
- **Rehabilitation:** J's mom calls each day to find out how J is feeling. She tells her she is listening each day. Staff work with J to practice having fun with others without sexual contact.
- **Reconnection:** J's parents work together to connect her to boys her own age & to take her to dances at the local church.
- **Regret:** J's parents meet with a therapist to work on forgiving each other for earlier decisions.

The Structure of Protective Factors

- Three inter-related categories
 - Individual characteristics
 - Attitudes, beliefs and patterns of behavior
 - Social involvement and bonding

