

Understanding the SAFE Model

A simple guide for parents and caregivers

THE MAIN IDEA

The SAFE Model helps DCFS understand child safety, family strengths, and what support may help keep children safely at home.

Your Questions, Answered

Why does DCFS use the SAFE Model?

DCFS uses the SAFE Model and the Forward Together Practice Guide to work with families so children are safe, supported, and thriving. The goal is a strong and respectful partnership with parents.

What does the SAFE Model look at?

- Safety concerns that may affect your child right now
- Your family's strengths and protective factors
- Behaviors and conditions that affect your child's well-being
- Support and services that may help keep your child safely at home

The assessment uses facts and behavior. It is meant to support family stability.

What can I expect from DCFS?

- Clear and honest information about concerns
- A chance to share your story and ask questions
- A focus on your strengths
- Teamwork when making plans and choosing services
- Regular follow-up to check progress
- Respect for your culture, identity, and parenting values

How does DCFS make safety decisions?

DCFS considers:

- Current safety threats
- Your ability to protect your child right now
- Your child's vulnerability
- Support available to you
- Your family's resilience and strengths

The goal is to keep children safely with their families whenever possible.

What is my role in the process?

You are the expert on your family. You are encouraged to:

- Ask questions and share barriers or concerns
- Take an active part in planning
- Name the support that would help your family
- Include trusted family or community members

What is DCFS committed to?

- Supporting your family and working with you respectfully
- Helping create a safe and stable home
- Recognizing your progress and strengths

Words You May Hear

SAFE Model: A structured, evidence-informed way to evaluate child safety.

Protective factors: Family strengths and supports that help protect a child.

Vulnerability: Things that may make it harder for a child to stay safe.

Where can I learn more?

Ask your DCFS worker to explain the SAFE Model, your assessment, and any next steps. More information can be found at <https://dcfs.illinois.gov/safe-kids/forward-together-and-the-safe-model.html>

Important: Ask questions whenever something is unclear. You should understand the concerns, the plan, and how you can take part.