



Implementation Prospectus



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Introduction

An effective model of practice is essential. To this end, Signs of Safety® has been honed by workers' experience and has a substantial evidence base. However, a model of practice is not sufficient to transform children's services. For this to occur, an organisation must change with the practice; indeed it needs to be aligned to the practice.

Child protection is always about the art of the possible in the real world. Among the intersecting realities at play within the agency at any given time will be the political imperatives, funding limitations, evolving local and national policy trends, the quality and turnover of staff, and the current organisational culture.

Every jurisdiction is unique and will have its own goals for implementing Signs of Safety. We can tailor an implementation to work to timelines that meet the specific needs of an agency. At the same time, there is a clear implementation theory, framework and trajectory — to begin and guide the journey — that has been demonstrated to achieve the most progress.

Approach to Implementation

We see implementation as a process where organisations use Signs of Safety as a vehicle to drill down into its practice, creating a learning organisation focused on how it is implementing the work, and reviewing outcomes, successes and failures, allowing them to continuously adapt to change as necessary while keeping to the key principles of the approach.

To achieve this, attention needs to be given to how the new way of working interacts with existing parts of the system, and how the system in turn aligns with the intervention. This is a more dynamic way of thinking about implementation than the common static framing, in which implementation involves installing a new intervention into a fixed system.

The dynamic nature of a Signs of Safety implementation is reflected in the framework's illustration, showing how the implementation is a continuous learning and development cycle with the practice approach at the centre.

The implementation framework illustration also implies the organisational action learning processes, and the agility and responsiveness required to lead and drive change in large organisations operating within larger human service and political systems.

At its simplest, it illustrates the obvious point that everything an organisation does (its leadership, procedures, measurement and learning) must always focus on what practitioners actually do with children and families.

The four domains for action within the implementation framework are Learning, Leadership, Organisational Alignment and Meaningful Measures.

Detailed planning documentation in line with the four domains is available for organisations starting the preparation phase of an implementation.

Learning: Following core training with a drive for continuous learning in the workplace grounded on what is happening in practice and across the organisation.

Leadership: Development that builds congruence between how the organisation is led and managed and how the work is expected to occur with families.



Meaningful Measures: Participatory quality assurance, matched to the practice, measuring its breadth (how much is occurring), depth (how good it is) and impact.

Organisational Alignment: Case management processes and recording, including in aligned IT, to match the practice. Partners being engaged to work with Signs of Safety.

Components of an Implementation

A Signs of Safety organisational implementation generally runs over five years preceeded by a preparation phase.

This prospectus primarily focuses the first **two years of intense activity** outlining typical activities provided to support the organisation's implementation.



Introductory Training

A two-day introductory course is provided to all staff, including senior and executive leaders, and key partners.

This training explores:

- the principles, disciplines, tools and processes of Signs of Safety practice;
- the application of Signs of Safety practice through end-to-end case examples;
- Signs of Safety application to an agency case; and
- the implementation framework, with emphasis on learning methods that support the practice methods.

Participants in the two-day programme should come away with a basic understanding of the Signs of Safety practice methods:

- Mapping
- Questioning
- My Three Houses
- Words and Pictures
- Network-building (Family Finding)
- Participatory Conferencing
- Safety Planning
- Trajectory Case Planning

Practice and organisational leadership positions should be the first to be trained so that they can be confident in their leadership of field staff.

Advanced Training

A five-day advanced training is provided for all practice leaders and ideally senior and executive staff.

This training focuses on:

- building a deeper understanding of the application of Signs of Safety across the full gamut of cases and casework processes;
- teaching the group supervision processes, focusing on agency cases;
- building the key skills of questioning, facilitation and Appreciative Inquiry;
- introducing all the Signs of Safety learning methods that the participants will be utilising with practitioners; and
- preparing participants for their participation in the practice leader learning and development programme.

Advanced training looks to begin 2–3 months following the introductory training.

Agency Signs of Safety Trainers

Agencies will take over the introductory training of new staff by the end of the first two years of implementation.

