



Podcast #1 Transcript: What is Safety Planning?

Welcome to the Y4Y podcast series on safety planning and practices. My name is Sherri, and I'm a 21st CCLC project director. This is the first of four podcasts where I'll share what I've learned about building your programs' capacity to respond effectively to emergencies.

I've found that sometimes the hardest part is figuring out where to start. What you need is a plan. Thankfully, creating a plan isn't something we 21st century project directors have to do on our own. Chances are, you've already been working with partners who have experience or expertise in safety planning. Also, your host organization can contribute to safety planning. For our program, the host is a community center. Yours might be a school or some other organization. Regardless of type, your host organization might already have a Safety Plan in place. My advice is to start there.

When I first looked at our host organization's Safety Plan, I was grateful to see it included detailed procedures and guidelines. That meant I didn't have to start from scratch. I met with the Safety Lead at the host organization, and she shared a lot of ideas and insights. As we talked, I realized there were several things I didn't know about best practices in safety preparedness and training, so I did some research on my own. Plus I learned a lot from the Safety Lead and her team. I'd like to share with you what I've learned about the general process for creating a safety plan.

When your host organization created its Safety Plan, they most likely followed an eight-step process that started with key leadership personnel creating a safety team. This team consists of a few people in the organization who are best positioned to learn safety practices, facilitate a safety review process, construct a plan and do safety training. Many organizations put people on the team based on their position within the organization. That way, the composition of the safety team is predetermined, so if someone leaves the organization, the person they hire to fill that position will automatically be on the safety team. That helps ensure that the team's work can continue with limited interruptions. As a 21st CCLC project director, you may work with one, some or all members of the host's safety team. In my case, I requested permission to attend the team's meetings, and they said yes. This helped me keep a finger on the pulse of local safety concerns and planning. It also gave me a chance to raise concerns specific to our program.

The safety team usually initiates the host organization's safety planning process by inviting a safety expert to perform a comprehensive Risk and Threat Vulnerability Assessment. This assessment is critical to developing the right plan for each unique setting. To identify risks and vulnerabilities within the facility, the expert does a physical walk-through of the entire building or campus, analyzing things like perimeter security, doors, cameras, utilities and the potential for natural hazards. They analyze other things too, like the building envelope. The "building envelope" refers to the design and construction of the exterior of the building. Don't worry, I had to ask the first time I heard that term, too! I'm guessing it's something you'd be especially concerned about if you live in an earthquake zone.

In addition to doing an assessment, the safety expert often works with the safety team to complete a Workplace/Classroom Hazard Checklist, which includes identifying, logging, and maintaining an inventory of all equipment and supplies. A Risk and Threat Vulnerability Assessment reveals the strengths and challenges that exist in the physical structure and immediate vicinity. Its results serve as a baseline for informing the safety planning process.



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Once the assessment and checklist are complete, the next thing the team does is write the safety plan. Sometimes it's called an Emergency Response Plan, or ERP. The plan itself includes at least four things:

- First, an explanation of the decisions made in creating the plan.
- Second, step-by-step procedures for responding to all potential threats identified through the Risk and Threat Vulnerability Assessment.
- Third, the communications structures and protocols to follow in an emergency.
- And fourth, a plan for recovery and restoration once a crisis has occurred.

It's generally up to the safety team to gather and maintain all the supplies and materials listed in the plan — things like first aid kits; battery-powered lights; and extra water, food and blankets. Those blankets could come in handy if you find yourself stranded at the program site with 30 shivering children due to blizzard conditions and a power outage. Trust me, it can happen!

Another thing you might see in your host organization's Safety Plan — especially if your program is hosted by a school or school district — is a Behavioral Health Needs Assessment, which looks at organizational culture and climate. One way schools and districts often try to improve climate and culture is to have positive learning environments that support student development and create a sense of belonging. That sense of belonging and connectedness among students, and between students and staff, helps to build relationships and combat bullying. It can also reduce the potential for students to vent their frustrations in inappropriate and possibly violent ways. Conducting a Behavioral Health Needs Assessment provides insight into what services or structures must be improved if a positive learning environment is to be established.

Here's something else to be aware of: Your host organization's safety team probably facilitates safety training based on what's in the Safety Plan. Holding safety drills and exercises is critical in preparing for emergency responses. Usually, training is ongoing and follows a yearly calendar, with certain drills and exercises occurring more frequently than others. You'll definitely want to build on what they already have in place. In podcast three, I'll share a process for aligning your program's training and practice with the host's.

Are you ready to enhance safety preparedness and planning in your program? I hope so, because I have more to share!

- Check out podcast two for a strategy on getting access to your host organization's plan. I'll also give you a heads-up on what you can expect to find in the plan.
- From there, podcast three walks you through the process of bringing the host's plan into your program, which may include making minor modifications to fit your program's needs and circumstances.
- I'll conclude this Y4Y series on safety planning with a fourth podcast, where I'll share ideas for conducting safety-related practices in a way that's sensitive to the emotional and mental health needs of children, staff and families.

Take a quick break, and I'll meet you in podcast two, OK?