To achieve this, during the preparation phase we ask agencies to identify training staff for development into internal Signs of Safety trainers. Licensed Signs of Safety Trainers will lead internal training staff so that they learn both the approach and how to train. Internal trainers will observe, then work alongside licensed trainers before starting to lead training.

Signs of Safety Knowledge Bank

The Knowledge Bank is an ever-growing library of case practice learning materials and implementation resources.

Staff within implementing agencies can access the Knowledge Bank directly via an online portal.

Capturing and sharing constructive practice is the engine room at the core of Signs of Safety. Practitioners, organisations, Signs of Safety Trainers and Signs of Safety Consultants around the world are generating strong, successful Signs of Safety practice, learning processes and organisational strategies for growing their work.

The Signs of Safety Knowledge Bank provides a formal platform to share this knowledge. Agencies and their staff can take advantage of the continual development by thousands of professionals across hundreds of agencies around the world, and are encouraged to contribute their own developments and learning back to the Knowledge Bank.

The Knowledge Bank is continually evolving, with Andrew Turnell and the community of Signs of Safety Trainers and Consultants leading the way by continually building on their previously unpublished materials, knowledge and training exercises. New resources are added frequently.

The Knowledge Bank also includes a comprehensive set of implementation documents written by Terry Murphy, Andrew Turnell and Joke Wiggerink that provide the core guidance to agencies during the first two years of implementation.

Whole System Learning Cases

Agency-specific whole system learning cases are an essential element of a successful Signs of Safety whole system implementation.

The learning case process focuses on particular open cases chosen by the agency. The consultant then leads a learning team of a cross section of agency staff working together in regular consult sessions to apply the practice model as fully as possible to that case. The process usually involves six to twelve sessions over a period of three to six months.

The entire team focuses throughout on assisting the caseworker and supervisor to get the best possible outcome for the case. As Signs of Safety is applied in the case, the group learns about the realities of using the approach in their agency while also learning about the organisational barriers that need to be addressed and the adjustments and support that are needed to enable system wide implementation. To ensure there is time to consider the system wide learnings a review session is held every third or fourth consultation.

For the learning case process to be of most value it is important to focus on the agency wide learning value of the case that is chosen. The whole system learning case process will be most productive when the chosen case involves the everyday cases field staff would say they regularly struggle with and would most want help with.

Once the casework is completed, a record of the work and the learnings are created so that the learning from the case can be disseminated throughout the agency and where appropriate into the wider professional field.

Practice Intensives

Implementing the Signs of Safety requires clear agency-specific guidance, that details how the approach will be used across the response pathways of that particular agency. The practice intensives are an action learning process that enable Signs of Safety consultants to work with an extensive group of staff to design the practice guidance for the agency.

Prior to the intensive, Signs of Safety consultants will have prepared proposed agency-specific practice guidance which is then tested and refined in the workshops.

The intensives involve Directors, Managers, Supervisors, Principal Social Workers and support staff. All participants work together to apply draft practice guidance using the Signs of Safety practice tools and decision-making methods to current agency cases. By undertaking a series of these practice intensives across the Signs of Safety practice guidance is refined and finalised.

Signs of Safety intensive practice workshops run over 3 or 4 days focusing on one part of the case practice continuum including:

- Duty/Intake
- Initial Investigation/Assessment (includes immediate safety planning)
- Case Conferences (if key decision-making is undertaken through prescribed conferences)
- Ongoing casework — long term safety planning
- Children in Care

Practice Leader Learning and Development Trajectory

After the advanced training, the practice leaders' learning and development trajectory should commence. This involves a formal programme of coaching sessions with small groups of practice leaders every six weeks. The programme is focused always on how participants, and the practitioners they are responsible for, are using the approach, looking particularly at their successes and struggles. In this environment, supervisors and practice managers build their individual and collective vision of the application of the approach in their agency, and learn from each other.

The programme successively builds the participants' confidence in using the Signs of Safety Learning Methods to deepen the use of the Practice Methods.

The practice leader learning and development sessions equip supervisors and practice managers to lead the learning of field staff. Materials and activities from these sessions will be immediately useful in their day-to-day work with staff through group supervision, collaborative case audit, Appreciative Inquiry and use of the Signs of Safety IT Solution and Signs of Safety Dashboard (if implemented by the agency).

Leadership Learning and Development Trajectory

Parallel with the practice leaders' learning and development sessions, an aligned formal programme of activities for leaders begins at the start of the implementation. This programme:

- builds the practice knowledge of the leaders;
- develops leadership consistent with the practice approach, equipping them in appreciative inquiry, questioning skills and participatory audit;
- initiates timely planning and reviews, focused on organisational alignment and the systems for meaningful measures; and
- always focuses on what is actually occurring in the organisation, and so forms defined cycles of action learning.

This trajectory is designed for the steering or governance group for the implementation, senior and executive leadership, service managers and policy (including quality assurance) managers based on quarterly consultancy meetings, and workshops with activity between each session.

Organisational Consultancy

Organisational consultancy focuses on working with agency leadership groups (steering committee, senior and executive leadership, service managers, corporate policy, and quality assurance) on implementation. It includes:

- introductory briefings and implementation planning;
- development, problem solving and planning for steering group, organisational leadership and project team;
- targeted leadership development;
- alignment of forms, procedures and policies;
- alignment of supervision and group supervision;
- alignment of QA system (including leadership engagement);
- support for application of Signs of Safety across key areas of service and the service continuum with consultation, planning, and development;
- facilitation of national and international engagement with the Signs of Safety community for sharing resources, learning and collaborating on research; and
- facilitation of annual and other progress reviews.

Organisational consultancy is provided through:

- in-person meetings and workshops;
- video calls; and
- email, for policy alignment advice and resources.

Organisational consultancy will be provided primarily by licensed Signs of Safety Consultants, overseen by a principal consultant who will also be available to the agency for targeted sessions.

Signs of Safety IT Solution

Substantial development has been undertaken to create the Signs of Safety IT Solution. To ensure full alignment with the practice model, Elia licenses and partners with IT providers to integrate Signs of Safety into their respective platforms.

By using the licensed Signs of Safety IT Solution from one of these partners, agencies benefit from the shared knowledge and experience of other implementing agencies all around the world. The system will be regularly updated as Signs of Safety evolves.

A list of licensed IT providers can be found at www.signsofsafety.net/it-solution/

Signs of Safety Trainer and Consultant Community

Signs of Safety Trademark

Signs of Safety is a registered trademark owned by Elia International Limited (Elia). It has been protected in this way to ensure the integrity and longevity of the approach.

Only Elia, and those licensed by Elia may legally provide commercial services using the Signs of Safety trademark.

Elia licenses and certifies trainers and consultants to use Signs of Safety to ensure that Signs of Safety training and consultation is done with rigour and to the highest standard.

Licensing for trainers and consultants requires 60–80 hours preparation of materials based on applicable work done in the previous year, and a formal interview. To maintain their licence, all trainers and consultants participate in ongoing development and supervision.

An up-to-date list of those trainers and consultants licensed and accredited by Elia can be found at www.signsofsafety.net/trainers.

Community

Licensed Signs of Safety Trainers and Signs of Safety Consultants work together with their colleagues, co-ordinated by country-based Signs of Safety Regional Directors.

All trainers and consultants participate actively in the broader international community, sharing and growing their knowledge and skills through training, Gatherings, contributing to the Signs of Safety Knowledge Bank, as well as individual and group supervision.

By working with our trainers and consultants, agencies can connect themselves into this unique international learning community.

Signs of Safety Trainers

Trainers provide training and supervision and support the use of the Signs of Safety approach in child protection casework.

Signs of Safety Consultants

Consultants work with leadership groups (steering committees, senior and executive leadership, service managers, policy and quality assurance) assisting agencies to implement the approach.



